

Disabled Children's Manifesto for Change Every Disabled Child Matters Policy Recommendations

Summary

Disabled children and young people have made their priorities for the next election clear in the Disabled Children's Manifesto for Change. The Every Disabled Child Matters campaign has put together this paper to recommend policies that your party might create to address these priorities.

Disabled children have set the following challenge to the next Government:

- Make people understand and **respect** disabled young people and children.
- Support us to take part in our **communities**, doing the things that all other children and young people do.
- Make a **commitment** that you will make sure the services we use can support us to live ordinary lives.
- Help us to get the **education, jobs and training** we want.

Every Disabled Child Matters priority recommendations

Party Election Manifesto Commitment: Every political party should include a commitment in their party manifesto to 'ensure that services meet the additional needs of disabled children and their families'.

This should include specific commitments to:

- Sustain investment in improving services that meet the additional needs of disabled children and their families
- Improve social mobility for disabled children and their families
- Embed the rights of disabled children in policy and legislation

Respect: The next government must ensure that health, education, leisure and social care professionals receive training on working with disabled children and young people. We also want the forthcoming Equality Bill to put pressure on public bodies to address discrimination against disabled children and young people.

Community: The next government has to invest in accessible and inclusive participation structures, so that disabled children and young people can enjoy the same opportunities as their peers. We want forums for disabled children and young people to influence issues around disability.

Education and training: The next government needs to push schools, colleges and apprenticeship schemes to promote opportunities for disabled children and young people. By doing this the disproportionate number of disabled young people who are NEET will be addressed.

Recommendations in detail

Respect

Attitudes

Disabled children asked you:

- We want the next Government to make sure all disabled people are full members of society and can take part alongside everyone else.
- We want the next Government to ensure services promote equality for disabled children and young people.
- We want policies and laws to include disabled children and young people, so they can do the same things as other people.

Every Disabled Child Matters recommendations

All parties should commit to embedding the rights of disabled children and their families throughout all relevant Government policy and legislation.

The next Government should proactively promote inclusion and equality for disabled children and young people, with a specific focus on ensuring that mainstream services meet their needs. In order to do this, they should commit to ensuring that the forthcoming Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies to provide specific information on how they are proactively addressing discrimination against disabled children and young people.

The next government must require sector skills agencies to ensure that early years and childcare, education, health, welfare and social care professionals receive training, and are continually assessed, on the way they work with disabled children and young people and the way they proactively promote an inclusive approach to the services they deliver.

We would welcome commitments to ensure that sector skills agencies develop common core competency frameworks and that every statutory Children's Trust Board will be required to use when creating a joint training strategy.

Bullying

Disabled children asked you:

- We want the next Government to stop the bullying of disabled children and young people in schools and where we live.
- What will you and your party do to make sure local authorities and children's trusts stop bullying in their area?

Every Disabled Child Matters recommendations

All parties should ensure that the specific needs of disabled children are overtly addressed by any anti-bullying policies, both in school and outside of school.

The next Government should ensure that all professionals working with children have disability awareness training in order to help them to prevent and address disablist bullying, and to ensure that should disabled children display bullying behaviour, they have appropriate skills and a range of options available rather than automatically punitive solutions.

They should also ensure that local services, both in school and outside of school, are required to involve disabled children with a range of impairments in developing anti-bullying policies.

We support the recommendations made by Mencap's *Don't stick it, stop it!* campaign:

- The government should ensure guidance on bullying of children with SEN and disabilities is promoted and disseminated to all schools.
- Local authorities and children's trusts should work with school clusters to address bullying in extended school activities and in the community.

Doing things on my own

Disabled children asked you:

- We want the next Government to make sure we have the right support so that we can do things independently – like other young people.
- What will you and your party do to make sure we can live independent lives?

Every Disabled Child Matters recommendations

All parties should commit to sustaining investment in services that support independent activities for disabled children.

The next Government should require statutory Children's Trust Boards to demonstrate a joined up approach to promoting the independence of disabled children in their Children and Young People's Plan through all children's services, including play and leisure, short breaks, education and training, and extended schools.

The next Government should sustain investment in creating a market place of social care providers that offer flexible and appropriate services to provide a range of activities for disabled children and young people. This should include a wide range of services including buddying and befriending schemes.

They should ensure that guidance to local areas on responding to their duty to provide short breaks for parents should provide disabled children and young people with opportunities to enjoy independent activities.

They should ensure that education settings and extended schools to provide opportunities to prepare for independent living. These should include:

- Support to access universal activities and participate in their design and development
- Support for parents to help them to support their children to be independent
- Peer support, e.g. buddying and befriending
- Independence skills training

They should ensure that the practice of listening to the experience and aspirations of young disabled people and their families is entrenched in the transition to adulthood process in order to promote opportunities for independent living.

Community

Participation

Disabled children asked you:

- We want the next Government to invest in resources so that we can have our say in the services that we use.
- What will you and your party do to make sure there are ways for us to have a say about the issues that affect us?
- What will you and your party do to make sure we are included in all youth services?

Every Disabled Child Matters recommendations

All parties should commit to supporting disabled children and young people to influence the issues that effect them, both in terms of the services they use and in terms of their wider interests as young people.

Participation in positive activities is important and provides all children and young people with significant benefits, including the opportunity to improve their personal and social development, make a contribution to society and accessing opportunities to enjoy themselves. As this is equally as important for disabled young people, the next government should ensure that National Indicator 110 requires local authorities to monitor and report on disabled young people's participation in positive activities.

The next government should invest in accessible and inclusive participation structures, so that disabled children and young people can enjoy the same opportunities as their peers. In order to achieve this, local areas should use a range of proactive approaches, including:

- Disability awareness / communication etc. training to universal participation structures
- Bridging workers to support disabled children and young people to access the universal participation structures.
- Forums for disabled young people to educate wider participation structures on how to include them e.g. as a 'sub-group' of a young person's forum

In addition to this, disabled children and young people should have the opportunity to take part in forums to influence issues around disability, similar to the 'parents forums' introduced by Aiming High for Disabled Children.

Having things to do outside school

Disabled children asked you:

- We want the next Government to make sure we have better places to go and more things to do, including play and positive activities.
- What will you and your party do to make sure we can take part in activities with other young people?
- What will you and your party do to make sure the people who work with us understand us properly and help us to do the things we want to?

Every Disabled Child Matters recommendations

All parties should commit to ensuring that play and youth strategies deliver for disabled children.

EDCM recommends that the next Government carries out an evaluation of the work of the Play Strategy to assess whether the explicit commitment that all play provision must be fully inclusive and accessible for all disabled children and young people has been delivered. Should this evaluation establish that barriers remain to accessing play provision, providers should be held to account.

In addition to this, an evaluation of MyPlace should be conducted to establish how disabled children and young people been involved in decision making about these projects, distribution of funding, design, delivery and evaluation.

Transport

Disabled children asked you:

- We want the next Government to make sure we can use public transport safely and easily.
- What will you and your party do to make sure we can get travel training so we can travel on our own?
- What will you and your party do to make sure all public transport staff understand us and can help us?

Every Disabled Child Matters recommendations

All parties should commit to creating an inclusive public transport system for disabled children and their families.

This should proactively address provision of accessible travel for disabled young people, training for public transport staff and travel training for disabled young people.

The next Government should require the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Transport to create a joint strategy to remove barriers to public transport for disabled children and their families.

This strategy should include measures to ensure that local authority transport plans demonstrate how local authorities will work with transport providers to improve accessibility of transport for extended school activities and other play and youth services, through:

- Disability equality training for all public transport staff
- Work with school clusters to promote travel training for all children and young people to support them to access local activities independently.
- A consistent policy, applied across all public transport, that anyone accompanying a disabled child or young person in the capacity of carer, short break worker or personal assistant should travel free.

Commitment

Health

Disabled children asked you:

- We want the next Government to make sure we have better experiences of health services.
- What will you and your party do to make sure health staff can communicate properly with us about our health needs, and involve us in decisions about our health care?
- What will you and your party do to make sure we can use an advocate when we need to?

Every Disabled Child Matters recommendations

All parties should pledge to ensure that disabled children receive the health services they need in terms of access to universal care, access to specialist and targeted services and addressing the needs of those with complex and/or palliative care needs.

The next Government should make sure that every PCT has a named lead at a strategic level to take responsibility for improving services for disabled children.

They should ensure that all staff working with children receive appropriate training in disability equality and the need to make reasonable adjustments, appropriate communication with disabled children and their parents about their basic needs and the need to involve disabled children in decisions about their care.

Housing

Disabled children asked you:

- We want the next Government to make housing a priority for us.
- What will you and your party do to make sure we can live in decent houses with our families?
- What will you and your party do to make sure we can live in houses that help us to be independent and safe?

Every Disabled Child Matters recommendations

All parties should pledge to address the negative effect of poor housing on families with disabled children.

The next Government should develop a joint strategy between the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Department of Health and the Department for Communities and Local Government to ensure that all national and local housing strategies proactively address the needs of disabled children and families and support disabled young people to lead independent lives.

The next Government should require Government Offices to ensure that all English regions consider the housing needs of families with disabled children in their housing strategies, and require local authorities to identify a named senior officer with planning responsibility for disabled children's housing needs. This senior officer should have a duty to promote opportunities for independent living for disabled young people.

Education and training

Disabled children asked you:

- We want the next Government to make sure we get a good education and have our needs met in school.
- What will you and your party do to make sure we get the help that we need in schools automatically, without being excluded?
- What will you and your party do to make sure schools and colleges are positive about disability and Special Educational Needs?

Every Disabled Child Matters recommendations

All parties should pledge to ensure that disabled children and those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) get a good education and have their needs met in school.

The next Government should commit to ensuring that no child with a known disability or SEN is permanently excluded from school until a review has been undertaken of whether those additional needs have been met and how this affected their behaviour.

All parties should commit to supporting and extending the way schools are specifically held accountable for disabled children and those with SEN including: through the new responsibilities to be placed on Ofsted; the development of the School Report Card; and in the work of school improvement partners.

All parties should commit to developing a core offer in education - such as that developed through the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme - that includes a guarantee of information and transparency from schools. The statutory assessment process, often viewed by parents as the only way to ensure that a child will get adequate support, will be less attractive if parents are clearly told what rights their child has and what resources schools can provide out of their own budgets.

The next Government should commit to providing disabled young people with training to address preparation for all aspects of work, including finding work, getting to work (transport), rights in relation to benefits, reasonable adjustments and access to work arrangements.

All parties should commit to ensuring that apprenticeships are fully accessible to young people with disabilities and SEN, including those who find it difficult to attain literacy and numeracy qualifications but are more than capable of making a positive contribution to an employer.

Respond to Every Disabled Child Matters

Disabled children and young people have asked that you respond to the questions they put to you in the Disabled Children's Manifesto for Change. We have provided these policy recommendations in order to support this response, and would value your views on whether your party would adopt these policies. We would be very happy to arrange a meeting to discuss the recommendations further.

For more information or to arrange a meeting to discuss these recommendations please contact Laura Courtney, Campaign Manager on:

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Download copies of the Disabled Children's Manifesto for Change at:
www.edcm.org.uk/dcmanifesto