

## Introduction

Face 2 Face is a one-to-one parent befriending service offering emotional support to parents whose children have been recognised as having a disability or additional needs. The service is delivered by trained parent volunteers who are supported by professionals working within a structured quality scheme.

Many parents find it invaluable to talk to another parent of a disabled child. Having someone to talk to, who has a similar experience, gives a parent the freedom to express the emotion that many feel as a natural part of coming to terms with their child's disability. Acknowledging those feelings, which may include pain, uncertainty and loss, can help them to process their experience, and enable them to find better strategies for supporting themselves and managing their situation.

Face 2 Face is free and confidential. We support the parents of children with **any type** of disability or additional need.

## What is befriending?

- Befriending offers emotional support to individual parents, helping these parents to make positive adjustments to their lives.
- Volunteers are parents of children with a disability/additional need too and are selected, trained and supervised in this role by professionals working within the national Face 2 Face network.
- We link parents with volunteer befrienders who live nearby so that they can meet and talk face to face. We are not a telephone service.
- Our primary focus is emotional support. We signpost parents to appropriate services if and when necessary, but we are not an information service.

## Who are the befrienders?

Every Face 2 Face befriender is a parent too. They know what it's like to cope with a new diagnosis and can offer support, parent to parent. We try to link parents whose child has a similar diagnosis or a common experience. A befriender's primary role is to offer empathy, presence (physical and emotional) and a 'listening ear' to new parents.

All befrienders have provided references that have been checked. They have also all undergone a Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure.

## Training support and supervision of befrienders

All befrienders have completed a quality assured training course and have been assessed for their readiness to befriend. This ensures a positive experience for both the new parents and the befriender.

Befrienders attend regular support meetings with other befrienders, the scheme co-ordinator and trainer/support worker for mutual support, supervision and to ensure appropriate skill development.

## How does a parent access the service?

Enquiries or referrals can come from a variety of sources. Parents can refer themselves or professionals already working with families can do so on their behalf, with their permission. Simply give the Co-ordinator the parent's contact details. The Co-ordinator will then make telephone contact for some basic information about the child and family, in order to provide a suitable match with a befriender, and will arrange to visit the parent, along with a potential befriender.

All enquires and referrals are treated individually and sensitively.

**Contact: Leanne Markland, Acting Face2Face Co-ordinator for Dudley & Sandwell.**

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