



Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance

Manifesto



Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance

Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance

The Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance (CDSA) brings together organisations from across the children's sector and the disability sector. It is jointly chaired by Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) and Disability Action (DA).

CDSA wants to ensure that policy impacting on the lives of children and young people with disabilities is informed by their needs and circumstances.

Through this Manifestoⁱ we aim to:

- Promote the rights and best interests of children and young people with a disability;
- Raise awareness of the exclusion experienced by children and young people with disabilities in their daily lives; and
- Recommend actions that will help address the barriers they encounter.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly in 1989.ⁱⁱ 2009 therefore marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention. The UK subsequently signed the Convention in 1991. In October 2008, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child delivered its most recent consideration of implementation of the Convention by Great Britain and NI.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was adopted by the General Assembly in December 2006. The UK signed the treaty at the first opportunity in March 2007 and ratified the Convention on the 8th June 2009. However it noted a reservation, among others, to Article 24 which requires states to deliver an inclusive education system.

Throughout the paper, where relevant to children with disabilities, reference is made to both UN Conventions and to supplementary recommendations and guidance issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.ⁱⁱⁱ

Endorsements

46 organisations have signed up to and endorsed the Manifesto.

They are:

- ACT (The Association for Children's Palliative Care)
- Action for Children
- Afasic
- Ards Borough Council
- Arthritis Care Northern Ireland
- Autism NI
- Care Coordination Network UK
- Care (NI) Ltd
- Cedar Foundation
- Child Brain Injury Trust
- Children in Northern Ireland
- Children's Law Centre
- CLIC Sargent
- Contact a Family
- Deaf Association of Northern Ireland
- Disability Action
- Dry Arch Centre
- Employers for Childcare
- Family Fund
- Foster Care Associates
- Habinteg
- Include Youth
- Inner City South Belfast Sure Start
- Lifestart Foundation
- Mencap
- Mindwise
- Mitchell House School
- NCBNI
- National Deaf Children's Society
- Northern Ireland Cancer Fund for Children
- Northern Ireland Hospice
- Northern Ireland Lupus Group
- Northern Ireland ME Association
- Parents Advice Centre
- Participation Network
- PlayBoard
- Positive Future
- Quaker Service
- Royal National Institute of Blind People
- Salvation Army
- Save the Children
- Sense NI
- Special Education Needs Advice Centre
- SureStart Edenballymore
- The Edgcumbe Training and Resource Centre Parents and Friends Group
- TinyLife

Contents

	Page
Cross Cutting Issues and Key Asks	6
Priority funding for disabled children and young people	6
Research on the circumstances and experiences of children with disabilities	7
Accessing Services	9
• Accessing mainstream public services	9
• Accessing disability specific services	10
Empowering children and young people with disabilities and their families	11
• Information	11
• Active Participation in Decision Making	12
• Bullying	13
Theme 1 Family Support (Including Support for Siblings and/or Disabled Parents)	15
• Family support	15
• Short breaks	16
• Child care	18
Theme 2 Support at Key Stages	19
• Early identification and intervention	19
• Access to Early Years' services	20
• Transition services and support	21
- Leaving hospital	22
- Leaving school	23
- Becoming more independent	24
Theme 3 Health and Well-Being	26
• Mental health of disabled children and young people	26
• Physical health of disabled children and young people	27
• Support provided to children with complex health needs	28
Theme 4 Access to and Participation in Play, Recreation, Leisure, Sport and Cultural Life	29

	Page
Theme 5 Child Poverty	31
Theme 6 Education	33
• Disability and special educational needs	33
• Educational attainment	34
• Pre-school provision for disabled children	35
• FE and HE provision for young people with disabilities	36
• Suspension and expulsion	38
• Alternative Education Provision (AEP)	39
• Transport to and from school	39
• Assessment and statementing of children with special educational needs	40
• Limited participation of children and young people in decision making	42
• SENDO	43
• Access to curriculum and examinations	44
Theme 7 Protection from Abuse	46
Abbreviations	49
References	51

Cross Cutting Issues and Key Asks

CDSA has identified a number of cross-cutting issues which must be addressed as a priority by the Government in Northern Ireland:

- Priority funding for disabled children and young people
- Research on the needs and circumstances of disabled children and young people
- Accessing services
- Empowering children and young people with disabilities and their families

Priority funding for disabled children and young people

Issue:

The UK Government made disabled children a priority for funding in the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. It is unclear whether children and young people with disabilities in Northern Ireland benefited directly from the additional funding allocated by the UK Government for disabled children's services.

What is needed:

Government must make disabled children a priority. Funding must be prioritised by commissioning a review of disabled children and young peoples services to highlight gaps in current provisions and areas of unmet need. The review should also consider the role played by the voluntary and community sector in developing innovative, child and family centred approaches and the extent to which this work is adequately resourced.

Did you know?

The UK Government Review of Disabled Children's Services, 'Aiming High for Disabled Children', committed Government to providing significant additional resources, £340million revenue funding, from 2008 to 2011, to transform services for disabled children. This funding was allocated to four specific service areas: shortbreaks, childcare, transition and parent forums.^{iv}

In December 2008, the Children's Plan in England committed an additional £90 million capital funding for short break services from 2008 – 2011, bringing the funding allocation to £430 million.^v

In February 2009, the Child Health Strategy 'Healthy lives, brighter futures' clarified that an additional £340 million has been given to primary care trusts for disabled children in England from 2008 - 2011.^{vi}

A 'Core Offer' of expectations for how disabled children and their families will be informed and involved as their needs are assessed and the necessary services are delivered has also been developed, alongside a 'Disabled Children's National Indicator' that will look at parental experiences of services for disabled children and young people aged 0-19.

Children's Rights Context:

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No 9 (2006) 'The rights of children with disabilities' states children should be a priority in the budgets of State parties and further that:

"Resources allocated to children with disabilities should be sufficient - and earmarked so that they are not used for other purposes - to cover all needs including programmes established for training professionals working with children with disabilities such as teachers, physiotherapists and policy makers as well as for education campaigns, financial support for families, income maintenance, social security, assistive devices and related services." (para 20)

Research on the circumstances and experiences of children with disabilities

Issue:

There is little research or information available about the needs and circumstances of children and young people with a disability in Northern Ireland. There is also a lack of research on the prevalence of different conditions or disaggregated analysis of government spending on disabled children and young people within health, social care, education, arts, leisure or sports services. The long awaited Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) on Disability report should contain valuable information about the experiences of disabled children and young people within Northern Ireland.

Schedule 2 of the Children (NI) Order 1995 required the establishment of a register of disabled children. Despite a full regional project report having been completed a number of years ago on the disabled children register, the Health and Social Care Trusts have not moved forward on this matter.

What is needed:

The PSI report on Disability must be published as a matter of urgency. Government departments must identify the targeted initiatives and actions they will take to address the exclusion experienced by disabled children and young people. All Government departments must be asked to collate and maintain up-to-date data relating to the uptake and use by children with disabilities of mainstream funded programmes.

Did you know?

In Northern Ireland 27% of the population are children. Approximately 6% of these children have a disability. For complex reasons the prevalence of disability is higher amongst boys than girls. Approximately 8% of boys aged 15 and under has a disability compared to 4% of girls in the same age group.^{vii}

Children's Rights Context:

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is still concerned at the absence of a nationwide mechanism to collect and analyse data on the areas covered by the Convention. The Committee recommends that the State Party “establish a nation-wide system such that disaggregated data are collected on all persons under 18 years for all areas covered by the Convention, including the most vulnerable groups, and that these data are used to assess progress and design policies to implement the Convention.” (para 18-19)

The UN Committee in General Comment No 9 (2006) The rights of children with disabilities indicated that it is necessary for State parties to “set up and develop data gathering mechanisms, which are accurate, standardized and allow disaggregation, and which reflect the actual situation of children with disabilities. (para 19)

Article 31 of the UNCRPD (Statistics and data collection) states that:

1. State parties undertake to collect appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable them to formulate and implement policies to give effect to the present Convention. The process of collecting and maintaining this information shall:
 - a. Comply with legally established safeguards, including legislation on data protection, to ensure confidentiality and respect for the privacy of persons with disabilities.
 - b. Comply with internationally accepted norms to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms and ethical principles in the collection and use of statistics.
2. The information collected in accordance with this article shall be disaggregated, as appropriate, and used to help assess the implementation of State parties' obligations under the present Convention and to identify and address the barriers faced by persons with disabilities in exercising their rights.

State parties shall assume responsibility for the dissemination of these statistics and ensure their accessibility to persons with disabilities and others.

Accessing Services

This issue looks at the experiences of disabled children and young people in:

- Accessing mainstream public services
- Accessing disability specific services

Accessing mainstream public services

Issue:

Disabled children and young people are not routinely able to access and benefit from public services in the same way as their peers. There is a general lack of awareness amongst public service providers about the specific needs of disabled children and young people.

Attitudinal barriers are often the greatest hurdle that disabled children and young people have to overcome to access their rights, enlarge their choices in life or expand their level of independence.

The failure of agencies, services and departments to work in a holistic manner or in partnership compounds the barriers faced by disabled children and young people.

Lack of staff training specific to the requirements of disabled children and young people can also hinder inclusion in service provision.

Physical barriers continue to exist for disabled children and young people in both internal and external environments and can also hinder access to services.

What is needed:

A high level commitment by public bodies to facilitate the promotion of positive attitudes and the inclusion of disabled children and young people, including the identification and implementation of reasonable adjustments, training for staff, and the development of targeted initiatives or programmes.

It is essential that service deliverers improve physical accessibility to their premises and also ensure that contracted services are accessible to disabled children and young people.

Children's Rights Context:

In its 2008 Concluding Recommendations the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern that there was no comprehensive national strategy for the inclusion of children with disabilities in society and recommended that such a strategy be developed. (para 53)

The Committee also recommended that Government undertake awareness raising campaigns on the rights and special needs of children with disabilities, to encourage their inclusion in society and prevent discrimination and institutionalisation.

Accessing disability specific services

Issue:

Disability specific policies and services have not traditionally been developed with the distinct needs of children and young people in mind. The location and delivery of a disability specific services may not always take account of how best to fit in with other aspects of the person's life, such as going to school, having friends or enjoying social activities.

The current over reliance on diagnosis and eligibility criteria as a means to determine access to services results in some disabled children being excluded from the services they require.

What is needed:

The development of holistic, child and family centred disability specific services, with strong links to health, social care, education, leisure, sports and community services.

Did you know?

The Bamford Review stated that the needs of children with a learning disability were "a footnote, an afterthought" within HSS programmes of care. Such programmes were dominated by the needs of adults and they had not benefited from initiatives to improve children's experiences or from measures focused on learning disability.

Empowering Children and Young People with Disabilities and Their Families

This issue looks at the barriers experienced by disabled children and young people around:

- Accessing the information they and their families need
- Being involved in decisions that affect their lives
- Being bullied

Information

Issue:

Families consistently report great difficulties in getting the information they need, including information about available support services. Accessible, age appropriate information for children and young people with disabilities is rarely produced.

What is needed:

Disabled children and young people and their families need independent, timely, relevant and accessible information at key times, for example, at the point of diagnosis and at other major transition points to enable them to make genuinely informed choices.

Children's Rights Context:

UNCRC Article 23(3) (Respect for home and the family) states:

“... State Parties shall undertake to provide early and comprehensive information, services and support to children with disabilities and their families.”

Active participation in decision making

Issue:

More needs to be done if disabled children and young people are to be listened to and actively involved in decisions about their life. Advocacy services and complaints procedures are not routinely accessible to disabled children and young people.

Children, young people, families and carers are not always recognised and respected as partners with professionals in decision making processes.

What is needed:

Innovative, targeted approaches are required to ensure that children and young people with disabilities, including those with communication difficulties, mental health, learning disability or complex health needs, are listened to and responded to. Disabled children and their families should be included and valued as equal and active partners in the development of policy and the planning and design of services which aim to meet their needs.

Effective, equitable and independent advocacy services which champion and respond to the distinct needs and circumstances of disabled children and young people should be developed and funded throughout Northern Ireland.

Public bodies when developing and implementing their Disability Action Plans, as required by the Disability Discrimination Order 2006, should ensure they include promotion of the participation of children and young people with disabilities in the life of the public body when carrying out all of its functions, including the delivery of services etc.^{viii}

Did you know?

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act requires designated public authorities to promote equality of opportunity across nine categories, and this includes children with disabilities, by virtue of their inclusion in both the 'age' category and the 'disability' category. In furtherance of its role in ensuring and monitoring effective implementation of Section 75, the Equality Commission has published guidance for public authorities on consulting and involving children and young people when developing policies which affect them.^{ix}

Participation Network, which is supported by OFMDFM^x, works with Government departments and statutory agencies in Northern Ireland to develop their capacity to fulfil their Section 75 duties and UNCRC article 12 obligations to effectively engage and involve children and young people in decision making.

Children's Rights Context:

Article 12 of the UNCRC states:

"States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child"

"For this purpose the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of natural law."

UNCRC General Comment No. 9 (2006) The rights of children with disabilities states:

"It is essential that children with disabilities are heard in all procedures affecting them and that their views be respected in accordance with their evolving capacities... Engaging them in such a process not only ensures that the policies are targeted to their needs and desires, it is also a valuable tool of inclusion since it ensures that the decision making process is a participatory one. Children should be equipped with whatever mode of communication to facilitate expressing their views. Furthermore, State parties should support the development of training for families and professionals on promoting and respecting the evolving capacities of children to take increasing responsibilities for decision-making in their own lives." (para 32)

Bullying

Issue:

Young people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to bullying, with the effects being felt well into adulthood.

Despite the statutory obligation requiring all schools in NI to develop anti-bullying policies, schools do not regularly and consistently monitor bullying of children and young people with disabilities.

What is needed:

Children with disabilities must be involved in the development, implementation, monitoring and review of school anti-bullying policies. School anti-bullying policies should outline procedures for tackling disabled bullying. The level and the extent of disabled bullying must be monitored and reported. Staff must be adequately trained in identifying, responding to and monitoring incidents of disabled bullying.

Did you know?

Mencap's 'Don't Stick it, Stop it!' research in 2007 found that amongst children and young people from Northern Ireland, England and Wales:

- Eight out of ten children with a learning disability are bullied
- Eight out of ten children with a learning disability are scared to go out because they are frightened they might be bullied
- Six out of ten children with a learning disability had been physically hurt by bullies
- Five out of ten children who had experienced bullying said that they stayed away from the places where they have been bullied in the past
- Nearly four out of ten (36%) children surveyed said that the bullying didn't stop when they told someone
- Nearly three out of ten (27%) children surveyed were bullied for three years or more^{xi}

Children with a disability and those with visible medical conditions can be twice as likely as their peers to become targets of bullying.^{xii}

The NI Anti-Bullying Forum has established a Disablist Bullying Task Group to look at the information and resources available and those that need to be developed to prevent or tackle bullying linked to actual or perceived disability.

Children's Rights Context:

The UN Committee of the Rights of the Child in its 2002 Concluding Observations noted its concern at the widespread bullying in schools. The Committee recommended that Government take measures and adopt adequate mechanisms and structures to prevent bullying and other forms of violence in schools and include children in the development and implementation of these strategies.

In its 2006 General Comment on the rights of children with disabilities the Committee observed that school bullying is a particular form of abuse that can target children with disabilities. The Committee urged schools to take all measures to combat school bullying and pay particular attention to children with disabilities providing them with the necessary protection while maintaining their inclusion into the mainstream education system. (paras 42 and 43 (e))

Theme 1: Family Support (Including Support for Siblings and/or Disabled Parents)

This theme looks at what needs to be done to improve:

- Family support
- Short breaks
- Child care

Family support

Issue:

The vast majority of children with disabilities live at home and are supported by their families.^{xiii} Support for families is critical, particularly at times of transition - birth, getting ready for school, leaving school, becoming more independent. Unfortunately, such support is not consistently and routinely available to all families as and when it is required. A postcode lottery seems to operate in relation to access to family support services.

What is needed:

A strategic approach to the co-ordinated provision of family and parent support services is needed to ensure that disabled parents and parents with a disabled child can access the same support and services as other parents and, as necessary, additional tailored support around the parent or child's disability.

This additional support should encompass a range of options, for example, access to specialist advice and information on financial entitlements etc; entitlement to a named key worker at point of diagnosis; support from other parents/families in a similar situation; sibling support; and support that recognises lifelong caring responsibilities.

The DHSSPS has allocated monies for family support services through the mechanism of Children's Services Planning. While the monies made available are welcome, more investment is required in early intervention and family support services, with particular priority accorded to investment in services for children with disabilities and their families. It is also important to ensure that this investment is delivered equitably across Northern Ireland.

Did you know?

The DHSSPS has published 'Families Matter', the Regional Family and Parenting Strategy which aims to empower and assist parents to be confident and responsible in helping their children to reach their potential.^{xiv}

Children's Rights Context:

UNCRC Article 18 states "... Government shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children."

UNCRC General Comment No. 9 (2006) The rights of children with disabilities states "Children with disabilities are best cared for and nurtured within their own family environments provided that the family is adequately supported in all aspects... In this context, support should be extended to children who are affected by the disabilities of their caregivers." (para 41)

Short breaks

Issue:

The absence/lack of community based services for children with disabilities, particularly those children with complex needs, places increased demands on parents who are the main care givers.

This can lead to family stress and breakdown, deteriorating health of parents/carers, increased risk of children being placed in care and deteriorating emotional and social development for disabled children and their siblings.^{xv}

What is needed:

Disabled children and their families need a menu of child focused and family directed short breaks to include planned breaks and emergency respite. Such options would allow parents/families a break from caring responsibilities and allow parents to spend time with other siblings. Appropriate short breaks also have positive impact on the lives of disabled children allowing them the opportunity to increase independence, experience new relationships and environments.

Government must clearly identify the proportion of funding allocated to disabled children and families for short breaks. Families caring for a disabled child should have equal access to funding allocated for short breaks.

Commissioners of services should map the availability of short break services to ensure there is adequate provision to meet need across Northern Ireland.

Did you know?

In Northern Ireland, the Government has a target to provide 200 new or enhanced respite packages to benefit approximately 400 children with special needs by 31 March 2011.^{xvi} DHSSPS is undertaking work to provide a clearer and fuller picture of current and future respite provision and need.^{xvii}

The DHSSPS is working to draft guidance and standards for disabled children receiving short break/respite care in children's homes and in host family situations.^{xviii}

The UK Government has made short break provision for families with a disabled child a priority.

In England and Wales the Children and Young Person's Act 2008 introduces a new duty on local authorities to provide short breaks services and will come into force in 2011.

Children's Rights Context:

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2008) Concluding Observations: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland expressed concern at

"... the high percentage of children with disabilities [in alternative care]" (para 44) and recommended that Government "assess why so many children with disabilities are in long term institutional care and review their care and treatment in these settings." (para 45)

UNCRC General Comment No. 9 (2006) The rights of children with disabilities states:

"Family support services should include different forms of respite care, such as care assistance in the home and day care facilities directly accessible at community level. Such services enable parents to work, as well as relieve stress and maintain healthy family environments." (para 41)

Child care

Issue:

The childcare situation for families of disabled children is stark. Families with disabled children face considerable difficulties in finding accessible, appropriate childcare when their children are young. Finding alternative care arrangements as disabled children become older and leave school can prove to be even more difficult for families. The additional costs associated with disability can mean that families caring for disabled children have fewer resources than other families to pay for the child care they need. (See child poverty page 31)

Accessible childcare is vital to help parents work and to enhance the opportunities of disabled children to learn and reach their potential during their early years.

What is needed:

All families with a disabled child should have access to high quality, flexible, affordable childcare to allow them the same opportunities as non-disabled families. There is a need for adequate and appropriate training of childminders: both specialist training to meet the needs around specific disabilities and generic training around disability awareness.

Did you know?

NCB research commissioned by NICMA^{xix} revealed that only 3-4% of children using daycare are disabled. For parents with a disabled child, quality and quantity of childminding services was an issue:

“Shortage of childminders; the sheer difficulty in finding a childminder who is willing to take a disabled child and who has sufficient competence and confidence.”

The Committee for OFMDFM held an Inquiry into Child Poverty and produced a series of recommendations in June 08 which included the development of a long term properly resourced childcare strategy to include a specific target to improve the level of appropriate, affordable childcare provision for children with a disability. In January 2009 the NI Executive formally responded to these recommendations and committed to the development of a childcare strategy.^{xx}

Theme 2: Support at Key Stages

This theme looks at the experiences and needs of disabled children at key times and stages of their life:

- Early identification and intervention
- Access to early years' services
- Transition services and support

Early identification and intervention

Issue:

Disability may occur for many varied reasons at any point in a child or young person's life. However, for children and young people with disabilities and their parents/carers assessment processes can be lengthy and may result in little or no intervention. Parents complain of having to manage multiple appointments and, at times, receiving conflicting advice. Professional efforts are not usually co-ordinated between disciplines. Services are often linked to diagnosis, so children without a diagnosis can lose out even if they clearly have complex needs.

What is needed:

Whatever the age of the child/young person early identification and appropriate follow up intervention is essential. Education and health and social services should develop a joint early intervention strategy to ensure timely access to relevant, co-ordinated support, care and treatment services. It is essential that the range of professionals working with children have the knowledge, awareness and training to support the early identification process and make appropriate referrals to more specialist services as necessary.

Did you know?

UNOCINI is the standard model of assessment used in children's services in Northern Ireland. It is an integrated approach to the holistic assessment of a child and their family's needs targeting resources at those families who are identified as in need or at risk.^{xxi}

Children's Rights Context:

UN Committee on the Rights of Children with Disabilities General Comment No 9 (2006)
The rights of children with disabilities states:

“Very often, disabilities are detected quite late in the child’s life, which deprives him or her of effective treatment and rehabilitation. Early identification requires high awareness among health professionals, parents, teachers as well as other professionals working with children... The Committee recommends that State parties establish systems of early identification and early intervention as part of their health services... links should be established between early intervention services, pre-schools and schools to facilitate the smooth transition of the child.” (para 56)

Article 25 of UNCRPD states persons with disabilities have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination on the basis of disability. This article also states that health services should be provided including early identification and intervention as appropriate and service designed to minimize and prevent further disabilities.

Access to Early Years' services

Issue:

The early years are a critical period for disabled children. Their development is affected by the support and services they receive during these years. Universal early years' services are not always accessible to children with disabilities.

What is needed:

Additional support must be available so that children with disabilities and their families have equal opportunity to benefit from the early years' services that should be available to their peers.

The Early Years Strategy must promote a cohesive cross Government approach to the specific needs and circumstances of children with disabilities and their families in the early years. DE must ensure the inclusion of specific actions and targets within the strategy to address the barriers disabled children currently face during these important years of development.

Children's Rights Context:

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No 7 (2005) Implementing child rights in early childhood

The Committee identified children with disabilities as one of the groups of young children in need of special protection.

“Early childhood is the period during which disabilities are usually identified, and the impact on children’s well-being and development recognised... A priority is to ensure that they have equal opportunity to participate fully in education and community life, including removal of disabling barriers that impede realisation of their rights... Young disabled children are entitled to appropriate specialist assistance, including support to their parents (or other caregivers).” (para 31 d)

Transition services and support

This section looks at the experiences of disabled children when:

- Leaving hospital
- Leaving school
- Becoming more independent

Disabled children experience a number of key transitions within their lives: from hospital to home, from primary to secondary education, from school to further education, training and employment, as well as the transition to adult health and social services and ultimately to becoming an independent adult.

Currently the support that children and young people receive is variable in terms of the preparation and planning for their transition. Children and young people are not routinely involved in decisions that affect their lives.

Transition from school can be a time of stress for children, young people, parents and carers. It is essential that children, young people and parents are involved, informed at all stages of the transitional process and recognised as a key partner in the process.

There is also an absence of age appropriate, accessible and real options across the entire range of transition phases.

Often young people and their parents/carers experience “cliff edges” in service provision in relation to the transition to adult health and social services.

Effective support needs to remain available for disabled children and young people throughout the various transitions in their lives.

Leaving hospital

Issue:

Disabled children and children with complex physical health care needs often spend longer in hospital than necessary, where they are more vulnerable to infection and isolation. Parents and carers described their children becoming institutionalised as a result of their prolonged hospitalisation which may impact on social and emotional development.^{xxii}

What is needed:

Implementation of McConkey et al's (2008)^{xxiii} recommendations in relation to effective discharge planning for children with complex needs transferring from hospital.

These include:

- Production of a specific service framework for families and children with complex physical healthcare needs that is multi-agency and multi-disciplinary. This must cover transition arrangements from acute hospitals to community; school entry, school transfer and school leaving.
- Services should work to develop an assessment instrument that can be used to determine a child's physical healthcare needs, their family's need for additional support services (including respite breaks) and which can assist with reviews of their needs. This would be used by all HSC Trusts, Education and voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland.
- Each family should be allocated a member of staff who will act as the main point of contact for the family and co-ordinate service inputs.
- A 'service map' should be created for each individual child and family. This should be shared with all services and persons who have an involvement with them. Names and contact details should be provided of all those included in the map.
- Each new HSC Trust should undertake an audit of nursing services for children with particular respect to future roles and functioning of children's community nursing; the interface it has with the acute sector and with other community nurses and their partnerships with the voluntary sector.
- Assured funding is needed for community children's nursing services and the provision of flexible, out-of-hours responses by nurses in the community.
- Joint planning with the Department of Education is required on joint funding arrangements and common healthcare assistant posts in schools.
- Accredited core training in specific procedures needs to be available regionally for nurses and healthcare assistants (e.g. provided by a peripatetic training team). This core training could then be individualised for specific children according to their needs. Opportunities should be given to parents to avail of this and other training.

- DHSSPS needs to instigate urgent reviews of the commissioning and delivery of equipment (e.g. hoists, frames) to children and families. This review must involve education. The recently commenced review of wheelchairs, led by what was the SHSSB, should give specific attention to the needs of children.
- DHSSPS and the HSC Board need to urgently review respite provision for children with special needs; particularly with respect to nurse involvement as this is deemed necessary for children with complex physical healthcare needs. This review should involve education.
- An increase in local respite options is needed for children and families.

Did you know?

Ventilated children stayed up to 7 to 18 months longer than necessary in hospital.^{xxiv}

Leaving school

Issue:

Young people with disabilities are faced with limited choices in the transition from school in comparison to their non-disabled peers.

What is needed:

There is an urgent need for an interdepartmental approach to transitional planning, with the development of a commonly agreed operating model of delivery with shared values and principles across all sectors for all disabled children.

A multi-agency transition service for disabled young people aged 14-25 is needed in every area to ensure person centred support at this critical time so the individual has a range of real options to enable them to reach their potential and look forward to their future with confidence.

Did you know?

Until 2008/2009, the Department of Education School Leaver's Survey only recorded the number of pupils leaving school with special educational needs in mainstream education.

In 2007, in response to the Report of The Transitions Inter-Departmental Working Group, a number of voluntary organisations across Northern Ireland involved in the provision of transition support services identified some major ongoing issues of concern within the sector around the transition of young people with disabilities from school, and outlined their view on principal elements of best practice in transition support.

Improving Life Chances for Disabled People produced by the UK Treasury in 2005 identified three key ingredients for effective support at the transition to adulthood:

- Planning for transition based on individual need
- Continuous service provision
- Access to a transparent and more appropriate menu of opportunities and choices

The Ministerial Sub Committee on Children and Young People has identified transitions to adulthood and the provision of appropriate health and social care interventions as key priorities in their work.^{xxv}

Children's Rights Context:

UNCRC General Comment No. 9 (2006) The rights of children with disabilities states:

“The Committee recommends that States parties continue and strengthen their efforts to take into consideration the views of children with disabilities and facilitate their participation in all matters affecting them within the evaluation, separation and placement process in out-of-home care, and during the transition process.”

Non-Discrimination - The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2002) noted its concern that the principle of non-discrimination is not fully implemented for all children in all parts of the State Party and that there is unequal enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, including for children with disabilities. (2002 Concluding Observations para 22)

Becoming independent

Issue:

To be able to live independently is an aspiration for many young people including those with disabilities. Loosening strong family ties, getting jobs, managing households, developing social lives and intimate relationships and attaining a sense of oneself as an equal citizen can be more difficult for young people with disabilities. Currently there is limited co-ordinated support across agencies and a lack of tailored services to enable young disabled people to make this transition to independent living.

The lack of appropriate support and learning opportunities for young disabled people limits their opportunities to develop new skills or maintain those they learnt at school.

What is needed:

A strategic co-ordinated approach which results in empowering young disabled people to become independent, confident adults is urgently needed.

This strategic approach must set targets across departments to ensure equal opportunity for young disabled people to live independently in all aspects of their life.

There is a need for investment in age-appropriate accommodation, ensuring that young people with disabilities are supported to live at home or to move to alternative accommodation of their choice.

Young disabled people should have access to life and work skills training including travel training, money management, and personal safety and relationships.

Did you know?

Disabled young people may wait up to 26 weeks from referral to commencement of Allied Health Professional services when entering adult services. Trusts are to ensure that this target reduces to 13 weeks by March 2009.^{xxvi}

On 3 March 2008 the UK Government published its Independent Living Strategy. The strategy details policy commitments that seek to realise the Government's vision of equality for disabled people by 2025.

Northern Ireland has the highest proportion of people living in long stay hospitals in the UK.^{xxvii}

Children's Rights Context:

Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities says that people with disabilities have the right to live independently in the community. People with disabilities must have the opportunity to choose where and with whom they live and be supported in doing so.

Theme 3: Health and Well-Being

This theme looks at what needs to be done to enhance the:

- Mental health of disabled children and young people
- Physical health of disabled children and young people
- Support provided to children with complex health needs

Mental health of disabled children and young people

Issue:

Disabled children and young people are at a higher risk of developing mental ill health than other children and young people and yet they experience great difficulty in accessing child and adolescent mental health services. Young people with mental ill health or learning disability have frequently been accommodated in adult wards.

Children with disabilities have largely been invisible in research on the impact of the conflict.

What is needed:

More early intervention and preventative approaches to enhance the emotional health and well-being of disabled children and young people and provide support to their families. Equal access to child and adolescent mental health services for children and young people with disabilities. Children and young people should never be placed in adult facilities.

Did you know?

It is estimated that more than 20% of young people are experiencing 'significant mental health problems' by their 18th birthday.^{xxviii}

A recent NDCS Report^{xxix} suggested that four deaf children were currently receiving specialist mental health support, but that this figure should rise to 38 if deaf children's needs received the same level of support provided to hearing children.

Children and adolescents with a significant learning disability are 3-4 times more likely to experience mental health problems.^{xxx}

Children's Rights Context:

In its 2008 Concluding Observations the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2008) expressed concern that:

"... while 1 in 10 children in the State party have a diagnosable mental health problem, only around 25% of them have access to the required treatment and care and that children may be still treated in adult psychiatric wards." (para 56)

The Committee made specific reference to Northern Ireland on this issue, stating that:

"The Committee is also concerned that in Northern Ireland - due to the legacy of the conflict - the situation of children in this respect is particularly delicate." (para 56)

The Committee recommended that "additional resources and improved capacities are employed to meet the needs of children with mental health problems throughout the country, with particular attention to those at greater risk, including children deprived of parental care, children affected by the conflict, those living in poverty and those in conflict with the law." (para 57)

Physical health of disabled children and young people

Issue:

Children and young people with disabilities are likely to experience a greater incidence of health problems and difficulties in accessing primary healthcare, for example, problems with oral health, respiratory difficulties, cardiovascular problems, mobility difficulties, obesity and low weight, as well as having a reduced resistance to infections.

What is needed:

All health strategies published at Department and Trust levels should set targets to address the specific needs of disabled children and young people.

Support provided to children with complex health needs

Issue:

There are increasing numbers of children with complex health needs, including children who are technology dependent, or who may require 24 hour personal care and increasingly intensive nursing care. Most children are being cared for at home by their families.

Children with complex needs are more likely to experience exclusion from mainstream and support services due to perceived risks and the lack of appropriate training for staff in this area.

What is needed:

Innovative and appropriate service responses are required to ensure that children and young people with complex needs and their parents get access to the support they require throughout their life and this includes access to high quality children's palliative care services in the setting of their choosing.

A regional training strategy is required to ensure that staff are confident and competent when delivering services and support to children and young people with complex needs in their daily lives.

Children's Rights Context:

In its 2008 Concluding Observations the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child noted its concern that children with disabilities continue to face barriers to the enjoyment of... the right to access health services and recommended that Government take all necessary measures to ensure that legislation providing protections for persons with disabilities, as well as programmes and services for children with disabilities are effectively implemented... and provide training for professional staff working with children with disabilities, such as medical, paramedical, and related personnel, teachers and social workers.

Theme 4: Access to and Participation in Play, Recreation, Leisure, Sport and Cultural Life

Issue:

Play and leisure opportunities available to children and young people with disabilities are limited because of difficulties associated with accessing and participating in mainstream play, leisure, cultural, arts and youth activities. Those that are available are often unwelcoming, and fail to make reasonable adjustments or provide the extra support that some children need to participate.

There is a heavy reliance on volunteers, often parents or carers of disabled children, to provide alternative activities, with few opportunities for parents' to develop skills to support their children in play.

In addition, there is limited monitoring by public service providers of the use and take up of services and activities by disabled children and young people.

What is needed:

Every child with a disability should have appropriate support so that they can enjoy the same play, leisure, cultural, arts and youth activities as their peers. Providers across all sectors must demonstrate that they are genuinely inclusive of, and encourage the active participation of all disabled children and young people. Play, leisure, culture, sports and youth service providers should monitor use and uptake of these services and demonstrate that they are inclusive.

Policies for play, leisure, culture and sports should ensure children and young people with disabilities can access and benefit from mainstream opportunities. They must recognise that some children with disabilities may need targeted provision and support to participate and this will require adequate funding. The policies should include specific indicators to monitor the use and uptake of such opportunities by children and young people with disabilities.

Did you know?

OFMDFM has produced a Play and Leisure Policy for NI. ^{xxx} The implementation plan for this policy is currently being drafted and focuses on three themes: Space for Play & Leisure, Access to Play & Leisure and Championing Play & Leisure. OFMDFM state in the policy that “All children and young people deserve an enjoyable childhood - no matter what constraints they face. Our job is to help them do that by providing accessible opportunities and affordable facilities.” The themes, priorities and subsequent actions for the Play & Leisure Policy Implementation Plan will prioritise inclusive play and leisure spaces and inclusive practice within which children with disabilities will clearly be identified.

Research carried out by Contact a Family pointed to a high degree of social exclusion of disabled children and young people across the UK, including Northern Ireland, in accessing play and leisure activities. 65% of parents/carers of disabled children said that they were put off because they or their child were made to feel uncomfortable while 55% had to travel out of their local area to find accessible facilities. ^{xxx}

Children’s Rights Context:

In its concluding observations in respect of the UK (2008), the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern that children with disabilities continue to face barriers in the enjoyment of the right... to access leisure and play (para 52) and further the Committee noted that with the sole exception of Wales, the right to play and leisure is not fully enjoyed by all children in the [UK], especially due to poor play infrastructures, notably for those children with disabilities.” (para 68)

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its concluding observations (2008), recommended that the UK “should pay particular attention to provide children, including those with disabilities with adequate and accessible playground spaces to exercise their play and leisure activities.” (para 69)

Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) specifies the right of people with disabilities, including children and young people, to participate in cultural life, recreation and sport. In particular, that children with disabilities have equal access to participation in play, recreation, leisure and sporting activities, including those activities in the school system.

UNCRC General Comment No. 9 (2006) The rights of children with disabilities states

“Play has been recognized as the best source of learning various skills, including social skills. The attainment of full inclusion of children with disabilities in the society is realised when children are given the opportunity, places and time to play with each other (children with disabilities and no disabilities).”

Theme 5: Child Poverty

Issue:

Disabled children and young people, particularly those from families with low incomes, experience disadvantage in education, health and family life. They are at greater risk of having an impoverished childhood without access to the opportunities, life experiences and chances others take for granted.

It is estimated that 57% of disabled children are poor/living in poverty compared to approximately 37% children without disabilities. Approximately 59% of children living with a chronically ill or disabled parent are poor.^{xxxiii}

It costs three times as much to bring up a disabled child as a non disabled child.^{xxxiv} Research also showed that families looking after a child with a disability are particularly likely to face debt problems, with 9 out of 10 families reporting some form of financial difficulty, ranging from having little money for treats to serious financial difficulties.^{xxxv}

There are also poor uptake rates amongst families with disabilities in relation to key benefits. By February 2006, it was estimated that only under half of the population of disabled children in the UK were actually receiving some form of DLA.^{xxxvi}

What is needed:

Responses from Government to tackle child poverty must include specific targeted actions to lift children and young people with disabilities and their families out of poverty. Poverty measurement tools should be developed to capture a more accurate picture of the extent and impact of poverty on children and young people with disabilities and their families.

Children and young people with a disability and their families require easier and targeted access to independent advice and information on grants, benefits and other sources of financial help that are available. Key Benefits for disabled children need to be index linked and to reflect the true costs of disability. To assist with the take up of benefits, such as DLA, targeted promotion strategies must be developed and rolled out, alongside the revision of the associated claim forms to make these more accessible and less complex.

Did you know?

The rate of Disability Living Allowance in recent years has barely kept pace with inflation. The Disability Alliance has estimated that an increase in Disability Living Allowance in the region of 30%-50% would come closer to meeting the true additional costs of disability.^{xxxvii} Disability Living Allowance is currently included as income in poverty measures and masks the true levels of disability poverty.^{xxxviii}

The Committee for OFMDFM held an Inquiry into Child Poverty and produced a series of recommendations in June 08 which included:

“the completion of a review, involving other relevant departments, to consider the issues addressed by the package for disabled children’s services in England, in relation to the provision of short breaks, accessible childcare, transition support and parents’ fora.”

On the 21st January 2009, the NI Executive formally responded to these recommendations.^{xxxix}

Children’s Rights Context:

UN Committee on the Rights of Children General Comment No 9 (2006) The rights of children with disabilities. The Committee highlights the link between poverty and disability:

“Poverty is both a cause and a consequence of disability. Children with disabilities and their families have the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing and housing and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The question of children with disabilities living in poverty should be addressed by allocating adequate budgetary resources as well as by ensuring access by children with disabilities to social protection and poverty reduction programmes.” (para 3)

UNCRC Article 28 (Adequate standard of living and social protection) highlights the need to ensure people with disabilities can access social protection programmes and poverty reduction programmes.

Theme 6: Education

This theme looks at:

- Disability and special educational needs
- Educational attainment
- Pre-school provision for disabled children
- FE and HE provision for young people with disabilities
- Suspension and expulsion
- Alternative Education Provision (AEP)
- Transport to and from school
- Assessment and statementing of children with special educational needs
- Limited participation of children and young people in decision making
- SENDO
- Access to curriculum and examinations

Disability and special educational needs

The terms “disability” and “special educational needs” are defined within a range of legislation and guidance.

Definitions of disability are included within legislation primarily concerned with health, social care, anti-discrimination and equality matters. Definition of special educational needs is included within legislation primarily concerned with addressing difficulties faced by children who find it harder to learn at the same pace as other children their age and/or disabled children who, because of their disability, find it difficult to use educational facilities or services in their area.

Not all disabled children have special educational needs. Not all children with special educational needs will have a disability.

Since the enactment of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005, and its emphasis on mainstream education, there has been a marked increase in the number of children with disabilities in mainstream education. There are concerns at the lack of resourcing, planning, participation and support. This has resulted in pupils with disabilities being placed in mainstream education settings that are ill prepared to meet their needs.

Did you know?

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has produced Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education.^{xi} They act as a resource for policy makers, teachers and learners, community leaders and members of civil society to improve and develop the inclusive aspect of schools and education systems.

Educational attainment

Issue:

Young people with disabilities are faced with extensive barriers in their quest for educational achievement and fulfilment. However, available data on educational outcomes is extremely limited and specific information on disabled children and young people is not collected. In terms of population, 44% of disabled people have no qualifications compared to 18% of people without disabilities while 12% of people with disabilities have a higher education qualification compared to 26% of people without disabilities.^{xii}

Young people with a disability have the same aspirations and goals as those without a disability in terms of education, work and independent living at age 16. However when they enter adulthood, the experiences of the two groups significantly widens.^{xiii}

What is needed:

There is an urgent need for Government to establish a system to collect and provide both qualitative and quantitative data on educational outcomes of children and young people with disabilities.

There is a need for appropriately resourced additional support to address the inequalities in educational attainment and low expectations so that children with disabilities and special educational needs are enabled to reach their full potential within education.

Did you know?

There is a significant gap in educational attainment levels between disabled children and young people and their non disabled peers. For example, 48% of deaf children in Northern Ireland get 5 GCSE's A-C in comparison with 64% of their hearing peers, equating to a 16% gap.^{xliii}

Children's Rights Context:

With regard to educational attainment the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its 2002 Concluding Observations noted its concern at:

“... the sharp differences in educational outcomes for children including children with disabilities.”

The Committee recommended that Government “undertake all necessary measures to remove the inequalities in educational achievement... and to guarantee all children an appropriate quality education.” (paras 45-46)

Six years later the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its 2008 Concluding Observations identified education as an area wherein significant inequalities persisted and where it was evident that “... several groups of children... cannot fully enjoy their right to education, notably children with disabilities...” (para 66)

The Committee also recommended that Government “... invest considerable additional resources in order to ensure the right of all children to a truly inclusive education which ensures the full enjoyment to children from all disadvantaged, marginalized and school-distant groups.”

Pre-school provision for children with disabilities

Issue:

Access to early years' provision for young children with disabilities is limited. There is some concern regarding the capacity of some pre-school programmes to make provision for children with special educational needs. Children attending pre-school programmes do not always have additional provision such as classroom assistants. Choosing appropriate pre-school provision is made increasingly difficult due to delays in diagnosis and assessment.

What is needed:

Children with disabilities should have equal access to appropriate and quality early years' provision. There needs to be a reduction in diagnostic and assessment waiting times so that children with disabilities are able to access the most appropriate provision.

To deliver inclusive provision staff in pre-school settings must have access to good quality training and guidance to enhance their capacity to meet the needs of all disabled children. It is vital that families are provided with good quality information and support during this time especially on promoting communication, play and social relationships.

Did you know?

The Department of Education's Policy Proposals on the Way Forward for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion has proposed that a revised Code of Practice would include voluntary playgroups and private day care nurseries participating in the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme.

Children's Rights Context:

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No 9 (2006) The rights of children with disabilities states:

"Early childhood education provided by the State, the community, or civil society institutions can provide important assistance to the well-being and development of all children with disabilities." (para 65)

FE and HE provision for young people with disabilities

More and more young people are staying on in post-16 education as a wider range of vocational and academic courses become available and, along with various funding mechanisms, act as an incentive for young people to stay on in education. FE colleges are required to have regard to the needs of students over compulsory school age who have learning difficulties (FE (NI) Order 1997).

Issue:

The numbers of students entering Higher Education [HE] is increasing. SENDO requires universities/colleges not to discriminate against disabled students, to assess their needs and to seek to make reasonable adjustments to enable them to access their education. Students should not be at a disadvantage because of their disability either in accessing a course or in the assessment process.

The transition to HE is more likely to be successful if a student has had good transition experiences in the past. It is important that there is good communication between children and adult health and social care teams involved with disabled young people who are moving toward HE. Knowledge about the young person's needs has to be shared with those professionals that will be assisting the move to HE.

What is needed:

Implementation of ETI's recommendations for improvement in provision from the 2007/08 ETI inspection of Further and Higher Education:^{xliv}

- Development of an agreed and progressive curriculum, negotiated with key providers, which builds effectively on the learning undertaken at school and the provision made by both statutory and voluntary health and social care agencies in the area served by the appropriate college;
- Appointment of a designated senior manager to lead and co-ordinate the provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities across each college;
- Need for improved arrangements for the provision of information on progression pathways for students with learning difficulties when they leave school;
- Transition arrangements and the flow of information between the colleges and other organisations;
- Need for focused training for academic and support staff in their work and contact with students with particularly challenging conditions, including attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorders;
- Improved planning for, and robust quality assurance of, all provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, on mainstream or discrete courses; and development of effective strategies to identify and disseminate best practice within and across the colleges;
- Consideration should be given by the Department to the replacing the designation 'students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities' with the more positive term 'students with additional learning needs'.

Did you know?

DEL, in association with the ETI and the Association of NI Colleges (ANIC), is currently undertaking a review of the nature and extent of special needs provision throughout the Further Education (FE) Sector, to determine how this provision might be improved.^{xlv}

The Additional Support Fund DEL made a further £1.5m available in 2007/08 to enable colleges to meet related costs of reduced classroom sizes, additional lecturer contact time, classroom assistants etc. when delivering discrete (i.e. specialised) provision in colleges or outreach centres.

In 2007, the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) launched the Advanced Diploma in 'Promoting Inclusiveness for Learners with Additional Support Needs' which aims to improve the facilities and experiences of students through working with lecturers, teachers, advisers and support staff. The qualification enables these lecturers to carry out special needs assessments to identify additional support needs which learners' may require from staff at Further Education Colleges.^{xlvi}

Children's Rights Context:

Article 24(5) states that people with disabilities should be able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others.

Suspension and expulsion

Issue:

In 2004 a DE consultation on change to suspension and expulsion procedures proposed that pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) should not be expelled from school.^{xlvii} However, a significant number of children with statements of SEN are suspended or expelled from school. These pupils can find it particularly difficult to obtain alternative education.

What is needed:

Current education policy on suspensions and expulsions must be reviewed with separate guidance in relation to special educational needs. Pupils with challenging behaviours rather than face suspension or expulsion should have a statement review before action is taken. Their needs could be re-assessed and more support and guidance on managing challenging behaviour provided to schools to give greater understanding of needs.

Did you know?

For the academic year 2006/07, a total of 45 pupils were expelled from school and 18 (40%) of these pupils had SEN. This is the highest percentage of pupils with SEN expelled from schools for the last five academic years.^{xlviii}

Children's Rights Context

With regard to suspension and expulsion the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its 2002 Concluding Observations noted its concern "at the still high rate of temporary and permanent exclusion from school affecting amongst other groups of children... disabled children"

The Committee recommended that Government "undertake all necessary measures to remove the inequalities in exclusion rates between children from different groups." (para 45-46)

Alternative Education Provision (AEP)

Issue:

A significant proportion of children in AEP have special educational needs but some programmes do not have the capacity or expertise to make provision accessible for these children.

What is needed:

The ETI¹ recommended earlier identification of children's problems and the need for more preventative work in primary schools, including support for children with special needs.

Where children with special educational needs do access AEP there is a need for proper, stable, long-term funding for these projects and access to resources including standard educational psychology or welfare services; physical resources such as ICT equipment, art, science and PE. Robust information sharing procedures must be put in place to ensure projects have full and accurate referral information relating to the young person. Teaching staff must be able to access professional development courses that recognise the diverse special educational needs of the young people accessing these projects. Post 16 support services must be developed for those leaving these projects.

Transport to and from school

Issue:

Children travelling to special schools considered their journey as being too long. Transport methods, including public transport, while meeting minimum requirements, may not always be fully accessible for children with disabilities. There are also concerns relating to child safety in private hire taxis and buses where securing wheelchairs can be problematic.

Access to after school activities may be limited due to the inflexibility of transport.

What is needed:

Flexible, appropriate, fully accessible school transport is essential to support the positive inclusion of children with disabilities in school life. There is a need for specific research to focus on the transport needs of children with disabilities.

Did you know?

A key priority of the Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People is the 'provision of school buses, road safety and transport issues'. The DOE is leading on work in this priority area in partnership with DARD, DRD, DE and the NIO (PSNI).

Assessment and statementing of children with special educational needs

There are 5 stages to the current process for the identification and assessment of special educational needs and provision: ^{li}

- **Stage 1:** teachers identify and register a child's special educational needs and, consulting the school's SEN co-ordinator, take initial action.
- **Stage 2:** the SEN co-ordinator takes lead responsibility for collecting and recording information and for co-ordinating the child's special educational provision, working with the child's teachers.
- **Stage 3:** teachers and the SEN co-ordinator are supported by specialists from outside the school.
- **Stage 4:** the Board considers the need for a statutory assessment and, if appropriate, makes a multi-disciplinary assessment.
- **Stage 5:** the Board considers the need for a statement of special educational needs; if appropriate, it makes a statement, arranges, monitors and reviews provision.

Issue:

A delay in assessing need has a significant impact on a child's educational experience and may leave schools struggling to provide adequately for a child's needs.

Inadequate numbers of educational psychologists coupled with a lack of statutory time limits in relation to the school based stages of the process, in particular Stage 3, has resulted in unacceptable waiting lists regionally.

At present there is only a statutory time frame for Stage 4 assessment and Stage 5 (statement issued). Delays in reports being forwarded by non-educational services can mean that, despite statutory time limits, these are not always adhered to.

Difficulties arise when the quantity and type of support provision such as speech and language therapy and occupational therapy is not made explicit within Part 3 of the statement.

The Department of Education's Policy Proposals for the Way Forward for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion^{lii} proposes a new framework which has emerged following a DE review of the current system. However, there are fears that the proposals will lead to greater uncertainty, reduce further the confidence of parents, and fail to effectively address the shortcomings of the current system, eroding the existing entitlement of children with disabilities to special educational needs provision.

What is needed:

There is an urgent need to address the current obstacles to effective special educational needs provision. A review must be undertaken with regard to the number of educational psychologists available and a strategy developed to reduce and respond appropriately to the current numbers on the waiting list for assessment.

There must be an effective, co-ordinated approach between education and health and social care trusts to plan, deliver and meet distinct needs of children with special educational needs in all educational settings. This includes access to occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and other support services such as IT and transport.

When drafting the current statement of SEN, or any future similar statutory document, it is essential to specify and quantify appropriate levels of provision including access to additional support services before the final statement or statutory document is issued.

A statutory time frame should be introduced to require the ELBs/ESA to discharge its duty to identify the children who may need assessment and statementing.

Legislation relating to special educational needs should include provision that in the exercising of all duties and functions the overriding principle guiding the ELBs/ESA should be the best interests of the child.

Changes (amendments) to the current system of responding to the needs of children with SEN must result in greater parental confidence in the process and ensure the child's right to special educational needs provision is protected, strengthened and enforceable. No attempt should be made to reduce any current enforceable legal right.

Did you know?

Delays experienced in the process currently range from 56 days (SELB) up to 158 days (SEELB) for Stage 3 and 4.

Over 2,000 children in Northern Ireland [10/08] are currently awaiting special needs assessment.^{liii}

Limited participation of children and young people in decision making in education settings

Issue:

Although guidance in the Code of Practice on SEN recommends that their views are sought and taken into account, children with special educational needs do not have a legal right to be heard for example when appeals are made to the SENDIST.^{liv}

Representation and advocacy services for children with SEN have no legislative basis and are not funded by the DE. In addition, legal aid is not available for representation at SENDIST, or for the cost of obtaining independent expert evidence to support an appeal.

The regional Inter-Board Dispute Avoidance Service (DARS) is currently under-used by the public. There are concerns that the primary reason is public perception that this service is not fully independent from the Education Library Boards.

What is needed:

Disabled children must be empowered and supported to give their views and have them given due weight in all matters concerning their education.

In particular, there is a need for fully resourced independent advocacy and representation services for children with special education needs. A legislative right of appeal to the SENDIST must be granted, supported by a publicly funded legal aid.

Awareness raising is required to promote and encourage use of the regional Dispute Avoidance and Resolution Service.

Did you know?

Young people with disabilities consider that the lack of respect for their views was 'poisoning' their school days (Educable, 2000).

The Equality Commission Conciliation Service has been established in law under the provisions of the SENDO to deal with disputes involving claims of disability discrimination in education.^{lv}

Children's Rights Context:

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its 2008 Concluding Observations expressed concern that there had been little progress to enshrine article 12 in education law and policy. In particular, the Committee remarked that “insufficient action has been taken to ensure the rights enshrined in article 12 to children with disabilities.” (para 32)

Furthermore, the Committee went on to note its concern that “participation of children in all aspects of schooling is inadequate, since children have very few consultation rights; in particular they have no right to appeal their exclusion or to appeal the decisions of a special educational needs tribunal.”

The Committee recommended that Government “ensure that children who are able to express their view have the right... to appeal to the special educational need tribunals.” (para 67)

Article 7 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that “States Parties shall ensure that children with disabilities have the right to express their views on all matters affecting them.”

SENDO

Issue:

Lack of training for teachers and classroom assistants, as well as lack of appropriate resource materials to support pupils with disabilities in mainstream education, has been highlighted by organisations working with disabled children and young people.^{lvi} Disabled children and their families should have the same choices as others in their community as to which school they attend.

What is needed:

A major training programme for teaching staff in mainstream on SENDO and inclusion needs to be on-going for professional development and to meet the diverse needs of the children and young people with special educational needs.

Investment needs to be recurrent to address any skills and knowledge gaps within learning communities in relation to SENDO, a particular disability, learning disability, or need.

There is a need to increase the level of outreach/support services available to schools and teachers.

There is a need for increased recognition of the expertise and knowledge of special school staff and the advantages of utilising their experience to advise and support mainstream staff. In addition, there is also a need to increase the number of specialist staff across all sectors and ensure that every school has access to appropriate specialist knowledge or expertise.

Did you know?

The DE Report 'Future Role of the Special School' recommended that this resource of expertise should be developed.^{lvii}

Children's Rights Context:

Article 24(a) states that people with disabilities should not be excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability. Moreover, that people with disabilities are able to access an inclusive and quality primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live.

In addition, Article 24 (3) states that action should be taken to ensure that education, and in particular education for children who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximise academic and social development.

Access to curriculum and examinations

Issue:

Ongoing efforts are being made to ensure the curriculum and examinations are accessible to all children. Awarding bodies have a statutory duty to eliminate discrimination and design examinations all components of which should be accessible to all learners - including disabled candidates. They must demonstrate no possible alternative of assessment before resorting to exemptions.

In cases where exemptions are required, enhancements will ensure that disabled students, unable to access any part of the examination, will have their marks enhanced to reflect their performance on the part of the examination completed.

Certificate indications do not constitute a 'reasonable adjustment' and serve only to stigmatise candidates in future employment and education.

What is needed:

An equitable, fair and robust system of examinations and qualifications, which enables disabled learners to obtain qualifications, to compete with non-disabled peers and obtain access to further / higher education and employment on an equal basis.

The provision of guidance and materials for teachers to enable them to meet the individual learning needs of each child. This must be accompanied by appropriate training and awareness for teachers in relation to the diversity of special education needs.

Did you know?

CCEA is in the process of developing guidance and materials to assist teachers in adapting the curriculum for children with disabilities.^{lviii}

DE in collaboration with the ELBs and the ETI has developed guidance on Vision Friendly Schools.

RNIB found that in schools, only 27.6% of English set texts are available in large print at key stage 4 while only 37.9% are available in Braille. At key stage 3, only 2.3% of Maths textbooks are available in large print while 14% were available in Braille.^{lix}

Children's Rights Context:

Article 24 of the UNCRPD states that children with disabilities should receive the support required to facilitate their learning and development. This article also states that teachers, including teachers with disabilities who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille should be employed and that professionals and staff who work at all levels of education should receive training. This training “shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.”

Theme 7: Protection from Abuse

Issue:

Disabled children are particularly vulnerable to all forms of abuse. Contributory factors include physical vulnerability, communication difficulties, denial and lack of respect for their human rights.

Disabled children are more likely to be abused than non disabled children. The presence of multiple disabilities appears to increase the risk of both abuse and neglect due to:

- Intimate care being provided by a number of different people,
- An increased reliance on residential settings for respite and difficulties in disclosing abuse when it is occurring.^{lx}

The complexities and vulnerabilities of disabled children and young people were highlighted by the Independent Review into Safe and Effective Respite care for Young People with Disabilities at Cherry Lodge Children's Home and the Social Services Inspectorate's 'Care at its Best' report of the multi-disciplinary inspection of services for disabled children in hospital. These reviews made a series of recommendations relating to the care of disabled children.

What is needed:

The NI Executive has produced a cross-departmental statement on the protection of children and young people^{lxi} which recognises the particular vulnerability of children with disabilities. The statement suggests that the new Safeguarding Board will consider how best to take forward the development of regional policies and procedures for this group of children.

Procedures to safeguard and protect children should reflect the needs and interests of disabled children, protect them from abuse and take action when they are abused.

Staff working in child protection should have the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure that their services are fully accessible and supportive to all disabled children. Those working directly with disabled children need an increased awareness and knowledge of child protection and how to recognise signs of abuse when it is occurring.

Disabled children must have full and equal access to the available therapeutic interventions to aid recovery.

Did you know?

The DHSSPS is working to finalise standards for disabled children in hospital and draft guidance and standards for disabled children receiving short break/respite care in children's homes and in host family situations.^{lxii}

A recent report^{lxii} concluded that focusing on disabled children's human and civil rights can protect children from abuse, help prevent unintended abusive practices in both residential and community settings and play a key role in carrying out effective investigations of abuse when it does occur.

NSPCC research found that both central government and local child protection services have so far generally failed to effectively protect disabled children from abuse.

Children's Rights Context:

In its 2006 General Comment on the rights of children with disabilities the UN Committee observed that children with disabilities are more vulnerable to all forms of abuse be it mental, physical or sexual in all settings... it is often quoted that children with disabilities are five times more likely to be victims of abuse. The Committee urged Governments to take particular measures including:

- (a) Train and educate parents or others taking care of the child to understand the risks and signs of abuse of the child.
- (b) Ensure that parents are vigilant about choosing caregivers and facilities for their children and improve their ability to detect abuse.
- (c) Provide and encourage support groups for parents, siblings and others taking care of the child to assist them in caring for their children and coping with their disabilities.
- (d) Ensure that children and caregivers know that the child is entitled as a matter of right to be treated with dignity and respect and they have the right to complain to appropriate authorities if those rights are breached.
- (f) Ensure that institutions providing care for children with disabilities are staffed with specially trained personnel, subject to appropriate standards, regularly monitored and evaluated and have accessible and sensitive complaint mechanisms.
- (g) Establish an accessible, child sensitive complaint mechanism and a functioning monitoring system based on the Paris Principles.
- (h) Take all necessary legislative measures that are required to punish and remove perpetrators from the home ensuring that the child is not deprived of his or her family and continue to live in a safe and healthy environment.
- (i) Treatment and re-integration of victims of abuse and violence with a special focus on their overall recovery programme.

On the particular issue of sexual exploitation the Committee observed that children with disabilities are more likely than others to become victims of child prostitution and child pornography. The Committee urged Governments to ratify and implement the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC) and in fulfilling their obligations to the Optional Protocol, pay particular attention to the protection of children with disabilities recognising their particular vulnerability (para 77).

Article 16 of the CRPD states that measures must be taken to protect all people with disabilities, both within and outside the home, from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse.

Also that State Parties shall put in place effective legislation and policies, including women and child-focused legislation and policies, to ensure that instances of exploitation, violence and abuse against people with disabilities are identified, investigated and prosecuted.

Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AEP	Alternative Education Provision
AEPs	Attenuating Energy Projectiles
ANIC	Association of NI Colleges
AQW	Assembly Question Written Answer
ASBO	Anti-Social Behaviour Order
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
CDSA	Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance
CiNI	Children in Northern Ireland
CJINI	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
DA	Disability Action
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DARS	Dispute Avoidance and Resolution Service
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Department of Employment and Learning
DHSSPS	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
DLA	Disability Living Allowance
DOE	Department of the Environment
DRD	Department for Regional Development
ECNI	Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
EDCM	Every Disabled Child Matters
ELB	Education and Library Board
EOTAS	Education Other Than At School
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
FE	Further Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HE	Housing Executive
HSC	Health and Social Care
HSS	Health and Social Services
HSST	Health and Social Services Trusts
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IMB	Independent Monitoring Board

JJC	Juvenile Justice Centre
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
NCB	National Children's Bureau
NDCS	National Deaf Children's Society
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NI	Northern Ireland
NICCY	Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
NICMA	Northern Ireland Child Minding Association
NIHRC	Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistic and Research Agency
NSPCC	National Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children
OCC	Office of the Children's Commissioner (UK)
OFMDFM	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
OPSC	Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
OT	Occupational Therapist
PE	Physical Education
PSI	Promoting Social Inclusion
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
SELB	Southern Education and Library Board
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENDO	Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005
SENDIST	Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal
SHSSB	Southern Health and Social Services Board
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNOCINI	Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland
YOC	Young Offenders Centre

References

- i This paper is current as of 31st October 2009. Further papers, including updates to the current paper, will be available in due course on the web.
- ii www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm
- iii Committee on the Rights of the Child (2002) Consideration of Reports and Concluding Observations GB and NI
[www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CRC.C.15.Add.188.En?OpenDocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CRC.C.15.Add.188.En?OpenDocument)
and Committee on the Rights of the Child (2008) Consideration of Reports and Concluding Observations GB and NI
www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC.C.GBR.CO.4.pdf

General Comment No 9 The rights of children with disabilities
[www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CRC.C.GC.9.En?OpenDocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CRC.C.GC.9.En?OpenDocument)
- iv HM Treasury (2007) Aiming High for Disabled Children: Better Support for Families:
www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/cyp_disabledchildren180507.pdf
- v The Children's Plan, (www.edcm.org.uk/childrensplan)
- vi Child Health Strategy 'Healthy lives, brighter futures (www.edcm.org.uk/health)
- vii NISRA (2007) First Report of the NI Survey of Activity Limitation and Disability (NISAL). NISRA, Belfast
- viii The Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 Article 5 inserts a new General duty in the 1995 Act: General duty 49A (1) Every public authority shall in carrying out its functions have due regard to (a) the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons; and (b) the need to encourage participation by disabled persons in public life
- ix Equality Commission (2008) Let's Talk Let's Listen: Guidance on public authorities on consulting and involving children and young people. ECNI: Belfast.
- x Participation Network: www.participationnetwork.org
- xi Mencap (2007). Bullying Wreck Lives: the experiences of children and young people with a learning disability
- xii Office of the Children's Commissioner (2006). Bullying Today: A report by the Office of the Children's Commissioner. London: OCC.
- xiii Contact a Family (2006) About families with disabled children, London – 90% of disabled children live at home and are supported by their families. 25% of families with disabled children say services are poor or lack co-ordination.
- xiv DHSSPS (2009) Families Matter Supporting Families in NI
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/families_matter_strategy.pdf
- xv Mencap's Breaking Point Survey found that 8 out of 10 families have reached or come close to breaking point because of a lack of short break services.

- xvi AQO 981/09 (10/11/08)
- xvii AQO 1926/09 (02/09)
- xviii OFMDFM (2009) Safeguarding Children A Cross Departmental Statement on the Protection of Children and Young People by the NI Executive. Belfast
- xix Geraghty, T. and Sinclair, R. (2007) The Daycare Needs of Disabled Young Children in NI.
- xx www.niassembly.gov.uk/centre/2007mandate/reports/responses/response%20to%20report08_07_08r.htm
- xxi www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/ssi/oss-childrens-services.htm
- xxii Ludrigsen and Morrison (2003) Breathing Space. Community Support of Children on Long Term Ventilation - Summary. Barnardos.
- xxiii McConkey., Barr. O. and Baxter, R. (2007). Complex Needs - The Nursing Response to Children and Young People with Complex Physical Health Care Needs. Belfast: Institute of Nursing Research.
- xxiv Ibid.
- xxv www.allchildrenni.gov.uk/index/ministerial-sub-committee.htm
- xxvi DHSSPS (2008) Priorities for Action 2008-09
- xxvii Mulvany, F., Barron, S. and McConkey, R. (2006) Residential provision for adult persons with intellectual disabilities in Ireland Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disability.
Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability (Northern Ireland) Equal Lives: Review of Policy and Services for People with a Learning Disability in Northern Ireland, September 2005.
- xxviii CMO (1999) Health of the Public in NI and quoted in Bamford Review Report 'A vision of a comprehensive child and adolescent mental health service'
- xxix NDCS (2005). Developing mental health services for deaf children and young people in Northern Ireland. NDCS: Belfast
- xxx Bamford Review Report (2006) A vision of a comprehensive child and adolescent mental health service
- xxxi OFMDFM (2009) Play and Leisure Policy Statement.
- xxxii Contact A Family (2008). Counting the Costs. London
- xxxiii Figures are based on deprivation measure: McLaughlin, E. and Monteith, M. (2006) Child and Family Poverty in Northern Ireland, Equality and Social Need Division, OFMDFM: Belfast
- xxxiv Dobson, B. and Middleton, S. (1998) 'Paying in Care: The cost of childhood disability'. JRF.
- xxxv Contact a Family (2006) Dealing with debt – Northern Ireland, London.
- xxxvi Preston, G (2006) Out of reach: Benefits for disabled children, London. Contact a Family/Child Poverty Action Group

- xxxvii EDCM (2007) Disabled Children and Child Poverty Briefing Paper
- xxxviii Work and pensions Committee (2004). Child Poverty in the UK, Volume 1. London: House of Commons. [pg23]
- xxxix www.niassembly.gov.uk/centre/2007mandate/reports/responses/response%20to%20report08_07_08r.htm
- xi UNESCO (2009) Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001778/177849e.pdf> and UNESCO (2005) Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001402/140224e.pdf>
- xli Equality Commission (2007). Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland. Belfast ECNI.
- xlii Burchardt, Tania. (2005). The education and employment of disabled young people. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

At age 26, the occupational outcomes of 39 per cent of disabled people were below the level to which they had aspired ten years previously, compared with 28 per cent of non-disabled people.

- xliv Department of Education (2006). School Leavers Survey. Bangor: ETI
- xlv ETI (2008) Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities in the Colleges of Further and Higher Education in Northern Ireland.
- xlv Assembly Debate, Further Education Provision for Young People with Disabilities [07.08.08] www.niassembly.gov.uk/record/reports2007/080407.htm#3
- xlvi DEL Press Release [10th June 2009] www.northernireland.gov.uk/news/news-del/news-del-100609-empsey-hails-success.htm
- xlvii DE (2004). Suspension and Expulsion Procedures. Proposals for Change. Bangor: DE.
- xlviii AQW 2960/09 In 2002/03 21% of those pupils expelled from school had SEN; this figure rose to 35% in 2004/05 and fell again to 30% in 2005/06 before rising to its highest level of 40% in 2006/07. www.niassembly.gov.uk/qanda/2007mandate/writtenans/2008/081212.htm
- xlix DE EOTAS Figures [10/08] 847 children in EOTAS Provision, 288 of which have statements of SEN.
- i DENI (ETI) (2007) Research Briefing on Alternative Education Provision in NI
- ii DENI (1998) Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs. www.deni.gov.uk/the_code_of_practice.pdf
- iii DE (2009) Policy Proposals Consultation Every School a Good School The Way Forward for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion. Bangor
- liii Assembly Question 12.09.09 (AQW 7891/09): www.niassembly.gov.uk/qanda/2007mandate/writtenans/2008/090612.htm

- liv The Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (or SENDIST) considers parents' appeals against the decisions of Education and Library Boards (Boards) about children's special educational needs, where the parents cannot reach agreement with the Board, and also deals with claims of disability discrimination in schools. www.education-support.org.uk/parents/special-education/sendist/faqs
- lv Guide to the Equality Commission's Disability Discrimination Service: www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/DisabilityDiscrim6pages08.pdf
- lvi CLC and Save the Children (2008). NGO Alternative Report to the UNCRC.
- lvii Department of Education. (2006). Future Role of the Special School. Bangor: DE.
- lviii www.nicurriculum.org.uk/inclusion_and_sen/index.asp
- lix RNIB (2006). www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ls/lisu/downloads/RNIB_textbooks_Eng.pdf
- lx NSPCC (2003) "It doesn't happen to disabled children." Report on the National Working Group on Child Protection and Disability. London: NSPCC.

Research suggests that they may be 3.1 times more likely to experience sexual abuse. (Sullivan and Knutson 2000) There is a specific vulnerability in the learning disabled and deaf populations. (Fyson, 2005) and Kennedy (1989) Power inequalities, physical vulnerability, communication differences and denial are among contributory factors. It also appears that disabled children are also less likely to receive therapeutic interventions

- lxi OFMDFM (2009) Safeguarding Children A Cross Departmental Statement on the Protection of Children and Young People by the NI Executive. Belfast
- lxii Ibid para 4.42-4.44
- lxiii NSPCC (2003) "It doesn't happen to disabled children." Report on the National Working Group on Child Protection and Disability. London: NSPCC.

Acknowledgments

CDSA would like to thank all of those organisations who contributed to the development of this manifesto. We would also like to thank Action for Children and Disability Action for covering the cost of this publication.

For further information please contact:

Children in Northern Ireland
Unit 9
40 Montgomery Road
Belfast
BT6 9HL

Telephone: 028 9040 1290
Fax: 028 9070 9418
Email: info@ci-ni.org.uk
Web: www.ci-ni.org.uk

or

Disability Action
Portside Business Park
189 Airport Road West
Belfast
BT3 9ED

Telephone: 028 9029 7880
Textphone: 028 9029 7882
Fax: 028 9029 7881
Email: hq@disabilityaction.org
Website: www.disabilityaction.org/cdsa

This document is also available, on request, in Braille,
audio, large print, computer disk, or as a pdf document.