

**Parliamentary Hearings:
Services for disabled children and their families**

Written Submissions Form

This form has been designed to help professionals contribute to the Parliamentary Hearings on services for disabled children and their families.

Please save and return this form by **18th August 2006** to hearings@cafamily.org.uk or print it out and post to:

Parliamentary Hearings
Contact a Family
209–211 City Road
London
EC1V 1JN

1) Please tell us who you are (delete Y or N as appropriate)

Voluntary Sector Professional

If your response is from an organisation, please type the name of your organisation in below:

Daycare Trust

Please note that our comments will focus on the childcare and early years services for disabled children. ***The quotes below are from parents as part of our 'Everyone Counts' project.***

2) Do you think the education services that disabled children receive are currently:

Poor

Comments:

Childcare services for disabled children are often not available, despite legal requirements in the Disability Discrimination Act. A 2004 National Audit Office report¹ found that although many childcare settings say they are able to accommodate children with disabilities, many settings are only able to offer one such place.

"The main problem with childcare for children with severe learning difficulties is there is very little. The scheme we use is a charity part funded by social services but it runs for a short period of time during school holidays. This is our only option."

¹ National Audit Office, Early Years: Progress in developing high quality childcare and early education accessible to all, 2004

The DfES Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey 2005² found that only three percent of children enrolled in full day care, four percent registered with childcare and five percent attending sessional day care had a special educational need. This compares with 17 per cent of children with SEN at primary school (although there is no formal mechanism for assessing SEN prior to school). Furthermore, 39 per cent of full daycare providers had no children with SEN registered.

In 2004/05, Daycare Trust carried out focus groups and questionnaires with parents of disabled children and childcare professionals. Of the parents we spoke to, 64% would use childcare if suitable provision was available, but 69% said it was difficult to find childcare to meet their children's needs. The project also found that childcare for older disabled children can be even more difficult to access.

"The carer I use is not registered. None of the fifty-seven registered carers I called when my partner left were qualified or willing to take on a child with my daughter's disability."

"My career has been effectively halted by the fact that I cannot afford childcare for my SEN son. I now scrape together a small amount of money by working only during school hours doing work which is much below my abilities and the education I received."

(When asked about the main problem for parents with disabled children who want to work) *"childcare you can trust to do the best by your child so that you go to work confident that their needs will be met."*

There are additional difficulties that parents encounter when trying to access childcare services, such as transport, and ensuring that additional health needs are met.

3) Do you think the health services that disabled children receive are currently:

Good	Y/N
Adequate	Y/N
Poor	Y/N

Comments:

4) Do you think the social care services that disabled children receive are currently:

Good	Y/N
Adequate	Y/N
Poor	Y/N

Comments:

5) Do you think current funding for services for disabled children is:

² Sam Clemens, Anna Ullman and Robert Kinnaird (2006), Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey 2005 Overview report, DfES, with thanks to Contact a Family for additional analysis of children with SEN.

Poor

Comments:

There are not enough childcare places for disabled children. This is partly due to the extra costs involved. Early education and care providers must make reasonable adjustments to accommodate disabled children and should not charge extra for disabled children without clear evidence to back up their case. However, additional costs involved in providing early education and care for disabled children might include additional staff costs, additional equipment and adapting premises.

According to DfES research³, Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey 2005, many childcare providers operate on a tight budget and may be making a loss. This makes sustainable childcare very difficult, and even more so when there are extra costs of staffing or equipment for disabled children involved. If this cost is passed onto the parents, this would render the childcare unaffordable.

“The only suitable arrangement I could see at present would be to employ a nanny who would be prepared to be trained for my sons needs. Unfortunately, the cost of this would be beyond our means.”

Daycare Trust believes that childcare costs for disabled and non-disabled children should be equal at the point of entry, so further supply-side (ring-fenced) funding should be available to fund places.

6) Do you think benefit levels for families with disabled children are:

Poor

Comments:

Benefit levels for disabled children are often inadequate. With regard to childcare, the Inland Revenue's tax credit figures show that working families with disabled children are less likely to benefit from the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit than other families. Both partners in a couple may be less able to work due to the care needs of their disabled child.

In addition, the different sources of funding available to families makes the situation very complicated. Parents may be eligible for various strands of funding such as Child Tax Credit, Disability Living Allowance, Mobility Allowance (to name but a few), but there are complicated forms and procedures involved in accessing the different funding streams.

Parents may be able to use Direct Payments to better meet their family's needs, but often are not aware of the Direct Payments system, or concerned about taking on additional burdens of organising and funding care.

³ Sam Clemens, Anna Ullman and Robert Kinnaird (2006), Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey 2005 Overview report, DfES

“We do not receive any monies for respite care, we have been requesting for a year now. We have no emergency back up if we are both ill or need a break. I am trying to obtain direct payments, but it is proving very difficult to obtain.”

“I have looked into going to work / study – but was told that it wouldn’t be in my best interests to get a job as I could never earn in wages what I get in benefits and I would be worse off”

7) Which aspects of the services you currently provide are you happy with?

8a) What aspects of the services you currently provide are you most unhappy with and why?

8b) Are there any services that you are not providing that you think would help parents and why do you think these are not provided?

9) Which of these key measures to improve services for disabled children do you think is most important? (please type in a rank from 1 to 7 where 1 is most important and 7 is least important, use each number once)

Targeted, ring-fenced resources	2
Professionals working together better	1
Better information for parents	
Better data about numbers of disabled children	3
Minimum service standards	
More parent involvement in developing services	4
More control for service users	

Please explain why:

The DfES Early Support Programme Pilots have shown the benefits for families when professionals work effectively together and when families have one named contact rather than a plethora of professionals to keep in touch with.

It is important to bear in mind that services for disabled children will be more expensive than those for non-disabled children, as they require additional equipment and human support. Therefore, targeted and ring-fenced resources are essential. This should include

extra supply-side funding for childcare providers to ensure parents have the choice to use childcare if they want. It would be appropriate to put a higher ceiling on the childcare element of working tax credit for disabled children, particularly for those children who are not eligible for DLA and/or carer's allowance, but for whom childcare is still more expensive.

10) Please provide an example of a service you receive that has worked well – and tell us why

As a charity which campaigns for better childcare services, we do not receive services ourselves, but we are aware of good practice that exists to support disabled children. For example, the Phoenix Children's Resource Centre in Bromley won a Sure Start Partners in Excellence award in 2005 for their effective joint working, which has greatly benefited families with disabled children. Helen Norris, Head of Bromley Pre-School SEN Services, has separately completed a submissions form, but if you require more information, please contact us.

11) What barriers exist to improving services for disabled children?

Lack of proper joined-up thinking across government departments and services

Staff attitudes and a lack of training

"It is in essence the lack of deaf awareness and the inability of the general public to sign which has made standard childcare inappropriate for my daughter"

Cost of providing services for disabled children OR cost of services to parents.

12) How specifically could these barriers be overcome?

Welfare Benefits

- Reform the childcare element of Working Tax Credit as a short-term solution, by relaxing the 16 hour rule, along with the requirement for both partners in a couple to be working where the family includes a disabled child.

"When you have a child with a disability, due to hospital and various appointments you have to attend, it was out of the question for me to think about working or studying"

- Consider the introduction of a 'transition period' within the tax credit for parents of disabled children who want to return to work and extend the 'run on period' beyond the current seven days to prevent parents from losing childcare places.
- Recognise that for many families informal care by relatives is often the only option and reflect this in the financial assistance available to families with disabled children.

"I think that, given the acute shortage of childminders able and willing to care for a large teenager with autism in his own home, I should not be required to use a registered childminder in order to qualify for help with childcare costs. This effectively disqualifies me from getting help with childcare costs and is yet another barrier to me being able to

support myself and my family more fully by working. It is costing the country more money than it is saving.”

“I chose to use my mother as my children’s carer because she understands my child’s needs and was cheaper to use. She was able to have both children and give my special needs child undivided attention and take them to school together. I received funding for her childcare from BBC Children in Need and the Family Welfare Association.”

Availability of childcare

- Greater supply-side subsidies for providers to be able to meet the additional costs or lost revenue of providing places for disabled children.
- Investigate introducing a Sitter Service similar to that in Scotland. This could be used both for respite care and more regular childcare. A report analysing the costs and benefits of the Sitter Service mentions a number of benefits to families of disabled children;

“Parents, particularly those with children with special educational needs, clearly saw advantages in having childcare taking place within their own home, as familiarity of environment was important to them and their children. One parent who had a child with Asperger’s Syndrome said that it was particularly important that her son saw his sitter within a familiar environment.”⁴

- Develop targets and systems to monitor the number of childcare places for disabled children, both nationally through the Joint Inspection Framework and locally.

Workforce

- Daycare Trust welcomes the Transformation Fund from the DfES, which is being used to support the training needs of private, voluntary and independent childcare providers in England. One strand of this funding can specifically be used to train staff on disability and special educational needs. However this funding is only available for two years. There needs to be sustainable investment in disability equality training and information on DDA requirements for childcare and early years providers. This should be a requirement of all childcare training courses and induction courses.

Partnership working

- Evaluate and monitor the use of the Early Support Programme materials and the associated key worker scheme in local authorities.

“When you have a special needs child you have to go begging for help, both financial and childcare support, etc. Getting the help you need is sometimes more frustrating than having to look after special needs children in the first place.”

⁴Wilson, Hall, Rankin, Davidson and Schad (October 2003) *The Sitter Service in Scotland, A study of the costs and benefits – final report* page 40 (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/933/0007604.pdf>)