

Parent Support Group Action Pack



The role of professionals

The role of the professional

You might be approached by a parent who would like you to start a parent support group or you may have identified the need to set one up yourself. Before starting a new support group, though, do check whether there are any other parent groups running locally or nationally that could meet families' needs. If you are unsure, Contact can let you know whether we are in touch with relevant groups.

Networking with other professionals, your local child development centre or charities may also be a good source of information on parent support groups.

What will your position be in the group? Are you going to be the group leader and facilitator? The extent of your involvement will depend on whether you and the parents involved see your role as being time-limited or whether you have started a group that will be facilitated by you. Busy parents may be only too pleased to have a professional do most of the organising!

Although many established groups are parent-led, a new group might ask you to facilitate their first few meetings and give guidance.

The precise role of a professional or paid worker within a group can sometimes be a source of confusion. It is not uncommon for someone to be professionally involved with a parent while offering them support via a group at the same time. So, it is important for everyone to be clear about the part you will play from the outset and agree on boundaries.

What sort of help do parent support groups need?

As every support group varies, so can the amount of assistance they need or want. However, most support groups appreciate help with one or more of the following at some stage of their development.

Reaching Parents

Parents rely on professionals involved in their lives to tell them what they don't know. Although, often professionals assume that someone else is providing the information and are very good at giving information from within their own field, but are not always aware of other support and how to access it. Whatever your profession, a system could be implemented whereby all parents are routinely given information about support groups near them by way of good practice. Parent groups offer an important additional source of local support to which you can refer the families you work with. Support groups should be as accessible as possible to all parents of disabled children and reflect the diversity of your local community.

Venue

Finding the right venue for meetings is important. A good venue makes meetings more enjoyable and attracts (and keeps!) group members. Finding an affordable meeting room can be a struggle. Professionals may be able to help here by offering free meeting space.

Publicity

Many groups find that word of mouth is a very effective way of publicising themselves but they need the help of professionals working with families to do this. Could you publicise groups through your professional newsletter or e-bulletin?

Speakers

By inviting speakers to meetings to either run a workshop on issues that affect their family life such as challenging behaviour or to talk about a service, for example, speech and language therapy. Your own professional contacts mean you can help groups to secure speakers more easily and build positive relationships.

Funding

Most parent support groups will seek some form of funding, even if it is just for refreshments during meetings. Do you have a budget to give groups some financial assistance? If not, are there ways you could help in kind, like offering free meeting rooms or helping with photocopying.

Further supporting information can be found in our Group Action Pack guide [Starting a parent support group](#) on page 17.

Support for professionals from Contact

Events with Contact

If you are a professional working with parent carers of disabled children in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland and would like us to hold a stall at an information event in your area, please find our contacts in your area to see what we can offer: www.cafamily.org.uk/advice-and-support/in-your-area

Training for professionals

We offer a range of training courses for professionals to take themselves, for professionals to commission for the parents they work with, and courses for networks, groups, and parent carer forums.

We have nearly 40 years' experience of working directly with disabled children and their families, providing information, advice and support. Our training programmes build on this experience.

Our training courses are for three groups:

- [Professionals - to support your continuous development](#)
- [The families you work with - to be commissioned by you](#)
- [Networks, groups, and parent carer forums](#)

Browse the pages below to see:

- [Testimonies](#)
- [Prices and discounts](#)
- [Frequently asked questions](#)
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All courses can be tailored to meet the needs of the specific audience to develop insight and knowledge and build skills.

Contact us

For more information or to book a course, just get in touch:

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