

# national transition support team

working together to improve transition  
for disabled young people

## 'How to' guide: How to involve disabled young people in *Aiming High for Young People: a ten year strategy for positive activities*

### Introduction

The aim of this booklet is to stimulate thinking and ideas, to enable youth professionals to reflect on how to better include disabled young people in the initiatives and duties set out in *Aiming High for Young People: a ten year strategy for positive activities* (AHYP).

### Aiming High for Young People

Published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in 2007, *Aiming High for Young People: a ten year strategy for positive activities* (AHYP) sets out 55 commitments, whose purpose is to increase all young people's participation in enjoyable and purposeful activities.

The stated vision within AHYP is for young people to enjoy

*'happy, healthy and safe teenage years... enabling them to reach their full potential.'*

Disabled young people have the same hopes and aspirations as other young people, and often barriers to achieving these are also the same. However, what may be different – and requires creative and collaborative thinking, are the solutions to those barriers. Youth services will need to examine and adapt their ways of working to ensure that disabled young people can actively influence and benefit from the opportunities offered in the strategy *Aiming High for Young People*. True influence and inclusion is not something that will occur through quick fixes but through a considered approach to changing the attitudes and structures that underpin practice.

There are already many examples of the engagement and involvement of disabled young people. But these are early days for the AHYP strategy. Several of the initiatives, proposed structures and pilot projects generated by AHYP are still being developed, particularly in

the areas of celebrating youth achievement, young inspectors, empowering young people, transport and devolved budgets. Youth professionals need to make sure they are aware of the new ideas and best practice that will be continually evolving and circulating.

To put this work into context, we need to know who we are talking about. In the Government's report *Improving the life chances of disabled people*<sup>1</sup> (January 2005) it was reported that:

- the UK has more than 770,000 disabled children, equal to 7 per cent of young people, with an increasing number reported as having complex health needs, autism spectrum disorders and mental health needs
- disabled people overall are likely to do less well than others in terms of housing, health and income, and more likely to be discriminated against and face negative attitudes
- black and minority ethnic families are less likely to contact health or social services about their disabled children and, generally, have lower service take-up rates.

In England, 2.8 per cent of pupils across all schools have statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN). In addition, 16.4 per cent of all pupils across all schools have SEN without a statement<sup>2</sup>.

In this document the term 'disabled young people' refers to young people with all forms of impairments, including those which are sensory, physical or intellectual. Different impairments mean that different types of support are required; youth services should seek to ensure that disabled young people with a range of needs are involved and included in provision.

A recent scoping report<sup>3</sup> by the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) found that although disabled young people and their families wanted a choice of more and different things to do that were both inclusive and specifically for them and their peers, there are limited opportunities for them to access positive activities locally.

*'If I say I'm kind of like disabled, they say no you're not, you're not in a wheelchair. You don't have to be in a wheelchair.'*

14-year-old disabled young person

In the Council for Disabled Children's Making Ourselves Heard project, disabled young people compiled a list of their top ten tips for participation. These included:

- involve us from the start
- prove you are listening
- be open and honest
- involve all of us
- respect us.

### **Aiming High for Disabled Children**

*'I don't want to feel like I am a nuisance or somebody different. I just want to do everything that everyone else does.'*

24-year-old disabled young person

*Aiming High for Disabled Children: Better support for children and families* (AHDC) was also launched by the DCSF and the Department of Health in 2007. It aims to ensure that *'all families of disabled children have the support they need to live ordinary lives as a matter of course'*. AHDC sets out a transformation programme for the delivery of services for disabled children and their families in England. Funding is available for the provision of short breaks, childcare, transition to adulthood and parent forums. It includes a National Indicator

(NI 54) on services for disabled children and a core offer for families.

The core offer covers the standards of service that disabled young people and their families can expect, including:

- information and transparency – to ensure that information about specialist and universal services is accessible, available and joined up across local authorities and their partner agencies
- participation and feedback – to ensure that they are involved in service development from inception to evaluation in ways appropriate to their needs.

Within AHDC, there are many areas of opportunity for youth services – for example, additional short breaks delivered through youth service positive activities, childcare for older children and funding for developing support during the transition to adulthood. Additionally, the obligations around transparency in recording and reporting run parallel to those covered by the positive activities duty<sup>4</sup>. For more information on the positive activities duty please see

[www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/youthmatters/thingstodoplacestogo/thingstodo/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/youthmatters/thingstodoplacestogo/thingstodo/)

While the additional funding allows youth services to provide short breaks, it is important to remember that disabled young people should have access to the same activities as all other young people. Short breaks provided in the form of a positive activity must be *additional* and must provide families with a real break as well as being a positive experience for the young person.

Disabled young people have the right to influence and be listened to, the same as all young people. AHYP and AHDC both give an impetus to youth services to look at how they enable disabled young people to be actively engaged and to influence provision. As new initiatives are developing and becoming embedded in now is the time to ensure that disabled young people are included and empowered.

## Questions

- Do you know who the lead is for AHDC in your area?
- Are you aware of what AHDC work is going on?
- Have you explored opportunities for joint working and shared learning?

## AHYP themes

There are six main themes in AHYP:

1. Positive perceptions
2. Empowerment
3. Places to go
4. Access and inclusion
5. Capacity and quality
6. Workforce development

In the following pages, we look at each of these themes in the context of positively engaging disabled young people. Examples are given from various local authorities.

### 1. Positive perceptions

*'All young people should feel able to have their achievements celebrated, sending a strong signal about their rightful place in society.'*  
AHYP

*'Last summer I was involved with a group... they didn't see me in the chair, they saw me as a young person – that's what I wanted them to see me as.'* 20-year-old young man

Disabled young people say they want respect and the same opportunities as everyone else to achieve and enjoy – and they want to be recognised for their achievements. Although many disabled young people accept they have a need or impairment that requires additional support or management, they do not see why they should be defined by that need or impairment. Many see other people making assumptions about what they can and can't do based on their disability. With this in mind, it is useful to understand the concept of the social model of disability.

Children in the Picture set out a definition of the social model of disability which states that:

*'..disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference.*

*The Social Model of Disability looks at ways of removing barriers which restrict life choices for people with SEND [special educational needs, disability] or differences.*

*When barriers are removed, disabled people can be independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives.<sup>5</sup>*

All young people can experience discrimination for a range of reasons, including negative images and a lack of opportunity. Disabled young people may experience further discrimination due to people's assumptions about their abilities, and in some cases another layer of discrimination if they are from a black or minority ethnic background – as evidenced in a report by disabled South Asian young people on barriers to their access to leisure activities.<sup>6</sup>

Currently, services are provided for disabled young people in a number of ways. The organisation KIDS describes the following approaches to service delivery taken by local authority youth services:

- segregated – disabled young people receiving services separately as decided by professionals
- separate – disabled young people choosing to meet with their peers
- inclusive – provision that removes disabling barriers and is open to all.<sup>7</sup>

However, inclusion itself can be subdivided and interpreted differently. C4EO describes three types of inclusion:

- pseudo inclusion – disabled young people are accepted but there is little or no work to support their participation in an activity or their social integration
- active inclusion – provision is designed and resourced to facilitate disabled children's participation

- opportunity inclusion – services are disability specific and offer activities or opportunities that non-disabled young people would also access.

## Questions

- How inclusive are your services? Which of the above models do they resemble? Are you, and the young people who use them, satisfied with that?
- How can mainstream youth service staff learn from these approaches and plan locally to meet the needs of all young people who want to access their services?
- Do youth service staff feel they have the skills and confidence to work with disabled young people?
- Do staff have the skills to develop inclusive services, including disability equality training, inclusive play techniques and personal care training as part of their induction to ensure they understand basic issues and can engage positively with all young people?

Each local authority has specialist services that can support youth service work by sharing learning and expertise. Such services may include a 'social care children with disabilities team' or a 'learning disability partnership board' that includes people with learning disabilities and carers.

Identifying these bodies, and others, and establishing links could create greater opportunities for young people to influence change. In particular, the boards should have established ways and resources for supporting and communicating with disabled people – for example, advocacy provision, sharing information and making information accessible that can be shared.

## Case study

### Oxfordshire Youth Enablers (OYE!)

OYE! is a forum for disabled children and young people set up through a multi-agency steering group that included disabled young people and those who work in health, social services, the youth service and the learning disability partnership board, who also provided some joint funding.

The forum was set up so that Oxfordshire County Council could get feedback about services. However, OYE! has also been involved in wider consultations, such as one on economic wellbeing.

Initially, disabled young people were invited to forums, but this meant most of the budget was spent on transporting people across this large rural county. Consequently, a different approach was developed. Four young people with a range of impairments were trained as accredited consultation leaders in a programme called OYE! Involve Us.

The accredited leaders co-facilitate consultations for existing disability groups, for example, Friends of the Youth Deaf. This has led to a more effective use of resources and has enabled a greater number of people to be involved.

[www.bigvoiceoxfordshire.com/wps/wcm/connect/BigVoiceOxfordshire/Home](http://www.bigvoiceoxfordshire.com/wps/wcm/connect/BigVoiceOxfordshire/Home)

## Case study

### City Equals – Sunderland

City Equals was set up in 2002 at the request of disabled young people and is supported by the Youth Service. The group has its own constitution and ground rules, with each member of the group taking on individual roles and responsibilities.

Group meetings create a platform for the group to tackle issues of importance by advocating on behalf of all young people across the city.

The group consults and debates with relevant

agencies, such as social services and the youth service, prepares reports and attends consultation events such as State of the City Debate and Youth Inc.

City Equals attends groups such as Sunderland Youth Parliament. They deliver disability awareness sessions to young people and agencies, and visit local areas and amenities to compile reports on accessibility.

[www.cityequals.co.uk](http://www.cityequals.co.uk)

## Questions

- Do you know of local services that support disabled young people which you could link into?
- If you do, is this information shared with colleagues who would benefit from it – for example, participation officers or facilitators of youth forums or parliaments?

## 2. Empowerment

*‘Giving young people genuine influence over local services is the most effective way of ensuring better access and increasing participation. All young people should feel able to make a positive contribution in their communities... sending a strong signal about their rightful place in society.’* AHYP

*‘Youth services offer provision not empowerment.’* Parent

It is important that disabled young people are involved in the design and development of services under the AHYP initiatives. This will mean that services will be set up with their needs in mind from the start, and so will not have to be redesigned at a later stage.

In order for all disabled young people to have the opportunity to express their views and be listened to, staff may need to acquire new skills and ways of working together and with other agencies. It is important that consultation processes are two way – ie, that those giving their views get feedback and that the services they want to influence hear what they have to say.

Though disabled young people may be aware of the notion of choice, they may not have experience of exercising it, so they may need training about their rights and how to speak out. Many local authorities already offer this to young people without a disability and there are packages available (see further information section). Alternatively, training may be provided by independent advocacy services in your area.

## Questions

- Do you know what participation or consultation support for disabled young people is provided by statutory and voluntary sector organisations in your area?
- Do you know which organisations and bodies are responsible for services for disabled young people in your area, and what forums or opportunities there are for disabled young people to express their views about, or influence changes in, these services?
- Do you offer training to young people about their rights or speaking out? How can you or another agency make this appropriate to disabled young people?
- Do you know what specific or adaptable training other organisations offer?

## Case study

### Youth Plus – Essex

Youth Plus is a voluntary, Mencap-affiliated service for young people with learning disabilities across Essex.

Members who join pledge to organise at least one activity a year. Disabled young people can join as members and can progress to being young volunteers in the group, for which training is given.

The young people carry out regular consultations about the activities that members want to do, with particular emphasis on facilitating access to activities

already available in the community that all other young people would access. Activities range from outdoor pursuits to theatre and cinema trips.

Young people are supported to promote, organise and coordinate activities, which are advertised at club nights and on their website. People sign up for activities they want to take part in.

[www.youthplus.net](http://www.youthplus.net)

### Case study

#### Get It Together Project – The Papworth Trust Cambridge and Huntingdon

The aims of the Get It Together Project are to:

- enhance disabled young people's social skills
- improve their ability to interact
- raise their aspirations.

Young people with learning disabilities from special schools put together a list of the sorts of activities they would like to take part in and the barriers that stopped them. They then presented this to local secondary school pupils. They have challenged the pupils to design projects that will enable disabled young people to access positive activities and overcome barriers.

The best project will be chosen by the disabled young people and jointly run by both groups. The successful project will be named 'Inclusion champions'.

A year's funding for the successful project will be sought from the Youth Opportunity Fund.

[www.papworth.org.uk](http://www.papworth.org.uk)

### Case study

#### Wecan2, Mencap

The Wecan2 research project was led by disabled young people in Devon and Blackpool. They found a number of barriers to their participation in youth councils and parliaments, which included:

- people speaking too fast
- too many big words
- extra time needed to read agendas and meeting papers
- documents were hard to read and inaccessible
- the need to ask questions throughout presentations and meetings
- time to think about what is being said.

The young people trialled a number of solutions to the above barriers:

- traffic light cards: cards that are used to indicate when people want more clarity, to ask a question or to slow down
- meetings before and after an event
- opinions recorded on Dictaphone or video to provide feedback
- using people's support networks or circles of support, which may mean working with advocates or carers
- use and training of peer mentors.

As a result of the solutions being implemented, the disabled young people felt more included and able to take part significantly more of the time.

<http://wecan2.open.ac.uk>

A further way to support involvement is to train peer mentors, who can support disabled young people to participate more in positive activities. Disabled young people themselves can become peer mentors.

## Case study

### Suffolk Positive Activities Consultations

Suffolk Youth and Connexions Service works closely with the Aiming High for Disabled Children and Young People Team. People with a range of disabilities are consulted as to what positive activities they would like to do in order to provide a short break for themselves and their families.

The AHYP team hold interactive taster events once a term where young people can try new activities. Volunteers use cameras and video to record the reactions and expressions of young people with communication difficulties. These are then assessed as part of the overall evaluation of young people's opinions and are taken into account when developing services. Photos and videos are used as evidence for inspections.

Parent's forums are held at the same time in a different part of the same venue.

Suffolk Youth and Connexions Service  
[www.suffolk.gov.uk/EducationAndLearning/YouthServices](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/EducationAndLearning/YouthServices)

Activities Unlimited (short breaks and activities for disabled children and young people in Suffolk)  
[www.activities-unlimited.co.uk](http://www.activities-unlimited.co.uk)

Some of the new initiatives within AHYP, such as devolving budgets, may be difficult to explain to disabled young people, particularly those with an intellectual disability. But as with all new concepts, rooting the explanation in a familiar frame of reference can often help to make sense of complex ideas. Looking at comparative experiences in the lives of disabled young people may offer some ideas of how AHYP initiatives can be explained to them.

Explicit questions need to be asked about how people with profound and multiple learning disabilities will be empowered and supported to have their views heard. This is the group who often need the most specialist services and face the most barriers, but who are least included.

## Case study

### Empowerment group – Seen and Heard, Barnardo's Bradford

Seen and Heard has a contract with the local authority to consult with disabled young people and support them to have their voices heard across networks on issues they have identified. This is a district-wide group of young people with profound and multiple disabilities.

A key to the group's success is that each member who joins the group has a full assessment of need, including medication, support and transport. A package of support is put together to ensure that the young person can regularly attend and be supported to participate.

A number of tools to record opinions are used – for example, videoing sessions, using objects and reference, prompt boards, etc.

Seen and Heard, Barnardo's Bradford

[www.seenandheardbradford.org.uk](http://www.seenandheardbradford.org.uk)

## Questions

- How do you currently seek the views of young people with profound and multiple disabilities?
- Do you know what work your local service providers are doing with this group?
- How will you ensure that ways of working are developed so that the views of this group are sought and implemented?

### 3. Places to go

*'Improving the offer of places to go for young people is central to delivering the government's vision.'* AHYP

*'They haven't got a youth club where I live. Well, they have but they're not very good for me... The kids aren't very nice... the adults aren't very nice and it's not very accessible.'*

16-year-old disabled young woman

Every area should ensure that facilities for young people are accessible to all. Accessibility for disabled young people is not just about physical access but about staff attitudes and knowledge, when activities are available and how they are presented. Many areas use mystery shoppers or young inspectors to visit services. The DCSF has funded a Young Inspectors initiative, and a number of pilot areas have begun to train young people, including disabled young people, to inspect services. Several areas have developed inspection models that include, or are specifically designed for, disabled young people.

In selected areas the My Place initiative is giving many young people the opportunity to design both youth facilities and the activities that happen within them. Areas that have been successful in these bids should have involved disabled young people in the consultations and the planning.

For more information go to:

[www.myplacesupport.co.uk](http://www.myplacesupport.co.uk)

#### Case study: Halton My Place Design Team

The My Place Design Team is a group of young people that includes disabled young people. The group consulted across the borough with young people about the sort of facility they would like and the activities they would like to do. This included targeting disabled young people and running specialist and open workshops.

The workshops were fun and interactive. A member of the group who uses a wheelchair advised on the building design and accessibility. He also visited the building, assessed it and suggested changes.

Halton Youth Service

[www.halton.gov.uk/youthservice](http://www.halton.gov.uk/youthservice)

#### Case study

##### Me 2, Dudley

Me2 is a kite mark award scheme run by Mencap. The project trained young people with and without disabilities to become young assessors.

The young people, parents, carers and other organisations working with disabled people all took part in devising a set of standards for inclusive services and the criteria for meeting them.

Leisure and childcare services working with disabled people can apply for the award. Young people visit the service and carry out an assessment. If required, the young people put together an action plan for improvement. When improvements have been made, young people decide if the service meets the criteria and gives the award, along with the right to display the kite mark. Services with the kite mark are advertised throughout the local area.

[www.mencap.org.uk/page.asp?id=4386](http://www.mencap.org.uk/page.asp?id=4386)

#### Questions

- How would your services benefit from a disabled young people's audit?
- Are there any initiatives where young people audit or check services in your area? Are disabled young people involved in these?
- In your area, who decides whether services and buildings are accessible to disabled young people – is it disabled young people?
- What incentives are there for services to be accessible?

Most youth services now strive to be accessible by meeting requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).<sup>8</sup> However, the multiple impairments of some young people mean they need additional features in a building that are currently not mandatory – an example would be a Changing Places toilet for people with complex needs where they can be changed in dignified and comfortable surroundings rather than on a toilet floor or not changed until they get home, if they attend at all.

For more information about Changing Places: [www.changing-places.org](http://www.changing-places.org)

Even if services meet DDA requirements, they may want to check whether they are still inaccessible to some people.

### Questions

- Do all your services meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act?
- What further access improvements could be made?
- Are there any opportunities, such as a My Place bid or use of the additional Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds (for the 50 most deprived areas), for enhancing access – for example, by providing a Changing Places toilet?

## 4. Access and inclusion

*‘All young people can experience barriers to access... but often they are experienced most by disadvantaged young people, who are the ones who could actually benefit most from the opportunities and services on offer.’*

Aiming High for Young People

*“I can’t just say to my mum, ‘I am going out now’, like a normal teenager. I have to say, ‘I’m going out on Saturday’ so she can help me sort things out”*

17 year old disabled young woman

The Council for Disabled Children describes inclusion<sup>9</sup> as:

- being welcome
- being a part, not apart
- going where you want to
- being actively involved
- people expecting you
- getting help when you need it.

### Questions

- Do your services work to these principles?
- How does your service evidence and measure the inclusion of disabled young people?

Parents and carers of disabled young people say the thing that would make the biggest difference to them would be not to have to fight for support and to be included in their communities.

Parents and carers are often the first point of contact for disabled young people. This can be difficult to reconcile with youth work principles, as they can be seen as gatekeepers or barriers to enablement. Some parents and carers are also concerned that youth services are not safe or do not offer appropriate services. Some of these concerns are real, and recent research by Mencap found that eight out of ten disabled young people said they experienced bullying wherever they go, in youth clubs, parks, etc.<sup>10</sup>

Under AHDC, local authorities are expected to provide a core offer, setting out what families with disabled children who use services can expect from them. There is also a national indicator (NI 54), against which local authorities must report. This gives youth services an opportunity to inform disabled young people and their families about services and enable them to influence, design and receive the services they want.

The following approaches are used successfully by local authorities to get information to and from parents and carers:

- parent forums: there is a duty to provide and listen to these under the aforementioned core offer
- promote activities and information through special schools, particularly those that are seen as good by families
- go to parents' evenings to describe what the authority offers
- have an information stand at parent and carer events
- distribute information through local voluntary agencies and parent/carer support organisations
- make presentations to student councils at special and mainstream schools.

Through AHYP, each local authority has been given specific funding to publicise positive activities. The accompanying guidance states that local authorities are expected to choose online publicity as the preferred way of publicising information, such as positive activities which are available. Many local authorities are developing interactive web technologies and a number have involved disabled young people in designing these. However, fewer disabled young people, particularly learning disabled young people, use online technology than their peers.<sup>11</sup> The AHYP guidance, and the core offer guidance with AHDC, also states that other media such as brochures, leaflets, etc should be used to advertise services.<sup>12</sup>

## Questions

- Have you asked disabled young people and their parents and carers how they want to be communicated with?
- Have you a strategy for spending the additional monies provided by DCSF for advertising positive activities?
- Have you mapped and audited actual and

potential distribution networks – such as school, libraries and non-statutory providers?

- Are disabled young people involved in designing and commenting on your online technology?
- What networks do you have to distribute information in your area?

Given the pressure of day-to-day work, it is often difficult to embed new strategies for involvement. However, the Disability Equality Duty, as set out in the DDA, requires every local authority to develop a disability equality scheme setting out how they will:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disabilities
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than other people.

Plans need to encompass how disability equality schemes will be embedded across youth services. It is part of the DDA duty to involve disabled people in design and development. Cross-referencing work on compliance with the disability equality duty with barriers to including disabled young people in the AHYP outcomes would help to identify changes or resources needed to ensure greater involvement. It would also provide greater leverage in negotiations with funders and senior management to change services. Another lever is that where a local authority contracts with an external provider – for example, for play or leisure provision, the contracted body is also

expected to meet the requirements of the authority's disability equality scheme.

For more information about the DDA and the Disability Equality Duty go to: [www.dotheduty.org](http://www.dotheduty.org)

### Case study

#### Time 4 Change – PACT, The Children's Society, York

Time 4 Change is a campaign group of disabled young people who are supported by PACT, a Children's Society Project in York.

The young people were invited by the City Council Department Learning, Culture and Children's services to contribute to their Disability Equality Duty Plan. The group audited department services and buildings for accessibility and met and talked to staff.

The group's recommendations included:

- disability equality training for all staff
- an opportunities fair promoting service provision to disabled young people
- ensuring more information is available to disabled young people on CD.

These recommendations were taken forward and acted upon as part of the department's disability equality scheme.

[www.childrenssociety.org.uk](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)

## 5. Capacity and quality

*'The challenge is how to ensure that local services are designed and commissioned to deliver opportunities and services that both attract young people and improve their outcomes.'*

Aiming High for Young People

*"Talk to other people so I don't have to keep saying the same stuff"*

15 year old disabled young woman

Cross-organisational working is one way to increase capacity. Finding ways to link local teams working on national initiatives like AHYP and AHDC can be an effective use of resources and sharing of expertise. Each local authority has a person responsible for taking forward AHDC. Identifying and working with this person could lead to youth services increasing their capacity and resources to deliver services to disabled young people.

All local authorities have received an increase of between two and five times the amount of their previous budgets to develop provision to ensure disabled young people and their families get meaningful short breaks. In some areas, for example Suffolk and Bradford, AHDC teams and the youth service are working jointly to provide these, partly through positive activities. It must be stressed, however, that this is for additional provision only. Short breaks funding should not be used to subsidise existing positive activities, and families as well as the disabled young person must benefit from them. Also, as specified within the positive activities duty<sup>13</sup>, disabled young people should be involved in identifying and designing what they would like to take part in.

Identifying areas of joint working and information sharing could also increase the opportunity for direct access to disabled young people and their families. In Nottingham City, the youth service manager was invited to chair the AHYP Core Offer Group. Chairing the group has increased the manager's contacts in the disability field and awareness of the work and opportunities raised by AHDC. In Derbyshire, a senior youth services manager has been seconded to the AHDC team, with the remit to look at developing joint structures for greater involvement of disabled young people. She is

### Questions

- Does your department have a disability equality plan or contribute to the local authority's disability equality scheme?
- Does it cover initiatives to enable the greater inclusion of disabled young people?
- Are disabled young people involved in devising the plan and reviewing it?

currently researching best practice models.

For more information see:

[www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=300](http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=300)

### Questions

- Do you have links or shared working with AHDC teams and initiatives?
- How could linking benefit both you and disabled young people locally?

Services can be improved by understanding the local population of disabled young people and recording their uptake of positive activities. Currently, there is no overarching database of disabled young people and their needs or an agreed criteria of data to be recorded. However, there are service-specific databases such as the voluntary Disabled Children's registers kept by children's social care teams, SEN registers and data from primary care trusts. Youth services may be able to work with colleagues across the children's trust to contact families using this local data.

### Case study

#### Bradford Youth Service

The service has developed its own database for recording people who access services. It records details of each disabled young person that is reached by the service.

The service has yearly targets for increasing the number of disabled young people it is engaging. This is used as a basis for engaging with and informing disabled young people and their families.

[www.bradford.gov.uk/people\\_and\\_organisation/people/youth\\_services](http://www.bradford.gov.uk/people_and_organisation/people/youth_services)

### Case study

#### Halton Youth Service

Halton Youth Service has purchased access to a management process aligned to the Connexions database.

This allows them to identify disabled young people who have not previously accessed the service. They also use this to record the services young people access and their achievements.

[www.halton.gov.uk/youthservice](http://www.halton.gov.uk/youthservice)

### Questions

- Do you know what your local population of disabled young people is?
- How do you record contact with disabled young people?
- How can you access data so you can recognise and meet the gaps in service provision for disabled young people?

There needs to be a structured approach to ensuring that disabled young people know about and can access services. Developing a planned approach to increasing the number of disabled young people, such as stepped percentage increase, should also mean that the wider issues of service quality and barriers to access would need to be taken into account.

### Case study: Bradford Youth Service: a joined-up approach

Bradford aims to increase the number of disabled young people who access their service by 10 per cent in 2009.

Youth workers are expected to target representative samples of young people in each locality and statistics are recorded. If it is noted that disabled young people are not accessing services, it is picked up through monitoring and addressed through a regular 'performance clinic', held with staff from

individual services and management, which looks at achievement in relation to service planning. As new disabled young people access services, this is recorded on a specifically developed database.

Managers within the youth service sit on the Aiming Higher for Disabled Young People Board.

A joint short breaks initiative has led to the creation of ten disability inclusion worker posts. Their role will be to enable disabled young people to access services and provision district wide. The inclusion workers will advertise provision to families, and will work with young people and families to identify appropriate provision and coordinate access, including looking at overcoming barriers such as support and transport.

[www.bradford.gov.uk/people\\_and\\_organisations/people/youth\\_services](http://www.bradford.gov.uk/people_and_organisations/people/youth_services)

## 6. Workforce development

*'Evidence shows that it is the work that adults do with young people in combination with activities that makes the difference...'*

Aiming High for Young People

*'In an ideal world, everything should be completely disabled friendly. And staff... should be trained.'*

18 year old disabled young woman

Local authorities adopt different approaches to providing staff support to disabled young people – ranging from integrated or joint provision to specialist disability teams. It is accepted that some disabled young people may need trained support in areas such as personal hygiene, but many just need to be enabled to take part in activities.

The Council for Disabled Children and Mencap recommend that all youth service staff should have at least disability equality training in order to gain a greater understanding of issues that affect disabled young people.

Disability equality training will often be part of local authority mandatory training for some staff teams, such as those working with learning or physically disabled young people. Many voluntary

and community sector organisations provide training on disability equality. Many disability organisations offer training in the areas of communication, working with people whose behaviours challenge, etc. The C4EO report<sup>14</sup> identified the need for training in:

- disability awareness
- inclusive play techniques
- informed risk taking
- behaviour management
- administering medication
- toileting and self-care
- the stages of child development.

It concluded that staff without this training are disadvantaged.

Staff with specialist skills in working with disabled young people can support and share learning with colleagues in youth settings through both leading training and joint training sessions. This can be mutually beneficial as specialist support staff have expertise in providing support about disability but few have training in the principles of youth work, which can improve their ability to enable disabled young people to take part and their understanding of purpose of activity and provision.

### Case study: Derbyshire Youth Service

Three youth conferences are held each year, and these are now integrated with other services. The next one will include many of the Derbyshire Disabled Children's Services teams, and representation from organisations in the voluntary, community and independent sectors that work with disabled children. The conference has a training element looking at issues such as working with young people with challenging behaviour and also runs workshops where staff explore how they could work together better. Each conference culminates in action planning, which ties people into making changes as a result of the conference.

[www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/youth\\_service](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/youth_service)

## Case study

### Free to be Me and Empowerment, Halton

Free to be Me and Empowerment are youth clubs for disabled young people in Runcorn and Widnes. They provide positive activities for their members and a short break for families. They are funded through AHYP as a joint initiative with the youth service as part of the short breaks funding.

In order that young people with high support needs have the support they need to take part and attend, the project is staffed by youth workers and care support workers contracted from a third sector support organisation. The support workers provide the personal care needs. Staff are trained and work together. Support staff also take part in activities.

This joint approach means that young people get the support they need to take part and enable parents to have time for themselves.

[www.halton.gov.uk/youthservice](http://www.halton.gov.uk/youthservice)

## Conclusion

Involving disabled young people in shaping the initiatives within the AHYP strategy will ensure that activities, services and models that evolve will be appropriate to them.

The involvement of disabled young people is not an overnight process. It can seem daunting. It takes time, planning and resources, and there may be twists and turns along the way. However, it is important to remember that also involving disabled young people is a legal duty and a human right.

To ensure that disabled young people are at the forefront of the service development process, youth professionals need to plan carefully, identify good practice and look at what drivers are available in terms of funding and policy. Youth services can then be confident that they are truly representative of all disabled young people, including the most marginalised.

*'You can find out what's best for us by involving us.'*

## Questions

- Do you offer youth service staff disability equality training?
- Do you offer youth work training to staff supporting disabled young people who may want to access youth services?
- Are you are aware of the opportunities offered by the local authority and its partner agencies for training relevant to working with disabled young people?

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## Further information

*Aiming High for Young People: A ten year strategy for positive activities*

[www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/aiminghigh/aiminghigh/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/aiminghigh/aiminghigh/)

*Aiming High for Disabled Children: Better support for children and families*

[www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/ahdc/AHDC/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/ahdc/AHDC/)

Council for Disabled Children

[www.ncb.org.uk/cdc](http://www.ncb.org.uk/cdc)

Every Disabled Child Matters campaign reports *Going Places – ensuring that play and youth strategies deliver for children and young people* and *If I Could change One Thing*

[www.edcm.org.uk](http://www.edcm.org.uk)

*Involving people with profound and multiple disabilities*

[www.mencap.org.uk/page.asp?id=1483](http://www.mencap.org.uk/page.asp?id=1483)

*Making Ourselves Heard: Ensuring Every Disabled Child's Right to be Heard Becomes a Reality*

[www.ncb.org.uk/ncb\\_moh](http://www.ncb.org.uk/ncb_moh)

Mencap

[www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

Me2

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National Indicator NI 110

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Powerful Voices Network (Scope)

[www.thepowerfulvoicesnetwork.com](http://www.thepowerfulvoicesnetwork.com)

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**Produced by Mencap and the National Transition Support Team  
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## **National Transition Support Team**

The National Transition Support Team is based at the Council for Disabled Children, NCB. Registered charity no 258825.

To find out more about the National Transition Support Team and the Transition Support Programme:

Information line: 020 7843 6348

Email: [tsp@ncb.org.uk](mailto:tsp@ncb.org.uk)

[www.transitionsupportprogramme.org.uk](http://www.transitionsupportprogramme.org.uk)



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Disabled  
Children**

