

# Planning for Inclusion

## Making Your Play Strategy Inclusive



### Why inclusive?

Although these are the sentiments of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 'all' does not always mean 'all'. Disabled children still face many barriers to taking a full and active part in everyday life.

Work undertaken by the **Kids Playwork Inclusion Project** (PIP) during 2005-06 indicates that local play strategies do not always ensure that the play and leisure requirements of disabled children are respected and promoted. Yet the Disability Discrimination Act and other equalities legislation require that we be inclusive from the outset.

**Planning for Inclusion** provides guidance on how to ensure that play strategies address the rights, and meet the requirements of disabled children. It is one of several publications produced as part of the Playwork Inclusion Project (PIP) – a national development programme delivered by Kids National Development Division.

'All children have the right to rest and play.'

(Article 31)

'Disabled children must...be able to take a full and active part in everyday life.'

(Article 23)



Supported by



The PIP project has been running since 2001. Originally funded through Sure Start Unit, Department for Education and Skills (DfES), it currently has a 3-year grant from the Children, Young People and Families grant scheme.

**Planning for Inclusion** supports the Big Lottery Fund/Children's Play Council publication **Planning for Play**, and is designed to help local authorities and their partners in the practical application of that guidance in relation to disabled children. It is aimed at those who

have responsibility for developing or contributing to local play strategies, whether you work for the local authority or in the voluntary and community sector. It can be used both by those who have a general role in the planning process, and by those who have a specific commitment to championing the rights of disabled children through the strategy. Whilst equality for disabled children is its principal concern, many of its suggestions will also apply to the full involvement of other traditionally excluded groups.

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## Why should we include disabled children?

### The legislative, policy and quality context

The inclusion of disabled children and young people has become an integral part of much recent legislation and policy in relation to play and children's services. This section brings together extracts from some of the key initiatives.

#### 1. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)

Introduced in 1995, sets out the basic legal duties in promoting equality for disabled people. Part 3 of the DDA requires service providers (including play settings) to make 'reasonable adjustments' to 'policy, practice and procedures' and, since October 2004, to physical features of their buildings. Under the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act (SENDA 2001), duties were extended to schools including playtime and after school clubs.

Since April 2005, the revised Act (The DDA 2005) has widened the definition of disability and imposed a new duty on all public bodies and local authorities to promote disability equality. This duty comes into force in December 2006.

#### 2. The Children Act (1989)

States that: 'A primary aim should be to promote access for all children and young people to the same range of services.'



#### 3. The Children Act (2004)

Provides the legal framework for the programme of reform **Every Child Matters** (ECM) which sets out five outcomes which all services should work towards. These are: to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve through learning, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well being. Achievement of these

aims has to demonstrate improvement of services for all children and young people – including disabled children.

#### 4. The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (2004)

Alongside the Framework's core standards on health and social care (applicable to all children), the disabled children's standard specifically states: 'Disabled children are able to access all mainstream children's services. These promote active participation and inclusion in childhood, family and community activities.'

#### 5. The Ten Year Strategy for Childcare (2005)

Following the publication of the Ten Year Strategy for Childcare, the Government issued guidance for local authorities to help them plan to meet the new agenda: 'It is particularly important that all children's centres and extended schools provide services which are accessible to disabled children and their families. Therefore local authorities should ensure that all planning for children's centres and extended schools includes measures to make these services fully inclusive.'

#### 6. The Big Lottery Fund Children's Play Initiative/Play England

The profile of inclusive play was raised by the Government's Play Review (2004) which led to the report **Getting serious about play**. Based on recommendations in the report, The Big Lottery Fund Children's Play Initiative will invest £155m in England over 5 years to create, improve and design children's play facilities with an emphasis on the development of 'cross-cutting, play strategies' leading to 'inclusive free play opportunities.' Go to: [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/programmes/childrensplay](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/programmes/childrensplay).

The guidance on the development of local play strategies **Planning for Play** has been produced by Play England – a project of the Children's Play Council and a key element of the Children's Play Initiative. **Planning for Play** confirms that: 'An

essential feature of the play strategy should be that it promotes inclusion and access for disadvantaged and disabled children and young people.' To download the guidance go to: [www.playengland.org.uk](http://www.playengland.org.uk).

#### 7. Workforce Development and Quality Playwork

Inclusive play is by definition quality play. The Playwork National Occupational Standards at Levels 3 and 4 now require inclusive practice. Additionally, modules on including disabled children are currently being developed.

#### 8. Inspection

The drive towards inclusion is also reflected in the emerging inspection criteria for the work of local authorities and their partners. The Ofsted framework for the inspection of children's services includes an analysis of the extent to which each ECM outcome is being met in relation to disabled children.

The Children's Play Council is developing (April 2006) a small number of strategic indicators for assessing local authority performance in ensuring quality play facilities. Two of the draft indicators actively encourage the provision of inclusive play.

Spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation which:

- are accessible, welcoming and engaging for all, including those who are disabled or have specific requirements and wishes.
- allow for differing needs of people of different ages and with different play interests and support requirements.

#### A final word about legislation and policy

It is clear that there is now a legal duty, a concerted policy drive and an emerging inspection framework to reinforce our moral responsibility to develop mainstream play services that enable access and participation for any disabled child who wishes to attend. Inclusion is not an optional extra; it is a requirement.

# How do we influence the strategy?

## Ensuring your processes of strategy development promote inclusion

The best way of ensuring that the content of the strategy promotes inclusion is by using inclusive processes to devise it. Possible content of the strategy is discussed in the final section of this briefing.

### 1. Inclusion ‘champions’

Many local authorities and their partners are identifying ‘play champions’ to be advocates for the rights of children to play. Whether or not you have a formal ‘play champion’ locally, you will need at least one person who is committed to inclusive play and who will participate in the planning and writing processes.

These ‘inclusion champions’ need to be enthusiastic, knowledgeable about the barriers faced by disabled children and young people in accessing play and leisure, and willing to consult and involve them in the process of identifying what they want. If you can identify someone who is also a disabled person, so much the better. Disabled people should be active contributors to the strategy wherever possible, not just amongst its recipients.

**A cautionary note:** Just as we all have an individual responsibility for health and safety, we all have a responsibility to be inclusive. It is important that inclusion is not seen as the responsibility of a token disabled person or ‘inclusion champion’.

However, the bigger danger is that, without one or more vocal campaigners, disabled children’s interests will be overlooked or given insufficient attention. The aim of all involved must be to ensure that the strategy promotes inclusion as a central objective rather than as an incidental one – and that an inclusive ethos permeates the whole process as well as the final document. For further guidance see the 2nd Edition of **It doesn’t just happen – inclusive management for inclusive play**. Available from Kids: [www.kids.org.uk/ndd/publications](http://www.kids.org.uk/ndd/publications).

### 2. External input

If you cannot identify anyone locally it may be worth considering paying for specific inputs from one or more external organisations – either through the Kids PIP Project, or other national agencies or from a neighbouring local authority.

### 3. Multi-agency representation, including budget holders for disabled children

You need the planning group to be representative of different voluntary, private and statutory agencies, and to include people who have control or influence over budget expenditure – e.g. those controlling local Children’s Trusts monies, play or leisure grants, commissioning officers and those in health and social services with other designated sums to spend in support of disabled children and young people. It is no use making bold pronouncements if they can be scuppered by absent senior figures with other budget priorities.

Once you have established your planning group, you may also find it helpful to distribute copies of the **Kids Inclusion Framework for Local Authorities** and the **All of Us – Inclusion Checklist for Settings** to everyone involved. Another way to start the process of identifying current evidence of inclusive practices and explore the implications of inclusion across the authority would be to book a **Kids Inclusion Framework seminar**. This can raise the profile of inclusion at the outset of the planning process and prevent the inclusion agenda being seen as a minority interest.

### 4. Definitions of inclusion

In developing an inclusive play strategy, you will not only need a definition of play, but you will also need a common understanding of what you mean by ‘inclusive play’ if the strategy is going to promote it effectively. Establishing this may be an important process in helping everyone to take shared ownership of a properly inclusive strategy.

**Planning for Play** quotes independent consultant and Kids associate trainer Alison John's definition:

**'Inclusive provision is open and accessible to all, and takes positive action in removing disabling barriers so that disabled and non-disabled children can participate.'**

Two other definitions on which you might base your own are reproduced below:

**'Inclusion is a process of identifying, understanding and breaking down the barriers to participation and belonging.'**  
(Early Childhood Forum)

**'Inclusion means everyone having the right to choose to take a full part in all local services – and being equally welcomed and enabled to do so.'**  
(Kids associate Philip Douch – **It Doesn't Just Happen**)

Each of these definitions is rooted in the social model of disability. An inclusive play strategy can help to create a wider understanding of this model by reinforcing the need to remove discriminatory barriers rather than focusing on disabled people's impairments.

## 5. What is already in place?

When looking at existing provision it is important to research which settings and facilities are currently used by disabled children, which are not, and why. Good access does not mean every child being able to do everything (which is impossible to achieve) but does mean making as many spaces as possible welcoming to disabled children. For further guidance see **Can Play Will Play**, available to download from: [www.npfa.org.uk](http://www.npfa.org.uk). But don't get held to ransom by a vocal group of a few



non-users! Assessing accessibility – both of existing play sites (supervised and unsupervised) and those that may be developed as part of the strategic plan – will be important in increasing the numbers of disabled children playing in both indoor and outdoor spaces.

Access issues include the layout of the facility, security, lighting, toilets, appropriate changing facilities and parking. If local authority transport policy dictates that disabled children are taken only from school to home, it may need changing to enable disabled children to be taken to play provision instead.

Where staff are present to facilitate play experiences, their attitudes towards disabled children and adults will probably be the biggest single influence on whether inclusive play develops. They need to have had inclusive play training.

## 6. Asking disabled children's views

Wherever consultation mechanisms are established to gather information to inform the strategic plan, you need to make sure that disabled children and young people are involved in the consultation – both those who already



attend play services and those who don't. Once consultation processes are seen routinely to include disabled people, the inclusion of disabled children will become part of everyone's expectations. Where possible, try to have disabled people involved in leading such consultations – and in other pieces of work that are not necessarily disability-specific too.

Where there are no pre-existing consultation mechanisms for disabled children and young people, you may need to locate disabled children through voluntary agencies, parents' groups, social services disabled children's teams, the local authority Parent Partnership scheme, special schools or mainstream schools.

**A cautionary note:** Be sensitive to the many questions and interrogations already experienced by families of disabled children in simply accessing basic services. Take into account the specific requirements that disabled young children may have, and be prepared to try alternative approaches to questionnaires. Try researching other data sources before re-creating surveys; it may be quicker and less intrusive to add one or two short questions to other surveys. **Making Connections: developing inclusive leisure in policy and practice** is a useful guide to effective consultation with disabled young people themselves: [www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop](http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop).

## 7. Drafting the written strategy

However representative the planning group's discussion sessions may be, if the strategy is to promote inclusion, a person committed to inclusion needs to be involved in writing it, or be asked to study each draft and suggest any changes. One way of doing this is to ask some check questions:

- If we say or do this, what difference will it make to disabled children's right to play?
- Are we really sure that disabled children are not being offered a less favourable service?
- Do commitments to 'children and young people' and to 'all children' actually apply to disabled children?

## 8. Look at the wording

The terminology you use to refer to disabled children and young people throughout the document is also important. It will set the tone for how disabled children are viewed. Sound guidance on appropriate terminology can be found in **Inclusive Childminding**, a CD Rom available from the National Childminding Association: [www.ncma.org.uk](http://www.ncma.org.uk). It clearly explains the rationale for appropriate use of language such as 'disabled children', 'children with impairments' and 'non-disabled children'. Do avoid using 'special needs'. No sub-section of children is helpfully described as 'special' (either all children are special or none are in our view), and 'special educational needs' is a term coined for use in schools rather than play environments.

## A final word about inclusive processes

Many organisations and local authorities have already prepared a play strategy. Some will have given due attention to issues of inclusion and others may not have done so. Once a strategy has been prepared it will be useful to ask the implementation and monitoring group to look specifically at how well the strategy works for disabled children. And if it isn't working for disabled children and young people, then amend it so that it does!

# What do we put in the strategy?

## Suggested initiatives to foster inclusion

There is no single practical step that makes inclusion happen – although a real commitment to wanting it to happen is undoubtedly the surest foundation.

The whole strategy should therefore be imbued with a commitment to inclusion, and each part of it should take account of and make sense to disabled children and their families.

In addition there should be a number of specific initiatives around disabled children and inclusion. Some key steps to take are outlined in the **Kids Inclusion Framework for Local Authorities**, and we recommend that you get hold of a copy of the Framework to complement this document. The Framework (and the **All of Us – Inclusion Checklist for Settings** referred to above) can be downloaded from: [www.kids.org.uk/ndd/publications](http://www.kids.org.uk/ndd/publications).

Listed below are some of the elements set out in that Framework. You will need to consider what will work best in your own local circumstances, but basing developments on the Framework elements should enable you to move forward with confidence.

### 1. Budget usage (Framework element 4)

The bottom line is that if you spend most of your money for disabled children on supporting specialist segregated provision, you won't have enough money to support mainstream play settings to welcome disabled children effectively. Inclusion doesn't just happen because you espouse it in policy statements. You need to allocate funds appropriately. If you start with the ideas under the next two sub-headings, you should be on course for successful inclusion.

### 2. Inclusive play training (Framework element 6)

Some local authorities have linked funding for settings to a requirement that their staff undertake inclusion training. Investment in such training is a

good way to develop a growing core of staff and settings committed to inclusion.

The **Kids PIP Project** offers a six session endorsed level 3 course (**Planning Inclusive Play**) for managers, heads of settings and development staff, and a single day level 1 course (**Let's All Play!**) for face to face play and childcare workers. Two key common components of these courses are their commitment to disability equality and an exploration of how positive 'can-do' attitudes are crucial to success.

### 3. 'Bridges' (Framework element 7)

It can be crucial to employ somebody to act as a 'bridge' between a child/family and the setting which that child wishes to attend. Someone who both understands inclusion, and has worked with disabled children, can win the trust and boost the confidence of everyone involved.

Bridging services are already being run successfully by both voluntary and statutory agencies. Whoever is to run such a service in your area, it is absolutely essential that the service is core funded as a central part of the strategy rather than merely receiving short term project funding. Investing in experienced staff to run such a scheme is probably going to be the most important driver of inclusion in your strategic plan. See also the new Kids Briefing on **Bridging Services**.

### 4. Support and advice on the end of a phone (Framework element 8) and Money available for a variety of extra assistance if necessary (Framework element 9)

Every provider needs to know that there is a single phone number/email address to contact for support or advice. This might be provided as an additional part of the bridging service or by other advisory staff. When additional staffing, equipment, training or expert input is required, money needs to be available flexibly and speedily

to facilitate a child's inclusion. Waiting several months is not acceptable. Nor is a response that 'it doesn't fit the criteria'. The criteria should be 'whatever enables the child's inclusion'.

Toy libraries, equipment pools and a bank of experienced personal assistants could also be useful investments.

### 5. A variety of standard paperwork available to settings (Framework element 10)

Finally, if parents, children and settings are all to feel confident, local authorities also need to develop standard guidance on issues such as intimate care, lifting, safety, risk and insurance. It is wasteful, stressful and dangerous to leave each setting to try to create their own individual policies and practices in these areas. The Council for Disabled Children has produced **The Dignity of Risk** to help establish policy and procedures in these specialised areas. It is full of good advice and sample documentation: [www.ncb.org.uk/cdc](http://www.ncb.org.uk/cdc).

### 6. Monitoring

Just as the strategy itself needs to show a consistently inclusive overall approach accompanied by specific initiatives to promote inclusion, so too do benchmarks, targets and other monitoring devices. You need to know how disabled children are being served by the plan as a whole, and you also need to check how specific initiatives to support disabled children are working out in practice. The key short term measures are how many additional disabled children are joining in and what percentage of children – disabled and non-disabled – are enjoying their opportunities to play alongside one another.

The long term results are probably immeasurable as communities become more welcoming to disabled children, and all parties learn over time to see the involvement of disabled people in play and community life as routine and unremarkable.



### Conclusion

None of these initiatives is especially difficult to establish; indeed they are already happening in various parts of the country. They just need to be prioritised, written in to the plan, and funded as a central part of the strategy. Additional monies can legitimately be drawn down from other early years and childcare budget streams so that it is not just play, but a range of children's services that benefit from these initiatives. The strategic planning process offers every local authority and its partners the opportunity to bring inclusion in from the fringes and place it at the heart of the developing work. Good practice is inclusive practice. Disabled children are entitled to good play opportunities. It is your responsibility to make that entitlement a reality.



**Kids** is a national charity working with disabled children, young people and their families. **Kids** offers a wide range of services including play and leisure projects through five regional centres, and provides training, publications and advice nationally to promote inclusive play and leisure through its National Development Division.

For further information go to: [www.kids.org.uk](http://www.kids.org.uk)

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