

## **ASSESSMENTS – WHAT, WHY, WHO, WHEN, WHERE & HOW!**

Families who have children with special needs and disabilities may need some practical help at home. This **does not** mean that you are failing as a parent or that someone is going to come and tell you what to do and how to do it. Government has recognised that looking after a disabled child is hard work and very stressful to family life. Helping families is a much better option in the long run (and a lot cheaper than residential care!). The best way to find out what support you need is to have someone who will come and visit you in your own home. They can meet your child and get to know them and discuss what sort of help they need. **You are entitled to this help** under the **Chronically Sick and Disabled Person's Act (1970)** in England and Wales; this was then introduced into Scottish law 1972 and in Northern Ireland in 1978. The sort of services that are on offer could include: practical help in the home; access to recreational facilities outside the home; home adaptations or disabled facilities; holidays; meals; travel and other assistance; telephone. Under the **NHS and Community Care Act 1990**, the **Children Act 1989** and the **Children (Scotland) Act 1995**, in England, Wales and Scotland, the Social Services Department have a duty to assess the needs of children with a disability. In Northern Ireland, the **Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995** more or less gives children the same rights as in the rest of the UK. The aim of these laws is to **support** you as a parent and **help** you care for your child. The first and most important way to get some help is to contact your local **Social Services Department** (In Wales and England it is part of your local authority. In Scotland it is called the Social Work Department, in Northern Ireland the Health and Social Services Trust. In some local authorities the department may be linked with other departments, for example, the Social Services and Education Department or have a title such as Community Services. Many local authorities have specific Children with Disabilities Teams.) Contact numbers will be in the local telephone directory, or you can get the number from the council enquiry desk, library, doctor, or Health Visitor. You will most likely be put through to the Duty Social Worker Desk. Tell them you have a disabled child and you want an assessment of their needs. **You also have the right to ask for an assessment for yourself** If you are feeling desperate, tell them, and you should be seen more quickly. An initial assessment should be completed within **seven working days**. At this stage Social Services will decide if a more in-depth, core assessment is required and this should take no longer than 35 working days; it will look at the child's, and the family's needs. An assessment should identify **all** your child's needs, not just the ones that the Local Authorities have the resources to meet. They should always look at the needs of the family and the child and be prepared to consider requests that may not be on their 'list' of what is available. They must give good and valid reasons why they cannot meet a particular need. The Social worker who carries out the assessment will prepare a **Care Plan** that identifies what services will meet the child's and the family's needs. More detailed information about assessments is available from your local Carers Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau, Law Centre or Disabled Person's Advice Centre. Details of your nearest one can be obtained from: Contact a Family (Free phone: 0808 808 3555, email: [helpline@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cafamily.org.uk) Web site: [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)