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Editorial



At the end of 1981 it is interesting to reflect on the effect of the International Year of the Disabled upon families and children. Although, as Barbara Rounsevell suggests in her article, the focus of the Year of the Disabled appears to have been on adults, parents of disabled children and the children themselves have been able to draw more attention to the needs of the disabled child and family. Numerous articles have appeared in the daily press and on television focussing on children and their approach to coping with disability. The effect of these articles and programmes can evoke acclaim, admiration and respect from the reader or viewer — only time will tell if acceptance of the child with disability as a person with the right to fully participate in society is also a lasting effect. It can only be hoped that the activity of the Year of the Disabled and the apparent change in community attitudes does not disappear as quickly as the activity associated with the Year of the Child (1979).

In this issue, the concept of permanency planning is explored. Permanency planning can protect the child in need of care from drifting uncertainly in the welfare system. Yet for permanency planning to work, as Denzil McCotter points out, adequate resources are needed. These resources include adequate family support services as well as adequate alternative care programmes. At the present time, the Government input into family support programmes is not adequate.

Other areas explored in this issue are forms of child care and the effect the illness of a child can have upon his/her family.

The needs of migrant children when they are faced with settling into a new school and culture is another area which is explored. The difficulties of moving between two cultures can be mitigated by programmes such as the one described by Michelle Barker and Kent Smith.

Barbara Rounsevell describes a development centre for children with disabilities. The attention given to the individual child in planning his/her programme and involvement of the family is obviously thorough and exciting. Surely such programmes are needed by all children with disability, but for many, because of their diagnosis, geographical situation or for other reasons, this type of care is not readily obtainable.

Perhaps 1981, with its focus on the rights and needs of the disabled will mean greater awareness of the need for these programmes which give the opportunity for adequate assessment and planning for children with disability and support for their families. These programmes must be supported by adequate resources for care and treatment.

Margarita Frederico