

The **Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance (CDSA)** brings together organisations from across the children's sector and the disability sector. It is jointly chaired by Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) and Disability Action (DA).

CDSA wants to ensure that policy impacting on the lives of children and young people with disabilities is informed by their needs and circumstances.

This Manifesto sets out measures on a number of important issues that, with political will, can be taken forward over the next Assembly term to deliver real change for children with disabilities and their families.

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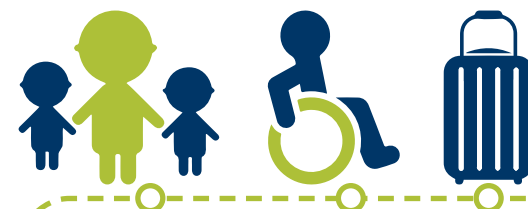
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Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance

MANIFESTO ASKS

2016-2020



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1. FAMILY SUPPORT



Family Support is crucial to the future development of children with disabilities. There remains a substantial absence of support for families following diagnosis.

CDSA demands that:

All children with disabilities should be recognised as children in need immediately following diagnosis in order to facilitate support for both themselves and their family. The child with disabilities and their family should be offered services, with signposting appropriate to the diagnosis through an agreed services pathway. Such services should include information, peer support, advice and advocacy services.

2. SHORT BREAKS



Short breaks are a post code lottery in Northern Ireland, and are often dependent upon the ability of the parent to act as the child's advocate, rather than being offered as of right.

CDSA demands that:

A Short Breaks policy should be agreed between the Department of Health, health agencies and children with disabilities and their families.

A Short Breaks policy should broaden the definition of short breaks beyond overnight placements to include breaks that are fun, developmental, work for children with disabilities and their families and are available on an equitable basis across Northern Ireland.

3. REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS



Changing society in order to ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities is a key concern, in particular promoting "reasonable adjustments" across a wide range of areas from education to leisure and transport.

CDSA demands that:

Government, the Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission actively promote greater awareness of the need to develop reasonable adjustments across all sectors in Northern Ireland in order to facilitate the inclusion of all children with disabilities and their families. The Human Rights Commission, The Equality Commission and the CRPD related Independent Mechanism for Northern Ireland should facilitate children with disabilities and their families to advocate for reasonable adjustments and inclusion throughout society.

4. CHILDCARE



There are increasing numbers of children with complex health needs now being cared for at home by their families. These children are more likely to experience exclusion from mainstream support services due to the perceived risks and lack of appropriate training for staff in this area.

CDSA demands that:

Child care services (early intervention) and support services for families (respite care, personal assistance) are funded to ensure consistent service provision for children with disabilities.

5. POVERTY



There is a relationship between disability and poverty, children with disabilities are more likely to grow up in poverty than their non-disabled peers.

CDSA demands that:

The official statistics reflect the additional costs incurred by families with disabled children when measuring child poverty levels in Northern Ireland and ensure that families take up their full entitlement to disability benefits.

6. LISTENING TO CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES



There are many ways in which children and young people can contribute positively to community and society. However, children and young people with disabilities can be prevented from having their voices heard.

CDSA demands that:

There is adequate investment in participation initiatives that ensure the voices of children and young people with disabilities are heard and they are facilitated in every aspect to input in to decisions which affect their lives.