



18 April 2005

Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People: Final Report

I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) to the Strategy Unit's invitation to provide feedback on this report. We welcome the opportunity to comment on the Strategy and the proposals for implementation.

The Commission, at its meeting on 13th April 2005, signalled its intention to respond to a number of the recent Government documents, including the Green Paper, "*Independence, Well-being, and Choice*". Each of these documents contributes to the future vision for social care for adults. We will be providing a comprehensive and coherent response to the Green Paper. However, since *Improving the Life Chances for Disabled People* highlights a number of issues for disabled children and their families which do not fall within the scope of the consultation on the social care Green Paper, we are providing this initial feedback to correspond with your deadline which is earlier than that for the Green Paper.

CSCI is the single inspectorate for social care in England. The Commission was established in April 2004. It combines and extends the work formerly carried out by the Social Service Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The Commission has a statutory duty of partnership with the Healthcare Commission, Audit Commission and, under the Children Act 2004, Ofsted. It also works closely with the other regulators, inspectorates and with relevant organisations in social care such as the General Social Care

Council, the training organisation Skills for Care, the Children's Workforce Development Council and the Social Care Institute for Excellence.

The Commission's primary function is to promote improvement in social care, across adults and children's services - in local councils, and in the private and voluntary sectors. It therefore has a duty to inspect, assess and promote improvement across the whole social care industry.

Overall, CSCI strongly endorses the direction of travel set out by the report and recognises the important project work undertaken by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. This direction of travel and the clear action plan outlined in the report reflect what many disabled people have told us they want and have a right to expect from a truly inclusive society. The focus on improving transition for young adults is very welcome and the Commission will say more on this in its comprehensive response to the Green Paper, *"Independence, Well-being, and Choice"*.

However, while *"Improving the Life Chances for Disabled People"* ostensibly covers all age groups, the overall focus of the report is on adults - on what can be done to improve the life chances of adults and on how to develop support to disabled children's parents. All this is very welcome. However, the links between this report and the "Every Child Matters: Change for Children" programme needs to be strengthened. Somewhat surprisingly, the report does not fully recognise the need to improve outcomes for children. In particular, we wish to bring to your attention a number of points.

- a) It is unfortunate that the five outcomes for children in Every Child Matters are not reflected as being the Government's overarching priorities for children. In our view, the "Every Child Matters: Change for Children" programme, the developments arising from the requirements of the Children Act 2004 and the integration of children's services should be central to all the actions recommended as regards children.
- b) Many of the recommendations made in the Report are already addressed by Change for Children and the National Service Framework for Children. Action is already in hand on them, making the recommendations for action somewhat out of date. We believe that the key recommendation in the report should be to support the Every Child Matters mainstream agenda, not a separate set of actions linked to part of a separate agenda for disabled people, focussing primarily on adults. The overall strategy should in addition be strengthened to contain all the relevant elements of the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme, many of which are not currently reflected.

- c) Further, the Report should reflect the action being taken on Special Educational Needs (Removing barriers to achievement) which is currently specifically excluded from the report.
- d) Finally, the report should reflect the full range of the NSF for children which is significantly more than a document setting standards for inspection.

We hope you will find these points helpful. We will be very pleased to work with you, and with the new Office for Disability Issues once it is established in the further development of the strategy and in implementation of the plan.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Denise Platt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dame Denise Platt DBE
Chair
Commission for Social Care Inspection