December 2006

Learning Disability Special Interest Group

LDSIG - E-zine

The Learning Disability Special Interest Group would like to wish all members a very peaceful Christmas and prosperous New Year.

As we draw to the end of another year, it is timely and seasonal to take stock of the year just gone and to plan and prepare for the year ahead. 2006 was a very successful year for the Group. The LDSIG saw an increase in membership, publication of the e-zine, review of the challenging behaviour policy document, a very successful Easter Workshop and two well-supported sessions at the Annual Conference.

2007 looks like it will be equally as busy, as the Group will host a one-day seminar on models of early intervention early in the New Year. Other projects which will receive attention include finalising the challenging behaviour document, preparing a document on meeting the mental health needs of individuals with intellectual disability, addressing the issue of allocation of resources to children with special needs in mainstream schools and working with Council to advocate on behalf of adults with a mild intellectual disability.

The purpose of the e-zine is to facilitate communication between Committee members and Group members as well as providing a forum for sharing information and promoting debate on issues relevant to the field of intellectual disability.

As usual, there is an open invitation for members of the LDSIG to submit material for inclusion in this publication and the email address is info@psihq.ie
Nollag Shona daoibh go léir.

John Buttimer
Editor

Early Intervention Workshop

The LDSIG will be hosting a one-day workshop on the 25th of January 2007 in Wynn's Hotel entitled: Early Intervetnion for Children with Intellectual Disability and their Families: New Models – Their Implications for Psychologists.

Further details and an application form can be downloaded from the Events page of the PSI website on www.psihq.ie

Challenging Behaviour:
Creating new guidelines for the future

Dr Pete Walsh provided an overview of progress to-date on the revision of the challenging behaviour document at the General Meeting of the LDSIG held at the Annual Conference in Galway.

Pete took us through the second draft of the document, using the various headings as discussion points. He stated that the original document was used as a guiding template and that the review group were very influenced by the BPS document on clinical practice guidelines on psychological interventions for severe challenging behaviour. (This BPS Document can be downloaded from the BPS website).

The headings discussed were;
- The Target Audience,
- Aims and Objectives,
- Definitions,
- Underlying Assumptions,

- Models of Service Delivery (historical, current and future),
- Guidelines for Effective Communication,
- Ethical and Professional Issues.

The Review Group will carry out further work in relation to sections on

- Mental Health Need/Dual Diagnosis and
- Offending Behaviour.

The Group is anxious to receive as much feedback as possible from interested stakeholders. To facilitate this, the LDSIG will disseminate the next version of the document to the Clinical Division, the Educational Division, the Autism Special Interest Group and other bodies for feedback from a wider audience.

The Review Group have also proposed that a user-friendly and accessible version of the final document is published simultaneously.

The second draft has already been circulated to the distribution list of the LDSIG and if you would like to add your feedback you can email Pete directly at pete.walsh@galwayca.ie

Working in a multi-cultural Ireland LDSIG - Workshop

In response to a request from the Psychology Department at Sterwarts' Hospital, the LDSIG organised a workshop on working in a changing and multi-cultural Ireland. Three papers were presented on the following themes;

- Current issues and trends from international literature presented by Jackie Flannagan and Clodagh Power.
- Working with translators presented by Juliana Azevedo of the Psychology Service for Refugees and Asylum Seekers.
- Psychometric issues and developing cultural competence presented by John Buttimer.

Time was then allocated for roundtable discussion on five key themes;

- Current Dilemmas
- Working with Translators
- Assessment Issues
- Cultural Issues
- Availability of Support and Expertise
- Future Action Plans

There was a consensus that psychologists were increasingly asked to work with children, adults and families from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. There are new skills and challenges to be faced but that there was hope and optimism that we could learn from other countries that have experienced similar experiences. There was a recognition of the need for further skill development and that creating cultural awareness and competency will only occur with the development and implementation of proactive strategies.

Further details will be presented in the next edition of the LDSIG e-zine

LDSIG Conference Symposium
Celebrating Diversity of Research

Over the past couple of years, three members of the LDSIG Committee successfully completed doctoral programmes. In recognition of this achievement, the LDSIG were pleased to convene a symposium at this year's annual conference to mark their success.

Mark Quinn presented on the efficacy or otherwise of parenting programmes in an interestingly titled paper – Beyond chat and coffee. We know that parent management training is one of the few empirically supported therapies for children with conduct problems in regular child and adolescent mental health services. However, there is a limited literature on the effectiveness of this approach for children with developmental disabilities who often present with conduct problems. This paper will present outcomes from a controlled effectiveness

study assessing changes in families of children with developmental disabilities following attendance at a generic parenting programme. This paper will also consider differential outcomes for this group of parents compared to a comparable child and adolescent mental health parent group. The experiences of the parents who participated in this study will be addressed and the implications of these findings for clinical practice will be discussed.

Kathy O'Grady presented a very interesting and personal paper on facilitating future planning for the ageing adults with intellectual disability. Using a very moving and powerful case study, Kathy emphasised the importance of an individualised person centered approach to planning. When ageing families of an adult with a lifelong disability embark on a process of planning for the future, they generally think in terms of making hard and fast decisions about: (1) where the person with the disability is going to live when "the time comes"; and (2) who will take on their direct care. Generally, many families ignore, neglect, or simply do not engage in making any formal plans at all which can mean that other significant aspects of a person's life (i.e., quality of life factors) are negated or neglected. Reviewing population demographics for both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, it was ascertained that a sizable number of parents will be aging in the near future and that some formalised assistance for future planning was needed.

Margaret Farrelly gave a paper on the experience of loneliness by adult males with Asperger's Syndrome. The present study investigated the experience of loneliness in 34 male adults with Asperger syndrome. The study employed a non-randomised cross sectional within group design. Three questionnaires were completed by each participant i.e. the Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults-shortened version, the Relationship Questionnaire and the Social Comparison Scale. The results revealed that male adults with Asperger syndrome did report loneliness with higher emotional than social loneliness and higher levels of romantic loneliness in particular. Relatively low levels of family loneliness were reported. Higher overall loneliness was associated with lower social comparison scores, lower levels of secure attachment and higher levels of fearful attachment. The findings are discussed in the context of the two main theoretical paradigms i.e. the socio-cognitive and the affective paradigms and the need to address loneliness, attachment patterns and social comparison strategies in clinical interventions with this group.

The LDSIG would like to congratulate all three Committee members on their achievement and on the excellent presentations at conference.

If you have any suggestions about future symposia then please contact any Committee member or email the LDSIG at info@psihq.ie

Useful Websites?

The British Institute of Learning Disabilities

www.bild.org.uk

The British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) is a national charity committed to improving the quality of life for people with a learning disability. We do this by influencing policy-makers and other decision-makers, encouraging good practice among practitioners and helping people with a learning disability take charge of their own lives and become part of an inclusive society.

They work with government agencies and other organisations to help shape policy and strategic thinking, contributing to a shared vision of better services. They also carry out research on topics of national interest and publish findings through conferences and workshops, publications and policy development.

Have your Say!

If you have any comments, suggestions or items for inclusion in future issues of the e-zine please contact us by email at info@psihq.ie

If you would prefer not to receive the e-zine in future please let us know by email at info@psihq.ie

Please mark all correspondence care of LDSIG e-zine.

We look forward to hearing from you!