

*disabled*  
Every Child Matters

# Going places!

Ensuring the play and youth strategies  
deliver for disabled children and  
young people





## About us

**Every Disabled Child Matters (EDCM) is the campaign to get rights and justice for disabled children, young people, and their families.**

EDCM campaigns about the issues that disabled children, young people and their families tell us are important to them.

EDCM supports every child's right to be included in every aspect of society. Disabled children should not have to ask or fight to be included in the things that other children do. Inclusion is a right in UK law (the Disability Discrimination Acts) and international law (UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). See EDCM's inclusion charter: [www.edcm.org.uk/inclusioncharter](http://www.edcm.org.uk/inclusioncharter)

Throughout this briefing we use the words 'disabled children and young people' to describe children and young people with a range of physical, learning, behavioural, sensory and communication needs, or complex health needs.

This briefing was written in partnership with Making Ourselves Heard, the project to ensure disabled children's right to be heard becomes a reality. To find out more visit [www.ncb.org.uk/cdc\\_moh](http://www.ncb.org.uk/cdc_moh)

**Thank you** to all the children and young people who talked to us about what good places to go and things to do look like for them. Particular thanks go to young people from the **Out and About group** in Ipswich, and the **KIDS Hayward Centre** in Islington.

Where quotes have no name next to them this is because the young person did not give us their name.





# Introduction

In summer 2007 EDCM asked disabled children and young people this question:  
**“If you were Prime Minister for the day and could change one thing, what would it be?”**

The top answer was to ‘have more fun things to do’ – just like other young people.

Then, in summer 2008, we asked disabled children and young people this question:  
**“What would more fun things to do and places to go look like for you?”**

This booklet sets out their answers, and makes recommendations about what needs to happen to ensure all disabled children and young people have the opportunity to be ‘going places’!

This government has committed to improving access to play and positive activities for all children and young people through the ‘Ten Year Youth Strategy’<sup>1</sup>, the ‘Children’s Plan’<sup>2</sup>, and ‘Fair play: a consultation on the play strategy’<sup>3</sup>. The Children’s Plan states a clear ambition for ‘all young people to enjoy happy, healthy and safe teenage years and to be prepared for adult life.’ We emphasise that this has to mean all young people, including disabled young people.

Disabled children and young people have the same right to benefit from these mainstream proposals as all other children, and we welcome government’s recognition of this.

‘Aiming High for Disabled Children’<sup>4</sup> includes funding to provide short breaks for children and young people with complex needs. It is crucial that short breaks are seen as additional to the strategy for improving all disabled young people’s access to positive activities.

Disabled children and young people want to do the same things and go to the same places as other children and young people.

“I like going out with my friends, I go out for meals, I go to the cinema, I just meet up with my friends.”

“Watch football, listen to music, relax, play PlayStation, Wii and socialising.”

<sup>1</sup> Available from [www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/tenyearyouthstrategy/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/tenyearyouthstrategy/)

<sup>2</sup> Available from [www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/)

<sup>3</sup> Available from [www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/fairplay/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/fairplay/)

<sup>4</sup> Find out more about Aiming High for Disabled Children at [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ahdc](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ahdc)



However, disabled children and young people currently face major barriers that stop them accessing positive activities. The top things they told us would allow them to get involved in these activities are:

- **better attitudes** to disabled young people from staff and other young people
- play and youth activities that are welcoming and **easier to access**
- accessible and affordable **transport**.

**This briefing includes young people's views and our recommendations for positive change. We urge central and local government to implement our recommendations to ensure that all young people get their chance to be going places.**



### **EDCM priority recommendations**

- Government guidance on play and positive activities must highlight the needs of disabled children and young people, and send a clear message that they must be met.
- Local authorities must ensure the services they provide or fund promote disability equality, including training all staff working with children and young people in disability equality.
- All new projects funded by the play strategy and MyPlace must show how disabled children, young people and their carers have been included in decisions about their development.





# Improving participation

**Disabled children and young people, like all children and young people, know what they enjoy and what they don't. A thread running through young people's views on attitudes, access and transport, is that decision makers would get better results by involving disabled young people in the design of places and activities.**

As one young person told us:

*'You can find out what's best for us by involving us.'*

Decision makers must listen to disabled young people, and involve them in local decisions, to make sure that all children and young people benefit from better things to do and places to go.



## The legal and policy context

The youth strategy emphasises that 'giving young people genuine influence over local services is the most effective way of ensuring better access and increasing participation.'

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all children have the right to have their opinions taken into account on decisions that affect them.

The Children Act 2004 requires local authorities to consult with children and young people in the development of their Children and Young People's Plans.



### **EDCM recommendations on participation:**

- National and regional government must support and challenge local authorities to include disabled children and young people in decisions about service planning, including providing advocates for young people who require support to make their views known.
- All new projects funded by the play strategy and MyPlace must show how disabled children, young people and their carers have been included in decisions about their development.



# Improving attitudes

**Disabled children and young people told us that other people's attitudes are a big problem and stop them enjoying play opportunities and activities for young people. This includes the attitudes of staff as well as those of other adults and young people.**

"Sometimes feel I am a nuisance."

Darius

"They either didn't include me or when they did include me they had to make a big deal out of it afterwards."

Evie

"Sometimes (staff) are not very helpful. If you're struggling with stuff they can seem to rush you. It just seems like it's a bother to help us when it shouldn't be."

Kim

**Positive and negative attitudes have an impact on children and young people's enjoyment of the places they want to go.**

"I don't want to feel like I'm a nuisance or somebody different. I just want to do everything that everyone else does."

Claire

"I went to Orlando and the buses were really nice. They wouldn't let anyone else get on the bus until they had harnessed you in. They just did it automatically, you didn't have to ask."

Rebecca, 15

**Disabled young people want everyone to have a better understanding of different disabilities and had clear ideas about how to help change people's attitudes.**

"They need more programmes with young physically disabled people... and learning disabilities... it needs disability to be out on prime time television."

Jared

"I think we should have disability awareness training for schools."

Rebecca

**Young people told us it would help if staff were prepared for people with different needs, and offered support instead of waiting to be asked.**

*"Whenever I go swimming, it really annoys me that I've got to tell people to get the hoist out. I think it should really be out already."*

Claire

## **The legal and policy context**

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 local authorities and all publicly funded services have a duty to promote equality for disabled people. This includes eliminating harassment and promoting positive attitudes towards disabled children and young people.

A key aim within the Ten Year Youth Strategy is to 'foster more positive perceptions' of young people. It is essential that this include promoting positive attitudes towards disabled young people.



### **EDCM recommendations on improving attitudes**

- Local authorities must ensure the services they provide or fund promote disability equality, including training all staff working with children and young people in disability equality.
- Local authorities' disability equality schemes must demonstrate plans to eliminate harassment and promote positive attitudes to disabled children and young people, and disabled children and young people must be involved in developing these plans.
- Central government must promote disability equality by ensuring the Single Equality Bill builds on current disability rights, retaining the positive duty to promote disability equality.
- Cross sector training for play and youth workers must include an element of disability equality training as standard.



## Improving access

**Disabled children and young people told us that lots of places and activities are hard for them to access, which stops them from doing the things that other children and young people do.**

"My school had a school trip to a theme park and I couldn't go on it... all my friends were talking about it for ages and they're still talking about it now and I always feel left out when everyone is talking about it."

Evie

"I would like to go to the seaside, I love being outside. But I can't because I can't stay long. When I need the loo I have to be hoisted from my chair to be changed. There is nowhere private to do this, I have no portable hoist."

**Inadequate facilities that don't meet their needs make things unnecessarily difficult and mean that young people have to plan far in advance rather than being able to enjoy going places spontaneously.**

"You can't just say, 'Do you want to go shopping?' I have to say, 'Do you want to go shopping next... whenever' I can't just say to my mum, 'I'm going out now' like a normal teenager. I have to say, 'I'm going out on Saturday' so she can help me sort things out."

Bex, 17

"The entrance to the Grand Theatre has good access but when you go into the theatre they put the wheelchairs on one side and you can only see the middle and side of the stage."

Sanah, 11

**Children and young people told us that access is not just about physical adaptations.**

"My brother is profoundly deaf. Lots of places have spoken information that he can't access. They don't even put up a sheet of paper with the spoken things on it, to make sense of the visual things for deaf people. We're fed up of going to places that advertise as being disabled access because they have ramps, but that others can't access."

Maria



**Children told us that not having support to play was a barrier; whether this was family members, friends or play workers.**

*"There are no adults or staff to take me to the playground."*

**Disabled children and young people have clear ideas about what they would like to change to make play and youth activities easier to access.**

*"Supermarkets and sports clubs to use more signs and symbols."*

*"Need volunteers to help with going out in the community."*

*"I think there should be special rides (in theme parks) for wheelchairs that you can get on."*

Dan

## **The legal and policy context**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 is clear that disabled people have the same right to access services and facilities as other people, and that services must make reasonable adjustments to turn this right into a reality.

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all children have the right to play and join in a wide range of activities.





## EDCM recommendations on improving access

- Government guidance on play and positive activities must highlight the needs of disabled children and young people, and send a clear message that they must be met.
- Each area's Children and Young People's Plan must recognise the barriers for disabled children and young people to accessing mainstream play and positive activities, and demonstrate how they will be overcome.
- Central government must ensure that indicators 110 and 199 in the national indicator set specifically measure disabled children and young people's participation in positive activities and views of play spaces respectively.
- All big public places must have Changing Places toilets installed. This includes leisure, shopping centres and arts venues. See **[www.changing-places.org](http://www.changing-places.org)** for guidance on standards.





# Improving transport

**Transport is a major barrier that stops disabled children and young people being able to access play provision and positive activities. As one young person told us:**

"It doesn't matter how good things are, if you can't get there in the first place, what's the point?"

Matthew

**Children and young people highlighted a number of problems with transport, including accessibility, availability, high costs, staff attitudes, lack of accessible information and feeling intimidated by how busy public transport is.**

"Where I live there's only one bus service, and you have to book a week in advance and sometimes they're fully booked."

Rebecca

"When I go on the bus, I would like to get to my seat before the bus moves."

Nana, 13

"One of my brothers is in a chair as well, so if my mum wants to take both of us out or if we both want to go out we can't cos they can't fit two wheelchairs on one bus. If I wanted to go out with (friends) I wouldn't be able to either because of that."

Evie

**Young people had several ideas about what needed to change to improve this.**

"I think with trains, they need to have people at the door that can help when people need help instead of just having someone when you called."

"I think you would have affordable transport... making it accessible, training the drivers so they can appreciate the problems that disabled young people have and making it organised. Timetables can be quite confusing."

Matthew

"Transport should be cheaper for children."





## The policy context

The Ten Year Youth Strategy highlights poor transport as one of the key barriers to young people accessing positive activities. Guidance from the government on improving transport to facilitate access to youth and play services, and guidance on developing local transport plans, is due out in winter 2008. Both sets of guidance should address the specific needs of disabled children and young people.



### EDCM recommendations to improve transport

- Local authority transport plans must demonstrate how local authorities will work with transport providers to improve accessibility of transport for extended school activities and other play and youth services.
- Central government must take steps to ensure all public transport staff have disability equality training.
- Local authorities must 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 must be 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 travels free.





# Improving independence and safety

## Doing things independently

**Disabled children and young people told us it can be difficult to do things independently. They just want the same chance as other young people to do things with their friends and without their parents. A lack of appropriate support or accessible transport often forces them to rely on their parents or other adults to take them places.**

"If you want to go and meet your friends in town but the buses aren't accessible then you won't be able to do it independently. It's good if you can do it independently 'cause you learn independence skills and confidence."

Kim

"On a weekend I'd like to go to the pub... but everywhere you go you've got to go with your parents... I have to rely on my mum to take me everywhere."

Kevin

"Sometimes with school trips I have to take my mum. I'm 18 years old nearly - I don't want to be taking my mum to a school trip."

Rebecca

## Feeling safe

**Disabled children are more likely to be bullied in their communities, which is a major barrier to feeling safe enough to access play or youth opportunities. Many disabled children and young people told us that worries about bullying would prevent them from going to places.**

"When we go out there, we'll get bullied again. Out there as soon as you walk round you'll get bullied."

"I don't like the street, I don't like the park, I don't like the swimming pool because of bullies."





## EDCM recommendations on feeling safe

We support the recommendations made by Mencap's *Don't stick it, stop it!*<sup>5</sup> campaign.

- The government should ensure recent 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.
- Forthcoming government guidance on bullying in the community must address the specific issues faced by disabled children.

<sup>5</sup>Find out more at [www.dontstickit.org.uk](http://www.dontstickit.org.uk)





## So what makes things to do and places to go work better?

**Children and young people told us that they want places where they can go to spend time with their friends, feel included and have a laugh. They want a variety of different things to choose from and to be involved in decisions. Most importantly, they want staff who are understanding and able to offer them the right support, and for other young people to be better educated about disability.**

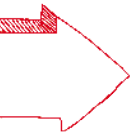
"You would have cooking, you could do arts and crafts there, chat with your friends from other schools."

"Last summer I was involved with a group... they didn't see me in the chair, they saw me as a young person - that's what I wanted them to see me as."

Jared

"When I come here I feel that I don't have a disability. I feel like one of the gang."

Darius



**All children and young people should be able to feel 'like one of the gang'. We urge national and local government – and play and youth settings – to act on our recommendations to ensure that all disabled children and young people get their opportunity to be 'going places'.**



### EDCM priority recommendations

- Government guidance on play and positive activities must highlight the needs of disabled children and young people, and send a clear message that they must be met.
- Local authorities must ensure the services they provide or fund promote disability equality, including training all staff working with children and young people in disability equality.
- All new projects funded by the play strategy and MyPlace must show how disabled children, young people and their carers have been included in decisions about their development.

To see more quotes from disabled children and young people, and their parents and carers, please go to **[www.edcm.org.uk/goingplaces](http://www.edcm.org.uk/goingplaces)**

To see our DVD of disabled young people talking about where they like to go, and some of the barriers they face, go to **[www.edcm.org.uk/goingplaces](http://www.edcm.org.uk/goingplaces)**

For copies of the accessible summary, or the EDCM campaign booklet for young people, please contact us.

### **You can:**

Go to our website: **[www.edcm.org.uk](http://www.edcm.org.uk)**

Email us at **[info@edcm.org.uk](mailto:info@edcm.org.uk)**

Call us on **020 7843 6318**

If you would like this booklet in a different format or language please contact us and we will try to meet your needs.



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