

Editorial: April 2010, Volume 3, Number 9

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I am pleased to welcome readers to this 9th issue of IQJ and it is my hope that everyone will find something relevant to them. The Opinion piece well deserves the 'Lead Article' status and I am proud to have this writing by Joe Mellone. I applaud its clarity and power and I value the thoughts and feelings it provokes. The piece points unwaveringly to the universal values of autonomy and self-respect like a compass pointing north.

Joe brought me face to face in this article with myself in how I live and work. Most of us (forgive me if you feel unjustly characterised) who work in the field of disability, whether we are public servants in councils, health trusts or government departments, or directors, managers and workers in one of the many wealthy charities, get our needs met much more easily than Joe and we are likely to enjoy, from cradle to grave, a much more resource-rich quality of life.

Not so many of the people we endeavour to support (forgive another generalisation) for whom the basics of a half-decent education, a home with people they would choose to live with, a job with a wage to pay the bills, and opportunities for sexual relationships and committed partnerships are very often an unrealistic ambition.

These basic wants are not unrealistic because of characteristics of people with, in the context of Joe's piece, learning disabilities but because people who are not disabled have built society this way so that it meets their needs first. People with learning disabilities cannot buy the things they might want because they probably have not got a job. And they have not got jobs because non-disabled people do not give them one, by and large.

This is not going to change very much until people with learning disabilities can wrest some power from the others – a struggle in which learning is a great asset. But I thank Joe for reminding me of the

imbalance. An imbalance in which some have nice cars and mileage allowance while others wait in rain for buses or struggle in wheelchairs on hazardous pavements. An imbalance in which some people's offices are warmer and safer than others' homes. An imbalance in which some live long enough to enjoy a good pension while others live in poverty and die younger.

I also want to thank the other writers who have contributed to this issue: Professor Hilton Davis for the second part of my interview with him, Sue Boucher for the second part of her account of the ICPCN Charter, and Deborah Berkeley for the ninth episode of her diary. And my thanks to the writers of the four features: Wendy Sainsbury on the work of NBS, Louisa Whait on the effort to involve people with PMLD in making decisions about their lives, Jane Lane on the need to guard against racism as we support people with disabilities, and Susan Hamilton on music therapy.

Although Susan's article comes last in this editorial I have very great respect for music therapy and have wanted an article on it for IQJ since we began. IQJ seeks writers in the childhood disability world who can transmit their enthusiasm and passion for their work. Features do not always have to be about new projects or initiatives. I would love to have writing about such basics as how a physiotherapist works with a baby with cerebral palsy, about how a psychologist and speech therapist collaborate to support young adults with autism. Such articles about the fundamentals would help us all learn about each other's work. And I would love to have more articles about how people with learning disabilities manage their lives – now that Joe has set the scene for us.