



# Play Action Guide

## Inclusion in Play

The information in this guide is used with the kind permission of **Merseyside Access to Play**, who run a thoroughly enjoyable and inspirational training programme on Inclusion.

The subject of inclusion is, quite rightly, to the forefront of people thinking with regard to play provision. When we talk of the child's right to play, we mean the right of EVERY child to be involved.

There can be some trepidation when considering Inclusion in a play project, usually concerned with lack of knowledge around disability and an understandable concern to 'get it right' for those involved.

### The Social Model of Disability

The key to getting to grips with the issue is not to look at the medical definition of disability (although some knowledge will help) but to approach from the view of the Social Model of Disability. This emphasises disability as a social construct- people are dis-abled by society. The use of the Social Model challenges the use of negative and stereotypical assumptions, the social and material structures and derogatory attitudes and language.

By beginning to tackle those issues, even within yourself, you begin to change the world, for the better, for all those you work with.

### Barriers

Some barriers to inclusion are physical, but most are of attitude. These are affected by the language we use and hear. The knock on effect of negative language can result in disabled people being seen as 'sufferers', "stupid", "inept", or "incapable" of leading full lives.

Addressing the issues on a play project can positively affect those lives, and the lives of everyone involved. As language is constantly changing and evolving there are no set rules to follow.

Only by communicating with disabled people will you discover which terms are preferable for individuals and which terms are updated to positively reflect disabled people in society. Many disabled people find that terms are important because:-

"they represent discussions we have been having to build up our ideas and our determination to be taken seriously and treated with respect"





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## Common myths

There are a number of myths which continue to distract workers from the reality of inclusion.

“it’s all about ramps and toilets”

“disabled children are sick children who need a lot of care and attention”

“We don’t have the equipment to work with disabled children”

If we had disabled children on our playscheme the other children might pick on them “

“We don’t know how to deal with children with behavioural problems”

## Guidelines for developing an inclusion project

When devising an inclusion policy it is important that you bear in mind three main things.

**Why am I doing it?**

**Who am I doing it for?**

**Have I consulted disabled people?**



**Talking about The Rights of the Child is one thing.  
Making it an active, working policy is a must.**

Once a child enters your project there are a number of fundamentals that need to be addressed constantly :-

The child needs to be seen as equal to non-disabled children

- being treated as unique, not as part of a collective group (the disabled)
- being addressed, and being spoken about, by their name
- being encouraged to be themselves
- being given enough time to be able to get the hang of things in order to take an active part in sessions and projects
- to be given the time and opportunity to understand what is going on
- to be listened to, and understood.

Sometimes people forget about the child, and only refer to the disability or medical condition...“There’s the Downs kid” or “We have three wheelchairs using our scheme”.

Therefore:-

**Address children with respect**, not as a medical condition, a piece of equipment or an object of achievement

- include children in conversations

**Respect children’s privacy**, especially if they have additional care needs

Treat all information on the child as confidential, it is up to them to divulge any medical condition etc.

**Never discuss information about one child in front of another**

**Involve the child in all decisions affecting them**

**Give the child information about what is going to happen before it does** and explain



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procedures before they occur

**Enable the child to become part of the service**, and don't let them feel that it is a difficulty having them around

**encourage the child to know that they have a right to take part in your service**

don't automatically adopt the attitude that disabled children are 'children in need'

don't ignore questions from non-disabled children, always attempt to answer and satisfy the child's curiosity.

**On a practical level:-**

**Provide positive images which reflect ALL disabled children**, not just white kids in wheelchairs

**Ensure you can deliver the policy.** Don't just use it as a P.C. statement

**Don't confuse practical care (i.e. administering medication, toileting etc) with the notions of providing respite.**

**Provide initial staff training on certain aspects of disability.** Staff will be far more understanding and confident if they are aware of the symptoms (of ADHD for example). Just think how much more confident you felt when you had finished your first, First Aid Course.

**Don't think you have to be an expert to work with disabled children**

**Don't work in isolation.** The entire staff team, management and the children and parents will need to be involved.

**Don't think that Inclusion means putting in a ramp or a toilet and leaving it at that.**

**Don't leave children sitting on the sidelines of activities as passive spectators.**

**Don't stop children asking questions about disabilities**, but

**Do challenge any discriminatory remarks by children or staff**

**BELIEVE that what you are doing is right.**



## Legislation

By 2004, all employers, however many staff they employ, will fall within the scope of the Disability Discrimination Act Part 111(DDA). Also, by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004, any organisation providing a service must have taken steps (sometimes literally) to have removed, altered or provided reasonable means of avoiding features that would make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of the service. Necessary work must be carried out prior to that date, not after it.

**Further details are available from**

Disability Rights Commission Tel:- 0845 762 2633

E-mail [enquiry@drc-gb/dda](mailto:enquiry@drc-gb/dda)

[www.disability.gov.uk/dda](http://www.disability.gov.uk/dda)



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Public Play areas fall into this legislation, after confirmation from the Government that it would put in place measures set out in a private members bill, *The Children with Disabilities (Play Areas) Bill*, tabled by Liberal Democrat MP Adrian Sanders. This means that all local authorities must have assessed their local play areas in consultation with disability organisations.

## Further reading:-

**The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Vol 6: Children with disabilities**

**Disability Discrimination Act, 1995. Access to Goods, Facilities and Services-DL 80 April 1996**

**The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**  
(Articles 2, 3, 6, 12, 13, 15, 17, 23 and 31)

**Charter for Children's Play- National Voluntary Council for Children's Play 1992** (Play for All, Safety, Services)

**U.N Convention on the Rights of the Child - Know Your Rights**  
Translation By and For Young People.



## Useful Contacts:-

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