



Improving access for disabled children: early years

"Do early years settings know who their disabled children are?"

"Do early years settings know how the local authority can help?"

"What do local authorities and settings need to do to improve access to early years education?"

"What are the benefits of extending a local authority accessibility strategy to include early years?"

This section includes materials that can help local authorities and early years settings to improve access for young disabled children. They include:

- an outline of the duties in the DDA as they apply to early years settings;
 - materials developed with local authorities to improve access in the early years;
 - training materials used and developed with local authorities and early years settings.
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1. Introduction

Improving access for disabled children: early years draws on the work of the Accessibility Planning Project: Early Years (APPEY). This project was commissioned by the Sure Start Unit at the Department for Education and Skills. It was designed to both recognise and promote the benefits of a strategic approach to increasing access to early years settings for young disabled children. APPEY was undertaken by the Council for Disabled Children (CDC) and the Special Educational Needs Joint Initiative on Training (SENJIT) at the Institute of Education, University of London.

The APPEY materials were first published on the Sure Start website August 2005 <http://www.surestart.gov.uk/resources/> and include:

- an outline of the duties in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) as they apply to early years settings;
- the principles that informed the project work with the partner local authorities and an outline of the work with them;
- copies of the materials that were developed with partner local authorities through the project work; and
- the training materials that were used and developed through the project.

The project is linked to the:

- Accessibility Planning Project (APP), supporting schools and local authorities in developing accessibility planning for disabled pupils; and
- Reasonable Adjustments Project (RAP), supporting schools in developing reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.

The website materials have been re-edited to sit alongside the APP and RAP materials to help improve access for young disabled children.

Additional materials are available on the CD-ROM that accompanies this resource and include:

- a PowerPoint presentation and training materials;
- a *Resources* section, with information about a number of resources that are referred to in the materials or have direct relevance to the materials;
- *Background to the project*: additional information about the work with the partner local authorities; and
- *Improving access for disabled children: early years*, a word processed file of this section. This is made available electronically so that the materials can be made more accessible, for example by increasing the font.



2. The DDA and the early years

The provision of care and education in the early years is covered by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). All settings and all local authorities are covered by the DDA.

Children protected by the disability discrimination duties are those who meet the definition in Section 1 of the DDA. This includes people who have:

a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to perform normal day-to-day activities.

The definition includes a wide range of impairments, including hidden impairments. If, for example, a child has an impairment affecting their mobility, sight or hearing, or has learning difficulties, a mental health condition, epilepsy, autism, a speech, language or communication impairment, asthma or diabetes then he or she may have a disability if the effect of the impairment on the child's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities is 'substantial' and 'long-term'. 'Substantial' in the DDA means 'more than minor or trivial.' Long-term means, that the impairment has lasted at least a year, or is likely to last for at least a year.

The different elements in the definition mean that, in practice, a larger group of children meet the definition of disability than most people realise. Many disabled children also have special educational needs as defined in Section 312 of the Education Act 1996.

All settings and all local education authorities (LEAs) also have duties under the SEN legislation. The SEN duties focus on making provision to meet special educational needs. The SEN duties dovetail with the DDA duties which focus on protection from discrimination and increasing access for disabled children.

Early years settings that are not constituted as schools are covered by Part 3 of the DDA. This requires settings:

- not to treat disabled children 'less favourably'; and
- to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled children.

Similar duties apply to schools under Part 4 of the DDA. Part 4 applies to all schools, including non-maintained, independent and private schools. More detail is available about the DDA duties as they apply to early years settings in the PowerPoint presentation on the CD-ROM accompanying this resource, and in a booklet: *Early years and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995: What service providers need to know.*¹

¹ Available from the Council for Disabled Children, 8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE

In addition, Part 4 of the DDA requires schools and LEAs to plan to increase access to education for disabled children. Schools are required to draw up accessibility plans and LEAs are required to draw up accessibility strategies in respect of schools maintained by them. The first accessibility plans and strategies were required to be published by April 2003 covering a three year period. They are renewable every three years, with review and revision as necessary.

The plans and strategies have to cover three aspects of access for disabled pupils:

- increased access to the curriculum;
- improvements to the physical environment of the school to increase access to education and associated services at schools;
- improvements in the provision of information that is provided in writing to pupils who are not disabled.

There is no requirement on LEAs to have an accessibility strategy for early years settings, other than in relation to the schools maintained by them. Equally, there is no requirement on early years settings, other than those constituted as schools, to have a published plan to increase access for young disabled children. Further information on the duties schools have under Part 4 of the DDA is provided in section 1 of this resource.

The development of a planned approach to the removal of barriers to learning and participation in all early years settings, and the extension of local authority strategies to include early years provision, are at the heart of this project. The benefits of such an approach are considered next.

Extending accessibility planning for young disabled children

A strategic approach to improving access will help the local authority to ensure the availability of provision where it is required and thus enable disabled children to benefit from early intervention. The extension of accessibility strategies to include all early years settings enables the local authority to draw on early years settings as a valuable source of information and data to inform access planning for its schools.

Early information

Information on young disabled children coming through the system can enhance planning for children in early years settings and at subsequent stages. Its quality can be further enhanced if it draws together information from health, social services and the voluntary sector. The development of the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme will promote a shared approach to information. For young disabled children it is important that this shared approach goes beyond information about individual children and looks at:

- the identification of numbers of children, seen in relation to sufficiency of provision; and
- what is working well and what is not working so well for young disabled children and their families: the quality of provision.

Earlier support

The extension of accessibility planning to include all early years provision can help to ensure that access for young disabled children is planned from the earliest possible

stage. Parents who were interviewed as part of the project spoke about the benefits they had perceived at the time of the introduction of the early years Area SENCOs, in particular the improved acceptance of young disabled children into a wider range of early years settings. The benefits of early intervention are widely recognised. Promoting the fullest possible access from the earliest stage gives young disabled children a positive start to their education.

Improving continuity

The extension of accessibility planning to include early years settings provides local authorities with an opportunity to improve continuity in the system and to reduce discontinuities. APPEY identified transition from early years settings into school as presenting particular difficulties for young disabled children and their parents. Work in two partner authorities sought to address this. Transition, in particular, needs to be addressed from both the schools and early years perspective.

For settings

The reasonable adjustments duty already requires settings to look ahead and anticipate the barriers that young disabled children may face. For settings, addressing these barriers in a planned way makes the setting of priorities more organised and the priorities themselves more achievable. The setting of a logical sequence: from raising staff awareness, and reviewing policies, to considering future developments, makes the process more manageable.

The project

The overall aim of the *Accessibility Planning Project: Early Years (APPEY)* was to promote a strategic approach to increasing access to early years settings for young disabled children. The term access is not limited to getting into a setting; it refers to joining in and gaining the full benefit of all the activities.

The objectives of the project were:

- to support a small number of local authorities in developing a planned approach to the removal of barriers for young disabled children in early years settings;
- through the work with partner authorities, and their early years settings, to draw out any approaches, tools and materials that might be helpful to others in adopting a more strategic approach;
- to draw these materials into a form that would be appropriate for dissemination to other authorities and settings.

APPEY worked with three partner authorities: Lambeth, Blackburn with Darwen and Norfolk. The work focused on the development of materials that would support those authorities and their early years settings in developing a more strategic approach. More detailed information about how the work was carried out in the partner authorities is in the section on *Background to the project* on the CD-ROM that accompanies these materials.

Principles of APPEY

Throughout the project APPEY worked to a Steering Group convened by the Sure Start Unit. The work was also supported and informed by a wider Reference Group that reflected Early Years, SEN and disability expertise, including representatives of the partner authorities, professional organisations, the voluntary sector and parent organisations.

In the early stages of the work the Steering and Reference Groups developed a set of principles to inform the project:

Principles

A planned approach to increasing access to early years settings for young disabled children and children with SEN involves identifying, understanding and breaking down barriers to participation and belonging.

Good early years planning for young disabled children:

- *builds continuity with other provision and other phases;*
- *builds partnership with parents and carers;*
- *takes account of the views of stakeholders;*
- *builds staff skills and confidence in working with disabled children;*
- *builds an understanding of the role and responsibilities of different adults in relation to disabled children;*
- *is underpinned by a clear vision of how all settings meet their responsibilities to disabled children and children with SEN;*
- *builds relationships with other services;*
- *is integrated with strategic planning for children's services.*

Good early years planning seeks to build access to education for disabled children through:

- *increased access to the curriculum;*
- *improvements to the physical environment to increase access to the whole life of the setting;*
- *improvements in the range of ways in which communication with disabled children is promoted.*

The development of a planned approach to increasing access for disabled children to early years education supports local authorities and early years providers in meeting their statutory duties.

Issues to be addressed in a planned approach

Through the APPEY work with the three local authorities a number of issues were identified that would help improve access for young disabled children if taken forward in a more strategic way.

General awareness of the DDA

In early years settings in all three authorities there was a low level of understanding of the disability discrimination duties. At the start of the project, those who came forward for training were aware of, and were working with, the duties in the SEN framework. They were aware of the national policy on increasing access for children with SEN to mainstream settings. However, there was little understanding of the DDA duties and some confusion about how they sit alongside the SEN duties. Work on APP and RAP has revealed a similar picture.

Definition of disability

The training provided for different groups in all three LEAs showed that misunderstandings about the definition of disability were widespread. Most trainees started out assuming that a very small number of children were disabled but by the end of the training were aware that the definition applied to a much wider group. The training for childminders in Lambeth highlighted this. At the beginning of the training session all of the childminders were clear that none of them knew a disabled child and had certainly never looked after one but at the end all of them said that they knew a number of disabled children and most of them had looked after at least one.

The low level of understanding of the DDA definition meant that most notions of disability included physical and sensory impairments, with assumptions being made that any duties towards disabled children related to the physical environment. In their narrowest interpretation these were seen to involve high cost building works to enable wheelchair access and were not thought to be required at all in older buildings.

Awareness of parents' views

In two local authorities APPEY heard the views of parents first hand. Their views were important in shaping the way that the work was focused in these two authorities. In one authority there are formal structures for hearing the views of parents, but usually in response to proposals from the local authority with no opportunity for parents to say more generally what they thought was going well and what was not. The impact on senior officers of seeing notes of the discussions with parents was such that the authority has now committed to hearing parents' views on a regular basis. The insights provided are helping the authority to set priorities for action.

Variability in provision for disabled children

Parents involved with APPEY highlighted the variability of the response to young disabled children. They revealed that whilst one setting will welcome a young disabled child, another may not. Once in a setting, one will ensure that a disabled child joins in all the activities available, another may not; one will seek out support to solve a problem, another will not. Some will listen to parents' views, others will not.

Parents also revealed that settings vary significantly in the way they deal with some of the common 'tricky issues' such as: nappies, medication, challenging behaviour, and communication difficulties.

Transition into school

There is much that early years settings can do to support young disabled children at transition into school or through a move to another setting. The tools in use in Lambeth, *Hello, my name is...* and Norfolk, *The learning story*, show what can be done to support this process. The commitment of schools is also important to the success of such initiatives. Parents' views indicated excellent practice in some schools regarding the welcome they provide for young disabled children, but, where this was not the case, the move to school was significantly more difficult for their disabled child. The work in Lambeth showed that a good start in school for a young disabled child is crucial to their subsequent progress and highlighted the importance of addressing transition into school as a school improvement issue.

Information

In Lambeth, development work with childminders identified a need to review the way in which information was being provided about childminders in the borough. Lambeth concluded that there are two issues to be considered in ensuring that disabled children are not discriminated against when accessing child minding services:

- how the information is presented by the Children's Information Service and others; and
- how parents choose their childminder.

Both the issues may be tackled by indicating whether a particular childminder has experience of caring for disabled children and how accessible their home is.

Staffing ratios

The work with the three local authorities also revealed a perception that a disabled child would necessarily need one-to-one care or 'be more work' than a young child who is not disabled. Although occasionally a young child may have complex needs that require one-to-one support in a group setting, or that require them to be in the sole charge of a childminder, this is not 'the norm'. The training provided by APPEY explored a wider notion of what reasonable adjustments might look like in early years settings.

However it also raised the question how one-to-one care should be funded. If a childminder normally cares for three children, he/she cannot reasonably be expected to forfeit two-thirds of his/her income. This is unlikely to be regarded as a reasonable adjustment. In this situation in one authority, social services funded the difference, in another a charitable trust had funded part of the difference and the parents had funded the remainder. It is likely a child with complex needs needing one-to-one care from a childminder will need a statement of SEN, so it might be reasonable for the local authority to issue a statement at an early stage and work out the appropriate support from different partners. With the increasing expectation of the availability of childcare for all children, and parents not necessarily seeking group settings, it is important to discuss and resolve how additional support should be funded.

Developing capacity in early years settings

In all three local authorities there was a focus on developing the capacity of early years settings to provide for young disabled children. The approaches adopted in the three authorities were very different but they all developed awareness and capacity:

- the audit approach in Blackburn with Darwen led to the development of a new professional dialogue on disability. This was focused on practice issues across a range of settings and provided a resource for problem-solving and sharing good practice;
- the Norfolk guidance, though an apparently different tool, provided a similar opportunity for professional dialogue, the sharing of approaches and the discussion of the good practice examples that are incorporated into the guidance;
- in Lambeth the discussions around both transition and childminding provided a forum for the development of a consensus about what constituted good practice.

Across all three authorities, the development of a professional dialogue and the sharing of good practice were key elements in developing the capacity of early years settings to plan and provide appropriately for young disabled children.

Summary

A strategic approach to improving access for young disabled children needs to:

- identify the factors that either enable or hinder increased access for young disabled children. The factors addressed through this Project were the ones identified by the partner authorities and may well be relevant in other authorities;
- devise a planned approach to removing barriers that young disabled children face;
- gain the best possible advantage for young disabled children from the action taken, whether in settings or at the level of the local authority, by working with others on a shared agenda, combining resources and sharing what works;
- ensure that action taken in the early years is effectively coordinated with action taken by schools and local authorities to increase access to education in schools; and finally, where appropriate
- link to the Early Support Programme, the Government programme to achieve better co-ordinated family services for young disabled children and their families.
www.earlysupport.org.uk



3. The work with the partner authorities

APPEY worked with three partner authorities: Lambeth, Blackburn with Darwen and Norfolk.

What follows is a brief description of the work in each of the partner authorities. The work illustrates some of the practical issues involved in developing a planned approach to increasing access to early years settings. The materials arising from the work are included in the *Resources* section on the CD-ROM. More detailed information about how the work was carried out is included in the *Background to the project* on the CD-ROM.

The Lambeth childminder guidance

Initial planning meetings held with Lambeth Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership identified training for childminders on the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) as one of the priorities for APPEY involvement.

Two training sessions were planned, with a crèche available and choice of timing for childminders. Prior to the training, discussions were held with the Lambeth Childminders Association to ensure training would be targeted appropriately. The meeting and the two training sessions involved a total of 20 childminders, one of whom had considerable experience of caring for disabled children.

A number of issues emerged from the discussions:

- at the outset childminders were not aware of the breadth of the definition of disability in the DDA;
- recognising the breadth of the definition, many childminders went on to describe 'reasonable adjustments' that were already part of their practice;
- one childminder described physical adaptations to her home by the occupational therapy team;
- childminders described the links through which they had accessed specialist support and loan equipment;
- childminders expressed concerns about the effect on their income should a child need one-to-one care. However, at the same time they recognised that a disabled child does not necessarily need one-to-one and that disabled children need loving care, opportunities to learn and the company of other children.

Following the discussions and training, and aware that a small number of childminders had been involved, it was agreed that the issues arising from the discussions and training should be turned into guidance for childminders in Lambeth:

- to explain and illustrate how the DDA works for childminders;
- to share good practice; and
- to address gaps in understanding.

The guidance was revised in the light of comments from the APPEY Steering and Reference Groups and from staff in Lambeth. Lambeth is building the guidance into its induction training for new childminders and is including it in a series of workshops for existing childminders. A copy of the guidance can be found on the resources section of the CD-ROM.

The Lambeth advice on transition to mainstream settings

Initial planning meetings held with Lambeth Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) identified the development of good practice in the transition of young disabled children from early years settings into school as one of the priorities for APPEY involvement.

While there were many schools that had good practice, the EYDCP was aware that some parents had found difficulties in getting a place in a mainstream school, or had not had sufficient opportunity to work with the school in planning transition. A meeting was held with a small group of parents to discuss their experiences and to set an agenda for the work. A further meeting was held with the inclusion workers from the EYDCP, who shared their experiences of supporting children through transition.

The discussions with parents had identified a number of difficulties:

- parents had difficulties in getting information from schools;
- some parents were given misleading information about statements and funding;
- not all schools welcomed disabled children;
- parents had many concerns about the practicalities of support for their child as they moved into primary school. There was little opportunity to discuss these and where opportunities existed, parents experienced many of them as negative and rejecting;
- the stressful nature of the process of the SEN statutory assessment.

Parents, schools, childminders and outreach workers from the EYDCP also identified features of positive transitions into school:

- good information for parents;
- a listening ear for parents;
- careful planning, involving a third party facilitated communication. For example, a childminder, an educational psychologist, staff from the EYDCP, mutual visiting between school and pre-school;
- the use of a passport: *Hello, my name is...*;
- continuity of support, for example: a teaching assistant from a nursery accompanying the child to the new school a day or so a week to start with;
- the identification of appropriate communications systems (and support for these) for the child;

- experienced SENCOs;
- specific training for staff;
- good follow up with a home-school diary and a built-in review.

A parent and a childminder also provided detailed individual accounts of what had worked well at transition.

The local authority was fully involved with the project and meetings were held with the assistant directors for SEN and school improvement, and for early years. The focus on transition into school fitted well with the priorities in the Education Development Plan. With the support of the local authority, letters were sent to all primary schools in Lambeth, asking for examples of good practice. Four schools, identified by the EYDCP and the local authority as having good practice, were approached directly and visited.

On the basis of the information gained from all these different sources, an initial draft of the advice was drawn up. This advice has been redrafted in the light of comments from the local authority, EYDCP and the steering and reference groups for APPEY. The draft was also shared with the schools who had contributed to the advice. The advice as it is published will develop over time in Lambeth, as it will in any other local authority where it is adopted and adapted for local use. Lambeth has recognised the guidance as contributing to school improvement.

The *Lambeth advice on transition to mainstream settings* and Lambeth's passport, *Hello my name is...*, are reproduced in the *Resources* section on the CD-ROM accompanying these materials.

Developing an early years audit in Blackburn with Darwen

In summer 2004 Blackburn with Darwen was proposing significant changes to the organisation of its early years services. Blackburn with Darwen already had seven children's centres, of a planned thirteen, and was moving to organise services in five geographical areas. Pilot work was being carried out around three of the existing Children's Centres to examine levels of need. This would inform the future service redesign and put children and families at the centre of planning considerations.

The changes would also involve an existing special nursery school and a child development centre. The school would become a virtual school working across the Authority. The child development centre was reviewing existing arrangements to inform the re-organisation of support services from all agencies to the new children's centres.

Depending on the pilot work, the plan was for one children's centre in each of the five geographical areas to have 'enhanced provision.' Support for children with complex needs would be provided from these five children's centres to all early years settings. Education services which had previously been organised to support different types of early years settings would be re-organised to work in a multi-agency context across all settings.

The redesign of more specialist support would need to be matched by the development of all early years settings to provide for a wider range of young children. Through a series of meetings with local managers and senior officers it was agreed that the priorities for the APPEY work in Blackburn with Darwen were:

- building the capacity of early years settings to welcome and provide for young disabled children and children with special educational needs;
- supporting the development of the new service arrangements.

There were three main elements to the Authority's approach:

- training through APPEY;
- a conference focused on inclusion, to take place in November 2004;
- the development of an audit tool for use in early years settings.

Training

The training by the local authority for private and voluntary sector providers was designed to:

- raise awareness of the DDA;
- ensure a shared understanding of the core concepts in the DDA: the definition of disability, less favourable treatment and reasonable adjustments;
- give providers an opportunity to understand which duties apply to their setting;
- give providers an opportunity to apply their understanding to practical examples from early years settings;
- increase understanding of how to prevent discrimination;
- enable providers to consider the benefits of a planned approach to increasing access for young disabled children;
- enable providers to plan the next steps to developing access in their own setting.

The training included a presentation on the DDA duties, including how they apply in different settings, and two workshop sessions: one looking at different scenarios and one looking at ways of planning to increase access in participants' own settings.

Five training sessions were provided over two days: two morning, two afternoon and one evening session. These were arranged at different locations around Blackburn and Darwen, including three different children's centres. A total of 60 people attended.

Early Years and Inclusion Conference November 2004

Blackburn with Darwen planned a conference, to take place in November 2004, for managers, owners and services. The conference was designed to raise the profile of its work on inclusion and the approach being taken in Blackburn with Darwen.

The day included external speakers with expertise in disability and inclusion issues and a series of workshops on play, resources and the development of inclusive attitudes. It also included an introduction to the audit tool that was being developed by the Authority.

The event was attended by approximately 100 practitioners from across the Authority. The feedback was positive and as a result six settings agreed to work with officers from the Authority to develop the audit tool: *Towards Inclusion*.

Audit tool issues

In developing the audit, Blackburn with Darwen wanted to achieve a number of objectives. It wanted to:

- raise the level of commitment to the inclusion of young disabled children and children with special educational needs in all settings;
- agree a baseline of provision that all settings would be able to provide;

- provide a framework for the development of provision for young disabled children and children with special educational needs;
- provide opportunities for settings to share creative solutions to practical problems.

There were some practical considerations:

- the audit would be used in all settings, so officers were clear that it had to be simple and straight forward to use (many of the published audits were seen as being too long);
- the audit needed to be developed collaboratively with settings if it was to be welcomed, adopted and 'owned' by settings;
- the development and introduction of the audit would need to link all settings into the new pattern of support services and would provide a practical focus for the work of the re-organised services.

Other materials in Birmingham and Scotland, 'Equal start,' and the Index for Inclusion informed the development of the audit (officers liked the developmental structure of the Birmingham standards, but wanted something that would be simple to use and would be owned locally).

The audit was developed in five units:

- 1: Leadership;
- 2: Management;
- 3: Play and learning;
- 4: Involving parents;
- 5: Involving the community.

Each unit consists of a number of statements, each of which is supported by a number of questions. In answering the questions, settings are encouraged to identify evidence that can support their response and, looking at their answers, identify whether their practice is:

- emerging;
- established; or
- enhanced.

At the November conference settings had volunteered to pilot the audit. A number of these were eventually able to participate: a nursery school, a nursery class in an infant school, a social services day nursery and a Children's Centre. The settings started by piloting *Unit 1: Leadership and Unit 2: Management*.

The headteacher of the nursery school and the headteacher of the infant school with the nursery class both saw the use of the audit as part of professional development. Because of pressure on staff development time, the two headteachers had both gone through the audit themselves first: one with a colleague, one on her own. Both had then taken it to a wider group of staff.

One school took one and a half hours, the head and a colleague for half an hour, then one hour with staff, for the two units. The other head had gone through the two units on her own first and had then spent two hours with her senior management team.

All the settings all spoke positively about using the audit and the fact that it had encouraged them to reflect on their practice:

"It helped to think things through. It made you think of things."

"We have taken stock of the staff development time that we have given to SEN and disability issues."

They had found the language and the layout easy to use:

"The language is easy and accessible."

The use of the audit gave some reassurance to staff about some of the things they were already doing. It also enabled them to plan the development of provision into the future:

"Policy development is normally in reaction to things, this is thinking ahead."

"We liked the staged approach. This will help with development planning."

Through the feedback from the pilot there was some discussion of what constituted evidence. In particular, settings were looking for evidence of the progress of disabled children and children with SEN. In general settings had drawn on:

- observations;
- staff interviews;
- P scales and PIVATS (Performance Indicators for Value Added Target Setting²).

Leaders and managers benefited from reflecting on the outcomes of the audit with an external partner. All settings felt a staged approach to using the audit tool was required with support when needed and that this element would need to be built in to the wider dissemination of the audit.

The settings felt that the tool provided an opportunity for clear signposting to resources, expertise and information within the Authority. They also found some overlap between the different questions and a significant amount of repetition in terms of the evidence that could be adduced in support of the schools' answers to the questions.

Some wider benefits emerged from the responses of the settings involved in the pilot:

- some consistency of approach, and of the language for discussing it, was already emerging from the use of the audit in the pilot;
- easier information sharing between settings;
- potential for sharing skills;
- increased confidence in sharing staff.

Progress with the audit tool was kept under review by a small group with representatives from the Educational Psychology Service and early years support services. The shared language and the shared understanding of provision would be helpful to the services as they came together. This would be helpful as the audit was introduced more widely.

To address some of the points about repetition, the audit tool is being re-ordered. The sections on play and learning have been moved to the front of the audit. This has the benefit of starting with children and staff rather than management. Leadership and management have been merged and placed later.

² PIVATS is an assessment programme developed by Lancashire County Council and used nationally to measure pupil progress through the 'P' scales and up to National Curriculum Level 4. More information about PIVATS can be found on Lancashire County Council's website: www.lancashire.gov.uk/education/pivats

Over the two months following the piloting and revision of the audit, the nursery school involved in the piloting agreed to lead on the introduction of the revised audit in a cluster of settings in the area. In effect the nursery school would act as a training centre and external partner.

Originally a childminder had volunteered to pilot the audit, but in the event was unable to do so. Officers would seek out another childminder to try the materials.

At the same time, officers would look through the evidence that had been used in completing the audit. This would be listed, so that settings would have a clear picture of what evidence they would need to have when working on the audit. This would need to be part of the guidance on how to use the audit which itself would be revised in the light of the pilot.

The training needs involved in the introduction of the audit were recognised. When the audit tool is fully implemented, settings will use the audit as part of the conversation with the Area SENCOs to identify what stage of development they are at, what is working well and what is not going so well. For schools, this conversation may need to be part of the school improvement conversation.

As a first step the nursery school involved in the pilot would take on a role in training other settings in the use of the audit. This approach would be carefully monitored. It had the potential for being adopted in other parts of the Authority.

There are several ways in which the introduction of the audit tool will help Blackburn with Darwen to develop a more strategic approach to the development of provision for young disabled children and children with SEN:

- it will help to identify development needs within settings and provide a good basis for development planning. This will enable settings to be more strategic in their work with young disabled children and children with special educational needs;
- it will help to identify development needs across settings and enable services to respond with appropriate opportunities for training and development;
- it will enable Blackburn with Darwen to identify where particular expertise lies, and to use that expertise in a targeted way to improve provision;
- it will support service development planning to meet the needs of the local community.

The Norfolk guidance

Initial planning meetings were held with officers with SEN and disability responsibilities in the early years. Norfolk is a large county with 485 early years settings. Fairly quickly it was decided that, whatever the focus for the APPEY work, it would be based in one or two smaller areas. Wider dissemination would then take place after the APPEY work.

To help inform the work, meetings were arranged with parents. Two meetings were arranged in different parts of the County. Parents were positive about the following aspects of early years provision:

- Portage; pre-school music group; 'bookstart'; early statutory assessment;
- Area SENCOs;
- the home-school diary which was especially helpful for children with communication difficulties.

Parents identified other factors that worked against a positive experience for their children and themselves, in particular:

- negative attitudes towards disability: one parent felt that her child was seen as a trouble-maker; another as 'a problem to be solved'; another felt her child was seen as a 'naughty' child, not a child with a disability whose needs were not being met;
- nappies: one parent said her son was 'evicted' from nursery because of toileting issues;
- difficulties in transition into school: 'my daughter went to a normal nursery but then they wouldn't accept her in the main school'; 'some schools are not happy to include children with Down's Syndrome';
- information for parents: 'there should be better information for parents'; 'parents are not included in planning or review'; 'children sometimes keep things to themselves, with bullying, parents need to know.'

The issues raised by parents suggested that guidance for settings on these, and other issues affecting access for young disabled children, might strengthen the ability of settings to cater for young disabled children. Guidance would need to be short, simple, and offer positive advice illustrated with examples of how early years settings in Norfolk were already managing these 'tricky issues' in practice

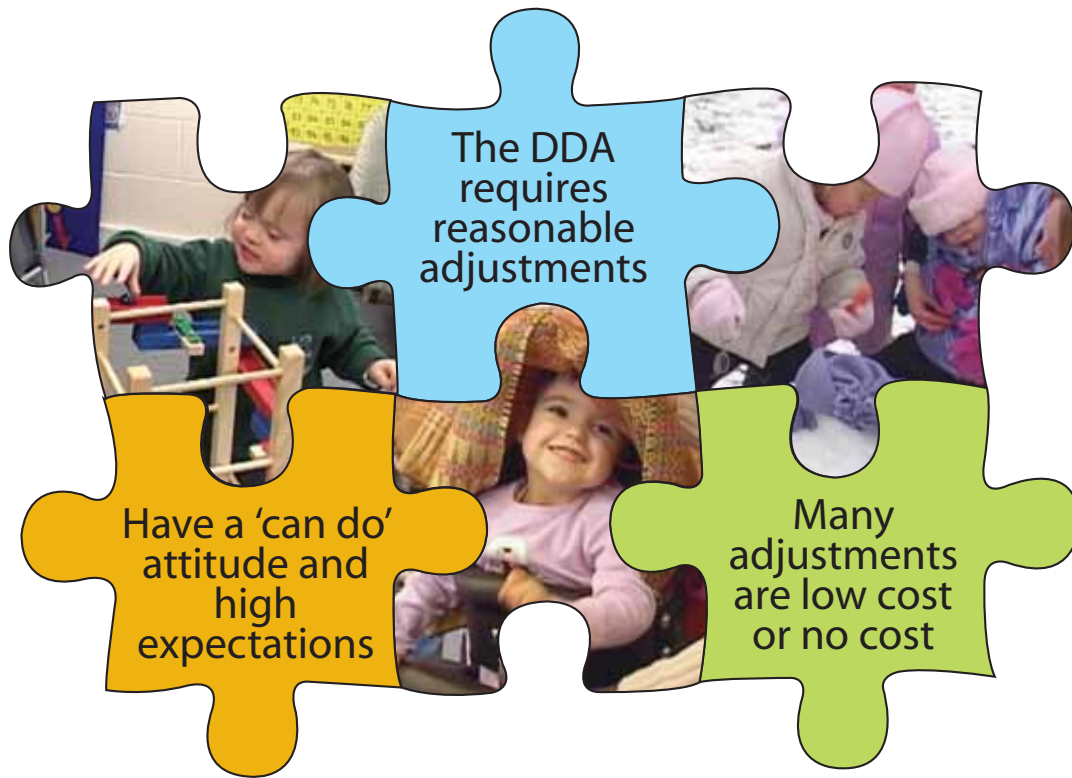
Training was arranged for early years settings in the Hethersett and East Dereham areas of the County with a choice of morning, afternoon and evening sessions. The training was used as an opportunity to discuss tricky issues that arise in early years settings and the positive solutions and interesting and innovative practice that settings had already developed.

Building on the parents' meetings and the training sessions, a first draft of guidance was developed. This built in some key elements:

- an initial outline of each issue;
- quotes or examples from settings that would illustrate positive solutions and how settings had '*gone the extra mile.*'
- guidance on what is required, key actions that need to be taken by settings or established good practice. This would provide a baseline of what might be expected in settings;
- reference to local contacts and other sources of information.

Over a series of meetings a draft was developed and refined, with input from Area SENCOs, Link Teachers and the County's Disability Co-ordinator. Drafts were circulated for colleagues to illustrate with examples. The drafts were further refined. The version of the guidance included in *Resources* section of the CD-ROM may be further developed by Norfolk. It may also be adapted for local use by other local authorities.

Norfolk is using the guidance to raise awareness of the disability discrimination duties across the Foundation Stage: in early years settings and in schools and in training. The guidance will be placed on their website: www.norfolkesinet.org.uk and disseminated through its Area SENCOs, link teachers and services working with early years settings.



Norfolk 'post card' guidance

During the development of the Norfolk guidance, a number of issues kept recurring, in particular:

- the general underestimation of the number of children covered by the definition of disability in the DDA;
- the expectation that changes for disabled children meant physical changes to buildings;
- concern that the DDA might require something 'unreasonable' or costly.

The Area SENCOs felt that a small card with half a dozen short messages would be helpful in raising awareness of the DDA. The Norfolk 'post card' guidance is a draft of such a document. The *Norfolk 'post card' guidance* is shown above and is included in the *Resources* section on the CD-ROM.

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