

1 in 14 children  
will be diagnosed with  
Language Disorder



# Disability Employment Services Reform

December 2016



**The Association for Childhood  
Language & Related Disorders  
(Chi.L.D. Association)**

# Response to Discussion Paper

## Participant Choice and Control

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- Chi.L.D. Association supports increased participant control of services
- This reflects a growing trend internationally, as well as acknowledges the importance of the person with disability in the decision making process
- Chi.L.D. Association believes every person has the right to communicate their choice, particularly regarding current or future employment
- Any changes will need to be actively communicated to current and future participants over an extended period of time
- It is important the changes reflect DES staff attitudes towards working with participants, rather than simply a change to processes

## Competition and Contestability

- It is agreed there is difficulty for new providers to enter the market or existing providers to grow
- Targeted information would need to be developed for new service providers on the process
- DES would need to actively recruit service providers to encourage a diverse range of opportunities
- A framework for expansion of current providers should reflect the needs of individuals accessing the services now and into the future
- Chi.L.D. Association encourages DES to expect high standards of service providers, which will ensure high quality employment opportunities for participants

## DES Funding Model

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- Chi.L.D. Association advocates for the rights for each individual to be assessed on their own merits, especially when seeking employment
- Individualised adjustments should always be considered for each participant to ensure appropriate placement
- Basic skills can be applied in different contexts and a wider range of work options should be available
- Ideally work placement will consider the interests, ambitions and strengths for the individual
- This will assist with better job matching and longer term employment if considered early in the process
- It is agreed the transition from education to employment should be a high priority for DES



## Gateway and Eligibility to DES

- Any assessment process for a person with disability should first consider the language abilities of the individual
- Too often physical or cognitive abilities is relied upon as predictors for employment success, when in fact communication skills have a greater impact on overall outcome
- The use of reliable assessments is simply “good practice” and should be expected of DES as a leading government agency
- Seeking consultation from a wide range of stakeholders when developing assessment processes, including educators, allied health professionals and medical professionals, is essential



## Assistance in the Workplace

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- While it is agreed the incentive structure does not align with the needs of participants, the introduction of fee for service could potentially create a divide between those who can afford support and those who cannot
- It is agreed however the funding should be linked to the individual rather than set standards
- An ongoing skill review after 12 months, which is linked to the initial assessment is recommended
- A structured review will also assist with determining if someone's job is in jeopardy
- Proactive measures will have greater success if a participant's employment is at risk



## Employer Engagement

- Prior to being notified of the DES Discussion Paper, Chi.L.D. Association had previously believed people with Language Disorder were ineligible for support. This has since been clarified, but previous information had been misleading
- Worthwhile incentives for employers would assist in increasing take up rates of people with disability
- Chi.L.D. Association agrees that all barriers faced by people with disability should be addressed and the often-overlooked issue of **communication** is crucial here





# About Chi.L.D. Association

# What is Language Disorder?

- 1 in 14 children have Language Disorder. That's on average two in every classroom. Compared with 1 in 100 children with Autism.
- Yet Language Disorder is still unknown and often described as a hidden disability. It is important we advocate for these children to give them every opportunity to find their voice.
- Language Disorder is a lifelong disability and specialist early intervention is key.
- Children and young people with Language Disorder are often as able, intelligent and healthy as other their age. However, they have great difficulty thinking about, understanding and using language.
- A child with Language Disorder will not develop skills in the typical way and often there is no obvious reason for this difficulty, however Language Disorder can be hereditary.



# What is Language Disorder?

- Alarming, more than 50% of youth offenders have a previously undiagnosed Language Disorder.
- Less than 25% of adults with Language Disorder are engaged in ongoing, supported employment.
- Children with Language Disorder often also have difficulties with motor skills, sensory regulation and mealtimes.
- Language Disorder looks different in everyone, and can be difficult to understand because we don't know the cause.
- We do know the speech and language part of the brain does not develop like others, and genetics play an important part.



# Ethan's Story

Frustrated and afraid, Ethan became withdrawn and hostile. Unable to cope with his desperate, 'aggressive' behaviour or interpret his frantic attempts to communicate, the teachers simply gave up.

At the first sign of 'trouble' they sent him home. Chloe, Ethan's mother, shared how her heart broke for her desperate little boy, who thought it was all his fault.

"Whether you are right or wrong, there's a judge, a jury and there's a trial. But Ethan has never been able to tell his side. He's had the witness tell all the story and he's never been able to defend himself. Years of just being told he's the naughty boy."

Quality education opportunities for children like Ethan with Language Disorder vary significantly across the country. Many children at risk of dropping out of school and failing to gain employment due to their disability.

***"Imagine having to fight 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year for the rest of your life, just to be heard."***

Chloe, Ethan's mum





# About the CHI.L.D. Association

## Vision

- To be the leader in enabling better outcomes for children and young people with disability for whom language is their primary disorder.

## Mission:

- We provide holistic, innovative and effective therapy, education and support services.



# How we help children with Language Disorder?

- CHI.L.D. Association is a not-for-profit organisation who specialise in providing multidisciplinary education and therapy to children and young people with Language Disorder.
- We also undertake research and advocacy to give families affected by Language Disorder a voice.
- Our organisation is the only one of its kind in Australia and has been fighting for the rights of children with Language Disorder for 40 years.
- Sadly, by the time we reach many children they have been bullied and excluded. Their parents have been told there is little hope for their ongoing progression. We help these children and young people find their voice.
- When a person has a voice they have hope. Their viewpoints, thoughts, and feelings are heard and recognised by others. They possess the capacity to make a positive impact, both on their own life, as well as the world in general. Something many of us take for granted.



# THANK YOU

- Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the DES Discussion Paper.
- For further information on this submission, please do not hesitate to contact either Hilary or Shaun.

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