

Choosing a service for your child

When you are choosing a service or an activity for your child you want to ensure that your child will be welcomed and appropriately supported.

The Equality Act 2010 (see leaflet on the Equality Act) built on and strengthened the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) that was the first legislation in the UK to make some forms of discrimination against disabled children and adults unlawful. However, whilst helpful, legislation alone cannot support the inclusion of disabled children in services. What is most essential is the positive attitudes and the willingness of service providers to ensure that disabled children are included in a positive and enjoyable way.

This information sheet contains a checklist of the kind of things you should look for and ask about when choosing a service. It will help you decide whether or not your child will have a good experience. This may seem like a long list and not all points may be applicable for your child or for all services that you might want your child to attend. However, you might find it useful to take the list with you when checking out services so that you can focus on what is important for you and your child.

Your child can either accompany you to view all possible service options that you are investigating, or just your top two or three choices. Ask their opinion or observe their behaviour with the adults who will be working with them. You may need a few trial observation visits to get their views. Doing this groundwork can save a lot of time later.

Checklist for services

- ◆ Do staff have a 'can do' attitude to including disabled children? Are they enthusiastic and imaginative about how they will overcome any potential difficulties about including your child rather than seeing them as justifiable barriers or 'problems'?
- ◆ Do they have a written policy on the inclusion of disabled children, outlining their commitment to it and how they are working to achieve it?
- ◆ Do staff show a keenness to work in partnership with you and acknowledge that you as parent, hold the key information they need to know about your child?
- ◆ Do staff show sensitivity and awareness about what information needs to be shared and what should remain confidential?
- ◆ Is there a commitment to meeting the specific care needs and requirements of your child, including an understanding of their preferred method of communication?
- ◆ Do all children have the opportunity to actively participate in making choices and expressing their views about the service, using their preferred method of communication?
- ◆ Are there lots of opportunities and different ways for parents to be involved in formal and informal consultations to influence what happens in the service?
- ◆ Are staff who have specific roles for the care needs of individual disabled children also responsible for their inclusion in play and activities?
- ◆ Does the service provide a range of activities that

they are willing to creatively adapt to meet your child's needs?

- ◆ Does the service go on outings and if so, have staff talked through/thought about how your child will be included in these?
- ◆ Do staff have ready access to the kind of training and support that they need to safely include your child, e.g. the community nursing service and occupational therapists?
- ◆ Is the service willing to change or adapt the way they do certain things in order to include your child?
- ◆ Do they have positive images of disability displayed, for example posters?
- ◆ How would they talk to and prepare other parents and children using the service before your child is included, and should it prove necessary, how will staff deal with any comments or reactions?
- ◆ Do they have a behaviour strategy that sets out their approach to any incidence of harassment or bullying?

This leaflet pack can be obtained by emailing data@mdsltd.uk or telephoning 020 8676 9989.

The leaflets can also be downloaded from **www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/rightsresponsibility** where you will also find web-based information covering the inclusion of children with specific needs.

