

## **Summary of EBIS Colloquium in December 2008**

EBIS organised a highly productive colloquium on long term care and support after a brain injury. Without the organisational skills of Christine Croisiaux and her colleagues, this meeting would never have happened.

We had presenters from a number of countries including France, Belgium, Italy, Ireland, England, Sweden, and the United States, covering topics ranging from philosophy, to medicolegal matters, to long term care, and quality assurance. We were particularly fortunate to have Chris MacDonell from CARF USA, talking about accreditation in the context of long term care and support for people with brain injury. There were a number of, to this writer, particular highlights in the meeting. The first was the presentation by the philosopher Stephen Bensimon. I took away some little nuggets from this talk, including phrases such as “every life has limits”; “every life has meaning”; “recognise and celebrate difference”; and, from Kirkegaard, “to help is not to control but to serve”.

I observed what in English we refer to as “an elephant in the room” (an important issue which we all know is there, but don’t talk about). One such issue was sex and intimacy, which is obviously a crucial aspect of long term care and support, and which was mentioned formally by only one person (Michel Onillon). A second issue was vulnerability, particularly in the long term. This is a really significant issue for many people late after a severe brain injury, but it was not debated to any degree in the colloquium. A third issue is families, and most specifically, what can go wrong or be problematic in family care. For example, when family members are too old to continue to care for the injured person. What happens when things go wrong and family members fail to, or are unable to consider the best interests of the injured person, rather than their own best interest?

The final issue which I felt was not addressed, but which might have been in a colloquium on long term care and support, was that of the person, often a young person, who had suffered a brain injury, in the context of pre-existing problems, often mental health problems, including drug and alcohol abuse. These can pose tremendous challenges to care and support services.

Those “elephants”, neatly define the content of what could be a further colloquium, the title of which could be something like “Vulnerability and Support for People with Complex Care Needs”.