

INCLUDE ME TOO!



Introduction



The National Blind Childrens Society has been awarded a development grant by Futurebuilders England for a feasibility study. This study will explore the opportunities for NBCS and partner voluntary organisations to provide specialist services to Children's Trusts and Local Authorities, for children and young people with visual impairment and their families.

NBCS



NBCS works with a range of other voluntary organisations and with Local Authorities, schools and nurseries to improve the life chances of children and young people with visual impairment and provides these key services:

- Family Support & Information
- Sports, leisure and holiday activities
- ICT assessments and equipment
- Customised large print books
- Specialist advice, training and support for professionals

Developing National VI Educational Advocacy Partnership



NBCS is already working on a national basis with children and families and is taking on a national coordinating role in NEAP (National Educational Advocacy Partnership) and other service initiatives and is increasingly well known and respected by professionals working in the field as well as parents and children.

The core staff have extensive experience in the field and contribute widely to initiatives and working groups, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

With the support of Futurebuilders England, NBCS is in a very strong position to extend it's work with children and families and to develop it's role as a coordinator and 'broker' of services nationally, in partnership with a range of statutory and voluntary organisations.

Methodology



Quantitative and qualitative research involving:

- Children, young people and their families
- Professionals working with them
- Representatives from Local Authority / Children's Trusts
- Representatives from voluntary organisations

Methodology



This was done through:

- Literature review of impact of VI on educational and social inclusion
- Analysis of current legislation, initiatives and research findings
- Analysis of current context including increased delegation to schools
- Focused interviews with children, families and a range of professionals working with them
- Analysis of questionnaires for families
- Analysis of questionnaires for Local Authorities / Children's Trusts
- Analysis of referrals to NBCS
- Comparison with other research carried out by RLSB and SERSEN Partnership

The data and evidence showed



- The need for high quality and specialised support for children and families from the point of diagnosis onwards and into adulthood
- The difficulties experienced by families in finding out about and accessing supportive services
- Parental concern for under-developed independence and social skills and resulting low self esteem and vulnerability
- Difficulties in providing comprehensive services in such a low incidence disability by individual Local Authorities / Children's Trusts in a climate of increased delegation to schools

The data and evidence showed (cont)



- The willingness of Local Authorities / Children's Trusts to work with the voluntary sector to build local capacity, to address gaps in provision and to enable children to achieve full educational social inclusion
- Examples of successful and cost effective partnership working between Local Authorities / Children's Trusts and voluntary sector
- Key areas of potential partnership working includes:
 - family support & information
 - the development of independence and social skills
 - provision of leisure
 - sports and holiday activities
 - mobility training

Some detailed findings



- Nearly 70% of parents were concerned about independence and social skills but only 24% received and direct support in this area. 61% of families did not know where to find this support
- 50% of Local Authorities / Children's Trusts expressed an interest in partnership working on developing independence and social skills with a further 29% interested in mobility training
- 57% of parents were concerned about opportunities for sports, leisure and holiday activities but only 26% received such services
- 67% of Local Authorities were interested in partnership working in this area but 88% felt that funding issues were a major barrier
- Many families needed more than one of the key services from NBCS and often came back again and again for support as the child's needs changed

Some detailed findings (cont)



- Many families felt their children were well supported educationally by their Authority's Visual Impairment Service. They felt that the additional services needed were often outside the remit of 'education' but were not provided by any other Local Authority service
- Nearly 50% of families said they needed family support, advice and information or educational advocacy but only 25% of families received these services
- 50% of Local Authorities / Children's Trusts said they were interested in partnership working in these areas
- 100% of Local Authorities expressed a desire to work in partnership with NBCS and other voluntary organisations

Outcome



The report will form the basis of applications for funding to:

- Develop partnership working with Local Authorities / Children's Trusts by NBCS and partner voluntary organisations, possibly through pilot projects in a range of Children's Trusts in a range of areas of identified need
- To work together to fill gaps in provision and to build local capacity
- To further develop the National VI Educational Advocacy Partnership