BACCH and BACD Survey:  
Impact of austerity measures on families with disabled children

The British Academy of Childhood Disability (BACD) and British Association for Community Child Health (BAACH) have carried out a national survey that looks at the impact of budget cuts on community health teams for disabled children.

In response to this survey and the news coverage, the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) Steering Group has said:

“The issues raised in the BACD austerity measures survey are reflected in the feedback that the NNPCF is receiving from Local Parent Carer Forums. Services for disabled children have been under increasing pressure over the last 12 months and we are now seeing situations where the resilience of families is being eroded and opportunities for disabled children and young people to live ‘ordinary’ lives are reducing.

We are particularly concerned that the impact of austerity measures on services for disabled children and young people will undermine the positive and significant work being done around the Special Educational Needs and Disability reforms via the Children and Families Act 2014, which aims to enable some of society’s most vulnerable children and young people to achieve their full potential.”

Community health teams are critical to disabled children and their families as they are the route to diagnoses for many children and the source of early intervention help through, for example, therapies and blood tests. Community paediatricians have a role in coordinating and integrating health care for children with many health needs and supporting young people through transition. They also provide a lot of other support to families through letters and other evidence for wider services. These services are commissioned through CCGs.

The survey by BACD and BAACH of these community teams has found that they are struggling to meet the needs of families and children and young people. Many posts are frozen or are being cut. This means that in many places there are delays in diagnoses, therapy services cannot be provided criteria for access to services are being changed. This reflects cuts to budgets and lack of understanding of the needs of the children for whom the services are being commissioned.
As a result BACD and BAACH are calling for everyone who has any influence to:

- STOP the cuts to services for disabled children and young people
- Mandate prospective data capture at the point of clinical care so that knowledge of population needs can inform intelligent planning across agencies for evidence-based services to best meet their needs
- REINVEST and REBUILD competent, interagency teams to prevent disabling conditions where possible and where it is not, to identify them early so that appropriate management and support can be put in place, informing and engaging with families.

The full survey results can be found here.

The BACD and BAACH survey follows Contact a Family’s Counting the Cost 2014 survey (based on responses from more than 3,500 families) show a sharp rise in families with disabled children going without the basics such as food, heating and days out as a family since last researched in 2012.

NNPCF Steering Group
The National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) was launched in 2011, and is funded by central government. We became a formally constituted Group in November 2013. The NNPCF membership is made up of Parent Carer Forums of which there is one in almost every local authority area in England. Each Parent Carer Forum in receipt of the Department of Education participation grant is a member of the NNPCF.

The function of the NNPCF is to develop cohesive good practice and effective participation and a solution focused approach at all levels, locally, regionally and nationally.

The aims of the NNPCF are to:

- Ensure that good practice, knowledge and shared expertise about parent participation continues to grow and strengthen.
- Develop a cohesive and coherent structure to sustain and develop the effectiveness of parent carer forums across England.
- Strengthen the pan disability, parent/carer led model of local forums and boost our collective voice.

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