

Budget Representation from the Disabled Children's Partnership – 28 September 2018

Summary

The Disabled Children's Partnership is calling on the Government to use the Budget to address the crisis in health and social care for disabled children and their families by providing additional funding to meet the estimated £1.5 billion annual shortfall.

About the Disabled Children's Partnership

The Disabled Children's Partnership is a coalition of more than 60 charities campaigning for improved health and social care for disabled children and their families.

The Crisis in Health and Social Care for Disabled Children

Disabled children face four big challenges.

- There are not enough services
- Many of those that exist are not good enough
- Families cannot access them easily
- Services do not always work together and communicate well with each other

This leads to an unacceptable contrast between the quality of life and the opportunities available to disabled children and their families, compared to those without disabilities.

DCP research on the health and social care funding gap

In July 2018, we published research by Development Economics to quantify what the current funding gap is for disabled children's services. For example, services such as specialist equipment, speech therapy and short breaks.

The research found that an estimated additional £433.9 million needs to be allocated to disabled children's social care services by local authorities and £1.1 billion by the NHS.

The Disabled Children's Partnership is therefore calling on government to include in the Budget £1.5 billion a year to a Disabled Children's Fund to plug the current funding gap. This equates to just 0.2% of total government spending.

By making this pledge, the government would

- ensure disabled children and their families have the support in place when they need it, which will in turn prevent them from reaching breaking point.
- enable local authorities and the NHS to meet their statutory duties and improve the availability and quality of services
- support parents and young disabled children to work and succeed at school

<https://disabledchildrenpartnership.org.uk/1-5-billion-funding-gap-for-services-for-disabled-children/>

Briefing on health and social care for disabled children and their families

Disabled children and their families should be able to realise the same opportunities and aspirations as non-disabled children and families. To help them do this, they need access to the good quality health and social care services which they are entitled to, when they need them.

Yet, the current state of play does not support this:

- 1. There are not enough health and social care services available to support disabled children and their families. This means they have to wait too long for support or find that services are no longer available due to cuts in funding.**
- 2. Many existing health and social care services aren't good enough and do not meet the needs of disabled children and their families.**
- 3. Disabled children and their families find health and social care services difficult to access often due to the complexity of the legal framework**

Most disabled children receive no regular support from outside their own close family and friends¹ and the number of disabled children who receive social care is reducing². This is despite the number of disabled children in the UK increasing by 33% over the past 10 years to over 1 million³ and their needs becoming ever more complex⁴.

At the same time, Government funding for early intervention services is has been cut by almost £500 million since 2013. It is projected to drop by a further £183 million by 2020⁵.

Failure to provide health and social care services risks the health of the child, impacts on the emotional and physical wellbeing of all the family and increases the need for more frequent medical interventions or hospital admissions.

Providing services to disabled children at an early stage has the potential to significantly reduce current expenditure on crisis interventions and long-term costs. For example:

- Providing support so that disabled children can stay at home with their parents means that £149,240 it costs for a year's placement in a children's residential home⁶.
- Modelling shows that if money was properly invested in better equipment, the proportion of disabled children requiring additional treatment or surgery was halved by better provision of equipment, saving £130 million per annum⁷
- Based on local authority case studies, a potential cost saving of £1,851,550 by using short breaks services for just 22 children at risk of going into care⁸

¹ Disabled Children's Partnership survey of 2,600 parents, 2017

² [Characteristics of children in need: 2016 to 2017](#)

³ [DWP Family Resources Survey \(2015/16\) and NewLife Charity, April 2018](#)

⁴ [Chief Medical Officer annual report 2012: children and young people's health](#)

⁵ [LGA \(2017\) Bright futures: Getting the best for children, young people and families](#)

⁶ [Chief Medical Officer annual report 2012: children and young people's health](#)

⁷ [The economic benefits of better provision of equipment for disabled and terminally ill children, BHTA 2014](#)

⁸ [Impact of the short break programme on the prevention of disabled children entering the 'looked after' system, 2011](#)

1. There are not enough health and social care services available to support disabled children and their families. They wait too long for support or find that services are no longer available due to cuts in funding

- It is estimated that there will be a £2 billion funding gap in children's services by 2019/20⁹. Yet, for every £1 spent on preventative work for children in need, £4 is spent on child protection work¹⁰
- Disabled children waited more than half a year after referral to begin receiving support in a third of cases across a range of health and social care services¹¹
- Only 3 in 100 families think health and social care services for disabled children are adequate¹²

2. Many existing health and social care services aren't good enough and do not meet the needs of disabled children and their families.

- Specialist equipment which protects the health of disabled children and those who care for them is underprovided by the bodies which have a statutory obligation to meet the needs of disabled children¹³
- Some families with disabled children have to take out loans or fundraise for necessary equipment or treatments¹⁴
- Only 1 in 10 parents believe health and social care services meet the needs of their disabled children¹²

3. Disabled children and their families find health and social care services difficult to access

- Existing law related to disabled children and their families stems from more than 10 different Acts of Parliament, regulations and guidance which have developed over the past 50 years
- Responsibility for services is split – at national level between the Department for Education (education and children's social care) and the Department of Health and Social Care (health); and at local level between local authorities and the health service
- The cost of a range of preventable health and social outcomes faced by children and young people over a 20-year period is estimated to be as high as £4 trillion¹⁵
- Nearly 7 in 10 parents with a disabled child never receive support for caring for their child outside their family and friends¹²

⁹ LGA (2017) Bright futures: Getting the best for children, young people and families

¹⁰ Losing in the long run (Action for Children, NCB and Children's Society)

¹¹ Contact, Waiting times for services (2015)

¹² Disabled Children's Partnership survey of 2,600 parents, 2017

¹³ Failing Disabled Children across the UK, BHTA 2016

¹⁴ Counting the Costs (Contact, 2012 & 2014)

¹⁵ Backing the Future: why investing in children is good for us all (nef and Action for Children 2009)