

Come On In!

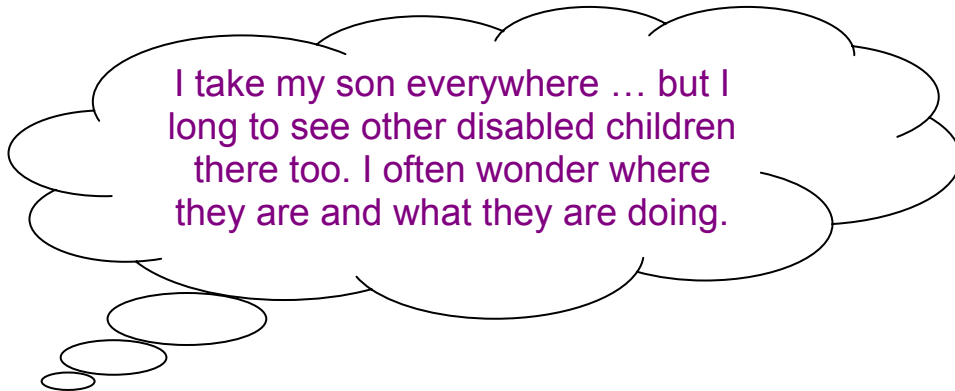
Developing inclusive play and leisure services



After school I like to play outside



The best thing about the group is talking to friends



I take my son everywhere ... but I long to see other disabled children there too. I often wonder where they are and what they are doing.

**Action for Leisure
and
Contact a Family West Midlands**

2003

Copies of this Report are available from:

Action for Leisure
c/o Warwickshire College, Moreton Morrell CV35 9BL

or

Contact a Family West Midlands
Somerville House, 20-22 Harborne Road, Edgbaston,
Birmingham B15 3AA

and on

www.actionforleisure.org.uk
www.cafamily.org.uk

A Summary of the Report is also available from
Action for Leisure or Contact a Family

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Action for Leisure is the national charity that promotes play and leisure with and for disabled children, young people and adults. We do this by providing information, advice and training on play, leisure and recreation for disabled people.

We are currently working on several issues: developing inclusive early years, play and leisure services; sharing ideas for homemade play and leisure equipment; finding and using low-cost sensory materials; age-appropriateness in play and leisure for adults with learning disabilities; sensory stimulation for older people with dementia.

Contact a Family is a national registered charity founded in 1979 for families with disabled children. At our heart is a unique and powerful combination of i) expert and comprehensive knowledge about rare disorders and all aspects of disability ii) a wealth of personal experience and contacts, and iii) an approach driven first and foremost by parents' points of view.

We provide information on parent groups; local, regional and national organisations and services; medical information; newsletters; workshops and events; publications on a wide range of topics around disability, and much more.

Our aim is never to dictate to families but always to enable them to organise their own systems of support and contact. It is this 'enabling rather than running' approach that allows us to deliver social change far beyond our resources and size.

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Introduction

This report is based on the research of Action for Leisure and Contact a Family West Midlands. In response to requests from parents across the region, we started to explore the inclusive play and leisure opportunities for disabled children and young people.

The report places inclusive leisure in the wider context of recent policies and research and then focuses on the views and opinions of parents and children. The second part of the report looks at examples of good practice across the region and highlights the principles and practices that make the schemes successful at including all children.

The two main aims of the report are

- ❖ To act as a useful working document for play and leisure providers by showing examples of successful inclusion and key elements that can be transferred to other settings.
- ❖ To offer useful tips and information to parents when looking for inclusive provision.

A checklist of what to look for in an inclusive setting is also included. This has been designed by parents to help other parents ask the right questions.

Action for Leisure and Contact a Family West Midlands are committed to working with all disabled children and their parents.

Background to the Report

This report has been developed over the past year. Workers from Action for Leisure and Contact a Family have been involved but there has not been a dedicated worker. This is significant due to the time and resources necessary to complete such a report. If more time had been available a more in-depth consultation with parents and children would have

been possible. The issues raised in the report are not exhaustive but do start to give perspective to the concerns of children, parents and providers.

Contact a Family led the consultation with parents, by visiting support groups across the West Midlands, distributing questionnaires for parents to complete, and leading discussion about inclusive play and leisure services parents use. Parents also talked about their experiences when finding or using play and leisure provision. The information gathered is summarised in the appendix and the key points raised by parents are explored in the report.

Action for Leisure developed the consultation with children. Different techniques were devised to enable children to express themselves. Interviews, questionnaires and activity games were used. Due to lack of time and resources the video and collage activities were not used.

Inclusion - Setting the scene

Play and leisure are essential to our self-development, quality of life and social interactions. For young children play is the medium through which skills and knowledge are achieved. For young people leisure activities offer friendships, fun and freedom. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of, and benefits received through, play and leisure opportunities, and yet for many disabled children **they do not exist**.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 Article 23 states “disabled children should enjoy a full and decent life in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self reliance and facilitate the child’s active participation in the community”. Along with the other key pieces of legislation the UN Convention made disabled children’s rights visible in the international arena. In a recent report *It is our world too!*¹ the neglect and abuse of disabled children’s rights is laid out. As well as describing good practice projects the report highlights the social exclusion, poverty and lack of rights that surround many disabled children.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is one initiative from government designed to offer real change for disabled people. The Act requires service providers (including those for play and leisure) to make reasonable adjustments to their provision in order to offer a quality service to disabled people. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) requires local education authorities, early years services, schools, youth services and colleges to ensure that children and young people with SEN are not discriminated against. The development of inclusive provision must be seen in the context of the DDA and its implementation by 2004, and of SENDA (which came into force in September 2002). However legislation should not be the motivational factor in increasing inclusion, commitment to human rights, equality and diversity should do that.

In much of the recent research on inclusive practice and consultation with disabled children and young people similar issues have been raised. The first point to make is the increased interest in the opinions of young people and the skills available to consult them effectively. The *ask us* research by

the Children's Society² and *Hello! Are you listening?* published by Joseph Rowntree³ are examples of this. The second point is the exploration of successful inclusion and the different models being developed in the play and leisure sector.

Consultation with disabled young people often highlights the same issues. One of the key points being that leisure is a central and essential component of their lives. Leisure activities are invariably linked to friendships. The *Hello! Are you listening?* research found young disabled people valued friends as a key element in leisure activities. The process of making friends is usually one that happens at school, which these young people said was difficult. This lack of friends presented a major barrier to the young people enjoying leisure activities.

This notion is also identified in *Inclusion : too difficult, expensive and impractical – or a basic human right?*, a recent article by Jenny Morris⁴. Morris finds young disabled people define social exclusion as 'having no friends'.

Inclusion is about valuing each child, their skills, interests and abilities. Also supporting all children to meet their full potential and acknowledging their achievements.

As we live in a society where the majority of disabled adults have been through a system of segregated provision, both in schools and play settings, we have a responsibility to listen to their opinions and experiences, many of which promote inclusion and aim to abandon segregation.

In *Dreaming the Dream, Inclusion: An issue of Social Justice*⁵ Parents for Inclusion explore the experience of disabled children, young people and their families. They conclude that inclusion requires a new type of collaboration and the total involvement of disabled people in the services they use and their participation in the community.

References

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A report on the lives of disabled children for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children, New York September 2001
Gerison Lansdown, 2001, Disability Awareness in Action
2. *ask us CD-ROM*
A Children's Society multi-media guide to consultation for the Quality Protects initiative
3. *Hello! Are you listening?*
Disabled teenagers' experience of access to inclusive leisure
Pippa Murray, 2002, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
4. *Inclusion: too difficult, expensive and impractical – or a basic human right?*
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5. *Dreaming the Dream*
Inclusion: an issue of Social Justice
Parents for Inclusion, 2001

Inclusion – the issues for parents

Inclusion is still an emotive issue for many parents and among the groups and individuals we spoke to, opinions varied. Some were committed to inclusive provision, whereas others felt that inclusive settings could not adequately meet their children's needs.

- ❖ Some parents felt that only specialist settings could offer the expertise and individual support their child required.
- ❖ Some felt that only inclusive settings could offer the range and equality of opportunity their children needed.

A key issue arose: How many play and leisure providers can claim to be truly inclusive of the whole range of disabilities? Some parents told us of 'inclusive' schemes that met the needs of children with one type of disability, but failed to provide for others.

Parents of children with severe and complex needs in particular, often said that only specialist provision could support their children.

One other point stood out from our research: Inclusion is an attitude of mind, and those providers who truly believe in inclusion will find ways of offering equality of experience to ALL children, whatever their disability.

These issues are explored in more detail next.



Parents told us about...

1. The importance of CHOICE

No two children are the same and no two families are the same. Parents wanted to be able to choose activities and settings that were right for **their** children. Although we asked specifically about inclusive schemes, some parents felt that their children would be safer and more appropriately supported in a specialist setting.

Choice was important in a variety of issues.

- ❖ **Choice of times when the provision was available**, to fit around work, school and other family commitments.
- ❖ **Sibling involvement**. Some parents wanted to involve siblings, others said that it was important for their children to have their own hobbies.
- ❖ **Choice of activities**. Everything from organised play schemes to free play in playgrounds, from weekend camps to art, crafts and puppets. A list of the activities is included in the appendix.

Children's individual differences mean that there needs to be flexibility in the levels of organisation and supervision. Some parents wanted their children to be closely supervised or to receive individual support. Others wanted their children to have the freedom to explore, express themselves and be independent, or be part of a group or team.

The key message was: "Let us and our children choose what is right for US! Don't make assumptions or put us into boxes. Provide a range of experiences to meet a range of abilities".

“I take my son everywhere. I refuse to just look for the special schemes or to rely on other people to make their activities accessible. I go to the leisure centres, parks, hotels, forest and dare them to turn us away. But I long to see other disabled children there too. I often wonder where they are, and what they are doing on Saturdays and Sundays. The more of us that turn up at these places/activities, the more reason for them to change”

(A parent from Birmingham)

2. Trust and confidence

This was a key issue for parents. Over and over again, they told us how vital it is to know that their children are safe, secure and happy. Of course, this is true for all parents, but for parents of disabled children there are extra anxieties about safety and supervision. Parents taking their children to an inclusive setting must have confidence in the staff, and in their ability to meet individual and often complex needs. Some of the parents in our survey did not have this confidence, and consequently preferred specialist settings.

Physical safety was frequently mentioned. Parents wanted to know that premises were secure, safe, comfortable and well-managed. Group size was often mentioned, as some parents were concerned about their children having to compete for space, time and attention with too many other (often very boisterous!) children.

Perhaps the biggest issue, though, was about staffing. Parents called for staff to be trained in disability awareness, to be knowledgeable, understanding, and willing to learn. They stressed the importance of good staff-to-child ratios, and low turnover, so that their children get to know the supervisors/instructors.

3. Accessibility

This is a wide-ranging issue, and refers not just to physical access but also to communication, information, cost and location of schemes. Several parents pointed out that leisure schemes need to be proactive in making themselves fully accessible to children with physical, sensory or communication disabilities. They asked for appropriate toilets and changing facilities, and for specialist equipment, designed to give all children equal opportunities to enjoy activities safely and independently.

Many said that cost is a major consideration, particularly given the extra financial implications of caring for a disabled child.

“[We need] all information in easy to understand English. Contacts available who can sign for our deaf children. Staff who are ‘deaf aware’ and all that entails. Easy access to buildings. Activities designed so people can join in”.

(A parent from Birmingham)

4. Appropriate activities

Parents were anxious that leisure experiences should be appropriate for their children, whatever their age, interests and strengths. There was some concern about schemes that offered places to children and young people of any age, but then did not provide suitable activities for all the children. Some parents mentioned the need for detailed planning of activities, and pointed out that the key to success for some children is in offering structure and familiar routines. Some parents wanted their children to be stimulated and challenged, others prioritised relaxation and security.

“[We need] to have access for different out of school activities for the children (art, dancing, clubs, gymnastics, trampolining, music) where the staff understand the child’s difficulty and give him/her a chance to explore and develop his/her potential”.

(A parent from Worcester)

5. Feeling welcome

Parents told us how crucial it is that their children are made to feel welcome. The schemes they value are those that provide a friendly, accepting and positive experience, which help to build children’s confidence and self-esteem. The best of these, they said, adopt a ‘can-do’ philosophy, where the staff offer an appropriate balance between challenge and support, and are willing to learn alongside the children.

Some parents felt that the attitude of other children and their parents was an important factor, and many said that peer friendships and shared activities are a major part of the inclusive experience.

The overall message was, once again, that provision must be flexible and activities responsive to the strengths and needs of individual children. Most parents thought that this was only possible when staff were enthusiastic about working with all children, whatever their abilities.

The key message was: **what really makes a good inclusive scheme work is the attitude of the staff who work there.**

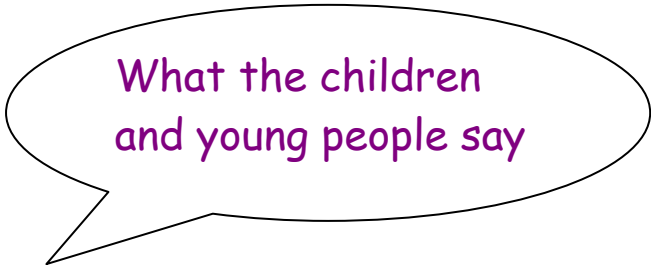
They need to be disability aware, but rather than being specifically trained in all conditions, they need to be open-minded and willing to learn from and about the children they meet.

“A good inclusive experience for any child, with any disability, largely depends on the attitude of the providers. No amount of training can take the place of the willingness to include all disabilities”.

(A parent from Worcester)

Inclusion - the issues for children and young people

The consultation with children and young people happened in a variety of settings with different age groups. The consultation was not extensive due to time constraints but it was prioritised as an area for future development. The findings of *Hello! Are you listening?* and *ask us*, have also informed the key points drawn out of this section. A summary of the consultation can be found in the appendix.



What the children
and young people say

Four key points have been drawn from the children and young people's comments.

1. Friendship

The disabled children and young people we spoke to want to spend their leisure time with friends. These social relationships are often what makes activities enjoyable. Children enjoy meeting friends at the clubs or groups they go to but also just being with friends as a leisure activity.

Children said that sometimes it was hard to make friends if your school was not in the local area and that going to youth clubs or playschemes was a way to meet up with friends. What children did not like was going to a group where you were not made to feel welcome. Having friends was an important contributor to feeling happy in groups.

The *Hello! Are you listening?* report found young people also felt that friendship was essential to quality leisure activities and that they go hand in hand. Providing an environment where

children can make friendships and meet friends seems to be a priority for young people.

There are various models of providing support to children and young people in mainstream settings and we should use them to respond to this request from children and young people.

2. What is everyone else doing...?

The types of activities the children we talked to were involved in, or would like to be involved in, varied enormously. Some children did not go to clubs and groups but enjoyed watching television and playing at home. Many children enjoyed sports or activity clubs and football was very popular. For young people, going shopping or to a disco featured quite often.

The most striking thing about the list of play and leisure activities children enjoyed was that it covered the same things non-disabled children enjoy and want to do.

Play means the same things to both groups of children, the difference is that often disabled children do not get to access the things that they want to do. Play and leisure for disabled children and young people are not about creating new or specialist activities, but about creating opportunities to access what already exists.

3. Feeling welcome

Linking closely to the feelings of parents, children and young people told us they wanted to feel welcome. It is important that people know your name and say hello. Some children felt it was helpful to be introduced to others in the group.

Feeling welcome also linked to being accepted. Children wanted to be themselves and not be bullied or have people call them names.

Feeling welcome starts from the moment we enter a building and physical accessibility is important. But we also need to be able to access activities once we get inside. Good communication and friendly staff help to make children and young people feel welcome.

4. Ask us

One of the key points made by disabled children and young people on the *ask us CD-ROM* was that they enjoy the same things as other children and young people of a similar age. They wanted more opportunities to do things in groups, activities after school, the chance to go out and about, and more independence.

The disabled young people defined inclusion as “taking part in something which you want to do together” and “being able to do the same things as everyone else, like going to the park, the seaside and the funfair”.

Stressing the importance of consulting children and young people, they said “When people do things without asking they won’t be done right”.

Case Studies

This section of the report looks at five play or leisure providers across the West Midlands. The providers were suggested to the researchers during the consultation with parents. We have visited the settings and drawn out the key elements of the service that make the inclusion of all children successful.

As we have already seen, inclusive practice does not always involve children with more profound or complex disabilities. For this reason, most of the case studies featured have inclusion policies that work to include all children through creative and innovative approaches to play and leisure.

Where the featured providers have come across difficulties, this is explored in an open and honest way. Inclusion is a process and we can learn and adapt our services constantly to meet the needs of individual children and families.

The aim of this section is to offer different approaches to developing an inclusive service. There are many models used to support disabled children and this report does not promote one above the other. The case studies listed give a variety of examples including:-

- ❖ Adapting equipment and resources to meet children's needs.
- ❖ Offering a support worker to enable a child to access a mainstream play or leisure setting.
- ❖ Starting with the child's ambitions then finding staff to support them in reaching their goal.
- ❖ Developing a new service to be accessible to all, through appropriate consultation and evolution.

The section is designed to give examples of good practice in the West Midlands and show how people are working towards inclusive provision. Each case study has transferable elements

that can be used by other providers to develop inclusive practice around the country.

The providers included are not highlighted as 'perfect' examples but they give honest accounts of what they are doing, what works and what doesn't.

The Rock Face

“everyone wins...”

The Rock Face is an indoor rock climbing centre in Birmingham. The centre is open to the public and organised groups. The centre aims to offer children and young people fun, enjoyment and a real sense of achievement. They have an “access for all” policy and have worked with disabled children for the past five to eight years.

The organisation has good working relationships with other organisations doing similar work, such as West Midlands Police. The centre offers a real sense of co-operation and team work. Rock climbing is not a competitive activity so there are no ‘winners’ and ‘losers’. Everyone works to their own goals and so everyone wins.

How does the inclusion policy work in practice?

It seems to work well. Perhaps the group least catered for are children/people in wheelchairs who have severe mobility difficulties. Those with good upper limb mobility can access the special caving activities. Most groups and individuals can be included and given the same experiences and opportunities as their peers.

Why does it work?

The attitude and willingness of the staff to cater for everybody is a key element of the success. Also being flexible to adapt activities to individual needs. There is a need to be creative and innovative when finding ways to enable children and young people to access activities. Approaching activities with a positive attitude helps to find solutions and not present barriers.

Transferable elements of the scheme

- Emphasis on beginners with good, clear instruction & tuition.

- The experience and knowledge of some of the instructors. This enables them to support other instructors.
- Sensitivity and a belief in inclusion.
- Planning for individual needs.
- Continuity of staff.
- Positive attitude – keen to celebrate achievement at whatever level.
- Willingness to work at children's own pace and support them to work for their own targets.
- Welcoming to parents as well – happy for them to stay and watch/take photos until they have built trust and are willing to leave their children.
- Willingness to share 'specialist' equipment such as large harnesses.

What are the problems they have faced?

The Rock Face identified three main barriers they had faced.

1. The assumptions from other people that disabled children 'can't do' rock climbing. Positive attitudes are essential in enabling children to achieve.
2. Cost can be a problem due to the high level of support needed by some children. This can be overcome to some extent by allowing external instructors to come with the children, which reduces the staff costs.
3. When parents don't tell staff about the child's individual needs. The setting needs time to plan and adapt the activities so all children can join in to the best of their ability.

For more information about Rock Face contact:
 Stuart Duckworth – Manager
 Jennens Road, A B Row, Birmingham B4 7QT
 Tel. 0121 359 6419

Play Partners

“we are on a journey...”

Play Partners is a local authority scheme based in Coventry, working across the city with children who have a special need or disability. The project aims to ‘assist children to access play activities when and where they would be of most benefit to the child’. Play Partners provides a support worker to assist the child to access a mainstream, or sometimes specialist, play setting.

Parents and professionals can refer children to the scheme and then the parents make the application. Play Partners’ co-ordinator meets the child and parents/carers to discuss the play schemes available and the worker who may support the child. Meetings are then set up with the play provider to meet the child and explore the most appropriate ways to support them.

The play partner exists to enable the child to join in and get the most out of the play provision they choose to attend. The worker is involved in the planning of the sessions at the provision and acts as an advocate for the child.

How does the inclusion policy work in practice?

“We look at the child first, not the disability”. The policy exists to support all children by putting systems in place to meet individual needs. This requires consultation with the parents and the child to find out what they want.

There is a multi-agency panel that assesses each application. The panel offers a variety of perspectives including health, education and play.

For the play partners, inclusion means meeting individual needs and offering choice. This means that some of the children with profound and multiple disabilities have accessed specialist play provision with additional support.

Why does it work?

Play Partners is a 'can do' organisation. They are committed to meeting individual needs and promoting independence. This means that sometimes children only have a 'play partner' until they have become confident and happy in the setting. The process of having a play partner in a mainstream setting requires a plan for the child and an evaluation of the scheme. This has enabled leaders to develop confidence and be able to support children in positive ways.

Transferable elements of the scheme?

- Parental involvement in the planning and organisation of the placement.
- Pre-placement meeting – with parents and workers to find out the best ways to support the child
- Developing an individual plan with the child and having regular evaluation.
- Commitment to offering choice in specialist and mainstream settings.
- Being clear about the capacity of the scheme. All provision has boundaries and we should let parents know what we can achieve.
- Alternative amounts of support. This can mean short or long term support but most importantly being realistic about children's needs and offering freedom and independence.
- Involve 'play partners' or support workers in group planning sessions so all staff can develop an understanding of the child's needs.
- Set up structures to support inclusion including clear aims and policies.
- Continuous training.

For more information about Play Partners contact:

Pat Seaman, Play Partner Co-ordinator

West District, Children and Family Education Service,

Allesley Further Education Centre, Birmingham Road, Coventry
CV5 9GR

Tel. 024 7640 5700

Adventure Activities for All Abilities

4 A's

“start from the person...”

4A's is an adventure activities scheme based in Leamington Spa. The organisation started in the 1980's.

The aim of the group is to include disabled children and young people in adventurous activities. They will include all children and young people in the activities, regardless of disability. For 4A's inclusion means offering the same activities to disabled and non-disabled siblings and families, however challenging that may seem.

The group starts by finding out what people want to do and then finds instructors to enable it to happen.

The main summer activity is canoeing, which is run with Leamington Spa Canoe Club. 4A's gets involved with events that are happening at the canoe club and also organises events of its own. In the winter the group meets to do different activities such as archery, climbing, tenpin bowling and clay pigeon shooting. As well as the weekly group meetings, 4A's runs residential weekends where people can try a variety of activities.

How does the inclusion policy work in practice?

Everyone is welcome. Initially the group talks to the families and the participant about what they would like to do. They talk about how much support the person will need. In some instances people are able to have a sessional worker from Social Services to support them, on other occasions a family member will join in.

The process is to identify the barriers individuals face to accessing the activity they want to, and then finding ways to overcome them. “The problem is never the person”. This attitude is the starting point to working with the children and provides the perspective that is necessary to find solutions.

What makes it work?

The enthusiasm of the volunteers is essential to making the scheme work together with a supportive, encouraging and positive ethos. The belief is that there is always a way to include people, we just need to find it. It is important to know that the experts are the disabled people and their carers. You do not need to know everything about disability. “We know about canoeing, they know how they need to be supported”.

Transferable elements of the scheme

- Always start with the person, and see their individual needs.
- Positive attitude – assess the barriers to someone achieving their aim and then find a way to overcome them.
- Involve parents and carers in the planning of activities.
- Be clear about what you are trying to achieve.

For more information about 4A's contact:

Miss P Pocock

Stud Cottage, Guy's Cliffe, Coventry Road, Warwick,
CV34 5YD.

Tel. 01926 495162

Words, Signs & Vibes

"everyone communicates...."

Words, Signs & Vibes is a drama group for deaf, hearing impaired and hearing young people aged between 11 and 18 years. The group aims to help young people to get the opportunity to experience a whole new way of communicating using physical theatre, movement, mime and sign. The project explores deaf and hearing cultures in imaginative ways.

The group meets every Saturday in Birmingham City Centre and the club is run by both deaf and hearing facilitators. Full communication support is available.

How does the inclusion policy work in practice?

Although this project is not fully accessible for all disabled young people, it is used in this report as an example of good practice in a particular field of impairment. Approximately half of the young people are deaf or have a hearing impairment. The group is looking to expand in the future and plans are currently underway to develop another project for those with and without visual impairments.

Why does it work?

No previous experience of drama or sign language is needed to join the project. The attitude of the staff and volunteers is second to none - they all work as a team. Previous members of the project have taken up drama courses at university and regularly return as volunteers. This shows the level of commitment, not only from the paid staff but the volunteers as well. The activities are very accessible and aimed at all levels - those with drama experience and those young people who are taking part for the first time.

Transferable elements of the scheme

- Strong team of dedicated volunteers, who are supported and encouraged to develop new skills.
- Dedication, motivation and a positive attitude from all – staff, volunteers, and young people.
- Run training for volunteers.
- Success in applying for development funding.
- Central accessible venue that is welcoming to all.
- Extra planning time is allocated to the project to ensure that activities run as smoothly as possible. Sessions are always planned beforehand.
- Staff encourage the young people to have direct input into planning activities and running sessions.
- Builds up life skills for the young people.
- Addresses any conflicts within the group, openly identifies problems and moves forward, learning from them.
- Encourages new members to join through constant publicity of the group.
- The young people have a refreshment break mid session. This encourages friendships and communication outside the actual drama session.
- Older members befriend any new members.

What are the problems they have faced?

- A pilot project was developed at a deaf school and they found it difficult to encourage hearing children into the drama club.
- Difficult to find an appropriate accessible building.
- Publicity is very time-consuming but needed.

For more information about Words, Signs & Vibes contact:
Alison Jones

The Leavers, 1 The Lodge, 1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham,
B29 6LJ

Tel. 0121 414 0099, Minicom 0121 414 0090.

The New Art Gallery Walsall

“continually developing for the future...”

The New Art Gallery Walsall was opened in February 2000 and is in the centre of Walsall town. The art gallery has permanent and temporary exhibitions, which appeal to different ages and interests.

The art gallery is physically accessible to visitors. There is a lift to all facilities, and adapted toilets. In addition to the access issues the gallery offers a variety of services to disabled people to make their visit more interesting and inclusive.

On the ground floor there is a Discovery Gallery designed for children and adults. This interactive art space is not only designed to stimulate interest in art, but also offers a multisensory approach to exploring art. Activities include dressing up clothes, small theatre space, textured art design space and light sculpture with commentary.

The permanent Garman Ryan Exhibition includes many sculptures. The gallery offers touch tours around the sculpture, information is also available in braille. Facilities are also available for people with hearing impairment.

How does the inclusion policy work in practice?

The inclusive practices of the art gallery have been developed through consultation with local groups and individuals. The key element is the physical accessibility which is complemented by other features such as low counters, tactile surfacing and the other services listed above.

What makes it work?

The attitude and approach of all staff towards disability awareness is a key factor in making the building welcoming and inclusive. The gallery worked hard to make sure the access issues were right from the start.

The inclusive policy is also evolving to meet the needs of visitors. Plans for the next financial year include larger signs and an audio-described guide to the Garman Ryan collection.

Transferable elements of the scheme

- Disability awareness training for staff. This should be a priority. It is important that people have a good knowledge about ways to assist disabled people and a knowledge about different types of disabilities.
- As it is difficult and expensive to change the architecture, it is important to get it right at the start.
- Creative thinking around the possibilities of providing your service in a variety of different ways.
- Consultation with the people who will be using the service. Ask people what would make the setting more accessible to them and how you can support them.

For more information about the gallery contact:

Jo Digger

The New Art Gallery Walsall, Gallery Square, Walsall,

WS2 8LG

Tel. 01922 654400

Conclusion

Let us and our children choose what is right for US!

Don't make assumptions or put us into boxes. Provide a range of experiences to meet a range of abilities.

Listening to parents

The key messages from the parents involved in the *Come On In!* research were

- ❖ What really makes a good inclusive scheme successful is the attitude of the staff who work there.
- ❖ Parents want staff to be knowledgeable, understanding and willing to learn.

Listening to disabled children and young people

The key messages from the disabled children and young people were

- ❖ The importance of friendship – they want to spend their leisure time with their friends. Opportunities to make and to meet friends are as important as the leisure activities themselves.
- ❖ The types of activities the children and young people were involved in, or would like to be involved in, ranged from organised activities and sports to watching TV or 'playing out' with friends. The list of activities was the same as lists produced by non-disabled children and young people.
- ❖ The importance of feeling welcome and being accepted.

How far have we come?

Despite legislation and good intentions, there is still a long way to go before disabled children and young people have access to a range of inclusive play and leisure opportunities in their neighbourhood, town or region.

There are examples of good practice in inclusive leisure provision and we can all learn from their experiences, but how can workers share this information? Kidsactive's inclusion network, Pippa Murray's new work for The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (leading on from her report *Hello! Are you listening?*), and Action for Leisure's 'On my doorstep' project (developing a national database of local play and leisure opportunities for disabled people) are some of the ways in which workers may make contact with each other to share ideas, successes and challenges.

The importance of choice

Not all parents want inclusive services for their children, and disabled children and young people may want opportunities to spend time with peers who share their experiences of disability. Perhaps what is needed is a range of inclusive and specialist leisure services from which the disabled young person can choose (and move between as they wish). Perhaps it is just as wrong to say to them "you must be in this inclusive setting" as it was in the past to say "you must be in this segregated setting"?

One issue that will, of course, arise is how we can help children and young people with more complex needs to express their views and make choices – and who mediates when the parent's view and the young person's view are different.

One thing is certain – we should aim to have a range of good quality inclusive services enabling disabled children and young people to access play, sports, the arts, cultural and social activities and to be a full member of their community.

Appendix

Type of leisure activities wanted for their children by parents and number of parents mentioning that activity

Type	No.	Type	No.
Holiday playscheme	14	Urban farm/animal sanctuary	2
Swimming	14	Wildlife centre/farm	2
Craft/Creative	7	Archery	1
Sensory room/area	6	Art gallery/museum	1
Soft play	6	Books	1
Saturday club	5	Bouncy castle	1
Ball pools	4	Camping	1
Music	4	Cinema	1
Painting/art	4	Climbing	1
Playgroup/scheme	4	Dance	1
After school club	3	Gym	1
Cubs, Scouts, Beavers	3	Jigsaws/games	1
Football	3	Karate	1
Guides, Brownies, Rainbows	3	Making videos	1
Leisure centre/sports clubs	3	Massage	1
Playground + specialist equipment	3	Parachute games	1
Summer/weekend camp	3	Parks	1
Buddy scheme	2	Roller blading	1
Bowling	2	Sand/Water/Messy	1
Horse riding	2	Scuba/snorkelling	1
Outings e.g. to theme parks	2	Slides etc.	1
Puppets	2	Snooker	1
Quiet area/white room	2	Stay & play	1
Story sessions	2	Trampolining	1
Team/ball games	2	Tree spotting/pond dipping	1
Theatre group/performing arts	2	Youth group	1

Age Group	Things you do after school, at the weekends and during the holidays (including clubs and groups)	Words to describe the groups and activities	What are the activities you would like to do?	Who do you play with?
14 – 18 years	Shopping Swimming After school club Watch TV Games at home Cinema Pizza Hut MacDonalds Play guitar Boat Club Adventure playground – Disco Grangers Social Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dancing - see friends - football - disco - table tennis 	Good		Family Mum Friend from school Friend Mental Health Worker

Starting the sentence...

An activity that was used with one group of young people was to give them the start of a sentence and ask them to finish it. The start of the sentences were written onto cards and spread on the table. We chose different cards and, as a group, discussed the activities or feelings that finished off the sentences. Not all the cards were used.

The sentences available were:

- The best thing about the group is...
- After school I like to...
- When you go to a new place what makes you feel welcome...
- I like...
- I would like to...
- I feel sad when...
- Sometimes...
- At weekends I like to...
- I don't like it when...
- In the holidays I like to...
- I wish...
- I feel happy when...

Young People's Responses during 'Starting the sentence...'

In the holidays I like to...	Play Go swimming and diving Holiday with my family Play football Disco Go on an aeroplane Playschemes – go bowling and pictures Visit boyfriend Art and craft Shopping Face painting
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I would like to...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop in bed Watch the television
After school I like to...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play outside Dance at school – after school First aid Basketball Watch television at home Play music at home Go in car with dad Snooker with brother Parties at sister's Pub / play darts
The best thing about the group is...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disco dancing Football Talk to friends Dance with friends Drinks and chocolate Colouring in
When you go to a new place what makes you feel welcome...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being introduced to other people People are polite People are nice People know your name Making friends People are not nasty
I don't like it when...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People call you names People boss you about Being bullied People fighting People swearing Pushing and kicking People are not friendly – like when they are in the street

A guide to play and leisure activities for disabled children

This guide was developed by parents who were involved in the *Come On In!* project. It provides information about the types of play and leisure activities that may be available and how to find out about them. It also includes a list of points to consider when visiting inclusive leisure settings and aims to help parents to ask the right questions when they are looking for a suitable play or leisure service for their disabled son or daughter.

Copies of the guide are available from Action for Leisure or Contact a Family.

Further reading

All together: how to create inclusive services for disabled children and their families

Mary Dickins and Judy Denziloe, 2002 2nd edition
National Early Years Network, ISBN 1-870985-62-1

Can you hear us? Including the views of disabled children and young people in decision making

Sue Whittles, 1998
Save the Children, ISBN 1-899120-83-1

Everyone's here

Pauline Shelley, 2002
Contact a Family, ISBN 1-874715-38-6

I'll go first: The planning and review toolkit for use with children with disabilities

Lucy Kirkbride, 1999
The Children's Society, ISBN 1-899783-13-X

It doesn't just happen: inclusive management for inclusive play

Philip Douch, 2002
Kidsactive, ISBN 0-952629-56-9

See What I Mean: Guidelines to aid understanding of communication by people with severe and profound learning disabilities

Nicola Grove, 2000
BILD/Mencap, ISBN 1-902519-41-8

Seen and Heard: Involving disabled children and young people in research and development projects

Linda Ward, 1997
Joseph Rowntree Foundation, ISBN 1-899987-48-7

Side by Side: guidelines for inclusive play

Rachel Scott (Editor), 2000
Kidsactive, ISBN 0-952629-51-8

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