



Opening Doors disability project activities 2003-2007

Workshops

Opening Doors ran a series of workshops across the UK to discover what could be learned from foster carers, social workers and other professionals about placing disabled children.

National Disability Conference 2005

"*Falling in love or computer-dating*". This conference explored several ways of creating links and matches, from computer-linking to 'falling in love'.

Articles for Adoption & Fostering Journal

The project consultant's controversial article "Are we missing the match? – rethinking adopter assessment and child profiling" (Vol 27:4), was taken up by the DfES in designing the Adoption and Children Act regulations. "Disabled children who need permanence: barriers to placement" (Vol 29:3) was based partly on what was learned from participants in the *Opening Doors* workshops.

Other articles about placing disabled children have been published in the professional and popular press. A [Mac Keith Press book](#), "*Disabled children living away from home*" is due out shortly, in which the project consultant's chapter describes the different routes via which disabled children come into the looked-after system. This highlights the vulnerability of disabled children who live away from home but who are not covered by the Review system.

Every Child is Special: placing disabled children for permanence (2006)

by the project consultant. This Good Practice Guide covers the social context of disability; legal issues; assessing children; recruiting, assessing and preparing families and making matches; planning permanence; profiling and featuring children, and supporting families. It can be ordered through BAAF's publication department.

Consultancy

The project consultant has been an external consultant to several agencies' campaigns to recruit families for disabled children. One of these included a large staff development seminar emphasising that disabled children are part of everyday childcare practice. The project consultant would be happy to discuss consultancy commissions with agencies.

Presentations

The project consultant has developed a number of presentations for regional social work groups/consortia focusing on the permanent placement of disabled children and the issue of disabled prospective adopters and carers.

Media

The project consultant featured in a documentary intended to fast-forward the debate about fostering in Bulgaria. She also appeared on GMTV during National Adoption Week promoting the permanence needs of disabled children. She was interviewed by a Norwegian foster care publication.

Manifesto

A manifesto for disabled children was produced to support BAAF's manifesto for children for the general election campaign of 2005.

The International Foster Care Organisation (IFCO) held a conference in Madison, USA and the project consultant attended ([see November 2005 BAAF News](#)). Although much is to be learned from other countries, the UK leads on several fostering developments, including the assessment of carers, and disability. In some countries disability is still medicalised, whereas the UK is promoting the social model. The UK also seems to be spearheading the development of innovative ways of matching children with families. The project consultant also contributed a paper to IFCO's East-East Network seminar in Bratislava ([see BAAF News September 06](#)).

Inclusive Training leaflet

This has been developed by the disability consultant for use in all training situations, and is sent to an agency when they commission BAAF training. The leaflet raises awareness of equality and inclusiveness in the training environment and asks for a commitment by all participants to contribute to this. The leaflet is available in English and Welsh.

Disabled adults

BAAF's National Adoption Week publicity contained the message: disabled adults are not automatically ruled out from becoming adoptive parents or carers. We need people who are resourceful and resilient to champion our most disadvantaged children. Often adults who have dealt with adversity have the qualities needed – not only to care for disabled children, but all children.

Opening Doors Disability project

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