

Covering Template for Responses to the Comprehensive Review 2007

Contact Details for Respondent	
Name	
Job Title	Senior Nurseries Manager
Do you represent an organisation? (if so, name of organisation and type e.g. voluntary, public body, private company	Yes Humpty Dumpty Childcare Ltd Private Company
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	Which area of the review are you responding to?
Prevention Strand	
Review of disabled children	X
Strategy for Youth Services	
Review of high cost ,high harm families	X

The following submission addresses the questions set in Annexe B2 of the consultation letter.

September 6th 2006

We are independent full day care providers who also run an after school and holiday playscheme. In 1993, it was agreed that, in consultation with Social Services, we would become an inclusive scheme that could offer places to parents of children with special needs. This necessitated a higher staff:child ratio but the costs incurred were seen to be an effective measure to meet the complex needs of families with children who have special needs. The funding, from 2003, has been managed by the Devon Children's Fund. This year has seen a shift in focus to Youth Justice which has resulted in the funding for a scheme which offered inclusive play for up to 30 families being withdrawn. As an independent provider we are unable to access funding through any outside sources; a route available to those with charitable status.

The service we offer is all about play for all. In this way we feel that the evidence should also address the review of high cost, high harm families. We work closely with the Local Authority's Children & Families team and often accommodate children that present an acute need for play services, or day care, through our nurseries.

When we engage with families that have specific needs, whether that relates to physical ability or behavioural issues, so much more can happen than just providing a play space with supportive staff for the child. The families, both parents and siblings can enjoy a much needed break from caring. They acknowledge there are other families in similar situations and a network grows that by its very existence is supportive. The families come to regard the carers of their children as co-workers in the full time job of providing specialised support. All of this has been related to us by our parents, and sadly when the funding was withdrawn for the service we could offer no optimistic outcomes.

Where there is a chronic condition that inhibits children's development to its full potential, it is only with extra funding that the needs can be met. It is our experience that only in acute cases are extra funds generated to temporarily help in a critical situation. It is difficult to explain to a parent that just because they are managing, they will be expected to continue to do so as the funds are limited and only available in emergency situations. The sense of isolation is increased and families lose faith in a system which aims to offer equality of opportunity and to maintain the rights of both children and parents.

We strongly feel that both the child's and parents/carer's needs are not being represented. If research is not done which listens to their viewpoint and includes them in the planning and allocation process, how can anyone working in childcare services be assured that we are spending limited resources in the most cost effective way?

The drive towards more integrated and "joined up" services is a very laudable one. It is expensive to duplicate information and services. The starting point must surely be to ask families what kind of support they need most, and how finite resources can be best used to help the greatest number of people.

We fail to understand how a family can access help one year, then have the opportunity withdrawn the next. The need has most certainly not gone away. The families that we have worked with have had a summer without any offer of respite. The children who obviously benefit from being included into play sessions with mainstream children can no longer do so. And it is a two way process ; the children who come regularly to the after school and holiday club no longer have an opportunity to help and play with those less able than themselves.

Our experience, and that of the families we work with is what we know of the South Hams area. Although we are an independent provider we attend local childcare services meetings and other multi -agency groups. It appears that lack of funding is at the source of issues surrounding meeting specific needs.

We appreciate the opportunity to relate our particular experience and would be interested to know if parent/carer groups have had the same chance, for it is our belief that if we are to plan how best to use limited resources – only the families can answer the question of what they would most benefit from.