COUNCIL FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

CDC Digest

Summer 2024

Dear all,

There has been an election! Which means there will be change. We're not exactly sure what that will look like yet, but let's be clear about the things we can be sure about. Because what I know with every fibre of my being is that Disabled children and young people and those with SEN and their families, can't afford for us to do nothing while a longer term direction of travel is set. There are things that everyone agrees on as the right thing to do that are currently underway and we need to keep our foot pressed down firmly on that particular accelerator.

The Change Programme has a focus on making mainstream provision more inclusive and ensuring that the needs of disabled children and those with SEN are met at the earliest point of presentation. It is developing National Standards to help us understand what is expected from mainstream schools in terms of ordinarily available provision. The Labour Party Manifesto made it clear that they are committed to 'a community-wide approach, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools'. So let's keep cracking on with that.

Our new Secretary of State for Education has made it clear that SEND is a priority and further that it is her intention to work 'together across government' to drive the change needed. I don't think we have ever been a priority this early in an administration.

This is a critical time then for us to work together and reach as wide a consensus as possible on the change that is needed, over and above that already in train. We will do what we've always done for our members and ensure that you are clear on what the views of key stakeholders are so that we can identify not only a consensus between us as the CDC membership, but also have a really clear understanding of those elements of common ground between all key players and those issues that we might need to work harder on and gather more evidence of if there isn't agreement.

We'll also make sure that we provide as many opportunities as possible for members to talk to DfE as they develop policy. If there is going to be change and it's going to work for children and young people and their families and represent the most efficient and effective use of resources, we know it's vital that those of you who work to support children and families, as well as children and young people and families themselves, are fully involved in developing it.

So I am fully expecting to see a lot more of you all over the coming months and really excited that we might have the opportunity of working together on policy change to deliver the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

Best wishes,

Amanda Allard

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Council for Disabled Children Updates

Health – Innovation and Support

This quarter our work with local systems has included supporting Local Authority areas in Yorkshire and London to develop new Strategic Outcomes Frameworks and Working Together Charters that will underpin their approach to system improvement. We have also been working with ICB areas in the Northeast and London to support development of, with a view to testing and evaluating, new Quality Assurance and Improvement Tools for SEND.

We have also helped local areas review how they respond to specific issues, including the provision of information advice and support to parent carers and how health and education can work together effectively to meet the needs of children with health needs in schools.

By exploring insights from data, reviewing the evidence and bringing them together with the views and experiences of professionals, parents and carers and children and young people we develop shared recommendations for service to enable them to respond to shifting demand and emerging challenges.

For more information about working with us please contact us at cdc@ncb.org.uk

Health – Systems Improvement

As part of the SEND and AP Change Programme, REACh have been busy delivering webinars and bespoke workshops to the Change Programme Partnerships (CPP) areas. These opportunities for areas have been delivered by various subject matter experts and showcased good practice examples across the CPPs. In the next upcoming weeks, there will focus on exploring inclusivity in mainstream schools by holding deep dive conversations with schools and reviewing Local Areas' Ordinarily Available Provision development process. REACh are also continuing to collect robust feedback from CPPs through surveys, focus groups and one-to-one interviews and providing concrete recommendations to the policy teams at the DfE. You can continue keeping up to date with the Change Programme's progress by signing up to the newsletter here.

The last few months have seen a flurry of activity for the Research and Improvement for SEND Excellent (RISE) Partnership, with a range of workshops exploring EHCPs, embedding co-production and using outcomes frameworks effectively all in the last month alone. Alongside regular RISE delivery, the recent Workforce Survey has now closed. More than the 450 SEND professionals across the country responded, giving their views on what the priorities are in improving knowledge and understanding of SEND systems. Over the coming weeks, RISE will be developing a curriculum of training to empower staff working with disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs. You can keep up to date with upcoming events as they are announced here, or contact RISE for further information.

Social Care

The Social Care team have been busy planning our new programme of activity through our Strategic Reform Partner contract with the Department for Education, including designing projects that will focus on inclusive mainstream education and annual reviews. We had another successful CDC Members meeting in May, with presentations from two CDC members; Afasic and Prader-Willi Syndrome Association UK. We also shared learning from the Short Breaks Innovation Fund and gave an overview of our position paper on the Law Commission Review of Disabled Children's Social Care. In REACh, we have completed our most recent Insight Guide on multi-agency panels and parental involvement and confidence.

We have also been developing more of our traded income work, in particular supporting local authorities with their short breaks strategies – if you want to find out more, email us at cdc@ncb.org.uk.

Special Educational Consortium

The Special Educational Consortium (SEC) have gained two new members this quarter: Action Cerebral Palsy and PRUsAP. We are pleased to see our membership and expertise grow. SEC have also launched their strategy for 24/25, which lists our key actions for the year ahead. This is a comprehensive and collaborative document that explores what change we would like to see with the new government. The SEC strategy can be accessed here. SEC have also submitted two consultation responses this quarter: one reviewing the national standards for personal, social and employability qualifications, and another for the Ofsted Big Listen. Both submissions can be read here. SEC members have met with the Local Government Association to discuss priorities within the post-16 sector, with some identified areas of follow up and potential for collaborative working post-election. Ofsted joined SEC at our May steering group meeting to discuss their consultation, along with the DfE who also discussed the consultation on Faith School Designation reforms. SEC also posted our manifesto key asks to parliamentarians and candidates ahead of the election to ensure our priorities are made aware to whichever Government comes into power. Lord Addington has expressed interest in meeting with SEC to discuss our manifesto asks. We also have begun discussing ways to influence post-election and ensure the needs of disabled children and young people, and those with SEN, are kept at the forefront.

Early Years SEND (EYSEND)

We are delighted to be continuing the EYSEND Partnership programme for another year and this quarter was dedicated to updating our suite of training and recruiting family hub areas to access our strategic support offer. As a Partnership of six organisations, we met on the 30th May to discuss our key aims of the programme, notably how to embed speech and language support in all our work and ensuring we are reaching underrepresented communities. Across the Partnership, we are now supporting 50+ different local areas across England to improve the strategic approach to access and inclusion for early years children. We have a series of seminars and regional events coming up soon, if you would like to keep up to date with upcoming events, please sign up to our EYSEND newsletter.

Information, Advice and Support Services Network (IASSN)

This quarter the IASSN's main focus has been the planning and delivery of eight face-to-face workshops held all around the country, for a total of two hundred and fifty-five SENDIASs staff. These workshops combined training on the Equality Act, a national update and an interactive workshop designed to identify, address and meet the key challenges impacting SENDIASs staff. Feedback from these sessions has been overwhelming positive with 99% of those who attended saying they would recommend the session to others and 98% rating the day good to excellent. Our next focus will be the implementation of the plans developed at those workshops.

During the quarter we also ran training on all three levels of IPSEA, held a new staff induction session which included a presentation from our children and young people's Steering Group to the fifty new SENDIASs staff who joined, met with our SENDIOG Colleagues, worked on the development of new resources and joined up with six regional SENDIASs managers meetings. All in all we're hoping for some calm over the next quarter to gather our thoughts and plans before September!

Participation

The last quarter has been busy with delivery for the Participation Team. This has included running one of our three annual national community of practice events as part of the Making Participation Work programme for participation and engagement practitioners working across children's health, education, and social care. 127 delegates shared their collective experiences of widening participation opportunities to support more diverse and seldom heard voices to engage. We have continued to deliver our monthly coffee mornings, which give professionals an informal opportunity to come together to collaboratively problem-solve and share their expertise. At recent sessions we have heard from the National Development Team for Inclusion and Coram Voice on their participation work with disabled children and young people and those who are care experienced.

The children and young people involved in our advisory groups have been just as busy. Some members of the FLARE group delivered a workshop at the Children and Young People Now's SEND Summit and two young people from Young NCB and the Young Research Advisors created the eleventh episode of Our Turn to Talk, which explores grief.

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education: A Postcard from Estonia

Dr Daniel Stavrou

Our host country, Estonia, is now recognised as an educational success: see the 2022 PISA results. We know that for disabled children and young people, and those with SEN, generalised statistics on academic attainment are not always meaningful, or representative of the 'success' of their educational life. However, the Estonians are clear that they attend carefully to all needs, adopting an inclusive approach. Some of the tenets of such an inclusive system are not specific to the realm of SEND: an investment in a wide curricular offer; universal free meals; a highly skilled teaching workforce; heavily subsidised early years provision and a progressive approach to utilising digital resources and technology for learning – all general approaches which have the potential to work well in the context of SEND. Above all, there is an unashamed ambition for schools to address societal inequality.

On a more SEND-specific note, and bearing in mind our own efforts currently undertaken on the Change Programme, it is worth mentioning Estonia's system of Regional Guidance Centres: these are managed and funded by local authorities, and function in a similar way to our EHCP system in the sense that they are intended to supplement and extend the level and types of support afforded to pupils with additional needs if the initial inclusive approach doesn't yield the desired outcomes. Committees sitting in the Regional Centres take a holistic approach to their recommendations, and these may include curricular adaptations.

Teachers in Estonia are highly trained (master's level for schoolteachers; graduate level for early years). Inclusive practice is an integral part of teacher training, and Estonian colleagues have said that one factor which supports a successful inclusive environment is an increased level of autonomy enjoyed by schools and teachers: allowing environmental, pedagogic, and curricular adaptations to be made (and reconsidered/refined) easily, in a person-centred manner whilst acknowledging local contexts. Any pupil with 'moderate, severe and profound learning difficulties' will access an individual curriculum by law.

Day one of the conference was dedicated to updates on the Agency's activities and data. For me, the standout feature of the day was the National Coordinator exchange session, which this time focused on countries' positions and journeys between special needs and inclusive education. There are, of course, still huge differences between countries, with Italy probably the most inclusive (taking a mechanical approach to the term inclusion) with less than 1% of pupils, who have audio-visual impairments, schooled in separate provision. As we know, the English context is very different, and although the Improvement Plan has a stated ambition to ensure more children and young people will receive the support they need through ordinarily available provision in their local setting, in England we have never committed to dismantling the special school system. The diverse experiences of our European counterparts should however allow us to be nuanced in our approach to that system which will emerge post– Change Programme and I think this is a conversation that needs to be had. For example, what are the implications of the new alternative provision system – and will it possibly mean less of our pupils will require to be schooled separately?

And is this indeed the direction we want to take?

The true excitement of day one, however, came as we headed for dinner, picking up the news from back home that an election date had been set – closer than expected in the SEND sector. Naturally, conversation turned to the hopes and fears in the sector regarding the political landscape at such a challenging time for our most vulnerable children and young people.

Day two was dedicated to the final conference on the Building Resilience through Inclusive Education Systems (BRIES). In short, the project set out to analyse the ways in which educational systems responded to the Covid-19 pandemic and to learn lessons regarding inclusive education. The underlying idea is to turn the crisis into an opportunity of learning and improvement. The project involved young people, parents, educational professionals and policy makers and we heard their reflections on the challenges of the pandemic which will surely sound familiar. Pupils spoke of isolation; parents of increased anxiety; and teachers on feeling a lack of agency.

The lessons learnt centred around the theme of communication, and how better (and better thought out) communication flow from policymakers to practitioners, parent/carers and learners will increase resilience in the system. During the work on BRIES, stakeholders quickly drew a direct line between these issues of communication and well-being. Again, anyone familiar with the struggles of our children and young people will immediately recognise the relevance to the English system.

BRIES participants highlighted the essential core elements of effective communication: trust, clarity, accessibility, and transparency. In workshops, we reflected on how well our countries are doing against these parameters. Pupil participants in the project spoke about challenges in communicating immediately with their teachers, as well as finding it difficult to access support from experts. Granted, these challenges were exacerbated by the pandemic and the lockdown, but certainly retain a relevance for disabled children and young people and those with SEN.

The lessons of the pandemic were translated into four ambitions:

1. Providing safe and secure psycho-social learning environments
2. Being able to act proactively, feeling prepared for psycho-social emergencies
3. Creating supportive links in the community around learners and families
4. Using effective communication to address the needs of all learners

BRIES provides a guidance for policymakers to work towards these ambitions including a self-audit tool related to ambition 4 (listed above) which enables an assessment of the criteria mentioned earlier (trust, clarity, accessibility and transparency). The resource is well worth a look: like many helpful tools, it is simple, uncluttered and intuitive. The guidance, a literature review, and a nice infographic are all available here.

The conference ended with a tour of the beautiful old town of Tallinn and a visit to a music and ballet school, from where we descended on Teachers' House for dinner and entertainment, which included music played by young performers and ended with a disco (!) DJ'd by two young boys. Fair to say some otherwise very serious educational professionals let their hair down...

Hüvasti from Tallinn.

Council for Disabled Children: National Standards Inclusive Mainstream Survey

The Council for Disabled Children have been commissioned through the Strategic Reform Partner contract to support the Department for Education with the development of National Standards by providing examples of best practice where mainstream education settings are delivering high quality provision to support children with SEND and/or examples of high-quality effective SEND provision that is available locally (not by schools) and set out in the local offer.

We have put together a survey, with the aim that the responses will help us gain further understanding of the ways in which support is provided to children and young people with SEND and how to best maximise this support. We are particularly interested in how local authority teams are supporting school settings who have children or young people with SEND.

Please complete the survey here.

The survey is anonymous and should not take more than 10 minutes depending on the amount of detail you share. The deadline to complete the survey is the 9th of August 2024.

For any questions or queries, please contact the CDC team (cdc@ncb.org.uk)

Council for Disabled Children: Making Participation Work Practitioners' Conference

As part of the Department for Education funded Making Participation Work programme, we deliver three national conferences a year. These conferences are aimed at professionals and practitioners designing and delivering participation and co-production work at a strategic level across the services children and young people rely on: health, education, and social care.

We delivered the first conference of the year in April, with a focus on sharing experiences of widening participation opportunities to include more diverse and seldom heard voices in our work. We invited youth groups leaders, participation practitioners, and local authority representatives (among others) to share their experiences of addressing barriers to participation and developing sustainable and inclusive engagement work.

The event included presentations on innovative engagement models to address barriers to strategic participation amongst certain groups, approaches to engaging young people with severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities in policy influencing, and developing opportunities for disabled young people and those with special educational needs to create change at local and national levels. Presentations were followed by breakout rooms discussions where delegates shared their experiences of and reflections on the conferences' themes: widening opportunities, addressing barriers, including diverse and seldom heard voices, and maximizing sustainability and longevity in participation and co-production work.

Feedback from delegates included:

- *"The event attracted a wide range of professionals with some really diverse experiences. It was good to hear some shared struggles as well as some positive ways forward."*
- *"I thought it was a really excellent event. It was great to hear about other participation projects from around the country and to have the opportunity to share ideas and practice."*
- *"Very relevant to the work I'm doing and useful to hear about current examples and challenges."*

If you would like to receive updates on our future events, please register for the Making Ourselves Heard Forum here.

Council for Disabled Children Resources

Using a needs-led eligibility framework to provide services to disabled children and their families – strategic briefing

The Council for Disabled Children and Research in Practice have co-published a new resource which explores the challenges faced by disabled children and families when requesting support. This strategic briefing reports on work undertaken by CDC and provides information about how a needs-led framework for assessment within children's social care can inform a lawful and transparent needs-led approach to assessing and providing services to disabled children and their families.

You can read the briefing here.

Short Breaks Innovation Fund Year Two – Learning Examples

The Department for Education's Short Breaks Innovation Fund consists of £30 million designed to support local authorities to establish new Short Breaks services via innovative projects.

This three-year programme (2022–2025) is helping to improve health, education and well-being outcomes for disabled children and young people and children and young people with special educational needs and their families.

The Council for Disabled Children has collaborated with three more local areas from year two of the Short Breaks Innovation Fund programme to complete our series of learning examples. These examples set out how local authorities have worked with their partners to plan and implement innovative short breaks provision. They showcase the difference their projects are making to the lives and outcomes of children and young people.

The learning examples in this series include:

- A project focused on improving school attendance and emotional wellbeing and reducing behaviours of concern through 1:1 and small group support.
- A short breaks hub incorporating community-based care and links with multidisciplinary short breaks residential team.

You can view all of the learning examples here.

Council for Disabled Children: Shining the Spotlight on the National Portage Association

We are really proud of our members and will jump at every chance to shout about them and their achievements! This is a dedicated place to showcase our members and to shine the spotlight on their projects. Keep scrolling to hear from our member the National Portage Association.

How it works

The National Portage Association (NPA) is a charity which provides a quality framework and training for portage services across England and Wales; supporting Portage services, Portage Practitioners and parents.

Portage is a home visiting, pre-school education service supporting young disabled children in the family home and learning environment. It is a model of support for children and families and the Portage principles can be adapted and used effectively both in the home and in early years and school settings.

In 2023 the National Portage Association celebrated 40 years in England. Portage has been established in the UK since 1976 and the NPA was formed in 1983. Currently the NPA works with over 100 Portage services across England and Wales. In addition to the home visits, many Portage services offer a range of groups and activities in their local areas.

Portage services are required to meet a set criteria and register with the NPA in order to ensure quality of intervention and consistency across services.

What has been achieved?

The National Portage Association 2023 Impact Report concludes the below:

- Parents highly value the support and intervention provided by the Portage service & would recommend it to other parents.
- Portage plays a fundamental role in the early identification and early intervention of needs for children.
- Portage interventions increases a parents' understanding of their child's needs both now and for the future.
- Portage provides young children with the Right Support, in the Right Place and at the Right Time.
- Portage empowers parents and carers and plays an important role in supporting parental mental health and wellbeing.
- Portage creates a holistic package of support for child and family and encompasses the needs of the whole family.
- Portage plays a large part in ensuring parents are linked in to the appropriate services, support and interventions.

For many, the service makes a life changing difference to family life and the child. Key value drivers across Portage services are the high quality/ specialist staff, expert advice and safe environment that leads to tangible results in child development. The feedback from parents/ carers who have received Portage sessions for their child is hugely positive:

"I feel less isolated and have more 'choice' and 'control' with my child's education and learning and a better understanding of my child's learning and development."

"Portage is amazing! We couldn't be more grateful for the knowledge and support it has given us."

"Having been under Portage since my son was nearly 2, they have been absolutely amazing and gone above and beyond. I truly can't be more thankful to our Portage worker – she is the best. She is also now working with my daughter too and again has been amazing we are so very lucky to have Portage."

"They set realistic goals, our Portage worker was very easy to talk to and we really enjoyed the sessions."

"Our Portage worker is fantastic. Our child has gone from strength to strength with his play, speech and understanding since he has been having sessions with Portage. He is unable to go to nursery and Portage has been an amazing substitute we couldn't be without."

More information

Website: https://www.portage.org.uk

Twitter: Portage_uk

Facebook: NationalPortageAssociation

Instagram: nationalportageassociation

Email: info@portage.org.uk

Council for Disabled Children: Apply for CDC Membership

At CDC we know that we are stronger and have a bigger voice if we are together. The CDC membership is a collection of over 380 voluntary or community organisations that represent the various facets of the SEND and Alternative Provision sector.

By becoming a member, organisations will have the opportunity to actively participate in shaping policies, sharing best practices, and advocating for positive changes that directly impact the lives of disabled children and young people and those with SEN. CDC membership is free and provides access to a network of over 380 organisations across the sector, as well as resources and opportunities for collaboration and learning.

Benefits of becoming a CDC member include:

- Access to the CDC members online forum which provides the opportunity for peer-to-peer support on challenges and solutions, best practice, and information and resource sharing.
- Networking opportunities to connect with professionals, policymakers, and other organisations in the field.
- Policy Influencing by actively participating in discussions and initiatives aimed at influencing policies.
- Access to a wealth of resources including a monthly newsletter, quarterly digest and news alerts.
- Direct updates from the Department for Education.
- Invitations to join CDC working groups.

To become a CDC member your organisation must be:

- A registered charity or Community Interest Company with a special interest in disabled children and young people and those with SEN, and/or a provider of Alternative Provision;
- Based in England; and
- Committed to the CDC values and our policy on inclusion.

To apply to become a CDC member please click here.

National Children's Bureau: Living Assessments – Online Art Gallery – New theme launched!

The online art gallery is run by the National Children's Bureau and the University of Kent as part of their Living Assessments project in partnership with the University of Cambridge and University of Kent.

This project aims to celebrate the creativity of children and young people with lived experience of social care and/or disability. They are currently collecting submissions around the theme of 'Identity', in whatever the word means to young people who identify as social care experienced and/or as having a disability and are under the age of 25.

You can submit any form of art including, but not limited to, a poem, film, craft, artwork, photography, drama, or spoken word.

A £200 gift voucher will be awarded to the best artwork submission and second and third place will also receive prizes!

Click here to enter a submission or email us at onlinegallery@ncb.org.uk

The competition for this theme will be open until the end of September.

All submissions will be shared on the online gallery – where you can also view the entries for the first round of this competition on the theme of 'Home?'.

National Children's Bureau: Living Assessments theatre workshops – recruiting now!

The National Children's Bureau and the University of Kent are partnering with Chickenshed Theatre to run a series of theatre workshops and monologue performances involving disabled children and young people, and those with experience of social care or the immigration system.

The workshops will explore a series of topics including mental health, children's social care, insecure immigration status and more. They will encourage participants to think about and, if comfortable, share their own lived experiences in a creative way. A final performance is planned for early 2025.

Recruitment is currently open, and disabled children and young people (under 25 years old), with experience of children's social care and those with experience of the UK immigration system are encouraged to apply.

If you or anyone you know would like to apply, please complete this form.

Contact: School transport issues for disabled young people

Contact's education helpline has seen an increase in enquiries about school transport for young disabled people aged 16 and over. The charity is hearing from more families whose child's transport has been denied or they are being charged increased costs for it. Many councils use their discretion to fund transport for disabled young people, aged 16 and over, despite there being no legal requirement under transport law to do so. But as their budgets have come under increasing pressure they are looking at where they can cut.

Channel 4 News have investigated the post-16 transport issue in this film featuring Contact's CEO, Anna Bird, and families the charity support.

In Birmingham, for example, some families have received a bus pass in place of their young person's usual school transport arrangements. While some disabled young people can travel independently, many can't.

Anna Bird said: "*Families of disabled young people in Birmingham rightly feel worried and angry at having received school bus passes in place of their teenager's usual school transport package. Disabled children and young people are more likely to travel further to school or college and, unlike their non-disabled teens, many can't use public transport when they turn 16. Being offered unsuitable alternatives when it is not always appropriate could put them at risk.*

"We really don't want to see parents having to give up or reduce hours of work and disabled youngsters not completing their education or training because their transport needs have not been met. School transport is often the difference between coping and crisis for families with disabled children. But through our helpline we know that families in Birmingham are not alone in facing transport difficulties."

Contact has also wants to find out more about how many disabled young people are affected by changes or cuts to their transport to and from education once they turn 16. Please answer some questions on post 16 school transport to help. You can find information on the rules around school transport including how to challenge a decision on Contact's school transport web pages. Find out more about Contact's school transport campaign.

Disabled Children's Partnership: New report "This is my life: Hear me, help me"

The Disabled Children's Partnership have published a new report which reveals that inadequate support services for disabled young people across England are denying them the right to a happy and fulfilling life and threatening the future they deserve. To understand the views of disabled young people the DCP conducted an online survey between December 2023 and January 2024 with 640 disabled young people, aged 11–25 years taking part.

The results paint a concerning picture, showing that only one in five feels that they have the right amount of formal support to achieve the things that they want in life. Satisfaction with levels of support appears to decline as children get older with only 17% of 19–25-year-olds happy with support levels, compared to 29% in 11–15-year-olds.

The research featured in an episode of FYI, the weekly news show for young people on Sky Kids and Sky News. The powerful episode focused on disabled young people who talked directly about their lives and the challenges they face.

You can read the full report here.

You can read the easy read report here.

Kids: New report "On the Cliff Edge" Disabled young people and their journey to adulthood

Kids have released their latest report, which documents the experience of young people with SEND as they move from childhood into adulthood, and makes recommendations for urgent improvements to an entirely broken system.

The existing challenges faced by young people with SEND are further exacerbated by a profoundly inadequate system of transition support in England. The cliff edge depicts how the support system is leaving too many young people with SEND and their parents on the precipice.

The new report documents wide-ranging experiences of young people with SEND including young people left without any support for two years before they could access adults' services and cases of young people, especially those with the more complex needs, who are excluded from society.

You can read the full report here.

You can read the summary report here.

Starlight: New report "Vaccine Project 2024"

Starlight is the UK's leading charity for children's play in hospitals and hospices. Evidence shows that play has the power to reduce fear, pain and trauma during treatment and recovery from illness – boosting mental and physical health and resilience. We work to ensure every child has the opportunity, space and time to experience play. We also undertake research and campaign to ensure children's right to play is protected and provided for. They are also members of the Council for Disabled Children, aligned in the purpose to support best possible conditions for childhoods.

NHS North-East London is an NHS England partner overseeing the COVID-19 vaccination programme. With a priority to co-design approaches to reducing health inequalities and increasing vaccination uptake amongst ethnic minority groups, faith groups and specific locations. During the 2023/24 Autumn/Winter campaign, NHS North-East London built on the learning from a previous project with Starlight looking at a play-based approach to increase uptake. Starlight provided advice, training, and activities.

Using health playworkers, play resources, and environmental modification, community sites were transformed into playful places, taking on the feel of playgrounds. Babies, children and young people, staff, volunteers reported positive experiences in this pilot.

This piece of work was undertaken as a small-scale pilot across 6 sites in the North East London area. In advance of delivery, Starlight presented at a webinar which was recorded and made available to staff. The approach and offer were set out and there were opportunities to discuss and ask questions/make suggestions.

Read the report from the project here.

Together for Short Lives: New report "Short Lives Can't Wait" Children's Hospice Funding in 2024

Together for Short Lives has published a new report which finds that lifeline children's hospice services will be cut if the next UK government fails to maintain the £25m ringfenced NHS fund.

If NHS England's ringfenced funding for children's hospices is not renewed:

- 82% would cut or stop providing respite care or short breaks
- 45% would cut end of life care
- 64% would cut or stop providing hospice at home services

The leading children's palliative care charity Together for Short Lives is urging parties contesting the general election to protect this lifeline funding.

You can help by signing the open letter via this link.

You can read the report here.

SEN Magazine: Joe Fautley – project assistant at the Council for Disabled Children features in recent issue

In this article, Joe Fautley, who works as Project Coordinator in the Systems Improvement Team at the Council for Disabled Children, writes openly about his personal experiences as an Autistic person and provides key advice for teachers and other education professionals to help them develop how they support Autistic pupils in schools and other education settings. In summary, Joe writes that it's helpful to view the Autism Spectrum through understanding and using language, thinking flexibly, understanding and getting on with others, and sensory processing. He states it's essential that staff have the tools to ensure all autistic people are supported throughout their education. Joe provides more detail about four key areas of advice for teachers to consider when supporting Autistic pupils.

You can read Joe's article here.

The INTERACT Trial

The INTERACT trial is a research project exploring how Intensive Interaction can be used to support children and young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD).

The research is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and is being delivered by a collaborative group of researchers at University of Kent, University of York, University of Sheffield, Newcastle University, and Bangor University. The researchers are also working closely with charitable organisations including the Council for Disabled Children and PAMIS.

The trial team are currently looking for settings to take part during the academic year 2024/2025. They are aiming to recruit SEND settings or mainstream settings with SEND units in Great Britain which have at least 5 children/young people aged 3–25 with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD). In order to be eligible, staff must not have been formally trained in Intensive Interaction within the last 12 months.

All participating settings will receive £350.

Settings can check if they are eligible to participate and register their interest on the official website here: www.interacttrial.com.

You can also find them on X (formerly Twitter) @interacttrial. Please note that registering your interest at this stage in no way obligates you to take part in the research.

If you register your interest and your setting is eligible to take part, you will be invited to attend an online recruitment information session to learn more about the study and ask any questions. There is also a pre-recorded recruitment information session available to view on the website.

If you have any questions about the trial, please email ytu-interact@york.ac.uk or call 01904 325157.

About the digest

The CDC Digest is a quarterly round-up of all the essential policy, practice and other news involving disabled children and young people, and their families.

If you would like to be added to the list to receive this digest, please visit our website and tick 'CDC Digest'

About CDC

The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) is the umbrella body for the disabled children's sector in England, with links to other UK nations. We are the only national body that brings together the diverse range of organisations that work with and for disabled children to support the development and implementation of policy and practice. Our work impacts on over 800,000 disabled children and their families. CDC hosts Making Ourselves Heard, the IASS Network, the Special Educational Consortium and the Transition Information Network.

Find out more

councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk

facebook.com/councilfordisabledchildren

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linkedin.com/company/council-for-disabled-children/

INFORMATION, ADVICE & SUPPORT SERVICES NETWORK

TRANSITION INFORMATION NETWORK

MAKING OURSELVES HEARD

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL CONSORTIUM

COUNCIL FOR DISABLED CHILDREN
Part of the family

COUNCIL FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

United for disabled children

The Council for Disabled Children brings people and organisations together to drive change in society and deliver a better childhood for disabled children the UK. We interrogate policy, uncover evidence and develop more effective ways of supporting disabled children and their families. Together with National Children's Bureau we are united for a better childhood.

Let's work together: 020 7843 6000 | cdc@ncb.org.uk

London: 23 Mentmore Terrace, London, E8 3PN

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NATIONAL CHILDREN'S BUREAU