

Sibs

For brothers and sisters
of disabled children and adults

New Report: If Only You Knew

The experiences of siblings of disabled children in school

Sibs supports siblings who have a brother or sister with a disability, special educational need (SEND) or long-term health condition. This report is the result of a survey with over 200 children and young people about their experiences of being a sibling to a disabled child and resulting impact this had on their school life. The children and young people responding were aged 5-16.

Key statistics are:

66% of children had told a teacher about their sibling situation

75% had told a friend or friends about their disabled brother or sister

74% didn't receive any help from school to support them as a sibling

What the children said they found the most difficult was school understanding sibling issues, getting homework done, dealing with friendship issues and being tired.

Dr Georgia Pavlopoulou, University College London Researcher and Sibs' Trustee says:

"Although schools are gradually recognising the significant impact of the unprecedented pressures on young people's lives, the needs and well-being of siblings of disabled children remain unrecognised. Whilst some siblings, just like every other student, are eligible to receive well-being support through general safeguarding and pupil support policies, these are rarely targeted specifically for the siblings of disabled children. Lockdowns have had a significant impact on the mental health of siblings with brothers and sister who have disabilities, special educational needs or long-term health conditions. Schools play a crucial role in providing opportunities for acceptance, connections, fun, growth and support overall wellbeing. The Green Paper in 2014 set a

momentum for schools to have a clear pathway in offering proactive and reactive support to all pupils by 2025. Sibs' report emphasises the importance of recognising siblings needs and providing sensitive support tailored to their unique experiences."

Clare Kassa, Chief Executive at Sibs says:

"School life is a hugely important part of childhood and for very many siblings, school can be a source of respite from many of the challenges faced at home. But too many siblings face these challenges alone, because their teachers and schools simply do not know about their families. Being a sibling can impact all aspects of a child's life, especially their educational attainment. For many, being a sibling also brings caring responsibilities. Numerous children in our survey told us what they needed was understanding and some basic disability awareness education for their peer group and school communities. As one young sibling told us "*Honestly, teachers understanding is all I would need.*" This shouldn't be too much to ask. We welcome the recent Disability Action Plan published by the Disability Unit which seeks to train professionals to identify sibling young carers in education – we would like this to go a step further and identify ALL siblings of disabled children and young people in school settings."

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Sibs charity

- Sibs www.sibs.org.uk is the only UK charity dedicated to supporting siblings who have grown up with or are growing up with a disabled brother or sister.
- Children and young people growing up with a disabled brother or sister, often get less attention from parents and have more worries and responsibilities than their peers.
- There are an estimated half a million young siblings growing up in the UK.
- Sibs provides direct support for young siblings through YoungSibs www.sibs.org.uk/youngsibs an online support and information service for children and young people aged 7-17 who have a brother who is disabled, has special educational needs (SEND) or a serious long-term condition.
- [Sibs Talk Lite](#) is a new set of FREE resources for primary schools to support siblings who are growing up with a brother or sister who is disabled or has SEND
- Sibs relies on the support of Trusts and Foundations and the generosity of individual donations to fund its work – Sibs receives no statutory funding.
- Sibs works towards a vision of a world in which siblings of disabled children and adults are seen, understood and valued.
- National Siblings Day is celebrated on 10th April www.sibs.org.uk/nsd

Full report available: www.sibs.org.uk/ifonly

For more press information or opportunities please contact:

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