

Being a family:

Parents with learning disabilities in Wales



The Welsh Assembly Government wants to know about parents with learning disabilities.



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

They asked Joyce Howarth with Learning Disability Wales to find out.



This report tells you what Joyce found out about parents with learning disabilities.



How many parents with learning disabilities are there in Wales?

Joyce asked organisations who work with families in Caerphilly how many parents with learning disabilities they work with.



She asked services like:

- Homestart
- Surestart
- Social Services



Joyce found out that there
Are 91 parents with learning
disabilities in Caerphilly.



91

This means there are 1200
in all of Wales.



1200

This is more than people used to think.

What are parents with learning disabilities like?

Joyce talked to 11 parents with learning disabilities from all over Wales.

They were all very different:

- Some were single mums or dads



- Some were married couples



- Some had a baby



- Some had teenagers



- Some had disabled children



All of them loved being a parent.



5 of the families had children put into care. This was because of family problems or when the parents split up. All the parents worked hard to get their children back.



Children in 3 of the families had been sexually assaulted. This was very hard to deal with.



Parents were worried by letters sent to them by social workers. They could not understand the letters and felt panicky when they got them.



One mother spoke Welsh as her first language. All the child case conferences were in English. This made it very hard for her to understand.



Nearly all the parents got good support from their families. This help made their lives easier.



Most of the parents felt they were treated badly by children's social services.



What is good support for parents with learning disabilities?

The top 5 things for good support are:

- being listened to
- workers doing what they said they would do
- workers helping to sort out problems
- having a choice about how to do things



- being in control in their own home



Parents with a disabled child think respite is very important.



Sometimes there are too many people coming and going to support parents. It is better to have one person in charge of it all that parents can talk to about their support.



Some parents went to a group of other parents with learning disabilities. They thought this was good, as they met other people who had gone through the same things.



Parents gave advice to support staff:

- Think about how a parent may be feeling



- Think about how a parent may be thinking



- Think about parents and children together as a family



- Do not treat parents with learning disabilities worse than other parents



Staff

Joyce asked the parents who had given them good support. The parents said it was ok for Joyce to interview paid staff who were good.



They did not want her to interview their families. One mum said 'They do enough already'



Joyce interviewed 16 staff across Wales. They were:

- Social workers



- Advocates



- Support workers



Things staff found hard

Staff found it hard to support parents through the court.



Often the different people giving support to a family did not tell each other what they were doing.



No one had any rules or plans (policies) on how to work with parents with learning disabilities.

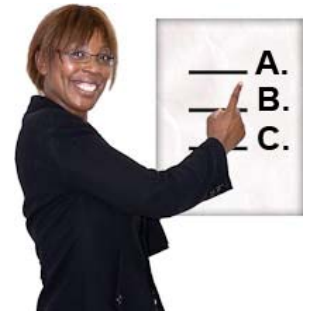


No one agreed what was good parenting.

This made it hard when a new social worker started



They sometimes had different ideas to the last social worker.



No one seemed to work with the whole family.



Some staff worked with the parents

Other staff worked with the children.



There were not enough advocates to help parents.



Things staff found good

Parents with learning disabilities who were given support were good at learning new skills.



It was good for parents to think about what might happen if they did certain things. They could then choose what to do for themselves. This is called a risk and choice plan.



Supporting parent to speak up for themselves made them more confident. This made their lives easier.



When parents got better at speaking up, staff felt encouraged to do more.



All the staff Joyce interviewed said that parents with learning disabilities make good parents when they are given the right support.



What the bosses think

Joyce also interviewed 3 bosses (senior managers) from different parts of Wales.



Sometimes people were asked by the court to have an IQ assessment by a psychologist. This was to find out if they had a learning disability.



The managers worried that sometimes people got a score that meant they could not use learning disability teams' support.



But they still needed the same support as someone who did use the learning disability team.



It takes a lot of staff time to support parents with learning disabilities to be parents. This means it costs more to support parents with learning disabilities than other parents.



But the managers say it is worth it.



The managers said it is important for everyone to work properly together.



It is important that the right of the child to be safe and grow up well comes before the rights of the parent.



People with learning disabilities need good sex education from school age, so that they can make the decisions about their lives.



It's important that the Welsh Assembly show what work is needed to support parents with learning disabilities.



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The Welsh Assembly needs to make sure that parents with learning disabilities are supported in future.





Learning Disability Wales would like to thank Joyce Howarth and everyone involved in this research and report.

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