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Researchers call for new system to support disabled children and their families

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A major new policy paper edited by experts in health and social care from the University of Birmingham and The Centre for Welfare Reform proposes radical reforms to the welfare system to get the best outcomes for disabled children and their families.

A Fair Start: A Personalised Pathway for disabled children and their families (PDF - 1.04MB) (/Documents/news/a-fair-start.pdf) challenges the current system and suggests that providing a more personalised system would offer a more suitable and straightforward solution for families.

Families currently access support from a wide range of services including the NHS, social care, education and the tax and benefit system. The report argues that this array of systems means that most families are confused about what they are entitled to and professionals struggle to provide accurate and timely information about current services.

The author, Dr Pippa Murray, suggests that government departments need to work with communities and families to develop an integrated pathway for the care, support and education of disabled children. This Personalised Pathway will give families more autonomy in deciding the best care for their child and will also offer a more cost-effective method of providing social care to those who need it most.

Personalisation could include individual budgets and credits for families to spend on care or education.

Professor Jon Glasby, Director of the Health Services Management Centre at the University of Birmingham, said: 'The system as it stands is based on outdated assumptions and does not always provide the best solution for families with disabled children. This paper suggests that a more personalised approach to welfare is adopted to give disabled children the best possible start in life.

'In giving a family the choice to select their own support you are moving from a one size fits all approach to a more tailored system which addresses specific and individual needs. The emphasis needs to be taken away from the system itself and focused on the needs of the family.'

Dr Simon Duffy, from the Centre for Welfare Reform comments: 'There are already a number of excellent examples of personalised care working successfully. For example more than 500 families manage a care budget for a disabled child and there have also been successful trials of individual education budgets. However, adoption of these systems is patchy at best.

'Giving families control can provide better value for money and better services because it provides families the chance to get the best possible support for their child.'

Ends

Notes to Editors

A Fair Start: A Personalised Pathway for disabled children and their families is written by Dr Pippa Murray, ibk initiatives, as part of a series of policy papers edited by Dr Simon Duffy, The Centre for Welfare Reform, Professor Jon Glasby, Director, Health Services Management Centre (HSMC), University of Birmingham, and Dr Catherine Needham, Senior Lecturer, Queen Mary, University of London and Honorary Fellow at HSMC.

In the summer of 2010 The University of Birmingham's Health Service Management Centre hosted a two day think-tank to explore whether recent innovations in health and social care might be the key to a more radical redesign of the whole welfare state. As part of the think tank papers were produced which proposed significant policy developments.

Each paper in the series has been produced by a leading practitioner and social innovator. The papers combine evidence and ideas for policy reform which are rooted in the real experience of bringing about change from the 'bottom-up'. Future papers in the series will focus on criminal justice, health, tax/benefits, local government and communities.

For more information on the University of Birmingham's Health Services Management Centre visit: **www.hsmc.bham.ac.uk (http://www.hsmc.bham.ac.uk/)**

For more information on The Centre for Welfare Reform visit:

www.centreforwelfarereform.org (http://www.centreforwelfarereform.org/)

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The Centre for Welfare Reform

The Centre for Welfare Reform is a research and development network committed to the redesign of the welfare state and the promotion of social justice, citizenship, family and community. It was established in 2009 by Dr Simon Duffy with a wide-ranging Fellowship who are experts in public service reform and innovation.

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