



assisting families in planning for the future. They can be ordered in bulk and are available for only £5. To order, please contact the publications team at 020 7803 1101 or email fpld@fpld.org.uk. These resources are also available to download from www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/mutual-caring.

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New learning disability website pools expertise of parents and professionals

www.Netbuddy.org.uk is the first online resource of its kind offering hundreds of simple, yet ingenious solutions to everyday issues encountered by parents, carers, teachers and therapists working with learning disability. From creating calm before bedtime to preventing panic attacks on the bus, Netbuddy lists over 700 practical tips and suggestions from people with first-hand experience of special needs.

Netbuddy Co-Director Deborah Gundle, who's son has learning disabilities, said: "The idea for Netbuddy came about when my son was small, I spent so much time and energy solving day-to-day problems, which I felt sure other people had overcome before me. I had no idea where to go to find the solutions I was looking for, and I started to think it would be really useful to create a practical resource." People visiting Netbuddy can use the site in several ways: they can either search for tips in areas such as 'routines' or 'sleep' or they can offer their own ideas. They can download videos and talk to other people on the interactive forum, or search for practical help in the information packs. Linda Goldberg, Deborah's Co-Director at Netbuddy, said: "We hope people will also use Netbuddy to share their happy stories and 'break-through moments' within a community who understands and appreciates the hard work that has gone into those successes." Since starting the project, Netbuddy has received tremendous support from parents, carers, teachers, therapists and other professionals working with learning disability. "For us, the real work starts now," said Deborah. "We need to get everyone talking about Netbuddy and sharing their tips and ideas on the site. We hope people will tell their friends, families and colleagues about Netbuddy... like us on Facebook and Twitter; blog about us, pass the word on to any groups or forums they belong to... this project is all about people getting involved. We want Netbuddy to be the place people come to find solutions, help others and connect with like-minded people who understand learning disabilities, so please tell everyone about us!"

Informing families of their child's disability

Communicating the news to a family that their child has, or may have a disability can be an emotionally challenging and difficult task. For families, the manner in which they are told of their child's disability can have an impact on levels of distress and this communication often forms the beginning of the parent-professional relationship. It is very important to establish trust from the start of this relationship as many families of children with disabilities will interact with professionals throughout their lives. Recognising the importance of the communication of the news of a child's disability, a set of best practice guidelines was developed in Ireland by the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies to support professionals in this task. The guidelines are robustly evidence-based, and came about through a substantial national research project. (You can read about it on the project website www.informingfamilies.ie). The guidelines provide practical recommendations in areas such as communication skills, ensuring the right people are present in an appropriate environment, liaising across sectors, and advice on information provision. The Guidelines have received welcome and endorsement from professional bodies, parent and family organisations and educational institutions in Ireland and further afield, including Harvard Medical School in the US. Following the launch of the Guidelines the Informing Families Project translated research into practice through a two year pilot implementation of the guidelines in the Cork region in the south of Ireland, across hospital, community and voluntary disability services. The project involved professionals from medical, nursing and allied health backgrounds and was chaired by a parent of two children with disabilities. The purpose of the pilot project was to gain knowledge about how these kinds of guidelines can be implemented to best support families and professionals. The report of the Cork Pilot Project details how the implementation was carried out and provides a range of practical tips and tools for implementing the Guidelines.

Download the Cork Implementation Project Report

www.informingfamilies.ie/_fileupload/Report%20of%20the%20Cork%20Pilot%20Project.pdf

Website: www.informingfamilies.ie

One of the key findings of the research was that families did not receive enough written information at the time of diagnosis. In consultation with families and professionals a website of information useful at the time of diagnosis has been developed and launched by the Informing Families Project. Families can access early information such as 'What are early services?' 'Who are the professionals I may meet?', 'How do I tell others about my child's diagnosis' and advice on Internet searching to ensure the most reliable and relevant information is found in relation to a child's diagnosis. There is also information available on entitlements and benefits, and support agencies in Ireland. Professionals can print all of the above information to provide to parents (or direct parents to the website). The website includes a one-hour e-learning programme to support professionals in their practice when communicating difficult news to families. The eLearning module can be followed at a time and location convenient to the learner. The module consists of a range of interactive learning tools structured into a programme that can be taken over a series of visits or in one session, according to the learner's preference. On completion of the module, which takes approximately one hour, the learner can take an assessment. A certificate of completion will be awarded when the assessment is passed.

Access the Informing Families Project eLearning Module

www.informingfamilies.ie/information-for-professionals/elearning-module.284.html

Other tools developed through the project

DVD: *Words you never forget*

This 24 minute documentary film, produced by the Informing Families Project has been listed by many participants in the Informing Families Training Programme as one of the most valuable elements of the training received. It features the stories of how two families were informed of their child's disability; one family in a helpful way and another in a way that added distress. Contact info@informingfamilies.ie to order a DVD copy.

Safe Cross Code Poster

Developed in conjunction with medical, nursing and allied health professionals working in the area of communicating with families, this one page A4 poster is a quick reminder of the key points of best practice that can be consulted before going to speak with a family about their child's diagnosis.

Available to download and print for free from

www.informingfamilies.ie/_fileupload/InformingFamilies_safecross_IF.pdf or you can order a pre-laminated copy from the same website.

You can find a list of all available tools from the Informing Families Project at the following link www.informingfamilies.ie/about-the-project/support-and-training-materials.257.html.