

About Family Action

Family Action has been a leading provider of services to disadvantaged and socially isolated families for 140 years. We work with over 45,000 families every year providing practical, emotional and financial support through over 100 services based in communities across England. We build on families' strengths, supporting them to fulfil their potential and make a positive contribution to their community. We use this experience to campaign for a society free from disadvantage and social isolation.

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family
action

Parents
with Learning
Disabilities

supporting families since 1869

Parents with Learning Disabilities

“People with learning disabilities can be good parents and provide their children with a good start in life, but may require considerable help to do so.”

Government Consultation, 2007

Family Action’s Valuing Families service supports parents with learning disabilities and their children to improve the quality and stability of family life. Our key aims are to improve outcomes for children and their parents’ ability and confidence in parenting. Based on Family Action’s successful Building Bridges model, support is provided on an outreach basis, working with families in their own homes and communities.

Who Do We Work With?

- Parents and carers with learning disabilities
- Children with parents with learning disabilities
- Other professionals in health and children’s services

What Do We Offer?

We work with families when and where they need us, such as at bathtime or bedtime, at the school gates, in the park or attending meetings together. We provide regular practical support to families, alongside one-to-one support for parents and children alike.

From the beginning we get to know parents and children, to build trust and agree what we’ll work on together. Initially it usually helps to visit the family often and to be in touch by phone between visits. We’ll also find out about people’s learning styles, e.g. some of us prefer to be shown something new and then try it on our own; some of us want to practise with someone else first.

A key ingredient is how we communicate rather than what we do. Parents with learning disabilities often comment that other services’ communication is poor and their written information inaccessible.

We provide coordination and liaison between families, schools and other organisations. We can help children in the family to better understand their situation, have more fun and take control over some parts of their lives, e.g. cooking healthy meals and getting ready for school.

Working with parents with learning disabilities will often mean developing new strategies, e.g. to put domestic routines into place. We’ll support them to understand why their children need stimulation, especially from themselves and why the house needs to be kept clean. Then we’ll show them how; breaking new tasks into manageable chunks and giving praise and encouragement as well as practising together. Sometimes, we’ll add picture charts, which are a useful reminder. This helps to reinforce learning so it sticks.

We enable families to access the services they need as well as ensuring they receive the benefits and resources to which they are entitled.



Outcomes

- Results from Family Action's work show that the right support can and does enable parents with learning disabilities to improve family stability
- Parents are supported to look after their children
- Children have healthier routines including regular mealtimes and bedtimes
- Reduction in safeguarding issues
- Improved relationships between the family and school, neighbours and the surrounding community

ECM Outcomes

- Be healthy:** children are enabled to be physically, mentally and emotionally healthy
- Stay safe:** ensure children are cared for, are safe and secure both at home and in the street
- Enjoy and achieve:** ensure children are included within their communities at school and at home

Make a positive contribution: children are encouraged and enabled to participate appropriately with practical tasks in the home

Achieve economic well being: teaching budgeting skills can provide material benefits, e.g. school uniforms, beds, curtains etc.

Quotes from service users (from Leicestershire Valuing Families service):

- “I liked it when she showed me how to cook”
- “It’s a friendly service”
- “It felt like she was on my side”
- “I could trust her and talk to her about anything, anywhere.”

For more information about Family Action’s Learning Disabilities Services please contact:

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Visit our website at www.family-action.org.uk/learningdisabilities