

Parliamentary Inquiry into childcare for disabled children

*Levelling the playing field for families
with disabled children and young people*



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Today, only one quarter of local authorities say they have enough childcare for disabled children.
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1. Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I introduce this report from the Parliamentary Inquiry into childcare for disabled children, and I commend the parliamentarians who instigated it. This important Inquiry was set up to look at how well disabled children and young people and their families are included and served by our childcare system.

As the Children's Commissioner for England my job is promoting and protecting the rights of children in England and in particular, those who live away from home, or receive social care, or who may be at particular risk of having their rights infringed.

Disabled children and young people have a right to enjoy the same opportunities as non-disabled children. This includes rights to local childcare and early learning opportunities, and to receive the support they need to fulfil their potential and to be involved in their communities.

For families with disabled children, we know that access to good quality childcare is important as they are more likely to live in poverty than other families. Childhood disability is frequently a 'trigger event' for poverty because families face significant extra expenses related to their child's disability and barriers moving into, or staying in work. And poverty can harm children's lived experiences and outcomes – in both the long and short term.

Unfortunately, the findings of this Inquiry are not encouraging. Today, only one quarter of local authorities say they have enough childcare for disabled children. This becomes more acute for older disabled children. Parents report it is more difficult in both finding and paying for childcare for disabled children compared to non-disabled children.

This means that too many disabled children and young people are missing out on not only important educational opportunities but also opportunities to socialise with other children, play and have fun – all of which they have a right to under the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I commend this report to all those who work with disabled children and young people, to policy and decision makers. They have the power to improve the experiences and outcomes of families with disabled children and this is the time to take action.

Maggie Atkinson
Children's Commissioner for England

FOREWORD FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

We set up the Parliamentary Inquiry into Childcare for Disabled Children to look at the extent to which disabled children and young people are included and served by the childcare system. The findings of the Inquiry will be of interest not only to government and local authorities, but all those who work with children and young people.

The Inquiry heard from parent carers and young people that the current picture is troubling. All families face childcare challenges, but these problems increase dramatically for disabled children and young people. Whilst there are numerous examples of good practice and inclusive provision, many parent carers described being subtly discouraged or simply turned away by a provider. Some parent carers were offered fewer than the 15 hours of early education they are entitled to. Parents who wish to work succeeded in arranging suitable care often only after an exhausting battle. Parents can be, and responses to the Inquiry indicate often are, charged higher fees than for non-disabled children, but may receive no extra help when this happens.

We heard from childcare providers that many did not believe the current system ensures high quality care for disabled children and young people. Providers highlighted the frequent difficulties they had accessing inclusion support from local authorities, as well as the limited knowledge and capacity of the workforce and the inspectors charged with ensuring high standards around children that need more specialised or intensive care.

A further gap the Inquiry highlighted was in childcare for disabled young people. For non-disabled young people, holiday and out of school childcare activities are increasingly available, but disabled young people and their parents must navigate limited choices in an attempt to avoid exclusion from teenage life.

Children's rights, the challenge of eliminating poverty and basic fairness all demand that we take the task of achieving an inclusive childcare system seriously. No child's horizons and opportunities should be narrowed by their first encounters with education and activities outside the school system. No parent should be excluded from the opportunity to work. It makes no sense for disabled children to be included in mainstream education but excluded from mainstream childcare.

Inclusive childcare is also good policy. For example, one of the government's key education goals is to reduce the significant vocabulary gap between low and high income children by the time they are aged five. Children with special educational needs are over-represented in children experiencing language delay. This is why access to therapeutic support is critical in closing this gap and why access to the full early education entitlement so important for these children.

Childcare is increasingly central to modern life, but the childcare system is not serving families with disabled children well. We have set out a number of steps the government could take immediately to begin to address these problems. The Inquiry report also provides a platform and opportunity to ensure that inclusion is in future at the heart of childcare policy. The opportunity is one we believe the government must take.



Pat Glass is the Labour Member of Parliament for North West Durham, having been elected in the 2010 General Election. Pat is a member of the Education Select Committee and is also vice-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for local democracy. Additionally, Pat is Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS) for Maria Eagle MP, the Shadow Secretary of State for DEFRA.

Before being elected to Parliament, Pat was an adviser to the government on education and worked with councils across the Yorkshire and Humber region to improve their education service. Her specialist area of knowledge is Special Educational Needs. She is a member of the GMB union and a former Councillor on Lanchester Parish Council.



Robert Buckland MP is Member of Parliament for South Swindon and a Recorder of the Crown Court, sitting on the Midland Circuit. He is a member of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, the Commons Committees on Standards and Privileges, and the Justice Select Committee. Robert is also the Joint Secretary of the 1922 Committee. Finally, he is the chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Autism and the vice-chair of the APPG on Speech and Language Difficulties.

2. About the Inquiry

This Parliamentary Inquiry was launched and co-chaired by Robert Buckland MP and Pat Glass MP. The Inquiry aimed to assess the extent to which disabled children and their families face barriers to childcare. It looked at:

- affordability
- availability and inclusion
- quality
- access and information.

The Inquiry examined potential policy measures to address these barriers and will make recommendations. The Inquiry is supported by Contact a Family, Every Disabled Child Matters, Family and Childcare Trust, and Working Families.

The Inquiry committee consisted of a cross-bench group of MPs and Peers including: Baroness Eaton; Lord Touhig; Sarah Champion MP; Alex Cunningham MP; Teresa Pearce MP; and David Ward MP.

The Inquiry held three oral evidence sessions and put out a call for written evidence, which received 35 responses from organisations representing parents, providers and local authorities as well as almost 1200 responses from individual parent carers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all the groups and individuals who submitted written evidence to the Inquiry or appeared as witnesses to give oral testimony. We would particularly like to thank all the parent carers and disabled young people who shared their views with us.

We would like to thank the organisations who have supported this Inquiry and written this report: Contact a Family, Every Disabled Child Matters, Family and Childcare Trust and Working Families.

3. Executive Summary

Overarching recommendation:

- 1** The Government should develop a cross-departmental action plan and funded programme to ensure that all disabled children and young people can access affordable, accessible and appropriate childcare.

The Inquiry heard compelling evidence from a number of sources, most importantly from parent carers and young people themselves, that childcare provision for disabled children is patchy across the country and often inadequate.

KEY FINDINGS

AFFORDABILITY

- Parent carers are often charged higher than average fees: 86% of parent carers who responded to the Inquiry's survey reported paying £5 or more per hour, with 38% paying £11-20 and 5% paying more than £20. This compares to the national averages of around £3.50 – 4.50 per hour.¹
- The Inquiry heard that many parent carers had been forced to give up work because they could not afford suitable childcare.
- Adequate funding is often not available to parent carers or providers to support the extra costs of high needs or one-to-one support for disabled children.

AVAILABILITY AND INCLUSION

- 41% of parent carers who responded to the Inquiry's survey said their children did not access the full 15 hours of the free entitlement for early education for three and four year olds
- Mainstream childcare provision is often not inclusive because of poor understanding of reasonable adjustments. There is also a lack of support available for providers to access additional training, resources and physical adaptations.
- The Childcare Act 2006 sufficiency duty is not compensating for the failure of the market to provide childcare for disabled children: children with complex needs and older disabled children are particularly missing out. Parent carers are being denied employment opportunities.

“Even now, at age 3, we have only managed to secure 6 hours a week at a nursery, during term-time only. He needs 1-2-1 support while at nursery and this is all the local authority says they can provide. This seems to me to breach the Equality Act, in that children without additional needs are entitled to 15 hours a week childcare.”

Katherine, parent carer

¹ Contact a Family (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

QUALITY

- There is a significant shortfall of knowledge, skills, and confidence and worry in providing quality care and education to disabled children in the childcare and early years workforce.
- 33%² of parent carers say that the lack of experienced staff was the reason for not accessing childcare, echoing concerns evident in the Childcare and early years survey of parents 2012-2013.
- Providers raised concerns that many Ofsted inspectors do not have the training necessary to monitor achievement against special educational needs standards and promote high quality childcare provision.

ACCESS AND INFORMATION

- 92%³ of parent carers say finding childcare for disabled children is more difficult than for non-disabled children. Parents must often approach providers directly and negotiate a placement and fees, sometimes in a three-way dialogue with the local authority for additional support.
- There is uncertainty for parent carers about what support they can expect, and confusion among local authorities and providers about what the childcare system should deliver for disabled children and young people.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Inquiry has put beyond doubt the presence of failures which fly in the face of the intent of statutory duties, equalities legislation and the aspiration of an inclusive childcare system.

There are a number of steps the Government should take to help families with disabled children to access affordable, quality childcare. These steps, outlined in full in the report, include:

- Undertaking a cross-departmental review of funding to identify where support must be improved to meet the extra costs of childcare for disabled children and remove barriers to access, followed by pilots of flexible approaches to delivering support.
- Introducing a requirement for local authorities to publish as part of the SEND Local Offer clear information for parents and providers on access to childcare inclusion support.
- Writing to local authorities to make clear that all eligible disabled children aged two, three and four are entitled to access their full 15 hours of free early education and clarify the arrangements for redress for parents.

These steps should be brought together into a coherent programme designed to ensure that all disabled children and young people can access affordable, accessible and appropriate childcare. The Inquiry evidence and findings must also inform long term reform of the childcare system. Ahead of the next general election, all political parties should commit to tackling the lack of affordable and quality childcare for disabled children once and for all.

² Contact a Family (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

³ Contact a Family (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

4. The importance of childcare to families with disabled children

“ Trying to return to work was one of the greatest challenges I faced. Very few nurseries would consider taking him. I felt that both my son and I were being excluded right at the start of his life. I had to fight hard to obtain funding from the council to give him one-to-one support at the private nursery that did offer him a place.”

Hannah, parent carer⁴

“ We know there is a general issue about the cost and affordability and choice of childcare for all parents and obviously that is exacerbated hugely when the child has got a disability.”

Olivia McLeod,
Director of Early Years and Childcare,
Department for Education

Access to good quality, affordable childcare is important for all parents. Good quality provision has a positive impact on children's learning outcomes and enables parents to work. For families with disabled children, access to good quality childcare is particularly significant because they are far more vulnerable to poverty compared to others. Childhood disability is frequently a 'trigger event' for poverty because families incur considerable additional and ongoing expenses related to their child's

disability, and they encounter significant barriers to entering or sustaining employment.

A major barrier to work for parent carers of disabled children is the significant lack of availability of suitable childcare, which has been identified by both parent carers and local authorities themselves. In addition, it is well recognised that where suitable childcare is available it is often significantly more expensive than for families with non-disabled children, making it unattainable for many parent carers. This not only forces parent carers out of the labour market but means working parents pay a huge 'income penalty' due to their child's disability.

Many parent carers who shared their views with this Inquiry explained how they wanted to work but the lack of high quality childcare available to them at a cost they could afford prevented them from doing so, or forced them to work fewer hours than they wished or in less senior roles than they were qualified for.

“ I have had to reduce to working one day a week due to no childcare available to care for my daughter's complex needs. This has had a huge financial impact on our family as well as the stress of organising work around my husband's shift so one of us is available to care for our daughter.”

Leanne, parent carer

⁴ Unless otherwise stated parent quotes are from: Parliamentary inquiry into childcare for disabled children (2014), parent carer survey

Key stats

- Disabled children are the most likely to experience poverty together with children with a disabled parent.⁵
- It costs up to three times as much to raise a disabled child, as it does to raise a child without disabilities.⁶
- Families with disabled children are 2.5 times more likely to have no parent working for more than 16 hours per week.⁷ Only 16% of mothers with disabled children work compared to 61% of all mothers.⁸
- 83% of parent carers say the lack of suitable childcare was the main barrier to paid work.⁹
- Only two in five (40%) parent carers believe there are childcare providers in their local area that can cater for their child's illness or disability. Only a third (35%) say that providers are available at times to fit around daily commitments.¹⁰
- Only 28% of local authorities report having sufficient childcare for disabled children, compared to 54% for all children under 2, 69% for children 3 or 4 years old, and 35% for children 5-11 years old.¹¹
- Parent carers reported paying between £12–14 per hour for childcare,¹² while others pay up to £20 per hour.¹³ This compares to the national average of around £3.50 – 4.50 per hour.¹⁴

5 Department for Work and Pensions (2013) Households Below Average Income: an analysis of the income distribution 1994/95 -2011/12

6 Department for Work and Pensions (2013) Households Below Average Income: an analysis of the income distribution 1994/95 -2011/12

7 Emerson, E and Hatton, C. (2005)

8 EDCM (2006), Between a rock and a hard place

9 Working Families (2012), Finding flexibility

10 Department for Education (2014), Childcare and early years survey of parents 2012-14, p. 140

11 Family and Childcare Trust (2014), Annual Cost Survey

12 EDCM and Family Fund (2011), Breaking Down Barriers

13 Department for Education (2011), Qualitative research into families' experiences and behaviours in the Childcare Affordability Pilots (CAP09): Disabled Children's Pilot

14 Daycare Trust (2011), Childcare Costs Survey 2010

“I’m unable to find suitable care that is trained to look after children with autism. The cost is also a major issue as it would cost more than what I would earn.”

Paula, parent carer

“My disabled child could go to an after school club, but this would cost me £15 per day. This is on top of the £18 per day I would need to pay for my other three children. I simply cannot afford to pay £165 a week for after school clubs. To add to this, I still wouldn’t be able to find suitable and affordable childcare during school holidays. The expense and difficulty in getting childcare ensures that I have to remain a stay at home mother; thereby losing an entire income.”

Emma, parent carer

Families with disabled children are not just financially disadvantaged by the lack of access to suitable childcare. Disabled children have fewer opportunities to make friends and to be independent and are less likely to meet developmental goals than their non-disabled peers. Access to high quality childcare offers significant social and educational benefits that mitigate these problems and creates long term benefits for families, communities and the economy. Parents described how their children benefited from being included in high quality settings:

“Nursery provides him with an opportunity to play with other children his own age, to experience a mainstream setting and participate in child-led play that would be impossible for me to replicate at home. His language, social and communication skills are all age appropriate and have developed dramatically since joining the nursery. I am confident that all of these experiences will encourage his independence in the long term.”

Hannah, parent carer

“The difference between May eating from a spoon, which she learned at nursery and I could not have taught her...was she was supposed to be a child that was going to be tube fed for the rest of her life. So we are talking about the short term financial gain of not including her in nursery compared to the long term. May being fed through a tube, the surgery, the infections that that would cause, the NHS visits, supplying her with liquid nutrition for the rest of her life, now costs the state nothing and will not cost the state anything for the rest of her life.”

Stacie, parent carer¹⁵

Many parent carers also described to the Inquiry the impact on their families of the combination of caring responsibilities, financial challenges and lack of access to high quality affordable childcare.

¹⁵ Parliamentary inquiry into childcare for disabled children (2014), oral evidence session

These pressures cause extreme financial instability and can force families out of their homes, lead to mental and physical ill health and contribute to family breakdown as they reach crisis point.

“My son with disabilities went to a private day nursery when I went back to work after maternity leave. It was an excellent nursery. Of course when he started school everything changed (due to lack of wraparound care) and eventually I had to give up work altogether. It was a very difficult time. I nearly lost my home and everything we had.”

Shelagh, parent carer

“I am a police officer with a good wage but I am having to use my son’s Disability Living Allowance to get through the month because childcare costs so much. The worry and stress of money as well as getting my son the help he needs has left me with a diagnosis of clinical depression.”

Rhian, parent carer

“Work for me was also something normal for me to do and allowed me to avoid isolation. It kept me sane through the very difficult and darker days, when strange as it may sound, it gave me a break... Due to lack of childcare provision I was forced into a position where I had to leave employment as I couldn’t fulfil the commitments my job needed in the shorter hours.”

Sharon, parent carer

Access to suitable childcare is fundamental to supporting families with disabled children to lead ordinary lives. Without access to suitable childcare, disabled children do not enjoy an equal opportunity to educational opportunities as their non-disabled peers and parents do not enjoy an equal opportunity to work as other parents.

This Inquiry set out to examine in detail the barriers that prevent families with disabled children from accessing high quality childcare. The Inquiry has put forward recommendations to enable parent carers to access the same opportunities to work as parents of non-disabled children.

“I feel passionately about my right to work. I feel passionately that it’s good value for the economy to put Ben into nursery...I’d be surviving on benefits if not. I wouldn’t be paying taxes. I wouldn’t be working with my colleagues to train up the next bunch of graduates who are going to work for this economy. You get good value out of me and yet we have to run through extraordinary hurdles just to get what is actually just the most fundamental right for our children.. This is a basic human right, and it is a human rights issue.”

Jennie, parent carer¹⁶

¹⁶ Parliamentary inquiry into childcare for disabled children (2014), oral evidence session

Case study

Hannah has two children. Rose aged seven has autism and learning disabilities. Her son is five and doesn't have a disability. She lives in Cambridgeshire. After having Rose, Hannah tried to return to work flexibly, but could not get childcare so had to leave her career. The only way she has been able to return to the workplace is by becoming self employed. She is Co-Founder of RosyandBo.com

The government recently announced measures to help parents access childcare, but it does not help families with disabled children like Hannah's. Hannah says that childcare is a major barrier to parents with disabled children returning to work. She was highly skilled and had a good job that she hasn't been able to return to. She says childcare for disabled children is not specialist enough or appropriate and is prohibitively expensive. To get Rose into nursery with a one to one carer, which is what she needs, costs £180 per week.

Now Rose goes to a mainstream school in the mornings and is home educated in the afternoons. Hannah hasn't been able to find flexible childcare after school clubs or in the holidays that are suitable for Rose. This hasn't been a problem for her son.

She says appropriate, affordable childcare is a problem in Cambridgeshire and is getting worse. She says, "There simply is not enough to go around as cuts are taking effect and what is left, often it is not appropriate for children with very differing needs. The local authority are not effective at telling parents about what is available, why can't they email all parents or use social media?"

People forget you can't share pickups, play-dates after school or exchange childcare in the way you can with children who do not have special needs or disabilities. For Rose, who has autism and learning disabilities, I would like her to be included in a mainstream after school club or holiday playscheme, so she can go with her brother who does not have special needs. I have to find private provision prepared to take her and then look for a carer to go with her... which makes it expensive."

5. Policy Context

The key policy framework to the current system remains the 2004 childcare strategy.¹⁷ It provided a ‘unifying narrative’ placing childcare in the context of child development and parental employment. It made recommendations under four categories:

- choice and flexibility
- availability
- quality and
- affordability.¹⁸

The Childcare Act 2006 placed a duty on local authorities to secure sufficient childcare for working parents, to assess childcare supply and demand every three years, and take action to fill gaps in provision. This duty applies to children up to the age of 14 and 18 in the case of disabled young people.

Since the 2004 childcare strategy, an infrastructure of support has been developed to help parents meet the costs of childcare and access early education. At present, support includes help with childcare costs through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. Working parents on low incomes can receive up to 70% of their childcare costs through tax credits, up to a maximum cost of £175 per week for one child in childcare and £300 per week for two or more children. Some parents also receive help with their childcare costs through employer-supported childcare vouchers, either as

an additional benefit on top of their salary or as a salary sacrifice before they pay tax. All children are entitled to a free early education offer, which in England is for 570 hours annually, or 15 hours per week over 38 weeks of the year for three and four-year-olds.

A further key policy change was the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2008. It brought together all early years providers into the same regulatory framework in order to introduce common standards and improve quality. Ofsted inspects against this framework, which covers all daycare, school reception classes, childminder care, sessional crèches and pre-schools. The Early Years Foundation Stage guidance outlines the early years curriculum, gives an assessment framework and provides statutory guidance on child welfare.

During this period, families with disabled children have been afforded specific attention. Under Aiming High for Disabled Children, the disabled children’s access to childcare (DCATCH) pilot specifically aimed to improve childcare provision for disabled children. The £35 million initiative funded 10 local authorities to pilot ways of improving the range and quality of childcare for disabled children between March 2008–2011. Despite the success of the programme, DCATCH did not have a sustained impact across the country due to the discontinuation of funding and failure to build on and roll out learning nationally.

The current Government has continued to develop policy to make childcare more affordable and improve both the supply and quality of childcare provision. *More Affordable Childcare* (2013) set out a childcare offer including a new

17 HMRC, DfES, DWP, Dtl (2004), *Choice for parents, the best start for children: a ten year strategy for childcare*

18 Family and Childcare Trust (2014), *Where next for childcare? Learning from the last ten years of childcare policy*

scheme to introduce tax-free childcare¹⁹ in place of childcare vouchers, enhanced childcare support under Universal Credit and extending the funded early education offer for three and four year olds to the 40% most disadvantaged two year olds.

More Great Childcare (2013), which included the Government's response to the Cathy Nutbrown Review into early education and childcare qualifications, set out measures to:

- raise the status and quality of the childcare workforce,
- reduce the regulatory burden on early years providers,
- establish childminder agencies and take steps to expand nursery places.

More recently, the Government has proposed an Early Years Premium for disadvantaged three and four year olds to improve the quality of provision they access.

Current changes to the childcare system take place against a background of significant reform to how services are planned and delivered to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The Children and Families Act 2014 replaces the system of statements of special educational needs (SEN) with Education, Health and Care Plans, introduces a Local Offer of services and greater rights to personal budgets. From September 2014, local authorities will also be under new duties to jointly commission education, health and care provision and review the sufficiency of provision in their area. The principles underpinning Part 3 of the Act emphasise:

- the importance of the participation of children, young people and their parents in decisions about the services, and
- a focus on educational outcomes and improving progress for children and young people with SEN.

The Children and Families Act will also introduce stronger rights to carer's assessments. In making an assessment local authorities must have regard to the impact of caring on the parent's well-being using the definition within the Care Act 2014. This includes participation in work, education, training or recreation and social and economic wellbeing. These new duties have clear relevance to the continuing development of childcare policy.

Today, childcare has a high public profile and is a political priority for each party. However, despite positive developments in quality, choice and cost for families, more widely there has been limited joined up thinking to address the childcare needs of families with disabled children. Ensuring families with disabled children can enjoy an equal opportunity to access childcare will require a cross-departmental approach.

“ We know there is a general issue about the cost and affordability and choice of childcare for all parents and obviously that is exacerbated hugely when the child has got a disability.”

Olivia McLeod,
Director of Early Years and Childcare,
Department for Education

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Definitions

Childcare is provided to enable parents to sustain employment. Formal childcare that is registered under the Childcare Act 2006 can include any form of care for a child. This includes education or any other supervised activity that does not take place in a school during school hours, or is any form of healthcare for a child. The Act specifically excludes care provided by a relative. Formal childcare may also not be registered under the Act, for example some out of school and holiday clubs. Informal childcare includes domestic arrangements with friends or relatives provided in exchange for remuneration.

A disabled child is a child aged 0 to 18 with a disability. The Equality Act 2010 sets out the definition of a disability as ‘a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.’ It is estimated there are 770,000 disabled children under this definition and approximately 350,000 receive Disability Living Allowance.²⁰

²⁰ ONS statistics (2014)

6. Affordability

“The few childminders who offered to take my child on told me they can only do it if I pay 3–4 times the usual rate as looking after my child would mean they lose money otherwise. However, £15 or £20 per hour for childcare is not anything we can afford.”

Parent carer

66% of families pay more for childcare for their disabled child than non-disabled child²¹

82% of families who use childcare paid above the average, with 31% paying £11–20 per hour²²

86% of parent carers who responded to this Inquiry's call for evidence survey reported paying £5 per hour or above, with 38% paying £11–20 per hour and 5% paying more than £20²³

Parent carers of disabled children consistently report being asked to pay higher costs for childcare than for non-disabled children. These increased costs act as a significant barrier to accessing childcare provision. This frequently results in parent carers being forced to give up employment or work fewer hours. 39% say they did not use childcare because it was too expensive.²⁴ 52% of parent carers cited cost as the main barrier to them accessing childcare.²⁵

6.1 HIGHER NEED

Higher costs are particularly significant because families with disabled children typically have a greater need for childcare than other families. This is often because they struggle to access the same informal childcare arrangements that other parents can agree with each other. These ‘nil cost swaps’ include a short number of hours before and after school enabling parents to fit work in with school timetables, journeys to school and play settings and care during holidays.²⁶

Furthermore, providing activities for disabled young people at secondary school to emulate their peers typically requires the presence of an adult for the duration, whilst non-disabled young people can spend their time taking part in unstructured or unsupervised activities with their friends.

21 EDCM and Family Fund (2011), *Breaking down barriers*

22 Contact a Family (2014), *Childcare affordability trap research*

23 Parliamentary inquiry into childcare for disabled children (2014), parent carer survey

24 Contact a Family (2014), *Childcare affordability trap research*

25 EDCM and Family Fund (2011), *Breaking down barriers*

26 Action for Kids (2014), *Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry*

Families with disabled children pay **8 times more** towards childcare costs compared with other families



The childcare affordability trap calculation¹

WORKING TAX CREDIT (WTC)

The average cost of a childminder looking after a child under two is now £3.93 per hour across Britain²

Based on a 35 hour working week childcare costs are

£137.55 per week

Under WTC they receive help with 70% of these costs

£96.28 per week

So this family has to make up

a shortfall of £41.27 per week

Mothers of disabled children can pay between £11–£20 per hour

Based on a 35 hour working week childcare costs are

£455 (based on £13)

Maximum amount of help available under WTC rules for one child is £122.50 (70% of £175 cap on childcare costs).

So this family has to make up

a weekly shortfall of £332.50

Therefore families with a disabled child

pay 8 times more

towards childcare costs.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT (UC)

The average cost of a childminder looking after a child under two is now £3.93 per hour across Britain³

Based on a 35 hour working week childcare costs are

£137.55 per week

Under UC they would receive help with 85% of these costs

£116.92 per week

So this family has to make up

a shortfall of £20.63 per week

Mothers of disabled children can pay between £11–£20 per hour

Based on a 35 hour working week childcare costs are

£455 (based on £13)

Maximum amount of help available under UC rules for one child is £148.75 (85% of £175 cap on childcare costs)

So this family have to make up

a weekly shortfall of £306.25

Therefore families with a disabled child

pay 15 times more

towards childcare costs.

¹ Calculation based on the maximum amount of childcare costs under Working Tax Credit (70%) and Universal Credit (85%) that can be taken into account are capped at £175 per week for one child and £300 per week for two or more children. If costs are below the cap you get 70/85% of your actual costs met not 70/85% of the maximum amount payable.

² & ³ www.familyandchildcaretrust.org

6.2 INADEQUATE FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Childcare is expensive for all parents and financial support is available to help meet these costs through Working Tax Credits for lower income households. This provides 70% of costs up to a maximum of £175 per week for one child and £300 per week for two or more children (but is subject to a taper as earnings increase).

Despite this support, childcare is still beyond the means of many families with disabled children because the hourly cost of childcare means they quickly reaches the weekly cap on support. Based on a 35 hour working week and childcare costs of £13 per hour, a family would have to make up a shortfall of £332.50 per week.²⁷ This shortfall is impossible to make up for most low income families and provides a huge disincentive to work. Alternatively, many families are forced to work only a small number of hours which restricts their earning potential and career progression.

Current Government policies are increasing support for childcare costs by raising the childcare element of Universal Credit to 85% from April 2016 as well as introducing tax-free childcare for working parents, a 20% subsidy of childcare costs up to a limit of £10,000 per year. However, while the tax-free childcare scheme recognises that disabled children need childcare help for longer, these initiatives do not take into account the extra costs many families with disabled children face, which mean that they quickly reach the upper capped limit of support.

The upper limit of capped childcare costs under Working Tax Credit means that families with disabled children face childcare costs 8

times greater than other families (see childcare affordability trap calculation box). The increased support under Universal Credit does not include a rise in the upper limit of support and results in families with disabled children facing childcare costs 15 times greater than other families. Similarly, under tax-free childcare many families quickly meet the upper limit of support, so stand to benefit relatively little from this policy.

Families with disabled children are further disadvantaged because policies to help families meet childcare costs may not be available for the full range of childcare options they access. Whilst some providers, such as holiday residential schemes that cater for disabled children, can typically register with Ofsted through the voluntary childcare register, whether they do so is a matter of discretion. The current Working Tax Credits regulations do allow the childcare element of tax credits to be used to pay for domiciliary carers (and the government proposes that the tax-free childcare scheme will mimic these regulations) but unregistered assistants would otherwise also need to register with Ofsted.

Parents with disabled children who require a combination of personal care and childcare currently face a confused situation, and little consistency as to whether a provider that can provide suitable care for their child will be eligible for support with childcare costs.

“ I tried to apply for Tax Credits (working and child tax credits) but was advised that I can only claim my costs for childcare when I’m working if my children attend an Ofsted registered facility. I explained that my daughter wasn’t able to access this type of facility

²⁷ Contact a Family (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

and has to be cared for at home but the advisor was quite adamant that there was no other option to claim these costs”

Parent carer²⁸

6.3 CHALLENGES FOR PROVIDERS

Providing childcare to disabled children frequently incurs additional costs. These costs can include:

- higher staff to children ratios
- 1:1 care or higher for children with complex needs
- physical adjustments to the childcare setting,
- additional training for staff including time to attend training, and
- the costs of resources such as specialist equipment.

This is particularly significant for childminders who do not provide childcare in group settings and cannot spread costs as easily.

Although parent carers regularly report these costs being passed on to them, many providers and local authorities to this Inquiry insist that the additional costs are absorbed by the settings themselves. A number of local authorities stated that they advise childcare providers that charging more for places for disabled children would be discriminatory and that it is their duty to make anticipatory provision in their budgets to meet reasonable adjustments. Other local authorities subsidise places for disabled children. However, this picture is not typical or consistent around the country.

Both the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) and the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY) stated that their members report absorbing additional costs themselves. In the case of free early education offer for disabled two, three and four year olds they cannot charge fees at all. According to NDNA, 78% of their members told them that local authority funding for these 15 free hours falls short by an average £900 per child per year.²⁹ This level of funding is even more inadequate for disabled children and explains why at least one local authority admitted that providers in its area may be wary of providing a disabled child with a place they are entitled to.

“If we were to charge the actual cost of providing care for a child with complex needs (for example, where one to one support is required, cover for that person’s annual leave/training etc) I am confident that the current parents in this situation that use our services would no longer be able to afford to access them.”

Voluntary sector nursery, East Midlands³⁰

These high costs challenge the viability of private childcare businesses and explain why many parent carers complain of a critical lack of availability of provision for disabled children.

²⁸ Sebastian’s Action Trust (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

²⁹ National Day Nursery Association (NDNA) (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

³⁰ NDNA (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

6.4 AVAILABILITY OF INCLUSION FUNDING

Providers often rely on additional funding from local authorities to meet the extra childcare costs for disabled children. Typically for intensive support such as one to one care, this is expected to come out of the High Needs Funding block. However, the availability of additional funding is inconsistent and is not always adequate to enable a disabled child's participation in a setting. In some areas inclusion funding is not available at all and in others it is only available for a limited number of hours. Local authorities can also impose an in work requirement which means that parent carers may not be able to access inclusion support for their children.

15% of respondents to Contact a Family's research said that they had been refused one to one funding to allow them to access childcare.³¹ In these cases, settings are faced with a choice to cover the costs themselves, exclude the child from attending or require parents to pay the costs of this support themselves. Funding this level of support is usually impossible for families with disabled children, who are more likely to live in poverty and are already faced with the additional costs of their child's disability. For those who can pay for this level of support, it endangers their economic security.

“ We found him an excellent pre school, but the local authority will only fund 6 hours of one to one care and only during the term time. They won't pro rate it across the year... We're lucky. We have family support, so I've been able to call on my mum to look after Lawrence while I work. If we hadn't have been

able to do that our financial situation would have been incredibly difficult. We wouldn't be homeowners any more. We'd be in social housing.”

Katherine, parent carer³²

Other issues with inclusion funding prevent disabled children accessing childcare. One local authority stated that inclusion funding for support workers was linked to set times during day nursery hours and did not meet many parents need for flexible childcare. In addition, funding for support workers during the school day could not be extended to allow children to attend wraparound care. A failure to assess children early was also cited as a barrier to accessing inclusion funding and in some cases drawn out assessment processes meant funding was not in place for the entire early years period. Some parents also report having to reapply for funding on a rolling basis but with little or no transparency about the process which takes place.

“ Every eighth week I was faced with the possibility that his funding would be pulled, that I would have to leave work, and I have a three month notice period at work, and if I lose work I will lose our home. It's that simple...there have been hiatuses in his care where his one to one has stopped...The nursery did what they could, and when these hiatuses have come up again they've tried to cover things up hoping that the money will come back to them in the form of more inclusion grant and discretionary funding.”

Jennie, parent carer

³¹ Contact a Family (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

³² Parliamentary Inquiry into childcare for disabled children (2014), oral evidence session

There was general agreement that inclusion funding from local authorities is vital for providers to be financially capable of providing quality care to disabled children. However, evidence shows this funding is harder to access by home-based childcare professionals than non-domestic settings. PACEY for example reported that 30% of nursery-based workers knew their setting had accessed additional funding, mainly from local authorities, compared to 6% of childminders.³³ Concerns were also expressed by Inquiry respondents that inclusion funding is not ring fenced and is increasingly vulnerable to local authority cuts.

Research by the City of York Council found that Early Years Inclusion Funding benefitted the child, setting and local authority. These benefits included allowing children to stay in their own locality instead of travelling to an enhanced resource base, supporting settings to be fully inclusive and reducing pressure on places at York's only enhanced resource base. Most significantly, the research shows that more children can be supported than through a Statement of SEN and more cost effectively.³⁴

6.5 SUPPORT FOR DISABLED OLDER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A key gap the Inquiry identified is in access to childcare and activities for older children and young people. Many of these activities and the gaps parents face do not fit easily into the current framework of support with childcare costs or access, which is based on supporting parents to work. Additional support with childcare costs for disabled children is not only extremely patchy, but eligibility is often based on whether or not parents are in work. A number of parents complained that they were not able to secure access to learning and social opportunities for their children because they could not afford to cover additional costs, either because no inclusion support is in place, or because they are not eligible for the support available.

“*The lack of suitable childcare for a disabled child makes life very difficult. Also the additional costs I have to pay, due to my child being disabled. One after school session fee costs £7.50 but I have to pay £37.50 for my son due to him being disabled. He attends three times a week. This is a mainstream after school club, as he attends a mainstream school. It's disgraceful!!*”

Katherine, parent carer

³³ Professional Association for Childminders and Early Years (PACEY) (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

³⁴ City of York (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

Recommendations

2 The government should undertake a cross-departmental review of funding to identify where support must be improved to meet the extra costs of childcare for disabled children and remove barriers to access.

3 The Department for Work and Pensions should pilot the provision of more flexible financial support for parents through increasing the upper limit of capped childcare costs under Universal Credit and the tax-free childcare scheme.

4 The Government should pilot how personal budgets could be enhanced to give parents and disabled young people better choice and control over the childcare market and the ability to cover extra costs.



7. Availability and inclusion

“ My local authority put me in touch with an inclusions officer who sent me the details of some private nurseries and child minders. As soon as I said my daughter was incontinent and a wheelchair user and needed hoisting the private nurseries either said they were full or they said they did not currently have the equipment to be able to support her. I looked online at the child minders and put in that my child has special needs, the list shrunk. I put in the she was a wheelchair user and the list said ‘there is nobody available in your area’.”

Cath, parent carer

41% of respondents to this Inquiry’s survey of parent carer views said they did not access the full 15 hours of free entitlement for early education.³⁵

40% of parent carers believe there are childcare providers in their local area that could cater for their child’s illness or disability.³⁶

28% of local authorities reported that they had sufficient childcare for disabled children.³⁷

Parent carers of disabled children consistently report that there is not sufficient childcare available for them to access. This is reflected in evidence received by the Inquiry from local areas. For example, in Calderdale 50% of parents said they could not access childcare to meet their needs and 25% said they could not access childcare at all despite the existence of a local DCATCH scheme.³⁸ Provision in rural areas is generally recognised to be even more lacking and the time and cost of travelling to non-local settings acts as an additional barrier. There is also a broad consensus identifying specific gaps in provision that are particularly acute.

7.1 LACK OF PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WITH HIGHER NEEDS

Respondents to the Inquiry identified specific groups of children that were less well served by existing provision. These included:

- children with complex needs and health conditions,
- children with challenging behaviour; and
- children requiring specialist support to access childcare settings.

Availability of provision is worse for these groups of children because mainstream settings struggle to include them. This is because resources can be costly or are in short supply, or because they require higher ratios of care that settings cannot provide. In contrast, some respondents noted that children with the most profound needs are

³⁵ Parliamentary inquiry into childcare for disabled children (2014), parent carer survey

³⁶ Department for Education (2014), *Childcare and early years survey of parents 2012–14*, p. 140

³⁷ Family and Childcare Trust (2014), *Annual Cost Survey 2014*

³⁸ Calderdale Parents and Carers (2014), Written evidence submitted to Inquiry

prioritised and can access high quality specialist care.

The result is that many disabled children cannot even access childcare they are specifically entitled to, as in the case of the free early years education offer for disabled two, three and four year olds. 41% of respondents to this Inquiry's survey of parent carer views said they did not access the full 15 hours of free entitlement for early education.³⁹ Reasons given were that settings simply refused to offer places to their children or they could only attend for a limited number of hours that the local authority provided funding for intensive support such as one to one care.

“ Even now, at age 3, we have only managed to secure 6 hours a week at a nursery, during term-time only. He needs 1-2-1 support while at nursery and this is all the local authority says they can provide. This seems to me to breach the Equality Act, in that children without additional needs are entitled to 15 hours a week childcare that can be pro rated across the calendar year.”

Katherine, parent carer

Many other parent carers expressed frustration that childcare support did not support greater choice in the range of interventions that could be paid for, particularly in regards to the early education offer. Rather than being available for interventions that parents felt could have the greatest benefit, they were limited to generic childcare settings or professionals.

“ I feel like the 15 hours scheme at the moment is really invented for normally functioning kids but could quite easily be a rather good scheme to help parents like me who wanted Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) in the early years or parents who want OT, because really we can't access some of these mainstream childcare facilities, not at the severe end anyway.”

Jane, parent carer⁴⁰

7.2 LACK OF PROVISION FOR OLDER CHILDREN

There was consensus among Inquiry respondents that older disabled children and young people are worse served by existing provision. As non-disabled children access childcare provision less once they are in secondary school and do not use childcare at all beyond the age of 14, the mainstream childcare market is relatively limited and fewer options exist for disabled young people.

³⁹ Parliamentary Inquiry into childcare for disabled children (2014), parent carer survey

⁴⁰ Parliamentary Inquiry into childcare for disabled children (2014), oral evidence session

Providing childcare to this group also presents additional challenges. Numbers of older children are often low which challenges the sustainability of settings. The physical size of older children can increase requirements for manual handling training and can make some providers reluctant to take on children with challenging behaviour or developmental impairments. It is also a greater challenge to provide quality childcare that offers opportunities for disabled children to do similar activities to their peers, so parents are sometimes reluctant to use provision that does not help their children thrive.

“ Non disabled children over 14 don't need childcare therefore there is nothing available in the mainstream and parents are completely dependent on specialist provision from the local authority. Due to budget cuts this is very limited and only the most disabled children are able to access a limited amount which does not enable the parents to work.”

Teresa, parent carer

7.3 LIMITED ACCESS TO HOLIDAY CARE/WRAPAROUND CARE

Respondents also identified childcare provision during the school holidays and before and after the school day as particular problems to families with disabled children. Mainstream schools are increasingly open for extended school days to provide breakfast clubs and after school care but these settings are often not inclusive, even to pupils attending the school during the day. One to one care and other school based support is typically not extended beyond school hours.

Far fewer special schools offer wraparound care, most likely because the numbers of families accessing the support would be low and it is harder to find additional staff to cover extended hours. This means children who attend these schools must travel to another childcare setting or access home-based care. Many respondents identified a failure to take advantage of special school facilities and resources as an issue limiting childcare provision.

Parents told the Inquiry that outside of term time holiday schemes were often offered sporadically during the holidays and so did not offer continuity of care through the school holidays. Holiday provision was often limited to times of the day that did not cover parents' work schedules. For children in secondary school, provision was even more limited as many settings only offer places to children up to the age of 11. Some disabled older children were expected to attend the same provision as much younger children and take part in the same activities they did when younger. For all holiday provision, availability was limited and often has to be secured a long time in advance.

“ This is a nightmare. I have tried for year to find an out of school provider that is suitable for my daughter and her needs and still have not been successful. She currently uses our local out of school club one day per week but this is purely out of necessity and is far from suitable for her.”

Parent carer⁴¹

⁴¹ Calderdale Parents and Carers (2014), Written evidence submitted to parliamentary inquiry into childcare for disabled

7.4 LACK OF INCLUSION IN MAINSTREAM PROVISION

Parent carers report that a major reason for the lack of availability of childcare is limited inclusion of disabled children and young people in mainstream provision. Instead, disabled children are often pushed towards the more limited provision on offer from specialist providers. Service providers are forbidden to discriminate against disabled people by the Equality Act 2010. This requires providers to make reasonable adjustments including adapting practices and procedures that make it difficult for a disabled person to use a service, the provision of auxiliary aids and making adjustments to physical features. However, compliance with the Childcare Act 2006 is highly variable with negative parental experiences being contrasted with settings that go beyond the reasonable adjustments they are required to make to promote inclusion.

“ We have contacted every single private childcare provider (childminders, holiday clubs, day care nurseries etc) yet no one is willing to take on a disabled child – unless the child’s disabilities are very mild and their needs are very low”

Parent carer, Calderdale

Respondents to the Inquiry report widespread barriers to offering inclusive childcare including a lack of:

- confidence and understanding about reasonable adjustments,
- skills in the workforce,
- generic disability awareness training,
- training to meet specific needs, and
- a lack of funding for resources and physical adaptations.

However, this is an area where relatively little investment can make a big difference to families with disabled children as most reasonable adjustments cost little or nothing.⁴²

7.5 ATTITUDES TO INCLUSION

One of the main barriers to extending inclusion in childcare provision is attitudes among both providers and parents. Attitudes prevalent among providers include the perceived impact of including disabled children on other children in their setting and the perception that all disabled children need one to one or specialist support. Local authorities commented that providers often do not understand their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and often want training as a prerequisite to accepting a disabled child because of unrealistic expectations of their care needs.

“ I have tried to access childcare. I contacted many child-minders and had a very negative experience. Some of the things they said were very hurtful and eventually I gave up as it was so demoralising”

Parent carer⁴³

It is not surprising that many parents are frustrated with the lack of compliance of some providers with their legal duties. Many have had negative experiences which undermine their confidence in accessing mainstream provision in the future. Some parents believe that providers only pay lip service to inclusion and accept only children with minor impairments as a tick

42 Council for Disabled Children (2008), *Extending inclusion*

43 Hampshire Parent Carer Network (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

box exercise. However, more than a quarter of respondents to PACEY's survey on caring for disabled children who were not currently caring for a child with additional needs stated they were willing and able to care for those children but had not been approached to do so for some time or at all.⁴⁴

A common view among respondents to the Inquiry was that local authorities should play a positive role in embedding inclusive practice, brokering access to childcare and establishing parental confidence in provision that was available. This Inquiry has received evidence from local areas where initiatives are in place to do just that but this experience remains far from universal.

7.6 SUPPORT FOR INCLUSION

Assisting settings to improve the inclusion of disabled children requires a range of support to meet children's needs. Provider associations and local authorities emphasise the clear need for training around inclusion in order to tackle attitudinal barriers and develop an inclusive ethos. In addition, respondents to the Inquiry highlighted the need for:

- more appropriate premises and capital funding to adapt sites⁴⁵
- the availability of inclusion funding for higher ratios of care when this was necessary,
- the availability of training to help meet specific needs and

- improved multi-agency coordination and planning in order to prepare settings to accommodate disabled children's needs.

In practice, providers highlighted a lack of prompt access to grants for physical adjustments as well as long delays in accessing training due to cuts to training budgets. Where inclusion funding was available it was sometimes subject to inconsistent and confusing applications processes. The Pre-School Learning Alliance highlighted cuts to funding for the early years sector and the failure of some local authorities to make SEN funding available to ensure disabled children can access their entitlement to childcare via the free early education offer. This context makes it difficult for providers to always offer places at the point of request, particularly against a background of oversubscribed early years places due to the closure of many settings.

Both local authorities and provider associations stated that clarity was needed around what constituted reasonable adjustments and what was additionality that local authorities should meet. Inevitably, parents are caught in the middle of a system that has not done enough to set out expectations for inclusion and what support is available in order to meet them.

7.7 ACCESSING CHILDCARE FOR SIBLINGS

Given the challenges around inclusion in the childcare sector, it is unsurprising that research shows that parents often struggle to find settings that will accept disabled and non-disabled siblings.⁴⁶ A recent survey by Hampshire Parent Carer Network found 40% of families had never found a provider for disabled and non-disabled

⁴⁴ PACEY (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

⁴⁵ 4Children (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

⁴⁶ EDCM and Family Fund (2011), *Breaking Down Barriers*

siblings.⁴⁷ Splitting childcare between different settings creates huge challenges for parents in scheduling pick-up and drop-offs in a way that meets families' needs and allows them to work. It also prevents siblings from enjoying play or social opportunities together.

“I feel providing provision for disabled children should be made as common and accessible as non SEN children. Why can't siblings access the same provision? If they are transported to and from school, why can't they be transported to their sibling's school and access provision there?”

Sharon, parent carer

7.8 LACK OF ACCESS TO FLEXIBLE CHILDCARE AND FLEXIBLE WORKING

A frequent complaint of parent carers is that they lack access to flexible childcare that meets their needs. 26% of respondents to a Mencap and Scope survey said that childcare did not fit in with the times or days their family required it.⁴⁸ This may reflect the work patterns of parents, particularly the need for childcare outside of normal group settings during the day, but also the challenge some parents report in establishing a regular childcare timetable due to changing health needs, appointments and behaviour.

“When she starts going to school this September, I will have to reduce my hours in order to take care of her before and after school because it is

difficult to find wraparound care for a child who is school aged, but unable to walk, talk or look after themselves. Until my daughter turns five, I will be able to send her to her current nursery during the school holidays. I don't know what I'm going to do after that. I may have to stop working.”

Jeev, parent carer

Flexible childcare is only one half of the equation for parents sustaining or returning to work. Some respondents to the Inquiry explained that they were unable to work because they could not find flexible employment to fit around caring commitments.

“Someone needs to take my son and be there for when he's in hospital. Last year he spent 5 weeks in intensive care and 2 weeks on wards. I was made 'redundant' shortly afterwards. No one wants someone who can't give 110% to their firm, even though they say it's okay.”

Joy, parent carer

Although the extension of the right to flexible working to all employees may help establish flexible working as the norm, employees still require 26 weeks continuous employment before an application can be made. This restricts the ability of parents to return to work and means that parents with disabled children are not supported at the crucial point when they apply for a job and must negotiate suitable working arrangements. The 26 week qualifying period also means that there is little pressure on employers to advertise jobs as available on a flexible basis.

⁴⁷ Hampshire Parent Carer Network (2014), Written evidence submitted to parliamentary inquiry into childcare for disabled

⁴⁸ Mencap (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

7.9 INFORMAL CHILDCARE

Given the lack of availability of affordable childcare for many disabled children, informal childcare plays an important role in enabling parents to enter or sustain employment. One survey by Mencap and Scope found 33% of families relying on families and friends to provide childcare.⁴⁹ Despite this there is little recognition of the role that informal childcare plays for families with disabled children, or consideration of what support would be appropriate for these arrangements. Nor do local authorities do enough to identify an excessive dependence on informal childcare, which is a key indicator of childcare sufficiency.

“ We are finding it extremely difficult to manage during school holidays as we are reliant on elderly grandparents to help with childcare who themselves find it increasingly difficult to physically care for our son. We are now at the point where I am faced with having to give up work due to lack of suitable childcare.”

Lisa, parent carer

7.10 TRANSPORT

A key barrier preventing disabled children accessing childcare is transport provision. A widespread complaint from parents is that transport provided by local authorities to take disabled children to school is not allowed to drop children off at any address other than their own home. This prevents children being driven to after school settings, whether they wraparound care or a childminders own home. This means

childcare is either limited to the children’s own home or parents are not able to work outside the school day.

“ My son gets council-provided transport to his autism resource base. While the school offers after school activities, the local authority isn’t willing to be flexible in its transport arrangements, so my son cannot attend any of these groups. It’s a particular shame – apart from preventing me from working, it’s also stopping him from spending out-of-school time with his friends.”

Sarah, parent carer

⁴⁹ Mencap (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

Recommendations

5 The Department for Education should undertake a review of childcare Local Offers when published in September 2014. This review should identify and monitor how local authorities, schools and their health partners aim to tackle gaps in the childcare market, are funding the extra costs of adjustments and intensive support, and improve choices for parents with disabled children and young people.

6 The Childcare Act 2006 sufficiency duty should be properly enforced and revised to ensure high quality commissioned childcare provision for disabled children, that narrows the gap and improves outcomes particularly for older disabled children and those whose parents are not in employment.

7 The Department for Education should disseminate best practice to all local authorities on how they can drive a cultural change to promote inclusive childcare for disabled children and enable childcare providers to meet their obligations under the Equalities Act 2010.

8 All parents of disabled children should be exempt from the 26 week qualifying period before they are entitled to request flexible working.

9 A new statutory right to a period of adjustment leave should be established to enable parents to cope with the onset of disability of a child, and put care arrangements in place, without having to give up work. (This legal right could also cover other similar situations, such as the onset of disability of a partner)



8. Quality

“Finding suitable childcare for my daughter is one issue, but also it is very hard to trust people to look after my daughter when she cannot communicate properly about how she has been and about what happens when I am not there. I feel that childcare is underpaid work which should be valued properly and the status and financial rewards should be increased, especially for children with complex needs. This should be a professional qualification like teaching.”

Angela, parent carer

33% of parent carers don't use childcare because staff don't have right experience.

8% had been told that their child was a health and safety risk.⁵⁰

Successive governments have aimed to increase both the provision and quality of childcare available to parents. Evidence shows that only quality childcare improves outcomes for disadvantaged children. For parent carers poor quality care is a significant barrier to accessing provision. Parent carers who responded to the Inquiry emphasised the importance of having well trained staff who understand their child's developmental needs as well as the ability to ensure their safety. Other priorities relate to how well settings can provide parity of provision with

non-disabled children through providing care that was accessible, inclusive and personalised.

8.1 QUALIFIED WORKFORCE

Increasing the professional standards of the workforce is central to plans to improve the quality of mainstream early years provision. The Nutbrown review made a series of recommendations to improve the quality of early years education and childcare and increase the professional identity and status of its workforce. These included:

- strengthening the content of level 3 qualifications (Early Years Educator) including more emphasis on special educational needs and disability (SEND) and inclusivity,
- making level 3 qualifications the minimum required to work in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) settings, and introducing a new Early Years Teacher status (level 6) equivalent to qualified teacher status.

More affordable childcare, the Government's response to the Nutbrown review, significantly waters down the emphasis on SEND by removing it from the standards set out for Early Years Educator status.

Many respondents to the Inquiry identified this lack of focus on SEND as a missed opportunity to embed inclusive practice throughout EYFS settings and raise the quality of provision for disabled children. The EYFS framework 2014 was also cited as compounding this by removing the requirement for wraparound care and holiday

⁵⁰ Contact a Family (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

provision to have a level 3 manager, equal opportunity policy and behaviour management coordinator. More broadly, the recent draft SEND Code of Practice has been criticised by respondents for not providing sufficient guidance to settings on delivering quality in early years. Taken together these developments show a lack of focus on ensuring early years practitioners have the professional qualifications and guidance to deliver the best outcomes for disabled children.

The new SEND Code of Practice that comes into force from September 2014 sets out potentially beneficial expectations of maintained childcare providers to show how they are able to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities. However, requirements for voluntary and private sector providers are more limited than those for their maintained counterparts. For example, maintained nurseries will be required to report on their SEND policy and the admission of disabled children, but other providers will not. Further requirements of the SEND Code of Practice are limited to providers directly funded by a local authority:

“ 5.8 Local authorities must ensure that all providers they fund in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors are aware of the requirement on them to have regard to the SEN Code of Practice and to meet the needs of children with SEN and disabilities. When securing funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-olds local authorities should promote equality and inclusion for children with disabilities or SEN. This includes removing barriers that prevent

children accessing early education and working with parents to give each child support to fulfil their potential.”

SEND Code of Practice

The SEND Code of Practice sets inconsistent and low expectations for childcare providers. Further, as only providers directly funded by a local authority are required to have regard for the Code of Practice, a large proportion of providers will not be affected: around half of registered nurseries deliver the free early education offer and many out of school and holiday providers receive no local authority funding.

8.2 INSPECTION

There was wide agreement amongst Inquiry respondents that the registration and inspection regime of early years and childcare settings did little to promote quality provision for disabled children. Parents frequently expressed frustration that settings with ‘outstanding’ awards from Ofsted would not be accessible to their children and fail to cater for their needs. Many respondents felt that an ability to demonstrate that a setting was inclusive to a wide range of disabled children should be a prerequisite for achieving high standards of quality. In fact, many parents felt that settings were incentivised to refuse children with high needs to maintain their Ofsted ratings.

“ One outstanding provider, according to Ofsted, that was a Sure Start centre, they didn’t just refuse May, they refused to let us even walk around the building. They told us that in their own literature

they advertise that they prioritise special needs as far as their waiting list... They had a newbuild building. They said that the building could not possibly be accessible for her”

Stacie, parent carer⁵¹

The current regulatory standards for providers on the Early Years Register, set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage framework, mean that during an inspection early years providers are judged by how well they cater to the children they care for at the time they are inspected, and not on their ability to cater to a diverse range of children. Private and voluntary sector providers—which constitute over 90% of full daycare providers, 67% of after school clubs and 75% of holiday schemes⁵² - are not expected to have in place clear policies to support inclusion covering admissions, fees and staffing.

The Inquiry also heard concerns about the ability of Ofsted inspectors to assess the extent to which providers are meeting the needs of children with special educational needs or disabilities. Provider organisations stated that there is too much variability in the special educational needs knowledge and understanding of Ofsted inspectors, and consequently weak scrutiny of the extent to which registered childcare providers are meeting their existing responsibilities to provide for the needs of disabled children. In the long term, improving the SEND capability of the early years workforce would itself lead to a greater expertise among inspectors, who are drawn from the sector. However, Ofsted itself

must also ensure routine SEND training for its inspectors, and consistent and robust inspections against relevant SEND standards.

8.3 WELL TRAINED STAFF

There is a consensus across parent carers, local authorities and provider associations that the childcare workforce lacks widespread understanding of disability and inclusion in general, as well as knowledge of skills required to include disabled children. Local authorities have the duty to secure information, advice and training under the Childcare Act 2006 and they should consider this alongside their duties to provide sufficiency. However, respondents agree that access to training provision and continuous professional development is inadequate. Some Inquiry respondents commented that resources and expertise that is available to schools is not readily available in the childcare sector due to limitations on staff and resources. In addition, funding restraints mean that the childcare workforce is often excluded from staff development enjoyed by statutory partners in Health, Education and Social Care.

“ I found it impossible to find a nursery where Makaton was properly supported. There were staff wishing to take Makaton courses but they could not afford to train. I tried to find afterschool clubs for my son but again they could not support Makaton. They showed little interest in his special needs and in trial sessions made no attempt to integrate him.”

Donna, parent carer

⁵¹ Parliamentary Inquiry into childcare for disabled children (2014), oral evidence session

⁵² Family and Childcare Trust (2014), *Where next for childcare? Learning from the last ten years of childcare policy*

“Although my son’s nursery tried very hard to provide for his needs, they did not have the resources, training or awareness for all their staff to enable them to do this. This resulted in my son having lots of accidents whilst at nursery.”

Julie, parent carer

Many local authorities that were more positive about the capacity of local providers to cater for disabled children described a legacy from previous DCATCH programmes that raised disability awareness and embedded an inclusive ethos in local provision. Whilst DCATCH monies were spent on different initiatives around the country, local authorities who were positive about its continued legacy had seen DCATCH funding invested in training, resources and equipment that had a sustainable impact, rather than funding additional support for individual children. Even in these cases, respondents admitted specific training requirements for particular groups of children.

The safety of childcare provision is of particular concern for many parent carer of disabled children. In some cases specific skills may be required such as administering medicine or manual handling. Funding cuts to local services has further impacted on the ability of settings to provide appropriate medical care as services like community nurses and other medically trained staff have historically taught settings how to safely administer specific medical interventions such as nasal and gastric feeding. Without this support settings may be forced to refuse childcare to children due to concerns over health and safety.

8.4 LACK OF COORDINATION BETWEEN PROFESSIONALS

Effective joint working between statutory partners and childcare providers is necessary to deliver quality provision, particularly in early years. Early assessments of children’s needs are important to ensure that childcare professionals can put in place plans to meet them. Settings may require prior information about individual children to help them prepare to include them. The involvement of inclusion services is also needed to ensure specialist support workers or therapists are provided as required.

These are all areas where local agencies often fall short. Provider associations raise concerns that childcare professionals sit outside multi-agency arrangements and so there is a lack of coordination that can support access and quality experiences. Some childcare professionals feel their contribution to a child and family’s wellbeing is undervalued.

8.5 QUALITY PROVISION FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Disabled children and young people of secondary school age are particularly poorly served by childcare provision. Services targeted at disabled children are frequently delivered to children grouped together because they have a disability rather than by age or ability. Mainstream provision in after school activities is frequently inaccessible or not inclusive. Consequently, many disabled young people experience services that are not age appropriate or do not help them emulate the opportunities their non-disabled peers enjoy. Parents want provision for their children at this age to help them thrive by developing their independence and providing flexibility and variety. Yet much available provision does not live up to this expectation.

“The activities that have been funded by my local authority which I have attended seem to have only two criteria, a child must have a physical or a learning disability and their age must be between five and age nineteen. I believe this is demeaning to the older children who are given no choice but to be grouped in with much younger children. Young people with disabilities are not happy about being patronised in this way...It’s like putting people together in a group because they have brown hair.”

Sam, disabled young person⁵³

Disabled young people told the Inquiry they want out of childcare and supervised activities the opportunity to do activities other teenagers may take for granted. They wanted to enjoy spending time with their friends, learn new skills, have fun and do things independently. Things that put them off attending activities were when they were boring, repetitive, not age-appropriate, not welcoming, not safe and not inclusive or accessible. To meet these aspirations, disabled young people often want options to do activities in structured settings, with personal assistants in their own home or in small buddy groups. Developing programmes of activities that can meet these requirements requires the active participation of disabled young people.

“I feel most included when there is an assumption that I can be involved and when I am consulted about what I want to do, not just given a take it or leave it option”

Sam, disabled young person⁵⁴

⁵³ Parliamentary Inquiry into childcare for disabled children (2014), oral evidence session

⁵⁴ Parliamentary Inquiry into childcare for disabled children (2014), oral evidence session

Recommendations

10 The new Early Years Educator qualification must include special educational needs and disability training and, where practical, placement experience in a setting caring for children with additional needs.

11 Local authorities should be required to provide clear information on access to training and additional support for providers.

12 The Early Years Foundation Stage framework should be revised to include an 'Inclusion' requirement for providers to produce information on their admission policy and make reasonable adjustments to admit children with additional needs. This requirement should be supported by clear arrangements for local authorities to provide the necessary support to providers.

13 The statutory SEND Code of Practice requirements for maintained nursery providers to report on the admission of disabled children should apply in a reworked form to private, voluntary and independent sector settings.

14 Ofsted must ensure that all its inspectors have the necessary expertise to judge whether childcare providers are identifying and meeting the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities. Ofsted should monitor and report in its early years annual report on progress towards meeting this aim and the extent to which registered early years provision meets the EYFS SEND requirements.

15 Providers must be able to demonstrate what reasonable adjustments for disabled children in order to receive an "Outstanding" from Ofsted.



9. Access and information

“At the moment, the people who access it are the people who have the time and energy and confidence to do so.”

Stephen, parent carer

92% say finding childcare for disabled children is more difficult compared to non-disabled children.⁵⁵

Parent carers complain that there is a lack of practical support to access and understand the right information about childcare provision that is available. Although there is often a great deal of information available, it can be fragmented, inconsistent and inaccurate. Time-poor parent carers place a high value on information personalised to their needs and support from professionals who can help them navigate the system, but this support is infrequently available. Family Information Services (FIS) should meet this need, but more than half have cut their outreach services and only 1 in 10 of all parents access these services.⁵⁶ In addition, widespread cuts to translation services are likely to impact the access of BME groups to childcare information provision.

9.1 DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

To support parent carers to access the information they need, key professionals should understand parents' entitlement to childcare provision and be equipped to signpost them to information. However, key professionals do not always effectively disseminate information because different agencies do not share common priorities. For example, one respondent suggested health visitors should play a greater role in ensuring eligible two year olds access the free early education offer. Closer joint working between health agencies, local authorities and childcare providers is widely seen as necessary to improve parents' access to childcare provision.

Some parent carers report that there is an assumption among some professionals that the mother of disabled children should not work and so they do not make information readily available. Other parents report that they cannot get adequate support from professionals who are prevented from recommending particular providers.

“I was made to feel that returning to work before May turned five was both frivolous and a waste of taxpayers' money. They specifically told me that it was a lifestyle choice, whereas I felt it was an economic imperative for my family so we could remain in our home. They fought us every step of the way.”

Stacie, parent carer⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Contact a Family (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

⁵⁶ PACEY (2014), Written evidence submitted to the Inquiry

⁵⁷ Parliamentary inquiry into childcare for disabled children (2014), oral evidence session

9.2 LOCAL OFFER

There is a good deal of optimism among parents that the Local Offer being introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014 will go a long way to resolving issues with accessing information and provision. Parents who shared their views with the Inquiry described a range of ways to improve the information available to them including:

- developing comprehensive online lists of suitable providers,
- involving parents in the development of information and
- improving joint working to create and disseminate information.

“Local authority needs to compile a recommended provider list for disabled young people. It would save parents the distress and embarrassment of being rejected by services – I’ve been told we don’t take over 14s or disabilities.”

Lisa, parent carer

The Local Offer presents the opportunity to meet these requirements. However, some concerns have been raised about the involvement of childcare providers in the development of Local Offers leading up to September 2014. Pre-school Learning Alliance members have reported that they have not been engaged with consistently by local authorities. It is essential that Local Offers include the full range of provision across the childcare sector, as well as information about how accessible settings are to disabled children and funding structures available to support children’s inclusion. Without this information, Local Offers will not improve access to childcare provision for families with disabled children.

Parent carers also explained that they needed support to understand their rights and entitlement to childcare. This includes information about what support they can receive through the benefit system, duties they can expect providers to fulfil and where to seek redress. The Local Offer must also link to stronger rights to assessments for carers introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014.



Recommendations

16 The government should write to local authorities to make clear that all eligible disabled children aged two, three and four are entitled to access their full 15 hours of free early education and clarify the arrangements for redress for parents.

17 The Local Offer and local authority SEND information and advice services should set out a clear joined-up childcare offer for parents, including information on providers and the additional support and funding available to cover assessments, intensive support and specialised care.

10. Conclusion

“I had a career, I had a job, I had a life, and I’ve been prevented from doing that, and that’s not to say that I don’t accept my lot in life. This has happened, she’s my daughter and I’d do anything for her, but I just have no choices.”

Hannah, parent carer⁵⁸

“Most local authorities will be providing an additional hourly rate for providers that are offering childcare to children with SEN...they certainly have the funding and power to do that.”

Olivia McLeod, Director of Early Years and Childcare, Department for Education

Despite the huge progress made in creating a national system of childcare provision in the past two decades, the evidence received by this Inquiry clearly demonstrates that national policy has failed to create a childcare system that meets the needs of disabled children and their families. There is confusion about what the childcare system should be delivering for families with disabled children. There are few effective mechanisms to help parent carers find suitable childcare and support providers to be inclusive. The Inquiry discovered large areas of the childcare system where making reasonable adjustments for disabled children appear to be frequently treated as an option rather than a requirement.

This Inquiry has heard from many different sources, but above all from parents and disabled

young people themselves that childcare provision is inadequate in many respects. Children with complex needs and disabled young people are particularly poorly served. There is worrying evidence that the lack of suitable and willing providers, and limited inclusion support, means many children are prevented from accessing the universal 15 hours free early education offer, denying them critical developmental opportunities available to non-disabled children.

Significant gaps also exist in flexible wraparound and holiday provision that can support parents to work and provide opportunities to older children to participate in activities alongside their peers. We found excellent examples of childcare schemes that made including disabled children part of their core purpose, but these schemes were exceptional when they should be the norm.

This lack of equal access to childcare is caused principally by:

- the absence of effective statutory duties supporting access;
- limited financial support for parents; and
- insufficient investment in compensating settings for the costs of providing childcare to disabled children and equipping the childcare workforce with skills and knowledge.

Parents’ experience of childcare for disabled children varies hugely between local areas and typically remains a low priority for local authorities and their partners. The childcare sufficiency duties in the Childcare Act 2006 have also failed to provide a robust way to tackle the gaps in provision for disabled children and young people across the country.

⁵⁸ Parliamentary inquiry into childcare for disabled children (2014), oral evidence session

There was also some evidence of ambivalent or troubling attitudes, such as

- the expectation that parents with severely disabled children will not work,
- that the childcare market will inevitably not deliver equitable access for different groups, or
- that disabled young people do not need to have the same range of choices about how they spend their time away from education as other young people.

These views are evidence of the void that exists where there should be clear expectations of all those working in childcare, and indicate an opportunity for government to raise the bar.

Learning from the 2008-11 Disabled Children's Access to Childcare Programme and the SEND reforms provided a valuable opportunity to transform childcare provision for families with disabled children. However, recent policy developments to improve the affordability and quality of childcare provision have to date failed to take into account the reality of childcare for disabled children. The system of financial support for families to meet childcare costs does not recognise the higher costs faced by families with disabled children. There remain significant shortfalls of knowledge, skills, and professional confidence in providing quality care and early education to disabled children which the recent reforms or early education qualifications will not address.

The result is that disabled children are denied the same opportunities for positive educational and social development enjoyed by their non-disabled peers, which can help them fulfil their potential. Parents are denied the same opportunities to choose to return to work. This means

families with disabled children are more likely to experience poverty, mental health problems and family breakdown.

Tackling these issues requires national leadership and recognition that access to childcare is an economic imperative for families of disabled children and is fundamental to delivering positive outcomes for disabled children. Although there is a noticeable political focus on childcare more generally, the issue of childcare for disabled children has remained neglected until now. We hope this Inquiry and our recommendations will form the building blocks of more rigorous national leadership and local action.

The first step is to recognise that disabled children cannot be an afterthought in the childcare system. Inclusion must be a basic principle that shapes policy making, beginning with a reinvigorated programme to improve childcare for disabled children and young people.

Ahead of the next general election, all political parties must commit to tackling the lack of affordable and quality childcare for disabled children once and for all.

“When she came into the nursery and we'd wheeled her in, children would surround her chair like she was some kind of popstar or something...All our children deserve that kind of affection and that kind of stimulation, and it is a terrible thing for a child to be born with one burden, a disability, and then be more encumbered by another, which is our exclusion.”

Stacie, parent carer⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Parliamentary inquiry into childcare for disabled children (2014), oral evidence session

11. Recommendations

OVERARCHING

- 1** The Government should develop a cross-departmental action plan and funded programme to ensure that all disabled children and young people can access affordable, accessible and appropriate childcare.

AFFORDABILITY

- 2** The government should undertake a cross-departmental review of funding to identify where support must be improved to meet the extra costs of childcare for disabled children and remove barriers to access.
- 3** The Government should pilot the provision of more flexible financial support for parents through increasing the upper limit of capped childcare costs under Universal Credit and the tax-free childcare scheme.
- 4** The Department for Work and Pensions should pilot how personal budgets could be enhanced to give parents and disabled young people better choice and control over the childcare market and the ability to cover extra costs.

AVAILABILITY AND INCLUSION

- 5** The Department for Education should undertake a review of childcare local offers when published in September 2014. This review should identify and monitor how local authorities, schools and their health partners aim to tackle gaps in the childcare market, are funding the extra costs of adjustments and intensive support, and improving choices for parents with disabled children and young people.
- 6** The Childcare Act 2006 sufficiency duty should be properly enforced and revised to ensure high quality commissioned childcare provision for disabled children, that narrows the gap and improves outcomes particularly for older disabled children and those whose parents are not in employment.
- 7** The Department for Education should disseminate best practice to all local authorities on how they can drive a cultural change to promote inclusive childcare for disabled children and enable childcare providers to meet their obligations under the Equalities Act 2010.
- 8** All parent carers should be exempt from the 26 week qualifying period before they are entitled to request flexible working.

9 A new statutory right to a period of adjustment leave should be established to enable parents to cope with the onset of disability of a child, and put care arrangements in place, without having to give up work. (This legal right could also cover other similar situations, such as the onset of disability of a partner).

QUALITY

10 The new Early Years Educator qualification must include special educational needs and disability training and, where practical, placement experience in a setting caring for children with additional needs.

11 Local authorities should be required to provide clear information on access to training and additional support for providers.

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15 Providers must be able to demonstrate what reasonable adjustments for disabled children in order to receive an "Outstanding" from Ofsted.

ACCESS AND INFORMATION

16 The government should write to local authorities to make clear that all eligible disabled children aged two, three and four are entitled to access their full 15 hours of free early education and clarify the arrangements for redress for parents.

17 The Local Offer and local authority SEND information and advice services should set out a clear joined-up childcare offer for parents, including information on providers and the additional support and funding available to cover assessments, intensive support and specialised care.

12. Appendix 1: Evidence

LIST OF WRITTEN EVIDENCE RECEIVED

4Children	Interface	Making a Difference in Kirklees)
Action for Children	Isle of Wight participation team	POWAR (Participation, Opportunity, Winning, Achieve, and Respect)
Action for Kids	Kids Wakefield	Pre-school Learning Alliance
Ambitious About Autism	Kirklees Council	Scope
Calderdale Parents and Carers	Leeds City Council	Sebastian's Action Trust
Carers UK	Mencap	Thurrock Council
Contact a Family	Mumsnet	Unique Kidz and co.
Dens of Equality	National Day Nursery Association	York City Council
Family Fund	Nottingham County Council	Warrington Borough Council
Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities	Oxfordshire Youth Enablers	Working Families
Gateshead Council	Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years	
Grandparents Plus	Pat Kelly, Educational Psychologist	
Hampshire Parent Carer Network	PCAN (Parents of Children with Additional Needs	
Hartlepool Borough Council		
Hillingdon		

LIST OF ORAL EVIDENCE SESSION 1**MONDAY 16 JUNE**

Christina Lewis,
Early Years and Childcare
Inclusion Lead Officer,
Suffolk County Council

Lucia Daniels,
Disability Information Officer,
Wandsworth Council

Lara Roberts,
National Network of Parent
Carer Forums

Sue Robb,
Head of Early Years,
4Children

Nick Hudson,
Early Years Director, Ofsted

Neil Leitch, Chief Executive,
Pre-School Learning Alliance

Liz Bayram, Chief Executive,
Professional Association for
Childcare and Early Years

(PACEY), and Diana Wills,
childminder representative

Purnima Tanuku OBE, Chief
Executive, National Day
Nurseries Association

TUESDAY 17 JUNE

Sam Sillars,
young person

Katherine Kowalski,
parent carer

Hannah Postgate and her
daughter Rose

Jane McCready and her son
Johnny McCready,

Stacie Lewis,
parent carer

Jennie Batchelor,
parent carer

MONDAY 23 JUNE

Olivia McLeod,
Director of Early Years and
Childcare,
Department for Education

Ann Gross,
Director,
Special Needs and Children's
Services Strategy, Department
for Education

13. Appendix 2: Good practice examples

KIDS WAKEFIELD

KIDS Wakefield Inclusion Service promotes providers' understanding that there is an expectation that they will meet the needs of disabled children through reasonable adjustments. When children's needs appear not to be met the KIDS Inclusion Service provides a stepping stone model of support.

This starts with advice and support for parents and childcare providers, then the Inclusion Service can offer funding or deploy staff to provide bridging support to allow the provider to meet the child's needs. Where children's needs cannot be met in the setting then the service can consider providing specialist childcare or care either within the home, both before and after school and during school holidays. Parents pay the average cost of childcare within Wakefield for both of these services.

To show parents that childcare provision can meet the needs of their child, the KIDS Inclusion Service promote free taster sessions with the provision of additional support for the child if necessary, to encourage parents to return to work or study. Once parents are confident that a provider can meet their child's needs they will start looking for work.

BROMLEY MENCAP

Bromley Mencap's childminding Network was set up in 1995 to provide quality childminding for parents of children with learning disabilities. The aim was to offer a flexible, tailor-made service where children up to 16 years of age are carefully matched with registered childminders who are trained specifically to care for them. Parents and childminders agree the terms of the arrangement which is monitored and supported by the Network Coordinators.

The Ofsted registered childminders look after children in their own homes. They are recruited onto the Networks, assessed, trained and supported by the Network Coordinators who are employed by Bromley Mencap. Childminders wishing to join the Networks must attend a preparation/disability awareness course which runs over several weeks and has been developed with help from individual experts and local agencies specialising in disability. Additional training is offered at regular intervals to build on the childminders skills and knowledge. This includes any specific one-to-one training that may be required to meet the needs of an individual child.

Bromley Mencap joined together with Bromley Scope in 2010, enabling the childminding service to be offered to families who have children with learning and/or physical disabilities.

SHEFFIELD PARENT CHAMPIONS⁶⁰ – SUPPORTING PARENTS WITH DISABLED CHILDREN IN HARD TO REACH COMMUNITIES TO NAVIGATE THE LOCAL OFFER

The Parent Champions model uses the knowledge that word of mouth is the most common source of childcare information, and that parents tend to trust other parents, to reach out to those who do not access services and ensure that information reaches those who need it. The model is particularly useful for targeting communities in which participation in children's early learning is not the norm and introduce the concept of early education and childcare and how it can benefit children and families in a non-intrusive way. Sheffield City Council have set up a Parent Champions scheme to tell families about the Local Offer and the services available for children with disabilities and special educational needs. The scheme was set up in partnership with two schools in the North East of Sheffield. The schools told parents about the chance to volunteer and supported them to apply for the role.

The Parent Champions group consists of fifteen parents, with the majority from the Asian and Roma Slovak communities. Parent Champions explain the Local Offer to parents, telling them about the information it has for parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities. They will also help collect feedback from parents to improve the Local Offer. The volunteers are based at the two schools to talk to parents but also go out into the community to start conversations with parents who are not engaged with the school. They will be kept up to date about the Local Offer by the Parent Champions scheme coordinators from the local authority and will receive support from school outreach officers.

⁶⁰ Family and Childcare Trust booklet *Supporting families of children with special educational needs and disabilities through Family Information Services* (available at www.familyandchildcaretrust.org).

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CONTACT A FAMILY

Contact a Family is the only UK charity that provides information, advice and support to families with disabled children whatever their condition or disability. Last year we helped 320,000 families to access life-changing help.

www.cafamily.org.uk



EVERY DISABLED CHILD MATTERS

Every Disabled Child Matters (EDCM) is the national campaign to get rights and justice for every disabled child. It is run by four leading organisations working with disabled children and their families: Contact a Family, Council for Disabled Children, Mencap and the Special Educational Consortium.

www.edcm.org.uk



FAMILY AND CHILDCARE TRUST

The Family and Childcare Trust works to make the UK a better place for families. Our vision is of a society where government, business and communities do all they can to support every family to thrive. Through our research, campaigning and practical support we are creating a more family friendly UK.

www.familyandchildcaretrust.org



WORKING FAMILIES

Working Families is the UK's leading work-life balance organisation. The charity helps working parents and carers and their employers find a better balance between responsibilities at home and work.

www.workingfamilies.org.uk