

# Aiming High for Disabled Children

Transforming services for disabled children and their families



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## Ministerial foreword

Through the *Aiming High for Disabled Children* programme, our Government has made disabled children a national priority.

We want this country to be the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up. To make this a reality for disabled children we are giving local authorities and health agencies significant new funding to invest in services over the next three years.

In putting together this programme, we listened to what disabled children and their families said they wanted, to make sure their needs are put first. The programme responds to the Parliamentary Hearings on Services for Disabled Children, chaired by MPs Tom Clarke and Joan Humble, which brought disabled children and their families to Parliament to tell Ministers what needed to change.

When Government Ministers met families with disabled children in their own homes, in schools and in Parliament, we heard that short breaks are the number one priority services for these families.

Responding to what families told us, most of the funding – £370 million from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) with funding from the Department of Health (DH) – will be spent on short breaks. These breaks will give disabled children the chance to develop new relationships and interests and experience life away from their parents as other children do. And they will give parents and carers the much needed chance to take a break from caring.

Transforming short break services is key to delivering the *Aiming High for Disabled Children* programme. But the change mustn't stop there.

We heard that being able to find childcare that meets their child's needs gives parents improved opportunities to work, so we have committed £35 million to making it more accessible.

We heard that services for disabled young people can fall away rather than support the transition into adulthood. So we have committed to setting up a new Transition Support Programme, backed by £19 million of funding, to better co-ordinate the services offered to disabled young people and their families.

And we heard that children with life-limiting conditions – most of whom are disabled – need particularly specialist support, so we have integrated our new children’s palliative care strategy (*Better Care: Better Lives*) into the *Aiming High for Disabled Children* programme.

In addition to the funding commitments, we are taking the steps needed to make the system work better for families with disabled children.

As well as making funding available to support parent forums, for the first time a new national indicator will measure parents’ experiences of the services their families receive. And we will expect every local area to deliver services according to the national expectations set out in the Core Offer to families.

In the *Children’s Plan* we set out our ambition to give every child the best possible start in life and help them to reach their potential. *Aiming High for Disabled Children* is our delivery programme to achieve that ambition.

A transformation in the support available for disabled children has begun and we expect that by 2011 all disabled children and families will see a real difference in their lives. Our Departments are working together and with you to make this a reality.



Handwritten signature of Ed Balls in blue ink, appearing as 'E Balls'.

Ed Balls MP,  
*Secretary of State for Children,  
Schools and Families*



Handwritten signature of Alan Johnson in blue ink, appearing as 'Alan Johnson'.

Alan Johnson MP,  
*Secretary of State for Health*

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# Introduction



*Aiming High for Disabled Children* is the Government's transformation programme for disabled children's services in England. This document sets out the vision behind the programme and the key improvements that Government wants to see developing and continuing in services and support for disabled children and their families.

The programme is led jointly by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department of Health (DH).

“The vision behind *Aiming High for Disabled Children* is for all families with disabled children to have the support they need to live ordinary family lives, as a matter of course.”

# The vision

The vision behind *Aiming High for Disabled Children* is for all families with disabled children to have the support they need to live ordinary family lives, as a matter of course.

To deliver this vision, *Aiming High for Disabled Children* has three priority areas:

## Access and empowerment

The national expectations in the Core Offer will help make services more accessible. Children, young people and their families will be actively involved in the planning and delivery of services in their local area.

## Responsive services and timely support

All professionals responsible for planning services for children, both locally and nationally, will focus on the services disabled children and young people need, particularly at key life stages such as the early years and in transition to adulthood.

## Improving quality and capacity

Significant new funding has been allocated to the services families want and need, in particular short break services which families have described as their key priority.



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# The context

*Aiming High for Disabled Children* supports and delivers the aims of *Every Child Matters* and the *Children's National Service Framework (NSF)* which emphasise the importance of joined up working and services centred around children and their families. In addition, DH and DCSF are working on a joint Child Health Strategy which will be published in 2008. This will bring together and explain the approach to all the different strands of children's health and social care services.

The Government recognises that the individual needs of disabled children and their families are best met through a personal and tailored response from both universal and specialist services. The Government also knows that until now, too many families with disabled children have struggled to get the support they need, rather than having 'the system' meeting their needs effectively.

*“The Government recognises that the individual needs of disabled children and their families are best met through a personal and tailored response...”*



# The funding



The funding for *Aiming High for Disabled Children* results from the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). This will deliver substantial improvements to the way the system works in practice and will help drive forward the *Children's National Service Framework*. The Government has an ongoing commitment to improving outcomes and life chances for disabled children and their families.

The *Aiming High for Disabled Children* programme currently has a total funding package of £430 million from the DCSF during 2008-11. This includes the initial programme budget of £340 million announced in May 2007, topped up with £90 million of additional capital funding for short break services announced in the DCSF *Children's Plan* in December 2007.



This is supported by a significant additional funding package from the DH. This has been allocated to Primary Care Trusts' (PCT) baseline budgets as part of the NHS settlement to improve services for disabled children and palliative care services. These are areas that have been signposted as priorities for the NHS through the Operating Framework. This includes funding for community equipment once the Community Equipment Review has bedded in, to update the stock of wheelchairs and improve the provision of community equipment for disabled children.

The funding from DCSF breaks down into the following streams:

- Short breaks – £370 million
- Childcare – £35 million
- Transition Support Programme – £19 million
- Parent forums – £5 million

Updates on how these funding streams are being spent, and all other programme information, are available at [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ahdc](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ahdc)



# Making the system work better



Measures to make the system work better are as important as the additional funding allocated to the *Aiming High for Disabled Children* programme. Together, these measures reflect a new national and local priority for disabled children. They include:

- A new national indicator on services for disabled children which will be used to measure the experience of families with disabled children. This will help us better understand and assess the performance of local authorities and PCTs across England.
- A Core Offer to disabled children and families – a national set of expectations around information, transparency, participation, assessment and feedback. These standards will help shape local services.
- Work to improve the quality and quantity of information held locally and centrally on disabled children, their families and the services they need.

Updates on these and other measures are available at [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ahdc](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ahdc)

# The difference *Aiming High for Disabled Children* will make

Over the next three years, as the funding and programme reforms take effect, our ambition is that:

- Disabled children will have the same opportunities to develop and fulfil their potential as all other children.
- Families with disabled children will get the support they need, when they need it.
- Universal children's services will be more genuinely inclusive of disabled children, including those with complex needs.
- Disabled children will be at the heart of the ongoing change programme for children's services.

This is a challenging agenda, but it will build on the excellent practice and service provision already in place in many local areas. Working together, with disabled children and families at the centre, we will make it happen.



# How to find out more

Further information and all programme updates for *Aiming High for Disabled Children* can be found at **[www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ahdc](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ahdc)**

To subscribe to our new *Aiming High for Disabled Children* bulletins, visit **[www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ahdc](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ahdc)**

For comments, questions and suggestions, please contact the *Aiming High for Disabled Children* team at **[ahdc.implementation@dcsh.gov.uk](mailto:ahdc.implementation@dcsh.gov.uk)**

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DCSF Publications

PO Box 5050

Sherwood Park

Annesley

Nottingham NG15 0DJ

Tel: 0845 60 222 60

Fax: 0845 60 333 60

Textphone: 0845 60 555 60

Email: [dcsh@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dcsh@prolog.uk.com)

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