

Access, support and involving parents with disabilities

*"Most teachers don't understand that we need to be involved."
(Parent with disabilities)*

Who is this chapter for?

- All staff
- School lead or staff interested in becoming/establishing a school lead within your school
- School leadership team
- Parent support adviser
- Home-school link

This chapter will support schools to:

- support parents with disabilities to enable them to engage in their child's education on the same level as with other parents.
- ensure they are accessible to parents who have ill-health or disabilities.
- ensure your communication with parents takes into account any illness or disability and provide a range of formats accordingly.
- avoid relying on young carers to translate for parents.

Synopsis

Poor communication between a school and parents can be the result of an illness or disability within the family. Poor communication with parents, or parental difficulties in accessing the school, such as parents' evenings, can compound any barriers for a young carer.

Schools should be accessible to all parents including those affected by disability or illness and those whose first language is not English. Good communication with parents will mitigate many of the issues ensuing from a pupil's family situation and caring role.

Physical access

Schools and colleges should be accessible to parents who are disabled or have a long-term illness. Communication strategies include provision for any parent with a visual, hearing or



communication impairment (as covered in the *Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005*) with regard to access to goods, services and facilities.¹

Communication and language barriers

Schools should make allowances for parents who find it difficult to access parents' evenings and should find additional ways of communicating with them. Provisions should be made for parents with a visual, hearing or communication impairment. They should be asked in what format they would prefer school reports, which could include Braille, large print, 'easy-read', CD or verbal discussions, and sign language interpretation at meetings.

Home visits, taped letters or school reports translated into other languages are all possible solutions for parents from migrant, refugee or asylum-seeking families who may need support to be involved in their child's education. This can require additional language and translation services being made available during enrolment or parents' evenings. It is not appropriate for the child to be used as an interpreter or translator for their parent.

Other chapters within this resource to help you understand this topic

- 4** Barriers to learning faced by young carers
- 8** Transport to and from school
- 28** Support for the whole family: signposting, referrals and partnership work

Key resources

- **Morris, J (2004), *Disabled Parents and Schools, Barriers to Parental Involvement in Children's Education*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.**
<http://www.disabledparentsnetwork.org.uk>
- **Disability Discrimination Act (1995)**
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_1
- **Disability Discrimination Act (2005)**
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2005/ukpga_20050013_en_1
- **Disabled parents and school**
Information provided by DirectGov.
www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/Disabledparents/DG_10037906
- **Supporting refugee young carers and their families: A toolkit for ALL practitioners**
Developed by The Children's Society Family Health Inclusion Project and funded by the Department of Health this is a tool for all adult and children's agencies in contact with refugee and asylum seeking families.
www.refugeetoolkit.org.uk/showPage.php?file=index.htm

¹Frank, J. & McLarnon, J. (2008). *Young carers, parents and their families: Key principles of practice*. The Children's Society