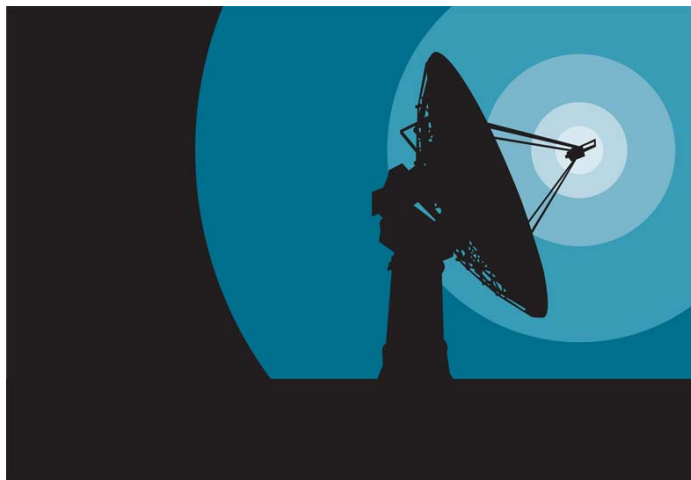


disabled
Every Child Matters



Off the Radar

how local authority plans fail disabled children

contact a family
for families with disabled children

Council for
Disabled
Children

MENCAP
Understanding learning disability

special
educational
consortium

Off the Radar

how local authority plans fail disabled children

Summary

- Very few of the new Children and Young People's Plans include any plans for disabled children even though most local authorities identify disabled children as a priority group
- Local authorities have not taken into account major changes in the numbers of disabled children in their area and their increasing needs for services
- Most local authorities have not involved either disabled children or their parents in the development of the strategic plan
- There is some planning for education but virtually none for housing or transport, both of which are of vital importance for disabled children and their families
- Most of the actions for disabled children in Children and Young People's Plans are vague, for example, 'develop integrated and responsive services'
- There is no evidence of work underway in local authorities to develop a Disability Equality Scheme which has to be published by December 06

Introduction

This paper reports on an analysis carried out by Mencap of the extent to which local authorities have included plans for disabled children in their Children and Young People Plans (CYPPs). It also examines the extent to which local authorities have integrated the CYPP process with the new duty to produce a Disability Equality Scheme. The paper highlights examples of good practice in local authority strategic planning to improve the life chances of disabled children and young people.

Background

The Children Act 2004 placed a new duty on local authorities to produce and publish an over-arching strategic plan for all children in their area by April 06. As well as the local authority services, the CYPP should cover services delivered by local partners, including health and the voluntary sector. The non-statutory guidance issued by the DfES¹ states that all local partners should be involved in developing the CYPP which should be based on the five Every Child Matters outcomes. Regulations require local authorities to consult children, young people and parents. The guidance is quite specific on disability and states that it may be necessary to arrange special events in order to consult with disabled young people.

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 placed a new duty on local authorities to develop and publish by December 06 a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) detailing how the local authority plans to meet the new Disability Equality Duty (DED). The new duty requires public authorities (for example local authorities) to eliminate unlawful discrimination and disability-related harassment and also promote equality of opportunity and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life. The Disability Equality scheme needs to specify how disabled children (and adults) have been involved in developing the scheme.

¹ Department for Education and Skills. 2005. *Every Child Matters: Change for Children - Guidance on the Children and Young People's Plan*. London: DfES.



Clearly the CYPP process provides local authorities with an opportunity to include disabled young people in the development of both the CYPP and the DES and in fact the DfES guidance suggests that this joining up would be advantageous.

Methodology

A representative sample of 20 local authorities was developed to ensure coverage of all government regions and type of authority as well as ensuring an urban/rural mix and a proportion of local authorities with a high BME population. The local authorities included in this study are:

Region	Local Authority
NE	Metropolitan Unitary
NW	Metropolitan Unitary
Yorks & Humber	Metropolitan Metropolitan
W. Mids	Shire Metropolitan
E. Mids	Shire
Eastern	Shire Unitary
London	London Borough London Borough London Borough London Borough London Borough
SE	Shire Unitary
SW	Shire Unitary

The CYPPs for these 20 local authorities have been analysed for:

- The extent to which disabled children and young people or their parents were involved in the development of the CYPP
- What specific and measurable actions for disabled children or young people are included in the CYPP
- How the CYPP interfaces with the local authority Disability Equality Scheme

Analysis

Despite the requirement to publish the CYPP and place it on the local authority website by the 1st April 06, by 1st July three of the sample of twenty local authorities had failed to publish their CYPP. Repeated phone calls to these local authorities revealed confusion about the responsibility to produce the CYPP and a lack of urgency to complete the process. In many other cases appendices and action plans that are referred to in the CYPP are neither published nor available.



This content analysis of the CYPPs only reports on actions and plans in published CYPPs and may not therefore highlight either high quality services or good practice of involving disabled children in service planning and evaluation.

Examples of specific and measurable actions for disabled children are included in boxes in each section.

Involving children and young people with a learning disability

There is limited evidence that local authorities have involved this group of children in developing the CYPP with only 6 out of 20 local authorities mentioning this type of involvement. Even when local authorities have 'gone the extra mile' the CYPP does not specify the age range or ethnicity of the disabled young people involved in the production of the CYPP or the consultation methods used. A typical comment in the CYPPs is 'we included as many people as possible, including children who are disabled'.

'I don't like being left out', a pan-region partnership initiative by social services, education, health and the voluntary sector. A needs analysis was carried out in 2004 and a five-year improvement plan is underway. 'The improvements are based on the active involvement of young people and parents in strategic and individual planning'.

Involving the parents and carers of children with a learning disability

Although the Regulations require local authorities to consult parents only 5 out of 20 CYPPs report any level of consultation with the parents of disabled children. The current vogue for developing a range of methods to facilitate the participation of children can mean that less effort is put into engaging with parents. Certainly in relation to the parents of disabled children there is little evidence of creative engagement.

Over 270 parents of disabled children provided feedback through questionnaires and face to face meetings as part of the Best Value Review. The Parents and Carers Sounding Board met to feed back further views. One of the main themes to emerge was the need for more respite support.

Needs analysis

The DfES guidance includes a strong expectation that the CYPP will be based on a robust analysis of local needs. In relation to disabled children there is very little reporting of this having taken place in any of the local authorities sampled. More typically, local authorities report on provision, for example 'we have 13 special schools' without indicating whether the demand for places in these schools is increasing or decreasing. Only 5 of the 20 CYPPs included any level of analysis of the size and characteristics of their population of disabled children.

Despite the recent introduction of PLASC to collect SEN data at a school level, only a minority of local authorities report on the number of children with SEN and even fewer report on emerging trends in the SEN population.



In contrast to the high level of reporting on teenage pregnancy rates almost none of the CYPPs report on live birth data or on the number of low birth weight babies despite the requirement to involve health in the CYPP process.

National epidemiological studies confirm the changing population of disabled children with more profoundly disabled children surviving and requiring high levels of local authority and health services throughout their childhood. In areas with a high BME population there is not only an increasing birth rate but also a high rate of childhood disability, particularly learning disability.

From this representative sample of local authorities it is clear that there are serious gaps in the data local authorities have in order to be in a position to plan effective services for children with a leaning disability and their families. There is no real evidence from these CYPPs that local authorities are taking cognisance of the changing population of disabled children in their area and the implications of these changes for local service delivery.

One local authority reports on the 'increasing number of babies in their area surviving with complex needs and requiring technological support' but does not report on actual data or clarify the extent of this trend. This CYPP does report that '155 children and young people are known to paediatric therapy services' and that there are 240 care packages provided by the children with disabilities social care team. This CYPP also states that the number of children attending special schools is rising.

Early years, childcare, and extended schools

With a 10 year national childcare strategy it might have been expected that the CYPPs would include some specific and measurable planned actions to develop childcare services for disabled children. Although several CYPPs anticipate the new duties included in the Childcare Act 2006 by stating that they would 'ensure sufficient provision', only one of them includes any actions to achieve this objective.

Plans for early years services are slightly stronger, for example 'all SENCOs in early years settings to have successfully completed Advanced Core Training'. Only 2 out of 20 refer to disabled children in their plans for extended schools.

One CYPP includes a clear timeline for delivery sufficient childcare 'with a particular focus on the needs of disabled children' so that a baseline is established, a target number of places is agreed and new childcare places developed in target areas.

Education

Education is a stronger area for the CYPPs sampled with 13 out of 20 CYPPs including actions for SEN/disabled children. There is reporting of work underway on a range of issues: building new special schools, reducing the reliance on statements and raising achievement.

In terms of future plans there was a substantial focus in the CYPPs on reducing the number of exclusions of children with SEN but with very little detail of the strategies to be deployed. Another area of focus was that of reducing the numbers of children educated out of authority but in the absence of a robust needs analysis this target



appeared to relate to the need to reduce costs rather than improve the outcomes for disabled children.

‘The performance of pupils with SEN will be tracked to ensure that they achieve to their maximum potential’. The CYPP also states that participation in school councils at special schools has increased. Disabled children and young people are to ‘have improved access to schools delivered through the Building Schools for the Future programme’. 100% of statements will be completed on time.

Social care

With the development of children’s services directorates in most local authority’s plans for social care are not always separated out in the CYPPs. In many cases disabled children are identified as a priority group, but only 1 in 13 disabled children currently receive a social care service².

In this sample of 20 local authorities only 12 of the CYPPs include plans for services for disabled children and the planned actions are mostly far from specific, for example, ‘develop integrated and responsive services’.

There is an Integrated Children with Disabilities Project Board and a Specialist Services Business Plan. KPIs have been agreed (but not reported in the CYPP) for the % of disabled children who receive a service, the % uptake of direct payments and the % of disabled children who receive respite care.

Health and public health

For disabled children and young people there is some evidence of joint planning with health at a strategic level with 7 out of 20 CYPPs reporting measurable actions. Several areas plan to develop CAMHS for children and young people with a learning disability.

There is however a general lack of health-based data even though some plans refer to the increasing numbers of children with complex health needs. Several CYPPs are candid about local provision; for example, ‘children with disabilities do not have access to a co-ordinated range of appropriately responsive health services’.

One CYPP has been written to link with priorities in the PCT Local Delivery Plans with disabled children as a local priority for improving life chances. One of the key objectives is to reduce health inequalities. One measure of progress is to be an increase in the number of services offered through pooled budgets.

Transition and youth services

The government’s green paper, Youth Matters, was launched while local authorities were developing their CYPPs. Despite the coverage of disabled young people in this green paper there is very little focus on youth services for disabled young

² Commission for Social Care Inspection. 2005. *Social Services Performance Assessment Framework Indicators (Pg89-90)*. London: CSCI/ONS



people in CYPPs. Only 5 out of 20 of the CYPPs even refer to disabled young people in their plans for youth services. Typically local authorities refer to plans to 'develop a transition policy' or mention existing partnership arrangements without specifying clear actions designed to improve the life chances of disabled young people.

The Cool Kids group aims to support disabled young people to take part in decision making and there is a target to 'improve the evidence that children and young people have communicated their views in the SEN review process'. There is also a target that by March 07, 84% of all relevant young people have a multi-agency pathway plan.

Lifelong Learning

Local authorities have to report on plans for young people with learning difficulties up to 25 and indeed 8 out of 20 of the CYPPs report on lifelong learning for this group. Many of the CYPPs report on NEETs (young people not in education, employment) with several referring to the high numbers of disabled young people in this NEET group. The widely stated objective to reduce the number of NEETs in their area is not matched by specific and measurable actions.

A smaller number of local authorities refer to their plans to review their post 16 provision and for colleges to develop 'inclusive provision'.

In one CYPP priority to 'achieve economic well-being', children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified as a priority group. The target is an increase in the number of young people with disabilities in employment through improving the support for students in work experience.

Housing, planning and regeneration

Given the vital importance of appropriate housing for families with a disabled child, especially those with a profound and multiple learning disability it is of concern that plans for these children do not feature in CYPPs. Overall in the CYPPs housing gets very little coverage and only 1 out of 20 has any housing actions for disabled children or young people. None of the CYPPs in this sample refer to the recent changes to the Disabled Facilities Grant.

One CYPP has as a key action, in relation to children and young people living in safe and suitable homes, 'the improved provision for disabled young people who want to live independently'.

Advice and guidance

The Youth Matters green paper published in July 2005 has a substantial focus on information, advice and guidance and it might have been expected to see this reflected in CYPPs. In relation to disabled young people only 3 out of 20 plans refer to advice and guidance.

There are also very few references to the Parent Partnership or mediation services that have been developed in virtually all areas for the parents of children with SEN.



Some CYPPs state that specialist advice and guidance will be developed for parents of disabled children and one local authority has an ambitious target to ensure that it has 'all relevant information in an accessible format'.

One local authority reports on a Parent's Forum for all parents of disabled children and that both parents and children were surveyed as part of the CYPP process. A target included in the CYPP is 'that all parents in the area with a disabled child receive regular information'.

Traffic and transport

Transport is a vital component in supporting disabled children to access their local community but it receives scant attention in these CYPPs. There is not a single example of a planned action in relation to traffic or transport to enable disabled children to improve their life chances.

Links between the CYPP and the Disability Equality Scheme

As local authorities are required to publish their Disability Equality Scheme (DES) by December 06 it is surprising that none of the CYPPs refer to the local process for developing a scheme. The opportunity for involving disabled children and young people in both the CYPP and the DES appears to have been lost with the attendant risk of parallel and costly consultation having to take place to meet the DDA 2005 requirements for involving disabled children.

None of the 20 local authorities refer to the actions they are taking to meet the new Disability Equality Duty in their CYPP.

One CYPP states that they 'will eliminate unlawful discrimination as required under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005'.

Conclusions

Although some local authorities link their CYPP with their Accessibility Plan or their SEN Policy there is virtually no evidence of linkage with work in progress on the Disability Equality Scheme.

Despite the fact that most local authorities identify disabled young people as a priority group, in their CYPP there is a real paucity of specific and measurable action planned for this group of young people. There is evidence of more planning for education for the wider group of SEN/disabled children. Housing and transport are the areas with the least evidence of planning to meet the needs of disabled children and their families.

There is very limited evidence that local authorities have conducted a robust needs analysis or fully involved parents or disabled young people in the development of the CYPP.

There are clear indications that local authorities are struggling in their CYPP to relate their plans for disabled children to the five Every Child Matters outcomes. Many CYPPs simply re-state the outcome, for example, 'ECM Outcome: Make a



Positive Contribution; we will ensure that disabled young people make a positive contribution'.

Even allowing for the fact that CYPPs are strategic plans and not detailed action plans there are very few specific plans for disabled children that are capable of being measured and monitored. The overall lack of measurable actions for disabled children will make it difficult to evaluate the delivery of the CYPP by parents, disabled young people, local partners, or Ofsted.

Recommendations

- Ofsted to monitor the delivery of CYPPs through the Joint Area Review process, with a specific focus on disabled children
- The DfES to issue guidance to local authorities clarifying the importance of including disabled children and their parents within the CYPP planning process
- The DfES to issue guidance to local authorities and their partners to promote better practice in collating sound data as a basis for local strategic planning for disabled children and young people
- The DfES issue examples of good practice in using the Every Child Matters outcomes to plan service improvements for disabled children and their parents
- This report be made available to local authorities through the Every Child Matters website
- The ADSS Disabled Child Network considers this report and proposes ways of improving CYPPs for disabled children and their families

October 2006

