

# Promoting inclusion

## Designer Children's Centre

### Introduction

Parents of disabled children can find it difficult to take part in consultation exercises as much of their time can be taken up caring for their child. These parents will have different priorities for services depending on their child's needs.

Contact a Family have designed this workshop for consulting with parents of disabled children. It is simple to replicate, lasts approximately two hours, can be adapted for local circumstances and is fun and easy for parents to participate in. This type of workshop can be used to generate ideas and find out views of families with disabled children on how to develop children's centres or child development centres to meet their needs.

After completion of the workshop, the parents ideas, suggestions and priorities can be summarised into a report to aid the decision making process.

### Format

This workshop works well with 10 to 20 parents, preferably from a range of backgrounds and conditions and takes approximately two hours. Alternatively, it can be run with one small group of parents in 1.5 to 2 hours.

Timings are approximate.

On the day:

- 1) Introduction: 5 minutes
- 2) Designer centre exercise: 1 hour  
Tea/coffee break: 20 minutes
- 3) Feedback: 20 minutes (not needed if running as one small group)
- 4) What next?: 10 mins

After event:

- 5) Summarising into a report - half a day

## 1) Introduction: 5 mins

Explain aims: You want the centre to be accessible and provide support to all families. You would like the parents' help to find out how you can best do that. The day will not be formal, very relaxed and hopefully fun. You want to hear everyone's ideas as different people will have different needs of services, depending on their individual circumstances.

Let participants know what will be done with the information gathered from the day, what feedback they will receive and the likely time scale.

Explain method: Parents will be working in small groups. Each group will be given a plan of a brand new, as yet unequipped centre and a series of questions about what they would like to see happen there. You want them to write/draw the answers to the questions on the building plan and on the handouts.

Warn them you will be listening to them as they work. By listening to their discussions you will learn more about the problems they face, which you can feed back to others. In designing the centre the parents are likely to talk about their own experiences of services, in particular bad ones. It helps to allow parents to air these briefly, and then ask how the centre could prevent these problems occurring, say by providing information to parents, or having professionals available there.

## 2) Designer centre: suggest parents allow approx 10 mins a question *(Keep checking they don't spend too long on one question)*

Parents initially work in small groups – optimum number is 5. Parents can begin by briefly introducing themselves to each other. Each group is provided with a basic building plan on a piece of flip chart paper containing:

- Waiting area including large empty children's play area
- Crèche/nursery
- Toilets
- Consulting room
- Family support room
- Information area
- Training room / Meeting room

*A suggested layout is provided in Table 1 at the end of this document.*

They are also provided with pens and glue, various coloured post-its, so they can all write their ideas down and stick on layout.

Handouts contain the following questions (you can leave some out if not relevant).

**Questions:****a) Accessibility**

First of all we want you to make sure the centre is accessible for families with disabled children. Look at each area in turn and draw in, or use post-its to illustrate what would be needed so families with disabled children could make use of the facilities at this centre.

**b) Information**

We want the centre to provide information around any aspect of caring for a child, as well as accessing support for parents. Please write down in the **information area** or use post-its to indicate what type of information and advice you would like to find at the centre and in what format.

**c) Professionals / clinics**

1) We would like to be able to provide local services that would be useful to you. Please use the colour post-its to put in the **consulting room** details of ALL THE TYPES of clinics and professionals you like to see working at this centre.

2) It might not be possible to have all these professionals/clinics available at the centre. Agree amongst yourselves which three should have the highest priority and write down your reasons here.

**d) Family support room**

1) The **family support room** will be available for families to receive one to one confidential advice. What type of advice would you like to be able to access here?

2) It might not be possible to provide all of these. Please indicate which would be most useful and write down your reasons here.

**e) Large training room / meeting room**

1) How would you like to see this room used? What sorts of events would you like to see happening in this room? Write down in the **training / meeting room** all the events you would like to see taking place here.

2) Imagine there is a limited budget. Agree amongst yourselves which three events you most want to take place and write down your reasons here.

**Tea/coffee break: 20 mins****3) Feedback: 20 mins (This is not needed if running as one small group)**

If possible tape record this session or have colleague make notes. It is not necessary to record what they ask for as you will be taking their designs away with you. However **it helps to ask and write down the reasons behind what parents are asking for** e.g. the reason they might want a shower in the toilets is because their child is doubly incontinent.

The feedback of designs can be done in two ways – depending on the number of groups.

If there are only 2-3 groups then ask each group to present their design to everyone else. It helps if everyone looks at the designs as this happens. They will discover that some of what they ask for is common, but some groups will have thought of different ideas. Also they are likely to have different priorities.

If there are 3 or more groups it is better to gather everyone together and go through each question in turn. Begin by asking one group what they have put down for accessibility, and then ask other groups if they had anything else to add – they will. Then repeat for all the other questions – making sure you note down what each group's priorities were for the consulting room, the interview room and the training/meeting room.

#### **4) End: What next?**

All the different designs and handouts are gathered in. It helps if you collect each set of designs/handouts in separate plastic bags, so if post-its fall out you know which design they belong to.

Explain how the information in their designs will be used to write a report. It might help to show them an example of a report done from a similar workshop with different parents (see table 3).

Let them know what will happen next. I would normally send them all copies of the report generated - let them know when this is likely to happen.

Explain who else will receive the report e.g. local service provider.

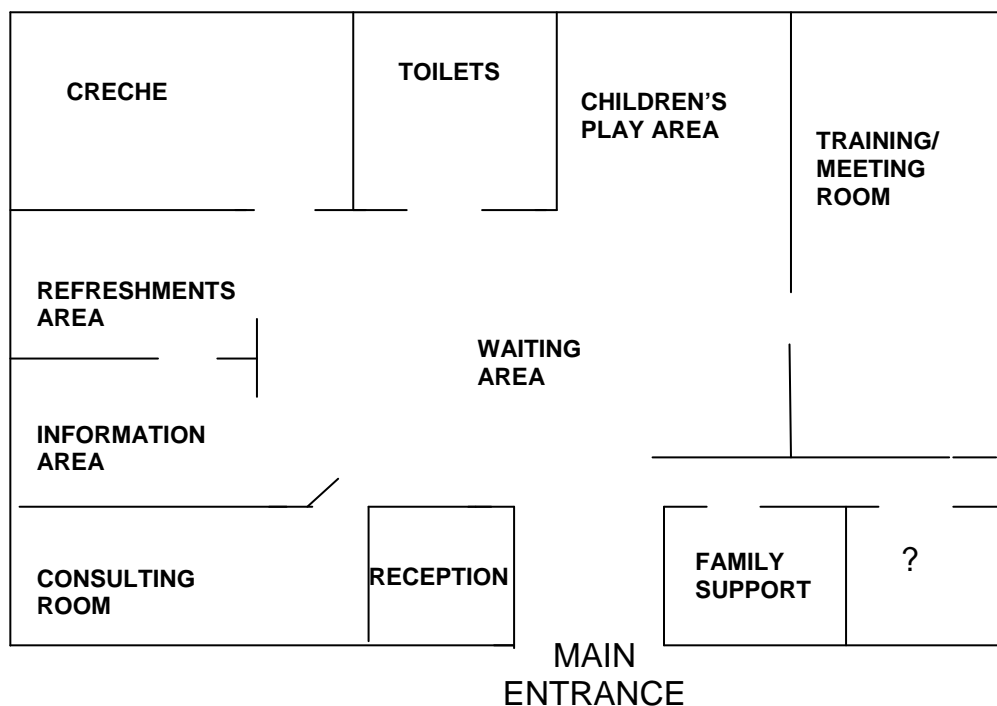
Thank them for their hard work and invaluable assistance.

#### **5) Writing the report**

1. Take each group's design in turn and for each question itemise what has been asked for.
2. Make a note of how often the same thing has been asked for by different groups. If all the groups have asked for the same thing, then this indicates many other parents might also benefit it.
3. This information is then used to as the basis for writing a report. A summary of the findings of a similar workshop that took place recently is shown in table 3.
4. Remember - different parents will request different things. Running this workshop with parents of children with different conditions, different localities and different cultures will generate different answers.

Contact a Family is interested in collecting feedback from these events to disseminate to other centres. Please email your reports to [karen.robinson@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:karen.robinson@cafamily.org.uk)

**Table 1 - Suggested skeleton layout of centre**



**Table 2 - Example of Excel spreadsheet – Interview room**

<b>Confidential one-to-one advice</b>	<b>number groups</b>
Behaviour management	1
Benefits & welfare rights	2
Children's rights worker	1
Citizens Advice Bureaux worker	1
Counselling - inc. relationship and bereavement	4
Education - SEN advocacy	3
Employment - Job Centre officer	1
Family planning advisor	1
Family support worker	1
Parenting advice	1
Peer support	1
Social worker	3
Teenage Pregnancy Advisory Service	1

**Table 3**  
**Summary of findings from a workshop that took place in 2006**

- The parents / workers repeatedly said that making a building wheelchair accessible was not sufficient on its own for the centre to be truly accessible for families. There were many other requirements especially around toilet and changing facilities.
- Information and advice around welfare benefits and education support were high on their agenda. They also wanted help with accessing other local services especially counselling for carers.
- Therapies highlighted were occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech and language therapy and all four groups would like a presence from CAMHS.
- Opportunities for parents to meet others, either through drop-in sessions or through more formal groups were popular. Suggestions for training, included help with parenting skills and accessing specialist support.