

REPORT

To: SOCIAL WORK (OPERATIONS AND SERVICES) SUB COMMITTEE		Subject: CHANGING CHILDHOODS?: THE SAME AS YOU? REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION GROUP (SAYIG)	
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK			
Date: 3 OCTOBER 2006	Ref: JD/KMcl/JH		

1. Purpose of Report/Introduction

To advise committee of the content of the report "Changing Childhoods: The Same as You?" commissioned by the Scottish Executive.

2. Background

- 2.1 The review of services for people with learning disabilities (The Same as You?) was published by the Scottish Executive in May 2000. The report set a clear strategic direction in developing support and opportunities for people with learning disabilities based on social inclusion principles.
- 2.2 "The Same as You?" was targeted at the delivery of services to adults with learning disabilities. It contained 29 recommendations which required all agencies to action eg in developing employment opportunities, supported living services etc.
- 2.3 "*Changing Childhoods?*" was published in April 2006, and was completed by the National Implementation Group for "The Same as You?" (SAYIG).
- 2.4 "Changing Childhoods?" aims to highlight how the same social inclusion principles can be applied to all services for children with learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders.

3. Proposals / Considerations

- 3.1 The report outlines the current experience of being a child / young person with a learning disability in Scotland. It also highlights the changing expectations of these children / young people and their families.
- 3.2 It summaries policy initiatives and good practice opportunities that exist in Scotland, to ensure that more young people with learning disabilities get the chance to fully contribute in the life of scottish communities.
- 3.3 While the report does not add to the 29 recommendations contained within "The Same as You?" suggestions for good practice are contained at the end of each section.
- 3.4 The report's content is set in the context of support for the social model of disability i.e. that disability arises mainly from barriers created due the way society is organised rather than an individual's physical impairment.

- 3.5 Emphasis is given to the view that all policy and legislation, including the principles outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, is equally relevant to children with learning disabilities.
- 3.6 The report identifies the needs of disabled children and their families at various stages through the child's life : pre-school years, school years and preparing for adulthood.
- 3.7 The report emphasises that the most important rights for a disabled child are to have an appropriate education and to be fully integrated into the community. The report also identifies some of the barriers to school years being a positive experience to disabled children including :
- Lack of partnership working
 - Problems in funding responses to the presumption of inclusion
 - The lack of focus on the young persons abilities instead of their disabilities
- 3.8 Best practice is outlined as :

Pre-school years

- At this stage parents require :
 - information about practical help and emotional support.
 - access to advice, child care etc
 - therapy services
 - programmes to assist in how best to help each child develop
 - advice and options for pre-school and primary education
- The report also recognises the importance of play as a fundamental part of a child's development. All too often disabled children are denied these opportunities, further excluding and disabling them from society

School years

- The national priorities for education are described as :
 - achievement and attainment
 - framework for learning
 - values and citizenship
 - learning for life
- The report outlines that appropriate support needs to be available to allow parents to make informed choices as to their child's educational placement i.e. mainstream versus specialist.
- Disabled children often face the transition to secondary school alone rather than with their peers. For this process to succeed requires good communication, planning and support structures in and beyond school.

Preparing for adulthood

- The report outlines how the aspirations of disabled young people are similar to those of every young person. Moving on from school is the most crucial period in determining the young person's future but is often described as the most difficult for families.

- Often assumptions are made that the young person will not be able to take up employment, yet most disabled young people indicate a desire to be in employment.
- Finding out what the young person wants is paramount. To maximise the chances of a successful transition to adult life, strong inter-agency working is required to deliver the plan and supports that are necessary.

3.9 The report concludes by emphasising the need for agencies to work together to ensure that the implementation of "The Same as You?" addresses the need for children with learning disabilities, and with autism spectrum disorder, to lead ordinary lives.

4. Financial / Personnel / Legal / Policy Implications

4.1 The report does not set out specific financial implications, however it indicates that adequate resources are required in various areas of service delivery for to ensure that appropriate supports are in place for children / young people with disabilities and their families.

5. Recommendation

5.1 Committee is asked to :

- (i) note the contents of the report


Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
6 September 2006

For further information on this report please contact Susan Taylor, Manager Children Families and Justice on telephone 01698 332032 or Keith McIntyre, Senior Child Care Officer, Children and Families on telephone 01698 332673