

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation

Responses to questions posed in relation to the needs of children with severe learning disabilities and challenging behaviour and their families

**What are the barriers currently restricting access to services and therefore effective intervention?**

- There is insufficient local expertise to assess and support such families.
- Children with severe learning disabilities and challenging behaviour are commonly excluded from respite services, and are more likely to be placed in residential schools long distances from their homes.
- It is easier for local authorities to exclude children from local services and place them in specialist provision out of area than develop adequate support locally.
- It is difficult for families to access clinical psychology support.
- It is difficult for families to access appropriate and timely training and support to effectively manage their child's behaviour.
- Local authorities apparently find it difficult to fund early intervention programmes which may not provide immediate and visible savings. There appears to be a "crisis management" approach.

**Are services sufficiently co-ordinated at local level to allow families to access sufficient support to meet their needs?**

No

**What family support services i.e. key workers, short breaks, sibling support, behavioural management are currently available and how do these relate to other services?**

- There is evidence that families receive little effective support in managing these children's behaviour (ref: recent study commissioned by BILD in association with the CBF)
- Children with challenging behaviour are likely to be excluded from short breaks.
- Families of children placed in specialist residential schools indicate that local support prior to the placement was poor (ref Tennyson, McGill & Cooper)
- There is no clear "route" or pathway for families to access support

**What are the most cost effective interventions in delivering better outcomes?**

**Are there interventions which, if made earlier, could reduce more costly interventions later?**

Partnership working is key – families and professionals from all agencies need to work together to co-ordinate effective support. There is a need for a lead agency to be identified to co-ordinate this process.

Early intervention and support is likely to

- enable families to manage their child's behaviour more effectively & maintain family life
- enable the child to have a good quality of life within the local community
- enable the child to be included locally, rather than be excluded
- enable local services to effectively meet the needs of such children & families through support and expertise
- develop expertise within the local workforce
- encourage planning for smooth transition to adult services
- prevent costly out of area placement for children & adults (there is evidence that once children are placed out of area, there is an increased likelihood of them remaining out of area as adults)

**How can we identify the need to intervene earlier?**

The experience of the CBF is that many families of this group of children ask for support and it is not forthcoming. Because of the complex needs of this group, individualised support is required, and it appears there is often no capacity for this to be provided.

Clear, practical information for families should be available, with a pathway for appropriate support.