

relationship. Programmes were enskilling for all concerned - child, parent and professional - acknowledging that we can all learn so much from each other. We never know it all.

**5. Effective evaluation.** Whilst the programme review meeting had its place, evaluation in these programmes was an ongoing feature. Adjustment to programme goals, contexts and resources were made where the shared feeling was that this was in the child's best interests. Implementation was a shared responsibility and no longer the onerous task of parents who had been dumped with a programme so intensive that it was disorientating to the life of the family. In these programmes there was no place for the precious professional domain; only for skilful, resourceful contributions that would benefit the child and empower the family.

Clearly, in these principles, the quality of partnership between parents and professionals is explicit. In reviewing research in the field of Early Intervention McConkey (1994) stated that whilst there was at present a greater emphasis on families and their role in Early Intervention, the implications of this new emphasis might not have been worked through adequately in professional practice. He challenged researchers and practitioners to develop, and adapt Early Intervention strategies for use in family homes as well as in clinics and schools, and criticised the continued dominance of research literature by laboratory-style investigation. He also mentioned the need for the focus of professional training to shift from the treatment of individuals to working with families in the provision of teaching and therapy.

Pugh (1994) summarised the aspirations of many authors in expressing the need for a 'developmentally appropriate' curriculum which would provide a quality curriculum for very young children. She further emphasised that 'quality is a dynamic rather than a static concept' (p. 111).

In countries such as New Zealand, Early Intervention training is offered to teachers on a one-year secondment basis. In the UK there is no such equivalent available, again reflecting the low status of pre-school Early Intervention-type services. What is very much needed is a trans-disciplinary training. Apart from specific training in our respective individual disciplines when do we ever have the opportunity to study

interactively with colleagues from other professions on a long-term accredited basis? (Westminster College, Oxford, is currently in the process of developing a research-based programme of training in Early Intervention which will be open to professionals from all disciplines.)

McConachie (1994) in reviewing the implications of stress for families with young disabled children also criticised current professional practice, and argued that the organisational model might owe more to habit than to clear rationale based on the varying needs of the population it serves. The well-supported family might be better equipped to dissipate the stress which has traditionally been associated with the care of a child with a disability (McConachie, 1994; Wilton and Renaut, 1986). In order to achieve this, however, those professions working in Early Intervention must reconcile their differences and find a truly trans-disciplinary model for service delivery where they, with parents, are sincere co-partners.

#### **Fathers - the Peripheral Parent?**

McConkey has identified fathers of children with disabilities as so-called 'hard-to reach parents'. Their role as key members in any family needs to be elaborated if we are to appreciate and develop their contribution.

A recent study by Herbert and Carpenter (1994) has focused upon fathers and their role in Early Intervention. Their study explored the recollections of seven fathers at the time of the birth of their children with Down's Syndrome. It discussed the disclosures of diagnosis and subsequent contacts the fathers made both professionally and socially during the period following, both in the hospital and at home. Myer (1986) suggest that amid the explosion of research into the role of the father in society as a whole and the family in particular, the fathers of children with special needs were relatively ignored. The literature on the subject is sparse (Hornby, 1991; Roddque et al., 1992). From a review of 24 studies in America, it was found such fathers were rarely consulted and that discussion papers 'allot a page or so to fathers as an aside' (McConachie, 1986, p. 43).

The study reported by Herbert and Carpenter (1994) looks at factors such as how the news is broken, parental responses, the content of information and the way in which it is given,