

Holidays, play and leisure

A guide for families in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales



Contents

Introduction.....	3
Who to ask about services in your area.....	5
Help paying for leisure activities.....	6
Wish-granting charities.....	7
Play and leisure contacts.....	9
Indoor play and leisure resources.....	12
Disability sport.....	14
Days out.....	16
Short breaks.....	18
Holidays.....	20
Equipment and mobility.....	24
Books to help your child play.....	26
Know your rights.....	30



Introduction

Many disabled children and young people say that leisure and play – after school, in the holidays and at weekends – is the most important missing element in their lives. Parents strive to make opportunities for these but often find many unnecessary barriers, including a basic lack of information about what's available.

This guide provides some information about what play, leisure, and short breaks options may be available, and where to find more information. It also has information about arranging holidays for disabled children and details of organisations which provide grants for these types of activities.



Who to ask about services in your area

If you want to know more about leisure facilities and clubs in your area, you could contact a local parent support group or carers' centre. Some run their own activities and if not, may know who does. Our freephone helpline can check if there is a group in your area. You can also ask your child's social worker or, if you don't have one, contact the local children with disabilities team.

You can also find information at:

- your local library
- your local council website
- a local leisure or youth service for details of inclusive facilities
- sports clubs
- a national organisation, like Phab (see page 10).

In England and Wales

Your local Family Information Service can tell you what services are available. This includes information about play and leisure. In England every local authority must publish a 'local offer', which includes information about leisure activities. The local offer also gives parents and carers a chance to give feedback and put forward ideas of what leisure activities should be available in their area.

More information about the local offer is at www.contact.org.uk/local-offer

You should be able to find the local offer on your local authority's website. Your school or children's centre may also have access to this information. Or call Contact's freephone helpline for information about play and leisure in your area.

In Northern Ireland

The Family Support NI website has information on play and leisure activities for disabled children:

www.familysupportni.gov.uk

Contact Northern Ireland can also give you information about play and leisure in your area.

Contact Northern Ireland
028 9262 7552

In Scotland

Most local authority websites have Family Information Services, which have information on play and leisure in their area. Or you can call Contact a Family Scotland.

Contact Scotland
0131 659 2930

Help paying for leisure activities

Direct payments and personal budgets

Local authorities can give payments instead of services, to allow disabled people and carers to buy the services they have been assessed as needing – for example, for your child to go to a local club or play scheme. Direct payments are for parents and their disabled children who would like to manage their own social care needs.

Some families can also get 'individual' or 'personal budgets' to arrange services. The budget is an amount allocated by social services after an assessment, which is usually based on a points system.

Call our freephone helpline for more information on personal budgets and what direct payments can be used for. Or visit our website www.contact.org.uk/personal-budgets-direct-payments

How much are direct payments?

The amount of money you get should be enough to allow you to meet all costs, including tax and national insurance, as well as criminal record police checks.

Contact our freephone helpline on 0800 808 3555 for more information.

Are you claiming all the benefits you're entitled to?

Certain benefits can lead to more help. For example, if your child gets the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) you can get discounts on road tax for your car and a Blue Badge to help you with parking your car. If your child has any award of DLA or PIP or is registered blind, you can get a Cinema Exhibitor's Association Card – free tickets for a person to go with a child to the cinema. Also, many local attractions offer discount schemes and queue jump passes for disabled people and their carers. Ask when you book.

Call our freephone helpline and speak to our benefits experts. They can also send you a list of grant-making charities you can apply to for help paying for holidays, play and leisure activities 0800 808 3555



Wish-granting charities

These charities offer special treats or holidays for children who are very ill or are living with severe disabilities. The charities listed below cover the whole of the UK but have different eligibility criteria, so you will need to check with them directly for more information.

Make a Wish Foundation

Make a Wish grants 'once-in-a-lifetime' wishes of children aged 3 to 17 who have life-threatening conditions. Parents, professionals, or the child themselves can request a wish.

01276 40 50 60

www.make-a-wish.org.uk

Starlight

Grants the wishes of seriously and terminally ill children aged 4 to 18. Parties, pantomimes, fun centres, distraction boxes and entertainment for children in hospitals and hospices. Anyone can refer a child for a wish.

020 7262 2881

www.starlight.org.uk

Promise Dreams

Grants one-off dreams to children who are terminally or seriously ill, such as the trip of a lifetime.

1902 212 451

www.promisedreams.co.uk

Happy Days Children's Charity

Funds and organises holidays, residential trips, days out and theatre trips throughout the UK for disadvantaged young people aged 3 to 17 years who have severe mental and physical disabilities and life-limiting illnesses. Parents, family members or medical professionals download the application form online.

01482 530 710

www.happydayscharity.org

When You Wish Upon a Star

Aims to fulfil wishes for children aged 2 to 16 years who have a life-threatening or terminal illness. Parents or medical professionals can apply on a child's behalf.

0115 9791 720

www.whenyowishuponastar.org.uk



Play and leisure contacts

There are many local and national bodies and organisations which give information about play and leisure for disabled children. Here are just a few.

UK-wide

Cinema Exhibitors' Association Card

UK wide card scheme for participating cinemas. Card holder is entitled to one free ticket for a person to go to the cinema with them. You or your child will need to be in receipt of DLA, PIP, Armed Forces Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance or be registered blind. Valid for one year.

01244 526 016

www.ceacard.co.uk

Autism-friendly cinema screenings

Opportunities for people with autism or sensory sensitivity to go to the cinema. Search for 'autism friendly cinema' on the website.

www.dimensions-uk.org

Euan's Guide

Euan's Guide lists access information for venues across the UK and beyond. Including information about accessible toilets, wheelchair access, hearing loops and multiple other access features.

0131 510 5106

www.euansguide.com

Disabled Photographers' Society

Technical support and help for disabled photographers plus information on all aspects of photography.

www.the-dps.co.uk

England and Wales

KIDS (England)

Specialist nurseries and crèches, short breaks, play schemes, youth groups and sibling support groups, plus training (in Makaton, for example) and keyworking.

020 7359 3635

www.kids.org.uk

The Performing Arts Children's Charity (England)

Charity that runs free drama, music and movement classes for disabled children and young people aged 9–19. Run by qualified teachers and helpers. Covers Colchester, Eastleigh, Hampton.

03000 309 897

www.pachildrenscharity.org.uk

VocalEyes (England)

Audio description charity. They capture the visual elements of a theatre piece, painting, or environment that a blind or partially-sighted person might miss and describe them in clear, vivid language.

enquiries@vocaleyeyes.co.uk

www.vocaleyeyes.co.uk

Phab England and Wales

Charity with around 140 clubs dedicated to inclusive clubs, holidays, annual summer programmes of activities, sailing, short breaks and adventure holidays for disabled and non-disabled children.

020 8667 9443

www.phab.org.uk

Stagetext (England and Wales)

Stagetext provides captioning and live speech-to-text services in theatres and other arts and cultural venues for people with varying types of deafness. Visit their website to find performances near you.

020 7377 0540

www.stagetext.org

Mencap Wales Play Our Way

Project to improve access to leisure facilities for people with a learning disability in Wales.

www.wales.mencap.org.uk

Northern Ireland

Cedar Foundation (NI)

Charity delivering play work, youth work, trips to the cinema, canoeing and other leisure activities for disabled children and young people. Plus breaks for carers.

www.cedar-foundation.org

Scotland

Smart Play Network

Charity supporting toy libraries and play services. They have projects in Dundee, Angus, Fife and Edinburgh.

0131 554 2620

www.smartplaynetwork.org

Linn Park Adventure Playground, Glasgow

Play centre for children aged 5 to 12 with additional support needs. Sensory room and arts and crafts activities. Large outdoor space, including climbing frame, sandpit, chute, swings, wheelchair swings and lots more.

0141 633 1493

The Yard, Edinburgh

Purpose built indoor and outdoor adventure playground. Drop-ins for 2–5 year olds, family sessions, youth clubs, activities for teens and pre-teens.

0131 476 4506

www.theyardscotland.org.uk



FABB Scotland

All-ability cycling, horse riding, beach outings, climbing plus residential activity holidays, activity days. Drop-in for families with disabled children 0-18 with magician shows, cooking workshops, sensory play room, and much more at community centres in Edinburgh.

01877 331 200

www.fabb.org.uk

Reidvale, Glasgow

Supervised indoor and outdoor playground for children with disabilities. Includes a sensory room, soft play area, and outside fixed play equipment for children who live in or outside Glasgow

0141 550 2320

www.rapa.org.uk



Indoor play and leisure resources

Sensory Toy Warehouse

Website set up by a parent which stocks accessibly-priced, tactile, interactive and stimulating multi-sensory resources, special needs toys and novelties for disabled children. Prices start from £1.

www.sensorytoywarehouse.com

The Letterbox Library

Catalogue of disability-related books for disabled children and their siblings, and for use in school or other settings, that promote understanding and explain 'difference' for all ages from babies to eleven years old.

020 8534 7502

www.letterboxlibrary.com

Calibre Audio Library

UK charity that lends audio books. Young Calibre is a free postal library bringing audio books to anyone under 16 who can't see properly, or has dyslexia or another disability which makes it difficult to read ordinary print. There is a one-off fee to join £35 (£20 for Young Calibre) and after that everything is free.

01296 432 339

www.calibreaudio.org.uk

Living Paintings (UK)

Free postal library supporting blind and partially sighted adults, children and young people. They make tactile versions of pictures that come to life when fingers feel them.

Audio descriptions tell the pictures' stories while directing the fingertips across the tactile image, describing what is being touched, felt and 'seen'. The tactile story books for children also include Braille sheets between each page of text so they can read the text of the story themselves.

01635 299 771

www.livingpaintings.org

BBC Ouch

For older teenagers and adults, Ouch explores the disability world in blog posts and a monthly internet radio talk show.

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02r6yqw

ITV Signed Stories

Signed Stories help improve the literacy of deaf children from infancy upwards. The website also provides useful advice and guidance for parents, carers and teachers of deaf children, and for the deaf parents of hearing children.

www.signedstories.com

Disability Arts Online

Online journal for discussion of arts and culture, giving disabled and deaf artists, performers, film-makers, writers, and critics a place to talk about and share artistic practice.

disabilityarts.online

Listening Books

Charity supplying postal and internet based audio book service to people across the UK who find it difficult to read due to illness, disability or learning difficulty. Supports the National Curriculum from Key Stage 2 to A-Level and have a huge range of fiction and non-fiction titles for both adults and children. Membership starts at £20 per year to stream online audio books.

020 7407 9417

www.listening-books.org.uk

Disability sport

In England, until March 2018 children under the age of 18 who have either been born without a limb or who have lost a limb are being given new running and swimming blades to help them participate in sport. These are available from NHS Limb Centres. For more information see www.gov.uk and search for 'children's sports prosthetics'.

UK wide

WheelPower

Introductory and competitive sports at centres around the UK for disabled children and adults. Run events, including youth sport camps.

01296 395 995

www.wheelpower.org.uk

Freedom in the Air

Charity giving disabled youngsters the opportunity to fly, either in a light aircraft, or to pilot an aircraft with full supervision. Family members welcome.

www.freedomintheair.org

Aerobility

Charity giving disabled people the opportunity to have a trial flight, a fun aviation education session, or a trip in a flight simulator.

0303 303 1230

www.aerobility.com

Disability Snowsport UK

Adaptive ski schools and local groups throughout the UK. Activity weeks, advice and encouragement for disabled people to take part in snow sports.

01479 788 770

www.disabilitysnowsport.org.uk

Royal Yachting Association

Sailability is the UK programme for disabled people to try sailing and take part regularly. Their network of approved sites have boats and facilities to cater for everyone, no matter what disability or age.

www.rya.org.uk

Special Olympics Great Britain

Sporting opportunities for children with a learning disability from the age of five and adults. Training programmes regardless of ability or degree of learning disability.

020 7247 8891

www.specialolympicsgb.org.uk

England and Wales

English Federation of Disability Sport

Information on finding the right sport for you, clubs, and examples of good practice. Inclusion training for sports coaches.

01509 227 750

www.efds.co.uk



Level Playing Field

Charity for disabled fans of football, rugby union, cricket, rugby league and tennis. Information on disabled fans' facilities at clubs and stadia.

020 8621 2403

www.levelplayingfield.org.uk

Disability Sport Wales

750 clubs and sessions across Wales, from archery to weightlifting. Find your nearest club by sport and disability on the website.

0300 300 3115

www.disabilitysportwales.com

Northern Ireland

Disability Sport Northern Ireland

Events, training courses and services for local disabled children and adults to take part in sport and physical recreation.

028 9046 9925

www.dsni.co.uk

Scotland

Scottish Disability Sport

Listings of local clubs and sporting activities for disabled children and adults.

0131 317 1130

www.scottishdisabilitysport.com

Disabled Curlers Scotland

Curling tuition and play for anyone of any age with a serious health problem, mobility issue or disability. Arrange curling sessions and competitions at various venues across Scotland.

www.scottishdgc.org.uk



Days out

Many major attractions and organisations in the UK allow a parent or other carer accompanying a disabled person free entry. Venues should have accessibility information on their websites. It's worth giving places you want to visit a call – they can tell you about accessibility and documents you might need to take advantage of any offers.

The Max Card is a local authority commissioned card scheme for disabled children (ages 0-19). It offers families discounted access to UK attractions. If your local authority funds the scheme

you will be able to access a free card. To find out if you're eligible, see www.mymaxcard.co.uk or send an email to hello@mymaxcard.co.uk with your child's circumstance and the local authority you fall under.

UK-wide

Day out with the kids

Website to help find accessible family outings around the UK.

www.dayoutwiththekids.co.uk

The National Trust

Visit historic places and gardens. Most properties have a good degree of access and admission policy has an 'admit one' card in the name of the disabled visitor, so a carer can go free of charge. Search for 'visitors with disabilities' on their website.

0344 249 1895

www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Woodland Trust

Find your local woods and activities for children and families.

0330 333 3300

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Phototrails

Accessibility information for trails in the countryside. Each trail has photos of every potential hazard and details on surface, gradient, facilities so you can ensure the trail is suitable before you go.

www.phototrails.org

Riding for the Disabled

Gives disabled children and people of any age the opportunity to ride, vault, or carriage drive. Suitable for children with physical and learning difficulties.

01926 492 915

www.rda.org.uk

Culture 24

News, exhibition reviews and features from UK museums, galleries, heritage and archaeology sites and libraries.

01273 623 266

www.weareculture24.org.uk

Walks with Wheelchairs

Free information on routes that are suitable for those who use a wheelchair.

www.walkswithwheelchairs.com

Scotland

Seagull Trust Cruises (Scotland)

Charity offering free cruises on Scotland's canals for people with additional needs. Cruises run from branches throughout Scotland. The Trust also has a purpose-built holiday boat based at Falkirk.

www.seagulltrust.org.uk

Visiting the theatre in London

SeatPlan is a website featuring user-friendly access guides and reviews for London's most popular theatres, including interactive maps to show people exactly where they will be sitting in each venue and what the view is like.

seatplan.com

Short Breaks

Short breaks allow your child to have a change of scene, try different experiences, have fun and make friends. You may already get breaks from caring by asking family, friends or neighbours to take charge from time to time, but you may need a more formal arrangement that doesn't depend on other people being available and willing to help.

Having a break can give you valuable time to recharge your batteries. You might want to spend time with your other children, friends, or just relax in the bath. If you have regular breaks it may also make your life easier if you ever have to leave your child with someone, as they will be used to this happening occasionally.

Short breaks come in all shapes and sizes and can include:

- **Care at home:** includes sitting services, which means someone to sit with or 'mind' your child, and care attendant schemes, which give help of various kinds at home, including sitting services.
- **Day care away from home:** includes nurseries, playgroups, opportunity groups, nursery schools and classes for pre-school children as well as child and family centres. There may also be out of school and weekend clubs and, during school holidays, access to play schemes.
- **Residential breaks:** includes residential homes, special units in hospitals and hospices. Talk to your local social services department.

- **Family link schemes:** where your child stays with another family on a regular basis or occasionally.

There is a legal duty on local authorities to provide a range of short breaks services for disabled children in their area. For information on the law in your country see page 30.

Speak to your local authority or health and social care board about getting short breaks services. The main route involves undergoing an assessment of your child and family's needs by social services. You can also contact the organisations listed on page 5 to find out about short breaks in your area. In Scotland contact:

Shared Care Scotland

Accessible, up-to-date information and advice on short breaks including accommodation and activity programmes that are accessible to disabled children and young people.

01383 622 462

www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk

The friendly parent advisers on our freephone helpline can talk you through how to contact your local social services department and ask for an assessment of your own and your child's needs. Contact them on 0808 808 3555, email helpline@contact.org or visit our website www.contact.org.uk/social-care



Holidays

Everyone needs a change of scene from time to time. You may find some of the organisations on the next pages useful for ideas and information on the different holidays to choose from. There are many organisations which provide holidays and holiday accommodation for families and disabled children.

Help to pay for holidays

Families with disabled children may be entitled to help from local social services departments. Some authorities may give grants towards holiday costs, others may offer holidays at places of your own choice. Some local authorities insist on means testing and, even when grants are available, they are usually small. Some charities that help towards holiday costs are listed on the next pages.

Contact can tell you about all aspects of the benefits and tax credits system to make sure you are claiming all you are entitled to. Our advisers can also send you a list of charitable grants you may be able to apply for to go on holiday, plus other financial help which may be available. Call the Contact freephone helpline on 0808 808 3555.

UK-wide

Turn2us

Online charity providing access to information on all benefits and grants available from both statutory and voluntary organisations in the UK. In many cases, applications for support can be made directly from the website and people can be kept informed by email, or by text to their mobile phone.

www.turn2us.org.uk

Family Fund

May be able to help towards holiday costs for a family when there is a disabled or seriously-ill child from birth to 17 years old. Grants are a contribution towards family holidays with or without the child.

The Family Fund works with a range of providers, so that families can choose the best holiday for themselves and their family. For some families taking a holiday is difficult, so a cash grant may be given for outings or recreational activities.

The Family Fund may be able to help with other grants to help children and young people access play and leisure activities. Here are some things the Family Fund has been able to help pay for in the past: trampoline, playstations and games, TV and DVD players, greenhouse, sensory toys and equipment, karate uniforms, singing lessons.

01904 550 055

www.familyfund.org.uk



Organisations who may help with holidays

UK-wide

Go Beyond

National children's charity providing free holiday breaks to disadvantaged children from all over the UK. Children are referred to Go Beyond by professionals.

01822 811 020

www.gobeyond.org.uk

National Autistic Society

Information on autism-friendly holidays and days out including planning your break. Search for 'holidays and days out'.

0808 800 4104

www.autism.org.uk

Tourism for all

Charity website with information on accessible accommodation, holidays, attractions, days out, plus planning your trip in the UK and overseas. They also list travel insurance companies for disabled people.

0845 124 9971

www.tourismforall.org.uk

3H Fund

Subsidised group holidays for physically disabled children and adults and respite for their carers. When funds are available, they can give grants to families throughout the UK living on low incomes.

01892 860 207

www.3hfund.org.uk

Ski 2 Freedom

Comprehensive information on everything from disability ski equipment and clothing, to help with planning mountain and winter sports activities in locations worldwide.

www.ski2freedom.com

Over the Wall

Free activity camps for seriously ill children, siblings, and their families, usually over the summer holidays. Venues are located across the South, the Midlands and Scotland.

02392 477 110

www.otw.org.uk

The Calvert Trust

Fully accessible activity adventure holidays for families at Exmoor, Kielder and the Lake District. For individuals and groups of all ages and all types of disability, including carers' breaks. Activities include abseiling, sailing, canoeing, archery, horse riding, climbing and more.

www.calvert-trust.org.uk

Scotland

Speyside Trust Badaguish Centre

Short breaks activity holidays for children and adults with learning and multiple disabilities. Outdoor activities, such as canoeing, biking and archery, to suit all levels of ability in the care of a qualified team.

01479 861 285

www.badaguish.org

"Carve out something for you. You will need to plan ahead, dig deep financially, emotionally and really want it, but finding time to have a break will help."

Airlines and airports

Information on the UK government website includes:

- how to get forms to tell airlines about incapacity and illness (usually from the airline website)
- how to get seats at reduced rates if you are accompanying a person with illness or disability, and
- services you can arrange to support your journey.

www.gov.uk/transport-disabled/planes



Equipment and mobility

Read our guide to ***Aids, equipment and adaptations*** for more in-depth information and advice about equipment and mobility.

For help in choosing the right equipment or for information about getting around, the following organisations are useful.

UK-wide

British Red Cross

Has a volunteer-led medical equipment service that provides wheelchair hire and short-term loans of equipment in almost 1,000 outlets in the UK.

0344 871 11 11

www.redcross.org.uk

Disabled Living Foundation

Advice on choosing daily living equipment, including for children who need help to dress, with personal care, and beds and bed accessories. Helpline for product and supplier information.

Website www.asksara.org.uk with information on products.

0300 999 0004

www.dlf.org.uk

Disability Rights UK

Has a Radar Key Scheme (NKS) offering independent access to 9,000 locked public toilets around the UK plus an accompanying NKS guide. The NKS scheme is available as an iPhone app.

<http://disabilityrightsuk.org>

Disabled Motoring UK

Has a range of information about travel around the UK, including parking.

www.disabledmotoring.org

PIE

PIE produces a Blue Badge Atlas with access information for towns across the UK. Their website also has other products for Blue Badge holders.

www.thepieguide.com

GOV.UK

Official website with information for disabled people on using different types of transport.

www.gov.uk/transport-disabled

London and South East

MERU

MERU designs and builds specialised equipment for disabled children and young people. Advice for flying with a disabled child, try out travel chairs and harnesses, and hire supported seating. Plus travel tips for parents.

01372 725 203

www.merushop.org



Books to help your child play

The books below are available to buy on the internet (where you will find lots of other suggestions), and may be ordered in your local bookshop, library or by contacting the publishers.

Small Steps Forward – using games and activities to help your pre-school child with special needs

Sarah Newman (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)
Lots of ideas for games and activities for pre-school children.

Autism, Play and Social Interaction

Lone Gammeltoft and Marianne Sollok Nordenhof (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)
How to help children with autism engage in interactive play. How to set up play environments, games schedules and play routines, and how to use visual aids and other props to facilitate co-operative play.

Party Planning for Children and Teens on the Autism Spectrum – how to avoid meltdowns and have fun!

Kate E. Reynolds (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)
What can cause anxiety for children on the autism spectrum plus practical solutions. Covers party invitations, prizes, food and venues, with activities for age groups 2-8, 9-12 and teenagers.

Fun with Messy Play – ideas and activities for children with special needs

Tracey Beckerleg (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)
Activity book using everyday 'messy' materials like baked beans, condensed milk, jelly or glue. Helps improve co-ordination, communicative and cognitive abilities, as well as self-esteem and social skills.

Can't Play Won't Play – simply sizzling ideas to get the ball rolling for children with dyspraxia

Sharon Drew and Elizabeth Atter (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)
Practical information, tips and hints to enable children with dyspraxia to access and enjoy activities.

Playing, Laughing and Learning with Children on the Autism Spectrum – a practical resource of play ideas for parents and carers

Julia Moor (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)
How to break down activities into manageable stages, and ways to gain a child's attention and build on small achievements. Each chapter covers a theme, including music, art, physical activities, playing outdoors, puzzles, turn-taking and using existing toys to create play sequences.

Focusing and Calming Games for Children: mindfulness strategies and activities to help children to relax, concentrate and take control

Deborah M. Plummer (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)

Games and activities to help children to focus, concentrate, and stay calm. Has a theory section, and a host of games and activities suitable for use with groups or individual children aged 5–12. Ideas for adaptation for children with attention and concentration difficulties are included.

100 Learning Games for special needs with music, movement, sounds and... silence

Johanne Hanko (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)

Inspiration and guidance for special education teachers, assistants, parents and carers on how to use lively play ideas to foster learning. Targets skills such as listening, self-awareness, movement, creative thinking and relaxation.

Play for Children with Special Needs, supporting children with learning differences 3–9

Christine Macintyre (Routledge)

A book on the benefits of play and includes different scenarios to show how to support children to play.

101 Activities for Kids in Tight Spaces: at the doctor's office, on car, train, and plane trips, home sick in bed

Carol Stock Kranowitz (St. Martin's Griffin)

This is an older book, however it is still full of great ideas. As the author has a good knowledge and understanding of sensory integration issues, it is ideal for children and some adults with sensory processing difficulties.

Your Essential Guide to Understanding Sensory Processing Disorder: plus travelling with a sensory kiddo!

Angie Voss OTR (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform)

Ideas for helping children with sensory processing disorders on road trips, aeroplanes, staying with relatives or friends, hotels, at the beach, camping and hiking, amusement and water parks.

The charity Scope also have good ideas on their website for inclusive play, search for 'Play resources' at www.scope.org.uk

A parent's story

Getting away from it all (and taking it with us)

It was as I was trying to find space for the food-whizzer the night before going to France last summer, when I began to question whether going on holiday was really worth the bother. Any kind of trip with young kids is a bit like this. It's impossible to travel light; you have to consider every eventuality, every type of weather, everybody's likes, dislikes and irrational attachments to particular things.

But travelling with Amy brings a whole new set of requirements, not just all the essential items (medicines, syringes, bibs, bottles, wipes, dribble-catchers, emergency food supplies, food-whizzer, Fimbles DVD) but all the restrictions on what we can do when.

With typical kids, as they get past the baby and toddler stage, family holidays gradually stop resembling a military campaign. They can usually wait a little while to eat if necessary, and you can find impromptu food and drinks. If there are delays along the way, they can entertain themselves. Their physical needs become less all-consuming as they grow up, and – this is the good bit – you can explain to them what's happening.

It's not like that with Amy. It's like being stuck at the baby stage in perpetuity. When she needs to eat, she can't wait long. And she can't be distracted with

toys. She doesn't cope well in enclosed, crowded spaces. She gets tired very quickly in new places and situations. So holiday spontaneity for us has to take place within clearly defined limits at set times of day.

But I still reckon it's worth it (even if it doesn't always feel that way while it's happening). It rained a lot in northern France, and Amy screamed. But that's not the whole picture, there were also times when the sun shone and Amy smiled. We played on vast, windswept beaches and spent a peaceful day exploring First World War battlefields – the atmosphere of the isolated cemeteries we visited seemed to suit Amy, and she smiled serenely.

Amy also responded well to quiet medieval churches, which turned out to be the perfect environment for her. She sat calmly in her buggy, focusing on the stained glass windows for a long time.

The other highlight of France from Amy's point of view was the food. I was able to tell her speech and language therapist on our return that she now definitely shows signs of anticipating things. She quickly understood that the morning trip to the boulangerie was followed by croissants dipped into hot chocolate – her new favourite treat.

Still, wherever we are, Amy's still Amy. Holidays with small children, even typical ones, hold limited possibilities

for complete relaxation. And holidays with children like Amy are never going to offer much more than the chance to do all the usual stuff in a slightly more scenic location.

But just the novelty of being somewhere new is good for all of us. And I'm certain that Amy appreciates a break from the

various therapies we feel compelled to do with her daily. There's also the indisputable fact that she's more relaxed when we're more relaxed, that less pressure and general rushing around has a good effect. Above all, it's good for us that going on holiday is a 'normal' thing to do – and we're doing it.

Tips from parents

"Work out what you can realistically manage - what can your disabled child cope with, what can you afford?"

"Plan it with precision, patience and persistence... but make it happen! It is so worth it."

"Have a list of activities your kids enjoy and do a rainy day alternative"

"Check the internet for money-off coupons/codes"

"If the day costs to get in, take a packed lunch."

"Go 'all-inclusive' and make sure you get transport to and from the airport to your destination."

"Accept that your disabled child's expectations of a good time may not be the same as yours."

"Having no money, no car and no support doesn't mean missing out. Learn to be a creative with the pennies and make the most of any free stuff."

"Make sure you have an in-depth knowledge of every public WC, friendly pub, café and discreet alley. It's also imperative to know how long it takes between each pit stop, either by bus or foot depending on time constraints and budget."

Know your rights

All children need the chance to play. Governments in the UK recognise that disabled children need good quality play and leisure opportunities. And that these must be available throughout their childhood to reach and maintain their highest development and wellbeing.

You may find it helpful to know that your disabled child or young person has certain rights relating to play and leisure.

Additionally, under Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to relax and play and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.

Local authority duties to disabled children

Your child also has rights to play and leisure in their local area. Services for disabled children are set out under Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the Children Act 1989. There is similar legislation in each nation, set out in the following pages.

For example, under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, services are given to an individual disabled child and do not extend to other members of the family. Depending on local criteria, services include:

- provision of leisure facilities (this could mean outings or a placement at a day centre), or
- education facilities (this could mean

home-based education, or funding for the personal care needs of students so they can study)

- travel and other help, like travel to and from a day centre
- holidays.

The Children Act 1989 sets out a range of support services which should be available. Services listed in the Act include:

- occupational, social, cultural or recreational activities
- help to allow your child and family to have a holiday
- travel assistance.

Under the Act:

- social services can give help which will benefit other family members, like siblings and other carers
- local authorities should give services to minimise the effect of disabilities on the lives of disabled children and give them opportunities to reach their full potential.

Local authorities must treat disabled children as children first and promote access for all children to the same range of services.

Your child's rights across the UK

In England

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 means local authorities need to take more responsibility to make fun and positive activities available for all young people.

Also, the *Early Years Foundation Stage* is a framework to support the welfare, learning and development of children from birth to five years old. The Early Years Foundation Stage promotes teaching and learning through play.

Short breaks

The *Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011* puts a legal duty on local authorities to provide a range of short breaks services for local disabled children.

As part of this duty, local authorities have to produce a *Short Breaks Services Statement*. This statement should include information on:

- what local short break services are available
- how the services are designed to meet the needs of carers in their area
- details of any eligibility criteria the local authority applies to short breaks services.

The local authority must publish their short breaks services statement, including having a copy of the statement on their website. Search for their local offer on their website. For more information search for 'short break care' at www.gov.uk.

Your rights as a carer

The Children and Families Act 2014 includes rights for parent carers and young carers to be entitled to an assessment of their needs. This is to encourage the local authority to take a whole-family approach. The Act includes a duty for local authorities to consider your wellbeing when you're being assessed, including participation in recreation. You may be able to get, for example, gym membership, massages or leisure classes to relieve stress.

The Care Act 2014 contains the rights of parent carers and sibling carers to an assessment of their needs if their disabled brother or sister is approaching or over the age of 18 and they are providing care and support for them. Under the Act the local authority must: '*promote the wellbeing of disabled adults and their carers*'. This means they must consider a person's: '*physical and mental health and emotional well-being and participation in work, education, training or recreation and social and economic wellbeing*'. Our guide [**Services and support from your local authority**](#) explains in more detail how to get an assessment of your family's needs.

We also have a factsheet *Carers' Assessments – help for parent carers in England*, available free from our freephone helpline on 0808 808 3555

Northern Ireland

Services for disabled children are available under Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978, and The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, and mirror the services listed on page 30. Under the 1995 Act, services may also extend to other members of the family, including young carers.

The Northern Ireland Executive has a *Play and Leisure Implementation Plan* which sets out to make access to play spaces that are welcoming, attractive and engaging for all including disabled children. The Office of the First and Deputy First Minister coordinates the progress by local councils responsible for leisure facilities, to monitor implementation of the plan.

Short breaks

The consultation on *Transforming Your Care*, the Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety's review of health and social care services, recommended more respite and short-breaks provision. Plans are underway to implement changes based on these findings.

Your rights as a carer

The Carers and Direct Payments Act (NI 2002) places a requirement on Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts to make sure carers know about their right to a carer's assessment. Local HSC trusts can make direct cash payments to people for the community care services that they have been assessed as needing, including breaks from caring.

In Scotland

Services for disabled children and their families are available under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Scotland) Act 1972 and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

The *Early Years Framework* in Scotland stresses the importance of play in improving children's quality of life, including the need to remove any barriers to play as a priority. *Getting it Right for Every Child* (GIRFEC) is a national approach to supporting and working with all children and young people in Scotland. GIRFEC highlights the opportunity to take part in play, recreation and sport, which helps healthy growth and development at home and in the community.

Underpinning the GIRFEC approach and the Early Years Framework, The Scottish Government's *National Play Strategy* (June 2013) aims to improve the play experiences of all children and young people including those with disabilities.

Short breaks

The Scottish Government has pledged to prioritise improvements and increase numbers of short breaks for all age groups. They have given specific funding for short breaks to be distributed through key voluntary organisations.

The emphasis is on flexibility and choice, giving disabled children, young people and their families greater control over their child's care.

The Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 allows people to make an informed choice as to how their social care support is provided.

By giving people control over their individual budget, the self directed support can be used flexibly. It can be taken as:

- a cash payment (direct payment)
- allocated to a provider the individual chooses
- the individual can opt for a local authority arranged service

or you could choose a mix of these options.

By using direct payments individuals could employ their own staff to accompany them to leisure activities or self directed support can be used for a short break.

Your rights as a carer

Local authorities must tell carers of disabled children about their rights to an assessment of their needs under the Community Care and Health (Scotland) Act 2002 (10), which amends the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 will come into force on 1 April 2017. It will place a duty on local authorities to provide support to carers, based on the carer's identified needs which meet local eligibility criteria. Local authorities will also have to involve and consult carers about their eligibility criteria.

How you can improve better leisure services for disabled children

In England, parent carers have an opportunity to have a say on commissioning play and leisure services through parent carer forums. For example, in Hull, the parent carer forum helped the local authority improve play facilities for disabled children in the local park.

To find your local parent carer forum in England, see the Parent Carer Participation pages on our website at www.contact.org.uk/pcp/resources

In Scotland, contact:

For Scotland's Disabled Children (fSDC)

fSDC works to secure rights and justice for disabled children in Scotland – you can get involved with their campaigns and help change services for the better. Contact them c/o Contact Scotland.

0131 659 2939

www.fsd.org.uk

Other useful booklets from Contact

We have guides for parents on a range of topics, including:

- *Money Matters – a checklist when your child has additional needs*
- *Claiming Disability Living Allowance for children*
- *Helping your child's sleep*
- *Siblings*
- *Fathers*
- *Grandparents*
- *Living with a rare condition*
- *Personal Independence Payment and other benefits at 16*
- *Understanding your child's behaviour*
- *Aids, equipment and adaptations.*

A full list of Contact publications is at the link below.

All our publications are free to parents who contact our helpline, and are free to download.

 www.contact.org.uk/publicationslist  **0808 808 3555**

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