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The everyday lives of children with intellectual disabilities (ID): From their perspective

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Aim: To explore disabled children's understandings of disability, how they negotiate the experience of disability in their everyday lives and their experiences of using services.

Method: Semistructured interviews, supported by activities and visual aids, were conducted with disabled children at home. Siblings and parents were also interviewed. The paper will focus on data collected from the 13 children, aged 9-15, who had ID.

Results: Most gave a positive account of their lives, presenting themselves as good friends, helpful pupils and active participants in family and school life. They described close, loving relationships with parents and the usual 'up's and down's' with siblings. Feelings of sadness were usually linked to recent events such as falling out with a friend, or the death/ illness of a relative. However, there were exceptions: some children talked about being bullied at school and /or locally. A couple had also encountered hostile behaviour from adults.

Conclusions: Overall, the children gave a positive account of their lives, presenting themselves in very 'ordinary' ways. Although they faced some physical and material barriers, 'psycho-emotional disablism', in the form of other people's behaviour and attitudes, caused them greater distress.