



Webinar

Working Together Well with Parents with Learning Difficulties

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'Attitudes and beliefs' exercise

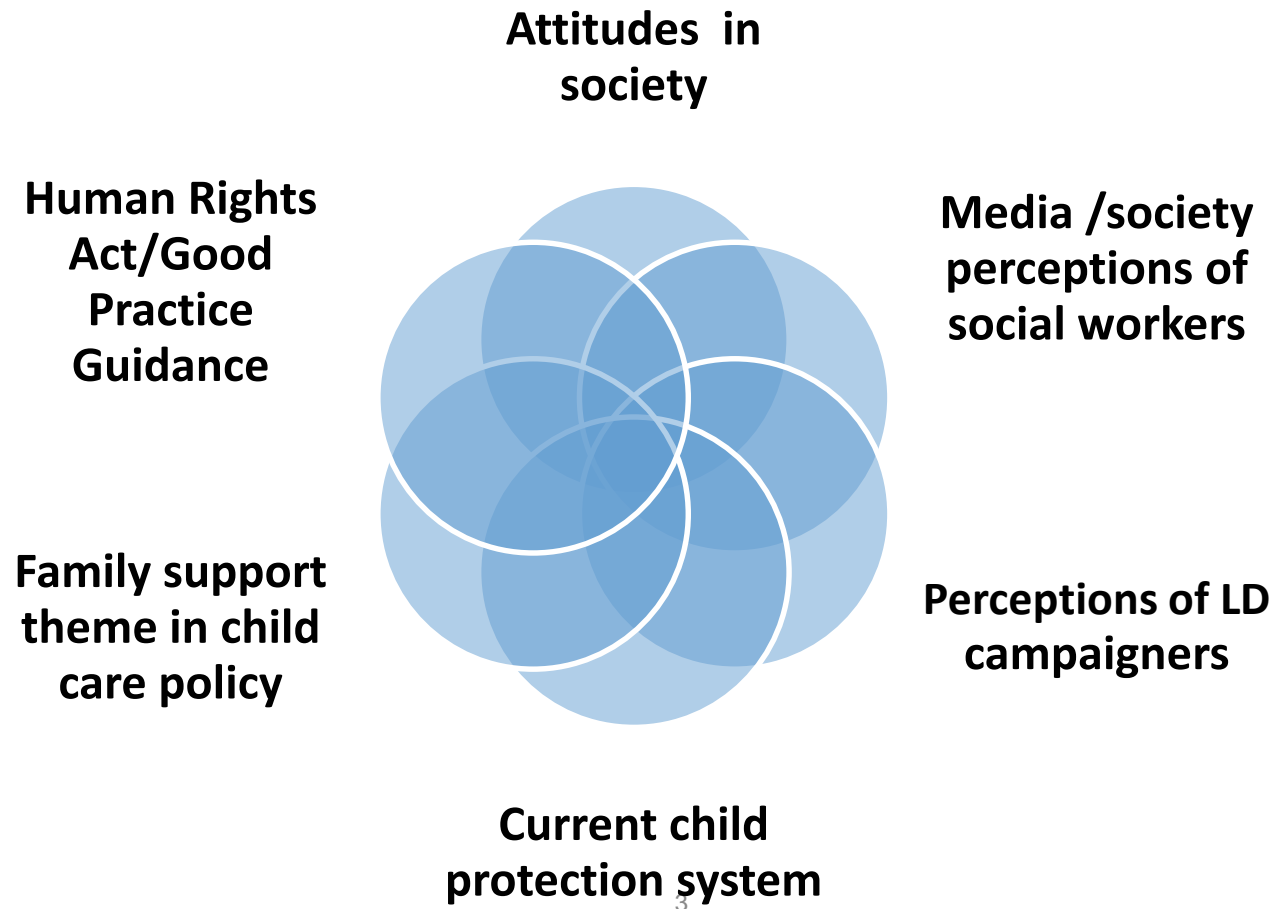
- What do 'we' (society, other professionals we have met) think about adults with learning difficulties becoming parents?

[Note: this does not have to be a personal view]

- What do 'we' think/assume about the well-being of their children?

<https://uob.padlet.org/bethtarleton/mzoanjc0bhyb09qr>

What do 'we' think about parents with LDs?



Parents with learning difficulties

- Increase in number of people with LDs who are becoming parents
- 12.5% of care proceeding cases involve parent with LD (Masson et al., 2008)
- Concerns re neglect by omission
- Large number of professionals involved

Key issues for parents

- Stigma, social exclusion, stereotypes and suspicion
- Professionals' presumption of lack of capacity
- Parents' fear of engagement with C&F social work
- Lack of formal & informal support networks and accessible information

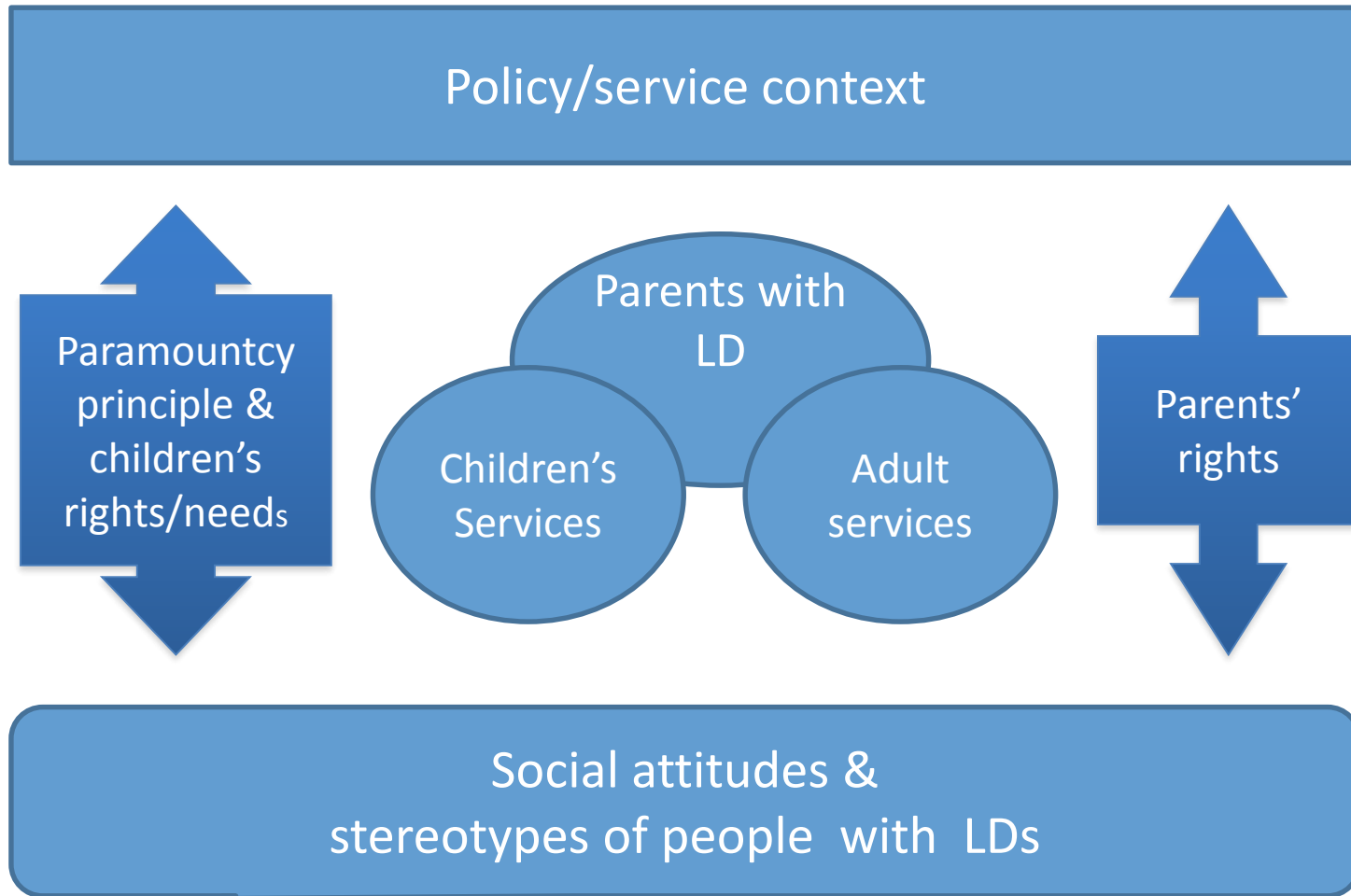
Service challenges: Children's Services

- Paramountcy of child's interests
- Eligibility criteria & threshold decisions
- Family support and/or child protection
- Short-termism vs long-term and/or recurring support needs
- Lack of knowledge/training to work with parents with LD

Service challenges: Adult Services

- Strict eligibility criteria, usually IQ-related
- Lack of focus on parenting
- Perceived emphasis on adults' rights
- Lack of knowledge / experience re child protection

How things are now



Working well with parents

The **Good Practice Guidance**:

- Accessible information and communication.
- Clear and co-ordinated referral and assessment procedures and processes, eligibility criteria and care pathways.
- Support designed to meet the needs of parents and children based on assessments of their needs and strengths. (Competency building support)
- Long-term support where necessary.
- Access to independent advocacy.
- Social model approach: If the focus is on things that *can* be changed (such as inadequate housing) and support needs that can be met (such as equipment to help a parent measure baby feeds), there are many more possibilities for bringing about positive improvements.

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/sps/documents/wtpn/2016%20WTPN%20UPDATE%20OF%20THE%20GPG%20-%20finalised%20with%20cover.pdf>

Using the GPG

President of the Family Division's Guidance - Family Proceedings: Parents with a Learning Disability - 10 April 2018

'My primary purpose in issuing this Guidance is to bring to the attention of practitioners and judges, and to commend for careful consideration and application by everyone, the very important "Good practice guidance on working with parents with a learning disability" issued by the Working Together with Parents Network and the Norah Fry Centre in September 2016:'

See policy handout and relevant case law

'Successful practices' with parents with learning difficulties

- ESRC-funded study (Tarleton, Turney, Merchant & Tilbury)
- University of Bristol research sponsorship and local research governance; NHS research ethical approval
- 3 sites, Interviews with 9 parents; 37 professionals; 1 commissioner; 8 Managers
- Project Report: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/sps/documents/wtpn/GTC%20SUMMARY%20REPORT%2016.5.2018%20designed.pdf>

Mothers' perspectives

Mothers had each established a **positive relationship with at least one professional:**

- Workers from the special parenting services as well as health visitors and family support workers and children's social workers
- Parents felt 'respected' and 'supported'
- Felt they had been helped to understand and learn
- Parents felt they could contact professional if they needed advice even if not currently working with them

Practitioner perspectives

- Recognised on-going support needs and multiple issues faced by parents, including stigma
- Understanding of neglect by parents with LDs
- Approach underpinned by concern about safety and wellbeing of the child/ren **but also** understanding the parent and their situation
- Clarity about concerns
- Support tailored to family's needs
- Relationship-based practice
- Multi-professional group working together – and seeing parents as key part of team

Effective relationship-based practice: the '6 Ts'

Working with parents takes:



Time

Trust

Tenacity

Truthfulness

Transparency

Tailored response

Accessible communication

Parents say:

- Give us information and letters in easy read format
- Do not assume that a parent can read or that they have someone who can read things for
- Do not send lots and lots of paperwork
- Avoid handwritten notes in joined up hand writing
- Avoid jargon or explain new words (like assessment) in easier language
- Explain and explain again – check we have understood and use different words if you need to
- Talk slowly and clearly
- Meetings should be short, parent focused, reports in advance, breaks if necessary.

Are you able to attend the concert that is being held on Friday?

Accessible information

- No jargon and explain words like assessment
- Use a clear font like Arial or Century Gothic
- Use font size 14 or above
- Use the number **2** not two.
- Use **bold**, not underline or *italics* for important points like dates and times
- Use short sentences. Only one point to a sentence.
- Ask people what works for them.
- Pictures on the left of text which show the key point of the sentence
- Use photos that are relevant to parents.



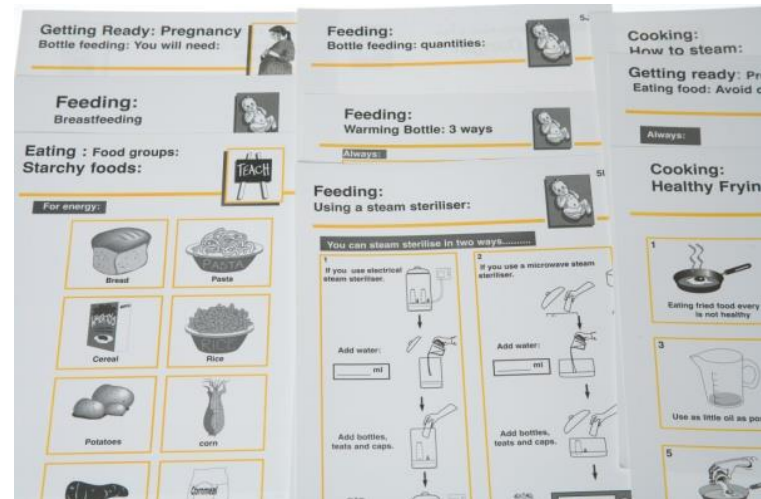
Supporting skill development

- Praise for parents' achievements, emotional support and support to develop self-esteem
- Helping parents understand what is expected and to respond positively to the support offered - advocacy
- Supporting parents re personal issues - poor housing, debt, harassment
- Supporting skills development through group work
 - Provision of appropriate courses such as adapted parenting / healthy eating courses
 - Information / advice in support groups on relevant topics - such as healthy eating, play, managing money
 - Enabling parents to run support groups - develop confidence and meeting skills

Supporting skill development

To support parents to develop skills:

- clear communication
- creativity - role play, modelling, videos
- step-by-step pictorial information
- personalised props
- repeating skills frequently



Example:

‘But with [Mother] we actually, you know, took a doll and took it into the sleep environment, and put it down in the cot, and showed her how to make the cot up, and what things to think about and so on, and were much more hands-on and practical with that. And also repeating it, so that she could understand it [...]

... we used a DVD about how to attach baby at the breast, what that looks like, we showed her with a doll, we gave her the opportunity to hold a doll, we lent her a DVD and went through it with her about how to hand express if she couldn't attach baby to the breast, and what that would be like, and showed her how to do that with a little breast, and all those kinds of things working up to the birth’

Advocacy

Especially important in child protection:

- Emotional support
- Translation
- Bridge between parents and professionals
- Support parents to understand and engage
- Enable other professionals to focus on child

Section 20, CA 1989 (voluntary accommodation) agreements have been receiving increasing scrutiny from the courts. Local Authorities must ensure the parents fully understand their options and the likely consequences of agreeing/declining to agree to s.20 accommodation. Failure to do so has been found to amount to a breach of the parent and the child's human rights.

Multi-agency working

- As few workers as possible supporting the family
- Use of a key worker system.
- Coherent team:
- Clarity and agreement on what 'good parenting' is for particular family
- Shared goals and attitudes developed through joint training
- Honesty and on-going communication between workers (phone calls/communication book)
- Clear understanding of roles and boundaries and valuing of experience
- Gaining parents consent for sharing information
- Workers with experience of learning difficulties retaining a focus on child protection and reporting issues.
- Develop joint protocols/care pathways -
<https://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide19/template/processes.asp>

Example of a multi-agency protocol

Working Together to Support Parents with a Learning Disability or Learning Difficulty: Joint working protocol: Brighton and Hove City Council; Directorate of Families, Children and Learning and Health and Adult Social Care.

<https://phantom.brighton-hove.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=112206>

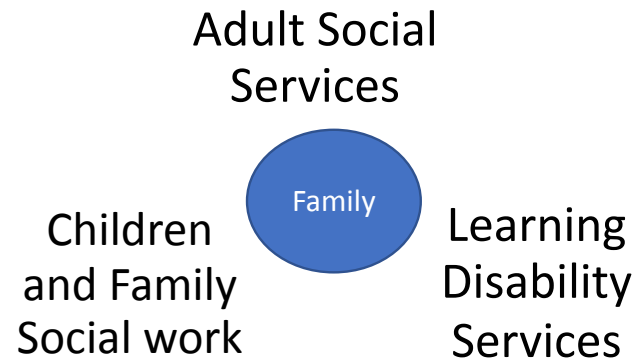
- Overarching principles of Good Practice
- Local authorities and all other agencies working or in contact with children have a responsibility to safeguard and promote children's welfare.
- Children's needs are usually best met by supporting their parents to look after them.
- Professionals should respect and support the private and family lives of parents who have additional support needs associated with physical or sensory impairment, learning disability/ difficulty, disability, mental health problems, long-term illness or drug or alcohol problems.
- Support needs should be addressed by enabling parents to access universal and community services wherever possible and appropriate, with reasonable adjustments made to facilitate engagement with support on offer.
- Key recommendations – 5 key themes from *Good Practice Guidance*

Implications for policy and practice

- Political and ethical commitment to addressing **long-term** and/or **recurrent** support needs of parents with learning disabilities within a relational framework, to enable **care for** parents and **care by** parents
- ‘Social model’ of child protection that acknowledges impact of deprivation & poverty (cf Featherstone et al, 2014)

A model for relational practice

6Ts framework to support vulnerable families as part of society



Non-stigmatising views of parents with LDs