

Local campaigning

group action pack

Campaigning for change

Parent support groups want the best local services for their members and all other families who have children with additional needs. To achieve this, some groups get involved in local campaigning; this can entail any of the following:

- raising awareness of the needs of families who have children with disabilities or additional needs;
- changing the way individuals or agencies deliver a service to families;
- trying to get a new or better service;
- trying to prevent the closure of a valued service.

This guide has been written for groups who are interested, or already involved, in campaigning locally. It contains ideas to help you run an effective campaign about the issues that matter most to the families in your area.

What do you want to campaign about?

The quality of services on offer to families differs from area to area and the changes your group would like to make will depend on local needs. However, there are some problems which parents commonly report:

- a diagnosis being given insensitively, with no follow-up support or information;
- case reviews putting parents in an inferior position, even though they are the expert on their child;
- no single information point to help parents, who tend to find out what is available by accident;

contact a family
for families with disabled children

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incorporating
The Lady Hoare Trust

- insufficient provision of short-term breaks;
- lack of play provision in the school holidays;
- insufficient therapy services for disabled children.

Before your group embarks on a local campaign, consider the following:

1. Is a campaign really needed?

- Are you sure there are no plans to provide a service or tackle a concern? At the moment, there are many changes taking place in the delivery of services for disabled children and their families and it is worth double-checking that new developments are not in the pipeline.
- Your group may be able to talk directly to decision-makers to discuss concerns and find a resolution – this might mean a full campaign is not needed.
- Check whether you have a Parent Forum or Parent Carer Council in your area. Could they speak on your behalf? Are they already addressing the issues your group is concerned about?

Parent Forums and Parent Participation

Traditionally, parents start or join local groups as a way of sharing information and offering each other support. Bringing about improvements in local services is also a key role for groups, usually by campaigning and taking action to further a specific cause.

Increasingly, individual parents are being asked to sit on working groups and committees in order to shape services for disabled children and their families. Parents in some areas have taken this a step further and created **Parent Forums** (sometimes known as Parent Carer Councils) to bring about change. Parent Forums work in partnership with local service providers and have representatives sitting on strategic planning groups to ensure the voices of local families are heard. This is an on-going process known as **parent participation**. Parent Participation is not time-limited in the way running a campaign is.

More information about parent participation can be found in Contact a Family's guide '**Parent Participation - improving services for disabled children**'. Copies can be downloaded free of charge from the Contact a Family website at:

<http://www.cafamily.org.uk/influenceresources.html>

Or call 020 7608 8700 to order your free copy.

If there is no existing Parent Forum in your area, you might wish to start one. If you are interested in knowing more about what is involved, please contact:

Liz Ranger, Parent Participation Manager

Telephone number: 020 7608 8784

Email: liz.ranger@cafamily.org.uk

- Check whether there are any national campaigns focussing on the issues your group would like to tackle. See whether you can feed your views into this campaign and make changes at a national level. If you would like to make a difference locally, see whether the national campaign can support you with ideas, information and resources.

2. Do a number of people feel strongly about what is happening?

Individuals may feel passionately about a particular issue but this does not mean everybody else does - embarking on a campaign in these circumstances will be counter-productive and a waste of time, effort and group resources. Running a campaign takes time and energy and your group will need the support of others. Parents will be more committed to pressing for change if the cause is one they care about.

What are your aims?

Once your group has decided that a campaign is needed, you need to be very clear about your aims. This means agreeing on exactly what you want to change, the difference you want to make and how this will be achieved. For example, if you decide to campaign about the lack of playschemes for disabled children in your area, are you asking your local authority to take direct action, or do you want to increase awareness of the issue in order to raise money so your group can run a playscheme?

- Your aims must also be realistic and achievable within the resources that are available locally. For example, a cause which costs £10,000 is reasonable where there is a local budget of £250,000. One which costs £200,000 is not.
- It can be helpful to agree on the targets that are essential to reach, as well as ones you would be prepared to compromise on.
- When you are clear about what you want, make sure everyone involved knows what the campaign aims are and agrees with what you want to accomplish.

Preparing your case

Getting together all the information you need to support your case is crucial. Successful campaigns are based on convincing evidence.

Step 1 – Do your research

It is important to research your case as this might alter what you want out of your campaign. For example, initially your group may want to campaign against the closure of a particular service but your research might show that the service is very inefficiently run and in actual fact, does not meet many families' needs. In this case, rather than campaigning to keep the service open, you might decide to campaign for a newly designed service which better meets the needs of local families.

Step 2 – Why is your campaign important?

As parents of disabled children, your group will fully understand why your cause is important and why change is needed. The arguments you put forward will be very logical and obvious to you, but the people you are trying to influence will have other priorities and will need to be convinced. Use your research to illustrate why change is so vital and help persuade others.

Step 3 – Gather your evidence

If you can produce solid evidence, it is much harder for people to ignore what you are saying. Examples of evidence you might want to collect are:

- real-life stories that show how local families are affected and demonstrate that what you are saying is true;
- statistics that illustrate how many families/disabled children are affected by the situation you are campaigning about;
- financial information which shows how much a service costs, how much money would be saved if changes were made;
- local policy guidelines covering your area of concern;
- published research that supports your case;
- national policy guidance or legislation regarding the service you are concerned about and on families with disabled children in general – you can find examples of helpful guidance and legislation on page 19.

Wherever possible, try to base your case-studies and figures on real-life situations - this will have a stronger impact. Make sure all your information is accurate and based on hard facts.

Who do you want to involve?

Targeting your campaign at the right people is crucial. The important people to talk to are the key decision makers in your area – these are the people with the power to make changes.

Most decisions about services for families with disabled children are made by the local council and health service providers. Each service has its own structure and there will be key decision makers in each - it is essential to find out exactly who can make the difference you are asking for. You can find more information about the structure of local councils and health services in England, and who best to target, on page 14.

Getting your message across takes time and patience but be persistent and momentum will soon build.

It is also always worth checking among your supporters for possible friends and allies to help in your campaign. These might include:

- a local councillor
- professional workers who empathise with your aims
- a local carers' centre
- your Member of Parliament (MP) or Member of European Parliament (MEP)
- the local media
- local voluntary organisations working with children
- other local parents' groups
- a local Parents' Forum or Parent Carers' Council

How do you want to campaign?

There are many different ways to convince key decision makers to make the changes you want. Some activities will be more appropriate for your campaign than others. You should consider:

- how much time you have available;
- how much money you have to spend;
- how many people are able to work with you on the campaign.

Writing letters

Letter writing is one of the most effective ways to campaign. The advantages are:

- you can write directly to the main decision makers and people who can really help you;

- you can make sure your letter contains all the important points about your campaign and sets out all the changes you would like to see;
- you can provide a sample letter which your group members and supporters can use to ensure everyone is sending out the same message;
- you can also write to local organisations who might join your campaign and offer their support;
- letters can be both posted and emailed;
- the costs involved are relatively low.

The more people you can get to send a letter, the better, as this shows the cause you are campaigning about is important to many people locally.

Posters

Posters are an easy way to get information about your campaign across to a large number of people. They are also useful when you are trying to gain support for a petition.

An effective poster contains a small amount of information that lets people know:

- what you are campaigning about;
- how families are affected;
- how to get more information and become involved.

Leaflets

Leaflets are also a valuable way of getting information across to a wide audience. They enable you to give people a little more detail but in a way that is easy to read and 'short and snappy'. A leaflet can tell people:

- what you are campaigning about and why;
- how to support your campaign;
- who is running the campaign – here you can give some brief information about your support group;
- how they can help in the running of your campaign.

Personal quotes and stories on posters and leaflets are a good way to illustrate the problems your campaign is tackling – real-life stories always make an impact.

Petitions

A petition is a list of people's signatures – each signature represents a member of the public who believes in your campaign. Petitions demonstrate volume of support very

clearly. They also enable people to show their support for your campaign swiftly and easily, as all they need to do is sign their name and add their address.

- It is quick and simple to put together a petition. All you need is a document with a short, clear statement about what your campaign wants to achieve at the top and space for people to write their names and addresses underneath.
- Once you have drawn up your petition, you need to get your signatures! Think of all the places families of disabled children are likely to visit (for example, schools, nurseries, Children's Centres, Child Development Centres) and ask whether you can stand in the main entrance with your petition. Alternatively, see whether they will keep your petition in a prominent place so people can sign it in their own time.
- If you have produced leaflets and posters, hand these out to people, or have them on display, so people can learn more about your campaign.
- Although you will want to show enthusiasm for your cause, do not put undue pressure on people to sign your petition, otherwise this may create a bad impression of your campaign.
- If you hold any public meetings to tell people about your campaign, don't forget to bring the petition along for signatures.
- Keep the petition in a safe place when it is not in use.
- Once you have gathered all your signatures, you can send your petition to anyone, including your local council and MP. However, if you are planning to send your petition to parliament or to government ministers, there are strict rules about what to do. Your local MP will be able to give you more information; further details can also be found on the Houses of Parliament website at:

http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_publications_and_archives/publicpetitions.cfm

Online campaigning (e-campaigning)

As more and more people have access to the internet, online campaigning is becoming an increasingly popular and effective means of pressing for change.

- As well as producing leaflets and posters to give people more information, you might want to have a website for your campaign, or include a specific webpage about it on your group's website.
- Petitions don't just have to be written down on paper, you can also set up an email petition. Just save a copy of an email that contains all the information about your campaign and what you want to achieve and send it out to people so they can add their names to the end and return it to you.
- There are some websites which enable you to create your own e-campaign and allow people to sign online petitions, send messages of support and find out more about your activities and how they can help. If your group is interested in e-campaigning, three websites that might be of interest are:

<http://www.voiceyourviews.net>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork/>

<http://www.ipetitions.com/>

- Social networking websites (like Facebook) are also an effective way to spread the word about your campaign and attract supporters.

Demonstrations

Holding a demonstration can be a very good way to show just how many people support your campaign and the depth of feeling involved.

- If you want to make a big impact, you will need a large number of people to join in your demonstration.
- Holding an effective demonstration takes a great deal of organisation, you will need to make sure everyone involved knows:
 - where it will be taking place;
 - when it will be taking place;
 - whether they need to bring placards, banners, whistles etc;
 - what you will be doing during the demonstration. Are you marching to a particular venue, are you staying in one spot (like outside a council building), will the demonstration end with an activity (like releasing balloons, handing over a petition)?
- Talk to your local newspaper/s before the demonstration so they can send reporters and photographers to cover the story.
- Be aware that demonstrations can sometimes get out of hand and may do more harm than good. Always make it clear to everyone taking part that they will be expected to abide by the law.

An important note about police permission

You have a democratic right to hold a demonstration or protest and this is protected under the Human Rights Act. However, your demonstration may be subject to certain conditions:

- If your demonstration involves people gathering in a public location (which is at least partly outdoors), you do not have to get permission in advance. **However**, an exception to this has been introduced as a part of the Serious and Organised Crime and Police Act 2005. This act bans people from demonstrating in any area designated by the government, including the square kilometre around the Houses of Parliament. If you wish to demonstrate in this area, you must receive authorisation from the Metropolitan Police at least 24 hours beforehand, otherwise you can be arrested.

For more information visit: http://www.met.police.uk/events/protest_march.htm or call the Public Order Branch on 020 7230 9801.

- If you are planning to organise a protest march, the law says you must give the local police at least 6 days warning, no matter where the march is taking place. Contact your local police station for more information.

Working with your MP

Your MP is elected to represent everyone living in your local area (which is also known as a constituency). MPs can sometimes be a powerful influence on those making local decisions, particularly if they are in the same political party. They can write to represent your views or ask questions of GPs, service managers and local benefits offices. They can also bring publicity to your case as the local media is always interested in the local MPs' views and activities.

MPs can also take up your case on a national level by presenting issues in Parliament or taking up matters with the relevant government minister or department.

You can find out who your MP is by visiting:

<http://www.theyworkforyou.com>

This website also allows you to see your MP's voting record and you can sign up for email alerts which will let you know whenever they are due to speak.

The website **<http://www.writetothem.com>** will also give you information on your local MPs and councillors.

If you do not have access to the internet, you can call the information offices at the House of Commons on 020 7219 4272. All they need is your postcode and they will be able to tell you the name of your MP and connect you to their office.

Visiting your MP

A personal discussion with your MP is best if you can manage it.

MPs hold regular 'surgeries' in their constituencies. Details of these are sometimes advertised in the local paper or can be obtained from the town hall or local party headquarters. It is best to write beforehand to let your MP know what you wish to discuss.

The following points will be of help:

- If you are going as a group to see an MP, ensure that you all live in his/her constituency as MPs will only take up issues from their own constituents;
- decide in advance who will speak about which issue;
- do not argue on a party political basis – seek to persuade, not to confront;

- be clear on your facts and keep to the point – it is likely you will only have 15-20 minutes;
- include your personal experience if you can, as this makes the most impact;
- at the end of your meeting, confirm what your MP has said they will do and thank them for seeing you. Write to them afterwards to thank them again and to remind them of the action they said they would take.

If the MP does not hold surgeries, you could invite him/her along to a group meeting.

Writing to your MP

If you cannot visit, it is worth writing to your MP. If you do this:

- make sure you spell your MP's name correctly;
- be polite, not aggressive;
- present your problem clearly and say what you would like the MP to do about it;
- keep to the point – bear in mind that your MP will receive many letters each day and may not be able to spend a lot of time reading each one;
- if several people are writing to the same MP, make the letters individual and not copies of each other – provide different personal examples;
- remember that MPs are supposed to reply to every letter they receive. If you do not receive a response then write again and remind them that you have written before.

You can write to your MP at his/her constituency office or at:

Rt Hon [enter your MP's name] MP

The House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA

Member of European Parliament (MEP)

MEPs work in the European Parliament in Brussels. They represent the people living in their constituency in the same way a MP does but they cover a bigger geographical area. The European Parliament considers very different issues and may be able to help if the British government is not doing the things you want it to. You can also ask your MEP to support your campaign if it is of interest to the European Union, especially if you are focussing on equality and human rights.

You can find out who your MEP is by visiting:

<http://www.europarl.eu.int/members/public.do> .

They will also be listed in your local phone directory or the yellow pages.

Political contacts

Don't forget to check if any of your members belong to a local political party. Local party activists can raise issues at meetings and put resolutions which then go forward to councillors of the same party. Be careful, though, not to allow your group to become identified too closely with one political party. Always aim for cross party support - this is particularly important if you are campaigning as a registered charity.

Working with the local media

Involving the local media is one of the best (and most cost-effective) ways of letting people know about your campaign. It is also helpful to involve them if you are working with local councillors and MPs, as they are always keen to have favourable press.

Before you talk to the media, you must ensure you are able to answer the following questions:

1. What is your campaign about?
2. Why is it happening?
3. Who is involved?
4. What are your aims?
5. How are you going to achieve your aims (what is your strategy)?
6. What will you be doing and when?
7. How can people get involved?

Don't forget to approach local radio, local TV stations, county magazines and free sheets, as well as local papers. Find out whether anyone in your group has experience of dealing with the media or knows people in the industry who may be able to help.

You might like to consider:

- writing a letter to the press about your cause (mark it "for publication");
- contacting a relevant reporter (for example, one with an interest in health or family issues) and letting them have updates on your campaign;
- offering to talk on local radio shows about the issues surrounding your campaign;
- issuing news releases at each stage of your campaign to involve the media and the public and to keep your targets on their toes. For more information about producing a news release see the Contact a Family Group Action Pack guide '**Writing a news release**'.

Timing can be very important - for example, if the local council makes a decision which impacts on your campaign, this would be a crucial time to contact the local media as there will be heightened interest in the issues you are concerned about.

Working with celebrities

It can be helpful to involve a local celebrity in your campaign; this can generate more interest from the media and the general public and raise the profile of your cause.

- Choose your local celebrity carefully – try to pick a celebrity who is both well known and well liked, otherwise they may have a negative impact on your campaign;
- make sure your local celebrity is genuinely interested in your campaign and agrees with what you are trying to achieve;
- always keep them up to date with your campaign and be very clear about what you would like them to do.

Again, one of your group members might have useful contacts who can help you get in touch with a particular celebrity.

Campaign tactics

The tactics you choose for your campaign will depend on your local circumstances. The following case study illustrates the possibilities for a local campaign. It is based on an actual example but modified to illustrate the points in this guide.

Case study

Cause: A local parents' group was concerned about the long waiting list for portage as children were losing out on help at a vital stage of their development. They decided to campaign for an extra portage worker who would absorb the whole waiting list.

Evidence: Portage in early years has a significant effect on children's development and supports parents constructively. The group cited recent research. The educational psychologist also supported this view.

Realistic objective: The group worked out that it would cost the council £15,000 to employ a worker to cover the waiting list - a small amount compared to other services and a long-term saving on educational costs.

Strategy: The group identified a councillor who, as trustee of a local opportunity group, was sympathetic. She gave them some inside information about the council and how and who to contact. She was also primed to ask questions in key budget meetings.

Following a letter to the local MP, a delegation of five parents went to see him at his surgery. The MP received them with understanding.

The group also wrote to every councillor a week before the meeting of the Education Committee. On the day of the meeting a number of supporters handed out leaflets outside the Town Hall and made sure every councillor was aware of their case. Placards were prepared to create a good picture for the local paper who had been informed in advance.

No decisions were taken at this meeting but it looked like there was a possibility the outcome would be favourable. Consequently, the group issued a press release saying how pleased they were with the Education Committee's sympathetic response. They also mentioned the MP's response.

At the next Education Committee meeting they repeated the tactics but this time had a bigger crowd of about 30 supporters.

Result: The Council appointed an extra portage worker.

Key contacts – England

The structure of services for disabled children and their families is not always straightforward. The person in charge of a particular service and the key decision makers might not be as obvious as it would first appear; transport for disabled children usually comes under the remit of education, for example.

Targeting the correct people is very important when you are campaigning - some examples of key contacts are given below. Always check that you have identified the correct agency or organisation responsible for the changes you want to see.

Your local authority

A local authority is another term for a local council. Local councils are central to many public services such as welfare, education, housing, transport and leisure. The structure of local councils varies depending on the part of England you live in. However, all councils are made up of **councillors** and **paid employees**.

Councillors

Councillors are elected by local residents to represent the people living in a particular area. They are responsible for making key policy decisions, like the types of services local authorities should provide and how much money/resources each department should be given. They also ensure that paid employees within the local authority are doing their jobs well.

Some councillors have responsibility for a specific service; these councillors are known as **lead members**. You may hear people referring to the lead member for social services or the lead member for children's services. In some areas, lead members are known as **cabinet members**.

The support of councillors can really benefit your campaign as they can:

- take up individual cases with officers and discuss issues with their political colleagues;
- speak out on your behalf in committees and council meetings;
- attract local media interest if they meet with your group.

Paid employees

Council officers and other paid employees carry out decisions made by the councillors. They work in different departments such as social services, housing and transport.

Senior Council Officers

Senior council officers are in charge of each department within the local council, they usually have the title of Director, for example, **Director of Social Services, Director of Children's Services**. Senior officers should be able to give you information about how much money their department is spending and their plans for local services (for example, any new services in development or any closures).

Senior council officers also give advice to councillors, make recommendations to them and make sure the decisions of the councillors are carried out.

Local Authority Chief Executive

The chief executive is in charge of the whole local authority. It is their job to make sure all the departments in the council carry out the work the councillors have decided needs to be done.

The chief executive manages all the senior council officers so it can be useful to talk to them if you are not getting a co-operative response from a particular department.

If your campaign involves several council departments, the chief executive would be a key person to inform about your campaign.

Changes in Children's Services

Over the past couple of years, the way children's services are delivered has started to change; this is mainly because of a government programme called **Every Child Matters** and the **Children Act 2004** (see page 19 for more information).

By 2008, all local authorities **must** have both a **lead member for children's services** and a **Director of Children's Services**. Some councils already have these people in place and they would be key contacts for your campaign.

The lead member and Director of Children's Services are responsible for ensuring the council, and all other local agencies working with children and their families, co-operate with each other and work jointly. In some areas, something called a **Children's Trust** has been formed to achieve this; this might be referred to as an **Integrated Children's Services Team** in some areas, or an **Integrated Children's Services Partnership**. This new way of working may affect who is responsible for running a particular service and therefore have an effect on who you target in your campaign.

The terminology used for local government bodies will also start to change, for example, the body with responsibility for education used to be the local education authority (LEA). However, as all children's services start to integrate, the term LEA will no longer formally exist – your local authority may have already stopped using it.

Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP)

Every local authority has a duty to produce a Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) which sets out how services for children and their families will be delivered; identifies priorities and gaps in services; and demonstrates how agencies will work together to

provide services which meet the local needs of children and their families. CYPPs should put children, young people and their families at the heart of planning services and they **must** be involved in drawing up the plan.

If you have not seen the CYPP for your area, contact your local authority for a copy – they can often be downloaded from the local authority's website too. The plan can be a very useful campaign tool as it will highlight the areas of priority – if they are the same issues covered by your campaign, you can use the plan to back you up and to highlight slow (or lack of) progress. If your cause is not mentioned in the plan, you are then in a strong position to campaign for this to be addressed.

How to get in touch with your local council

Your local council's main telephone number can be found in the telephone directory – if you call this they will be able to tell you how to contact the senior council officers and chief executive.

All local authorities have their own website which will give details of how to contact council departments and also local councillors. You can find out more information about the councillors in your area at <http://www.upmystreet.com> and entering your postcode.

Your local health service

The Department of Health is the government department in charge of the overall planning, regulation and inspection of the **National Health Service (NHS)**. The NHS is divided into different parts starting with:

Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs)

There are ten Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) throughout England. Each SHA acts as a link between the Department of Health and the rest of the NHS. They make sure NHS services are working as they should be and the government's plans are being followed. The SHA also checks that any health priorities set by the Department of Health are included in local health plans.

Each SHA contains different NHS trusts, which they supervise, these include **Primary Care Trusts**.

Primary Care Trusts (PCTs)

Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) decide on the health services for each local area. They plan how to meet local needs and control the money for local services, including family doctors (GPs), dentists, hospitals and special services like cancer services. PCTs are also responsible for ensuring that health services work together with local councils for the benefit of patients.

Each PCT must put together a **Local Delivery Plan (LDP)**. This plan sets out the health services that are going to be delivered over the next three years and identifies local priorities and targets. You can ask your PCT to send you a copy of the LDP for your area – if you are unhappy with the way the plan takes the needs of disabled children and their families into account, or you want to campaign for a new or improved service, then there are key individuals you should contact:

SHA Chief Executive and PCT Chief Executive

These are the people with overall responsibility for running and managing each SHA and PCT.

Non-executive members of the SHA Board and PCT Board

Each SHA and PCT is led by a Board made up of Executive members (like the Chief Executive) and Non-executive members. Non-executive members are local people who are appointed to the Board because they have an interest in influencing and shaping local health services.

SHA lead on Children's Services and PCT lead on Children's Services

Every SHA and PCT should have a lead member of staff who is responsible for making sure appropriate health services are being delivered to **all** children – in some areas there is a lead specifically for disabled children.

Patient and Public Involvement Forums (PPI Forums)

Every PCT should have a PPI Forum. These Forums are made up of volunteer members of the public who want to influence the way healthcare is organised and delivered. PPI Forum Members find out what local people's views are and pass them on to the PCT who, by law, must listen and respond. PPI Forums also monitor and inspect the quality of healthcare and report back to the PCT and the public.

PPI Forums welcome input from the public. If you are campaigning on health issues, they are good group to inform about your campaign and ask to put questions to the PCT. Forum meetings are usually held in a public place and are open to everyone so representatives from your group could attend – you can also write to your PPI Forum.

To find your nearest PPI Forum and for more information on how to join, visit: <http://www.cppih.org/index.html> or contact the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health on 0845 120 7111, or by email at: helpdesk@cppih.org .

From March 2008, PPI Forums will be replaced by LINKs (Local Involvement Networks). There will be a LINK in every local authority area and they will have the

same aims as PPI Forums. However, LINKs will be open to both individuals and local community and voluntary organisations.

LINKs are already being piloted in some areas - you can find more information at: <http://tinyurl.com/35mng2> .

How to get in touch with your local health service

Patient Advice Liaison Services (PALS) offer confidential advice and support to patients, their carers and families. They can give you more information about your local health service and advise you on who to contact about your campaign.

PALS can also collect patients' views and opinions on health services and help patient's through the complaints process.

To find your local PALS service, call NHS Direct on 0845 4647.

Useful legislation and guidance

Every Child Matters (ECM)

'Every Child Matters: change for children' is the government's programme to revolutionise services for children and their families.

The aim of the programme is for **every** child, whatever their background or circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

This means that all organisations and agencies working with children, from local councils, hospitals and schools to the police and voluntary groups, will be working together and sharing information so that they deliver services which truly meet the needs of children, young people and their families.

Every Child Matters also calls for all children, young people and their families to be involved in the planning and delivery of local services.

Children Act 2004

The Children Act 2004 provides the legal backbone for the Every Child Matters programme. In order to meet the five Every Child Matters outcomes, the Children Act includes a duty for each local authority to:

- appoint a Director for Children's Services and lead members for Children's Services;
- publish a Children and Young People's plan to show how Every Child Matters will be implemented in their area, in consultation with local children, young people and their families;
- develop a database of local children so that agencies can share information easily;
- co-operate with all organisations and agencies working with children, young people and their families so that services can be planned and delivered jointly, pooling budgets where necessary.

The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services

The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (which is sometimes shortened to Children's NSF) sets clear, national standards for children's health and social care – by following the standards, the five Every Child Matters outcomes will be achieved.

There is a specific section covering the needs of disabled children and young people and this means that standard of care and services they receive **must** improve.

The Children's NSF is not voluntary and service providers must meet all the standards by 2014. This gives parents of disabled children and parent groups a significant tool with which to influence services and ensure progress is made.

Contact a Family has written two publications which give parents all the essential information they need on the Children's NSF and how it can be used influence services.

Make a difference: the Children's NSF and parents of disabled children is a leaflet for individual parents and explains what the Children's NSF is and what it means for disabled children and their families.

Making a difference: how parent groups can use the Children's NSF to influence local services is a guide which helps to make sense of the changes taking place in Children's Services and how the Children's NSF fits in. It also provides the practical information parent groups need to change services and gives examples of how the Children's NSF (and other relevant legislation and policies) can be used to press for improvements.

Both publications can be downloaded free of charge from the Contact a Family website at:

<http://www.cafamily.org.uk/influenceresources.html> .

Alternatively, call Contact a Family on 020 7608 8700 to order your free copies.

Every Disabled Child Matters (EDCM)

Every Disabled Child Matters is a national three year campaign to get rights and justice for every disabled child. The aim of the campaign is to make sure disabled children and their families have access to the services and support they need in order to live ordinary lives.

The campaign needs the support of disabled children and their families and there are many ways you can get involved and influence decision makers at a local and national level.

For more information about the campaign, visit <http://www.edcm.org.uk> .

The EDCM campaign has written reports and briefing papers on some of the issues your group may be campaigning about - for example, the lack of childcare for disabled children. These reports and briefing papers may be useful resources for your campaign and can be downloaded from <http://tinyurl.com/2pkebe> .

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) aims to end the discrimination that many disabled people face. This Act gives disabled people rights in the areas of:

- Employment
- Education
- Access to goods, facilities and services
- Transport

From 1 October 2004, Part 3 of the DDA 1995 has required service providers to take reasonable steps to tackle physical features that act as a barrier to disabled people who want to access their services.

In April 2005 a new **Disability Discrimination Act** was passed by Parliament, which amends or extends existing provisions in the DDA 1995, such as requiring public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

This Act amended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) to make it unlawful for education providers to discriminate against disabled pupils, and adult learners, and to ensure disabled people are not disadvantaged in comparison to people who are not disabled. It also lays down clear rights for parents to be consulted about their child's special education

The Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004

This Act places a statutory duty on social services departments to inform carers of their right to an assessment. It also aims to promote better joint working between councils and the health service to ensure support for carers is delivered in a co-ordinated manner.

Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000

The Carers and Disabled Children Act gives parents and carers an enhanced right to an assessment of their own needs (even when the person they care for does not wish to be assessed). It also makes provision for vouchers and direct payments to be provided to parents and carers of disabled children where they have been assessed as needing a service.

The Childcare Act 2006

This Act was passed only last year and places a duty on local authorities to provide childcare for parents with disabled children (aged 18 and below) and improve the information on childhood services available to them.

Freedom of Information Act 2000

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides you with a general right to access information held by public authorities, including local councils.

Any individual who makes a request to a public authority for information has the right to be told whether the authority holds that information, and (subject to any exemptions under the Act) to be supplied with that information.

Local Government Access to Information Act 1985

This Act requires local authorities to give the public access to council meetings and publish all agendas, reports and papers of those meetings. Under the Act:

- all council meetings (committees and sub-committees) should be publicly advertised five days before they take place;
- all agenda and background papers should be available for public inspection before meetings;
- the public are allowed to attend all council, committee and sub-committee meetings;
- all council minutes, agendas and reports should be available to the public for at least six years after the meetings have taken place and background papers for at least four years.

This guide is part of the Contact a Family Group Action Pack. For more information please visit www.cafamily.org.uk or telephone 020 7608 8700.

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