



Disability

Directors' summary **2** September 2009

Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services

It would be hard to overstate how significant the quality of leadership is in narrowing the gap for children and young people within a context of improving outcomes for all ...

Narrowing the Gap – Final Year Guidance 2

C4EO's work on Disability supports directors of children's services and their Children's Trust partners by providing the knowledge, data and tailored support they may need to help improve outcomes for disabled children and their families. This summary provides a concise and accessible overview for DCSs of the three research reviews in the Disability theme. Please go to www.c4eo.org.uk to download the full and in-depth research reviews.



Improving the wellbeing of disabled children through:

- increasing the quality and range of early years interventions (up to age 8)
- improving access to positive and inclusive activities
- ensuring all disabled children, young people and their families receive services that are sufficiently differentiated to meet their diverse needs.

What do we know?

Not all services are genuinely and actively inclusive and there is a wide variety in the definition of inclusion. Genuine inclusion means provision which is designed and resourced to facilitate disabled children and young people's participation in the same activities and opportunities as non-disabled children. It may involve interaction between disabled and non-disabled children or be for disabled children and young people only. Inclusion should provide a choice for disabled children, young people and their families.

Early years

- The overall verdict on family-centred early years interventions is positive.
- High quality pre-school education can reduce the need for special education at primary school, especially for the most vulnerable children.
- Improving parent's ability to cope is as important as the child's developmental progress.
- Efficient key worker systems are an essential part of effective early years' provision.
- The most effective services are shaped by parents, are seamless, co-ordinated and easy to navigate. The more complex a service, the less effective it seems to be.
- Services must compensate for social disadvantage. The families who benefit most tend to be those who have the capacity to access services. Families with less capacity benefit more from careful and thorough assessment of their needs.

Access

- Access to positive and inclusive activities improves disabled children's health and wellbeing.
- Disabled children and their families need the active involvement of trained staff to benefit from their experience.
- They want more choice, support to pursue individual interests and the opportunity to meet and make new friends.
- Improving participation is as important as improving access.
- Disabled children and their families need to be involved in decision-making about what is on offer as well as their own participation.

Differentiation

Currently we do not know the extent to which disabled children and young people and their families receive services that are sufficiently differentiated to meet their diverse needs. However:

- the most pressing problems affecting some children from BME backgrounds are poverty and social disadvantage, which appear to have a greater influence on the prevalence and impact of disability than ethnicity
- asylum-seeking families may not report the child's impairment for fear of altering their immigration status
- key workers have been shown to improve family relationships with services, speed up access and reduce parental stress
- many parents believe that earlier intervention would have prevented away-from-home placement.

What do you want to do next?

The last three years has seen investment of £770 million. How can you be sure that it is being used appropriately in your locality and that your services for disabled children and young people will improve?



Questions to facilitate improvement

Q1 What are your aspirations for disabled children in your locality? What outcomes (quality-of-life conditions) do you want?

For example, they are healthy, safe, enjoying and achieving, have a sense of belonging, they are making a positive contribution, participating in positive activities.

Q2 What would the outcomes look like if you could see or experience them?

(Experience is the bridge between outcomes and indicators)

For example, disabled children and young people will be participating in positive activities suited to their needs; parents will say that they are receiving good quality and timely services; disabled children and young people are improving their personal achievement by attending high-quality pre-schools/nurseries; disabled children and their parents are given opportunities to participate in decision-making.

Q3 What milestones are you setting to support the achievement of locally defined outcomes? And how can you measure them?

The indicators emerge from descriptions of the experience. Appropriate indicators from the National Indicators Set, should be selected, for example:

- NI 54: Disabled Children's Indicator (measuring services for disabled children through parental surveys)
- NI 110: more participation in positive activities
- NI 50: emotional health and wellbeing – children and young people user perception
- NI 92: narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile and the rest

Other measures specific to your locality should be defined so that you will be able to see whether you are achieving your defined outcomes, to what extent your plans need amendment and to provide feedback to your local communities.

Q4 Where are you now? How are you currently doing on the most important measures?

The web-based C4EO Progress Mapping tool will provide relevant data on the indicators and you may also be able to use your own local data to create data curves/charts to analyse and compare performance with other authorities.

Q5 Who are the partners for improvement? Who from the Children's Trust should be around the table?

The Children's Trust has a crucial role in improving outcomes for disabled children and young people. Essential partners in improving governance, strategy and resource sharing include:

- education
- health
- Sure Start programme managers
- disabled children and young people
- youth
- social care
- inclusion
- parents and carers
- relevant local authority departments/agencies such as housing and leisure.

You may choose to undertake a 'turning the curve' exercise on the measures where improvement is needed. This will enable you to identify which partners/agencies should be involved. C4EO sector specialists can help to support this work.

Q6 What really works to improve the outcomes you want?

C4EO's in-depth research reviews on this priority provide the evidence for what works (see below). This evidence can be used to support the achievement of the outcomes you have identified.

Q7 What do you propose to do next?

Draw up an action plan and monitor progress on selected indicators. A report card format can be used which is clear and simple for the partners.

Who has the information you need?

- parents, children and young people
- managers working at a strategic level delivering services (e.g. healthcare, educational and therapeutic support, culturally appropriate emotional and practical support to the family)
- PCT managers
- early years practitioners, Sure Start programme managers
- family parent programme managers
- psychologists (e.g. educational, in CAMHS)
- SEN coordinators
- family centre managers
- health visitors
- speech and language therapists and others providing a service for physical or neurological impairment (e.g. occupational therapists, physiotherapists).

Directors' summaries

This summary is a concise and accessible overview of C4EO's current work in this theme for directors of children's services.

Please go to www.c4eo.org.uk to download full and in-depth versions.

How can C4EO support your vision?

C4EO offers wide-ranging support, including:

- validated local practice
- knowledge and progression workshops
- sector specialists and tailored support
- knowledge and research reviews including key messages from research

Please go to www.c4eo.org.uk to access full information.