



Strategy Unit Disability Team
Cabinet Office
4th Floor, Admiralty Arch
The Mall
London SW1A 2WH

Dear Sir/Madam

Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People

I write with regard to the above report published in January 2005.

Whilst our organisation (which is operated by and for people with disabilities) welcomes the report and its intentions, we are dismayed that whilst there is a whole section dedicated to disabled children and their parents, there is little reference to the issues for disabled adults who are parents and their families, and where these references occur, they are often within footnotes and as references to other documents.

Disabled Parents Network through daily contact with disabled parents and parents-to-be, is aware of a huge range of difficulties and challenges faced by disabled people who plan to become or already are parents.

These are things like:

- Prejudicial judgements and comments to disabled adults who have articulated their wish to have children from both medical and social care professionals and sometimes even family members.
- Lack of signposting for disabled parents/parents-to-be to appropriate information/services/support – no professional taking a leading role on this
- Lack of access to and equal provision of many services, including fertility treatment, antenatal classes, maternity services.
- Difficulties in accessing information about how pregnancy affects disability or how disability affects pregnancy. Disability groups such as the MS Society, Scope, RNIB, RNID don't have this type of information and generally pass enquirers on to us.
- A fear of approaching social services to ask for support in case they are seen as being an unfit parent, their child is seen as "in need" or "at risk" and being taken into care.

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- Lack of statutory support in their parenting role, their children often being identified as “Young Carers” whilst the lack of support to the disabled adult being disregarded,
- Lack of equipment specifically for disabled parents to assist them to care for their baby/child safely and without risk, having to adapt existing equipment or have bespoke items of equipment designed and manufactured for them, and lack of assistance to pay for these items.
- The additional costs incurred by disabled parents, which fall outside of any of the welfare benefits – either those for people with disabilities, or those who have caring responsibilities.
- Inappropriate assessment of need from social services – often failing to assess disabled adults in their parenting role, ie, support not just in their own personal care, but also to assist them to care for children in the way that they need or want to.
- Access into their children’s schools and getting children to and from school.

As you will see from the above, there are many issues which disabled parents come up against, and we feel that the report fails to identify any of these. The above are just a flavour of the issues, and are not exhaustive of the types of enquiries requesting support that we receive.

If you would like to open a dialogue with Disabled Parents Network to ensure that these issues are adequately addressed in terms of improving the life chances of disabled people then I would be pleased to hear from you.

Yours faithfully



SIMONE BAKER
Vice-Chairperson, Disabled Parents Network