

Aiming High for Disabled Children

National Core Offer

The national Core Offer is a statement of the standards which families with disabled children can expect across the country from local services. Primarily the Core Offer refers to early years, education, youth, social care and health services, but housing, leisure and transport are also very important for families with disabled children.

Aiming High for Disabled Children identified five elements of the Core Offer. Given the links and overlaps across these elements, these have been grouped under three headings: information and transparency; assessment; and participation and feedback.

1. Information and Transparency

“The information provided should be tailored to the individual needs of children and their parents and be readily accessible in a range of formats.”¹

Providing information and greater transparency about decision making will empower families to find their own ways to meet the needs of their disabled child, their other children and themselves.

Disabled children, young people and their families can expect information which is:

- *Accessible*: using everyday language, alternative formats, the internet and community languages as necessary
- *Available*: “to hand” without delay in places where families with children routinely go, including schools and colleges, health centres and GP surgeries and Sure Start Children’s Centres
- *Relevant and Accurate*: appropriate for every stage of a child’s life and up-to-date with what is actually provided
- *Joined-up*: co-ordinated across local authorities, schools and colleges, PCTs, provider trusts and the voluntary and independent sector
- *User-focussed*: always focussing on the desired outcome i.e. families know where, and how, to get help and support.

¹ DCSF (2008) Duty to provide information, advice and assistance; guidance for local authorities Childcare Act 2006 (para 6.2).

Families should be asked how they wish to receive information and then to receive it in that way. Some families will need help to make best use of available information. As children and young people mature, information should be targeted at them as far as possible using methods most suitable for this age group.

Disabled children, young people and families can expect information which covers:

- Access to universal as well as specialist services
- Voluntary and independent sector as well as statutory services
- Health and local authority children's services (including schools and colleges), adult social services as well as housing, leisure, transport, welfare rights and employment related services
- Key transition points, in particular the transition from children's to adult services.

Disabled children, young people and their families can expect transparency about:

- How *overall resources are decided* and have changed over time
- How *resources are allocated*, with criteria based on need, which are fair, understandable, and take account of the impact of disability
- The purpose of an *assessment*, the process which will take place, the time it may take and the possible outcomes
- How *services work together* to promote good outcomes, for example, care pathways for children with specific conditions, multi-agency involvement in statutory assessment of SEN and appropriate support for transition to adulthood
- How *services are commissioned*. This should be on the basis of a rigorous, up-to-date, published needs analysis of the local population of disabled children, with an integrated inter-agency plan to meet the support needs of families
- How *the Local Authority, the PCT* and their partners work together, through Children's Trust arrangements
- How the *Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP)* is produced and how communities can influence the Plan
- How the CYPP delivers the statutory requirements regarding *disability equality*
- How *feedback* is sought, analysed, reported and acted upon
- The *quality* of local services, including performance measures and inspection reports
- How their *legal entitlements* are being met and how to *complain* if necessary.

2. Assessment

Disabled children and young people receive child-centred multi-agency co-ordinated services from the point of referral through identification and assessment to delivery²

Disabled children, young people and families can expect assessments that are:

- *Holistic, multi-agency and co-ordinated*, undertaken as far as possible in the same place at the same time, and be provided as early as possible with minimum waiting times
- *Proportionate* to the apparent need, guided by the views of the child and family, and centred on meeting their needs rather than on the pattern of current services
- Based on the *necessary consent* to share information and an understanding of the purpose and possible outcomes of the assessment
- Based on *shared information*, increasingly the Common Assessment Framework, as a platform for more specialist assessments, ensuring that families do not have to provide the same information time and time again
- Focussed on *promoting the welfare of the child* in the family context and recognising that the needs of the family change over time
- Undertaken by *staff with the right skills* for onward referral or diagnosis, assessment, treatment and ongoing care and support.

Disabled children, young people and families can expect assessments to include:

- Consideration of mainstream, inclusive options as well as specialist services, including the offer of direct payments and support to manage direct payments
- Family support plan in Early Support for 0 – 4, and person centred transition planning for young people from 14
- Consideration of the need for a key worker or lead professional.

3. Participation and Feedback

Disabled children and young people and their families are routinely involved and supported in making informed decisions about their treatment, care and support, and in shaping services.³

² National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Disabled Children and Young People and those with Complex Health Needs (Standard 8): marker of good practice 2

³ National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Disabled Children and Young People and those with Complex Health Needs (Standard 8): marker of good practice 6

Disabled children, young people and families can expect participation through:

- Choice over the support provided to them through *full involvement* in assessment and design of their packages of care
- The option of participating from the beginning in *decisions about local service* development, in particular drawing up the CYPP
- *Arrangements* in all areas for parents of disabled children so that they can fully participate in shaping local universal and specialist services at both strategic and operational levels, these may be through parent forums or *Local Involvement Networks (LINKs)*
- *Tailor-made opportunities* using a creative range of methods to ensure disabled children and young people can meaningfully participate in service planning and development
- Opportunities for involvement in drawing up the *disability equality scheme* and monitoring its effectiveness in eliminating discrimination
- The survey of a representative sample of parents on their experience of services from 2009.

*Disabled children want staff to listen to them, ask them for their ideas, take notice of what they say and give them choices.... Involvement of children and their parents in planning services leads to more appropriate services.*⁴

Disabled children, young people and their families can expect:

- Feedback to be *routinely and systematically*
 - sought from all children and families regardless of impairment
 - analysed by socio demographic factors and by nature of impairment
 - reported in everyday language to local parents forums and to meetings which develop the CYPP
 - acted upon so that the views of families requiring support demonstrably influence future provision
- *Support* to be available to enable disabled children and young people to provide feedback, for example, advocacy
- A clear and well-publicised *complaints procedure* for all families who are not happy with the services they are receiving
- *Complaints to be dealt with promptly*, fully, fairly and at an appropriate level, with findings fed back to parents and carers.

⁴ National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Disabled Children and Young People and those with with Complex Health Needs (Standard 8): para 5.10.