



Elizabeth Rouse
Department for Children, Schools and Families
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

13th March 2008

Dear Ms Rouse

Aiming High for Disabled Children: Draft Core Offer Standards Paper

Barnardo's is one of the largest voluntary sector providers of support and community services to disabled children. We run more than 60 services specifically for disabled children and their families, including education, skills training and short break provision. We are very grateful for the opportunity to contribute our views on this document.

We would like to offer the following initial comments on the Draft Core Standards Offer Paper:

Do you think that setting out these standards at this high level is helpful?

We are pleased that enabling and empowering disabled children and their families to effectively influence the design and delivery of services is a priority for government. The level at which the standards are set is essential to facilitate this. It is only in detailing each standard that clear expectations can be established.

Do you think this document will help you ensure that disabled children and young people and their parents have the option of being fully involved in local service development and in designing their package of care?

We believe the details set out in this document will provide a clear infrastructure and benchmarks to measure degrees of participation for all involved.

Fostering meaningful participation by disabled children in shaping services to meet their needs requires significant time and resource investment. Genuine consultation with disabled children takes place in a variety of ways and can involve taking time to build relationships and observe children in different settings. It is essential that expectations on local authorities are raised to facilitate this kind of true consultation. Significant energy and attention must be given to developing communication systems between local authorities, service providers, disabled children and their families, including staff dedicated to this.

Do you think that it will be straightforward for you to adapt and expand this paper locally?

As a voluntary sector provider, Barnardo's works closely with local authorities and other agencies. We would be happy to work with our partners to adapt and plan the expansion of this document locally across England. Our knowledge of the communities we operate in would be useful in planning services to meet local requirements. Opportunities to launch, distribute and discuss the paper must be coordinated by all partnership agencies. It is important that all materials must be relevant and in formats applicable to the community.

Do you think that presenting the five elements under the three headings would it be helpful?

Barnardo's recognises the demands and challenges faced by families caring for a disabled child. It is essential that this "Core Offer" is clear, relative and accessible to the target group. We believe the three headings will establish focus but must not detract from the intended objective of each element.

It is important to gather and assess feedback on services from children and families. This feedback should influence the development of further services. It is encouraging that feedback from surveys will form the basis of the Disabled Children Service Indicator. We would urge that the views of disabled children also considered.

Barnardo's, in association with local authority partners in England, have many established services which can provide examples shaped around the standards in the core offer. We would be happy to provide details upon request.

If you would like to discuss our comments further please do not hesitate to contact myself or my colleague Simon Roach, Short Break Development Manager, at simon.roach@barnardos.org.uk

Best wishes

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