



# I want to play too

Developing inclusive play and leisure for disabled children and young people

Barnardo's vision is that the lives of all children and young people should be free from poverty, abuse and discrimination.

Barnardo's purpose is to help the most vulnerable children and young people transform their lives and fulfil their potential.

## Acknowledgments

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The names of individual children have been changed. The case studies are based on the words of children, parents and Barnardo's workers.

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# Preface

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Play is a fundamental part of childhood. It enables children to develop social skills, form friendships, develop physical skills and learn about and become confident in their environment.

However, for many disabled children opportunities are severely restricted. Community-based facilities, such as sporting activities, play schemes, and organised clubs and groups frequently exclude disabled children. In addition, disabled children often attend specialist schools or nurseries away from where they live, reducing their opportunities to make friends in their own communities.

Reduced opportunities for play and leisure also affect disabled children's families. Most parents can take a break from parenting responsibilities when their children are playing with friends or involved in leisure activities. Parents of disabled children often do not experience these breaks; also brothers and sisters may be required to play with their disabled sibling rather than pursuing their own friendships and interests.

The government and other agencies have recognised disabled children's right to access the same opportunities for play and leisure as other children. Several initiatives and schemes are being developed to remove the barriers which prevent disabled children from accessing these activities. This booklet describes some of the initiatives developed by Barnardo's services in the North West region of England.

As well as highlighting eight pieces of work, this booklet aims to give some practical ideas about how the inclusive play opportunities for disabled children can be developed and problems overcome. Most importantly, the booklet will show what difference involvement in activities can make for disabled children themselves, using their own words.

## Disabled children want to play too

The challenge for everyone working with disabled children is to remove the barriers which prevent this and make inclusive play the norm and not the exception. We intend that the *I want to play too* conference, supported by this booklet, will provide some tools to help this vision become a reality.

Sue Hayes  
Director Barnardo's North West



# What is inclusion?

The voices of young people, parents and Barnardo's service workers

Not turning anyone away, full stop, for any reason

No barriers, no boundaries, with support if needed

It is when disabled children are missed if they are not there

Being able to join (with support if necessary) any activity they wish to take part in

**Inclusion** – the act of including or state of being included, to form part of a larger group

The chance for disabled children to be included in their community

Being able to go to something local like a play scheme

It's all about opportunities – that everyone should have the same chances, the same opportunity to try things

Disabled children being able to go to everything that any child could

Being able to access activities, take part, make choices, and be valued. To be able to join in and be listened to

Being able to do things without it being a 'problem'

# The wider context of inclusion

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## Disability Discrimination Act 1995

This legislation established rights for disabled people to have the same access to 'goods and services' as any other member of the public.

## Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

This requires schools and youth services to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that disabled pupils are not disadvantaged.

## UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989

Article 31 states that parties should recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

Article 23 also states that parties should recognise that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.

## Children Act 1989

The Children Act recognises that children's needs for: 'good quality play opportunities change as they grow up but they need such opportunities to reach and maintain their optimum development and well being'. Local authorities are required to provide services for disabled children which are designed to 'minimise the effects of the child's disabilities and give them the opportunity to lead lives that are as normal as possible'.



# Barnardo's North West regional statement on the inclusion of disabled children

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## What we mean by disability and impairment

'Disabled people's own view of the situation is that – while we may have medical conditions which hamper us and which may or may not need medical treatment – human knowledge, technology and collective resources are already such that our physical or mental impairments need not prevent us from being able to live perfectly good lives. It is society's unwillingness to employ these means to altering itself rather than us which caused our disabilities. This is what we call the Social Model of Disability. It puts the problem outside of ourselves, back onto the collective responsibility of society as a whole.' (Mason & Reiser 1992)

The region's work is underpinned by the social model of disability. This is a way of thinking about disability which has been developed by the disabled people's civil rights movement. The social model of disability separates out impairment, the functional limitations of someone's body or mind, from disability, the disabling barriers of prejudicial attitudes and unequal access to education, employment, housing, transport, leisure activities and so on.

The task facing services which seek to support disabled children is to identify what is restricting their opportunities and to work alongside them to remove these barriers. In this way services can significantly improve the quality of children's lives as they grow into adulthood.

## Our vision

Barnardo's vision is that the lives of children should be free from poverty, abuse and discrimination. To achieve this for disabled children, Barnardo's envisions a society which fully recognises disabled children's human rights and comprehensively promotes their inclusion. Disabled children would be fully included in everyday society with full access to schools and communities. Where they are unable to do the kinds of things that non-disabled children do, they would receive support to help them participate.



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## What we mean by inclusion

Inclusion involves adaptation of all parts of the community – both people's attitudes and the physical environment – to cater for a wide spectrum of ability and need. This must be an ongoing process whose overall aim is to embrace diversity rather than simply tolerate differences.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 laid down rights for disabled people to have the same access to 'goods and services' as any other member of the public. The Special Needs and Disability Act 2001 also requires schools and youth services to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that disabled pupils are not disadvantaged.

But inclusion means more than simply providing physical access to a mainstream school, nursery or youth club – important as this is. To be inclusive, institutions and the people in them need to change and develop, to provide high-quality services adapted to meet a range of individual needs.

The terms 'inclusion' and 'integration' are often used interchangeably, but they have different meanings. When a child is integrated, specialist support may be provided, but the expectation is not that the system or institution itself should adapt – the child is expected to fit in. Inclusion emphasises developing systems which view diversity as positive and respond to this, rather than denying difference and trying to make everyone fit a pre-determined structure.



# What is leisure?

The voices of young people, parents and Barnardo's service workers



# Dimensions of inclusion



Some of the ways that disabled children and young people can be included in community play and leisure activities

A disabled child or young person being supported by a worker or volunteer to join an activity in their local community

Non-disabled children or young people joining disabled children in a group set up by a service for disabled children

A group of disabled children or young people using local community leisure facilities

A disabled child or young person being supported by a worker or volunteer to join an activity in their local community with the aim of individual support being withdrawn when the disabled child is settled

A disabled child or young person joining an activity in their local community without being accompanied by a volunteer or member of staff



# Developing inclusive provision

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Kidsactive produced a publication on inclusive play entitled *It doesn't just happen*. As this title communicates, setting up inclusive play and leisure opportunities requires work and expertise. This booklet details the experiences of Barnardo's services in the North West that are working to provide inclusive activities. Their work in this area has been proactive. They have overcome many barriers, but some issues remain. In this section, we summarise areas of work which have been significant on the journey to inclusion.

## Challenging the attitudes and assumptions of service staff, families and children

Service staff, parents and children need to be brought along together if inclusive play is to be a positive and worthwhile experience. Moving from a more protective environment to inclusive services is a significant move for everyone concerned and Barnardo's services have found that communication, reassurance and providing adequate information can help staff and families and encourage enthusiasm and confidence. Parents need to be involved from the start so that they know exactly what to expect from the service and leisure providers. Parents and carers are often anxious about whether their child's needs can be met in an inclusive setting and disabled children and young people may be limited by their own expectations and knowledge of the types of leisure activities available to them. Trust must be established and concerns addressed well before specific activities are investigated.

## Finding out about local leisure opportunities

Both new and longstanding Barnardo's services have encountered two distinct tasks: first to identify local play and leisure opportunities and second to discover which of these groups and activities could be inclusive. The local community may have created databases of activities that children take part in, or some services have created their own lists. If children choose an activity that is not on the database or list, staff have used local links to identify new opportunities. This happened, for example, when one disabled child wanted to go fishing – workers then needed to find out about local clubs. It is vital to discuss the opportunities for inclusive play with the service providers first. Careful preparation will ensure that suitable activities are ready for inclusion at the same time as the disabled children and young people are ready to take part.

## Working with local leisure providers

Once local activities have been identified, training and support should be offered to the staff and volunteers providing the service before a disabled child or young person is introduced. The training may focus on a particular individual's needs, or may be more general preparation for the future needs of disabled children and



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young people. Services have found that there is often a willingness to include disabled children in mainstream activities but staff lack confidence. One service said that the fear factor has to be removed:

*'They all have fears, they all have a picture of disability as being a wheelchair. They need telling about different kinds of disability.'* (Barnardo's service worker)

Staff may need to challenge assumptions and stereotypes about disabled children and their ability to participate in play and leisure activities. They may also have concerns that inclusion may be too difficult. These issues should be recognised, appropriate training and support given, and assumptions challenged in a positive way. It is vital that this preparation occurs before a disabled child starts accessing an activity.

Barnardo's services have found that they need to put a lot of work into publicising their services so that groups know they are there. Once contact has been made, their role is to provide leisure providers and their staff with inspiration, information, training (or access to training) and ongoing support.

## Meeting individual needs

The needs of each child and young person are different. It is crucial that the activities provided have the interests of each individual at its heart. It is essential to find out what the disabled child or young person does or does not like or want to do. This may be done through a series of meetings or discussions. One service has also developed an *All about me* book that the child puts together with their family or a service worker.

Getting to know the child and their family and presenting them with a wide range of possibilities are the precursors to sensitive matching of an individual to an activity. Inclusion is not an automatic process; a great deal of work is often needed for an individual to access an activity with the appropriate level of support. Flexibility is the key. For some young people, inclusion means visiting a pool hall with their disabled friends, supported by a volunteer; for others it means attending Brownies with support at first, then alone once they have settled into the group. Some children and their families may choose not to spend their leisure time in an inclusive setting. Inclusion can mean many things; the preferences of individuals are of key importance.

## Addressing practical issues

Practical difficulties have to be addressed before some disabled children and young people can access inclusive play and leisure opportunities. Changes to the family routine can pose problems: for example, if transport has been provided from home



to segregated leisure activities in the past, families may find it difficult to make their own arrangements. Some families have also chosen to use a free short-term break facility, rather than pay for their child to attend a leisure activity. Lifting, handling and personal care may also need to be addressed with some leisure providers for children and young people who need assistance. Services may need to help leisure providers apply for grants to fund adaptations which enable access or for specialist equipment.

If the service is clear from the start about what assistance it can give, families and leisure providers know what to expect. One service decided that, although leisure activities were to be inclusive, they needed to maintain their minibus rather than rely on public transport or ask parents to transport their children. A combination of factors – the complex needs of the children, the fact that many parents do not have cars and the dearth of local leisure facilities – led to this decision. In another service, parents are expected to make their own travel arrangements and pay the standard charge for an activity as any other child or young person would.

### Staff and volunteer resources

Inclusion requires managers, staff and volunteers to be available to work on a range of tasks both behind the scenes (networking, training etc) and supporting individual children and young people. The recruitment of additional staff and volunteers is often essential and time for this needs to be built into the planning process.

The way that individual children are supported will vary. Some support workers or volunteers are linked to specific children and attend only with that child. In other cases, inclusion means placing additional staff within an activity, such as an after-school club, as a member of the staff team with additional responsibilities for disabled children. But all staff must be committed to the task and appropriately trained.

It is widely recognised that a leisure activity is enhanced if all of the workers, not just the identified support worker or volunteer, have an awareness of and some training in disability. A broader understanding within the group can mean that the disabled child is not isolated and not excluded if the support worker is absent for some reason.

*'It works better if all members of staff have disability training and are fully supportive of the ethos of inclusion.'* (Barnardo's service worker)



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## Timescales for change

Establishing inclusive services may take a long time and requires adequate planning. This needs to include recruiting staff and volunteers, training them, finding out about local leisure opportunities and making links with providers, identifying children who need the service, finding the activities the children wish to pursue and building trust and relationships between staff, children and families. It is important to be realistic about what needs to be done when funding is being negotiated. By building this into service planning and delivery, services have been able to lay the foundations for successful inclusion in the future and demonstrate progress to funders.

## Risk and safety

One of the major concerns for parents is whether their child will be safe attending activities in the community. Parents often feel, particularly at the start, that these activities pose a greater risk than segregated services. The supporting agency can reassure but it is also important that the family has confidence in the particular activity attended by their child.

*'Parents can be very cautious, especially when it comes to the safety of their child. It is important that parents have information about the setting from the activity provider.'*  
(Barnardo's service worker)

Potential risks should be identified and plans made to reduce them. Sometimes activities may be changed in order to reduce risk. Risk assessments are part of the professional practice of Barnardo's staff and are undertaken for children for each activity they are involved in. The completion of risk assessments has been built into the process of activity planning; they can be time-consuming, but become less so with practice.

## Celebrating success

Services that have provided support for inclusive play and leisure talk about the positive impact this has had on individual children, young people and their families. Difficulties have arisen but the key is to have systems in place to deal with issues as they arise and take appropriate action. In doing this, communication with the family and leisure provider is important to maintain understanding and trust.



## Playaway – talking to mum

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### A case study from Sure Start Hollinwood – a programme providing a range of services for pre-school children and their families

Kate is now 2½ years old. She has been attending sessional day care since she was 13 months old. Kate can support her upper body only for short periods of time and needs a special chair and standing frame. Sure Start Hollinwood have been able to acquire this equipment, and a special tricycle, for her to use while she is in day care.

Kate and her family were supported by social services workers until she settled into day care. They stayed with her for weekly half-hour sessions, encouraging her to play with other children and interact with staff. This was a long process but Kate's time in day care was gradually increased until she became more confident and was happy to stay for the whole session alone.

Kate's mum says that coming to sessional day care has had a big impact on her daughter. She feels that Kate likes the hustle and bustle of being part of a group of children where there are lots of things going on. Developmentally, Kate has come on 'fantastically' since she has been attending day care but Mum is also really pleased with the way that Kate interacts with other children and enjoys the activities and routine.

This family are able to look at the benefits of inclusive provision from the perspective of both Kate and their 9 year old son, Carl, who is also disabled. Carl attended a nursery for children with special needs and now attends a special school. Carl is quite a different personality from Kate, but the family has thought about how his early experiences of one-to-one nursery care may have affected his preferences now. He isn't so happy around other children or with noise and prefers the company of adults. Mum is happy that Kate has had the opportunity to go to inclusive day care and be part of a noisy, stimulating group of children. She feels that it is easier to start the inclusion process at an early age rather than when the child is older and it is more difficult to become accepted.

The family are looking forward to Kate attending a mainstream school and, if possible, taking part in inclusive leisure activities. Her mum says the only problem is that local leisure activities for any child or young person seem to be limited. When Kate is older and is interested in doing something outside of school time they will need to look around to see what is available.

***'Kate loves being around other children and likes to be part of everything. Sessional day care meets all of Kate's needs, individually as well as part of a group.'***

# Give us a cue – reflections of a playworker



A case study from Liverpool Families, a service providing support services for families with disabled children and young people, including holiday play schemes, support groups and activity schemes

Every Saturday afternoon I accompany four teenagers who have severe learning disabilities to take part in an activity of their choice. The activities vary from week to week, from bowling to the cinema and shopping, but one of our more popular choices is to play pool; we play at least once every two months, fitting it around the other things we want to do.

We meet at Belle Vale shopping centre or one of the local Liverpool train stations. The young people either get dropped off by their parents, or catch the bus from their homes (a big achievement for these young men). We take the bus to Bootle where there is a pool club. There are other clubs, but we tend to stick with this one as it allows people under 18 in. We have never had any problems with access for disabled people though.

Once we're there we hire a pool table for about an hour, which one of the lads goes to pay for. Another person takes the money for everybody's snacks and buys all the crisps and drinks. The staff are always friendly and helpful, but no more than they would be to anyone else – they just accept us. The young people enjoy interacting with them; it helps with their speech, confidence and even their knowledge of money. We have never noticed anyone there being discriminatory towards us, staring or whispering. They are always friendly and just accept us as they do other pool players.

We always have a really fun time when we go, and the young people always enjoy it. One person in the group is now getting really good and the rest have certainly improved – they all put me to shame that's for sure! The next time we go some of my friends are going to tag along too, which will be great for everyone and will promote inclusion even more.

My role is to make sure the lads are OK and that they are having a good time. Other than that the group elects its own leader each week, usually the person who chose the activity. They take charge of what we are doing, making sure everyone is happy and that we decide what and where we want to eat and all agree on it. Through this they have all gained in confidence and awareness of themselves and their abilities.

Our plans for the coming weeks mainly revolve around shopping. With Christmas just round the corner they want to go out into Liverpool, buy presents and check out the Christmas lights. We also have a birthday coming up, and for every birthday we have an agreement that we go to a restaurant to celebrate. I don't just mean McDonalds – we've been to Chinese, American, Indian and pizza restaurants. As for this next time I have no idea as yet what is being planned, I guess I'll just have to wait and see.



# Saturday morning masterpiece – thoughts of Jon and his volunteer helper

A case study from Wider Horizons Halton, a service providing support to enable disabled children and young people to access mainstream leisure activities.

This morning I met Jon, a 7 year old whom I have been supporting to go to an art class. The session begins at 10am, but I always meet Jon and his parents at the community centre five minutes earlier so we can have a quick chat and check that everything is OK. This morning Jon was really looking forward to the session.

We arrived before everyone else so Jon and I helped Ian, the teacher, set up the room. Due to his dyspraxia, Jon can be unsteady at times but he really concentrated and was a great help setting out paints and paper. The rest of the class soon arrived and Jon, who has started to make a few friends within the group, said hi to them and went to sit with Mark who he has become very friendly with. I went and sat on the table behind Jon and Mark so I was near enough to help if Jon needed any assistance but I was also far enough away to let the boys get on with the session without feeling like they were being watched.

During the first half of the session we were asked to draw characters that we had made up ourselves, and it was clear to see that Jon was really enjoying thinking of super heroes to make up and draw. He does need a bit more time than the rest of the group and on this occasion needed some help putting in the detail on one of his super heroes.

*'Ian began drawing characters and he drew me in a superman costume. I coloured the picture in. Ian helped me draw Dragon Man and now he looks boss.'*

Ian was very relaxed about giving Jon more time and helped him fill in the detail on his drawings. In the next half of the session we started to put the characters into a comic strip and again Jon was really enjoying thinking about the different situations to put his characters in. Mark needed some help so Jon helped him think about what a comic strip should look like: it was really good to see the two boys working together and Jon got a boost of confidence from helping. In return Mark helped Jon put a bit more detail in his drawings.

*'I like the art class – I want to paint my pictures ... If we had more time at art class, I could make new people to be in my comic book, it would be better then.'*

At the end of the session Jon had produced a great comic strip which he wanted to keep to show his mum and dad. When we showed Jon's mum the picture, she was so impressed that the comic strip has pride of place on the fridge at home!

# School's out – a worker visiting an out of school club



A case study from Wider Horizons Knowsley, which involves parents and young people in developing services for disabled children and young people, providing information and support to help families have their say in education, social services and leisure.

One of my roles as a service worker is to visit various activities to see that the children placed through Wider Horizons in play and leisure groups are happy and included. This afternoon I visited an after school club, based in a community centre in Kirkby, where three children attend with support from Interplay – they provide an additional member of staff who has disability training to work in the group.

This particular session was very busy because the mobile arts team had come to encourage the children to get involved in drama and music. The team worked with small groups of children throughout the session but other activities were also on offer such as indoor and outdoor games. Arts and crafts tables had been set up just in case the children wanted something a bit quieter.

All of the children supported by Interplay were able to choose which activity they would like to take part in and, typically, changed their minds as often as the other children! The children have been attending this after school club for a while now; it's really good to see them being fully included both in the indoor sessions and in the trips out that the club organises. The children supported by Interplay and the other children that attend the session have formed good relationships and interact well. One boy, Jack, attends the group only in term time as he has other commitments during the summer but it is really nice to see that he is not forgotten about over the summer; the staff and other children always welcome him back after his long break from the club.

It's not just the children who are fully included – the Interplay staff are, too. It has taken a while but now they're not just seen as support workers for the children, they are part of the team. All of the staff have had training on disability and they feel confident about working with the children who attend the sessions supported by an Interplay worker.

Parents also appreciate the social benefits gained by their children when they attend a local club:

***'Because the club's local, Joe knows some of the local kids now so he can go out and play with them.'* (parent)**



# Bowled over – thoughts from a sessional worker, young people and a parent

A case study from Catalyst (St Helens), a service which aims to promote the inclusion of disabled children and young people, helping them to access community facilities and activities.

With the help of volunteers, I support a group of disabled teenagers to access local leisure facilities. The group meets once a fortnight and usually goes to the cinema, shopping or out for a meal. The young people choose the activities and pay for themselves – they decided themselves on a spending limit of £10 for each outing.

Each time I meet with the volunteers before the young people arrive to check that everything is going well and that they are happy with what they are being asked to do. We all meet up at a central point and arrange either lifts or taxis from there. On this occasion we got taxis to a bowling alley. The young people paid for themselves, sorted out their bowling shoes and worked out how to programme their names on to the computers which keep the score. This was a remarkable achievement given the range of learning disabilities and complex needs that the young people have.

After an hour of bowling, Joe was the overall winner. He suggested getting something to eat from McDonalds before returning home; a very enjoyable end to the day. We ordered taxis to take the young people home by 10pm, the curfew time we have set in consultation with parents.

I always ask the young people for their comments about the group and the activities we take part in. Some of the young people fill in forms, others talk about their experiences and some use pictures for eye pointing. The overall response is that they enjoy the group 'because everyone is nice' or because 'I like meeting my friends'. We also ask parents for their views on the groups; their feedback is invariably positive. One parent commented:

*'The group allows the young people to have their own identity and enables them to make good friends. It also allows them to enjoy being part of a group and be mature and have confidence... it enables them to realise how important they are despite their disability.'*

It's a challenge to make sure that the young people participate fully in decision-making; our volunteers' expertise and patience helps make this possible. Another difficulty is the lack of activities in the local area. We regularly go to the cinema or go shopping, but there's not much else to do. Having said that, the young people chose to do these activities and they are the kind of things any local teenager would do. The volunteers are young people themselves; this gives the whole group confidence and encouragement. We're delighted that many meaningful relationships have formed between the young people. This, along with taking on increased responsibility, has been tremendously empowering for the young people.

# In the summertime – going to a holiday play scheme



**A case study from Salford Families, a service providing support for families with disabled children, including holiday play schemes, support groups and activity schemes**

Rebecca is 10 years old and, with support from a volunteer from Salford Families, had been going to the same inclusive summer play scheme in Salford for four years. This year we again arranged for a volunteer to accompany Rebecca to the play scheme. Rebecca, who has mild learning difficulties and some difficulties in co-ordination, has always been quite nervous and unsure of herself and her mum has been anxious about her going to the play scheme alone.

Rebecca enjoys the scheme, which meets in her local park, because they do a lot of lively activities. The location is handy for Rebecca's mum to walk to and from the scheme with her. After the first few days of the play scheme, the volunteer noticed that Rebecca's mum was not arriving to the scheme as usual. Instead Rebecca was coming every day with friends that she had made at the play scheme. The staff at the play scheme began to feel that there was no need for the volunteer to stay with Rebecca, as they knew her well and were confident that they could care for her. The family support worker met with Rebecca's mum. She was happy for the volunteer to withdraw from the play scheme and for Rebecca to go to the play scheme with her friends.

After a couple of days we rang the play scheme and Rebecca's mum to see how everything was going. Rebecca was still really enjoying the scheme and was going and coming home safely with her new friends. Rebecca had a great summer and is planning to go back next summer without our support.

We will be available to both Rebecca's parents and the play scheme for advice or support but this year's success leaves us hopeful that we won't be needed any longer.



# It's showtime! – from a project worker in a local drama group

A case study from West Cheshire Families, a service providing support services for families with disabled children, including holiday play schemes, support groups and activities

The Whirligig Theatre Company was set up in partnership with the YMCA in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire. Young people from West Cheshire Families had taken part in a drama presentation at the Labour Party Conference in Blackpool in 2002, and were interested in being part of a local drama group. There were no suitable groups locally, so a new one was established at an accessible venue: the YMCA at Ellesmere Port.

Barnardo's and the YMCA both provided service workers with drama and visual art skills, who developed a plan for the group. The group was for anyone between 11-18 years old in the Ellesmere Port area who was interested in drama. The group of young people that attended the first sessions were from both local and special needs schools. Each week the group welcomed a new member (either disabled or non-disabled), building up to 18 members by the summer. The young people's range of drama experience varied: some had taken part in school productions while others had never performed before.

The group used its first few sessions to develop the young people's confidence and ability to work as a team. Everyone was enthusiastic and positive about inclusion. Two members of the group have a visual impairment, and one member uses an electric wheelchair, but this proved no barrier to the group having fun.

The group wanted to create a production to perform for the local community, family and friends. Ideas for the performance came from the young people's desire to change their community, looking at negatives and positives about living in Ellesmere Port. The performance was entitled *Dreaming of...*. Its themes included: how young people who have a disability in Ellesmere Port are often excluded, environmental issues and nightlife in Ellesmere Port for young people. All the members of the group had similar thoughts and feelings about these issues, from concerns about pollution to wanting improved facilities and transport at night around town.

*Dreaming of...* was presented at the YMCA in Ellesmere Port in July 2003. The positive response from the audience gave the young people a real sense of achievement. Through this production, the young people have acquired a variety of new skills, and members of Whirligig are enthusiastic to continue to perform, building on the success of their first production.

# Pow wow – a worker's experience of finding a place at Brownies



**A case study from Wider Horizons Halton, a service providing support for disabled children aged 5 to 13 years old to access mainstream leisure opportunities**

Sophie and Sarah are 8-year-old twins who have hearing impairments and moderate learning difficulties. They did not attend any leisure activities; they'd had bad experiences in the past, because their behaviour was viewed as challenging. Their mum approached Wider Horizons because she thought Sophie and Sarah would benefit from interacting with children in an inclusive setting, perhaps pick up some positive behaviour and, more importantly, have fun. Sophie and Sarah's mum said that the girls would like to try Brownies. This idea seemed very suitable, as Brownies tends to be a calm environment, and is fairly structured in comparison with other activities. As the family didn't have a car, Wider Horizons contacted two packs within easy reach. One, a small Brownie pack of just 10 girls and 3 staff, was very close to the family home. The leaders had no experience of including disabled children before but were very keen to do so with our support.

A Wider Horizons worker met with the Brownie leaders to explain Sophie and Sarah's needs, and give some common-sense advice about hearing impairments. We felt that the girls might have difficulty with being knocked out of games, we played games with the family before the girls started to go to Brownies, so they could learn how to behave appropriately. Sophie, Sarah and the Wider Horizons support worker attended their first Brownies session after the summer holidays. During circle time, our support worker explained Sophie and Sarah's disabilities to the other Brownies and demonstrated how to get their attention by touching their arms. The girls listened and were very welcoming to Sophie and Sarah. Both the twins had a good time although they did need a bit of extra help when it came to learning some action rhymes. They spent a few minutes sulking when they were knocked out of a game, but they soon got over their annoyance and enjoyed the rest of the session.

The Wider Horizons support worker accompanied the girls to one other session but the Brownie leaders and mum felt confident that the girls no longer needed support. We offered to help if the girls wanted to go on a day out or to church parade. We also check in with both Brown Owl and Sophie and Sarah's mum every six weeks to assess the situation and see if more support is needed. This success at Brownies has given Sophie and Sarah's mum the confidence to try some other activities and the girls are now attending a dance class. Sophie and Sarah's success demonstrates that, as long as a caring, open-minded attitude is maintained, even children who have been labelled as 'challenging' can fit in and have fun.



## What inclusion means to me

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My name is Claire. I am 16 years old and live in St Helens with my mum, dad, and younger brother and sister. I have a learning disability and a physical disability. At the moment I am studying life skills at Carmel College.

When I'm not at college my life is really busy. For fun I use Barnardo's services: I attend a teenage group and we go bowling or to the theatre. We've even been away for the weekend which I loved. Last night we were supposed to go to the cinema, but I was the only one who was old enough to get in, which meant Sue, the Barnardo's service worker, couldn't let the others watch it. We ended up going for something to eat – I didn't mind too much because the food was really nice and I got to have a proper talk with my mates!

I also go to the KISS sports club where I can play basketball. I don't really go to get exercise, though – I use it as a chance to see my mates and talk to the other young people that go. Both these clubs have given me the chance to try loads of new things and do the stuff I like doing. I've always been able to join in with the activities they provide because they have been designed with people like me, disabled people, in mind.

The Barnardo's clubs are for lots of different young people with different abilities. I like this because it teaches non-disabled young people what it is like to have a disability. I know that some disabled young people might be scared or nervous about socialising with people who are more able than themselves. They may be put off coming because they think that they wouldn't be able to do as well as the others there, or that the other kids will be nasty or not understand them – but that hasn't happened to me.

I've made lots of friends through Barnardo's and some of my old school friends also go to the teenage groups and KISS club, so I still get to see them and have a good gossip about who has been doing what. I don't know the kids down my street. I know them by sight and would say 'hi' to them if I saw them, but that is as far as it would go. It's a shame but I don't feel I'm missing out.

When I talk about what I like to do, it sounds as if I spend a lot of time with adults, or adults are always around. I suppose they are, but I do like the staff at Barnardo's – they are fun. Saying that, I do try to get involved in things where it is just people my own age, and yes, sometimes I think it would be better if adults weren't always around. I'm happy with what I am doing at the moment; compared to some disabled young people I do an awful lot. I like being with people, especially my friends, and going to the groups at Barnardo's has been good for me. In the future I would really like to either help other disabled young people, or perhaps do training for non-disabled people because I want to raise their awareness of disability.

# What inclusion means for my family



I've three sons aged 21, 16 and 12. My 16 year old, Paul, has Down's syndrome, and autistic tendencies. We have been accessing services through Barnardo's since Paul was 4 months old, including coffee mornings when Paul was a baby, a playgroup, summer play schemes, and recently inclusive weekend and evening youth groups. We've seen a lot of changes.

In the early days, Barnardo's services were completely segregated and provided within the service building. If they took Paul and the other young people out they were picked up from their homes by minibus and dropped off again later. Although this gave a sense of security, particularly for a parent, I still wasn't too happy with them all going out like that because I felt it was just a 'gang' of disabled children, which would only draw more attention to them. Also, Paul could never express a preference; the activities were organised for them.

Initially, I didn't think I'd support the change from segregated to inclusive provision. Barnardo's drastically reduced the number of services they provided on site, started to use mainstream youth clubs and facilities, and gave the young people the choice of what to do and where to go. The biggest change was that Barnardo's got rid of its minibus and encouraged the young people to use public transport to meet up. My initial reaction was 'oh my God, he's never been on a bus!' as we have always had a car. But Barnardo's talked us through the changes, so we knew how they'd be introduced and we were a part of it all the way along. Apart from the transport issue, we had no other worries, and the transition has been such a big success.

The differences in Paul have been brilliant. When he goes to the youth club now and non-disabled lads and girls are always hanging around, they shout 'alright mate' and he shouts back and sticks his thumb up to them – he's never had that before. I loved this; to me it's these small things that count so much. Also, he is now far more confident and aware of himself and his friends. He now joins in far more and becomes more involved. I think this is good for the non-disabled young people as well, as they are more aware and are gaining friends they would never have had before. Taking public transport has been great for him. He really enjoys it and it has become part of the fun of going out.

As a parent, it is wonderful to know your child is being included, not being separated. Paul's not so reliant on us and his brothers now; he's meeting people and making friends – just what he should be doing at 16.



# What inclusion means for my service

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I have been at Chorley Families for eight years. During that time the way we work with disabled children, young people, and their families has really changed. When I first started, the leisure we provided was a mixture of community and project based. Although we were always looking for ways to be involved in the local community, we did not have enough staff or resources to do this as we wanted to.

When we came to review the service, we were all really keen to become more inclusive. All children, regardless of their age or ability, should have equal rights, but the right to play and experience different opportunities is so often denied to disabled children and young people. For me, the chance to develop through leisure is essential for all children. Taking part in recreational activities builds children's self esteem. There's nothing like deciding what to do with your own time to increase empowerment. With that in mind, the project successfully bid for money from the Children's Fund to recruit family support and community play workers who were committed to providing an inclusive service.

The support workers then had to find out what our service users wanted to do in their leisure time. We consulted the parents of disabled children and young people throughout the process. Some parents were worried about change but many were very pleased that their children might be involved in inclusive activities. Some parents remain anxious about inclusion due to the nature of their children's disabilities, so we still offer small group activities to develop social and play skills. We recognise that inclusion doesn't always work, particularly for children with autism who are less able to socialise, but we try to find activities, such as horse riding, which children can undertake in inclusive settings and hopefully begin to interact. Some of our service users have very complex needs and consultation can be difficult, but by knowing the children well and by enlisting their parents' help we think of activities they might like to try. And once the child is doing an activity, it's easy to tell whether they're enjoying it. Our work contains some trial and error, and this can take time, but we aim to find a leisure activity that is right for every child.

The team has spent time finding activities that are attractive to the children and has worked with community groups to enable them to become inclusive. We offer support and training to all group leaders and members and we are always able to support children and young people when they start attending a group. Some children and young people can attend independently after a few weeks while others need ongoing support from staff or volunteers. Groups and organisations respond better to requests for inclusion when they know help will be available.

Becoming inclusive has changed my role. We have set up a directory of activities for children in the local area, have undertaken risk assessments, planned which member of staff will support which service user, where staff and volunteers are going to be, which facilities to use and how many staff we need for each setting. We also focus a lot more on raising our profile and promoting inclusion for children with disabilities, building more links in to the local community. The process of inclusion has been hard work, but everyone at Chorley Families believes that the individual children's needs come first; as a team we're committed to making it work.

# What next for Barnardo's in the North West?



Barnardo's has made a commitment to offer inclusive leisure opportunities for disabled children and young people. While some services have developed leisure services which offer disabled children the chance to be with their mainstream peers, much work remains to be done.

Inclusion is not static. Children's needs change and Barnardo's services are developing in a variety of ways. We want to ensure that inclusion is meaningful and that as many children and young people as possible have the opportunity to try something they are interested in or simply spend time with their non-disabled peers. In addition to the expansion of inclusive services, specific work is also taking place in several areas including consultation and participation, services for children of different ages and working in new communities.

## Consultation and participation

Involving disabled children and young people in planning and delivering services is vital, particularly because inclusion is about opportunities and choices. Some Barnardo's services are involving children and young people in steering groups, while others work with them in informal groups or on a one-to-one basis. The key is to find a way to empower young people and enable them to have a say in and make decisions about their own life.

## Children and young people of different ages

Barnardo's works with a range of children and young people, but we have found that some children's needs are not being met due to limited funding for certain age groups. We have identified gaps at opposite ends of the spectrum – 14 to 18 year olds and children under 4. Barnardo's will be seeking funding that can support this work.

## Working in new communities

Barnardo's works throughout the North West and in a variety of communities. Some services intend to expand their work further to nearby rural areas, for example to meet the demand for inclusive leisure from an increasing number of disabled children, young people and their families.

## Service provision

There is some debate about whether services should provide inclusive leisure opportunities themselves. One service is considering providing an inclusive service at their service base as well as offering disabled children and young people support to access their local communities. They feel that this will give more children the opportunity to become involved in an inclusive service, and will give disabled children and young people another service to use. Other services argue that their role should be to ensure that inclusion is on statutory and voluntary providers' agenda and to work with them, offering training and other support but not taking on the responsibility of providing inclusive services on site.



# Go for it!

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Staff at Barnardo's have identified several key issues that they have needed to address in their move towards inclusive leisure provision.

## Define inclusion

Inclusion means different things to different people. Designing a working definition in partnership with all concerned will help create a shared vision, shared values and shared goals. The definition should allow services to meet the needs of individual children and young people.

## Find committed people

Inclusion will not work if the people involved do not want it to happen. Services need to offer support and dispel the myths that limit the involvement of disabled people in mainstream activities. Parents and children must also be committed to inclusion or it will not work. Volunteers are often required to provide support for children and young people – their recruitment, training and retention can be crucial to the success of inclusive work.

## Work in partnership

One person or organisation cannot have all the answers for all children. Different agencies will be able to help at different times. Community networks are invaluable when it comes to ideas for creative play, procedures or advice on helping families and widening the circle of organisations who work inclusively.

## Consultation and participation

Inclusion demands that children are able to choose what they would like to be able to do in their leisure time and try new activities as their skills and confidence develop or their interests change. A culture of consulting with service users and their families means that people will be able to participate in decisions that affect them and the services they may use.

## Sensitivity

The concerns and anxieties of children and young people, parents and staff need to be recognised and addressed in a sensitive manner – moving towards inclusion can be a daunting process if people are used to segregated services.



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## Flexibility

It is not always easy to achieve, but flexibility is vital to the success of inclusive leisure services. One size does not fit all. Some children will be best supported in specialist groups or in their own home while others will be able to take part in community activities with little additional support.

## Challenging attitudes

'Why should it be different for the disabled child and young person?' Staff within Barnardo's services felt that it was important to keep questioning themselves and those around them. Negative attitudes need to be challenged and solutions worked through. This may involve service workers and volunteers advocating for disabled children, young people and their parents.

## Think about the timescales

Inclusive provision takes time to become established and this may be difficult, especially if long-term funding is not available. But inclusion is dependent on planning and preparation: a child or young person may need some time before they are ready to enter mainstream activities.

## Show it working

It is important for service staff, parents, disabled children and others to demonstrate that a disabled child or young person can choose and enjoy a mainstream leisure activity. This will help disabled children and their families realise that it is possible to overcome barriers and non-disabled children and adults can appreciate that it is positive to involve disabled children in inclusive leisure activities.

## Act now!

A child's early experiences of play and leisure have a lasting impact on their development and wellbeing. Children and young people need opportunities to find out what they like to do in their free time, relax, have fun and share new experiences. Making the most of inclusive services can present disabled children and young people with a wide range of possibilities – the journey can start now!



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Disability Discrimination Act 1995. HMSO, London.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. HMSO, London

Convention on the Rights of the Child. 1989 UNICEF, Geneva, Switzerland

# Organisations and websites



## Action for Leisure

c/o Warwickshire College, Moreton Morrell  
Centre, Moreton Morrell, Warwickshire CV39 9BL  
Tel: 01962 650195  
Email: [enquiries@actionforleisure.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@actionforleisure.org.uk)

## Better Play

Tanners Lane, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1QG  
Tel: 020 8498 7589  
Email: [betterplay@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:betterplay@barnardos.org.uk)  
Website: [www.barnardos.org.uk/betterplay](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/betterplay)

## British Council of Disabled People

Litchurch Plaza, Litchurch Lane, Derby, Derbyshire  
DE24 8AA  
Tel: 01332 295551  
Email: [bcodp@bcodp.org.uk](mailto:bcodp@bcodp.org.uk)  
Website: [www.bcodp.org.uk](http://www.bcodp.org.uk)

## Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education

New Redland, Frenchay Campus, Coldharbour  
Lane, Bristol BS16 1QU  
Tel: 0117 344 4007  
Email: [csie-web@43green.freemove.co.uk](mailto:csie-web@43green.freemove.co.uk)  
Website: [inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/csiefaqs.htm](http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/csiefaqs.htm)

## Contact a Family

209 – 211 City Road, London EC1V 1JN  
Tel: 020 7608 8700  
Email: [info@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:info@cafamily.org.uk)  
Website: [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)

## Disability Challengers

Stoke Park, Guildford GU1 1TU  
Tel: 01483 579390  
Email: [information@disability-challengers.org](mailto:information@disability-challengers.org)  
Website: [www.disability-challengers.org/html/about.html](http://www.disability-challengers.org/html/about.html)

## Disability Rights Commission

Freepost/ MID 01264,  
Stratford upon Avon CV37 9BR  
Helpline: 08457 622633  
Text: 08457 622644  
Email: [enquiry@drc-gb.org](mailto:enquiry@drc-gb.org)  
Website: [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)

## Disability Sport England

Unit 4G, N17 Studios, 784-788 High Road,  
Tottenham, London N17 0DA  
Tel: 020 8801 4466  
Website: [www.disabilitysport.org.uk](http://www.disabilitysport.org.uk)

## Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Homestead, 40 Water End, York YO30 6WP  
Tel: 01904 629241  
Email: [info@jrf.org.uk](mailto:info@jrf.org.uk)  
Website: [www.jrf.org.uk/](http://www.jrf.org.uk/)

## Kidsactive

Pryor's Bank, Bishops Park, London SW6 3LA  
Tel: 020 7384 2596  
Text: 020 7384 2596  
Email: [pip@kidsactive.org.uk](mailto:pip@kidsactive.org.uk)  
Website: [www.kidsactive.org.uk](http://www.kidsactive.org.uk)

## Letterbox Library

71-73 Allen Road, London N16 8RY  
Tel: 020 7503 4801  
Email: [info@letterboxlibrary.com](mailto:info@letterboxlibrary.com)  
Website: [www.letterboxlibrary.com](http://www.letterboxlibrary.com)

## National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries

68 Churchway, London NW1 1LT  
Tel: 020 3787 9592  
Website: [www.natll.org.uk](http://www.natll.org.uk)

## National Children's Bureau

– Children's Play Council (CPC)  
– Children's Play Information Service (CPIS)  
– Council for Disabled Children  
8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE  
Tel: 020 7843 6016  
Email: [cpc@ncb.org.uk](mailto:cpc@ncb.org.uk)  
Website: [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)

## Parents for Inclusion

Unit 2, South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1RL  
Tel: 020 7735 7735  
Email: [info@parentsforinclusion.org.uk](mailto:info@parentsforinclusion.org.uk)  
Website: [www.parentsforinclusion.org.uk](http://www.parentsforinclusion.org.uk)



# Sources of training

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## Action for Leisure

**provides training on play and leisure for children and adults with multiple and profound disabilities**

c/o Warwickshire College, Moreton Morrell Centre, Moreton Morrell, Warwickshire CV39 9BL

Tel: 01962 650195

## Association for Psychotherapists and Counsellors

**provides a range of courses on play therapy and communication through play**

Fern Hill Centre, Fern Hill, Uckfield, Sussex TN22 3BU

Tel: 01825 712312

## Deafworks

**run training on deaf awareness, a play advisory service and sign language courses for individuals and organisations**

59 Banner Street, Clerkenwell, London EC1Y 8PX

Tel: 020 7689 0033

## Kidsactive

**provides training and consultancy on inclusive play, working with a range of groups including early years, playgroups and youth clubs**

Pryor's Bank, Bishops Park, London SW6 3LA

Tel: 020 7384 2596

## Kids' Clubs Network

**runs courses and produces publications on play in out-of-school clubs**

2nd Floor, Bellerive House, 3 Muirfield Crescent, London E14 9SZ

Tel: 020 7512 2112

## Markfield Project

**provides training and consultancy on all aspects of inclusive practice in play/social care for individuals and organisations**

Markfield Road, London N15 4RB

Tel: 020 8800 4143

## National Early Years Network

**runs courses on including disabled children in early years settings**

77 Holloway Road, London N7 8JZ

Tel: 020 7607 9573

# Resources

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Dickens, M and Denziloe, J (1998) *All together – how to create inclusive services for disabled children and their families, a practical handbook for early years workers*. National Early Years Network, London.

Kids Clubs Network (1997) *Opening up the doors – how to make your kids club more accessible*. Kids Clubs Network, London.

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Inclusion is ...

being able to access activities, take part, make choices and be valued. To be able to join in and be listened to.



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