

THE OFFICIAL SOLICITOR

- Alastair Pitblado is the Official Solicitor to the Senior Courts



- He holds a statutory office within an arm's length body of the Ministry of Justice
- He has a wide range of duties and

Responsibilities

- No role in criminal proceedings
- No role in tribunal proceedings
- He is the litigation friend of last resort in many types of civil proceedings
- He acts in civil, family and Court of Protection proceedings

The Official Solicitor's Office

- 135 staff in the office
- 5 lawyers whose responsibilities include family work
- 3 case worker teams deal with family litigation:
 - 12 case managers for public law
 - 6 case managers for private family law and divorce

LITIGATION FRIEND

- The court rules provide that someone who lacks capacity within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) to conduct the proceedings requires a litigation friend in those proceedings
- Capacity is issue specific - may require a litigation friend for some proceedings but not for others
- The protected party remains the solicitor's client, but the instructions regarding the conduct of the proceedings are given by the litigation friend

THE ROLE OF LITIGATION FRIEND

In family proceedings - Practice Direction 15A

- Fairly and competently conduct the proceedings *and*
- have no interest in the proceedings adverse to the protected party *and*
- all steps and decisions taken must be taken for the benefit of the protected party

LITIGATION CAPACITY

- Issue specific
- Not the same as the ability to do something
- Must be kept under review
- If there is evidence that the protected party has regained capacity the Official Solicitor applies to the court to be discharged

THE OFFICIAL SOLICITOR'S ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA

These must be met before the Official Solicitor will consent to act:

1. Satisfactory undisputed evidence of lack of litigation capacity or a finding of the court
2. Confirmation there is no one else willing & suitable to act - 'last resort'
3. Confirmation that there is security for the protected party's legal costs

PRACTICALITIES

- The Official Solicitor is the litigation friend. The client still has their solicitor to represent them in the proceedings
- A detailed letter of instruction is sent to the instructed solicitor once the Official Solicitor consents to act
- The instructed solicitor has the continued face to face contact with the client
- The instructed solicitor is responsible for relaying the client's wishes and feelings to the case manager as well as providing the legal advice

THE OFFICIAL SOLICITOR'S APPROACH

- Litigation friend of last resort
- Can only make decisions for the client within the litigation
- Presents any arguable case for the client
- Acts in the client's best interests
- Relies on the advice of the instructed solicitor
- Takes full account of all the evidence, including the protected party's wishes and feelings before reaching a conclusion

ASSESSMENTS

- The Official Solicitor will consider and challenge, where appropriate, previous assessments
- He will seek advice on and propose, where appropriate, further assessments

OFFICE OF THE OFFICIAL SOLICITOR & PUBLIC TRUSTEE

Victory House
30-34 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6EX

DX 141423 Bloomsbury 7

Tel: 020 3681 2755 (family litigation public law)

020 3861 2754 (family litigation private law)

020 3861 2751 (CoP healthcare & welfare)

Good Practice and Parents with a Learning Disability



Who we are



Eveline

Kevin

What it is like being a parent with a learning disability



We are proud parents who love our children.

It is tough being judged and not getting the support that you need.

What might we need support with

Everyone is different

The logo for 'Just ask!' features the word 'Just' in a blue, rounded, sans-serif font with a white outline. Below it, the word 'ask!' is written in a larger, red, rounded, sans-serif font with a white outline. The exclamation point is also red and has a white outline.

Ask

What might we need support with



- Budgeting
- Setting up routines with our children
- Setting boundaries with our children
- Dealing with the benefits agencies
- Reading letters

What might we need support with

The image shows a London Underground timetable for route 137, which includes Crystal Palace, Clapham Common, and Oxford Circus. The timetable is organized into sections for different directions and includes columns for station names, train times, and other relevant information. The route is labeled '137' and '137A'.

- Finding out how to get to where you need to be
- Give at least 3 days notice if we need to go to a new place
- Juggling appointments
- Setting up routines at home

What might we need support with



- Learning to cook healthy meals
- Filling out forms
- Finding good support
- Knowing who the good and bad people are around us

What might we need support with

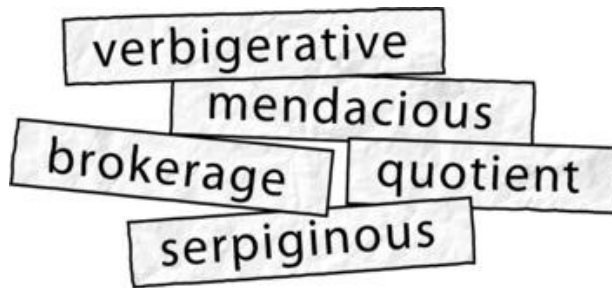


Remember everyone is
different

Ask

What goes wrong for parents with a learning disability?

- Assessments that do not take account of our learning disabilities.
- Not enough easy read information
- Negative attitudes from professionals



What goes wrong for parents with a learning disability?



- Children and adult services do not always work together
- Support not available when needed
- There is no long term support

What helps most



- Workers that listen to you
- Workers that explain things to you clearly
- An advocate

What helps most



- Workers that work together and give the same advice
- Workers that are honest
- Workers that see a family

What helps most



- Childcare
- A support network
- Be flexible

Accessible Information and Communication

Written Information



- No Jargon
- Use a clear font like Arial or Century Gothic
- Use font size 14 or above
- Use **bold**, not underline or *italics* for important points like dates and times

Accessible Information and Communication

2

Written Information

- Use short sentences. Only one point to a sentence.
- Use the number **2** not two.
- Ask people what works for them.

~~**Two**~~

Meetings



Before meetings

- Make sure the parent has an advocate if they want one.
- The meeting lead should make sure that parents:
 - know the reason for the meeting
 - who will be at the meeting
 - know where and when the meeting is and how to get there

Meetings



Report

Before meetings

- Parents should have all reports and paperwork in good time to get ready for meetings.
- New information or concerns should be discussed with parents before meetings not during them.
- Offer childcare if needed.

Meetings



During meetings

- Have breaks
- Don't use jargon
- Keep the parent at the centre of the meeting
- Don't talk about your personal life, focus on the meeting.

Meetings



During meetings

- If meetings get too long they need to end and carry on another time.
- Remember that everyone is different – ask what works for them.

Meetings

After meetings

- We need the record of the meeting in good time and an advocate to go through it with us
- We need to think about what was said and we might need to ask questions



Parent assessments – what makes a good assessment?

From the parents point of view



Communication



- Give us information and letters in easy read format about assessments
- Do not assume that a parent can read or that they have someone who can read things for them

Communication

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

- Do not send lots and lots of paperwork
- Avoid handwritten notes in joined up hand writing

Communication



- Avoid jargon or explain new words about the assessment in easier language
- Explain and explain again – check we have understood and use different words if you need to
- Talk slowly and clearly

Communication



- Show us you are listening
- Do not write lots of notes in front of us
- When possible tell us in advance if you are coming to do a home visit

The bigger picture



- Look 'outside the box' –the issue might not be poor parenting. There might be another reason like not enough money

The bigger picture



- Don't make assumptions – try and find the reason why we are doing what we are doing

The bigger picture



- Find out who we have to support us outside social services - who can explain things, and read letters? Is there a family member, neighbour, a solicitor or an advocate?

Relating to the parents



- Match your body language and expressions to the information you are giving – Don't give bad news with a smiling face it may be misunderstood.
- Be polite, friendly and respectful
- Turn up on time

Relating to the parents



- Try and build up a positive relationship
- Be straight forward – tell us ‘as it is’

**Thank You
for listening**





Mellow Futures

Mellow Futures

A parenting programme for parents with learning disabilities and/or difficulties



Lara Burnett, Diane Simcoe and
Stacey Day



Mellow Futures

- Supports parents with a learning disability and learning difficulty
- Written under a project called Parent Pioneers, funded by the Department of Health
- The project is being delivered over 3 years, from 2012-2015
- The project is being delivered in 2 Local Authority pilot sites:
 - London Borough of Islington
 - County of Northumberland



Mellow Futures

Parent Pioneers

Delivered by four specialist organisations:



Mencap; intellectual disability expertise and project management



Mellow Parenting; adapting parenting courses



Elfrida Society; running parents reference group



Norah Fry Research Centre; evaluating the project



Key aims

- To level the playing field for families where a mum to be or parent in the early months of parenting has a learning difficulty or a learning disability.
- Providing **early** and **accessible** services - support needs to be **early, planned,** and **pro-active**
- To increase the support to families in their community
- Improve the knowledge and skills of early years services



Mellow Futures

Mellow Futures



Mellow Bumps

- helping mums to bond with their babies
- helping mums to de-stress
- 6 weeks



Mellow Babies

- supporting mums to be a parent.
- discussing what is like being a parent and talking about topics such as healthy eating and safety
- 14 weeks

Mellow Futures

- Volunteer family mentors
 - to help practice what was learnt on the course
 - supporting families access local support and services
- Adaptation of the existing programme
 - easy information, highly visual, repetitive, easy print, pictorial with use of video and craft/art.
- Support with issues in other areas of their life
- A Parents Reference Group





Mellow Futures

Parents leading practice

- We are from The Reference Group. We are a group of parents with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Many of us have not felt welcomed at parenting groups or support services
- We don't get information in the right way
- We get left out
- We sometimes feel judged
- It is important that we are involved in Mellow Futures so we can help professionals develop groups that work for us

Parents leading practice

- We help train workers about the needs of parents with learning difficulties.
- We look at all the course materials
- We test out new and adapted sessions.
- We think about the best way to find out if it works with the Norah Fry Research Centre.
- We help write job descriptions for volunteers mentors
- We have made films about our experiences to help people make better services for us



Mellow Futures

Sally's film





Mellow Futures

Kevin's film



Islington Mellow Futures

Mellow Futures is part of family of programmes developed to support parents and their children in making good relationships.

- Intensive
- A group approach
- Focus on nurture and relationships
- Reducing external environmental risk

4 components of the group:

- Personal group
- Lunch with the children - Opportunity to nurture the families and chance to Observe
- Shared activities - Giving parents and babies an opportunity to have fun together
- Parenting workshop

Some adaptations made:

- Reducing barriers to parents attending
- Highly visual approach where literacy is not required
- Repetitive 'bite sized' pieces of information
- Using crèche workers with the right skills
- Use of volunteer parent mentors
- Facilitators and mentors trained

Some outcomes for the mums:

- Child taken into care the shortly after the group finished
- Three mothers showed increased ability to work with further support servicers.
- One mother was able to successfully argue for additional independent assessment in court
- Supervision order made instead of adoption
- 4 mothers developed a social network



Evaluation of the Programme

- Interim Evaluation available now
- Final evaluation available in July 2015.
- Cost Benefit Analysis





Mellow Futures

Any questions?

The London Network of Parents with Learning Difficulties



We are a group of parents with learning difficulties and workers. We work together to improve outcomes for parents with learning difficulties and our families.

We want parents and children to stay together and get the right support.



We have been meeting for nearly 10 years.

We meet in different boroughs around London.

We talk about ways we can make things better for parents with learning difficulties.

We have a website where we want people to send us useful information



The London Network of Parents with Learning Difficulties

We go to
partnership
board meetings

We speak at
conferences

Terms of Reference

- To find out what goes on in other boroughs
- To let people know what it is like to be a parent with learning difficulties and disabilities
- Share ideas between workers and parents
- To help parents groups in other boroughs



- To help services offer the right support
- To campaign and raise awareness to make change happen
- Support each other
- To share parents experiences
- Make our voices more powerful

- Learn from each other and identify areas that need changing
- Discuss issues and feed back to

Working Together with Parents Network



**Working Together
With Parents Network**
Supporting professionals working with
parents with learning difficulties

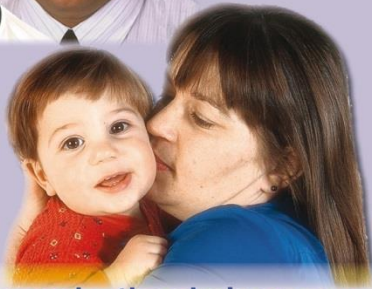
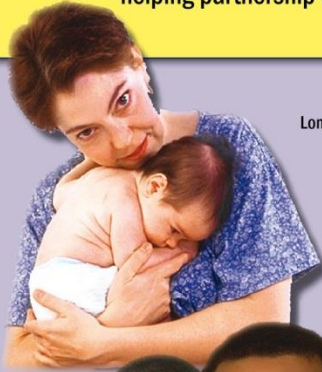
The Mellow Reference Group



Parenting Toolkit:

helping partnership boards meet the needs of people
with learning difficulties

London Network of Parents with Learning Difficulties
Elfrida Society
Valuing People Team



supporting us to make the choices we want

The Parenting Toolkit

Four year ago the London Network made the Parenting Toolkit

It is an important book for local authorities to use

It will help them to find out how good their services are at supporting us



We hope the toolkit will help adult and children services to work together



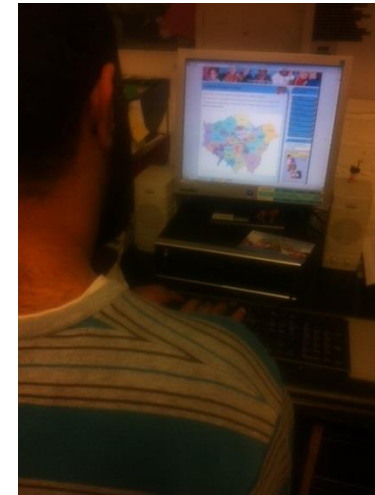
It was made by parents with learning difficulties



Because we are the experts!

What next for the London Network of Parents with Learning Difficulties?

We want to update the website



We want to update



the Parenting Toolkit

- 2 How often can we get midwife checkups through pregnancy?
What special support is there at checkups? (Extra time, easy information, trained staff)
- 3 How do you make sure we have the same midwife through pregnancy?
- 4 What antenatal classes do you offer, and do you offer easy information on pregnancy and birth?
- 5 How do you include fathers in your care and support?
- 6 What help do you offer us to write a birth plan?
- 7 What choices do you offer about home birth and pain killers?
- 8 What easy information do you offer about these?
- 9 What choice do you offer us as new parents? (Support worker, adult placement scheme, parent baby unit etc)

We want new members and new places to have our meetings



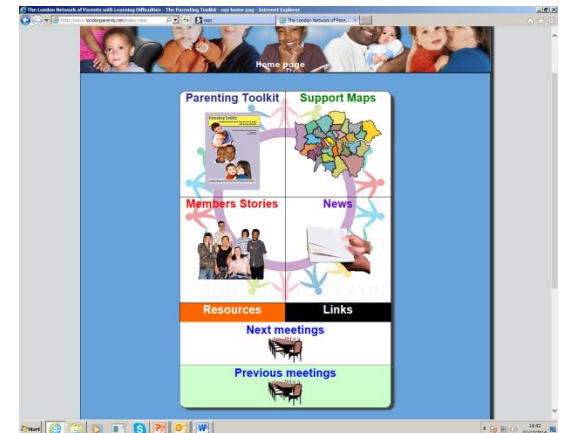
You can find out more about the London Network from the website www.londonparents.net



You can send us information about services



You can download helpful documents and our membership form



The London Network of Parents with Learning Difficulties

Thank You for listening



Nabeel, Murat and Diane from the London Network of Parents with Learning Difficulties

The London Network of Parents with Learning Difficulties