



Questions about Aiming High for Disabled Children (AHDC) from those involved in the play pathfinder/playbuilder developments

This Frequently Asked Questions page has been developed to inform those leading on the play pathfinder and playbuilder programme in local authorities, about Aiming High for Disabled Children (AHDC). It is hoped that both the Play and the AHDC programmes will be linked within local authorities in order to provide disabled children with high quality playful short breaks.

KIDS definition of Inclusion:

Disabled children and young people are involved at all levels in the planning, delivery and review of services.

All disabled children and young people are encouraged and supported to participate in the services and opportunities they choose.

Access is getting in – inclusion is wanting to stay.

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1 What is Aiming High for Disabled Children?

'Aiming High for Disabled Children: Better Support for Families' launched in May 2007, is the transformation programme for disabled children's services. AHDC is jointly delivered by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department of Health (DH). The programme builds on, and helps deliver, existing government policy relating to disabled children, such as Standard 8 of the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (2004).

In AHDC the Government announced a range of measures to transform services for disabled children and their families. The resulting AHDC change programme is designed to ensure effective delivery of child centred services.

2 What are the objectives of Aiming High for Disabled Children?

AHDC announced a number of significant investments in key service areas:

- Childcare accessibility
- Transition support programme
- Supporting parents' forums
- Transformation of short break services

Alongside this substantial funding the government has introduced measures to provide families with information on what they can expect of local services – the core offer. This will be monitored by the new national indicator for disabled children (NI 54 -



which looks at parental experiences of services for disabled children and young people aged 0 to 19 and the extent to which these services are delivered according to core offer standards). The Core Offer sets out in one place a national statement of expectations for how disabled children and their families will be informed and involved as their needs are assessed and the necessary services delivered. The Core Offer covers:

- information
- transparency
- assessment
- participation
- feedback

The standards in the Core Offer provide clarity on what entitlements and services disabled children, young people and their families can expect in every area.

In order to look at parental experiences of services for disabled children and young people and assess local authority performance, the national indicator was created to fit within the national indicator set which will be inspected against as part of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and could form part of local authorities' local area agreement targets.

Please see the AHDC section of the DCSF website for more information:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/ahdc/AHDC>

3. What are AHDC pathfinders?

In 2008, 19 pathfinder local authorities from across England were given AHDC funding to test out ideas related to transforming services for disabled children (direct payments, understanding and building short breaks, commissioning services etc). In April 2009, all other top tier local authorities received funding from this programme.

Please see the AHDC section of the DCSF website for more information:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/ahdc/AHDC/>

4 Why should Aiming High for Disabled Children and Play be linked?

The national Play Strategy has highlighted that all the new play pathfinder and playbuilder areas should be 'attractive, welcoming, engaging and accessible for all local children and young people including disabled children...' (pg 5). This recognises the findings of research carried out by the Every Disabled Child Matters (EDCM) campaign into what types of services and facilities disabled children wanted. This



revealed (unsurprisingly) that disabled children and young people want to do the same things as their non disabled peers – they want ‘more fun things to do and places to go’ (See ‘Going places’ www.edcm.org.uk). Children don’t want to be segregated on the basis of whether or not they have impairment. Play, leisure and childcare services should be genuinely accessible to all children.

Within the ‘Ten Year Childcare Strategy’ (DCSF, 2004) and ‘Next Steps to Early Learning and Childcare’ (DCSF, 2009) it has been acknowledged that childcare for disabled children aged birth-19 can be sporadic and varying in quality. Through AHDC funding is now being provided for short breaks and access to childcare for disabled children (DCATCH).

‘We are Listening!’ (<http://www.cafamily.org.uk/pdfs/westmids-WeAreListeningSummary.pdf>) and ‘Listening to Parents of Disabled Children’ are two documents which have identified that parents and disabled children themselves, often want to be included into universal play and leisure services. However there is often a tendency to assume that disabled children will need specialist support and care. This is a myth created usually by non-disabled adults who see and feel anxious about the impairment/s a child has, before seeing and getting to know the child as an individual.

Parents want a range of specialist and mainstream activities and opportunities for their children but even here, information on what exists is cited as a vital and unmet need.’ ‘We are Listening!’ 2003

Listening to the views of disabled children and young people, and their parents and carers, it seems obvious that we should be developing and providing more inclusive play and childcare services for all children to access and enjoy. There is an unprecedented opportunity to join these two complementary funding streams in order to give disabled children ‘more fun things to do’ and provide families and children with more playful short breaks.

5 What are short breaks?

Short breaks provide disabled children and young people with opportunities to have fun, make friends, develop some independence from their parents and carers and enjoy a range of activities that reduce social exclusion, develop understanding and increase self esteem. Previously the term ‘repit care’ has been used to describe similar services, however it is recognized that this term has negative connotations about disabled children being a burden on their families, and that respite care is for the family rather than being beneficial for the disabled child.

Short breaks should also provide parents and carers with the opportunity to have a break from their caring responsibilities, to rest and relax and to spend time with their other children. However, as well as recognizing the benefits of short-break provision to parents and carers, it is important to understand the opportunities that a short break provides for children and young people, and these should be maximised. Thus a



diverse range of short breaks should be offered and made available so that all children can choose something they enjoy and want to do. For example:

- short breaks include day, evening, weekend and overnight breaks as well as holiday activities
- can take place in or outside of the child's home
- can last for a couple of hours or a couple of days
- should include a wide range of leisure and play opportunities

Please see the KIDS Direct Short Breaks website for more information about how KIDS is supporting the development of short break services for disabled children, young people and their families (<http://www.directshortbreaks.org.uk>).

6 How does the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme link to the play agenda?

For some families, attending a play service, a holiday play scheme or an adventure playground, could be a type of short break which meets their requirements as a family. Not all families will want overnight stays within specialist services, and so there are possibilities for extending the types of short breaks available to disabled children and their families.

Aiming High for Disabled Children aspires to transform short break provision for disabled children and their families. Families should have access to a modern range of services that meet their requirements. This will require quality joint working between teams and services to ensure that these requirements are met. It will also mean most areas expanding the types of short break service available to be able to offer a more personalised, flexible service that is well designed and orientated around the families requirements.

AHDC encourages strategies that incorporate the use of universal settings, for example play settings, to provide short breaks. This does not mean that specialist services are redundant, but instead it recognizes that for many disabled children, this is unlikely to be the best option. In working with universal settings, the aim of the programme should be to ensure that such settings are capable of supporting substantial and regular breaks, rather than improving general access for disabled children.

7. How can those leading on Play and Aiming High for Disabled Children work together?



'Making the Links' (KIDS, 2009) gives practical examples of how those leading on these two funding streams can work in synergy. Some common themes which run throughout the examples provided are:

- good communication between the AHDC and Play leads
- attendance at both strategic meetings
- coordinating programme action plans to take account of both funding streams
- ensuring relevant play, inclusion and AHDC policy is joined up
- engaging with families of disabled children to find out what services they want, why they don't or can't access inclusive play services and how certain challenges to doing so could be overcome.

8. How much funding is attached to the Aiming High for Disabled Children agenda?

Nationally AHDC announced:

- £35m childcare accessibility project (DCATCH) to improve access to childcare for disabled children
- 19m Transition Support Programme to support service improvements that will promote disabled young people's transition to adulthood
- £5m for supporting parents' forums throughout England
- £269m revenue funding for the transformation of short breaks for disabled children

Top tier local authorities have all received funding to develop short breaks, whereas the other funding is being distributed to a few pathfinder authorities or to specific organisations. For more information on different elements of AHDC, and to see what funding each authority has received please see below:

- Short breaks-
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/ahdc/shortbreaks/shortbreaks/>
- Childcare-
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/ahdc/childcare/childcare/>



- Transition support-

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/ahdc/transition/transition/>

- Palliative care-

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/ahdc/palliativecare/palliativecare/>

- Core Offer-

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/ahdc/coreoffer/coreofferandni/>

In February 2009 the DCSF and DH jointly launched 'Healthy lives, brighter futures: A strategy for children and young people's health' which presents the government's vision for children and young people's health and wellbeing. The strategy promises an extra **£340 million** of NHS funding to be available over 3 years (2008-2011) for palliative care and end of life care, short breaks, community equipment and wheelchair services for disabled children and young people.

9. What ring fencing is there in the funding through Aiming High for Disabled Children?

It has been recognised that children who have higher levels of support requirements are less likely to access services. Consequently AHDC funding has a specific focus upon:

- children and young people with Autism
- children and young people with complex health needs which includes those with impairments and life limiting conditions
- children and young people aged 11 and over with moving and handling needs that require equipment and adaptations
- children and young people where challenging behaviour is associated with other impairments (e.g. severe learning difficulties)
- young people over 14 years.

Some children may fall into more than one of these categories - but it is important that all areas ensure that eligible children falling within these groups are not disadvantaged in their access to provision.

10. Who leads on the Aiming High programme in my authority?



This will vary from authority to authority. However, predominantly the lead officer will sit within Disabled Children's Service team of the top tier authority or within the Primary Care Trust (PCT). Search on the local authority website to find the name and contact details of this lead officer, or phone your Disabled Children's Service team within Children's Services.

11. How can I find out what other local authorities have done around linking these two funding streams?

A joint Play/AHDC pathfinder group (with 4 local authorities who have received both pathfinder status: - Enfield, Dudley, Sunderland and North Tyneside) has been established to exchange ideas and information, and now meets on a quarterly basis. KIDS, Play England, SkillsActive and Together for Disabled Children are providing support to this group to enable the coordination of funding projects and to encourage the sharing of experiences. The dedicated funding streams provide a real opportunity to make play and leisure for disabled children and young people a priority and allow disabled children to enjoy independent playful experiences, whilst providing their parents or carers with time to themselves.

The learning from this group has been collected and the findings published in a KIDS briefing, 'Making the links - playful short breaks for disabled children' (2009). This builds on an earlier KIDS briefing, 'Aiming Higher for Inclusive Play' (2008) which provides an overview of AHDC and how this links to the play agenda. Both briefings are available to download from the KIDS website: www.kids.org.uk/publications

12. How can we encourage the people leading on Aiming High for Disabled Children to think of play provision as an option for short breaks?

There is much evidence to draw on. For example, the findings within 'Going Places!' (EDCM, 2008, http://www.edcm.org.uk/Page.asp?originx_2142th_94126087459651r5c_20084242828u), 'Can Play, Will Play - disabled children and access to outdoor play environments' (Fields in Trust, 2004), 'Fun and Freedom' (11 Million, 2008, http://www.playengland.org.uk/Page.asp?originx_9566qw_5753329932181c84f_20088183723j), 'If I could Change One Thing...' (EDCM, 2007, http://www.edcm.org.uk/Page.asp?originx_7962hg_2442312584137k31h_20079204746d), 'Aiming Higher for Inclusive Play' (KIDS, 2008, <http://www.kids.org.uk/information/100428/100623/100836/briefings/>) and any local evidence from the local authority or voluntary groups.

It is also important to highlight the Play Strategy (DCSF, 2008) and in particular, the sections relating to accessible and inclusive play spaces. Some professionals may not have come across this document, or be aware that it has a focus on access and inclusion. Meeting face to face with the AHDC strategic board within a specific top tier



local authority, may be the best way of transmitting information about the importance of jointly providing inclusive playful breaks for children.

13. How can district councils access the funding through Aiming High for Disabled Children?

The AHDC funding (as with the play pathfinder and playbuilders) has been distributed to top tier local authorities. It is anticipated however that district councils will work closely with top tier authorities to identify how best to improve the quality of services for disabled children. Therefore, how district councils access the funding, will depend on the relationship between the districts and top tier authorities and the mechanisms in place for allocating funding. Good practice may see representatives from district councils sitting on the Aiming High partnership board along with the top tier representatives, providing input on local level services and requirements.

14. How is Aiming High for Disabled Children advertised to parents and carers?

The advertising and promotion of AHDC is a crucial element of the programme. All local authorities have a full service Core Offer to inform parents about services for them and their family. In addition, all areas have been required to set up a Parent Forum which will be supported by Contact a Family (www.cafamily.org.uk). These forums will receive up to date information about AHDC in their local area via newsletters and events. Contact a Family has also set up a web page and a Facebook group to publicise information about AHDC.

15. How can local authorities get local councillors actively involved in both the Play and Aiming High agendas?

Councillors can be local champions for disabled children. Having a champion for disabled children can help prioritise thinking around services for disabled children, and help access council support for specific programmes. Local councillors can also sit on scrutiny panels which will be responsible for agreeing authority spending, thus ensuring councillors understand the importance of both the Play and the AHDC agendas.

Councillors should be invited to consultation and other events to inform them about both agendas, provide publicity and authority interest and backing.

16. How can I find out more about Aiming High for Disabled Children?

- Go to the DCSF pages about AHDC
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/ahdc/AHDC/>



- Speak to the AHDC lead within your local authority in more detail
- Contact Together for Disabled Children who are the organisation supporting the Aiming High for Disabled Children short breaks programme and development of parent participation forums <http://www.togetherfdc.org/default.aspx>