

Contact details for respondent	
Name	
Job title	Planning and Development Officer (Disabled Children)
Do you represent an organisation? (if so, name of organisation and type: e.g. voluntary, public body, private company).	South Gloucestershire Council – Department for Children and Young People
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	Which area of the review are you responding to? (please mark X)
Prevention strand	
Review of disabled children	X
Strategy for youth services	
Review of high cost, high harm families	

The main response has been sent on the professionals' response form for 18th August. Please refer to this for comments on service issues. This additional response is to provide evidence from a survey of parents of children with statements of special educational needs or who were in touch with Early Years' services.

DfES/HM Treasury Joint Policy Review on Children and Young People

Additional response from South Gloucestershire Council

Progress in addressing needs:

- A wider range of services is being put in place, not just those that provide residential short breaks. Support in the home, opportunities to participate in youth and leisure activities, a 'sitting service', direct payments, young people's groups and summer holiday schemes are all being offered.
- Young people and children receiving short breaks are being actively encouraged to give their views both at and in preparation for review meetings.
- Occupational Therapists work with families to support them in helping children and young people develop independence skills.
- There is close work with Connexions, Education and the Community Care Services for adults to improve transition planning and process.

In the implementation of the Every Child Matters Agenda the Department is working to ensure that universal service provision is inclusive. Multi-agency work is promoted by the Specialist Child Health and Disability Team, particularly with front-line health colleagues eg learning disability nurses, specialist speech and language therapists, and health staff working with children and young people with life limiting/threatening conditions.

During the last year South Gloucestershire has coordinated a survey of parents of children with statements of special educational needs or who were in contact with the Early Years Inclusion Service. A copy of the analysis of the results is attached. This provides evidence of parents' views about the services they have been offered, or would find helpful. The areas in the survey cover some of the key questions of the DfES/Treasury review.

For the survey a questionnaire was sent to approximately 1650 parents seeking their views on key issues which had been identified in interviews with professionals. The questions were grouped in the following sections:

- Information
- Database (Register) of disabled children
- Thresholds and Criteria for Services
- Coordination and Integration of Services

170 questionnaires were returned. In addition to the questionnaire a stakeholders day was held, attended by 34 randomly selected parents, and 11 representatives of professional groups.

The information from the survey is being used to inform the development of a five year multi-agency strategy for services for disabled children and their families. This will have a focus on ensuring positive outcomes in accordance with the Every Child Matters Agenda. Parents of disabled children are being

involved in the strategy development as are disabled young people. The strategy will link with development plans for universal services in the Council, so as to ensure inclusion for disabled children and young people.

Summary of the replies: Nearly 77% of the respondents felt they did not receive enough information about what services were available. There was a wide variety of suggestions for improving information giving. These included information packs at specific stages during childhood, as well as use of the internet, leaflets and free newspaper. Just over half of respondents (53%) knew about the council's existing registration process, (The Network).

Most did not know the criteria used by the different services for providing help. 81% of parents said that children and families with higher levels of need should receive some targeted support services. However comments were also made that every child should be entitled to help and that services should be equally available regardless of background, while others said that some people can naturally cope, others can't, irrespective of family circumstance, finances etc. Several comments stated that all families are different, and there should be no hard and fast rules about who can and can't get help.

A large majority of parents wanted a wider range of leisure activities to be available for their children and young people, particularly holiday schemes and activities at weekends and evenings.

A third of all replies (33%) said that they found all services difficult to get. Generally the view was that lack of knowledge of what was available, and long waiting lists were a significant barrier to accessing services, as well as the effort parents had to make in chasing appointments and ensuring things happened. The age of the child was cited several times as preventing access to services, and inadequate staffing levels of universal services eg after-school and holiday clubs.

86% said that they had to repeat the same details about their child and family to different agencies/support services. (78%) had to wait over three months before getting help. There was support for services to be brought together in one base, and suggestions for improvements to appointment systems. Nearly 86% were in favour of a keyworker system.

Several replies mentioned the need to listen to parents, do more research into what they want and involve them in decisions. It was also stressed that professionals should not assume that a family was coping, just because the parent put on a 'brave face'; professionals should ask the parent and give opportunities for feelings to be discussed.

When asked to suggest three services that should be available to everyone without being dependent on assessment, the majority of participants named leisure activities including after-school clubs and playschemes. Short breaks, less means testing, and improving availability of therapy services were also mentioned.

