



# **PART TWO**

## **Final evaluation of Solihull DCATCH pilot**

### **Case Studies**

**April 2011**

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## **Introduction**

This is part two of a two-part report of the evaluation of the Solihull DCATCH national pilot that ran from September 2008-March 2011.

Part one outlines the programme, how the evaluation was undertaken, the key findings and a number of recommendations for taking forward childcare and other related services for disabled children.

Part two presents a number of in-depth case studies of specific projects.

**Solihull DCATCH pilot**

**Extending Early Support**

**Case Study**

**March 2011**

## **1 Project summary – vision and aims**

DCATCH funding was used to extend the early support programme so that it was suitable for older children and parents to use with schools.

A key feature of this multi agency project, in which parents are seen as integral partners, was to develop **practical tools and training** to meet parents' needs at the 'next step' of early support. For this reason the project is sometimes referred to as 'next steps'.

The project initially considered delivering separate workshops for primary and secondary age groups in the event the focus was 'parents of children in school' and included the development of a family file informed by the whole family.

The project supported the following DCATCH National Outcomes:

- Greater numbers of parents with disabled children take-up formal childcare; parents, children and young people are more positive and confident about using it.
- Parents, children and young people are better informed about the provision of suitable childcare in their area.
- Participation and feedback: consulting with families.

## **2 Challenges the project set out to address**

The project set out to address a number of challenges:

- Parents with disabled children were isolated which can lead to a high incident of family breakdown.
- Fathers of disabled children experienced particular problems of isolation and can feel excluded from their child's life.
- Parents were concerned that they did not feel as involved in their child's life when they went into school and that the needs of the child and family gave way to educational targets (evidence from the Lamb Enquiry).
- A number of parents were unaware of the existence of the Family Information Service (FIS).
- Parents identified their need for information, advice and support particularly at transition into school and later into secondary school.
- Parents wanted to help schools and providers to understand their children's needs.
- Schools were not always fully engaged with the Team Around the Family as a process for working with families.

### **3 How the project responded to these challenges**

#### **Developing Partnerships and engaging parents**

The project developed links with a range of services, including Meadow Centre, LINCS, FIS, Children's Centres, schools and the Parent Champions. The aim of the partnerships was both to reach out to a wider range of parents than were habitually reached and to include stakeholders in the training. For example, FIS and LINCS both spoke to the parents attending the training about what they provide and how services could be accessed.

#### **Family File and Family Service Planning**

A meeting with Solihull Life Opportunities (SoLO) was undertaken to incorporate their format for gathering information about children, so as to gather information needed by providers whilst avoiding duplication.

Using the Early Support Family File as a starting point, the project developed the Family File and Family Service Planning Tool for school aged children and piloted it with six families and their schools. The tool aimed to support partnership working with schools taking a holistic approach to a child or young person's needs.

The tool has been planned to act as a *'living document'* kept by the parent and modified as children grow and change, develop new interests and have new needs.

#### **Workshops**

**Next Steps** School Focussed workshops were developed to support parents whose children had started school. Two Early Support training consultants worked with the Senior Parent Champion and two parent volunteers to draft the primary workshops. The workshops sought to address parents' comments on previously delivered Early Support training. The four workshops were on the following themes:

- Helping parents to understand the world that they are in.
- Feelings and relationship.
- Relationships with professionals.
- The importance of the ordinary.

The aim of the workshops was to:

- Support parents to deal positively with the attitudinal barriers from other parents as well as professionals in childcare/leisure.
- Helping parents to participate actively in their children's education and leisure opportunities ensuring that their children get the best possible experience, enjoyment and achievement.
- Make support accessible to the fathers of children with disabilities.
- Renew parents' confidence as their children move into integrated childcare settings and into school.
- Supporting children to take up leisure opportunities.

## **Training the trainers**

The project undertook 'training the trainers' for professionals and parents, with a view to participants delivering the course themselves.

## **Dads' group**

A dads' group was set up, designed for dads to have fun with their children and identify what they would like in the future. The group meet at times which best suit fathers and male carers, including Saturday mornings.

## **4 What the project has achieved and its next steps**

- The project has developed a range of partners, including with other DCATCH projects and mainstream organisations, including Parent Champions, Children's Centres, FIS, LINCS, Sportwise, Schools – mainstream and special, and The Meadow Centre.
- There are further opportunities to link up with LINCS in relation to the CAF.
- 29 parents from across the borough have been involved in consultation.
- Two sets of workshops for parents have been delivered.
- A training the trainers session.
- Five parents have been trained to deliver the parent workshops.
- Two of the parents became paid Parent Champions.
- 15 fathers attend a dads' groups, ten of whom are actively involved in running the group post-DCATCH.
- The Family File has been developed, to include a section for older children, that can be given to whatever setting their child attends.
- Professionals and parent trainers will deliver a final set of workshops. The parent trainers will be assessed with a view to them becoming trainers for the consortium.

## **5 Benefits of the project**

### **To the local authority and to professionals**

- More effective partnerships with parents who have been through the workshops.
- Professionals get more information about the child, including 'soft' information via the Family File.
- Family Service Plans have been developed for parents who have gone on to have LINCS meetings.

### **To parents and carers**

- Parents attending the workshops are more confident and stronger.
- Parents feel less isolated through being involved in a supportive group.
- Some parents have gone on to deliver the training themselves and two are employed as Parent Champions.
- Parents are more confident about their children attending leisure activities when they can give the provider the Family File.
- Dads are more engaged with their children and have more opportunities to bond with them and meet other fathers and male carers.

### **To children and young people**

- Children and young people have accessed more activities and have benefited by the experience.

- Children and young people get more coordinated support.
- Children have more time with their fathers and male carers.

## **6 Critical success factors**

- Developing effective relationships with providers (schools, special schools, Meadow Centre, Children's Centres).
- Developing effective relationships with FIS and LINCS.
- An experienced trainer delivering the initial workshops.
- Reaching a wide range of parents by going further than those already active and known and publicising activities widely through schools, special schools, SENCOs etc.
- Practical issues also supported the project to reach out more widely, such as holding workshops in the evening and on Saturday mornings.
- Engaging fathers through separate activities including holding 'dads' groups' and having activities where dads can get involved with their children in a variety of activities.
- Keeping all activities, including the family file, low-cost to enhance sustainability.

## **7 What would/could be done differently?**

- The partnership structure: The partnership structure meant that there was no authority over partners' delivery of activities. This caused some delays in delivery when partners were unable to work to agreed time frames and action plans.
- Administrative arrangements: By relying on someone else to book venues and publicity, there was often an issue of information not getting to families in time to enable them to attend the training.

## **8 Sustainability**

The West Midlands Early Support Regional Training Consortium (WMESRTC) is looking at setting up a Community Interest Company for delivering Early Support Training and is putting in place a pool of consortium trainers who can deliver early support and next steps across the region, with local parents being developed to become lead trainers.

## **9 For more information contact case study co-author**

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# **Solihull DCATCH pilot**

## **Information and Engagement**

### **Case Study**

**March 2011**

## **1 Project summary**

The Information and Engagement project was initially two separate projects, one focussed on improving how parents access information and the information available to them and the other on engaging and consulting with parents through the work of Parent Champions. However, it became apparent that the links between the two areas of work were so great that they would both benefit from coming together under the remit of the Family Information Service (FIS) and working, from a delivery point of view, as one project.

The information project was established to improve the availability and accuracy of information and to coordinate the flow of information between stakeholders (DCATCH projects and other agencies) and parents through the development and implementation of an information strategy.

The engagement project would work through a team of Parent Champions to reach out to parents, gather their views on services and support them to access information and provision.

The project supported the following DCATCH National Outcomes:

- Participation and feedback.
- Improving information for families.
- Supporting families to make choices.

## **2 Challenges the project set out to address**

The project had a number of challenges to overcome:

- Parents were reporting frustrations in not having the information they needed at the right time to make choices about services and provision. In many cases parents did not find out about provision until it was too late for them to access it.
- Some parents lacked the confidence to engage with services.
- Consultation and engagement tended to be with the same parents each time and there was a need to reach out to more parents, including fathers and working parents.
- Some professional were not as open as others to hearing parents' views.

## **3 How the project responded to these challenges**

### **Recruitment of worker into the FIS**

A worker was recruited into the FIS to lead on collecting relevant information and network with services, build up and share knowledge and skills in this area, and to support families to access childcare and services. The Parent Champions were recruited, as parents of children with additional needs and disabilities themselves, to use their personal experience to engage with families and also to identify what information parents wanted, when they wanted it, in what format(s) and how they wanted to receive it. The Information Officer provided in-depth advice to parents through brokerage that included signposting parents to other services and, where necessary, guiding them through the process to the stage where they felt confident in accessing that service independently. FIS now receives an average of 15 enquiries a month from parents of disabled children, of which seven are for in-depth brokerage support.

### **Gathering and distributing information**

An important aspect of this project was to gather and distribute information between service providers, parents and practitioners on a regular basis. This included gathering information on the accessibility of services, notably childcare settings, and information about events, activities and services that were available to children with disabilities and additional needs. This, plus information on additional topics such as starting school and short breaks opportunities, was made available for families and practitioners to access via the FIS web pages. Information on useful topics, activities and events was then regularly disseminated to parents and other professionals via the Parents' Network termly newsletter and monthly e-bulletin and via the Parent Champions and Information Officer through information sessions, drop-in groups, SENCO meetings, team meetings and other parent support groups. The network was also used to gather views from families which was then fed into the development of relevant service areas. As of February 2011 a total of 1003 people were signed up to the Parents' Network of which 271 are families of children with additional needs and/or disabilities.

### **Communication, consultation and engagement**

The FIS developed a communication strategy to ensure the collection and distribution of information was coordinated. Developing the website was a critical aspect of this project, recognising that for many parents the Internet is an important source of information.

The project ensured communication was a 'two-way street'. For example as well as sharing information with parents, the team undertook consultation with 128 parents and used both formal and informal methods of gathering their views. These views, and any issues that were highlighted, were then logged and fed back into the local authority or to services so that they could take these views on board and make appropriate changes.

Engaging parents, particularly increasing the number of parents with whom the local authority engaged and the ways in which they were engaged, was a key focus for this project. A range of different approaches were used so that parents could get involved at different levels depending on their interests and levels of confidence. Fun days and outings were found to be useful ways of engaging new parents or those with little time to be involved in any other ways. There are three regular weekly drop-in sessions and two play and stay sessions run by the Parent Champions.

### **Parents' Forum**

The Solihull CAN (Children with Additional Needs) Forum, facilitated by a Parent Champion, was set up to influence decisions that are made about services for children with additional needs and/or disabilities. This is achieved through links to the strategic Parents' Forum which has a seat on the Children and Young People's Trust Board and two seats on the Disabled Children's Strategy Board. Solihull CAN has also undertaken training for members and has developed its own website.

### **Parent volunteers**

The Family Information Service recognised both the value of engaging parents and the opportunities afforded through parent volunteers. The team developed a formal process for recruiting, supporting and deploying volunteers. For example parents were enabled to support the running of parent groups, as a precursor to parents then taking over the coordination and running of these groups themselves. Parents were encouraged to join the West Midlands Early Support Training Consortium and some were trained as Early Support trainers. Parents volunteered in a range of ways including attending strategic forums, helping to organise local fun days, undertaking mystery shopper activities or attending meetings to provide the parents' voice.

### **Brokerage**

The brokerage aspect of the project provided support and advice to parents to help them find the right childcare to meet their child's needs. Brokerage involved discussing the needs of individual children and the childcare options available to identify what type of childcare would be most appropriate; approaching childcare providers on a family's behalf; providing support to the setting and advising the parent on how to work with the provider to settle the child in as easily as possible. Where necessary brokerage also brought together other agencies and services to ensure the child was supported and their needs met. Occasionally brokerage involved attending initial meetings with childcare providers.

Experience has shown that in most cases parents just need to be advised about what their child is entitled to and what their options are and most are then confident to source a suitable childcare place themselves. Letting parents know that they can approach their brokerage service if they have any further concerns or if there are any delays in support being set up, ensures parents don't 'fall off the edge'. Brokerage has increased parents' confidence in using childcare, leisure and other support services and has helped parents/carers and providers recognise the value of inclusion. The FIS has supported 119 parents through the brokerage scheme from July 2009 up to Feb 2011).

### **Partnership working**

Working with other agencies was critical to the Information and Engagement Project and so the project team developed close working relationships across a wide range of professionals and services including school SENCOs, support groups such as Solihull Autistic Spectrum Support and Information (SASSI), Solihull Downs Group, Autism West Midlands and South Birmingham and Solihull Dyspraxia Group; services such as Early Support, LINCS and the Meadow Centre, and with providers such as SoLO, leisure centres and children's centres

## **4 What the project has achieved and its next steps**

- 204 families of children with additional needs and/or disabilities are signed up to receive regular information.
- Consultation with 128 families.
- Feedback from 18 families from outreach events.
- The regular drop in sessions are attended on average as follows:
  - Lyndon up to 10 attendees
  - Chelmsley Wood up to 4 attendees
  - Shirley Heath up to 5 attendees

- Meeting with 39 SENCOs.
- Enquiries from an average of 15 families per month.
- A marketing and communication strategy through which the FIS leads on the collection and dissemination of information between services and families.
- More parents are involved and in a range of different ways (Trust Board, fun days, supporting drop-in groups etc). However, the project needs to continue to bring parents on board, particularly parents in the north of the borough and those with older children.
- The CAN parents' forum for parents of children with disabilities and additional needs feeds into key strategic fora. Whilst there are currently 11 core members, Solihull CAN needs to ensure that it increases its reach and presents as representative a voice as possible.
- There are now two active parent volunteers with a further seven at different stages of recruitment and induction.
- Brokerage and potential of this work to support the Short Breaks agenda.

## **5 Benefits of the project**

### **To the local authority and to professionals**

- Active involvement of SENCOs in schools and settings ensures that more parents are being referred to FIS as the one stop shop for information, and are more aware of the range of support available, and are able to ensure parents are made aware and have the opportunity to sign up to the parents' network.
- The FIS has a much better understanding of the needs of parents, of services that are available to them and how to reach and involve parents in ways that are mutually beneficial.
- FIS has a higher profile and has greater credibility.
- Parental engagement strategy reflects complexity of approaches.

### **To parents and carers**

- Parents have somewhere to go to seek information, get support (e.g. brokerage), share their views and get involved.
- Parents are starting to find their voice collectively.
- Parents receive more targeted and timely information.
- Opportunities to volunteer and develop skills and confidence, which will support those who wish to take steps towards employment.
- Parents have developed peer support networks, for example through drop-ins.
- Leaving their child in a crèche at a drop in session, often the parent's first experience of being away from their child, enables parents to discuss issues and support one another.
- Maintain channels for engaging with families including listening and acting on their views through the FIS issues logging process.
- Maintain channels for parents to access the information they need and the support to be able to access services.

## **6 Critical success factors**

- Ensuring parents are aware of the different ways that they can get involved (including as volunteers) and are then supported to do so.
- Ensuring that parents are always made welcome when they first join a group, come to a meeting etc. This involves practical actions such as calling the parent before an event to

make sure they are still ok to attend, making sure that someone knows they are coming, providing them with an opportunity to attend a meeting as an observer before attending as a representative, etc.

- Providing training and support to parents especially those who are involved in formal representation. This can include IT training, speaking and listening, asking questions, protocols around meetings, etc.
- Allowing sufficient time to involve and engage parents in meaningful ways.
- Adopting a responsive and flexible approach to project delivery and being prepared to try things out, adopt what works and change what doesn't.
- Working with all partners on a 'win-win' philosophy.

## **7 What would/could have been done differently?**

- Ensuring better strategic links with other agencies from the outset so that parent' views could be fed through in constructive ways and used to influence services.
- Better links with partner agencies to improve parental awareness of the FIS.
- Automatic link-up to the Parents' Network so that parents are given regular information.
- Better links with Early Support so that parents have access to drop-ins following on from their attendance at parent workshops.
- Looking into new ways of engaging families and reaching more people.

## **8 Sustainability**

The DCATCH Information Officer will be retained within the FIS so that this knowledge, expertise and contacts are held. The service is trying to identify Information Champions within each provider/service as it has found that information sent out doesn't always reach the right person and FIS doesn't have the capacity to engage with lots of different people in a service. The FIS website will help ensure that information is kept up to date and will make it easier to print information that parents need rather than print brochures, etc. that are immediately out of date. FIS will link up with the DCATCH Information System so that there is a targeted approach to sending out information to parents.

The FIS are exploring ways of engaging parent volunteers. CAN is becoming a formally constituted body.

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**Solihull DCATCH pilot**

**Access Initiative Coordination**

**Case Study**

**March 2011**

## 1 Project summary – vision and aims

The Access Initiative project had three elements:

- **The database project:** developing a centrally held and accessible database to identify and track disabled children and the settings they currently access and may access in the future.
- **Equipment tracking and needs monitoring system:** identifying what equipment has already been provided and identifying gaps in the provision of equipment to support the inclusion of disabled children and young people.
- **Access Audit Project:** developing a strategy to support the development of successful access audits within the borough.

The project supported the following DCATCH National Outcomes:

- Participation and Feedback: Consulting with Families.
- Supporting families to make choices.
- Workforce development.
- Increasing capacity, including and improving quality.

## 2 Challenges the project set out to address

The project set out to address the following challenges:

- Equipment bought for one child to enable them to attend a setting was not optimally used and was often 'mothballed' when the child moves on.
- Where children have a need for equipment, it could take several weeks to put in an order to get it approved.
- Children were being denied childcare places, when a relatively small piece of equipment might make inclusion possible.

## 3 How the project responded to these challenges

The Access Initiative undertook a number of activities:

### Access audits

**Training for professionals:** A nine-day training course was developed, held in blocks of two to three days over a three-month period. Training was then delivered to 23 professionals from across education, health and the third sector to become access audit practitioners. Individuals trained were those who were identified as being able to do elements of access audits within their day jobs and included paediatric occupational therapists, teachers from the specialist inclusion service, teachers in mainstream schools, statementing officers, capital assets team, buildings, SoLO and the Parent Partnership.

**Training for parents:** A shortened version of the access audit training, lasting for three short days (10.00am to 2.30pm), was developed and delivered to parents and carers and aimed to help them identify the questions to ask when they were considering settings for their own children – including leisure settings, schools, extended schools, etc.

**Access Initiative Panel:** The Access Initiative Panel was set up. The panel was chaired by the trained school inclusion coordinator and meetings held half termly. The panel of professionals took referrals from schools about individual children. This formed the impetus for an access audit and involving trained professionals visiting the setting in order to identify

what would be needed to ensure that child's access. The panel would then approve any work required.

### **Database of equipment**

This aspect of the project aimed to develop a system to enable tracking, monitoring and reviewing of the equipment purchased on behalf of disabled children. The project worked closely with the DIS project, who took over much of the IT development work.

In order to progress the database, flow charts have been developed, outlining the process of identifying, purchasing and managing the equipment, as follows:

- Who should be contacted if a child was identified as having a disability/additional need.
- How equipment is identified.
- How to locate funding sources.
- Delivery of the equipment to the project lead.
- How the equipment would reach the setting and what training would be provided.
- The setting's responsibility in ensuring that equipment is returned and that concerns about the equipment are raised.
- Triggers for when a child moved between settings that will monitor how the equipment accompanies them, and ensuring appropriate staff training at the new setting.

### **A bank of equipment**

The project worked to recommend equipment that would be potentially useful to different children and that would be held in a bank to optimise its use.

It was noted that there was more success with the early years' equipment, in terms of purchasing and recommending equipment that can be used by a number of children, as older children's needs tend to be more specialised and child specific e.g. purpose built for a particular child with regard to their specific needs, dimensions, etc.

The Early Years team subsequently purchased a pool of equipment for pre-school and earlier settings. Where appropriate, equipment was trialled, in order to identify the most effective type.

Equipment purchased has included e.g. portable ramps, so if a child moves into a different setting or needs to use a wheelchair, the equipment can be put in place quickly, minimising any delays in the child accessing provision.

#### **4 What the project has achieved and its next steps**

- A nine-day course for professionals has been developed.
- 23 professionals have been trained to undertake an access initiative.
- Full access audits have been conducted for three settings.
- A pool of equipment has been purchased that will enable settings to access small items of equipment.
- Nine parents have received training in understanding what questions to ask of childcare and leisure providers.
- Progress has been made towards developing a database of equipment, which will rationalise the process of purchase, training, use and tracking of equipment.
- Processes have been developed to carry out access audits for individual children, so that a group of people can come together with a particular child in mind to identify what they will need over the next twelve to eighteen months.
- It is planned that parents will support the evaluation of the access audit through a 'mystery shopping' exercise.

#### **5 Benefits of the project**

##### **To the local authority and to professionals**

- A better understanding of disability and children's needs through the bringing together of professionals who have not previously spent time together – e.g. early years support workers and employees responsible for building from the capital assets team.
- A better understanding of other professionals' roles.
- More joined up information, with colleagues inputting information about a child being able to see who else is involved.
- Greater focus on the range of equality issues, including a broader understanding of social integration issues around stereotyping and language used, leading to a culture change amongst professionals.

##### **To families with disabled children**

- Saving time and energy, not having to repeat themselves to different professionals.
- Greater access to childcare and leisure activities.
- Reduced time delays where settings have more immediate access to resources.
- An improved quality of the services for children in schools and settings, including better quality transitions.
- Parents are more confident and have a greater understanding of their child's support needs.

##### **To providers**

- Settings are more inclusive, offering more opportunities for leisure pursuits.
- Settings are confident that they can use specialist equipment provided.
- Staff have access to named professionals whom they can call on if required.

## 6 Critical success factors

- The project was led by an Occupational Therapist (OT) with an interest in equipment and accessibility, who brought passion and motivation to the project.
- Multi-agency working across a range of disciplines has helped to create networks and ensure the full range of skills required to undertake an access audit.
- The commitment of the professionals involved, all of whom were described as “*people who wanted to make a difference to the lives of disabled children and their families*”.
- The training organisation (Gallant) was described as “*an inspired choice*”.
- The philosophical point of view inherent in the training, which included qualitative examination of issues of equality, culture, and attitudes, rather than a ‘tick box’ approach to undertaking an access audit.

## 7 What would/could be done differently?

- There were difficulties in bringing people on board from other fields and getting issues acknowledged at a strategic level. This might have been mitigated by a strategic lead by someone with authority over the various stakeholders.
- If the project had been able to fully engage with Property Services and include them as part of the multi-agency training, they would have a better understanding of what was required when buildings needed to be adapted. For example, if a ramp were requested outside the backdoor, they would understand what kind of ramp was required.

## 8 Sustainability

The project was set up so that the **equipment tracking and needs monitoring system** would be sustainable, as it had developed a way of tightening up, and being consistent about, processes that people could do within their day job.

**Access audit:** It was acknowledged that the provision of a full audit is not sustainable, with the full audit taking a total of at least ten days with five days for the visit, and a further five days to write up.

A shorter walk-around is therefore being piloted – a ‘**walk around access audit**’ for schools and settings that would be more sustainable in the longer term.

It is expected that **the database development and maintenance** will continue post March 2011 as part of the wider programme of data development.

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**Solihull DCATCH pilot**

**Inclusion Resource Base**

**Case Study**

**March 2011**

## **1 Project summary – vision and aims**

The Solihull Inclusion Resource Base (IRB) project aimed to establish a resource base focussing on the autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The resource base would be located on the Langley Campus<sup>1</sup> and would be accessible to parents/carers and professionals. It would provide access to a wide range of resources including information, books, equipment, expertise and training all within 'a one stop shop'. In addition the resource base would outreach into mainstream settings. Books and equipment would be available for loan. The project set out to change attitudes towards children on autistic spectrum disorder through a range of activities.

The project supported the following DCATCH National Outcomes:

- Participation and feedback.
- Improving information for families.
- Supporting families to make choices.
- Workforce development.
- Increasing capacity, inclusion and improving quality.

## **2 Challenges the project set out to address**

The project had a number of challenges to overcome:

- Parents were reporting a lack of access to a place where they could go to find out more about ASD.
- Parents wanted the resource base in a school and were reluctant to use existing facilities such as the Meadow Centre because of the difficulties and trauma associated with places where their child was diagnosed.
- Parents wanted a more open, informal place and somewhere they could return to as and when their needs changed.

## **3 How the project responded to these challenges**

The IRB project undertook a number of activities that were key to its success:

### **Partnership**

The project, was instigated by the Langley Campus School Head, and delivered in partnership with Autism West Midlands from a base at the Langley Campus. The Campus has a good track record of working with families across the age range and the model could provide a template for working with other schools across Solihull.

The school has been a key and equal partner. Not only has it proved to be an enthusiastic and supportive promoter and guide, but it also provided the project with a base and has helped to engage and involve parents and staff. Both the head teacher and deputy head recognised the mutual benefits in having the project based at the Campus and have now allocated the caretaker's house (a separate building on the campus but with its own entrance) for the project going forward.

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<sup>1</sup> The Langley Campus comprises a special school, a primary school, a secondary school, a Children's Centre and a nursery.

The project has also made good links with other DCATCH projects, particularly SoLO, Early Support, FIS, the local authority workforce development/volunteer lead officer and Sportwise, in relation to the summer holiday schemes.

### **Training**

The project developed training programmes aimed at parents/carers and professionals (teaching assistants, SENCOs, occupational therapists, etc.) that would increase their awareness and understanding of ASD and that would give them practical strategies for supporting ASD children. Future training is to be accredited by the Open College Network.

### **Volunteers**

The project recognised that a volunteer base was critical to its success and that recruiting volunteers would support the ongoing delivery of the project and provide individuals with valuable practical experience that could lead to employment and make full use of their experience and knowledge to further benefit other parents. Volunteers have been recruited through the school, from parent training workshops and through other DCATCH projects such as Early Support.

### **Consultation and feedback**

The project spent time asking parents/carers and professionals what they wanted most from the resource base – how they would use it, when they would use it, what equipment and materials they wanted etc.

### **Resources**

A key purpose of the project was to establish an inclusion resource base with a focus on autism. Working with parents/carers and professionals, the project identified a range of resources that, whilst focussing on ASD, are also of use across the spectrum of disability. The base consists of books including reference and research, practical strategies and biographies. Equipment includes sensory resources, many providing a source of stimulation to decrease anxiety, and resources to promote emotional understanding for younger children all of which are available for loan. In addition parents/carers and professionals also have the support to compile their own resources through the creation of symbol timetables, emotional behaviour understanding and pen pictures.

### **Business support**

Recognising that there would not be further funding beyond DCATCH, the project explored options for becoming self-sustaining and obtained business advice and support.

#### **4 What the project has achieved and its next steps**

A well used resource base that focuses on autism but that also has a wider inclusion benefit and can provide resources and support across a range of disabilities. However, the project needs to ensure that it builds on the successes and reputation it has developed so far in relation to ASD, to become an inclusion resource base across the spectrum of disability. At the time of writing 155 parents/carers and professionals have taken part in training of whom 22 were independent nursery staff, 21 were youth workers, 30 were volunteers from SoLO, 30 were SENCOs, 38 were parents, five were other childcare professionals and nine were carers. A further 40 parents have asked to be considered for future courses.

- From March 2010 to January 2011:
  - 26 parents/carers and 23 professionals have **borrowed books**.
  - 29 parents/carers and 40 professionals have **borrowed resources**.
  - 89 parents/carers and 67 professionals have made **telephone enquiries**.
  - 52 parents/carers and 49 professionals have made **email enquiries**.
  - 28 parents/carers and 17 professionals have **dropped in** to use the resource base.
  - 28 parents/carers and 38 professionals **made appointments** to use the resource base.
  - 38 parents/carers and 88 professionals have **taken part in training**.
- A 10-hour course (two hours a week for five weeks) for parents/carers covering topics such as ASD awareness, communication and social interaction, rigidity and anxiety, senses and interventions and resources.
- The start of a volunteer base that can support the project in managing the resource library, deliver training, run parent support groups, etc. In taking this forward the project needs to plan how it will best use its volunteers and what support and management they will need.
- Training for professionals including ASD awareness, communication, signing (Signalong). Training may prove to be a critical aspect of the project's sustainability and in this respect should ensure as broad a range of opportunities as possible.

#### **5 Benefits of the project**

##### **To the local authority and to professionals**

- An easily accessible resource base with potential for growth and development that can meet the needs of a wide range of parents and professionals.

##### **To parents and carers**

- Access to an informal and relaxed service.
- Relevant information conveniently available.
- Opportunities to volunteer, use their expertise and knowledge and develop skills and confidence that may lead to employment.

##### **To children and young people**

- Greater independence and confidence.
- New friendships for both the disabled and non-disabled children.
- Greater understanding of the positive benefits of inclusion, diversity and difference as opposed to exclusion, disability and ignorance.

## **To Langley Primary School**

- On-site easy access to expertise, training and resources.
- A source of income from premises rental.
- A place where children can come and choose the equipment they want rather than teachers taking resources to them.
- Enhancing the schools' reputation as a place of choice, offering an integrated curriculum.

## **6 Critical success factors**

- Developing and maximising the benefits of the positive relationship with the DCATCH project manager.
- Embracing partnership working, recognising the potential of, and building on, opportunities afforded through partnership working.
- Having a supportive head teacher and deputy head both of whom are committed to inclusion and understand the benefits.
- Understanding that DCATCH was a time-limited project and, having the end in sight from the outset, developing a number of options once the project funding ended.
- Identifying and receiving appropriate business development support.
- The right people at the right time in the right place.
- The pro-active involvement of schools.

## **7 What would/could be done differently?**

In hindsight the project thought that it could have prepared and started its exit strategy earlier with a view to raising funds, for example by charging for training. This would have made the transition from the DCATCH project to the CIC smoother; for example by funding a post to do a lot of the development work to set up the CIC.

## **8 Sustainability**

The Inclusion Resource Base project will continue post March 2011 as a Community Interest Company (CIC). The CIC has identified a management board (including the head teacher and deputy head from the school, parents and staff from Solihull MBC), has received support from ISE in relation to business development, has a draft business plan in place and has identified a number of income generation/cost recovery opportunities. For example:

- The CIC has received a request from the Children's Society to provide two days a week consultancy support and from Children's Centres to provide ASD awareness and behaviour management training to staff.
- The CIC has started discussions with a number of other DCATCH initiatives in relation to joint use of its premises (in exchange for a contribution to running costs) and has identified a possible partner to run a small coffee shop.

In taking the project forward there will be opportunities for increasing the involvement of volunteers and the range of volunteering opportunities for adults and for young people with disabilities.

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# **Solihull DCATCH pilot**

## **Visually Impaired Children Participating in Positive Activities (VIPA)**

### **Case Study**

**March 2011**

## **1 Project summary – vision and aims**

The Visually Impaired Children Accessing Positive Activities (VIPA) project aimed to improve access to childcare and leisure activities for visually impaired children and young people by providing information and training to settings, providing information to parents, children and young people and increasing the confidence of parents, children and young people. VIPA was developed and delivered in partnership between the Sensory & Physical Impairment Team in the Specialist Inclusion Support Service (SISS), Solihull MBC and the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (GDBA).

The project supported the following DCATCH National Outcomes:

- Supporting families to make choices.
- Workforce development.
- Increasing capacity, inclusion and improving quality.

## **2 Challenges the project set out to address**

The project had a number of challenges to overcome:

- Visually impaired children and young people were not accessing leisure activities and were often reluctant to do so.
- A lot of visually impaired children have a social immaturity because they do not access the same level of social opportunities that their peer groups do and so they don't practice or develop those social skills.
- Reluctance amongst some parents to encourage and allow their visually impaired young people to go out on their own.
- Settings and providers not confident at providing services to visually impaired children and young people, which increased parents' concerns.
- Parents report being unable to find activities that their children can take part in.

## **3 How the project responded to these challenges**

The VIPA project undertook a number of activities that were key to its success:

### **Consultation and information**

VIPA undertook consultation with parents and children and young people in order to find out their aspirations, their experiences of accessing services, what activities they would like to be more involved in and what they needed in order to make services more accessible. For example, better information on what services are available or changes to the services themselves.

Following this, the project held a parents' information evening to which they invited parents, children and young people. Although the event was not well attended five children were able to access weekend activities as a result.

Information packs were developed and distributed through the Family Information Service.

### **Mobility Officer**

A Mobility Officer was employed to work as a broker liaising with families and settings. The Mobility Officer ensured that each child or young person had a personal plan outlining what support they needed in order to access activities; delivered training for settings and supported children and young people in developing independence and confidence.

### **Partnership**

The project worked with a range of partners, some of which were also DCATCH funded projects e.g. Sportwise, Specialist Inclusion Support Service (SISS), Autism West Midlands and others including Action for Blind People and Actionnaires were brought in as part of the sustainability planning. Ulverley School and Greyhounds Afterschool Club hosted the venue for most of the DVD, which was filmed through Whiteshirt Filming Company.

### **Training**

The project delivered visual impairment training to staff from a range of settings (leisure centre staff, Brownies' volunteers, support workers, SENCOs, Learning Support Officers etc). The training consisted of raising awareness of different conditions that affect children who are visually impaired using simulation spectacles, looking at specific leisure activities and how they could be made more accessible for visually impaired children, health and safety issues, specialist equipment, etc. Many settings were unwilling to participate in training unless they had a visually impaired young person attending and parents were reluctant to let their children attend unless the setting had undergone training.

10 young people were given training, not just in mobility, but also how to plan for and undertake a journey. This was important in terms of raising young people's confidence.

### **DVD**

The project produced a 15-minute DVD highlighting the worries and concerns faced by parents of visually impaired children when accessing afterschool and leisure opportunities. The DVD also gives examples of how, with mobility training offered to the child and VI awareness training to staff, a lot of these worries can be overcome. The older children in the DVD talk about the challenges they face being visually impaired which shows examples of young people with visual impairment leading independent lives. The DVD was launched at a family evening attended by over 40 people, and was shared with groups of parents through a range of events including a mother and daughter evening, a dads and lads sports event and a family fun day and was shown at an event for settings and professionals.

### **Resources**

The project set up a library of sensory equipment and toys which are available within a new toy library, set up and managed by the Sensory Team, for afterschool clubs and leisure clubs to access for any visually impaired children who take part in their settings.

#### **4 What the project has achieved and its next steps**

- Parents consulted about/involved in the design and delivery of services. However, more needs to be done to work with parents when their children are very young.
- Events were held for parents and children and young people. Some parents and children meet for social events during the year which enables them to network and discuss concerns and worries with others and which will help VIPA to signpost them to services and activities and identify gaps. More events like this would enable families to develop informal networks.
- 14 children and young people access mainstream leisure provision and say their confidence has increased as a result. The children are willing to accessing a wider range of activities and want to take an active part.
- There is a need to increase the number of children and parents who engage in activities. However, more parents are registered with FIS and are receiving information at regular intervals. The number of families participating in Action for Blind activities has increased as a result of the project.
- A DVD showing practical steps that can be taken to enable visually impaired children and young people to access mainstream activities.
- 45 families received an information pack on summer activities suitable for visually impaired children and young people.

#### **5 Benefits of the project**

##### **To the local authority and to professionals**

- The FIS has contact details of families with visually impaired children and young people and can send out targeted information.
- Settings have a better understanding of visual impairment and of the range of needs of visually impaired children.
- Staff in settings have increased confidence and better knowledge of how to include visually impaired children in their activities and have better access to information and specialist equipment.
- SISS staff have a much better knowledge and awareness of other agencies and activities.

##### **To parents and carers**

- Parents have greater confidence in providers and are more willing to allow their children to take part in mainstream activities independently.
- Parents have developed an informal peer support network.
- Access to information through a range of sources including FIS and specialist agencies.

##### **To children and young people**

- Greater independence and confidence.
- Increased social and emotional development.
- Better access to leisure activities such as swimming, football, Brownies, etc. which can lead to young people having more healthy lifestyles.
- Better access to a wide range of activities e.g. those run by Actionnaires.
- Sighted children have a better understanding of how to include visually impaired children.

## **6 Critical success factors**

- Partnership with Guide Dogs for the Blind Association and notably recruiting the Mobility Officer from this organisation to work part-time on the project and part-time within GDBA.
- Partnership with FIS to ensure that information is made more widely available.
- Partnership with other agencies to coordinate events for families.
- A can do attitude of the project manager and the team and the team's desire to link with others and work in a different way.

## **7 What would/could have been done differently?**

- Engage more settings in training.
- It would have been useful to have had Bring and Share events at the start of the project to improve access to information.
- Engagement with parents could have occurred at an earlier stage – this was more difficult and time consuming than originally thought.
- More emphasis on engaging schools especially in an area where there are few visually impaired children and young people and where the perception is that they are coping and don't need support.

## **8 Sustainability**

The Mobility Officer post will continue but at a reduced level. A lot of the activity will focus on enabling children and young people to access school-based provision and there may not be capacity to continue to support the access to weekend leisure activities.

There is also some concern that as funding becomes much tighter services will not be willing to support activity that they don't see as their responsibility.

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# **Solihull DCATCH pilot**

## **Embedding the Local Integrated Needs-led Coordinated Service (LINCS) Model**

### **Case Study**

**March 2011**

## **1 Project summary – vision and aims**

DCATCH funding was used to increase capacity in the LINCS (Local Integrated Needs-led Coordinated Service) team and to embed an integrated model of working for all families. A key feature of the project was to build on the Extending Early Support model, so that the needs of disabled children and young people are met up to the age of 25.

LINCS incorporates the **Common Assessment Framework (CAF)** and the **Lead Person (LP)** also known as Lead Professional or Lead Practitioner, where there are concerns about a child, and their needs cannot be met by a single agency.

A CAF is completed whenever someone who works with a child or family thinks they are going to need support that goes beyond a single issue or involvement with just one service or professional. The aim is to coordinate what is planned and to avoid having different assessments and meetings.

The project supported the following DCATCH National Outcomes:

- Participation and feedback: consulting with families.
- Supporting families to make choices.
- Workforce development.
- Increasing capacity, including and improving quality.

## **2 Challenges the project set out to address**

The project sought to overcome the following challenges:

- Families with disabled children experienced barriers to accessing childcare and leisure opportunities.
- Families were frequently not aware of the support that the LINCS process (which includes a CAF) could provide for them.
- A number of families with disabled children had not been identified for the Team Around the Family (TAF) and therefore had no Lead Person coordinating services.
- Strong teams that supported children while they were under five often '*vanished*' when the child entered school.
- Children with Emotional and Behavioural Disorder (EBD) often remained undiagnosed.
- Many providers did not understand the LINCS process and the CAF did not always support the uptake of childcare and leisure opportunities.
- A lack of clarity about the links between early support and LINCS
- Some services and agencies choosing not to recognise the LINCS process.

## **3 How the project responded to these challenges**

The project was developed on the premise that the CAF would be able, by making links with childcare and leisure providers, to identify the child's needs and what support might be required for the individual child/young person to access appropriate childcare/leisure opportunities.

The project worked to identify, for each young person, the team and Lead Person best able to support the family. This was the intensive stage of the project, after which the family would receive ongoing, and probably slightly less intensive, support from the identified team.

### **Parent engagement**

The project recognised the need to reach parents and inform them about the support that was available and that it should carry on from the Early Years to the Primary age group. This was achieved through partnership work involving a variety of partners in education, health and disability services working to reach parents.

### **Partnership development**

The project made links with a number of key players, including the following:

- DCATCH projects: Extending Early Support, Parent Champions, DCATCH Information System (DIS), West Midlands Early Support Regional Training Consortium and Workforce Development.
- Primary Care Trust through the Meadow Centre.
- Education Services.
- Children's Health Services.
- Children's Services.
- Youth Services and Connexions.
- Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) organisations: DIAL (Disability Information Advice Line).

### **Training for professionals and providers**

The project has provided bespoke training to providers and professionals to improve their understanding of the CAF process and support that can be offered and 1:1 support for completing a CAF and coordination of support.

### **Enabling families to receive the support they need**

The project has undertaken CAFs, and brokered new Lead Persons where appropriate.

## **4 What the project has achieved and its next steps**

The project has:

- Improved its processes (systems, monitoring, etc.) and tackled some ICT issues.
- Set up a task group to map pathways into LINCS and Early Support.
- Significantly increased the number of children with disabilities supported by CAF and LINCS: In the first nine months of 2010, 24 CAFs were completed for children and young people, compared to six in the previous nine months - a fourfold increase. As a proportion of the total CAFs completed, this represents an increase from 6% to 19%.
- Delivered bespoke training to childcare providers, health visitors and other professionals.
- Produced a poster and leaflet highlighting the LINCS support for display in public places where families access i.e. clinics and doctor's surgeries. There were 11 enquiries between January – March 2011 as a result of the posters.
- Referred six children to the LINCS team for a CAF.
- Made contact with four families via the Family Information Service pathway.
- Created clarity around the early Support and LINCS interface

Activities that are either underway or to be started include:

- Training for LINCS staff on Extending Early Support to support the Lead Person role. A DVD is being produced to accompany the training.

- Involving schools and other partners to look at their processes for supporting vulnerable children and where the LINCS process can be used effectively.
- Building practitioner confidence to use the LINCS process.
- Capturing evidence (qualitative and quantitative) to assess the impact of the model on children and young people.
- Developing new CAF paperwork and a system to support the analysis of CAF.
- Further training is to be delivered to childcare providers and other professionals.

## **5 Benefits of the project**

### **Benefits for families**

- Nine out of 10 children and young people supported through LINCS experience improved outcomes as a result.
- Parents are less isolated and helped to recognise that their children's behaviour is not due to their parenting.
- Parents are more confident and have a voice about what their children need.
- A small number of children have accessed activities outside of the home as a result of the CAF process.
- A clearer understanding now exists about how LINCS and Early Support fit together.

### **Benefits for providers**

- An increased understanding of the CAF process and the support available for disabled children.
- A change of attitude to, and better understanding of, the CAF process as a result of the training and one to one support.

### **Benefits for professionals**

- A better understanding of what prevents children and young people from accessing childcare and leisure opportunities.
- Avoiding duplication by bringing the right people together.
- Better teamwork with fewer breakdowns in communication.
- Professionals are more aware of the importance of the CAF and the Lead Person for a wider group of children.

## **6 Critical success factors**

- Partnership engagement and ongoing involvement and communication.
- Engaging parents through links with other projects and information sessions.
- Face to face communication with parents enabling them to ask questions and allay fears, including the opportunity to phone at a later date with any other questions.
- Close working with the Family Information Service (FIS) so that they are better equipped to think about what parents say to them and what they might need.
- Active outreach to a range of practitioners, including schools, community housing, Connexions, etc. to identify their training needs.
- Brokering support around the Lead Person where required.
- Bespoke training to a range of organisations, focussing on their particular needs.
- A knowledgeable team already conversant with the needs of settings, disabled children and young people and Early Support.

## **7 What would/could have been done differently?**

- Including key questions for parental feedback in early evaluations about levels of satisfaction with childcare, might have resulted in more targeted support.
- Enabling practitioners to understand the need to engage at an early stage in the process.
- Earlier recognition that the administrative burden around the Lead Person role was considerable and required resourcing.
- Earlier clarification of the similarities of Early Support and LINCS at a strategic level

## **8 Sustainability**

- The Family Information Service is better equipped to understand the processes, which will influence their future conversations with parents.
- The Family Information Service will have a leaflet in their pack that they send out to schools.
- DCATCH has enabled there to be a clearer focus on how processes could be successfully implemented and embedded across service teams.
- Continuing to be proactive in the work through brokerage on the Lead Person role.
- Parents have tools to enable them to continue to access services for their child including when they start formal education.

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**Solihull DCATCH pilot**

**DCATCH Information System**

**Case Study**

**March 2011**

## **1 Project summary – vision and aims**

The Solihull DCATCH Information System (DIS) project was initiated to build on Solihull's vision of 'a single view of a child' and aimed to create an information system that included all data relevant to disabled children and young people who were known to SMBC. The DIS system will enable all stakeholders to share information relating to the needs of disabled children, young people, their families and the services accessed by them. The system will:

- Strengthen the influence of families with disabled children over provision.
- Improve commissioning of childcare provision for families with disabled children.
- Support the development of a quality childcare workforce.
- Easily identify the number of disabled children known to SMBC and accessing services.
- Provide information on the total number of places accessed by disabled children and young people in a range of settings.
- Reduce the need for multiple data entry thus reducing the risk of error and duplication.

## **2 Challenges the project set out to address**

The project had a number of challenges to overcome:

- Information on disabled children, young people and their families was held in a number of different places, by different agencies and in different formats. As a result there was likely to be considerable duplication of information.
- There was no standard definition of disability in use by SMBC or partner agencies.
- The requirement of a technical blueprint that is flexible, secure and scalable to enable multi-agency working across voluntary, private and independent sectors.

## **3 How the project responded to these challenges**

The DIS project team undertook a number of activities that were key to its success:

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The DIS project successfully engaged a wide range of different agencies from across the sectors through workshops designed to ensure there was a shared vision for the project.

An example of this engagement was the work carried out to agree a definition of disability and the different ways in which disability is categorised. This proved to be challenging as each service and in some cases different individuals all had different views on what should be included. The disability definitions were agreed and the disability definition took account of the requirements of the Short Breaks Management Information Team, The Disability Discrimination Act, Children's Act, and Improving Life Chances for Disabled Children and Young People.

Due to the number of stakeholders involved in the project, and the wide range of areas covered, it was clear from the outset that any implementation would need to be completed on a phased basis, therefore an initial deployment group was agreed consisting of Short Breaks (management information), Paediatric OT (assets), Meadow Centre (complex needs), LINCS, Children's Disability team, Connexions and Parent Networks. To ensure the information was transmitted back to the larger stakeholder group, this deployment group had an additional responsibility for acting as champions, channelling key bi-directional messages.

## **Communication**

Communication with stakeholders throughout the project was of key importance to ensuring the project team maintained the buy-in across all areas. This helped to ensure that stakeholders were aware of what the project would deliver and were kept updated on progress at each key step during the project. The stakeholders were also actively involved in identifying and resolving issues, concerns and risks

Communication at a strategic level was less formalised and resulted in the reduced visibility of the project at a senior level. This was due in part to governance and the absence of a mandate defined to communicate to key parties and was overcome by creating an interest/influence/impact matrix which allowed the team to understand where the bottlenecks were occurring and why.

## **Specification Development**

The project team was set with the challenge of developing a system within eight weeks. A supplier was identified that could meet the requirements to rapidly develop both technical specification and functional requirements documents for the DIS project. The existing integrated children's database was used as the starting point, with a range of specific additional fields included to cover the requirements relating to information recording for disabled children and young people. Having the senior supplier on the project ensured key deliverables were being met on time.

Corporate ICT was a key stakeholder at this stage to ensure that the system developed was compatible with existing or planned architecture and infrastructure

## **Business Process Analysis**

The DIS project team with the help of an external consultancy worked with each of the wider stakeholder groups to develop process maps showing how their service was delivered to disabled children, young people and their families. Particular attention was paid to how they collect, store and process information.

It became clear that each stakeholder moved through a similar set of core activities which were identified as Contact, Dialogue/Consultation, Planning, Ongoing Support, and Transition/Discharge. A generic process was developed to cover the service-led journey of a disabled child or young person. See appendix two for a copy of the generic process map.

Recognising that there wasn't enough time to do this detailed work with every stakeholder, the team reviewed the process for each of the initial deployment group. This review identified how the new system would fit into current business processes and what level of information would need to be recorded in the system.

The project team worked closely with each of the initial deployment areas to develop a detailed business requirement specification (BRS). The BRS outlines the scope of the implementation, the current business process, the proposed multi-agency business process and the proposed interactions with the new system. In addition, the BRS provided information on what information is required from the deployment area prior to any

implementation and the type of reports required. See Appendix C for an example BRS document.

### **Prototype and testing**

A prototype of the system was developed, based on the BRS documents produced for each of the initial deployment areas, and comprehensively tested. The prototype was also to demonstrate the system's functionality and to identify and respond to concerns that users had. One concern was around duplication of information and the project was able to show that only a small amount of information would need to be recorded in the new system to enable the sharing of key, relevant information with other practitioners.

As access to the system would be via the Internet, the security of the information held in the application is of key importance. An authorised external company was engaged to carry out a penetration test to evaluate the security of the application by simulating an attack from a malicious source and also to identify any potential application and technical vulnerabilities.

### **Implementation (including data migration and cleaning)**

It was agreed that the project team would prime the system with relevant information for each of the initial deployment areas. This would ensure that the initial deployment areas would have access to useful and relevant information as soon as the new system was available to them.

As a baseline the system needed to be populated with the details of disabled children and young people currently known to SMBC. The Statutory Assessment and Review Team (START) provided information from children and young people who are statemented. This information was only included in the system where specific consent had been received for information to be shared. The initial list of disabled children and young people was supplemented by information from the Meadow Centre Complex Needs Team, Paediatric Occupational Therapy Team, and Connexions. Each of the initial deployment areas was also asked to provide information including:

- Details of cases open to the Child Disability Social Work Team and the Complex Needs Team. This included dates of any initial assessments, core assessments and reviews.
- Details of equipment allocated, or available for allocation.
- All short breaks delivered to disabled children, young people and their families during the 2010/2011 reporting period.
- Details of disabled young people currently receiving a service from Connexions, including the date of any assessments completed.
- Details of all children and young people that have had a CAF completed since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009.

Wherever possible, information was migrated into the new system using an automated data migration tool. Where this option wasn't available the project team undertook a manual data migration exercise.

During the data migration phase some data quality work was also completed. This involved checking the information provided against the information held on the database. Where

discrepancies were found the information was verified and any agreed changes made to the database record.

### **Information sharing and governance**

One of the core project deliverables was to share information across different agencies. Information sharing and governance was therefore a very important aspect of the project.

At an early stage it was identified that the existing Information Sharing Protocol between SMBC and the Solihull NHS Care Trust had expired and so a specific information sharing agreement for this project was developed and approved by senior management from both organisations.

In addition to the information sharing agreement it was important that the project identified the information that would need to be updated on an ongoing basis and who was able to make changes to this information.

It was agreed that only teams involved in providing a clinical diagnosis (i.e. professionals from Solihull NHS Care Trust) would have the facility to add disability information to a child or young person's record. Any changes to demographic information would continue to be dealt with by the central education information team.

## **4 What the project has achieved and its next steps**

- Integrated working practices, backed up by an integrated system.
- A live system available to the initial deployment areas.
- A shared definition of disability and agreed categories for disability.

The next steps will be to monitor the quality of how information is recorded and maintained and to continue to rollout the system to the wider stakeholder group.

## **5 Benefits of the project**

Benefits will continue to accrue as the project continues to develop. The benefits currently identified include:

### **To the local authority and to professionals**

- Easy identification of the number of disabled children and young people known at a given time and over a period of time.
- Ability to monitor the services that disabled children and young people have received and to use this information to assist with future service planning and delivery.
- A richer and more complete view of information relating to disabled children and young people is available to the local authority and their partners.
- An integrated system which will identify a disabled child or young person, their disability, the services they have been accessing and for what duration and the assets and resources allocated to the child/young person/family.
- Ability to track and reuse assets and visibility of the source of funding.
- A complete multi-agency picture across Solihull of all disabled children.
- Ability to report on long-term trends.
- Better planning and targeting of services and resources.

- Cost savings as a result of reduced inefficiencies and duplication.
- Government returns should be easier to complete and more accurate.

### **To parents and carers**

- Access to more targeted services.
- Information can be sent to families in a more targeted way than at present.
- Reduction in the number of times parents have to 'tell their story'.

## **6 Critical success factors**

- Structured and methodical approach to project management.
- Allowing sufficient time for each step.
- Accepting that steps are not necessarily sequential – some activity overlaps.
- Capturing learning at each stage and feeding that learning back into the process.
- Early stakeholder engagement and ongoing involvement and communication.
- Identifying how data is collected, stored, processed and shared.
- Choosing the right system supplier.
- Ensuring the necessary infrastructure is in place.

## **7 What would/could have been done differently?**

- The breakdown in the chain of communication across the various boards meant the project team had to cover old ground. A business case/mandate should have been defined to ensure key parties understood the project and were actively engaged.
- Lack of engagement of certain business areas lead to misunderstanding. Ensure that roles and responsibilities are understood by the individuals representing business areas on the project and that there is a commitment to continuity in key roles.
- Ensuring buy-in from Social Care.
- Due to the number of stakeholders it would have been useful to agree a standardised reporting template.
- Ensuring the project team has a clear understanding of services being provided.
- Gaining agreement of the disability definitions and sub-categories across stakeholder organisations was difficult because of professional interpretations of types of disability. The time taken to agree these was underestimated.
- Reluctance to re-engage families. Engaging families to carry out 360<sup>0</sup> analysis would have been extremely useful in testing out how much of the information gathered in the past could be used in the future.

## **8 Sustainability**

The DCATCH Information System Project will continue post March 2011 as part of the wider ICIS (Integrated Children's Information System) programme to continue the vision of creating a single view of a child.

## **9 For more information (including a copy of a fuller version of this case study) contact case study co-author**

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# Appendix 1

## Agreed Solihull Statement

*The DDA defines a disabled person as someone who has: “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.*

*In Solihull we recognise that a child or young person with a disability experiences challenges or barriers in day-to-day activities such as Education, Leisure, Independent Living and Employment which may require understanding additional help and adaptations.*

## Categories of Disabilities

### 1. Health or Medical Needs:-

Epilepsy, Allergies, Asthma, Cystic Fibrosis, Diabetes, HIV, Cancer, Tourettes, Hormonal Disorders, Life Limiting Conditions, ME, Dysphagia, Metabolic Disorders, Technology Dependent and Acquired Brain Injury.

### 2. Cognitive or Learning Need:-

Downs Syndrome, Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Learning Difficulties (SLD, MLD, GMLD etc) and Development Delay.

### 3. Mental Health Difficulties:-

Anxiety, Depression, Bipolar Disorders, Schizophrenia, Eating Disorders, Self Harming and OCD.

### 4. Sensory Impairment:-

Hearing, Visual, Multi-sensory and Ushers Syndrome.

### 5. Speech and Language:-

Verbal Dyspraxia, Interaction Disorders, Phonological Disorders, Voice Disorders, Specific/Developmental Language Impairment, Selective Mutism and Cleft Palate.

### 6. Autism:-

Aspergers, ASD, Forensic ASD and PDD/PDD NOS.

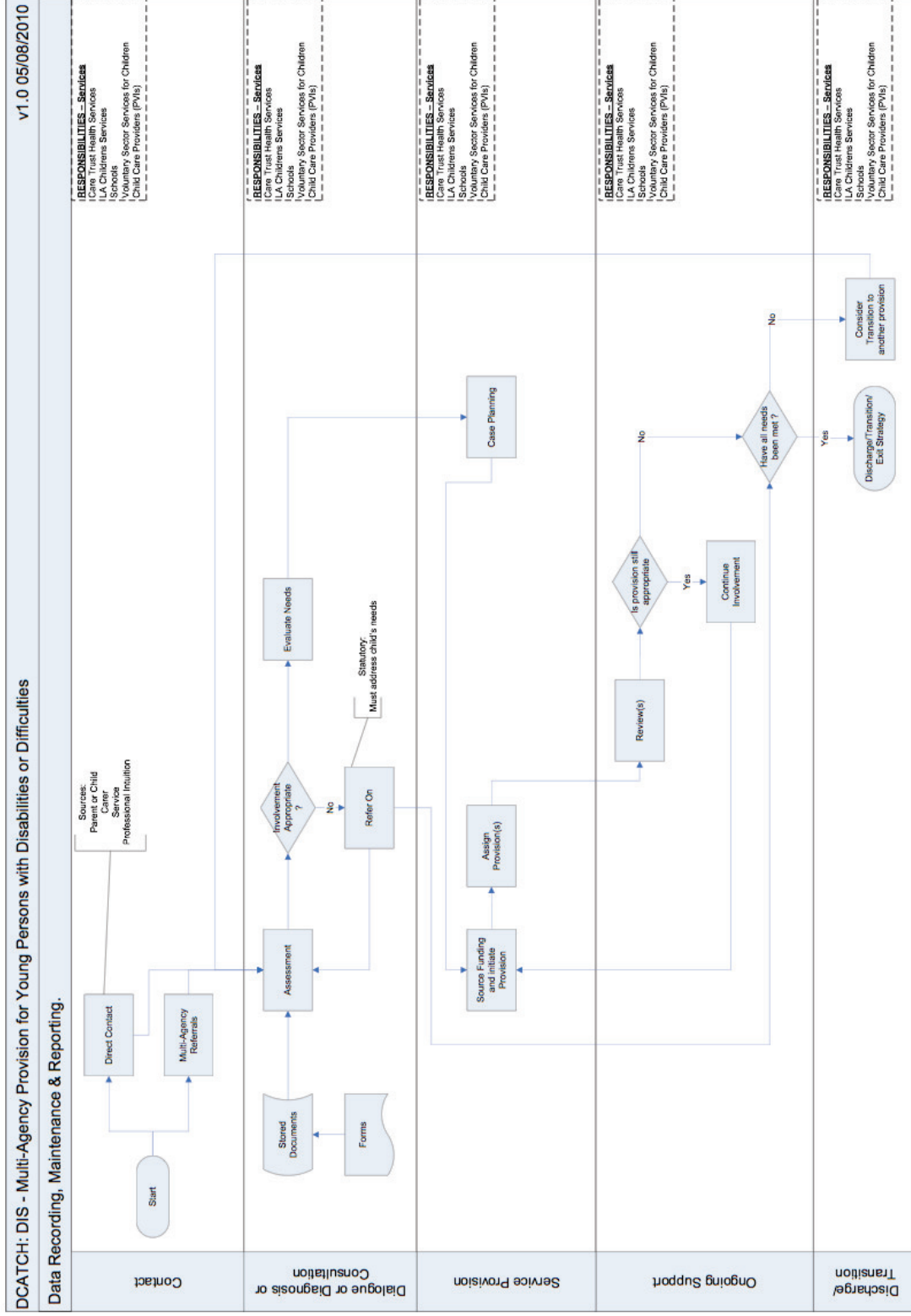
### 7. Physical Needs and Difficulties:-

Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifada, Rheumatism, Arthritis, Dyspraxia, Muscular Dystrophy, Limb Deficiency and Achondroplasia.

### 8. Behaviour, Emotion and Social Development Needs:-

Attachment Disorder, ADHD, ADD and Compulsive Disorder.

# Appendix 2



**Solihull DCATCH pilot**

**Inclusive Universal Provision for  
Children over Eight**

**Case Study**

**March 2011**

## **1 Project summary – vision and aims**

The Inclusive Universal Provision for Children over Eight project, delivered by Sportwise, started in January 2010 and aimed to increase access to mainstream sport and leisure activity by disabled children and young people and those with additional needs aged five to 16 attending mainstream and special schools. In particular, the project wanted to support disabled children and young people to take part in sports and leisure activities during the weekends and school holidays that were close to where they lived.

The project wanted to find out what activities children and young people liked doing, what barriers they faced and what could be done to overcome these barriers so that the project could facilitate access either by direct provision or by working with other agencies.

The project supported the following DCATCH National Outcomes:

- Supporting families to make choices.
- Workforce development.
- Increasing capacity, inclusion and improving quality.
- Affordability and cost.

## **2 Challenges the project set out to address**

The project had a number of challenges to overcome:

- Children and young people in specialist schools access services whilst at school but don't go to other provision at weekends, school holidays, etc. and so are isolated.
- Children with additional needs in mainstream schools often have very limited access to sports and leisure activities.
- Reluctance amongst some parents to encourage and allow their disabled children and young people to take part in mainstream activities.
- Leisure and sports providers (particularly private sector providers) were not good at, nor particularly interested in, including disabled children and young people.
- Linking with extended services.

## **3 How the project responded to these challenges**

Sportwise undertook a number of activities that were key to its success:

### **Raising awareness of, and confidence in, inclusive sports and leisure**

The project visited special schools to deliver inclusive games and activities in order to build the trust and confidence of the children and young people and also their parents. This involved a step by step approach of talking about inclusion, delivering a one-off session building up to more regular activities during the school day and then out of school activities – all within an environment in which children and young people felt secure (i.e. their special school). Having achieved this, the project took the children and young people to a different venue before finally inviting non-disabled children to join in.

Aware that children with additional needs in mainstream schools may have even less access to sports and leisure activities than disabled children in special schools, the project also targeted these children.

### **Increasing access to inclusive sports and leisure through partnership working**

The project employed a temporary worker, a parent of a disabled child, as an events coordinator to liaise with parents and providers. The project worked with other agencies and DCATCH projects:

- Worked with SoLO to take a group of disabled young people to play golf, another group to attend a disco night in Solihull and another to take part in an outdoor adventure sporting activity weekend in Walsall.
- Piloted a swimming session for disabled children and their siblings at Tudor Grange.
- Supported swimming sessions for 50 disabled children at Reynolds Cross School and North Solihull Sports Centre.
- Providing coaches to run sport and dance lessons (two days a week for the duration of the summer holidays) with Autism West Midlands.
- Promoted the Stars Sitting service to parents to make summer camps more accessible.
- Enabling sports coaches to participate in training to work with visually impaired children and young people and children and young people with challenging behaviour.

### **Affordability and cost**

The project analysed the costs of providing a one-week inclusive summer holiday camp:

- Costs for a camp of 30 children were approx. £3,500, or £116 per child
  - Marketing – approx £500
  - Venue hire – approx £500
  - Staffing – 4 staff approx £2,800

Sportwise charged £30 per child with DCATCH funding subsidising the additional £86.

Sportwise estimates it could offer the camps for £40 per child if schools were prepared to allow access to venues for free, volunteers could be recruited to replace some staff, schools, FIS and others could do the marketing and some pupil premium funding could be diverted to the service.

## **4 What the project has achieved and its next steps**

- Sportwise ran a five week camp in the summer, two x one week camps in October, one week's activities at Christmas, one week in February and one at Whitsun.
- 162 disabled young people attended two disco evenings.
- 85 disabled young people attended camps; however, the project was not able to provide one to one support because of the cost.
- 152 disabled young people attended swimming, golf, circus, the April playscheme and inclusive play.
- From feedback from the 85 children attending the camps, 74 said they had fun and football, swimming, dodge ball and basketball were the favourite activities.
- Four trainee coaches were used for each camp thereby supporting the project to keep costs to a minimum. The project could explore whether there is potential to train disabled young people as trainees.

The range of disabilities of children attending the summer camps included Down's Syndrome, Moderate Learning Difficulties, Aspergers Syndrome, Autism, Dyspraxia, Learning Difficulties, ADHD, Disorganised Attachment Disorder and Visual Impairment.

## **5 Benefits of the project**

### **To the local authority and to professionals**

- Teachers in schools have benefited from seeing good inclusive coaching.
- Sports coaches are more confident and better able to deliver high quality inclusive provision. Coaches in particular are better able to meet the needs of visually impaired children and young people.
- Better understanding within the commissioning team of barriers faced by businesses starting up and other issues faced in communicating with schools and services.

### **To parents and carers**

- Parents of disabled children and young people have more confidence in, and are more able to trust their children to attend sports and leisure provision.
- Parents have some time in which to do something else (for themselves or for other children).

### **To children and young people**

- Better access to inclusive sports and leisure activities during holidays such as swimming, football, basketball, etc.
- Access to affordable provision.
- Non-disabled children and young people mix with disabled children and are able to explore and overcome their own uncertainties and fears.
- Opportunities to mix with other young people which could result in greater community cohesion.

## **6 Critical success factors**

- Partnership where mutual benefits were identified so that resources were maximised e.g. venues provided for free, sharing volunteers, providing training, etc. These partnerships included with mainstream sports and leisure providers, special and mainstream schools and other DCATCH projects.
- Having a pool of flexible, qualified tutors who can provide tuition in a wide range of sports including football, cricket, basketball, tennis, athletics, gymnastics, dodge ball, frisbee and boxing.
- Making services affordable but charging for them means that they are less likely to be taken for granted.
- Having access to trained and qualified trainee coaches at low cost.
- Being able to use trainees.

## **7 Sustainability**

Sportwise plans to continue the holiday camps, albeit at a higher cost without DCATCH funding but making them affordable by reducing costs such as sending out publicity (which could be done by FIS), hiring low cost venues (these could be provided free of charge by schools) and using volunteers.

## **8 For more information contact case study co-author**

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# **Solihull DCATCH pilot**

## **Increased Uptake in Universal Registered Provision (INCUP)**

### **Case Study**

**March 2011**

## **1 Project summary – vision and aims**

INCUP (Increased Uptake project in universal registered childcare) aimed to increase the uptake of childcare places in registered childcare and schools (up to the end of the Foundation Stage) by families with disabled children.

Activities were planned to include:

- **Engagement with the third sector** through training, access to resources and information leading to an increase in the number of disabled children accessing registered settings up to 19 years of age.
- **Embedding Early Support** through the LINCS Model.
- **Extension of the Support Scheme** beyond children aged age 0-5 and into schools.
- **Development of a champion role** within identified sectors of childcare provision leading to greater engagement within the providers – including the third sector, childminders, leisure, wrap around, holiday provision, day care and schools.
- **Continuing to build up the resource base.**

The project supported the following DCATCH National Outcomes:

- Supporting Families to make choices.
- Workforce development.
- Increasing capacity, including and improving quality.

## **2 Challenges the project set out to address**

The project had a number of challenges to overcome:

- Many schools and childcare settings did not have the confidence or skills to meet the needs of disabled children.
- Some providers, including schools, thought that all disabled children needed one to one support.
- Many parents did not have access to the information required to make informed decisions about their child's school.
- Information about children with complex needs was not always provided or available to the school when the child started to attend.
- There tended to be a small number of providers always willing to be involved in initiatives and another group who were more difficult to engage – sometimes this was due to a lack of time or commercial imperatives.

## **3 How the project responded to these challenges**

The project undertook the following activities:

### **Engaging the third sector**

Four settings were involved in developing a holiday playscheme. The lead setting at Barnhouse St Martins called Teen Fest have undertaken considerable work engaging with parents, children and young people. With Teen Fest as the hub, the settings are joining together for activities e.g. days out and they will also pool resources.

Links are also being made with activities such as those provided by Sportwise, where older children and young people are accessing leisure opportunities.

### **Extension of the Support Scheme into schools (EYFS)**

Schools were asked to complete a form to provide information about numbers of children and types of difficulty that they were experiencing or where they felt that they needed extra support in relation to a child's needs.

Using the capacity-building model, the support was delivered through the provision of funding for the school to provide an additional member of staff to increase ratios within the classroom, and enable more targeted support to be provided for the child whilst ensuring that all of the staff within the class were supported to understand the child's needs and how to meet these. In some schools the support was delivered in partnership with the Specialist Inclusion Support Service (SISS), who provided the school with an Inclusion Support Practitioner for a block of child-specific time.

In order to reduce the challenge for the provision when the ISP withdrew, the project encouraged the allocation of a Teaching Assistant (TA) to work alongside the Inclusion Support Practitioner. Feedback from schools to date indicates that the additional support and funding is making a significant difference for outcomes for the children.

### **Embedding Early Support through the LINCS Model**

A task and finish group has completed a piece of work to look at the pathways for offering children and families support using the Early Support approach or LINCS. It was agreed that the two were intrinsically linked, with the key difference being that Early Support was targeted specifically at children with identified additional needs and disabilities. Key messages from Early Support will be embedded within Solihull's Integrated Working Training Programme.

Through the extension of the Support Scheme into schools, Early Support has been promoted and schools have been encouraged to use the Team around the Family (TAF) approach to encourage partnership working and ensure that children's needs are identified and addressed on an ongoing basis.

### **Development of the Champion role**

The Early Support champion was identified as the early years SENCO. The project provided a package of training to SENCOs so that all will have attended three training programmes:

- Introduction to Early Support.
- Supporting Children with Additional Needs.
- Working in Partnership.

### **Resource library**

The project had developed a wide range of quality resources to lend to providers, including sensory equipment, physiotherapy rolls, mats, textured objects, specialist cutlery and crockery and toys that most children will be able to access but that are particularly useful for children with disabilities. In addition, the project was able to purchase larger equipment, such as a specialist chair for a child, which can follow the child through to the end of the foundation stage.

Whilst there was no permanent base for resources, use was made of a garage at the Meadow Centre for settings to access the resources.

#### **4 What the project has achieved and its next steps**

- 15 schools have received support through the extension of the Support Schemes.
- Four PVI providers have received support and have developed into a cluster that has run two successful holiday play schemes.
- The four PVI providers will be working in partnership to share costs to take disabled children on trips during the holidays.
- Ongoing discussion will need to be held regarding the future direction of Early Support in Solihull in view of the Green Paper for SEN (March 2011).

#### **5 Benefits of the project**

##### **To the local authority and to professionals**

- The local authority and professionals are more aware of the profile of children who have additional needs and disabilities and what is needed to ensure take-up of mainstream provision.

##### **To childcare providers and schools**

- Improved partnership working between schools, Early Years and Childcare settings, and other agencies.
- Settings are more able to continue with the TAF process when children enter into the school environment.
- Early Years SENCOs are more confident at their ability to support children with additional needs, which benefits the settings in which they work.
- Childcare staff have developed confidence and extended their knowledge.
- Childcare staff have developed new networks and relationships, working alongside colleagues from other settings and other professions.

##### **To children and young people**

- Children receive support that enables them to be included.
- Children are able to access inclusive leisure opportunities.
- Children are building up links with other young people through holiday activities.
- Families are empowered by being less dependent and more able to find their own solutions.

#### **6 Critical success factors**

- A capacity-building philosophy: It was considered more appropriate to train staff members, who could then cascade the training through the organisation, than to put in one to one support that would be unsustainable.
- A focus on schools and childcare settings, not on individual children.
- Using the Early Support approach alongside the LINC model.
- The value of cluster working e.g. combining groups when travelling to days out gave better value for money.
- The commitment from the professionals and practitioners to make a difference for children and young people.
- Informing activity and planning by consulting young people.

- Bringing people together for the DCATCH meetings and the sharing of good practice and listening to what other sessions had done.

## **7 What would/could be done differently?**

- It might be useful to ensure that the parental information includes a thorough review of both specialist and mainstream options.
- Providing debriefing support for parents after assessments.

## **8 Sustainability**

The following areas of the schemes were considered to be sustainable:

- Mainstreaming inclusion training through the Common Core Induction.
- All EY SENCOs to have attended the 'Early Support' trio of courses.
- The capacity building model was considered sustainable, as, used properly, it would lead to more inclusive practice through a skilled workforce, rather than the more expensive model of specialist or one to one provision, with dependence on being given an extra person. The importance of the 'whole setting' approach to children's needs being met by the practitioners who work in those settings was emphasised.

## **9 For more information contact case study co-author**

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**Solihull DCATCH pilot**

**Inclusive Leisure Opportunities**

**Case Study**

**March 2011**

## **1 Project summary – vision and aims**

The Parkwood Leisure Centre project (inclusive leisure opportunities) was aimed at encouraging and enabling disabled children and young people to access facilities at the centre. The centre is involved in the Inclusive Fitness Initiative run by the English Federation for Disability Sport and which has an accreditation scheme which measures how accessible sports centres are for disabled people.

The project supported the following DCATCH National Outcomes:

- Participation and feedback.
- Supporting families to make choices.
- Workforce development.
- Increasing capacity, inclusion and improving quality.

## **2 Challenges the project set out to address**

The project had a number of challenges to overcome:

- Children and young people were not able to access facilities and activities at the centre.
- Additional equipment, signage and better facilities were needed to ensure disabled children and young people could access activities.
- Staff at the centre lacked confidence, awareness of disability and specialist knowledge to be able to include disabled children and young people in sports and leisure activities at the centre.
- Some children required additional support and the centre was not able to provide this.
- Families were unaware of the facilities at the centre.

## **3 How the project responded to these challenges**

The Parkwood Leisure project undertook a number of activities that were key to its success:

### **Consultation and information**

In partnership with Parent Champions, the project asked users (parents/carers, children and young people) to take part in a Mystery Shopper activity (an anonymous questionnaire covering all aspects of the service) and in return for agreeing to complete the questionnaire they were given a free session and a voucher.

Feedback from the mystery shopping was used to improve and change the current provision of activities. A good example of this was the first session we did, when we had a lot of feedback from parents around the provision of equipment. We therefore implemented a booking system for the changing rooms and other equipment so that parents would know when they came in, what they could use.

Other user groups took part in forums and were asked what changes they would like to see in the centre. For example there are two team changing rooms which are normally closed in the evening. One club asked to be able to book out this facility, as it was bigger than the main changing rooms. The centre implemented this straight away acknowledging that it was *“just one of those that we hadn’t thought about – it never crossed our minds but when we sat down with them...”*

### **Increasing access to inclusive sports and leisure**

The project ran a number of specific sessions for disabled children and young people such as swimming, tennis, basketball, multi-sports activities such as soft play and gym work – swimming being the activity that most families enquired about and said they would like to take part in. Because of high cost the project chose not to work with activities such as badminton and fencing.

### **Resources**

The centre purchased a wide range of sports equipment that would enable disabled children and young people to take part in sports and leisure activities including swimming, gymnastics, tennis, soft play, etc. The centre also adapted the equipment in the gym to include Braille signs and yellow handles that are easy to use and bought gym equipment that can accommodate a wheelchair, established a poolside disabled changing room and shower chairs.

Other agencies make good use of the facilities. For example the local special school uses the gym and a swimming club for disabled children and young people uses the pool.

### **Partnership**

The project worked with a range of partners, some of which were also DCATCH funded projects e.g. SoLO (who provided additional support carers for young people using the centre), FIS (who helped to promote the facilities and activities), VIPA (who did training in visual impairment), Solihull CAN (through mutual promotion of activities and to promote the Mystery Shopping programme), Parent Champions (to gather feedback from parents and families), Access Initiative (for advice on purchasing equipment) and others including the Wheelchair Tennis Centre, Reynolds Cross School, a specialist swimming club and other staff from Solihull MBC whose roles are focussed on sports and health.

### **Training**

The project has 115 staff and all of them took part in a Level 1 Disability Awareness Course. All the swimming teachers took part in a UKCC Disability Swimming Course. The reception staff went on an Equal Opportunities course and then a Disability Awareness course.

## **4 What the project has achieved and its next steps**

- Established parental need through partnership with Parent Champions, including Mystery Shopping exercises.
- Trained reception staff so that they are aware of the activities available and how they could best support disabled children.
- Trained Pool staff in which type of equipment to offer people and how best to use the access equipment to help the public and support appropriate messages to be delivered by staff.
- Four staff Completed Level 1 Disability Swimming Course.
- Marketed the use of the gym for the special schools – Reynolds Cross is now booked in and starts attending in September.
- Introduced a new Funzone! Session for disabled children and their families, which is completely inclusive.
- Ran four sessions of free-swimming lessons for disabled children on a Sunday.

- Currently looking into the possibility of starting inclusive swimming sessions on a Sunday with more teachers in the water – recruiting volunteers at the moment through the Apprenticeship scheme.
- After consultation with users, have implemented a booking system for the group changing rooms in the pool area, so that people can book them in advance and know that they have a set area to go into.
- Looking into the possibility of a changing bed and a changing hoist.
- Increased Swimming figures from 2009 – 2010 for disabled use by 236%; Usage of the Gym by disabled people increased by 83%.
- Children’s Gym sessions start in September.
- Worked with Family Information Service to advertise sessions more effectively and to find out exactly what parents need from a centre.
- Currently 45 children with Special Needs on children’s instruction courses.
- Enabled monitoring of usage by disabled people through adding a member section onto the new Legend Screen.
- Updated Website with information on inclusive use of the centre for children and adults.
- All Pool staff have now attended disability awareness training in September.
- SHOKK gym sessions, have been launched, with sessions targeting people with additional needs being created.

## **5 Benefits of the project**

### **To the local authority and to professionals**

- Staff have a greater awareness of disability.
- Staff adopt a more welcoming and inclusive approach and have more confidence in responding to the needs of disabled children and young people – staff know what to do and how to respond when a disabled young person comes into the centre. This is in stark contrast to the position a couple of years ago when few staff would have known what to do and would have immediately had to call the centre manager.
- Staff are more confident in approaching customers and asking their views and opinions (largely as a result of the work with Parent Champions).
- Links between agencies that bring mutual benefits have been established. For example with SoLO who provide additional support for children who need it.
- Greater promotion of the sporting interests of disabled children and young people.

### **To children and young people**

- Significantly greater access to the facilities and activities at the centre particularly swimming and gymnastics – two of the activities most requested by this group. However, many families are still unaware that the centre has changed both in terms of its ethos but also its resources and equipment.

## **6 Critical success factors**

- Choosing to focus on activities that the centre knew were more affordable and that they could do well.
- Gathering and acting on feedback from parents helped the centre to clarify that they should be an inclusive mainstream leisure centre rather than attempt to develop specialist activities that other agencies were better able to provide and in which parents already had full confidence.
- Identifying the mutual benefits of partnerships.
- Identifying a champion on the staff team.

## **7 What would/could have been done differently?**

More focus on the provision of inclusive activities and making the centre more accessible, as well as training the staff. At the start of the project, there was perhaps too much focus on creating specialist activities. However, since this is a specialist area, it is considered that it would be better to focus on inclusive activities that can be offered to everyone.

## **8 Sustainability**

The project intends to continue to be known as an inclusive leisure centre. Gym and swimming activities for example will continue as a result of lasting changes – having trained staff, having bought the equipment and having established a changing room, activities can continue without additional funding.

Partnerships that have been established should continue. However, changes in personnel will need to be managed to ensure that links are maintained.

The Funzone! Session is self-sustaining – the entrance fee is not subsidised by the funding and so can continue after the funding has finished.

## **9 For more information contact case study co-author**

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**Solihull DCATCH pilot**

**Specialist and Inclusive Play**

**Case Study**

**March 2011**

## 1 Project summary – vision and aims

Solihull Life Opportunities (SoLO) provides a wide range of specialist activities for disabled children and young people across the spectrum of disabilities i.e. those with very mild learning difficulties through to those with profound and multiple needs. Most activities are funded through Short Breaks or through a specialist play contract. In addition SoLO supports disabled children and young people to access mainstream settings through the provision of additional support carers and disability awareness training.

SoLO is a good example of where DCATCH funding, which was used to pay for project leader training and for an annual transition event, was used effectively to complement Short Breaks funding. For this reason it is difficult to separate the two and this case study draws on the full range of SoLO activities.

The project supported the following DCATCH National Outcomes:

- Supporting families to make choices.
- Workforce development.

## 2 Challenges SoLO aims to address

SoLO works to overcome a number of challenges:

- Few opportunities for children at the high end of the spectrum to engage in social activities.
- Mainstream settings are often reluctant to include disabled children and young people.

## 3 How SoLO responds to these challenges

SoLO undertook a number of activities that were key to its success:

### Increasing access to mainstream provision

- **Teen Open Door (Merstone School)** - 15 places for 11-18 years olds with profound multiple learning disabilities to chill out and enjoy a meal after school, with mixed activities such as music, arts, games, dancing and reflexology. Tuesdays 3.30-7.30pm.
- **Transitional Youth Club (Hazel Oak School)** - An opportunity for 12 young people aged 15-18 to build their independence, to cook and eat together and enjoying trips out. Wednesdays 3.30-6.30pm.
- **Drumming (Shirley Community Church)** - An opportunity for 16 young people aged 12+ to participate in an African drumming group lead by a professional. Running fortnightly in Shirley. Runs alternate Thursdays 6.30-8.30pm (term time).
- **Access All Areas** - a service to support children aged 6-18 with learning disabilities to access a mainstream setting such as Youth Clubs, cubs, sports groups etc.
- **Get active** - For 12 young people aged 14-24 with learning disabilities to meet and take part in sports such as: swimming, skiing, rock climbing.) Alternate Saturday mornings (term time).
- **Super friends Saturday Club (Hobs Moat youth club)** - A fortnightly club run by parents and supported by SoLO for 16 children aged 8-13 years of age with moderate learning disabilities. Alternate Saturdays 10.00-12.00.
- **Holiday Activities (Merstone or Reynalds Cross Schools)** - Specialist Easter and summer holiday playscheme for children aged 4-19 with severe or multiple disabilities.

- **Holiday Activities** - Activities during school holidays for children aged 8-12 years, and young people aged 13+ with moderate to severe learning disabilities.
- **Totally Arts Project (Hatchford Brook Youth Club)** - Activities focussing on dance and drama and backstage work for young people aged 12-18 years. Alternate Saturdays 1.30-4pm (Term time).
- **Inclusive Play After School (Chelmsley Wood)** - Outdoor free play in a mainstream setting for children aged 6-12 years are supported by SoLO staff and volunteers. Thursdays 3.30-5.30pm (term time).
- **After School Club (Forest Oak School)** - A mixed programme of indoor and outdoor activities for children aged 8-13 years. Wednesdays 3.15-5pm (term time)
- **Inclusive Play - School Holidays** – Easter and summer school holiday free play for children aged 6-12 with learning disabilities along side non disabled children.

### **Provision of Individual support**

SoLO provides workers who can accompany disabled children and young people to a variety of mainstream activities that include sports (e.g. football, swimming, tennis) and leisure (e.g. Brownies, Beavers, horse riding).

### **Consultation**

SoLO arranges regular consultation events with children and young people in order to find out what they have done recently, what they liked, what they didn't like, what they haven't done but would like to do etc. and also with older children about cost, transport etc.

In the run up to the transition events SoLO ran transition cafes at the Family Centre where parents with teenagers could talk about what they needed and what they wanted from the event. They also set up a parents email forum so that parents could support each other.

### **Annual transition event**

SoLO coordinates an annual event for families of children with disabilities through the transition age of leaving school or going on to college. Events are well attended by a range of different agencies that host information stalls and run workshops on topics that include finance, education, work and training etc.

### **Partnership**

SoLO worked with a range of partners, some of which were also DCATCH funded projects e.g. LINCS (to develop the CAF), Meadow Centre (referrals), Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (so that children could experience dog walking), Sportwise (to deliver holiday activities), KIDS (to deliver a 'chill out' zone at the transition event), Tudor Grange (to enable young people to access swimming), Autism West Midlands (joint training), VIPA (attending events and training) and others including schools, after school clubs and Signposting for Autism.

### **Training**

SoLO engages disabled young adults to deliver disability awareness training to a wide range of other professionals and other providers in particular, mainstream settings, to help them become more inclusive. Take up of disability awareness training is often low as some providers are reluctant to include disabled children and young people.

Specifically using DCATCH funding, SoLO coordinated a project leader weekend for other professionals including family liaison officers, SENCOs and childcare settings. The weekend also provided an opportunity for professionals to network with each other. Feedback from those who attended was very positive in terms of raising awareness and knowledge.

#### **4 What SoLO has achieved**

- 10 term time and four holiday projects catering for a membership of over 400 disabled children and young people.
- 50 children are supported to attend 21 different clubs through Access All Areas.
- 89 different activities attended by 262 disabled children and young people during the school holidays.
- Over 290 people attended (including several school groups) and 58 different exhibitors attended a transition event.
- 16 settings received disability awareness training.
- 200 parents consulted about/involved in the design and delivery of services.
- 262 children and young people consulted about/involved in the design and delivery of services.

#### **5 Benefits**

##### **To the local authority and to professionals**

- An agency to which families can be referred or signposted to.
- Greater awareness of disability and how to overcome barriers to inclusion.
- More confidence in responding to the needs of disabled children and young people.
- Source of practical advice and support to agencies and professionals.
- Greater awareness of other professionals and agencies.
- Some settings have developed models whereby two or three disabled children attend together which reduces additional support costs.
- Greater integrated partnership working.

##### **To parents and carers**

- Parents have greater choice in the range of activities their children can go to.
- Time for themselves or to spend with their family or friends, particularly during school holidays and at weekends. For parents of children with profound and multiple disabilities time away from their child can prevent the family tipping into a state of crisis.
- Access to information through the transition events.

##### **To children and young people**

- Children and young people develop their individual potential and talents.
- Greater independence and confidence.
- Increased social and emotional development and positive changes in behaviour.
- Better access to mainstream activities such as swimming, football, ballet, uniformed groups etc.

#### **6 Critical success factors**

- SoLO has an established reputation.
- Integrated partnership working.

- Effective use of well supported and trained volunteers.

## **7 What would/could have been done differently?**

- Finding ways of getting providers to buy into inclusion – however this is not something that SoLO can manage to do on its own.

## **8 Sustainability**

Longer term, SoLO is trying to make individual projects self-governing with parent/volunteer committees that oversee them and do their own fundraising. SoLO is also reviewing its funding model and costing and pricing structures to prepare for personalisation. The organisation also plans to make more use of volunteers for example to start new initiatives such as sewing, and is exploring alternative sources of funds including involving members in fund raising activities.

## **9 For more information contact case study co-authors**

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