

Disabled Children's Access to Childcare (DCATCH): a qualitative evaluation

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This research report was commissioned before the new UK Government took office on 11 May 2010. As a result the content may not reflect current Government policy and may make reference to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) which has now been replaced by the Department for Education (DFE).

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.

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Executive Summary

The *Disabled Children's Access to Childcare* (DCATCH) pilot was a specific element of the *Aiming High for Disabled Children* (AHDC) initiative dedicated to improving childcare provision for this group of children and their families. This £35 million initiative, which ran from March 2008 to March 2011, involved funding ten local authorities to pilot ways of improving the range and quality of childcare for families of disabled children, and involving families in shaping childcare services.

This report presents the findings of two qualitative studies: (i) of families' views on the acceptability and impact of DCATCH, and (ii) a process evaluation of three themes identified by the scoping study: brokerage; information and outreach; and the provision of additional services (including one-to-one support for disabled children in group settings).

Key findings

- The DCATCH pilot offer has been very positively received by the 22 families with disabled children interviewed in our study, and has met their needs in a responsive, flexible and solution focused way. The childcare accessed has enabled parents to meet work and other commitments, and raised their expectations about being able to work more hours or in better jobs. It has also provided positive and enjoyable opportunities for disabled children and young people which increased their confidence and independence.
- The brokerage role of DCATCH teams – giving advice to parents, providing support to childcare providers and facilitating dialogue between the two - has been crucial to their effectiveness.
- Local authorities strategies to deliver information about DCATCH have involved undertaking outreach work, holding events and using 'information champions' in various settings.
- A range of additional provision has been funded under DCATCH, this included new provision, 1-1 support for disabled children in group settings and buddying schemes.
- The two main barriers to delivery of DCATCH have been resistance to inclusive working encountered in some mainstream settings and local authorities; and parents lacking confidence in the ability of childcare to meet their children's needs.
- A key facilitator for effective delivery has been partnership working.
- There were mixed views from stakeholders on the long term sustainability of the work undertaken by the DCATCH pilots. Some professionals were optimistic that the impact of pilot funding ending would be offset by the positive legacy of the DCATCH programme. However, others considered that the end of DCATCH funding would jeopardise activities that had been set up and the raised expectations of families with disabled children would no longer be met. Parents tended to share this more pessimistic view. In some areas mainstream funding had been earmarked for the continuation of key DCATCH posts.

Background

Aiming High for Disabled Children (AHDC): Better support for families (HM Treasury/DfES 2007), was launched in May 2007 by the previous Government. It aimed to improve service provision for disabled children and their families, stressed the importance of appropriate childcare for disabled children and young people and acknowledged the lack of adequate provision to meet need. The *Disabled Children's Access to Childcare* (DCATCH) pilot was a specific AHDC initiative dedicated to improving childcare provision for this group of children and their families. This £35 million initiative, which ran from March 2008 to March 2011, involved funding ten local authorities to pilot ways of addressing the lack of childcare which meets the needs of disabled children and their families, and of reducing barriers to access. The focus of the pilots was on improving the range and quality of childcare for families of disabled children, and involving families in shaping childcare services.

The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) was commissioned by the Department for Education (formerly the Department for Children, Schools and Families) in May 2009 to evaluate the DCATCH pilot in collaboration with the School of Health and Social Studies (SHSS) at the University of Warwick, and the Norah Fry Research Centre (NFRS) at the University of Bristol.

A scoping study for the evaluation, carried out in all ten DCATCH pilot areas in summer 2009, identified some key themes common across all the pilot areas. These key themes were explored in more detail through a series of qualitative studies. This report presents the findings of two of these studies: a qualitative study of families' views on the acceptability and impact of DCATCH, and a process evaluation of three themes identified by the scoping study: brokerage; information and outreach; and the provision of additional services (including one-to-one support for disabled children in group settings). A further report examining the themes of parent participation and workforce development was published in June 2010 (Jessiman et al, 2010).

These qualitative studies had two aims:

- To find out more about what impacts childcare arrangements made through DCATCH have had on families, and what particular characteristics of support made the most difference.
- To explore key interventions being developed by pilots with the aim of sharing the learning with other local authorities to enable replication and adaptation of common and successful practice.

The qualitative study of the acceptability and impact of DCATCH involved interviews with 38 individuals in 22 families drawn from all ten pilot areas. The majority of interviewees were parents (19 mothers and five fathers), with seven disabled young people and four siblings also involved in the study. The majority of the interviews were carried out face to face in the family home. Five were conducted by telephone.

The process evaluation on the three themes of brokerage, information and outreach and the provision of additional services involved a total of 26 respondents across

nine of the ten DCATCH pilot areas¹. This included DCATCH project managers, who were interviewed in all pilot areas and a range of other professionals working for the

¹ The 10th was not included in this second round of process evaluation due to resource limitations. However, this pilot was included in some detail in themes covered in the July 2010 process evaluation report.

local authority. Face to face individual interviews were carried out with 14 respondents; four were involved in paired interviews, seven in group interviews and one by telephone.

The findings from the two studies are discussed below under the following headings:

- Families' views on impact and acceptability
- Brokerage
- Information and outreach
- Additional provision

Findings: Families' views on impact and acceptability

The need for childcare

Families told us why they needed childcare for their disabled children and there were three principal issues which frequently overlapped: accessing childcare in order to work; in order to meet other family commitments; in order to meet the disabled child's needs for social activities, inclusion, interaction and friendship.

All of the families who needed childcare in order to work said they had tried to find childcare solutions but had faced significant difficulties due to:

- Refusal of group childcare providers to accept their child unless they had 1-1 support in place;
- Prohibitive cost of 1-1 support in group childcare settings;
- Lack of availability of private childminders (especially in rural areas);
- Additional costs charged by private childminders for disabled children;
- Difficulties in finding childminders who would accept their children for reasons relating to either the child's impairment, behaviour or support needs.

The majority of families had more than one school age child and described the usual demands of the whole family unit. In some instances, parents said that they hoped that setting up successful childcare opportunities for the disabled child, would create more opportunity for them to spend time with their other children. Parents also reported that time away from substantial care responsibilities and the opportunity to work and/or have time alone or with friends, was an important way of maintaining their own sense of well-being.

The need to organise childcare to meet work and other family commitments was, in the majority of cases, said to be combined with the desire to create opportunities for the disabled child/young person in the family to be with other children their own age, enjoy social interaction, and have time apart from parents (as non-disabled peers would).

Support received from DCATCH

Amongst the families in our sample, the support from DCATCH could be grouped into three main types:

- 1) Paying for personal assistants (PAs) or carers to come into the family home to look after or be with the disabled child/young person;
- 2) Support (financial and other) to access private childminders;

- 3) Paying for staff time (usually 1-1) to support the disabled child/young person in schemes and clubs outside of school hours and in the summer holidays.

Acceptability of DCATCH support

Previous research has shown that families with disabled children often cite difficulties and delays when they try to access support and services². We asked families what the DCATCH process (at the start and on an on-going basis) had been like for them.

Parents in this study universally said that the process of getting DCATCH support put in place was very straightforward, quick, and with the minimum of paperwork or assessment. In most cases, parents said that the DCATCH lead sorted out all of the paperwork and administration for them. This level of support was said by families to continue beyond the set-up period. DCATCH staff were said to be available, competent, reliable and concerned that things were working well – all things which were very appreciated by families.

Every family reported that the support that they received with childcare was (more than) acceptable. Apart from problematic issues described as ‘minor’ by four parents (who nonetheless said that the overall package of support was acceptable), accounts from families were universally positive.

The main aspects of support which were cited when discussing acceptability were:

- **Confidence in provision and support staff**

There were a number of qualities associated with good staff (in childcare settings and DCATCH staff alike) that families talked about: confidence, competent at things like lifting or communication, being respectful and caring towards the disabled child/young person.

- **Opportunities for social interaction for children and young people**
(including with non-disabled children)

Childcare which had an emphasis on disabled children and young people enjoying themselves and having social opportunities and social interaction were greatly welcomed by parents and children alike. Children and young people described doing activities they had never done before (for example, kayaking, archery, rock climbing, karting, going to pubs and eating out).

- **Positive feelings associated with accessing support in the same way that other families might**

Parents citing this aspect of acceptability spoke very positively about how it felt to access childcare services that other families with a non-disabled child might. It seemed to have an empowering and ‘equalising’ effect. Two parents who were accessing play schemes which were open to disabled and non-disabled children said they valued the ‘ordinariness.’

² Audit Commission (2003) *Services for disabled children: A review of services for disabled children and their families*. Audit Commission: London; Slade, Z. et al, (2009) *Parental experience of services for disabled children*, Department for Children, Schools & Families, DCSF-RR147

- **Flexibility**

The flexibility of the childcare made available through DCATCH was the most frequently cited area of satisfaction (and usually in contrast to previous childcare arrangements or offers of short breaks which were considered to offer no flexibility in relation to meeting work related childcare needs). Flexibility of arrangements was usually built-in at the beginning of putting the childcare package together. Families described an individualised and tailored approach with arrangements that suited working hours which could be either very specific or variable.

Impacts

Four main kinds of impact were described by families:

1. Impact on capacity to work;

Impact on parents' capacity to work was the most frequently cited, with childcare mentioned by all 20 parents who were working. Of these, eight parents said that the childcare made the difference between working and not working at all. Most people in this situation said that they had negotiated as much leeway with employers as they could and found it hard to imagine that they would be able to find alternative jobs if the childcare ceased.

The impact of working was financial but was also said to impact positively on self esteem and well-being. We were also told of examples where childcare encouraged some parents to increase working hours or apply for more senior roles with greater responsibilities (and pay).

2. Positive and enjoyable experiences for the disabled child/young person

All of the disabled children and young people who took an active part in the interviews said or showed things which suggested that they enjoyed the social and play opportunities afforded them by the childcare and activities they received. Parents speaking on behalf of their children also recounted the important and positive impact of play, friendships, social interaction and separateness from home and parents. Social interaction and stimulation was said by parents to be in short supply outside of school for many of the young people, so this was regarded as a key benefit of the activities they were accessing.

3. An increase in confidence and independence for both parents and children/young people

An additional impact associated with families securing childcare arrangements that they could trust was a reported increase in confidence and independence: children and young people more confident because of their social interactions and parents more confident that they could leave their disabled child with someone else; and, as a result of 'safe' spaces in which disabled children and their parents could be apart, a greater sense of independence for children, parents and other family members.

4. Time for parents to pursue ordinary activities and protect mental health

About a third of parents said that having good childcare and activities in place impacted positively upon their sense of well-being – they worried less about their child's isolation and worried less about thinking how to occupy their time. It also freed up parents to do ordinary things like housework and be with other members of the

family, or even as one mother remarked, be alone at home which she said was a huge rarity and pleasure.

Findings: Brokerage

Aims of brokerage

Brokerage work within local authorities has two elements: the *delivery of advice* to families on childcare options (including signposting to other sources of advice and support), and the use of brokerage officers as *facilitators* in enabling families to access childcare provision (both targeted and mainstream, as well as registered and non-registered options).

In their role as facilitators, brokerage officers seek to establish a dialogue between parents and childcare settings, assessing the needs of children and exploring how these could be met by the setting. More interventionist aspects of this work entails brokers working with settings to actively support them to provide care for disabled children.

Brokerage interventions are geared towards achieving two main outcomes within local authorities: improving how the *brokerage service* operates within an area and improving the willingness and ability of *settings*, particularly mainstream ones, to engage with and provide childcare for disabled children.

Types of brokerage activity

The scoping study outlined two main channels, through which brokerage is provided by local authorities: through the *Family Information Service* (FIS) and through the work of *DCATCH project staff and inclusion coordinators*. The process evaluation focused on both of these.

Brokerage work through the FIS entails a DCATCH brokerage officer who has specialist knowledge of the needs of disabled children and local childcare provision, being placed within the FIS. This is usually done with a view to increasing the skills of FIS staff so that they feel confident to deal with childcare (and other) queries from families with disabled children. This was accomplished in a number of ways, including peer support within FIS and inviting Parent Trainers to provide input into the brokerage service at FIS. The support given brokerage officers varies according to the needs of families, but a typical brokerage process tends to involve:

- A referral being made to FIS staff/DCATCH officer through a number of sources.
- A needs assessment involving the brokerage officer visiting families to ascertain the disability issues affecting their child and their childcare needs and to discuss the range of childcare options with them.
- Establishing a dialogue between settings and parents around childcare.
- Follow-up work to see how the childcare arrangement is working for parents and setting.

Where brokerage is managed outside of FIS, it occurs in a variety of ways, including:

- DCATCH funded brokerage officers being embedded in different strands of mainstream local authority work (e.g. employment and welfare and benefits strands). This is done with a view to increasing the skills of those working in different strands of local authority activity and improving joined-up support for families.

- Brokerage work being managed directly by the DCATCH team. In one local authority, this involved three brokerage workers, known as 'practitioners', being assigned to deal with parent referrals in different parts of the county.
- Brokerage workers being located in, and usually employed by, childcare settings. In one local authority, there are five Play Inclusion Coordinators, who are located in Children's Centres who are tasked with facilitating the involvement of the setting in providing childcare for disabled children.

Challenges of Brokerage

The challenges faced by the local authorities in delivering brokerage include:

- **Recruiting and retaining DCATCH brokerage officers:** Given the highly skilled nature of the job, local authorities reported the challenges of recruiting high calibre staff and holding on to these during the course of the programme.
- **Challenging attitudes within settings and FIS:** Staff interviewed reported initial resistance from settings and, to a lesser extent, FIS in brokering childcare for families with disabled children. Much of this resistance stems from staff feeling unconfident to deal with disabled children due to a lack of experience and knowledge of disability issues.
- **Working with local authority practices and processes:** This relates to delays caused in the recruitment of key brokerage staff at the start of the programme due to local authority regulations, such as the moratorium some authorities had on recruitment due to anticipated cuts in budgets and the lengthy process involved in the approval of job descriptions and tenders.
- **Challenges working with parents:** There were a number of dimensions to this challenge, including gaining the trust of parents who did not feel confident leaving their child with strangers, convincing parents that FIS could provide brokerage services for disabled children, and addressing the stigma associated with childcare amongst parents from some Black and Minority Ethnic Groups, such as the South Asian community.

Success factors

Success factors identified in the development of brokerage include:

- **The importance of the brokerage officer role:** Brokerage workers are seen to be important in not only delivering brokerage activity, but also in upskilling organisations to undertake this work. In addition to a background in disability issues, brokerage workers are seen to be particularly effective if they have the confidence and connections to network with a range of organisations.
- **Integrating brokerage officers within FIS:** This was identified by interviewees, particularly DCATCH managers, as not only helping to skill up FIS to handle brokerage for disabled children, but also to send out a message that working with disabled children and their families should be a part of mainstream provision.
- **Promotion of brokerage services within FIS:** This is done through various means, including the use of FIS websites and newsletters. Word of mouth approaches using parents to pass on the information to other parents was viewed as particularly effective.
- **Other general brokerage practices:** A range of other brokerage practices are seen to work well. These ranged from having a simple referral system that professionals and parents can use to access easily to parents being involved in helping FIS develop their brokerage service.
- **DCATCH funding:** This funding is seen to make the important brokerage officer posts possible.

- **Local authority support and input:** DCATCH brokerage teams appreciate the emotional, administrative and legal support give by local authorities.

Findings: Information and outreach

Aims of information and outreach

Information and outreach activities are geared towards three outcomes: increasing local knowledge about disabled children and their families, through the mapping of service provision and creating/improving Disabled Children Registers; making information as accessible as possible to parents; and encouraging and supporting settings to provide childcare through the outreach work done by FIS and information champions.

There are two key approaches that DCATCH teams use to identify families that might benefit from information and outreach services: targeting parents through service access points (e.g. special schools and mainstream schools), particularly where Disabled Children's Register (DCR) is not available, and the use of various local authority held databases (these include the Disabled Children's Register, social care databases and databases of DCATCH service users).

Types of information and outreach activity

Some of the DCATCH strategies to deliver information build on those already used by local authorities before DCATCH such as:

Publications and the internet: Written publications that are used to disseminate information of DCATCH include newsletters, DVDs produced in local languages and booklets about childcare provision during school holidays. FIS and local authority websites are also used to provide information around childcare for disabled children.

FIS and local authority staff: Staff are important conduits of information and advice to families. Strategies developed by DCATCH pilots include steps to increase the skills of FIS and other staff to work with disabled children and their families, through support provided by brokerage officers and, in one local authority, by a Disability Information Officer (DIO) who is based in the local authority.

'Information champions': are individuals based in a variety of organisations/settings that conduct information outreach work. For example, in one local authority, there are two types of staff undertaking this role: information champions based in schools and parent champions, who are based in the FIS and local authority departments.

Events to publicise DCATCH: These includes one-off 'information days' organised by information champions that bring together parents and various organisations, as well as regular drop-in surgeries for families with disabled children.

Challenges

Challenges faced by local authorities include:

- **Lack of information about parents at the start of DCATCH:** This relates particularly to local authorities that did not have a DCR at the start of DCATCH.
- **Challenging attitudes within local authorities and settings:** information and outreach activities sometimes met with resistance to the idea of inclusive care. It was regarded as stemming from a lack of experience and/or knowledge of disabled children.

- **Managing information champions and FIS information officers:** where information champions were managed outside the DCATCH team there was less control over their practice and it was therefore harder to ensure quality and consistency of the service. There were also challenges around ensuring that DCATCH information staff embedded in other settings had their time protected for DCATCH activities.
- **Working with local authority processes and other local authority factors:** As well as these contributing to delays in the recruitment of key staff at the start of the programme, some local authority areas were large and geographically dispersed, presenting challenges around disseminating information.
- **Working with parents:** These challenges include: engaging specific types of parents, such as those in mainstream settings and those with children that had complex needs; clarifying parents' understanding of DCATCH (e.g. the difference between DCATCH and Short Breaks); and providing ongoing information to parents as their receptiveness to information is affected by various situational and personal factors.

Success factors

Success factors identified across the local authorities include:

- The work of information officers at FIS and information champions in developing effective information strategies; ensuring that information is delivered in a timely manner to families and settings, and challenging settings around their attitudes to inclusive provision.
- Good partnership work with settings, the voluntary sector and other DCATCH projects to ensure information about DCATCH activities reach a wide an audience as possible, and that parents are more aware of sources of information about childcare in the local area.
- Working with parents parent groups and networks is seen to be crucial to ensuring that parents can influence the information and services that are available and in providing an additional route through which information about DCATCH could be distributed.

Findings: Additional provision

Pilot areas have developed a range of additional provision geared towards increasing access to childcare for disabled children and increasing the quality and flexibility of the childcare experience. The key aim of funding additional provision is to increase the number of disabled children accessing formal childcare, and to increase the number of hours each child is able to access.

Types of additional provision

Additional childcare provision funded under DCATCH falls into three main types: new provision targeted at disabled children; one-to-one support for disabled children in group settings (mostly but not limited to mainstream settings); and buddying schemes.

Challenges

Challenges faced by local authorities included the following:

- Ensuring one-to-one support enhances the setting
- Finding enough qualified staff to support disabled children

- Gaining parents' trust
- Administrative challenges in the local authority.

Success factors

The success factors identified in the development of additional services include:

- **Building relationships with schools:** This is seen to have a number of advantages, including making the running of services, such as after-school clubs, easier, enabling providers to draw on school staff (e.g. teaching assistants) to deliver one-to-one support during school holidays and to overcome problems of access to suitable buildings and equipment.
- **Focusing one-to-one support on settings:** Focusing one-to-one support on settings, rather than individual children, was highlighted by interviewees as one of the most important facilitators to maximise the benefits. Focusing the resource on training and upskilling staff ensures that the additional worker is likely to be able to withdraw earlier, and will make withdrawal less difficult for the child.
- **'Fit for purpose' referral systems:** Referral systems that allow time to fully assess the child's (and parents') needs and are linked with good brokerage work to find the most suitable setting are likely to help allay parents and providers' fears. Referral schemes that are simple, for example allowing parents to self refer online, are seen to help more young people access activities without delay.
- **Integrated working within the local authority:** Despite the challenges of integrated working, some authorities reported good joint working particularly across Short Breaks and DCATCH.

Conclusions

Findings from these qualitative studies have shown that the DCATCH offer has been very positively received by families with disabled children interviewed in our study. The support and intervention provided by the pilots has met their needs in a responsive, flexible and solution focused way. DCATCH staff were generally described in glowing terms by parents.

Effective childcare has enabled parents to meet work and other commitments whilst also providing positive and enjoyable opportunities for disabled children and young people. Almost without exception, these two goals were inextricably linked for families. Disabled children and young people who took part in this evaluation, whilst small in number, all expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the activities in which they were involved.

Families reported how effective childcare has raised their expectations about being able to work more hours or in better jobs; it has also reassured some understandably anxious parents that they can entrust their children to other people; and, that disabled children and young people can experience increased confidence, independence and happiness.

The brokerage role of DCATCH teams has been crucial to their effectiveness. It is the combination of delivering timely advice to parents with the active facilitation of access through dialogue with, and support to, settings that is regarded as significant.

All the pilot local authorities had developed information strategies to deliver information about DCATCH. These involved undertaking outreach work, holding events and using 'information champions' in various settings.

A range of additional provision had been funded under DCATCH, this included new provision, 1-1 support for disabled children in group settings and buddying schemes.

The two main barriers to delivery of DCATCH identified through these studies have been resistance to inclusive working encountered in some mainstream settings and local authorities; and parents lacking confidence in the ability of childcare to meet their children's needs, particularly where these are complex and they have not previously accessed formal childcare.

A key facilitator for effective delivery has been partnership working. Panels consisting of representatives of different funding streams making decisions about resources have been particularly advantageous in ensuring joined up working and ownership of a funding strategy.

There was optimism amongst many professionals interviewed that the impact of funding withdrawal would be offset by the positive legacy of the DCATCH programme in terms of the encouragement and skill enhancement of staff; the processes and resources that had been put in place; and the enhanced confidence of both mainstream settings to provide childcare for disabled children, and of parents to access it. In some areas mainstream funding had been earmarked for the continuation of key DCATCH posts.

This optimism was not shared by all professionals, and some considered that the end of DCATCH funding would jeopardise activities that had been set up and the raised expectations of families with disabled children would no longer be met. Parents tended to share this more pessimistic view. Some expressed fears that without the financial support offered by DCATCH childcare would again become unaffordable while others believed that services would withdraw their child's place when funded 1-1 support ceased being provided. Without deeper structural or attitudinal changes in the wider childcare market these families felt they would potentially be 'back where they started'.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Aiming High for Disabled Children (AHDC): Better support for families (HM Treasury/DfES 2007), was launched in May 2007 by the then Government. It aimed to improve service provision for disabled children and their families, stressed the importance of appropriate childcare for disabled children and young people and acknowledged the lack of adequate provision to meet need. For many parents of disabled children, the lack of affordable and suitable childcare is a significant barrier to taking up work, or having time out from their caring responsibilities to attend to other important issues (Kagen *et al* 1998&9; Daycare Trust 2001&7; Contact a Family 2002; Audit Commission 2003; Russell 2003; National Audit Office 2004). As well as benefiting parents, day care can help to reduce disadvantage and social exclusion by giving disabled children opportunities for a wider range of social contacts and activities (Audit Commission 2003; Daycare Trust 2007; HM Treasury/DfES 2007).

The *Disabled Children's Access to Childcare* (DCATCH) pilot was a specific AHDC initiative dedicated to improving childcare provision for this group of children and their families. This £35 million initiative, which ran from March 2008 to March 2011, involved funding ten local authorities to pilot ways of addressing the lack of childcare which meets the needs of disabled children and their families, and of reducing barriers to access. The focus of the pilots was on improving the range and quality of childcare for families of disabled children, and involving families in shaping childcare services.

In December 2009, the Department for Education (known then as Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), announced that the DCATCH initiative would be rolled out to a wider group of local authorities in England from March 2010. Authorities were funded up to £119,000 for 2010/11 to focus on one or more areas of improvement selected, according to local needs and priorities, from the following menu of options developed through the pilots³:

- Better data: estimating demand and monitoring take up;
- Participation and feedback: consulting with families;
- Improving information for families;
- Supporting families to make choices;
- Workforce development;
- Increasing capacity, inclusion and improving quality;
- Meeting particular childcare needs;
- Affordability and cost.

Support for local authorities has been provided by "Together for Disabled Children" (TDC), part of the "Together for Children" partnership between Serco and 4Children. TDC provided implementation support to each DCATCH pilot authority, as well as reporting to the Department on delivery progress, and identifying, promoting and sharing good practice⁴.

³ DCSF letter to local authorities in England announcing the rollout of the DATCH initiative. 7th Jan 2010
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/publications/documents/laenationalextensiondcatch>

⁴ <http://www.togetherfdc.org>

1.2 DCATCH evaluation design overview

The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) was commissioned by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in May 2009 to evaluate the DCATCH pilot, in collaboration with the School of Health and Social Studies (SHSS) at the University of Warwick, and the Norah Fry Research Centre (NFRC) at the University of Bristol. The key overarching aims of the evaluation are to:

- Provide robust information to assist the implementation of the projects in the pilot authorities, and the wider roll out of projects to other authorities;
- Evaluate the impact of these projects on disabled children and their families;
- Identify key lessons for policy development on childcare provision for disabled children.

The design for the evaluation of DCATCH involves four key stages:

(i) A **qualitative scoping study** – The aim of the study was to: (a) to select programmes and interventions for further analysis; and (b) to carry out detailed preparatory work to inform the design of the impact survey. The scoping study was completed in summer 2009.

(ii) A **quantitative impact survey** of parents in DCATCH pilot authority areas and matched comparison Local Authorities to measure the impact of DCATCH. This survey is ongoing at the time of writing this report.

(iii) A **qualitative acceptability and impact study** to explore the acceptability and impact of DCATCH support/interventions to families.

(iv) A **qualitative process evaluation** to explore key interventions being developed by pilots, and provide information for other local authorities to share successful practice.

This report focuses on the findings of (iii) and (iv), the acceptability and impact study and the qualitative process evaluation.

1.3 Acceptability and Impact Study

This study comprised qualitative interviews with 22 families across the ten DCATCH pilot areas with the aim of exploring the acceptability and impact of DCATCH support/interventions. In agreement with the Department for Education (DfE), we focused on families who had been in receipt of tangible support which resulted in some kind of childcare being put in place. We wanted to find out more about what difference these arrangements made and what particular characteristics of support made the most difference.

1.4 Process Evaluation

The process evaluation explored key interventions being developed by pilots with the aim of sharing the learning with other local authorities to enable replication and adaptation of common and successful practice. The process evaluation report of July 2010⁵, describes the range of intervention types funded under DCATCH across the

⁵ Jessiman, P. et al (2010). *Disabled Children's Access to Childcare (DCATCH): Process evaluation of participation and workforce development activity in the DCATCH pilots*. Department for Education DFE-RR013

ten pilot areas, and Appendix 1 provides a brief summary of activity in each area at the time of the scoping review. The interventions, intended beneficiaries and anticipated outcomes vary widely between pilots, reflecting the varying contexts and 'starting points' across areas, particularly around the pre-DCATCH provision of childcare for disabled children. The types of intervention identified through the scoping study can be grouped into the following nine categories:

- Information and outreach work;
- Brokerage of childcare for disabled children and young people;
- Improved integration of services for disabled children across the local authority;
- Funding Additional childcare places, and one-to-one support in group settings;
- Improving the data held by local authorities on disabled children, their families, and the services they need;
- Research, evaluation, and audits of service provision;
- Support for parents to access employment and training;
- Parent and child participation in service design and delivery;
- Workforce Development.

Criteria for the selection of themes for the process evaluation were agreed with the Department for Education (DfE) and the evaluation steering group based on the following criteria:

- (a) the theme emerges in two or more authorities (identified through the scoping study work to date);
- (b) Lessons can be learnt on barriers to and facilitators of successful implementation.

The process evaluation of the parent participation and workforce development themes was reported along with the scoping study in July 2010. This second process evaluation report has examined the following themes:

- Brokerage;
- Information and outreach
- Additional provision.

The scoping study identified these themes as key areas of implementation across the ten DCATCH pilot areas in which there were examples of good practice and innovative interventions. For this process evaluation, we selected local authority interventions that were sufficiently established to allow lessons to be learnt about implementation which would be applicable to other local authorities seeking to initiate similar schemes.

The study focused on an exploration of the local authority context pre-DCATCH, the implementation of the intervention, anticipated and perceived outcomes of the intervention, and success factors and barriers to implementation.

1.5 Methods

1.5.1 The qualitative acceptability and impact study

Families were recruited for this study through the DCATCH lead contact in each area. We sent a set of approach materials to each pilot area asking them to send them on to five randomly selected families who were in receipt of childcare following a DCATCH intervention. After sending reminder letters, 22 out of a possible 50 families responded positively.

Fieldwork took place between December 2010 and March 2011. Face to face visits were arranged at respondents' convenience and were mainly conducted in the family home. Five interviews were conducted by telephone.

A total of 38 respondents took part in the study. 24 were parents, with the majority being mothers (19). Four were siblings of the disabled young person, and there was one grandparent, one girlfriend of the young person and one family friend.

Seven disabled children and young people participated in the interviews. Three of these had verbal communication and took part in a conventional interview (at the same time as their parents). Two children took part by showing us (with support from their parents) photographs of DCATCH related activities or people they were involved with or of things that they had made in their childcare settings e.g. pictures and artwork. In addition, we met and spent some time with two children prior to talking to their parents but who then did not take part in the subsequent interview with their parents.

The content of the interviews was directed by semi-structured topic guides (see Appendix 2) and lasted an average of 40 minutes. More detail about the methodology and the sample of families interviewed is contained in Appendix 3.

1.5.2 Process evaluation

For each identified theme, the process evaluation built on the work carried out during the scoping stage of the evaluation and involved research with key stakeholders within local authorities. Fieldwork was carried out between November 2010 and January 2011 and involved a total of 26 respondents across nine of the ten DCATCH pilot areas⁶. This included:

- Face to face individual in-depth interviews with 14 respondents;
- Telephone in-depth interview with one respondent;
- Two face to face in-depth paired interviews (with four respondents in total);
- Two group interviews with seven respondents.

The stakeholders interviewed included: the DCATCH project manager, (who was interviewed in all pilot areas); local authority outreach officers and DCATCH coordinators working under DCATCH managers; other local authority staff with an operational role relating to the relevant theme; (most commonly, staff within the

⁶ The 10th was not included in this second round of process evaluation due to resource limitations. However, this pilot was included in some detail in themes covered in the July 2010 process evaluation report.

Family Information Service responsible for brokerage and/or information and outreach). In two local authorities some parents were also interviewed.

All in-depth interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes. Topic guides were developed for each theme, and are included in Appendix 2. In some cases, respondents were interviewed about more than one theme and, in such cases, the topic guides were combined and interviews lasted longer. Appendix 3 provides a summary table and further information about the data collection and analysis process.

Local authorities and respondents have been anonymised in this report.

2 Impact and Acceptability of Childcare in the DCATCH pilots: qualitative work with families

2.1 Getting started and nature of support needed and given

This section describes families' accounts of how they found out about or were put in touch with staff in DCATCH; the reason for that support i.e. what challenges or issues were families facing in relation to childcare before support from DCATCH; the nature of support they received; and finally, families' accounts of the process of putting the support into practice.

2.1.1. How families got started/found out about DCATCH

Of those that could recall, families described a number of different ways in which they had heard about or been put in touch with DCATCH:

- Staff from statutory services told them, for example, social worker, early years worker, information officer (seven families)
- Told about DCATCH by staff at their child's school or childcare setting, for example, nursery, school, sixth form (four families)
- Met the person leading on DCATCH and been told about it (four families) , including at a DCATCH event (one family)
- Found out from voluntary organisations with whom they were involved (two families)
- One parent said they had been told by another parent.

2.1.2. Childcare challenges for families pre-DCATCH

Before support from DCATCH, parents described a range of largely ad hoc arrangements for childcare. These routinely involved asking members of the extended family to offer childcare, making arrangements with employers to leave work early or work flexible hours, and trying to find schemes and private childminders on an on-going basis (with mixed success).

These arrangements were described as often being unsatisfactory. Issues mentioned included the disabled child/young person becoming older, heavier, 'more difficult' and subsequently, much harder for grandparents, for example, to look after. In one family, grandparents had been looking after their grandson but as he had become older, it had become less feasible:

It was okay when he was smaller... well, he's always been hard work... but they could cope with him and his behaviour, but obviously, as he's getting older and bigger, then the potential for him to have his outbursts, which he does, it gets harder for them.

Parents described pushing their employers' flexibility and good-will to the limit and said that whilst one-off holiday schemes were helpful, the lack of structured, reliable childcare meant that arrangements often had to be planned at the last minute.

Families told us why they needed support with childcare for their disabled children and there were three principal issues which nearly always overlapped: accessing childcare in order to work; in order to meet other family commitments; in order to meet the disabled child's needs for social activities, inclusion, interaction and friendship.

Work

Almost all of the families who took part were in full or part-time work and cited work related childcare as the main reason why they needed and welcomed support from DCATCH.

In households headed by a single parent, childcare needs usually related to help either at the end of the school day or in holidays. In households where there were two parents living together, help was normally required in the gaps between one parent's full-time hours and the other parent's part-time hours (as well as in the holidays). All of the families said they had tried to find childcare solutions but had faced significant difficulties due to:

- Refusal of group childcare providers to accept their child unless they had 1-1 support in place: *The after-school club is not willing to have my daughter unless there is a 1-1 person there. They turned me down flat.*⁷
- Prohibitive cost of 1-1 support in group childcare settings.
- Lack of availability of private childminders (especially in rural areas).
- Additional costs charged by private childminders for disabled children: *They wanted £8 an hour for [daughter] while I only pay £3.50 for [non disabled son]. We couldn't afford it.*
- Difficulties in finding childminders who would accept their children for reasons relating to either the child's impairment, behaviour or support needs: *Loads of them turned me down – it was a bit of a nightmare.*

Four parents said that their goal was to have stable and affordable childcare arrangements so that they could transition from temporary work to more permanent contracts with better pay and conditions. Two parents were also hoping to gain professional and academic qualifications to help secure better quality jobs.

Other family commitments

The majority of families had more than one school age child and described the usual demands of the whole family unit. In some instances, parents said that they hoped that setting up successful childcare opportunities for the disabled child, would create more opportunity for them to spend time with their other children.

I wanted to access childcare for [disabled son] to spend time with his twin brother because he does suffer and doesn't get any Mum time. [Disabled son] is quite violent towards him – he wrecks his bedroom... It's nice for him to have a day when he can have his friends here or just go out with me.

⁷ Unless otherwise stated, quotations are from parents.

Parents also reported that time away from substantial care responsibilities and the opportunity to work and/or have time alone or with friends, was an important way of maintaining their own sense of well-being.

Needs of the disabled child/young person

The need to organise childcare to meet work and other family commitments was, in the majority of cases, said to be combined with the desire to create opportunities for the disabled child/young person in the family to be with other children their own age, enjoy social interaction, and have time apart from parents (as non-disabled peers would). Parents reported that once out of school, their disabled children had very limited social opportunities. For children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders, there was a common tendency to want to stay at home and watch TV/DVDs or play computer games in a fairly isolated fashion, so parents had an added incentive to try to access social and leisure opportunities for their children as part of their childcare time. Parents whose children attended special school and who had to travel further, said that they rarely saw school friends outside of school hours.

I used to dread the holidays because nobody ever knocks at the door and says, 'Can you come out to play?', so he just vegetated in front of the TV.

I didn't go out of the house much. Maybe every two weeks I went to the park and that was it. And the rest of the time I was stuck here. Plus I don't go out much because I was bullied down there [at the park]. (Young disabled person)

2.1.3. Nature of support received from DCATCH

Amongst the families in our sample, the support from DCATCH could be grouped into three main types:

- 1) Paying for personal assistants (PAs) or carers to come into the family home to look after or be with the disabled child/young person;
- 2) Support (financial and other) to access private childminders;
- 3) Paying for staff time (usually 1-1) to support the disabled child/young person in schemes and clubs outside of school hours and in the summer holidays.

Paying for PA/carer time in the family home

Five families said that this was the main source of DCATCH support that they received. In two families the person who came to the home was a PA whilst in the other three families, the person or people occupied a more traditional carer role with an emphasis solely on physical care and support as opposed to a broader remit which might include going out of the house to support the disabled child/young person with social activities.

The arrangements for support or care varied quite a lot between these five families – unsurprisingly, given that they were set up in order to respond to particular needs. The families who described having a PA used the time (two hours a week in one family and four hours a week in the other) to facilitate social opportunities for their child which usually involved the PA and the young disabled person going out to do social things e.g. café, cinema, shops.

Arrangements were similarly varied in the three families who described carers coming into the family home. In one family where a single parent worked full-time, carers came to the house first thing in the morning to get the child ready for school and on the bus and then meet him off the bus at the end of the school day and bring

him home and look after him till the parent got home. In another family, a carer came to the house three days a week in the school holidays so that the working parent could meet her work commitments.

Support (financial and other) to access private childminders

Four families said that this was the main source of DCATCH support that they received. In three instances this involved a cash contribution towards childcare: for one parent, £200 to be used over a 12 month period, which the parent used to pay a supporter to help her son in a play setting in the school holidays. In the other two families, DCATCH paid the childminder the difference between the fee they would pay for a non-disabled child (£3.50 an hour) and the fee required for their disabled child (£10 an hour).

In the fourth family, financial assistance was not directly paid to the family but involved DCATCH paying for a childminder to access training and OFSTED registration so that she could child-mind for two boys in one family.

Paying for staff time (usually 1-1) to support the disabled child/young person in schemes/clubs outside of school hours and in the summer holidays

This was the support described by the majority of families almost always because providers were not prepared to have the disabled children and young people attend without 1-1 support. In one family, instead of paying for 1-1 support, DCATCH made a contribution to the general staff costs of an after-school club which the disabled child attended.

Again, the exact nature and amount of support varied quite considerably although in all cases, parents paid for the session time and DCATCH paid for the additional support. Examples of support included:

- 1-1 at after-school club (varying from one day to four days a week);
- Holiday clubs (usually in addition to term-time after-school club and including 1-1 support for some);
- Staff support at activity centre and youth club (after-school but not school based) - included befriending and inclusion schemes;⁸
- Support to attend pre-school twice a week.

2.1.4. Process of putting support into practice

We know that historically, families with disabled children often cite difficulties and delays when they try to access support and services⁹. We asked families what the DCATCH process (at the start and on an on-going basis) had been like for them.

Parents in this study universally said that the process of getting DCATCH support put in place was very straightforward, quick, and with the minimum of paperwork or assessment. In most cases, parents said that the DCATCH lead sorted out all of the paperwork and administration for them.

⁸ These two schemes ran along similar lines. In these cases, the befriender was an adult who supported the young disabled person to access a youth club and feel at home and join in. The inclusion was an adult who supported another young disabled person with a range of social and activity based settings and who was also an instructor for activities such as archery and rock climbing.

⁹ Audit Commission (2003) *Services for disabled children: A review of services for disabled children and their families*. Audit Commission: London; Slade, Z. *et al*, (2009) *Parental experience of services for disabled children*, Department for Children, Schools & Families, DCSF-RR147

Someone sorted it all out for me.

[DCATCH lead] came out for a visit and I told her what I wanted and she did the rest – waved her magic wand! Didn't have to do a lot...just happened. Normally we have to battle for things but this went really smoothly.

They kept the paperwork to a minimum so the pressure off me was phenomenal.

This level of support was said by families to continue beyond the set-up period. DCATCH staff were said to be available, competent, reliable and concerned that things were working well – all things which were very appreciated by families.

[DCATCH lead] is amazing. I don't know how she fits it all in. She is one amazing person. She's there for anybody.

Can't sing [DCATCH lead] praises enough – absolutely fantastic. Very well trained, very savvy, finger on the pulse.

I've got a very close relationship with them [DCATCH team] and they're like that for every family. They really care – they're super sensitive, super well trained and very professional.

2.2 Acceptability of DCATCH support

Every family reported that the support that they received with childcare was (more than) acceptable. Apart from problematic issues described as 'minor' by four parents (who nonetheless said that the overall package of support was acceptable) accounts from families were universally positive.

The main aspects of support which were cited when discussing acceptability were: confidence in provision and support staff; opportunities for social interaction for children and young people (including with non-disabled children); positive feelings associated with accessing support in the same way that other families might; and, flexibility.

2.2.1 Confidence in provision and staff/support

Families said that a key aspect of their satisfaction was their confidence and happiness with the 1-1 support staff they had and/or the general staff in provider organisations. This was of particular importance to parents who had not left their child with anyone else before and said that they had been anxious about it.

The first day he went [to the activity scheme] I had to be dragged away crying, but when I went back to get him, his confidence...he was just like a different child. It gave me confidence that he can survive without me – he's not tied to my apron strings.

There were a number of qualities associated with good staff (in childcare settings and DCATCH staff alike) that families talked about: confidence, competent at things like lifting or communication, being respectful and caring towards the disabled

child/young person. In discussing the childminder that had been set up for their children, one mother said:

We all just clicked straight away. She [childminder] seems confident and well practised in disability issues and came across as fantastic.

And a different parent described the childminder her family had:

She provides a loving environment – she’s almost like a grandma really.

In three families with older, teenage sons, the quality of staff (a one to one includer in one case, a befriender in another, and a general staff group in a youth club setting in the third) were said to be key to keeping the young men engaged and happy to keep going:

His includer is a youngish man who also does his personal care so it works really well.

I go on walks and stuff and went skiing once. The first time I went [to youth club with befriender] I was a bit worried, I didn’t know what I was going to do, but when I got into it I really liked it. (Young person)

It’s become an important marker in the week. He’ll tell people, ‘I’m going to [club] tonight and we’re going to do so and so...’. The staff are great – really good role models. They’re quite young and a good gender mix... lots of banter going on and always very respectful.

In four cases, parents said that they had been involved in the selection of staff who would support their children. More commonly, staff who were already known to the child in one setting (e.g. school or health care) were employed to support the child in another so that there was continuity and the child/supporter relationship was already a good and trusted one.

It’s brilliant. I have total confidence in the staff [supporting child in pre-school] because they understand her complex health care needs as they are already her general health care assistants.

It’s fantastic. He’s supported by people he already knows and who are confident about his feed.

2.2.2 Opportunities for social interaction for children and young people (including with non-disabled children)

Childcare which had an emphasis on disabled children and young people enjoying themselves and having social opportunities and social interaction were greatly welcomed by parents and children alike. Children and young people described doing activities they had never done before (kayaking, archery, rock climbing, karting, going to pubs and eating out).

It’s good that he can go out and do activities as he’s very sociable – ...it’s not about respite for me it’s about him having a life.

I like the dancing. I’ve got friends there. They’re coming to my house for tea. (Child)

I like the archery and the rock climbing. I like going! (Young person)

I really like that it's a mainstream service for all children. I like my son being with lots of different people. He's happy and enjoys it and cries when its time to go home!

I really like it. It's all my mates with me, like we look in shops. It's like, safe. Like, we don't get bullied. (Young person)

2.2.3 Positive feelings associated with accessing support in the same way that other families might

Parents citing this aspect of acceptability spoke very positively about how it felt to access childcare services that other families with a non-disabled child might. It seemed to have an empowering and 'equalising' effect. Two parents who were accessing play schemes which were open to disabled and non-disabled children said they valued the 'ordinariness.'

They're just ordinary activities that other kids take for granted, but you can't do with kids like ours.

It's accessing what other parents with normal kids can access. It gives me the faith that she'll be okay.

2.2.4 Flexibility

This aspect of satisfaction with childcare was the most frequently cited (and usually in contrast to previous childcare arrangements or offers of short breaks which were considered to offer no flexibility in relation to meeting work related childcare needs).

Flexibility of arrangements was usually built-in at the beginning of putting the childcare package together. Families described an individualised and tailored approach with arrangements that suited working hours which could be either very specific or variable. This could mean carers coming into the family home for short periods of time in the morning to get a child ready, meeting a child off the school bus and bringing them home till the parent arrived, or offering childcare at short notice. Families in this situation (especially those who were self employed with irregular work hours) described being able to access childcare as and when they needed it rather than at fixed times. One mother described how support workers who had had training around autism and related behaviours came to the house each day to get her son ready for school. She judged this to be much more valuable and successful than her struggling to get him ready at the same time as getting ready for work herself:

It's fantastic. Flexibility is key – doesn't fit with a childminder model so this is perfect.

In a family who had found a local childminder who, with support from DCATCH, had been OFSTED registered and received additional disability awareness training, they were able to negotiate extra or changing hours at quite short notice which they found invaluable:

It's afforded us a huge flexibility.

2.2.5 Areas of difficulty

Four parents had experienced some difficulties with their support – and could suggest ways in which it would be more acceptable. These suggested improvements were in three areas:

- More hours, for example, play schemes running till 5.30 or 6 instead of until 4pm and more support in Christmas holidays.
- More staff in group settings - ‘...*would be good if after school club has slightly more staff.*’
- Some disagreement about the transfer of essential equipment (e.g. toilet seats) from one setting to another.

2.3 Impact of DCATCH support

Four main kinds of impact were described by families:

- 1) Impact on capacity to work;
- 2) Positive and enjoyable experiences for the disabled child/young person;
- 3) An increase in confidence and independence for both parents and children/young people;
- 4) Time for parents to pursue ordinary activities and protect mental health.

2.3.1. Impact on capacity to work

This was the most frequently cited impact of DCATCH support with childcare mentioned by all 20 parents who were working. Of these, eight parents said that the childcare made the difference between working and not working at all. Most people in this situation said that they had negotiated as much leeway with employers as they could and found it hard to imagine that they would be able to find alternative jobs if the childcare ceased.

The impact of working was financial but was also said to impact positively on self esteem and well-being. We were also told of examples where childcare encouraged some parents to increase working hours or apply for more senior roles with greater responsibilities (and pay).

I couldn't work without it as I work full-time now. We would really struggle without it. It's made a huge difference.

It enables me to carry on working otherwise I suppose I'd have to have given up my job which is my only bit of sanity really.

A single parent, who had support for his child at the family home before and after school, described the whole range of ways in which being able to work resulted in perceived beneficial impacts:

It's allowed me the ability to go out and work: it's feeling like a normal human being, because obviously caring for [son] is pretty intense stuff - it's not easy. Whereas by going to work, it's kind of the old cliché: I go to work for a rest, if you see what I mean. The second side of it is the job I do, I feel - without wanting to sound arrogant - makes a contribution to society. So I feel that by

working full-time I'm contributing to the welfare state, I'm paying my taxes. Whereas if I'm not working full-time, I'm going to be taking money from the state welfare system. It's by far the most valuable benefit I've received since [son] has been alive. It's the most productive thing I've ever had, it really, really is. So it's been fantastic.

In common with other parents, one mother described work as a place where she could have time not being a carer or a parent but where work provided an important reminder of other aspects of life, identity and value:

It means I can work which is my respite, my 'me time', being a normal person, doing the same as everyone else in society.

2.3.2. Positive and enjoyable experiences for disabled children and young people

All of the disabled children and young people who took an active part in the interviews said or showed things which suggested that they enjoyed the social and play opportunities afforded them by the childcare and activities they received. Parents speaking on behalf of their children also recounted the important and positive impact of play, friendships, social interaction and separateness from home and parents. A mother whose son attended an evening youth club said:

He's been encouraged to interact much more with his peers and he really enjoys the whole thing. When I take him and he goes up to the bunch of people, he's always high-fiving and, 'Alright mate?', very appropriate young people behaviour. And he looks forward to it, he really looks forward to it, deciding... he'd even decided what to wear, you know? It's the whole deal it's much bigger even than just being dropped off somewhere for an activity.

Parents with children attending a mainstream childcare or play provider also felt that there were positive impacts associated with the mix of disabled and non-disabled children (for both) – for example, this mother with a child with complex needs and non verbal communication:

It's a really good opportunity for my daughter to interact with non-disabled children, they love her and she has a lovely time. I think it's good on the other non-disabled children there too, they've learnt a lot and it's good for her non-disabled brothers too - so when the boys go, 'My sister stopped breathing today...', everyone kind of understands a little bit more because they've seen her, it's not hidden away.

Social interaction and stimulation was said by parents to be in short supply outside of school for many of the young people, so this was regarded as a key benefit of the activities they were accessing. In two different families with an older teenage child with autism, activities outside of the home and separate from parents were described as offering significant opportunities for important social interaction:

It's really good for my son because of the interaction. Without it he would sit and watch DVDs at home all day and we don't have the confidence to take him to the places that the after school club take him.

It gives [son] more meaning in his life and something to talk to people about.

2.3.3. Confidence and Independence

An additional impact associated with families securing childcare arrangements that they could trust was a reported increase in confidence and independence: children and young people more confident because of their social interactions and parents more confident that they could leave their disabled child with someone else; and, as a result of 'safe' spaces in which disabled children and their parents could be apart, a greater sense of independence for children, parents and other family members.

One parent described how her daughter who had limited verbal communication was benefiting from being around other children with a whole range of communication methods:

She really loves it [after school club]. There's lots of interaction and I think it's built her speech and her confidence and as long as she's happy, I'm happy.

Two mothers whose sons were accessing activity based schemes reported that they had both grown in confidence as a result:

It's increased his confidence. It's giving him independence and it's giving me independence.

The befriending scheme and youth club have given [son] quite a lot of confidence. And it makes stuff easier for the whole family because we can see that he's happy.

One young person described how going to a youth club, supported by his befriender, made him feel less isolated and more confident about his social life:

Before all this happened, with [befriending] and everything, I actually felt quite lonely. Because like, 'See you later mum, I'm off to the park', and then I'm at the park and I don't know what I'll do, so I just go on the swing. And that were a bit boring. Because if I'd had some mates I'd have gone like, 'Ah, I'll just swing on the swing for a bit and then go up to mate's, or go to so-and-so.' And I couldn't do that because I didn't have no mates. Now I've got mates I can like...I'll go to the park and I'll think of what I'm doing tomorrow night with them. (Young person)

2.3.4. Time for parents to pursue 'ordinary activities' and preserve well-being

About a third of parents said that having good childcare and activities in place impacted positively upon their sense of well-being – '*...it keeps me sane*': they worried less about their child's isolation and worried less about thinking how to occupy their time.

It's been more of a relief that he's got something for himself to do, not us having to drag him places...something of his own.

It also freed up parents to do ordinary things like housework and be with other members of the family, or even as one mother remarked, be alone at home which she said was a huge rarity and pleasure.

2.4 The Future

With the exception of two parents, all others said they knew that DCATCH funding was going to end in March or April 2011. Most of these said that they knew this was going to be the case i.e. that DCATCH pilot money was time-limited but believed that if the pilot was shown to be successful then continued funding should be found. One parent said her understanding was that funding would end in March 2012 and one parent said they had not heard anything about the possibility of the funding ending or changing:

I think I live in blissful ignorance hoping it won't change! I just hope it doesn't stop because then I'm really in trouble!.

2.4.1 Impact of funding ending

Parents who believed that the ending of DCATCH funding was imminent (in fact funding had already ceased for three families at the time of interview) spoke passionately about the potential impact. There were several concerns outlined:

- The service being accessed would not accept their child any longer if the DCATCH funded 1-1 support was no longer in place. Five parents said that the scheme that they used had explicitly said this would be the case. This had already happened to one family:

Once it [funding] was over they refused to have him. So we're back to square one now. DCATCH even offered to do staff training but they weren't interested.

- It would not be possible to find an alternative either at all or of the same quality:

The after-school club have said that if funding for 1-1 stops then [daughter] will have to leave. I don't know what's going to happen. I don't think there's anyone who can really help me with childcare apart from [DCATCH Lead].

- Without the financial support offered by DCATCH, childcare would once gain become unaffordable:

If the DCATCH subsidy ended...if we were presented with the full costs, which I'm guessing would easily be double what we're paying, we would struggle to do that.

- That in reverting to the situation where childcare was unaffordable, families with a disabled child were being discriminated against:

Our costs are going to go up again which is discrimination in my book. I think withdrawing it contravenes human rights – why should I be penalised for having a disabled child? To be able to go to work I have to pay twice the childcare costs, which is outrageous in this day and age. And I say, if it's a successful pilot then do something about it. Never mind just chucking £800 million at short breaks.

- The increase in costs and the unavailability of childcare alternatives would necessitate stopping work (this was especially true for single parents, as demonstrated by this quotation, but also some dual earner households):

It feels like a constant battle to work – should I even bother? I find it incomprehensible that the government should bring up DCATCH and get it working so well and then it disappears. If I stop work and go on benefits it'll be a miserable, isolated life for me and my son.

- That there would be a detrimental impact on the disabled child/young person:

It's going to be a worry when the funding finishes, because we'll be back where we were before. He'll be rudderless again and it's a great shame. You can't understand why such great pieces of work can be established and then just left to disappear again – you know, with all the wonderful things that have happened and all the experience that's been gathered on how to make it work and it feels like it will just disappear.

It's not just the financial impact, it's the severing of the friends [son] has had at the play scheme – the ending of those positive relationships can't be replaced.

2.4.2 Possible next steps

We asked families what positive steps they thought they would or could take if their DCATCH supported childcare ended. Although nearly all said that they did not know what they would do, most said that they were about to have meetings with their DCATCH contacts to discuss what they could do next. Parents in this position said that they appreciated it that DCATCH staff were still happy to help.

'...they're still on board, still trying to find a solution.'

Of those who had begun to think about what they would do next, two said they were going to look into whether they could use tax credits to help pay for childcare; two said they were going to look at direct payments¹⁰ (two parents said that direct payments were not an option for them: one because they had been told that their son was not 'disabled enough' to be eligible and one because the parent was put off by the amount of work involved in managing a direct payment); and, two families were interested in getting together with other families to try to find a solution: one family was in discussion with other families who had been using the same play scheme to see if they could use an individual budget to re-commission the scheme and in the other family, there was a hope that two or more families with children with similar needs could pool resources to pay for the same childminder.

2.5 Conclusion

It is not very common to undertake research and evaluation with families with a disabled child in which there is 1) so little variation in view/opinion, and, 2) so positive a set of messages.

¹⁰ Direct payments are cash payments made to individuals who have been assessed as needing services, in lieu of social service provisions

Four features of the data stand out:

1. DCATCH support and intervention as outlined by the respondents in this study was meeting individual need in a responsive, flexible and solution focused way. DCATCH staff were generally described in glowing terms.
2. Effective childcare encompassed a wide range of activities, and parents said that these generally enabled them to meet work and other commitments whilst also providing positive and enjoyable opportunities for disabled children and young people. Almost without exception, these two goals were inextricably linked for families. Disabled children and young people who took part in this evaluation, whilst small in number, all expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the activities in which they were involved.
3. Families gave accounts of childcare providers who were not willing to continue having disabled children without 1-1 support even with offers of training and other kinds of support. For some families, whilst DCATCH had provided invaluable support, lack of structural or attitudinal changes in the wider childcare market meant that they were back where they started. In a small number examples, support to register and train childminders may have a longer term effect but only if families can afford to meet the higher costs charged by childminders who look after disabled children.
4. Families reported experiences of how effective childcare can work and is possible. It has raised expectations on several levels: that more options about work are possible (more hours or better jobs); that some understandably anxious parents can entrust their children to other people; and, that disabled children and young people can experience increased confidence, independence and happiness. Unsurprisingly, families who we spoke to feel very strongly that having had such positive support and childcare arrangements, '*going back to square one*' as one parent put it, is a very challenging situation to face.

3 The Process Evaluation: Brokerage

3.1 Description of interventions explored for the process evaluation

This section provides an overview of how brokerage is defined by local authorities as well as further detail about brokerage activities taking place in FIS and outside of it. The section includes a summary of some of the key principles underpinning brokerage work across the local authorities.

3.1.1 Defining brokerage work

Brokerage work within local authorities has two elements: the *delivery of advice* to families on childcare options (including signposting to other sources of advice and support), and the use of brokerage officers as *facilitators* in enabling families to access childcare provision (both targeted and mainstream, as well as registered and non-registered options). Some local authorities have a holistic approach to the delivery of information and advice so that as well as providing information on childcare options, they also provide advice and information to families on a wide range of issues, from benefits entitlements to transport.

In their role as facilitators, brokerage officers seek to establish a dialogue between parents and childcare settings, assessing the needs of children and exploring how these could be met by the setting. For example, in local authority E, brokers work to help parents and settings draw up an agreement around the stated needs of a child and how these needs are to be met by the setting so that expectations between parties are aligned. Another, more interventionist, aspect of this work entails brokers working with settings to actively support them to provide care for disabled children. This could involve brokers helping settings to identify equipment and training needs and to secure funding/provision for these. As part of this more interventionist approach, brokerage workers sometimes adopt a coaching or mentoring role to help settings identify practices which could help them accommodate a disabled child. Given their role as facilitators, it is evident that there is an overlap between brokerage and workforce development in the work undertaken by brokers.

3.1.2 Brokerage activity

The scoping study outlined two key channels through which brokerage is provided by local authorities: brokerage through the Family Information Service (FIS) and brokerage through the work of DCATCH project staff and inclusion coordinators. In all cases, the role of a 'brokerage officer' is central to the delivery and oversight of the brokerage activity. Although the name given to these posts varies, we refer to them as brokerage officers for the purpose of this report.

Brokerage work through the FIS (local authorities D, B and E)

This entails having a DCATCH brokerage officer with specialist knowledge of the needs of disabled children and local childcare provision being placed within the FIS. This is usually done with a view to skilling up FIS staff to feel confident to deal with

childcare (and other) queries from families with disabled children. Brokers seek to accomplish this in a number of ways. For example, in local authority B, the brokerage officer organises training around disability issues for FIS staff, and introduced a system of peer support to help FIS staff in their brokerage role, as well as inviting Parent Trainers¹¹ to provide input to FIS on what a useful brokerage service should look like.

The focus on helping FIS improve its brokerage capacity means that DCATCH brokerage officers are keen for FIS staff to do at least some low level brokerage work for disabled children themselves rather than referring all of these cases on to them. Thus, in local authority D, the DCATCH broker only tends to deal with children that have complex disabilities for whom childcare is particularly problematic, with mainstream FIS staff providing support to other families with less complex needs.

There are similarities across the local authorities in terms of the actual brokerage process. This process is illustrated by local authority E's approach, which entails the following steps:

1. *Referrals being made to FIS staff/DCATCH officer through a number of sources.* This includes from professionals, such as social workers, and self-referrals from parents who had heard of the service.
2. *A needs assessment being done.* This entails the brokerage officer visiting families to ascertain the disability issues affecting their child, their childcare needs (e.g. how often they need care and how immediately) and discussion of a range of childcare options with them. During assessments, brokerage officers feel it is important to ensure that they understand the family's experiences to gain a better perspective on their needs and priorities.
3. *Establishing a dialogue between settings and parents around childcare.* In local authority E's case, this entails the drawing up of agreements between both parties.
4. *Follow-up work to see how the childcare arrangement is working for parents and setting.* For local authority E, this entails the DCATCH brokerage officer arranging three monthly visits to parents and keeping in email contact with them.

Although the above approach tends to be the standard one, local authorities tailor the level and type of support they offer according to the capacity of parents to act on the advice given to them. For parents who feel confident to approach settings themselves, the broker restricts their role to simply signposting parents to settings. Other parents need much more intervention and support from the brokerage officer, such as accompanying parents and the child to a setting.

Brokerage managed outside of FIS (local authorities C and I)

Within local authority C, DCATCH-funded brokerage officers are embedded in different strands of mainstream local authority work, including the employability strand, the welfare and benefits advice strand and the childcare/inclusion strand. This is done in order to increase the skills of those working in these areas to work

¹¹ This is a parent training scheme, where parents of disabled children are employed to deliver training sessions on disability inclusion. Parent trainers have been discussed at length in Jessiman, P *et al* (2010).

with disabled children and their families, and to help ensure more joined-up support for families across the different strands. For example, an officer in the welfare and benefits strand may come across a family that has childcare issues whilst dealing with their benefits and may refer them to the broker in the childcare/inclusion strand. There is no FIS service in this area.

Local authority I has a brokerage service managed directly by the DCATCH team. It employs three brokerage officers, known as 'practitioners', to deal with parent referrals in particular parts of the county; to support settings within those areas to understand the needs of families of disabled children; and to help settings appreciate what they are already doing well that could accommodate these children. The chief role of FIS in this area is to refer parents to the DCATCH team.

Local authority C operates a brokerage service through five Play Inclusion Coordinators, who are located in, and usually employed by, childcare settings, such as Children's Centres. Each coordinator is tasked with facilitating the involvement of the setting in providing childcare for disabled children. This could entail reminding the setting of its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act, identifying training/equipment needs, and then helping to identify sources of funding within the local authority. Coordinators do not offer formal training to settings but do have a role in modelling how support should be given to a disabled child by, for example, working directly with a child in the setting.

3.1.3 Summary of the characteristics of brokerage practice

The four key characteristics of brokerage activity are:

- *Holistic advice and information to meet the diverse needs of families, not just around childcare.* This principle is reflected in the advice given to families around a wide array of issues, including their training and employment needs.
- *Facilitation involving both families and settings.* The importance of bringing both parties together to raise understanding of the issues and to align expectations.
- *Graduated/flexible support given to families based on their capacity.* Families that are not confident to access settings are given more support than those that simply need signposting.
- *Providing a choice of childcare options to parents.* The importance of providing parents with a range of childcare options which could meet the needs of their child.

3.2 Outcomes and sustainability

At the time of the scoping study in 2009/10 almost all pilots were working towards an improved brokerage service for childcare for disabled children. Current delivery is in line with that identified at that time, with the Family Information Service (or local equivalent) leading on this in many instances. In some, brokerage was managed by DCATCH staff outside FIS for example through the DCATCH project managers, or through play inclusion coordinators located in children's centres.

Although the focus of the process evaluation is largely around understanding and sharing good practice around the implementation of interventions, respondents were also asked to comment on the outcomes of their brokerage activity one year on, as well as share their thoughts on the sustainability of these activities post-DCATCH. Respondents discussed outcomes in relation to what they felt are the intended goals of their brokerage activity and their perceptions of the progress made in achieving these goals. These perceptions tended to be informed by informal/indirect sources of

information), rather than any systematic evaluation undertaken. Both intended outcomes and respondents perceptions of progress towards these are discussed below.

3.2.1 Intended outcomes

Brokerage activity is geared towards achieving two main outcomes within local authorities: improving how the *brokerage service* operates within an area and improving the willingness and ability of *settings*, particularly mainstream ones, to engage with and provide childcare for disabled children.

In terms of improving brokerage services, a key objective is to transform *existing* brokerage services so that they are able to provide a fast and effective service to families of disabled children, even after DCATCH funding ends. This means improving the confidence and ability of FIS staff (in the case of local authority D, B and E) and/or local authority staff and departments (for local authority C and I) to deal with childcare and other issues relating to disabled children, and embedding brokerage in the routine, daily practice of these organisations. As an example of the latter, local authority D reports that FIS has a set of routine questions around disability issues and childcare in the scripts used to field routine calls from parents, in order to pick up on additional needs and issues more effectively.

The overall aim of brokerage activity is to improve the parents' experience of accessing childcare. Confidence is seen to be an issue in improving the willingness and ability of settings to provide childcare, with DCATCH managers and staff seeking to expose settings to the provision of childcare for disabled children through the support that brokerage officers provide.

It's [brokerage work] created more inclusive settings...which has created more inclusive places. So, I think staff are more confident about, within settings, about their ability to accommodate disabled children. Parents have certainly said that they found the process easier than in the past; cos some parents have tried before and failed to get their child in to childcare and have almost given up in despair; they've maybe heard about DCATCH and thought oh go on, I'll give it one more go¹².

(DCATCH Manager)

3.2.2 Perceived outcomes

Although local authorities are required to gather benchmarking data for TDC, with some local authorities also planning formal evaluations of their own, much of the evidence for the impact of the brokerage is based on the perceptions of staff derived from informal and/or indirect sources of evidence, as opposed to any formal, systematic evaluations. The reliance on these sources of data may reflect the challenges local authorities experience in collecting data around brokerage work specifically, and DCATCH activities as a whole. These challenges include the fact that brokerage involves a smaller proportion of the population than other DCATCH activities and the complexities involved in the collection of information from settings who, for example, may have a very restricted definition of disabilities.

¹² Quotes used in this report are not attributed to individuals or authorities; job titles or roles are supplied to provide context.

The sources of data local authorities drew on to evaluate brokerage activity are:

- Formal and informal feedback from parents (e.g. through emails as well as formal DCATCH events);
- Feedback from FIS and local authority staff. This feedback focused on largely on the uptake of brokerage service and tended to be collected on an ad hoc basis through conversations and feedback at events and meetings, rather than systematically;
- Feedback from other professionals (e.g. social workers);
- The use of routine MI data collected by the local authority and FIS (e.g. call logs);
- The use of routine MI data collected by brokers;
- Case studies based on the notes of brokerage officers;
- The Childcare Sufficiency Assessments routinely carried out by local authorities.

The remainder of this section will discuss how the outcomes of the brokerage work were perceived by DCATCH managers and brokerage workers (including FIS staff, where relevant). The outcomes discussed will be in relation to FIS and local authorities, settings and families and children with disabilities, and other partners.

Impact on FIS and local authority

There was an overwhelming view amongst DCATCH managers and brokerage workers that the DCATCH brokerage work has:

- *Led to an increase in the uptake of services offered, particularly by the FIS, since the start of DCATCH.* Drawing on MI data such as call logs, this increase is reported in terms of the number of enquiries received from families with disabled children, as well as the number of families that brokerage officers support. By reflecting on the uptake of brokerage services prior to DCATCH, DCATCH managers in particular, attribute this increase to the above work of brokerage officers as well as the work done around promoting the FIS as a source of advice around childcare.
- *Improved the willingness and capacity of FIS and/or the local authority to address childcare issues for disabled children.* DCATCH brokerage officers are seen to be instrumental in this, particularly if they are embedded within these organisations. They are seen to accomplish this by being an important mechanism through which knowledge of disabled children and their families, as well as local childcare provision, is transmitted in the host organisation.
- *Allowed brokers to play an important role in furnishing organisations with the resources and processes that they needed to deal with queries from families such as relevant reading materials, flow diagrams outlining the referral process that a FIS/local authority worker should go through when dealing with families and telephone scripts guiding workers through enquiries.*

Impact on settings

DCATCH teams also report mainstream settings being more willing and able to work with disabled children as a result of the work done by brokerage officers to support them to become more confident to do so. There is also anecdotal evidence to suggest that those settings who do not have a history of providing childcare to disabled children, but are supported to do so through the brokerage work, are more

willing and able to offer this childcare to families in the future independently of any support from DCATCH.

It's brought in settings that previously maybe would've backed off from accommodating a disabled child for reasons we talked about earlier, fears about cost, fears about everything, it's created more inclusive settings.

(DCATCH Manager)

Impact on parents

There is a view, particularly amongst brokerage workers, that brokerage work is appropriate for a narrower group than the population targeted by other DCATCH activities. This is due to a number of reasons, including the reliance of brokerage on referrals from other sources, and the fact that not every family with a disabled child requires the type of intense support that a broker provides.

The brokerage service, for individual families that she has worked with, has been immense, but in terms of if you were looking at impact across the whole of the population of families with disabled children, probably not that great... in some ways its about coverage, but its about need as well, isn't it? Because, you know, not every family with a disabled child needs to have that kind of intense support, and particularly what we don't want is for families with children with say moderate learning disabilities, feel that they have to go down that route, because actually childcare providers should be supporting those families, they've got much more larger choice of childcare provision, those children with sort of mild to moderate disabilities.

(DCATCH manager)

However, brokerage work is seen to have a beneficial impact on parents that did access the service in a number of ways. Firstly, DCATCH brokerage work is seen by DCATCH managers to provide a joined-up way for local authority departments to work together to provide support for families. For example, the model of a brokerage officer being located in each different strand of local authority activity that local authority C uses, is seen to lead to joined-up referral systems for families across the local authority, so that it is possible for the system to detect a childcare issue for a parent who initially came in with a benefits query and visa versa.

Secondly, brokerage activity is seen as ensuring that queries are dealt with consistently and in a timely manner. There is the view that prior to DCATCH, accessing brokerage services in some local authorities was ad-hoc, with parents finding it difficult to access the right person to provide brokerage and, even when they did, getting inadequate support due to a lack of knowledge, skills or dedicated resources within organisations. As a result of the work done by brokers, particularly to upskill the FIS and different local authority departments, it is felt that cases are now being dealt with appropriately and much more quickly than before.

I think referrals for childcare have increased but I think the bigger impact is the, the speed in which things are being sorted and the reduction in parents dropping out as well. [Before DCATCH] there's no sense of a coherent approach to anything. So you lose parents very quickly and very easily.

(DCATCH manager)

Impact on other partners

Although not an explicit goal of brokerage activity, DCATCH teams also report having positive feedback from other partners and professionals, such as social workers, on the impact that the brokerage work has had on their roles. The feedback indicates

that other professionals appreciate having somewhere to refer clients to for childcare needs and this seems to have lightened their workload.

Yes, and you talk about professionals just prior to that and I think the feedback from them [is] that they're really appreciative of the brokerage role especially social workers where perhaps it would fall on them before to find appropriate childcare and the childcare provision, and the direct payment team, they've always been really pleased that they had somebody...to refer families onto.

(DCATCH project worker)

3.2.3 Sustainability

Across the sample, local authorities have developed their DCATCH provision with sustainability of brokerage work in mind. A key strategy used by local authorities to make brokerage work sustainable is to embed the DCATCH work in existing services and practices, such as FIS or other local authority departments, in order to 'nudge' these into taking a role in brokerage work even after DCATCH funding had ended. Upskilling rather than the creation of expensive new services has been the focus. Thus, although the issue of the impending end of the pilot has raised concerns around the sustainability of some aspects of the brokerage service (e.g. the brokerage officer posts) and some discussion around sustaining some of the brokerage posts, respondents also focused on the legacy that DCATCH brokerage work is designed to leave behind. One such legacy is the bank of knowledge and skills that brokerage officers would leave behind in brokerage services and childcare settings alike, as well as a greater willingness of services and settings to deal with families that have disabled children.

I think that particularly with the cutting of services and the budget cuts and everything, and we know it's gonna be a smaller Council and... So I think in that way what we're doing...I've empowered the team [brokerage service] and made them more knowledgeable and up skilled them...

(DCATCH project worker)

Another legacy that the brokerage activity is thought to leave behind is the processes that are in place as a result of the DCATCH funding. These include the various documentation, such as templates for agreements with parents and settings, and process overviews, such as flow diagrams that enable FIS workers to navigate the brokerage process, which have been tried and tested and will remain as useful aids even after the pilots are over.

And the systems are in place [for after DCATCH funding], I mean that's the thing..., there are forms, there are applications, there are agreements...I'm not belittling the amount of work to maintain them or do them cos what we won't have is the admin support, but undoubtedly the fact that they have all been devised and been well tested and so on and so forth.

(DCATCH manager and project worker)

3.3 Challenges

In this section, the main challenges to developing and implementing brokerage services raised by respondents interviewed during the process evaluation will be explored and, where applicable, how these challenges are addressed and/or how respondents felt they could be avoided in the future.

3.3.1 Recruiting and retaining DCATCH brokerage officers

An important aspect of DCATCH has been to recruit suitably experienced and qualified staff to undertake the brokerage work, given that brokerage officers are often expected to “hit the ground running” once recruited, and are tasked not only with dealing with the needs of families, but also with transforming the organisations they are located in (e.g. FIS), and the settings they worked with (e.g. Children’s Centres). One key challenge, therefore, is recruiting a person with the right skills and calibre to undertake this work. Reflecting on this challenge, local authority I highlights the importance of having a very tight job specification which outlines the role of the brokerage officer (particularly where the role begins and where it should end) and also the philosophy of brokerage underpinning their post (e.g. brokering in inclusive settings). This is seen to be instrumental in dissuading inexperienced and/or unqualified applicants and also those that are not in tune with visions of how brokerage should take place within a local authority area.

Another key challenge is the retention of brokerage officers. In local authority D for instance, there were two brokerage officers initially recruited, but one had to withdraw for personal reasons. This led to a situation where the remaining brokerage officer experienced a sharp rise in caseloads. In response to this, the DCATCH manager provided training to mainstream FIS staff around childcare and additional needs. This now enables FIS staff to deal with low-level enquires, leaving the brokerage officer to pick up complex cases and so distributing the workload as well as upskilling FIS staff.

3.3.2 Challenging attitudes within settings and FIS

A key challenge is dealing with initial attitudes within settings and, to a lesser extent, FIS, around brokering childcare for families with disabled children. DCATCH teams report resistance amongst certain settings at the idea of providing childcare to disabled children. Much of this resistance stems from staff feeling unconfident to deal with disabled children within a mainstream setting due to a lack of experience and knowledge of disability issues. In some cases, DCATCH managers felt that this lack of confidence has sometimes been compounded by over-cautious local authority advice being given to settings, for example one interviewee felt that prior to DCATCH some health and safety guidance had, unintentionally, discouraged settings from providing inclusive childcare. Consequently, settings sometimes over-emphasised additional funding from the local authority as a condition for providing inclusive childcare and relied excessively on the local authority to help them problem-solve to provide inclusive childcare. This situation is summarised by the DCATCH manager below.

The biggest challenge, I think, across the whole of the project has been attitudinal change; it’s been quite difficult to break an attitude. It tends to be preconceived; it tends to be ill-conceived, with no disrespect to any of my colleagues, or settings. I think that’s the biggest challenge because there are some that if you just mention the word disability, you get the [makes shocked noise] hands up and shock factor. I think attitudinal is the biggest barrier.

(DCATCH manager)

The DCATCH workforce development work undertaken with settings, discussed in the previous report, as well as the work of the brokerage officers is seen to help settings understand that additional funding is not always a pre-requisite for inclusive childcare and to help them develop a problem-solving approach. In local authority I, for example, the DCATCH ‘practitioners’ employed a coaching model with settings which encouraged them to creatively problem solve around how they are going to

provide inclusive childcare as part of the process of drawing brokerage agreements between parents and settings.

There is also some initial resistance amongst FIS staff in some areas around extending their brokerage role to deal with disabled children and their families. Again, a lack of knowledge and experience of undertaking this work contributes to a lack of confidence, as well as unhelpful preconceptions around what this brokerage activity would involve. For example, DCATCH managers report early fears amongst FIS staff around their ability to deal with these enquires and the time and resources that it would take, as illustrated in the quote below.

I'd say it took about five to six months because for a lot of staff it was the idea, the word brokerage was quite scary you know, when you said brokerage they took it to be spending five hours with a family you know and it took a while to kind of get across the message that brokerage can be any-, you know you, you're actually already doing it, it's just about being flexible and offering that extra support where it's needed.

(DCATCH manager)

The work of DCATCH managers and brokerage officers is seen to help redress these misconceptions.

3.3.3 Working with local authority practices and processes

This set of challenges relates to delays in the recruitment of key brokerage staff at the start of the DCATCH programme due to local authority practices and processes, some of which were influenced by the wider economic situation. These included:

- Some local authorities had a moratorium on recruitment in anticipation of local authority cuts and redundancies. This meant that although DCATCH money for the recruitment for brokers is ring-fenced, some DCATCH managers were initially unable to release this money. This led to delays in recruiting key brokerage staff which, in turn, is seen to limit the work's potential impact given the time-limited nature of the funding.
- Lengthy processes for the approval of job descriptions or for tenders over a certain amount adding further delays to the process.

3.3.4 Challenges working with parents

A key challenge around working with parents is to get certain parents to access the brokerage service in the first place. This challenge had a number of dimensions:

- Parents who had never accessed childcare do not feel confident leaving their child with strangers.
- Particularly where the FIS is concerned, challenges around informing parents that the FIS could also provide childcare advice, support and brokerage for their disabled child. DCATCH teams address this by publicising the role of the FIS and the brokerage service in local newsletters, as well as publishing case studies in the local press to highlight the helpfulness of the brokerage service.
- DCATCH brokers report that within certain Black Minority Ethnic groups, such as the South Asian community, some parents are reluctant to access childcare because of the perceived stigma associated with being seen to have their child looked after by someone outside of the family.

Even when parents are willing to access childcare, brokers experienced the challenge of sourcing childcare provision that is acceptable to parents (e.g. DCATCH managers mentioned that some do not wish to use childminders) – within the context of sometimes limited provision in the area – as well as ensuring the provision met the requirements of parents. For example, brokerage officers found it particularly difficult to accommodate the needs of parents who are shift workers and needed childcare at odd hours or for unsociable hours.

3.3.5 The limited capacity of the brokerage service

In areas where brokerage work is being undertaken by a limited number of staff, concern is expressed around the ability of brokers to manage a growing caseload. As discussed earlier, one response to this is to draw on the organisation in which the broker is based, often the FIS, to help provide at least low-level brokerage work for families. This left the specialist brokerage officer with capacity to deal with more complex cases, as well as the time to organise support and training for other staff. Where this becomes slightly problematic is when, for example, the FIS itself has limited staff who find it difficult to even provide low-level brokerage with non-complex cases due to their other work commitments.

3.3.6 The limited childcare provision in a local area

In some areas, there seems to be a paucity of childcare settings that brokers could draw on and this proved to be a key challenge in their brokerage work – this is especially the case for finding settings that are willing and able to deal with children that had complex additional needs. In some instances, these challenges are amplified by a gradual reduction in DCATCH money over the life of the programme, resulting in brokers not being able to offer parents childcare options such as one-to-one support to access play settings, which they could previously.

Sourcing childminders is also an issue, in some cases because childminders, like workers in group settings, do not always feel confident working with a disabled child. Moreover, DCATCH managers felt that there was a lack of childminders because the requirements childminders have to meet to be registered with Ofsted were seen as deterring some individuals from becoming or remaining a registered child minder.

3.4 Success factors in the development of brokerage

3.4.1 Brokerage officer role

The brokerage officer role is seen not only as directly providing brokerage, but also in developing the skills of organisations to undertake this work. Brokerage officers are used to develop the capacity of settings, for example, by helping share good practice around working with disabled children and their families.

Although many brokerage officers have a background in disability issues, in one local authority it was felt that officers with a background in general childcare could also be skilled up to be brokerage officers. Certain key experiences and skills are seen to help brokerage officers perform effectively in their roles:

- Brokerage officers need to be confident and well-connected: confident in order to network with a range of organisations and be prepared to deal with resistance from parents and settings; connected in order to have familiarity and knowledge of a number of settings and providers to help them network better.

- In working with mainstream settings, the use of a 'coaching approach' is seen to be a helpful way of engaging staff. This is a supportive approach used by brokers to help settings recognise what they are already doing that could help them accommodate a disabled child, as well as supporting them to consider what else they could be doing to better support these children.
- A way of recruiting high calibre staff for brokerage posts is to advertise them as secondments within the local authority. This enabled local authorities to speed up the recruitment process and to have someone in post that already had knowledge of how the local authority functioned.
- Having direct personal experience of caring for a disabled child thorough, for example, having a disabled child themselves is seen help them empathise with families and their needs further, as well as enable parents to relate to them.

3.4.2 Integrating brokerage officers within FIS

Earlier discussions on impact have already identified the catalytic role played by DCATCH-funded staff in 'transforming' FIS (and the local authority departments they are placed in) to handle brokerage for disabled children and their families. There is also evidence to suggest that specialist brokers (and DCATCH managers in some cases) also gained much by being integrated into the FIS. This includes brokerage officers gaining knowledge of mainstream funding from their FIS colleagues as well as deriving emotional support, particularly when they are line managed by FIS staff.

That's why being part of the FIS team as well as DCATCH has worked really well because, although families are referred to me mostly because of childcare, because I work for FIS, I know a lot of more information that can support them.

(DCATCH project worker)

Situating DCATCH-funded brokerage within FIS is also seen to send out a clear message that work with disabled children and their families should not be just 'siloe'd' within disability teams but should be integrated as a part of mainstream brokerage provision.

3.4.3 Promotion of brokerage services

Raising awareness of parents and professionals around the brokerage work is a particular issue for brokerage work located within the FIS. This is because FIS is not traditionally seen to be a source of advice and information for disabled children and their families. Local authorities report that 'word of mouth' involving parents who have used the service recommending it to others is particularly effective in gradually raising the profile of FIS and the brokerage service that they provide. Some local authorities use more proactive ways of raising the profile of FIS, including the use of local authority and FIS websites and newsletters. One innovative way of raising the profile of FIS as a brokerage service involves selling tickets to a mainstream children's event organised by the local authority through the FIS. This enables parents who had never used the FIS before to have their first contact with the FIS and enables FIS staff to inform them of their brokerage work during the course of selling these tickets.

3.4.4 Other brokerage practices that worked well

There are also other brokerage practices that worked well. There are five key project practices that respondents focused on:

- i. A simple referral system through which parents and professionals could access brokerage support is seen to be instrumental in helping brokerage services reach out to a wider number of parents. An important element of this is the absence of complicated forms and assessments for parents and officers to go through which could delay the process.
- ii. The practice of using 'agreement plans' drawn up between parents and settings during the brokerage process are also seen to be helpful. As discussed earlier, these are used to establish a shared understanding of the needs of the child as well as the service that the setting would offer. These plans are seen to help settings and parents become engaged in provision, to make settings aware of what they are already doing that could accommodate the child, as well as to help them align expectations of the level and type of service that is going to be offered.
- iii. The provision of information to parents on how to approach settings. This information outlines the types of questions that parents should ask settings if they are approaching them on their own and what they should look for in a setting. The information sometimes came in the form of leaflets and is seen to support parents become more confident to talk to settings.
- iv. Where DCATCH teams rely on more than one broker, it is seen to be advantageous for brokers to be located in different localities within an area so that these brokers are much more approachable for families and to help brokers to become much more familiar with the provision and issues within a locality.
- v. Parent involvement in helping FIS design their brokerage service is also seen to be helpful. This enables staff to question parents on what a useful service would look like and for parents to have an input into shaping a service that would work for them.

3.4.5 DCATCH funding and other work

Brokerage teams value the funding provided by DCATCH not only to fund the brokerage officer posts, but also because of the flexibility it provided in sourcing childcare. For example, brokerage officers appreciate having the extra money which enables them to find childcare at short notice which they otherwise would not be able to do.

The only reason that we're able to do all of this [provide childcare options] is because we have got the DCATCH budget and the whole point of having a project is to try doing innovative things so that we can learn from them for the future.

(DCATCH manager and worker)

As noted earlier, other DCATCH work particularly around additional services and workforce development is seen to support the brokerage work undertaken insofar as helping to expand the childcare options within a given area.

3.4.6 Local authority support and input

DCATCH brokerage teams also appreciate the emotional, administrative and legal support given by local authorities during the course of the brokerage work. For instance, one DCATCH team in a local authority appreciated the strong inclusive culture within the local authority in which senior local authority staff are willing to champion inclusive childcare to the point of senior staff attending DCATCH brokerage events to raise its profile.

We had a culture already... So we were actually building on a positive base both in terms of provision and resources but also in terms of the culture and we do have a Head of Service who will fight and does expect it to be taken seriously. You know, in the current situation it's not every Head of Service who would've even considered asking the Director to come to an event... I mean he knew the value of getting these parents in one place and getting to listen to them, you know.

(DCATCH manager and worker)

4 Information and outreach

4.1 Description of interventions explored for the process evaluation

The aim of information and outreach is to ensure that parents of disabled children are aware of the range of childcare options available to them. The scoping study found a range of dissemination activities across the pilot authorities with information delivered through leaflets, newsletters, local websites and DVDs. This included the mailing out of information to parents of children on the register of disabled children and the distribution of information at service access points.

However, information sent out in this way does not always reach the families that need it most and the 'passive' receipt of information is not sufficient to encourage some families to pursue childcare options. In recognition of this, some local authorities have developed more active outreach strategies to target parents.

This section provides a description of the information and outreach activities undertaken by local authorities and explored in the current study, as well as setting out the key principles underpinning these efforts.

4.1.1 Information and outreach strategies

There are two key approaches to identifying families that may benefit from information and outreach services, with both approaches used concurrently in some areas:

- *Targeting parents through service access points.* This is particularly the case where local authorities lacked a disability register or any other databases for targeting parents. These access points include special schools (e.g. in local authority H), through SENCO staff in mainstream schools (e.g. local authority G) and Children's Centres (e.g. in local authority D).
- *Using databases to target families.* These include the Disability Children's Register (DCR) and, where these are not available, local authorities have worked hard to identify families through social care databases as well as databases of DCATCH service users.

Although parents tend to be the recipients of information about DCATCH activities, information is also made available to key local authority departments and staff. This is the case, for example, in local authority J, where newsletters are distributed to key members of the local authority, such as councillors and managers of departments across services, updating them about DCATCH activity and its impact in order to get their 'buy in' to the DCATCH programme.

The strategies to deliver information and outreach entail four key ways of disseminating information:

- The use of publications and the internet to publicise DCATCH activities;
- The use of the FIS and other local authority staff to undertake information outreach work;
- Outreach work of 'information champions' in various settings; and
- The use of events to publicise DCATCH activities.

These strategies do not only rely on parents to be referred to DCATCH in order to receive information, but also embody an intention to ensure information reaches parents in the settings and services they access. Each of these will be dealt with in turn in the sections below

The use of publications and the internet (local authority G, D, J)

Various written publications are used to disseminate information about DCATCH activities. In local authority G, a newsletter is sent out twice a year containing information about DCATCH activities. Local authority G also produces a DVD in local languages outlining the service directory of provision for disabled children. Local authority D produces a booklet outlining childcare provision (both mainstream and targeted) during the school holidays for disabled children. This booklet is distributed approximately five times a year, two weeks before school holidays are due to commence.

Existing websites are also used as a vehicle to distribute information about local childcare activities, as well as DCATCH activities more specifically. In local authority D for example, the DCATCH team have links embedded in the FIS website which lead to information about both mainstream and targeted childcare activities available to disabled children, as well as a space where they can contribute to consultations about service provision. Likewise, local authority J centralised information about childcare activities for families with disabled children in a specific part of the local authority website.

The use of the FIS and local authority staff (local authority H, D, J, G)

As with the brokerage work, the FIS is seen by local authorities to be a key lever in the delivery of information, with some local authorities (e.g. local authority J) keen to market the FIS as a one-stop shop for meeting all of the childcare needs of families. The onus in this approach is very much on the parents to contact FIS in order to be able to access this information. As discussed in chapter three, there is usually a key brokerage officer embedded within the FIS who is responsible for upskilling FIS staff to be able to deliver information, advice and brokerage around childcare to parents with disabled children.

Local authority G has a Disability Information Officer (the DIO) who, though embedded within the local authority, works closely with the FIS to inform the information delivery practice through various elements of their work. The DIO's role includes ensuring that information around childcare needs for disabled children is centralised in one place rather than across the different local authority departments. This role involved setting up a DCR and a 'directory of services', which lists clubs and services that are able and willing to work with disabled children. The DIO is also responsible for revamping the local authority website to provide more information on the services that families could access, providing a drop-in surgery at the FIS once a week for parents to get information and advice and for attending and organising information outreach events.

Local authority J also has an 'issues log' within the FIS which enabled staff to log unmet needs of parents which then is fed back to the Aiming High team within the local authority.

The use of 'information champions' (local authority J, H)

'Information champions' are individuals based in a variety of organisations/ settings that conduct information outreach work to publicise childcare and DCATCH activities

and embody a drive by local authorities to ensure that information reaches out to settings and parents. The work of the information champions in many instances also overlaps with brokerage and workforce development work, with some champions also having the remit of challenging settings who are reluctant to provide childcare for disabled children. This is done through the provision of information around where these settings could access support and guidance that would enable them to accommodate disabled children.

Local authority J has two types of staff undertaking this role: (i) information champions who are embedded largely in schools and have a key role in ensuring that schools have the right information around childcare options available to give to parents; and, (ii) parent champions, who tend to be based in the FIS and local authority departments, who have a dual role: to support parents with their information needs around childcare and to gain their feedback around issues concerning information and service delivery, with a view to feeding concerns back to the local authority.

There were two strands to the parent champion work. One is around gathering parents' views and the other one is around kind of supporting them to access services, including childcare and leisure. So at those, if you think about those drop-ins, where parents are meeting regularly, it's an opportunity for parents, for us to gather that information from them about the things that they're talking about, that they've got issues with, that they're struggling with... which is what parent champions do every week, when you pick up on things all the time, don't you, from those parents? But also to put them in touch with services that might be able to support them.

(DCATCH project worker)

In local authority H, out-of-school liaison officers (OSLOs) are used to ensure parents receive good information around childcare, play and leisure options. Although the OSLOs were piloted prior to DCATCH, they have been rolled out more widely as a result of DCATCH funding. OSLOs are embedded in 12 special schools in the area and managed by these schools, with some being members of staff. The level of involvement in the delivery of information and advice varies according to each OSLO and the school structures in which they are placed; with some signposting parents to childcare options, whilst others are going further and even helping a child settle into a setting.

[T]heir role is to provide information support for families in that school community to access out of school childcare play and leisure opportunities, you know, some do that to a higher intensity than others, depending upon the way they work and the structures of the school...some...would go with the young person to the club, help introduce them, maybe go for a few weeks, a bit like an enabler. Others might just...give the family all the information; make a couple of phone [calls]...

(DCATCH manager)

The use of events to publicise DCATCH activities (local authority J, C and G)

Local authorities used both one-off events and on-going events to publicise childcare and DCATCH activities. For example, local authority C hosted a day event which brought together different key partners (e.g. Scope, the National Autistic Society etc) in one place for parents to find out more about the services available locally. The DIO in local authority G organised a similar event in the form of a 'Disability Information Day', where providers had the opportunity to promote their service to parents. In local

authority J, parent champions are responsible for running drop-in surgeries for families with disabled children which enable a regular delivery of information to parents. These drop-in sessions are also an opportunity for parents to provide feedback on their information needs, facilitating a two-way exchange of information between champions and parents.

4.1.2 Summary of the characteristics of information delivery

The information delivery strategies that are used by local authorities seem to share some or all of the following characteristics:

- *Efforts are made to centralise the point where families could access information.* Rather than having to approach a number of individuals and organisations, local authorities are attempting to centralise where information around childcare could be accessed by parents. This could be through the FIS and/or a website.
- *Information exchange being a two-way process.* Local authorities are not only content to deliver information to parents, but also to consult them during the course of information delivery on the types of information they required and to gain feedback on the services provided by the local authority.
- *Information delivery not being a one-off event.* This is seen to be important as the information needs of parents may change – e.g. from first diagnosis of their child onwards – and/or they may be more receptive to receiving information at certain points than other. This is illustrated for example in the drop-in surgeries run by local authority J, where parents could regularly come for information, rather than have a leaflet posted to them once in year.

4.2 Outcomes and sustainability

The sections below explore respondents' views on the intended outcomes of their information and outreach activity as well as their perceptions around the progress made in achieving these goals. Respondents' views on the sustainability of these activities post-DCATCH are also discussed.

4.2.1 Intended outcomes

There are three intended outcomes *implicit* in respondents' discussion of information and outreach activity:

- Improving knowledge and information about disabled children and their families and the childcare options available to them through work done on creating and improving DCRs and the mapping of service provision.
- Making this information as accessible as possible to parents, for example, by centralising its point of delivery and the use of internet.
- To encourage and support settings to provide childcare through the outreach work done by FIS and the various information champions.

4.2.2 Perceived outcomes

As with brokerage, the perceptions of staff on the impact of information and brokerage work is often derived from informal/and or indirect sources. Again, the use of these sources of data seems to reflect the challenges that the DCATCH programme experience in collecting systematic data for their interventions. These challenges are summarised in the quote below, where a respondent reflects on the difficulties of data collection, particularly in relation to the needs of the TDC and the government:

Data collection has been a huge problem around DCATCH and...I would say that DCATCH in [area] has really been a success, except for data collection. It's just been really, really hard to collect the data, particularly the data that Together for Disabled Children are asking us and I believe that might be the data the Government are asking. So there's a line on the data collection about unmet need, I challenge anybody to know a number of people that you haven't [come across], that you don't know are there in the first place, you know, how can you measure unmet need if you don't know the people have a need in the first place? So it has been very difficult gathering data.

(DCATCH manager)

These sources informing perceptions of impact are similar to those discussed before and include:

- Formal and informal feedback from parents (e.g. through focus groups and informal conversations);
- Feedback from FIS and local authority staff;
- Feedback from other professionals (e.g. social workers); and
- The use of routine MI data collected by the local authority and FIS (e.g. call logs).

The remainder of this section will discuss how the outcomes of the information and outreach work were perceived by DCATCH managers and information officers (including FIS staff, where relevant). The outcomes discussed will be in relation to the impact on FIS and local authorities, other partners, settings and families with disabled children.

Impact on FIS and local authority

Respondents believed that information and outreach work has improved knowledge within the local authority and FIS of local childcare provision for disabled children as well as the extent of need.

This work has included mapping service provision (leading some to generate a service directory for an area) and, where areas did not already have a DCR, identifying parents that have disabled children. Networking events held to bring families and service providers together are also seen to be beneficial for services within a local authority:

Well what was fascinating was to hear the response from the professionals and the staff to say wow, you know, 'I didn't know they existed', 'I didn't know there were teachers for the deaf' and 'I didn't know there was a caring agency that families could refer themselves to', and 'I didn't know there was support for siblings of disabled kids', you know, fantastic.

(DCATCH manager)

It is also important to reiterate the value of the information and brokerage officers in upskilling the FIS and the local authority, as well as the impact on the uptake of FIS services by parents as a result of the work done to promote FIS – both impacts have been discussed in chapter three.

Impact on settings

Discussions around information and outreach work mirror the view discussed in chapter three that mainstream settings are more willing and able to work with disabled children as a result of DCATCH. In addition to the work of the brokerage officer, respondents felt that the work that is being done by information champions

also helps to challenge and support settings around their confidence to cater for disabled children. For example, information champions sometimes accompany children to settings to help them settle in. This gives them the opportunity to observe and challenge settings where it is felt they are not inclusive enough, as well as to feedback to the local authority any training or other developmental issues that are raised by settings.

But now there's more out there, there's also more people challenging, saying, Well this is what the family wants, why can't you include this child? I haven't got I haven't got enough staff. Oh, well there is the inclusion support scheme that will pay for another member of staff for these particular... So, actually, by somebody challenging and trying to broker and find a place, I think it's probably then meant that providers aren't as capable of saying no and the barriers that they put for not taking the child are broken down by a professional, because they are they aware of the things that are out there to ensure that that child can be placed in that provision... Say if say an [information officer] goes with a child to help settle them into a setting, because some of them do that, or go to meet the provider, if there is an issue around quality, if there's an issue around training, if there's also things that are working really well that could be shared, then they can do that because they're going into, you know...

(DCATCH manager)

Impact on parents

The impact on parents of the DCATCH information activity is seen to be twofold: firstly, in some areas, it is seen to improve their access to information by providing a centralised point of contact. This means that parents do not have to search for childcare information across a variety of settings and local authority departments, but are able to access this information through a key source – this tends to be through the FIS and/or local authority website. Information is also seen to be made accessible by providing it in different formats and in different languages, as is the case in local authority G, where information around service provision is also provided in a DVD format in five local languages.

The fact that it's been centralised, the fact that it's available in a variety of formats which should suit the need of every parent out there, unless we've got a parent who didn't speak a language we hadn't had it translated into. I think the centralisation of it has been the most positive outcome, because that's what parents were asking for, and they had been for years. Yes, we want the info, but we want it in one place or at the end of one telephone number, or at the end of one website address rather than being sent off in all directions of the compass, you know, and sent on a wild goose chase some of the time. So I think that that's our biggest thing, centralisation.

(DCATCH manager)

There is the view among some DCATCH managers and FIS staff that the uptake of information around childcare has improved as result of this information being provided in an accessible format and the work done around promoting it. This uptake is gauged in various ways, including:

- An increase in the number of childcare placements made by information officers and brokers. For example, local authority H reports 1,200 placements being made by their OSLOs;

- An increase in the use of FIS as a source of advice for childcare. For example, local authority D reports at least 20 calls to FIS from families with disabled children in December 2010, compared to very few prior to DCATCH;
- An increase in the number of hits that websites on childcare and disabled children are registering;
- An improvement in responses to local consultations (e.g. local authority surveys) from families with disabled children; and
- Positive feedback from parents gathered routinely during the course of project activities (e.g. parents feeling happy with a centralised point of contact and the format of the information – for example, the holiday childcare booklet that local authority D produces).

Impact on other partners

Although not an explicit goal of information and outreach activities, these activities are also seen by DCATCH managers as having a positive impact on other professionals who come across childcare and disability issues during the course of their work. This includes professionals, such as social workers, feeling appreciative of having a source of information (e.g. the FIS) around the childcare they could refer to, as well as the usefulness of the support given by information champions to social workers, in particular, to develop their knowledge of disabled childcare provision in the local area. The workload of social workers also seems to have lightened as result of being able to refer parents to the FIS and the information champions within a local authority.

R: I mean one of the benefits from having [information champions], the feedback we've had from social care is that it has meant that the work that social workers might have... they may have had to have done that work in the past by having those people in post, it's actually given them capacity to work with more vulnerable families within the community which, to me, is a massive achievement.

I: Having those people, who?

R: [Information champions]. By having them it's increased the capacity of the social workers to work with more vulnerable people. I think it's up skilled the social workers as well in terms of, you know, them being aware of what funding schemes are out there

(DCATCH manager)

4.2.3 Sustainability

As with brokerage, sustainability seems to have informed the information and outreach activities that are undertaken. Two key strategies are used to make information and outreach work sustainable: to embed them in structures and organisations already existing within the local authority (e.g. in the FIS) - see the quote below - and to ensure that information and outreach strategies are relatively easy and cost-effective to maintain once they have been set up. For example, ensuring that once a website with information on childcare has been set up, it would be relatively easy to maintain and update. Similarly, information booklets around holiday provisions are relatively cost-effective to produce and could be sustained by other local authority departments post-DCATCH.

I think the approach that [local authority] have done where they didn't individually fund family, they tried...to improve the services that are current, not develop another service...which is really good because that makes us sustainable. That means, because if people are trained and they go back with training, that's knowledge and that's going to stay with them forever.

And then if this equipment, as long as it's maintained, it's going to stay with them forever. The website is going to stay there, and it's going to be updated. The newsletter's going to stay there...

(DCATCH project worker)

However, the study found some concern amongst DCATCH managers about the sustainability of some of the information and outreach activities after DCATCH, particularly around funding for the various information champion posts created. However, there is also a parallel focus on the lasting legacy that DCATCH would leave behind. As with brokerage, this includes the knowledge and skills that the information activities will leave behind within the local authority, the FIS and even among professionals, such as social workers, who have been affected by the interventions. Again, respondents drew attention to the sustainability of some of the processes created as a result of information and outreach activity, for example the database of local providers willing and able to provide care for disabled children or a DCR which may not have existed before DCATCH and could be drawn on in the future to target information.

4.3 Challenges

In this section, the main challenges to developing and implementing information and outreach activities are explored and, where applicable, how these challenges are addressed and/or how respondents felt they could be avoided in the future.

4.3.1 Lack of information about parents at the start of DCATCH

In local authorities that did not have a DCR, initial challenges relate to a lack of information on the number and identity of families with disabled children. This made it difficult for local authorities to know who to send information about DCATCH activities out to and to initially target families. This challenge is summarised by a project worker below.

We literally didn't have anybody, you know, apart from a few people that had been on the workshops already. You know, we didn't have a lovely list of people that we could send out and tell them all about DCATCH and tell them all about FIS and, you know, what the [information champions] were doing. So promoting things like the drop-ins, which, and everything that we've been trying to grow, was, was really hard, and we did have to target, you know, certain places and services that we knew, where we'd reach those families, so things like [Children's Centers].

(Project worker)

As the above quotes suggests, local authorities had to creatively think about where to distribute this information so that families that would benefit from it the most could access it. They did this through tapping in to various existing organisations and forums, including support groups for parents with disabled children (e.g. Autism groups), Children's Centres known to be used by families with disabled children and NHS children assessment centres.

4.3.2 Challenging attitudes within local authority and settings

Information and outreach activities, like brokerage activities, experienced resistance from local authority teams, settings and professionals (e.g. social workers) around the idea of inclusive childcare for disabled children. As discussed in chapter three,

much of this resistance stems from a lack of confidence within local authority departments (e.g. transport and housing) or settings around dealing with disabled children due to a paucity of knowledge and/or experience. So respondents pointed to the residual view amongst some local authority staff that disabled children should be accommodated by specialist and targeted provision. This attitude is encountered by information champions within settings and in the thinking of some service leads within local authorities. This attitude is summed up by a DCATCH manager below.

R: Service leads... it can be anywhere [resistance to inclusive care]...you get, you get your [information champions] - I've always had a lot of people saying, [patronisingly] "Oh, it's a great idea. It's lovely. Yes. Good luck!" [Laughs.] And I'm thinking, [frustrated] "No! I want you with me!" And all saying, "Yes, I can understand, and it's the responsibility of those specialist services to deal with that" and trying to get people to change so that they understand that it's universal services that need to be involved has been a huge problem.

I: Why is that? Why has that been a problem?

R: Because it's not their agenda. And it needs to be their agenda...

(DCATCH manager)

Even when this is not case, some settings, particularly some schools, have a very narrow definition of what constitutes disability – sometimes restricted to 'physical difficulties'. This has sometimes made it difficult for DCATCH teams to be confident that the information about services distributed through schools would reach all families who might require it. In response, DCATCH leads attend various school meetings, such as cluster meetings, and forums to inform schools about disability issues.

Finally, strategic teams within local authorities are sometimes seen to be slow in responding to parent feedback around services provided through the FIS and/or information champions. This has led to parents feeling that their views are not being addressed.

4.3.3 Managing information champions and FIS information officers

Areas where the information champions and DCATCH funded FIS staff are managed outside of the DCATCH team faced challenges ensuring quality and consistency of service. For example, where these champions are embedded and line managed within settings such as schools, DCATCH teams sometimes feel they lack the ability to influence the practice of health champions – who work to the priorities of the school. This is seen to contribute to a variable service to parents being delivered, with some champions being more involved and proactive in delivering advice than others.

Another challenge rests on DCATCH staff responsible for information delivery having to juggle with multiple roles. For both DCATCH officers in FIS and the champions embedded in other settings (e.g. as teaching assistants within schools), the challenge for local authorities is to ensure that their time is protected for DCATCH activities and it is not taken over by the mainstream FIS work or the needs of schools. This challenge around role management is further amplified in instances where information champions are 'job sharing' for various reasons. DCATCH managers sometimes found this leads to a lack of communication between those sharing the job and some duplication of work with parents between them.

4.3.4 Working with local authority processes and other local authority factors

The issue of local authority processes has already been given coverage in chapter three, so will only be touched upon here. As with brokerage activities, this challenge affected DCATCH activities at the start of the programme and related to constraints imposed by local authority regulations on recruitment and other activities (e.g. marketing). For example, DCATCH teams could not initially recruit key individuals needed for information and outreach work, such as administrators, because of the moratorium some local authorities placed on recruitment. This situation was compounded by the lengthy processes involved in the approval of job descriptions within local authorities, leading to further delays in posts being filled. This challenge is summarised by a DCATCH manager below.

...and also, you know, some of the stuff, you're trying to set it up in a time where the local authority has basically cancelled all publication, you can't do any marketing, you can't recruit, you can't, you know, our administrator left halfway through. If we hadn't have had somebody internally looking for additional hours, you'd have had no administration.

(DCATCH manager)

Some local authority areas are also large and geographically dispersed, which presents its own challenges for information and outreach. This includes the time taken for information champions and other DCATCH staff to get to different settings (e.g. schools) in the local authority area to meet with staff and parents for the purpose of information delivery and outreach work and, perhaps more fundamentally, DCATCH staff lacking knowledge about the state of information and additional service provision in certain areas within the local authority. This made it difficult for DCATCH teams to deliver comprehensive information and outreach provision in all of their local areas.

4.3.5 Challenges working with parents

Three key challenges with working with parents are cited by respondents. Firstly, there are challenges in reaching out and engaging certain types of parents in DCATCH activities. This includes parents of children in mainstream schools, who may be less open to acknowledging that their child needs additional help, and parents with children who have complex needs (e.g. challenging behaviour or epilepsy), who despite receiving information services may not have had the confidence that settings would be able to care for their child.

Secondly, challenges are reported around clarifying parents' understanding of DCATCH. In particular, challenges are experienced around consolidating parents' understanding of the difference between Short Breaks and childcare and the different drivers that informed both types of work and the different projects that each provided.

Thirdly, there is also the feeling that the provision of information is not in itself enough to ensure that parents accessed DCATCH services; regardless of the format and way it is delivered. Parents' receptiveness to the information is felt to be tied to their emotional state of mind, with parents being more receptive to the information when they are in a positive state of mind and shutting out the information when they are not. In this respect, it is seen to be important to provide ongoing information and advice, rather than a one-off event.

As a result of all this, information and outreach work is seen to be time and resource intensive. It is clear that some parents require more effort than the simple signposting to childcare; in such cases, information and outreach work easily turns into brokerage work (e.g. when information officers visit settings with parents). This has resource implications for the information and outreach work done.

4.4 Success factors in the development of information and outreach work

This section provides an overview of some of the factors that are seen to facilitate the DCATCH information and outreach work.

4.4.1 Information officers at FIS and Information champions

The work of the information officers in FIS is seen to be pivotal to the information delivery strategy in many DCATCH areas. As discussed in chapter three, having a officer in FIS with specialist knowledge of disability issues and childcare helps FIS to develop information strategies around disabled children and their families as well as building its capacity to provide information and advice for this group through, for example, the formal and informal training and transfer of knowledge that the information officer provides. It helps if the FIS officer has strong networking skills and is able to approach organisations and settings using their initiative in order to encourage referrals to FIS. The work of both the FIS officer, as well as the information champions, is also seen to help DCATCH areas develop their understanding and knowledge of inclusive local provision where there may have been a paucity of this prior to DCATCH.

I'd say that the work around... through having the [information champions] and the accessible childcare information officer within the Family Information Service, there's now a better database of what inclusive provision is out there.

(DCATCH manager)

Information champions are another central part of many local authorities' information delivery strategy. As discussed earlier, information champions played an important part in challenging settings around their attitudes towards inclusive provision. Where champions are embedded in settings, they are also seen to help DCATCH not only disseminate information quickly and directly to these settings, but also to provide feedback to the DCATCH team on the information gaps that exists locally.

[In] terms of disseminating information as well, obviously it's [having embedded information champions] a really quick way, especially with having one person in each of the special schools to get the information out there quickly to families with disabled children, and to pick up when there's gaps and, you know, difficulties, so that's worked really well.

(DCATCH manager)

Similarly, locating information champions within different services exposes services to working with families with disabled children and, where the champions are themselves parents of disabled children, also helps services gain a parental perspective on the issues.

A good induction programme is seen to help information champions to perform their role. For example, local authority H organised a day's induction for all of their OSLOs

to provide generic training around their role and to enable them to network with one another and to develop a shared identity.

The use of the FIS and information champions was part of the strategy used by local authorities to ensure information is provided in different forms and on an ongoing basis to meet parents changing needs.

4.4.2 Good partnership work with settings, the voluntary sector and other DCATCH projects

DCATCH staff also work on establishing relationships with a host of other organisations – both settings and non-settings – in order for information on DCATCH activities to reach as wide an audience as possible and to provide another route for DCATCH referrals. These include PCTs, NHS children's assessment centres, key individuals in schools, such as SENCOs, a range of voluntary organisations and settings, such as Children's Centres.

Strong partnership work between different strands of the DCATCH work, and the different projects within these strands, is seen to be a key facilitator in getting information about DCATCH activities out. For example, a DCATCH manager ensures that there is effective communication between projects and that each project routinely promotes the FIS as a source of information in the work that they do.

R: Yeah, I mentioned about the projects holding on to each other's agendas and supporting each other, so that information sharing between... DCATCH projects has worked really well.

I: Why's that been helpful?

R: Because, for example, Family Information Service hasn't been working in isolation. Every single project has been adding to their focus, so there isn't one project that, when I monitor the projects I say... do you mention Family Information Service to families?

(DCATCH manager)

4.4.3 Working with parents

Working with parents is seen to be helpful for two reasons: first, it is seen to be a part of a wider commitment in some local authorities to a two-way process of information sharing, so that information is not just given to parents, but that parents also influence the information and services that are available. Second, parent groups and networks provide an additional route through which information about DCATCH could be distributed. Again, the use of parent forums, networks and other groups is seen to be helpful in this regard¹³.

¹³ The issue of participation has been discussed at length in Jessiman, P *et al* (2010).

5 Additional provision

5.1 Description of interventions explored for the process evaluation

Additional childcare provision funded under DCATCH falls into three main types: new provision targeted at disabled children, one-to-one support for disabled children in group settings (mostly but not limited to mainstream settings) and buddying schemes.

5.1.1 New targeted provision

Some authorities are using DCATCH funding to provide new childcare provision for disabled children and young people, mostly funding after-school and holiday clubs. This funding goes towards an increase in places available in targeted provision but the organisations in some cases are also funded to increase the capacity of mainstream providers to work with disabled children. For example, local authority H has increased funding to three organisations (already providing places to disabled children) to provide more leisure and childcare opportunities for disabled children and young people. Other examples include local authority A that is funding an after school club run by a special school, a specialist youth club for 8-13 year olds run by a local voluntary organisation, and has plans to set up another youth club in 2011.

As well as funding holiday activities for disabled children and young people, Authority D also funds a club for their siblings, to support parents spending time alone with their disabled child while facilitating peer support between siblings of disabled children who may be facing challenges of their own.

5.1.2 One-to-one support in group settings

Four authorities are funding one-to-one support for disabled children to access group settings. The purpose of this additional support varies: in some cases it is long-term support specific to the child, with the additional worker taking responsibility for personal care, play support etc. In other examples, the additional worker is there to provide transitional support, supporting the child for a time-limited period to introduce the child to the setting and help settle them before withdrawing. In this second case, the worker will often have an explicit role in training and supporting setting staff, building their capacity to support the child after they withdraw. Where this training and capacity-building role is not explicit, many respondents were keen to point out that staff capacity would still improve through more informal methods of observation and 'being set a good example'.

Authority H is funding a pool of workers to provide one-to-one support in mainstream and targeted group settings. Parents complete a profile of their children and, on occasion, a home assessment is carried out to determine need. The support can be either permanent or transitional, depending on the needs of the child. There is no systematic approach to training staff in the settings, but the DCATCH manager reports that good practice will be shared. Similarly Authority D uses teaching assistants to support disabled children to attend mainstream holiday clubs (parents pay for the club, DCATCH funding pays for the assistant). Again, there is no explicit expectation that the staff will be trained in inclusion but it is expected that good practice be shared.

Two other authorities, J and B, provide one-to-one support with an emphasis on both building capacity within the setting, and withdrawing the one-to-one workers afterwards. Authority J is building on provision that existed prior to DCATCH funding; DCATCH has expanded their capacity to provide additional staff in group settings to support a disabled child where required. The service is presented as an opportunity for settings to increase the staff: child ratio rather than an assistant for the child, and, where possible, the funding is withdrawn once the setting is able to meet the child's needs without additional staff – although the DCATCH manager reports this has not always been possible. Authority B has a DCATCH-funded inclusion worker to promote the inclusion of disabled children in childcare settings. In addition, the authority funds ten play support workers to work in groups settings for up to six weeks after a disabled child begins to attend. The role is to support the setting, not the child, through generic disability inclusion training, and training based around the child's specific needs. On withdrawal of the play support worker, settings can access the inclusion worker who can provide additional support and training. This authority also provides parents who previously did not access formal childcare with £200 funding for 'childcare taster sessions' which means that the family is financially supported to access childcare while the play support worker builds capacity in the setting to meet the needs of the child.

5.1.3 Buddying schemes

Two authorities (A and J) are funding 'buddying' schemes for older children and young people. Both are funding third sector partners to match children with adult support workers who take them to group activities or support them more generally to go out independently without their parents. However, both of the schemes were relatively small scale and, in one case, only very recently implemented. As a result, buddying schemes are only briefly discussed in the following sections.

5.2 Outcomes and sustainability

The scoping study found that almost all pilot authorities were funding some additional childcare provision, including new provision of the type already mentioned in this chapter (e.g. after school clubs), sometimes for specific groups, such as the visually impaired, and also the funding of one-to-one support to increase the capacity of existing providers to support disabled children.

The sections below explore respondents' views on the intended outcomes of their additional provision as well as their perceptions around the progress made in achieving these goals. Respondents' views on the sustainability of these activities post-DCATCH are also discussed.

5.2.1 Intended impact

The primary aim of all pilot areas in funding additional provision is straightforward: to increase the number of disabled children accessing formal childcare, and to increase the number of hours each child is able to access.

Although the study is not an impact assessment, some authorities were able to provide evidence of their success in this. Authority B set an annual target of supporting 100 children into settings through one-to-one, time-limited support from a play worker and met the target. Many of these families were new to formal childcare, supported in addition by the £200 fund for childcare 'tasters'. Authority D reports recruiting over 100 teaching assistants working with 300 children to access mainstream holiday clubs. Authorities that have funded third sector partners to

increase the number of childcare places available to disabled children report increased take up as well as better geographical spread of places across the local area.

DCATCH managers, drawing on feedback provided by project staff and settings, report that some interventions have struggled to have the intended impact. For example, in two authorities (H and J) respondents report ensuring that one-to-one support enhances group settings has been challenging because withdrawing this support from settings can be difficult when providers have become dependent on the support worker. The emphasis on supporting the child, rather than the setting, appears to increase the likelihood of this happening. Authorities who have made clear the support is time-limited and is intended to build staff capacity have supported a greater number of children. This and other challenges are covered in section 5.4.

5.2.2 Wider perceived impacts

Beyond an increase in available childcare hours for disabled children to access, respondents reported wider impacts that they perceived to have resulted from the additional funded provision.

Increasing provider engagement with other inclusion work

Respondents report that where the local authority has provided funding to increase the staff ratio, or supplied a one-to-one support worker to the setting, this has helped engage settings that may previously have been reluctant to improve their offer to disabled children and young people. For example, Authority H used DCATCH funding to support a pool of one-to-one workers as well as funding additional provision, and extended the reach of this across 2 new localities that pre-DCATCH they had not been able to reach. The manager reports that this has raised awareness of inclusion amongst childcare providers, and of other support available to providers should they need it.

I think its promoted inclusion across the [area] and it's raised the profile of inclusion..... So, it's probably, again, better awareness of the funding schemes to support access.

(DCATCH Manager)

Authority B has an extensive programme of workforce development (see the July 2010 report¹⁴) which includes access to an inclusion support officer and a self-assessment inclusion audit for childcare providers. The capacity to provide intensive support through a 6-week period where a play support worker is placed in the setting to help support a disabled child (through capacity building with staff) has encouraged previously reluctant providers to engage with the wider workforce development opportunities.

For some settings who were really difficult to engage with before...a setting that's been really hard to engage with you know, doesn't want to work with us and you have stuff like the inclusion audits which they turn away from, if they've got a Play Support Worker going in, working with them over six weeks

¹⁴ Jessiman, P et al (2010). *Disabled Children's Access to Childcare (DCATCH): Process evaluation of participation and workforce development activity in the DCATCH pilots.* Department for Education DFE-RR013

around the particular young person like building that relationship between them, at the end of the six weeks, as well as that young person being in the provision, can then start introducing other things around the setting's development. So, start talking to them about doing the inclusion audit, getting the focused improvement plan so it's a non threatening way to get into a setting sometimes.

(DCATCH manager)

Building provider capacity to support disabled children

DCATCH managers reported that providing one-to-one support to settings has increased settings' capacity to provide a service to other disabled children without repeated need for one-to-one support to help settle the child. This is more likely to be the case where the support worker has an explicit remit to upskill setting staff, rather than only working with the disabled child. In authority B, the support worker together with the inclusion officer (in some cases the same person does both roles) offer a range of training and support ranging from formal training to informal support and building staff confidence.

We have a core session that we deliver which is disability quality training and all the settings would go on that. We have things like behaviour training, -- training, anything that would help support the community or the children that are going to that setting. We would also support obviously being there in the setting and just anything that they'd need... And I think it's just that encouragement to say you can do it.

(Play support worker)

However even where support workers are there for the child rather than to train setting staff, some respondents reported that settings could still learn from the support worker. In some cases, this may be through the provider identifying a skills gap and seeking additional training for staff.

Because they've had their awareness raised, they've done the disability training... Sometimes we have been there and afterwards the providers gone, 'Oh, actually, we'll be fine next time'. You know, which is good. Yeah, because they've seen how we've dealt with them.

(one-to-one support worker)

Respondents acknowledge however that providers' capacity to support disabled children is more likely to increase if the support is presented as for the staff and not the child:

It's saying, "You don't need the support forever. Only what you need." Now, [the provider] may say, "This child's behaviour is such that we constantly need an extra member of staff to support with this child." In which case, we say, "Fine. But we don't - we're not going to come in and solve the problem for you; we look at training all of your staff to meet the needs, and we increase the ratio for all of those children."

(DCATCH manager)

Raising confidence in attending mainstream activities

Respondents also reported that one-to-one provision could raise both parents' and children and young peoples' confidence in attending mainstream settings as well as

specialist provision. This was associated both with childcare for younger children (and in Authority B, one-to-one provision is coupled with a free childcare 'taster' grant of £200 to encourage new users of formal childcare) and for young people attending after school clubs and holiday activities. Authority D gathers feedback from parents on all DCATCH interventions through surveys, focus groups and consultations at Aiming High events and reports that one-to-one support to enable children to attend group activities during holidays is the most highly rated intervention:

It's the one that was rated as highest by parents. What it's done is enabled parents to use activities that we all use for children as childcare, so sports clubs, you know, holiday activity centres, and then we have the targeted activities that we do as well, so all of those things that we all use for childcare has enabled parents to do that knowing that a child is properly supported.

(DCATCH Manager)

Other perceived impacts

Other impacts were specific to a particular type of additional provision and are listed in brief below:

- One authority funding an after school club at a special school reports that this has encouraged the school to engage in the extended services agenda.
- The sibling service (activities for siblings of disabled children and young people) in Authority C may prevent some young people from reaching 'crisis point'.
- Increased after-school provision has made the authority address recurring difficulties providing transport for disabled children to access positive activities.

5.3 Sustainability

At the time of the study, local authorities that had funded additional after-school clubs, holiday clubs, and other provision, were not optimistic that these would be sustainable after the pilot funding ends in March 2011. DCATCH managers who had hoped that the benefits of such provision would encourage the authority to provide mainstream funding have revised their predictions, largely as a result of the cuts in local authority budgets facing the majority of pilot areas. This reliance on mainstreaming funding may also account for why local authorities that funded third sector organisations to run additional provision, such as one-to-one support and after-school clubs, had no post-March 2011 funding strategy in place, with DCATCH managers reporting that provision may revert to pre-DCATCH levels after funding. Organisations have been encouraged to seek alternative sources of funding, and the authority running the sibling service is working with parents to set up a charity that can access funding from Trusts and other sources to keep the club running. At the time of data collection, no further funding had been confirmed for any of this provision. Third sector partners have also been encouraged to explore charging parents for services - although some DCATCH managers felt that this may have a detrimental impact on take-up as providers would have to charge parents above market rates for certain activities in order to ensure costs are met.

I mean [the third sector partner] has been really proactive because I have to monitor the youth club and I was dreading sort of saying to them [that the funding was ending], but the manager knew, and she'd worked out how much she was going to have to charge parents for the

Monday night clubs and she they've sorted all that out and she said they'll have to come through their Direct Payments.

(DCATCH manager)

Authorities that have put funding into one-to-one support tend to be more optimistic that the impacts will be sustainable; for example, improvements to staff skills and confidence in working with disabled children and young people will remain after the additional one-to-one provision is withdrawn. At the time of fieldwork, some authorities raised concerns that provision will return to pre-DCATCH levels of provision but hope to do 'more with less', e.g. Authority B is considering reducing the average length of one-to-one support from 6 weeks to 1 week. It is recognized that this is likely to disproportionately impact upon those children with more severe and complex needs who require longer term support to settle into a group setting.

5.4 Challenges

This section details the main challenges faced by pilot areas funding additional provision including one-to-one support and where possible, the strategies used to address them.

5.4.1 Ensuring one-to-one support enhances the setting

DCATCH managers report challenges in ensuring that childcare providers benefited as much as possible from the additional support that a one-to-one worker could provide. Drawing on the experiences of support staff, DCATCH managers felt that some settings may have become over-reliant on the support worker to meet the child's additional needs, rather than using the resource to upskill setting staff. This reliance may be because setting staff have become accustomed to having support workers present and knew that the additional needs of the child would be taken care of without their input. Others found that provider staff could not find the time, or were unwilling to learn from the support worker. Those authorities that were more successful in avoiding these difficulties made it clear the support was time limited and was there for staff not children (often through avoiding the use of the term 'one-to-one' altogether), as well as having a clear training programme for workers to implement.

...there's certain providers that {who} been into where it [up skill setting staff] hasn't worked at all, because you're actually putting a member of staff... with a child that, you know, then some of the staff in that setting are like, 'Oh we don't have to worry about supporting that child because that member of staff looks after them'. So, actually then the enabler hasn't really been able to withdraw from that child.

(DCATCH manager)

5.4.2 Finding enough qualified staff to support disabled children

Some authorities report difficulties in finding enough resource and qualified staff to meet the demand for additional provision from families with disabled children. This challenge applied to all types of additional provision, including setting up new specialist childcare settings and providing one-to-one support to established settings.

Yeah, going back to the group childcare challenges ... there's been issues around trying to get enough staff ...working in the settings that have got the appropriate training, experience, and skills and

qualifications, because the pay to work in a childcare or Short Break setting is low and you could get as much working in Tesco, but equally now, you've got to have quite a solid qualification that, you know, you've got to have quite high qualifications for the level of pay, so... I suppose there's not always that many people moving into the profession.

(DCATCH manager)

Even things like area coordinators, for OFSTED purposes, need to have an NVQ3 in play work or equivalent to be in charge of one of the play schemes. And just trying to get people with those qualifications is a nightmare.... It's really hard, which makes it more difficult for us because then, you know, you want to get it running, so you have to go and try and run it yourself until you can find somebody, which means it's a bit of a juggling act, isn't it? Yes, it means that then you've got to spread your qualified people around, so if you're running four sites with three qualified people...

(3rd sector manager)

One authority's solution to this has been to use teaching assistants (TAs) who provide similar support during school time to 'plug the gap' in supporting children to attend holiday clubs. The assistants remain employed and payment is managed through the school, with the added advantage that Criminal Record Bureau Checks will be current and valid for the employer (avoiding further delay). The manager reports that most TAs are happy to earn additional income during holiday breaks. However, despite recruiting approximately 100 they still faced challenges meeting demand from parents wanting to use the service and limited uptake to two sessions per child, per week.

Local authority B's one-to-one support was over-subscribed with a waiting list of approximately 150 families at the time of the fieldwork. The DCATCH manager reports that better targeting and selection of children eligible for the service may have prevented this. Some children's needs were more severe and complex than could be addressed through a 6-week package of training and support to a mainstream setting and perhaps better met through permanent support or an alternative setting.

One setting also reports difficulties in recruiting male staff to support older disabled boys who prefer a male support worker.

5.4.3 Gaining parents' trust

DCATCH managers and support workers report that parents of disabled children may be reluctant to attend new specialist provision, or mainstream provision with one-to-one support. This may be because of previous bad experiences, low expectations of the quality of care in the local authority, and a general anxiety that formal childcare providers will not know how to support their child (particularly where the child has especially complex health needs or challenging behaviour). DCATCH managers feel that this can be especially challenging for those authorities who pre-DCATCH had a very low level of childcare provision for disabled children. One manager reported additional challenges engaging parents in some ethnic minority groups because of language barriers and cultural resistance to formal childcare. However, both DCATCH managers and project workers do report success in supporting parents of disabled children to be more confident at leaving their child in the care of others, and the following quote from one parent illustrates:

My life was a misery until this service was in, and the first day I left him was, I had to be dragged away from there, because I was so scared to leave him with a stranger, thinking, Oh, my God, is he going to be drowned? You know, is he going to be ok? And it was really a scary process. And I stayed in the area, sitting having a cup of coffee... because I wouldn't move, just in case I got a phone call to say, there's something wrong. Now it's like, I'd have an Includer five days a week, if I could.

(Parent)

Solutions implemented by pilot areas include:

- Extensive outreach and information work to promote new services, including parents of children in mainstream schools and families from BME backgrounds (see chapter 4).
- Supported transitions into formal childcare, including free childcare 'taster' sessions and one-to-one support.
- The use of teaching assistants already familiar to the child to support access to mainstream holiday clubs.
- Using inclusion officers to carry out home assessments of children and specialist brokerage to find the 'right' provider (see chapter 3)

5.4.4 Administrative challenges in the local authority

A number of authorities reported facing challenges commissioning external organisations to deliver additional provision. The main challenge appeared to be capacity: local authorities were commissioning a large number of new services under both DCATCH and Short Breaks at the same time, using the same panel to review applications. This placed a strain on both the local authority procurement department and the responding organisations.

In local authority B, one commissioned partner went into insolvency soon after the contract was awarded and the problems in finding a replacement with sufficient staff and skills severely delayed the set up of a buddying scheme.

One DCATCH manager reported that a budget freeze within the local authority meant that project staff could not be recruited for nearly a year after DCATCH funding was awarded, delaying the set-up of additional provision.

Some managers also report that DCATCH and Short Breaks are not well integrated within the authority. Where the two funding streams were managed by two different managers (or teams), sharing resources and implementing joint initiatives was difficult, and operational staff were less likely to work together.

Short breaks have had different managers coming in and going and coming, so we've not really built up that [relationship], no, and it was a shame because I can so see the benefits of boroughs that have been working with Short Breaks so that you complement each other, but we've kind of had the Short Breaks there and us over here, and there hasn't been a lot of joined up working, which is really sad and I think had they have had a manager from the beginning that had stayed, things would have been different.

(DCATCH manager)

This also impacted on organisations funded by both streams, because commissioning, reporting and monitoring were not adequately joined up and on occasion 'in-fighting' could impact on the provider.

Well, [staff at the local authority] were arguing amongst themselves and still are, to be quite honest, about, you know, these funding streams and their demands because they both, they've got conflicting needs out of this money which they've never resolved and we're caught in the middle of to be honest. That's been quite difficult...In order for us to be able to run good comprehensive schemes, we had to combine the pots but then we had one person on one side saying, 'Well, I need this, this and this outcome', and we had other people saying, 'Well, I need this, this and this outcome', and they were sometimes conflicting...

(3rd Sector manager)

5.5 Success factors in the development of additional provision

5.5.1 Building relationships with schools

As one external manager reports: investing time in establishing rapport and trust with school staff at all levels, from the head to the teaching assistants, has made running after-schools clubs easier. One local authority works with schools to use teaching assistants as one-to-one supporters during holiday time. The assistants are employed and paid by the school, which then invoices the local authority. This relationship building has helped overcome some of the problems of access to suitable buildings and equipment that have been reported by external organizations.

Two authorities report that giving special schools money directly to fund after-school clubs and holiday provision has been more effective than trying to establish new provision with another provider. DCATCH managers consider that the funding may have encouraged special schools to engage further in the delivery of extended services.

One of the other things that's worked quite well is we gave each of the special schools some money to kind of enhance their out of school liaison officers work, so some of them were set up, activity clubs, after school clubs, holiday clubs... so actually it's made them increase the provision on the school site, so that's been good. Yeah, and it's been very cheap, they've done it quite cheaply because obviously the school was delivering it.

(DCATCH manager)

5.5.2 Focusing one-to-one support on settings

Focusing one-to-one support on settings rather than individual children has emerged as one of the strongest facilitators to maximise the benefits. Some authorities avoid the use of the term 'one-to-one', preferring to use the phrase 'increasing the staff ratio'. Focusing the resource on training and upskilling staff ensures that the additional worker is likely to be able to withdraw earlier, and will make withdrawal less difficult for the child.

One local authority offers ongoing support from an inclusion officer after the one-to-one support has been withdrawn. The inclusion officer will not be in the setting with the child but will visit regularly to provide guidance, support and training where

needed. This helps avoid the provider feeling they may fall off the 'cliff-edge' once the one-to-one worker has been withdrawn.

5.5.3 'Fit for purpose' referral systems

Respondents note the need for 'fit for purpose' referral systems for one-to-one support. Where younger children are placed in group day care settings for the first time, parents and providers may be more nervous about the likelihood of the child 'settling'. Referral systems that allow time to fully assess the child's (and parents') needs and are linked with good brokerage work to find the most suitable setting, are likely to help allay parents and providers' fears. However such resource intensive systems may be less necessary for 'lighter touch' schemes. The DCATCH manager in authority D, in which teaching assistants are matched to young people attending holiday activities, notes that the referral scheme is simple – parents can self refer online – meaning that more young people are able to access activities without delay.

5.5.4 Integrated working within the local authority

Despite some difficulties, some authorities do report good joint working across Short Breaks and DCATCH.

The two projects have really grown together and, yeah it's been a really positive experience for both of us [DCATCH and Short Breaks Managers]. I know that parents can see that, it's very easy for parents to criticise what the local authority do and a lot of the criticism is around disjointedness of service provision, but I think by showing this united front of Short Breaks and DCATCH parents have really appreciated the fact that we have used the money more effectively by joining up together. I sit on the Short Breaks steering group and the Manager of Short Breaks sits on my steering group so that we both know what's going on in the other projects and, and we can compliment each other. There's no thought whatsoever of it being a competition between the two and I think parents really have appreciated that show of unity and, and the best use of money.

(DCATCH manager)

6 Conclusion

This report set out to describe in detail the findings of two qualitative studies and to draw out the key messages from these studies in terms of acceptability and impact, key themes in relation to delivery, and barriers and facilitators encountered by the pilots.

6.1 Acceptability and impact

The findings of our study of families are notable in that there was so little variation in the views expressed by families, and that these views gave so positive a set of messages.

Four features of the data stand out:

1. DCATCH support and intervention as outlined by the respondents in this study was meeting individual need in a responsive, flexible and solution focused way. DCATCH staff were generally described in glowing terms.
2. Effective childcare encompassed a wide range of activities, and parents said that these generally enabled them to meet work and other commitments whilst also providing positive and enjoyable opportunities for disabled children and young people. Almost without exception, these two goals were inextricably linked for families. Disabled children and young people who took part in this evaluation, whilst small in number, all expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the activities in which they were involved.
3. Families gave accounts of childcare providers who were not willing to continue having disabled children without 1-1 support even with offers of training and other kinds of support. For some families, whilst DCATCH had provided invaluable support, lack of structural or attitudinal changes in the wider childcare market meant that they were back where they started. In a small number examples, support to register and train childminders may have a longer term effect but only if families can afford to meet the higher costs charged by childminders who look after disabled children.
4. Families reported experiences of how effective childcare can work and is possible. It has raised expectations on several levels: that more options about work are possible (more hours or better jobs); that some understandably anxious parents can entrust their children to other people; and, that disabled children and young people can experience increased confidence, independence and happiness. Unsurprisingly, families who we spoke to feel very strongly that having had such positive support and childcare arrangements, '*going back to square one*' as one parent put it, is a very challenging situation to face.

There are key elements underpinning the **brokerage** work within local authorities: the *delivery of advice* (or signposting to other sources of advice and support) and the use of brokerage officers as *facilitators* in the brokerage process. Brokerage work is delivered through the following channels: Family Information Service (FIS); and the

work of DCATCH project staff and inclusion coordinators. In all cases, the role of a specialist brokerage officer is central to the delivery and overseeing of the brokerage activity, although in many cases this role involves mainstreaming brokerage of disabled childcare amongst a wider group of staff.

All of the local authorities interviewed have strategies in place to deliver **information** about DCATCH activities. This is done through various means, including the use of FIS and other local authority staff to undertake information and outreach work, the work of 'information champions' in various settings and the use of events to publicise DCATCH activities.

Finally, **additional childcare provision** funded under DCATCH centres on new provision targeted at disabled children, one-to-one support for disabled children in group settings (mostly but not limited to mainstream settings) and buddying schemes.

Although for the purpose of this report, activities for all of the above themes are discussed separately, there is a great deal of overlap between the different themes covered in this and the report of July 2010¹⁵. The interventions discussed in separate chapters are in many cases the remit of a single member of staff, or delivered within the context of a range of interventions without which they would be untenable; for example, the work undertaken by information champions sometimes also involves brokerage activity, whilst the work of brokers also entails some degree of workforce development work.

6.2 Delivery: challenges and facilitators

This report has focussed on the three delivery themes of brokerage, information and additional provision. It is the brokerage role of DCATCH teams which appears to have been crucial to their effectiveness. It is the combination of delivering timely advice to parents with the active facilitation of access through dialogue with, and support to, settings that is regarded as significant.

All the pilot local authorities had developed information strategies to deliver information about DCATCH. These involved undertaking outreach work, holding events and using 'information champions' in various settings.

A range of additional provision had been funded under DCATCH, this included new provision, 1-1 support for disabled children in group settings and buddying schemes.

There were two barriers common to interventions across these three themes:

- Resistance to inclusive working with disabled children and their families within both local authorities and mainstream settings. This resistance is seen by DCATCH managers and project workers to be a result of staff lacking the knowledge and experience of working with disabled children, and consequently lacking the confidence to do so. This sometimes results in local authorities favouring targeted provision and settings because they believe that additional resources from local authorities are always a necessary pre-requisite of providing inclusive childcare. The impact of DCATCH activities must be seen within the context of the efforts needed to overcome these attitudes.

¹⁵ Ibid.

- Parental confidence in the DCATCH interventions. This is particularly so where parents are not accustomed to accessing childcare for their disabled child, for example in areas which do not have a history of such provision and/or amongst parents with children with complex needs and have never accessed formal childcare.

A key facilitator for DCATCH activities is partnership work. A particularly important example of this is the partnership work undertaken between the different funding streams in the local authority, including Short Breaks (and other Aiming High for Disabled Children initiatives), and other childcare funding streams. Where panels consisting of representatives of the different funding streams are used to make decisions about resources, local authorities report advantages in terms of more joined up working between partners, ownership of funding decisions across the funding streams and the benefits of having a larger pool of money to draw on.

6.3 Sustainability

A recurrent view during interviews with professionals, particularly amongst DCATCH managers, was that the impact of the funding withdrawal would be offset by the positive *legacy* left by the programme. This legacy includes:

- Staff within the FIS and other local authority departments being up skilled and 'nudged' by their DCATCH experience to work with disabled children and their families;
- DCATCH leaving behind important re-usable processes and resources (such as DCRs and contracts between parents and settings); and
- The positive impact that the programme has had on the confidence of mainstream settings to provide childcare for disabled children and on families to access it, which will endure post-DCATCH.
- In some instances mainstream funding has already been earmarked for the continuation of key DCATCH posts and so the impact of pilot funding withdrawal will be minimal.

Other professionals were less optimistic and feared that the withdrawal of DCATCH post-pilot money will jeopardise the continuation of the activities that the programme has set up, to the detriment of disabled children and their families. There was also a view that DCATCH has raised expectations amongst disabled children and their families of the provision they can access, which will no longer be available post-DCATCH. This more pessimistic view was shared by parents

All but two parents interviewed were aware that DCATCH funding was going to end in March or April 2011. Many expressed the view that if the pilot was shown to be successful then continued funding should be found and they spoke passionately about the potential impact of DCATCH ending. There were several concerns outlined:

- The service being accessed would not accept their child any longer if the DCATCH funded 1-1 support was no longer in place. Five parents said that the scheme that they used had explicitly said this would be the case. This had already happened to one family.
- It would not be possible to find an alternative either at all or of the same quality.

- Without the financial support offered by DCATCH, childcare would once again become unaffordable.
- That in reverting to the situation where childcare was unaffordable; families with a disabled child were being discriminated against.
- The increase in costs and the unavailability of childcare alternatives would necessitate stopping work (this was especially true for single parents)
- That there would be a detrimental impact on the disabled child/young person.

Appendix 1: Summary of activity within each pilot authority

Local Authority A

A London borough with large pockets of disadvantage, the local authority is keen to support parents into work and training. A recent Joint Area Review identified that provision for disabled children aged over five years was in need of improvement.

The authority's DCATCH project plan was changed in September 2009 owing to delays in commissioning new childcare provision for the borough. A study of the demand for provision for 12-18 year olds has begun, which will inform a feasibility study into the provision of services and staff development. A sensory and soft play out-of-school club, and summer holiday hydrotherapy provision, is in place. An equipment grant scheme and equipment loan scheme is also running.

A programme of workforce development for out of school clubs and child minders has begun, followed up by specialist support delivered in the setting.

The authority has undertaken consultation with disabled children and their parents, and appointed a parent engagement officer to continue this work. There is some emphasis on outreach and improving information to parents through the creation and dissemination of leaflets and DVDs. The borough is also working with partners in the employment and training sector to promote the project.

Local Authority B

The authority has both a high proportion of BME residents, and a higher than average proportion of disabled children with complex needs. Work has previously been carried out to increase the take up of childcare by BME families, and six children's centres have been developed to support children with complex physical needs. Need analysis identified that while under-fives were well catered for; work was needed to improve childcare provision for disabled children over five years.

The authority has produced a report detailing the results of intensive qualitative research into the specific needs of parents of disabled children in the area, and undertaken feasibility work to determine the training needs of providers to meet the needs of disabled children over five years old. An Inclusion Quality Standard developed for early year's settings in 2001 is being redesigned to encompass out of school provision and rolled out to settings, supported by Inclusion Officers. Settings will also receive an individually tailored package of support. Play partners are supporting disabled children to access group childcare sessions.

The project plan has a strong element of user participation, funding a participation worker for parents, and children. Plans are in place to train a group of parents to contribute to childcare design and delivery, and for the development of peer education and empowerment groups.

Local Authority C

39% of children live in workless families, and the number of disabled children and young people is increasing in the local authority area. The authority has an established integrated service for families with disabled children bringing together a range of health services, social care, participation, child development and the disabled children's register.

The DCATCH project plan places a strong emphasis on employment, training, and welfare support. An information, advice and guidance officer is in place to offer employment and training support to parents of disabled children, and a welfare benefits adviser provides coordinated welfare rights and childcare costs advice. The authority is providing funding for low income parents to help with the cost of childcare while undertaking training, work experience or volunteering.

It is also funding inclusion workers to provide training to childcare settings, and one to one support to disabled children. They are building a pool of specialist child minders, and investing in inclusive play settings. It is hoped that by the end of the pilot there will be at least five parents trained and ready to train childcare providers in inclusive practice.

The pilot is also funding a Family Information service (FIS) disability outreach officer, and working to improve the availability and accessibility of information about childcare options to parents.

Local Authority D

Disabled children are a strategic priority in the authority's Children and Young People's Plan, and both the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and the Parent Carer Council had identified gaps in provision for older disabled children.

DCATCH funding is going towards brokerage of support workers (who are also teaching assistants) to support disabled children in settings including after school clubs and holiday provision; training specialist child minders; a holiday club for visually impaired and deaf children over 14 years; and a sibling service (providing parents with quality time to spend with their disabled children). The authority is also looking into improving transport provision.

There is a strong participation theme in the project plan, and a parent participation officer has been jointly funded with Short Breaks. Training on inclusion delivered by both parents, and young people, is being developed.

There is also a strong emphasis on improved information. The authority is organizing two parent conferences (one national) and one disabled children's conference. Information 'hubs' are being developed in special schools. A specialist FIS officer is being jointly funded with Two Year Old pilot funding.

The authority is evaluating all DCATCH-funded interventions to gather evidence to inform the mainstreaming of some services post 2011.

Local Authority E

This is a large and rural county, with associated issues around the availability of transport to access services. The authority has been running an inclusion funding scheme since 2002 which supports Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers requiring additional resource to meet the needs of disabled children. There is also an existing specialist equipment loan scheme for childcare settings. Needs analysis indicated a gap in provision for older children, and children with severe and complex needs.

The authority is working on a Programme for Change for children with additional needs, developing coordinated services across the children and young people's partnership. The DCATCH funding is supporting this work, and much of the governance and operational groups are jointly run with Short Breaks, under the wider Aiming High for Disabled Children steering group. An example of this is the development of a bank of staff that can support children across a range of settings, reducing the number of staff working with a disabled child in various settings.

Participation is a strong theme within the project plan and parents and children have been consulted on a wide range of DCATCH-related decisions, including the eligibility criteria, and the assessment of providers applying to be part of the Approved Provider Framework.

The pilot has funded a specialist FIS officer to broker packages of care, and develop the capacity of all FIS staff to meet the needs of disabled children and their families. It is hoped that access to childcare will be brokered for those children with severe and complex needs who cannot access group provision. The authority is also developing a scheme of one to one support to enable older disabled children to access group provision.

Local Authority F

Again, the size and rural nature of this authority makes the provision of flexible, responsive childcare services challenging. Consultation with parents consistently raised difficulties in sourcing appropriate childcare for school-age disabled children. Early education settings have been receiving inclusion support since 2001, and DCATCH is being used to raise inclusion to a similar level in settings for older children. In addition, the authority is keen to rationalise the criteria for funding and inclusion practice across the range of professionals working with disabled children and their families.

The authority has appointed three inclusion support workers based in three children's centres around the county. These workers broker individual packages of care, and deliver training and support to providers to improve inclusion practice. Providers, and disabled children, are also being supported by a community nurse and a speech and language therapist. Out of school provision and holiday clubs are also being developed.

The authority is also developing better data monitoring systems to improve knowledge about the demand for childcare for disabled children, and monitoring outcomes for those families in receipt of DCATCH support. Work is also ongoing to improve the information available to parents and disabled children on their entitlements, and available provision.

Local Authority G

A range of demographic and cultural factors determine the size and nature of this urban authority's population of disabled children as well as their profile of need. It is one of the fastest growing local authorities in the UK with large migrant and transient populations. It has a high birth rate, but also a high infant mortality rate, low birth weight and poor perinatal health.

Specifically, there is a large South Asian community; a population with a high incidence of disability amongst children where multiple children with disabilities within the same family are not uncommon. For a range of reasons, such disability may remain hidden or undetected within such families until the child is older and the capacity of parents to cope with such disability may be compounded by pre-existing social and economic disadvantage.

The authority has 19 Children Centres, six of which had resourced places for disabled children (44 places in all) prior to DCATCH. There is a pre-existing culture of high and proactive parental involvement in service development for disabled children. The approach taken under DCATCH is characterised by an emphasis on low-cost structural change, enabling parents and increasing their stake in the development of all services for disabled children and young people. Sustainability is

key to this approach; rather than create new posts or childcare places that may not survive changes in funding after 2011, all interventions must be self-sustaining, integrated or mainstreamed.

Local Authority H

Min this authority the development of accessible childcare takes place in the context of the challenges of providing services for rural communities. The authority's approach to DCATCH is partly based on inclusion work in the authority pre-DCATCH (for example under Sure Start) with DCATCH money allowing this work to be continued or expanded.

The authority is working with different types of providers in a number of ways to enhance inclusion in existing mainstream provision, as well as to grow provision in terms of the number of places and type of provision. Examples are building up a pool of flexible inclusion support staff, growing the authority's specialist childminder network, and the development of a support package to stimulate the growth of home-based childcare provision.

The commissioning of additional provision under DCATCH was preceded by groundwork to support providers in the tendering process with a view to long term sustainability. This included research into the real cost of inclusive childcare places and the dissemination of financial tools for use by providers across the authority and beyond.

Better information for parents is a key objective, and the authority has approached this in a number of ways, for example through the employment of 'Accessible Childcare Information' staff within their Family Information Service. Another project trains up a member of school staff in each special school in the county to have all the relevant information about the local childcare market and funding options for parents.

The authority's plan also focuses on changing mindsets and competence of providers and aims to achieve this aim in a number of ways such as dissemination of a training and promotional DVD to all providers across the county, the creation of "Inclusion Awards" to be awarded to organisations and individuals for outstanding inclusive practice, and workforce training.

In addition, work is on-going to improve the authorities' systems and processes. DCATCH is providing 'additionality' to embedding and enhancing integration of services and initiatives across the authority (e.g. Short Breaks, Extended Schools and Children's Centres), the various funding schemes and streams available to parents will be reviewed and a review of the transport system has already taken place. Further development of user involvement is also planned under DCATCH.

Local Authority I

The authority's children and family services have been subject to on-going authority-wide review, re-structuring and development with the aims of creating more family-centred and flexible approaches to services, more integrated and partnership working and better alignment of funding streams. This on-going development work and existing knowledge about gaps in childcare provision and areas for improvement forms the context for the DCATCH pilot. The authority experienced initial capacity issues in relation to DCATCH such as high staff turnover, and whilst initially delayed, strategic and operational arrangements for taking forward the DCATCH work have since been put into place.

Similar to some of the other pilot authorities, much of the work under DCATCH is linked to the on-going re-structuring and development of services in the authority. User involvement and parent partnership will be developed under DCATCH to ensure that the development of services is in line with what parents want and need.

The authority will be undertaking benchmarking and research to provide strategic direction and ensure relevant knowledge to inform the work, such as research around the hidden cost of transport, consultations with parents to establish their awareness of the system of entitlements and funding opportunities, and a workforce training audit. In addition, the authority intends to evaluate any changes and provision initiated under the pilot. It is also involving its providers in taking forward work under DCATCH such as commissioning a voluntary sector provider to review and develop the authority's data collection around disability. The authority plans to develop childcare provision working with the range of different providers.

The authority has also utilised DCATCH funding to directly support individual families' access to provision, by providing brokerage services to families with childcare needs, providing one-to-one inclusion support in settings, funding training and resources for settings to facilitate access, and funding home-based provision some families need.

Local Authority J

Staff in the authority report having a well established model of good practice in integrated services and a historically strong parent partnership. For example, the authority was one of the early implementers of the Early Support programme, for instance, and integrated working across services is embedded throughout the authority. The pilot is designed to build on this good practice (for example DCATCH-funded work around partnership with parents) in order to further embed and enhance these pre-existing models of practice.

The authority has employed 'Parent Champions' under DCATCH and is recruiting more parents into this role, who are undertaking a number of tasks such as parent support groups, parent training and parent consultations. Work around integrated working practices includes research into the barriers to full implementation as well as strategic and financial support.

The authority is emphasising the need for improvements achieved under DCATCH to be sustainable, which the pilot reflects through much of the planned work having been designed to improve relevant processes and systems. For example, the authority will be reviewing the existing resource and equipment base with a view to making improvements to the system, and undertaking work around establishing one single database of families which all relevant partners, agencies, or services will be able to access.

Other projects under DCATCH involve the authority's providers. One project is building up a pool of individuals as 'Access Auditors' to audit existing provision which serves the two-fold aims of supporting providers with inclusion and feeding benchmarking information back to the authority. Another project is seeking to create 'Centres of Excellence', utilising good inclusive practice models and expertise within the authority to support other, less advanced providers. There are also some small scale projects that providers will undertake themselves, for example a project around working with older children with special needs, and another looking at training for 'play'.

Whilst the pilot is mostly designed to provide 'additionality' to existing practices and structures (for example, DCATCH allows the extension of a scheme which currently supports the inclusion needs of children aged 0-11 to be extended to support children and individuals up to 25 years old), on a small scale it also funds additional provision through grants to existing providers for accessible childcare development with the view to expanding that provision.

Appendix 2: Topic guides

Process evaluation of Disabled Children's Access to Childcare (DCATCH) Pilot

Topic Guide for use with local authority staff/ childcare practitioners

Additional provision

The primary aim of these interviews is to inform the additional provision theme of process evaluation.

As this is a process evaluation, we wish to encourage respondents to discuss their views and experiences in an open way without excluding issues which may be of importance to individual respondents and the study as a whole. Therefore, unlike a survey questionnaire or semi-structured interview, the questioning (and the language and terminology used) will be responsive to respondents' own experiences, attitudes and circumstances.

The following guide does not therefore contain pre-set questions but rather lists the key themes and sub-themes to be explored with each respondent. It does not include follow-up questions like 'why', 'when', 'how', etc. as respondents' contributions will be fully explored throughout using prompts and probes in order to understand how and why views, behaviours and experiences have arisen. The order in which issues are addressed, and the amount of time spent exploring different themes, will vary between respondents according to individual circumstances.

1. Introduction

- **Introduce self & NatCen**
- **Introduce study:**
 - evaluation of the DCATCH
 - taking place in ten pilot areas
 - looking at additional provision as one theme of the process evaluation
- **Digital recording** – check OK, and reassure re confidentiality
- **Confidentiality** - how findings will be reported
- **Length of interview** – (1 hour – 1.5 hours) check OK
- **Any questions/concerns?**

2. Background

Aim: to capture information about their current role and involvement with DCATCH

Explore respondent's job title, roles and responsibilities

- Respondents job title
- Roles and responsibility in the local authority
- Roles and responsibilities in relation to DCATCH
- How long they have been involved in DCATCH

3. Local authority context pre-DCATCH (antecedents)

Aim: to gain an overview of what childcare provision the LA provided for disabled children prior to DCATCH funding

[WHEN ASKING THESE QUESTIONS, BEAR IN MIND EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS: EARLY YEARS, PLAY SERVICES AND YOUTH SERVICES]

Overview of childcare provision for DC provided prior to DCATCH funding?

- What services / activities provided
- Who were the services available for
 - Disabled children (demographics)
 - Families
- Gaps in provision (and how identified)

Details of any needs analysis undertaken around additional provision prior to applying for DCATCH funding (and if appropriate, since receipt of funding)

- What needs analysis undertaken?
- Who undertook it?
- What were the key findings?
- Implications for the use of DCATCH funding

Was any other means used to identify how DCATCH funding might be used to develop additional childcare provision?

1. Prompt for any issues which were identified but are NOT being addressed (and why not)

4. Approach

Aim: to explore what additional childcare provision for disabled children is being provided by the local authority as a result of DCATCH funding

[WHEN ASKING THESE QUESTIONS, BEAR IN MIND EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS: EARLY YEARS, PLAY SERVICES AND YOUTH SERVICES]

Overview of additional childcare provision in DCATCH pilot

- What new activities / services are being provided
 - Prompt – may not necessarily be ‘new’, but revised activity as a result of funding
- Who are the services aimed at
 - Disabled children
 - Families e.g. siblings
 - Further targeting/eligibility e.g. age of child, type of disability, family demographics etc
- (If new places) Which agencies / organisations are involved in delivering these services?
 - New/existing providers?
 - How identified/commissioned
 - Support/training/resources provided by the LA to the providers?
 - One off / ongoing support or training
- Details of any one-to-one support provided as a part of the childcare provision
 - Purpose of this support (e.g. to introduce child to childcare)

- Description of what support entails in setting (e.g. individual helping disabled children join in group activities and/or training/up-skill other staff to deliver support)
- Who delivers this support (e.g. play workers) – including their professional background
- Whether support seen to be permanent or transitional – if transitional, how transition managed (i.e. processes in place)?
- Overview of how this form of support set-up and developed as a service
- How are families identified as being in need of one-to-one support
 - How are families targeted and identified?
 - What specific criteria used to assess eligibility?
- Rationale for providing these additional childcare provisions

What factors make it difficult to provide additional provision?

- Challenges / barriers to providing additional childcare (*Spontaneous answers then prompt for following*)
 - Funding
 - Concerns over sustainability
 - Attitudes (y/p, parents, LA)
- How do they overcome these

5. Outcomes

Aim: to explore the outcomes of providing additional childcare provision for disabled children and what methods have worked well

[WHEN ASKING THESE QUESTIONS, BEAR IN MIND EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS: EARLY YEARS, PLAY SERVICES AND YOUTH SERVICES]

Explore what impact additional childcare provision has had

- Explore whether additional provision has had an impact (if not, why not?)
- If additional provision has had an impact, what are these? (*Spontaneous answers then prompt for following*)
 - Outcomes for children and young people
 - Any differences in types of y/p engaging with services
 - Attitudes
 - Aspirations
 - Employment / education
 - Outcomes for families
 - Parent / guardians
 - Siblings
 - Outcome for the LA
 - Staff skills / accreditation
 - LA targets

- LA culture
- **How are the impacts measured?**
- Perceptions of whether these are short term or long term impacts
 - Why these are perceived to be long or short term impacts?
 - If long-term impact, are these impacts already being felt? If not, how long before they think these impacts would be felt?
- Explore any differences between the level of additional support envisaged and what was actually needed / provided (if so, why?)
- How much did outcome match what expected
 - Achieved
 - Exceeded
 - Did not match expectations
- Explore any unanticipated impacts and the reasons for these

Where one-to-one support provided, specifically explore impact of this support on:

- Families (see above)
- Settings where this support takes place (e.g. improved capacity of settings such as nurseries to support disabled children without further support)

Explore what worked well and what could have improved

- Key successes
 - Type of services provided
 - Type of measure – temporary / permanent / 1-1
 - Staff delivering additional provision
 - Change in attitudes / increased confidence
 - Amount of funding assigned to providing additional childcare provision
 - Types of groups/ individuals taking up the additional services
 - Types of organisations involved
- **What factors made the provision of additional support for disabled children a success?**
- What could have worked better
- What would they change or improve

6. Conclusions

- Critical success factors in providing additional childcare provision
- Sustainability of current additional childcare provision
 - If the support/provision is permanent (particularly one-to-one), how will they sustain it?

- What are the funding consequences of sustaining this permanent support?
- Hopes / expectations for future of additional provision in their local authority

7. End

- Any questions for the researcher
- Thank them for taking part and close

Process evaluation of Disabled Children's Access to Childcare (DCATCH) Pilot

Topic Guide for use with local authority staff/ childcare practitioners

Brokerage

The primary aim of these interviews is to inform the brokerage theme of process evaluation.

As this is a process evaluation, we wish to encourage respondents to discuss their views and experiences in an open way without excluding issues which may be of importance to individual respondents and the study as a whole. Therefore, unlike a survey questionnaire or semi-structured interview, the questioning (and the language and terminology used) will be responsive to respondents' own experiences, attitudes and circumstances.

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Explore respondent's job title, roles and responsibilities

- Respondents job title
- Roles and responsibility in the local authority
- Roles and responsibilities in relation to DCATCH
- How long they have been involved in DCATCH
- (if needed) – role/involvement in brokerage work

3. Local authority context pre-DCATCH (antecedents)

Aim: to gain an overview of what brokerage services for childcare for disabled children the LA provided prior to DCATCH funding

[WHEN ASKING THESE QUESTIONS, BEAR IN MIND EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS: EARLY YEARS, PLAY SERVICES AND YOUTH SERVICES]

What does brokerage mean to their LA?

- What kinds of activities are considered to be brokerage?
- Does the brokerage service offered to parents of disabled children differ from that offered to other parents? (If so, how?)

History of brokerage service provided prior to DCATCH funding?

- What type of service provided (brokerage or equivalent)
- Who provided the service (individual, role, organisation)
- How they assessed the need and circumstances of the child and family
- Rationale for this approach
- Success (or otherwise)

Details of any needs analysis undertaken around brokerage service prior to applying for DCATCH funding

- What needs analysis undertaken?
- Who undertook it?
- What were the key findings?
- Implications for the use of DCATCH funding

Was any other means used to identify how DCATCH funding might be used to develop a brokerage service/better brokerage for families with DC?

2. Prompt for any issues which were identified but are NOT being addressed (and why)

4. Approach

Aim: to explore the range of ways in which LA's are trying to improve their brokerage service for childcare for disabled children

[WHEN ASKING THESE QUESTIONS, BEAR IN MIND EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS: EARLY YEARS, PLAY SERVICES AND YOUTH SERVICES]

Overview of brokerage service provided in the LA

- Who provides the brokerage service (and why) (*Spontaneous answers and then prompt for following*)
 - Family Information Service (FIS)
 - DCATCH staff
 - Inclusion co-ordinators
 - Support workers
 - Other
- Is this provision new?
 - If existing provision, how has DCATCH funding been used to improve it?
- What support / training do staff receive in providing brokerage services?
 - Who delivers this?
 - One off /ongoing training or support
- What other activities have been implemented?
 - E.g. changes to recording systems

Ask for respondent to talk through how brokerage works for a family (e.g. from accessing the brokerage service, assessing need, brokering childcare, follow up). If appropriate, more than one example can be provided.

- Process for assessing the needs and circumstances of the child and the family
 - How are their needs assessed
 - Who is responsible for assessing a child's need (individual, organisation etc)
- Types of provision provided
 - After school provision
 - Childminder
 - Home care
 - one-to-one support
 - Holiday provision
 - Leisure activities
 - Other
- How is the provision identified
- How easy is it to match a child's need with available provision
- What is funding used for (e.g. staff or activities)
- Has approach changed in anyway since start of DCATCH funding

What factors make it difficult to provide a brokerage package for disabled children?

- Challenges /barriers to providing brokerage package (*Spontaneous answers then prompt for following*)
 - Staff expertise of working with disabled children
 - Knowledge of locally available provision
 - Gaps in provision
 - Complexity of individual packages for children with severe or complex needs
 - Training / support available for staff
- How do they overcome these

5. Outcomes

Aim: to explore the outcomes of providing brokerage packages for disabled children and what methods have worked well.

[WHEN ASKING THESE QUESTIONS, BEAR IN MIND EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS: EARLY YEARS, PLAY SERVICES AND YOUTH SERVICES]

Explore what impact their approaches to brokerage have had

- Explore whether approach to brokerage has had an impact (if not, why not?)

- If brokerage approach has had an impact, what are these? (*Spontaneous answers then prompt for following*)
 - Types of young people / families using the brokerage service
 - Types of provision available
 - Level of additional support required
 - Increased /decreased / remained the same
 - Involvement of y/p and families
 - Local authority outcomes / targets
 - Local authority culture
 - Other
- How is success and impact measured?
- Perception of whether these are short term or long term impacts
 - Why these are perceived to be long or short term impacts?
 - If long-term impact, are these impacts already being felt? If not, how long before they think these impacts would be felt?
- Who has brokerage worked well for (and why)
- How much did outcome match what expected
 - Achieved
 - Exceeded
 - Did not match expectations
- Explore any unanticipated impacts and the reasons for these.

Explore what worked well and what could have improved

- Key successes (*Spontaneous answers and then prompt for the following*)
 - Staffing
 - Provision available
 - Training / support provided
 - Other
- **What factors made providing a brokerage package for disabled children a success?**
 - What could have worked better
 - What would they change or improve

6. Conclusions

- Critical success factors in providing brokerage packages
- Sustainability of current brokerage activities
 - Will they be sustained?
 - If not, why not?
 - If so, how will they be sustained?
- Future plans for brokerage services in their local authority

7. End

- Any questions for the researcher
- Thank them for taking part and close

Process evaluation of Disabled Children's Access to Childcare (DCATCH) Pilot

Topic Guide for use with local authority staff/ childcare practitioners

Information and outreach

The primary aim of these interviews is to inform the information and outreach theme of process evaluation.

As this is a process evaluation, we wish to encourage respondents to discuss their views and experiences in an open way without excluding issues which may be of importance to individual respondents and the study as a whole. Therefore, unlike a survey questionnaire or semi-structured interview, the questioning (and the language and terminology used) will be responsive to respondents' own experiences, attitudes and circumstances.

The following guide does not therefore contain pre-set questions but rather lists the key themes and sub-themes to be explored with each respondent. It does not include follow-up questions like 'why', 'when', 'how', etc. as respondents' contributions will be fully explored throughout using prompts and probes in order to understand how and why views, behaviours and experiences have arisen. The order in which issues are addressed, and the amount of time spent exploring different themes, will vary between respondents according to individual circumstances.

1. Introduction

- **Introduce self & NatGen**
- **Introduce study:**
 - evaluation of the DCATCH
 - taking place in ten pilot areas
 - looking at information and outreach as one theme of the process evaluation
- **Digital recording** – check OK, and reassure re confidentiality
- **Confidentiality** - how findings will be reported
- **Length of interview** – (1 hour – 1.5 hours) check OK
- **Any questions/concerns?**

2. Background

Aim: to capture information about their current role and involvement with DCATCH

Explore respondent's job title, roles and responsibilities

- Respondents job title
- Roles and responsibility in the local authority
- Roles and responsibilities in relation to DCATCH
- How long they have been involved in DCATCH
- (if needed) – role/involvement in information and outreach work

3. Local authority context pre-DCATCH (antecedents)

Aim: to gain an overview of what information the LA provided to parents on childcare options for disabled children and this how information was delivered prior to DCATCH funding

What information was available to parents of disabled children around childcare prior to DCATCH funding?

Prompts

- What information available
- How information available
- Rationale for this approach
- Who was responsible for providing the information
- Success (or otherwise)
- Impacts
- 'Culture' of providing information within the local authority
- 'Problem' that needed to be resolved/addressed by DCATCH intervention

Details of any needs analysis undertaken around information and outreach prior to applying for DCATCH funding

- What needs analysis undertaken?
- Who undertook it?
- What were the key findings?
- Implications for the use of DCATCH funding

Was any other means used to identify how DCATCH funding might be used to develop information and outreach?

3. Prompt for any issues which were identified but are NOT being addressed (and why)

4. Approach

Aim: to explore the range of ways in which LA's are trying to raise awareness of what DCATCH can offer for disabled children and their families

Overview of the information and outreach work

- What information and outreach work is being carried out?
 - Prompt to determine the extent of 'active outreach' (involving someone talking to them about the programme, reassuring them about any concerns they might have, helping them to identify the right setting, helping them with form filling etc.) versus 'passive marketing' (advertising the programme to target families but not actively seeking to recruit them)
- What information do they provide
 - Range of childcare options available
 - Welfare and benefit entitlements
 - Transport support for disabled children and their families
 - Other support available for disabled children and their families
- Who is the information aimed at
 - Parents / guardians (demographics)
 - Young people / children
 - Local statutory / voluntary organisations
- What format do they provide the information in (and why)
 - Leaflets
 - Newsletters
 - Local websites

- DVDs
- Others

Exploring how families are targeted

- Who are the target families/groups for area?
- How is the target families identified?
- Is information about childcare their primary need, or are other types of information a higher priority?
- What data sources do you use (if any)?
 - Are there any local datasets they use? (Which ones? Why?)
 - Prompt: Child Tax credit, benefit data, ACORN or MOSAIC
- How are you targeting those families who fit the eligibility criteria?
 - Mailed directly to parents on DCR
 - Leaflets sent to service access points e.g. GP's, childcare centres etc
 - Fun / open days
 - Conferences
 - Other
- Are there differing strategies for reaching families with different kinds of needs?
 - What these are?
 - Why they are seen to be effective?

Exploring responsibilities and partnership work

- Who is responsible for this work (and why)?
- Who is involved in (any) outreach partnership work?
 - Prompt: FIS, children's centres, health, housing, adult and children's services, family support workers, JC+
- How does the partnership work? (*Discuss for each partnership arrangement*)
- What impact has this partnership work had on information and outreach activities and why? (*Discuss for each partnership arrangement*)

Exploring the role of DCATCH funding in activities

- Is all of this activity covered by the DCATCH funding? If not, why not?
- Is the level of funding for outreach sufficient?
- Has approach changed in anyway since the start of DCATCH?

What factors make it difficult to provide information on childcare options?

- Challenges / barriers to providing information (*Spontaneous answers then prompt for following*)
 - Funding
 - Access to young people / families

- Literacy problems
- Information overload
- How do they overcome these

What factors make it difficult to engage families in the offer?

- Are you aware of any groups or families that you would like to reach but are struggling to engage?
- Are there any recurring barriers to families engaging in the offer?
 - E.g. speakers of other languages, parents with a disability, refugees/asylum seekers
 - Do you have an active strategy for engaging with those families who face additional barriers?

5. Outcomes

Aim: to explore the outcomes of providing information and outreach on childcare options and what methods have worked well.

Explore what impact their approaches to information and outreach have had

- Explore whether DCATCH approach has had an impact (if not, why not?)
 - How effective has your information and outreach work been to date (and how do you know?)
- If DCATCH approach has had an impact, what are these? (*Spontaneous answers then prompt for following*)
 - Impact on referral rates
 - Any differences in types of y/p / families being referred to DCATCH
 - Who worked for and why
 - Who it didn't work for and why
 - Any differences in types of organisations promoting DCATCH services
 - Perceptions of whether these are short term or long term impacts
 - Why these are perceived to be long or short term impacts?
 - If long-term impact, are these impacts already being felt? If not, how long before they think these impacts would be felt?
- How are these impacts measured
- How much did outcome match what expected
 - Achieved
 - Exceeded
 - Did not match expectations
- Explore any unanticipated impacts and the reasons for these.

Explore what worked well and what could have improved

- Key successes
 - Type of information providing
 - What impact feel it has had

- Why
 - Format of materials
 - What worked well for raising awareness
 - Why
 - Dissemination of information
 - What methods successful
 - Why had an impact
 - Types of groups/ individuals targeting
 - Types of organisations promoting options
- What other factors helped to make activities work well
 - What could have worked better and why
 - What would they change or improve

6. Conclusions

- Critical success factors in providing information about childcare options
- Sustainability of current information provision and outreach activities
 - Will they be sustained?
 - If not, why not?
 - If so, how will they be sustained?
- Further plans for information and outreach in their local authority

7. End

- Any questions for the researcher
- Thank them for taking part and close



Disabled Children's Access to Childcare (DCATCH) Pilots: Parents Topic Guide

1. Introduce self, evaluation, agree practicalities (who will be interviewed when and where), discuss/confirm participation of son/daughter, administer consent form/agree recording.
2. Tell me about who lives here and what people do (work, school etc)?
3. What's your understanding of what DCATCH is?
4. Tell me how you first found out about DCATCH?
5. At that point (pre DCATCH) how was your childcare organised for your child(ren)?
6. Tell me what happened next (with DCATCH change/provision)?
 - Process questions: practicalities (including transport, hours, accessibility), costs (if any), quality of provision/people, information, advice, participation in choices/decision making, role of advocates (if applicable), sensitive to particular needs (ethnicity, medical needs etc)
 - Impact questions: affect on family, working or training capacity, income (work and benefits), family functioning (including impact on siblings), on child in receipt of the intervention (in terms of specific intervention and overall well being/inclusion)
7. Overall assessment of what's working/not working and what could be different/better.
8. Anything else?
9. Thank you, reporting back, voucher, close.

**Disabled Children's Access to Childcare (DCATCH) Pilots:
Children and Young People's Topic Guide**

1. Introduce self, evaluation, administer consent form.
2. Tell me a bit about who you live with here? Tell me about your life at the moment – school? Interests?
3. *(Having established what the DCATCH 'thing' is)* Your mum/dad told me that you....[go to child minder/group/club]...
 - What's that like?
 - When did you start to go?
 - Did you have a say about it?
 - Tell me about the people involved? (other children/young people, staff, childminder) *(prompt for any positive or negative views on staff or other children including age, gender and impairment)*
 - What do you like about it? What do you not like about it? What would you change about it?
 - Do you think they can/do meet needs you have relating to your disability/impairment?
 - *(If applicable)* Do your brothers and sisters also do this/go there? *(probe for feelings about the similar or different arrangements)*
 - Has it changed things for other people in the family?
 - Future/longevity of intervention.
4. Overall assessment of what's working/not working and what could be different/better.
5. Anything else?
6. Thank you, reporting back, close.

Appendix 3: Summary of data collection and analysis

Table 1 below summarises the nature of the interventions explored for each local authority for the process evaluation, the theme under which the intervention falls, and the type of data collection carried out.

Table 1:					
Local Authority	Summary of intervention	Process theme: Brokerage	Process theme: Information and Outreach	Process theme: Additional provision	Fieldwork
'A'	one-to-one support for disabled children and young people in holiday and after-school clubs, and funded youth club and after-school provision at a special school			✓	Face to face interview with DCATCH manager
'B'	Information officer embedded in FIS to embed better childcare brokerage for disabled children. Play partners providing one-to-one support in group settings	✓		✓	Face to face interviews with DCATCH manager, play partner and senior information officer
'C'	Brokerage carried out by FIS team and inclusion workers; DCATCH-funded disability outreach post raising awareness of DCATCH services	✓	✓		Face to face interviews with DCATCH manager, and disability outreach officer
'D'	Specialist brokerage officers within FIS; printed directory of services for disabled children and parent-facing conferences; one-to-one support in group activities	✓	✓	✓	Face to face interview with DCATCH manager, FIS manager and FIS officer. Group interview with 2 one-to-one support workers, DCATCH coordinator and parent.
'E'	DCATCH-funded post to provide specialist brokerage services for disabled children and build capacity within FIS	✓			Face to face paired interview DCATCH manager and officer responsible for brokerage
'G'	DCATCH-funded disability outreach worker responsible for 'light touch brokerage' and developing web and printed resource for		✓		Face to face interview with DCATCH manager and disability outreach officer

	families with disabled children				
'H'	3rd sector organisation commissioned to run holiday and after school clubs for disabled children in 4 areas			✓	Face to face interview with DCATCH manager and participation worker
'I'	Brokerage undertaken by FIS and DCATCH team	✓			Face to face interview with DCATCH manager and officer responsible for brokerage
'J'	Parent 'champions' employed with information and outreach role		✓		Face to face interview with DCATCH manager and group interview with 3 parent champions

Table 2 provides information on the respondents involved in the qualitative acceptability and impact study

Table 2: Families' view of Acceptability and Impact: Respondent background information

Number of families per pilot area	Status of respondents	Ethnicity	Work status of main respondent	Age of disabled child in receipt of childcare	Primary impairment of disabled child
Barking & Dagenham: 1 Bradford: 3 Camden: 1 Cornwall: 3 Luton: 2 Nottinghamshire: 3 Northumberland: 2 Oxfordshire: 2 Sefton: 2 Solihull: 3	Mother: 19 Father: 5 Sibling: 4 Child/young person: 7 Grandmother: 1 Girlfriend of young person: 1 Family friend: 1	White: 36 Asian: 1 Black: 1	Paid work: 19 Not in labour market: 2 Unpaid work: 1	0-5 years: 4 children 6-10 years: 10 children 11-14 years: 4 children 15+ years: 5 young people n=23 because one family had two disabled children in receipt of DCATCH support.	Physical impairment: 1 (additional impairment: communication) Learning disability: 10 (additional impairments: epilepsy, visual and hearing impairment, ADHD, rare syndromes) Autism/ADHD/Aspergers: 12 (additional impairments: learning disability and hearing impairment) Additional health care needs: Children requiring medication to be regularly administered: 4 Children requiring tube feeding: 2 Children requiring help with ventilation and suction: 1

Methods of the qualitative acceptability and impact study

We produced a set of approach materials for families and sent these to each DCATCH lead contact (a letter, an easy read information sheet for parents and one for children/young people, a reply sheet and a stamped address envelope).¹⁶ We amended these materials for two pilot areas where the DCATCH lead person felt that the DCATCH 'brand' would not be familiar to families because work on childcare had been carried out under the auspices of '*Aiming High*'.¹⁷ We asked each pilot area to send these materials to five randomly selected families who were in receipt of childcare following a DCATCH intervention. After sending reminder letters, 22 out of a possible 50 families responded positively.¹⁸ Whilst we did not receive any reply sheets from children or young people themselves, some reply sheets indicated that we could meet the child or young person in receipt of childcare. Two parents wrote that their child 'would not be able to take part'.

Once a reply sheet had been received, we telephoned or e-mailed the respondent to arrange a suitable time to visit. All face to face visits were conducted in the family home apart from one where the respondent requested that we meet in a pub at the end of a family support group session which she attended and which regularly met at the pub. Two respondents asked if we could do a telephone interview instead which we did. Three reply sheets were returned after the period in which visits were being conducted so these were also carried out as phone interviews.

In setting up the interviews, there was often quite a lot of variables to negotiate. The main respondent's availability was usually very limited as several commitments had to be juggled i.e. work, childcare, meetings, other children. We tried to be as flexible as possible and offer appointments at any time of the day or evening.

In terms of which family members took part, this was either negotiated in advance (often the best time to visit for the main respondent was whilst the disabled child/young person was at school), or on arrival.

Seven children and young people participated in the interviews. Three of these had verbal communication and took part in a conventional interview (at the same time as their parents). Two children took part by showing us (with support from their parents) photographs of DCATCH related activities or people they were involved with or of things that they had made in their childcare settings e.g. pictures and artwork. In addition, we met and spent some time with two children prior to talking to their parents but who then did not take part in the subsequent interview with their parents. One of these children had very complex needs and one was quite poorly on the day we visited. However both parents felt it was important for us to meet and say 'hello' and tell them what we were going to talk about.

The content of the interviews was directed by semi-structured topic guides (see Appendix 1). However, after the first couple of interviews, it became apparent that the most fruitful way to run the interview was to ask families, 'Tell me your DCATCH story?' (or, 'Tell me how your childcare works?' in areas where families were not familiar with the DCATCH 'brand') whilst being careful to ensure that main themes and follow-on questions in the topic guide were included in the discussion.

With consent, interviews were digitally recorded. They lasted between 20 minutes and 75 minutes with the average interview lasting 40 minutes. Each family that took part was

¹⁶ Having first obtained ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee at the National Centre for Social Research.

¹⁷ However, in this report, we refer to DCATCH leads/areas/staff etc throughout.

¹⁸ One other response was from a parent who, having discussed it with them, said that they were not, nor had ever been in receipt of any support with childcare. This family was not included.

given a £20 gift voucher as a small 'thank you' for their time. Families said that they appreciated and liked the gesture. All the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed in full. The data was analysed using Framework (Ritchie et al, 2003), a systematic approach to qualitative data management that was developed by NatCen and is now widely used in social research (Pope et al, 2006). Framework involves a number of stages. First, the key topics and issues which emerge from the research objectives and the data are identified through familiarisation with the transcripts. The initial analytical framework is then drawn up and a series of thematic charts or matrices are set up, each relating to a different thematic issue. The columns in each matrix represent the key sub-themes or topics while the rows represent individual respondents. Data from each respondent are summarised into the appropriate cell. In this way, the data are ordered in a systematic way that is grounded in respondents' own accounts, yet oriented to the research objectives. The significance of managing data in this way is that the whole of a respondent's account can easily be accessed, analysed and compared with other cases as well enabling analysis of particular themes within the account.

Data Analysis using Framework

The Framework approach and the Framework software meant that each transcript and each part of every transcript that was relevant to a particular theme was noted, ordered and instantly accessible while maintaining the ability to view the accounts and cases as coherent wholes. The final stage of analysis involved working through the charted data in detail, drawing out the range of experiences and views, identifying similarities and differences, and interrogating the data to seek to explain emergent patterns and findings.

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