Parenting and Disability
Access to informed choice and consent

As health professionals we have a duty to offer informed choice and gain informed consent (NMC, 2004; 2008). All parents must be given information in a format that they can understand. Many questions asked by prospective and new parents with a disability will be the same questions asked by all parents -

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<th>Question</th>
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<td>Will the test harm my baby?</td>
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<td>When shall I come into hospital- how will I know when I am in labour?</td>
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<td>When should I start taking folic acid tablets?</td>
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<td>Should my baby have the MMR vaccination?</td>
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So do new parents with disability really have true informed choice and give consent?

e-tivity (2 hours)

Purpose
To consider whether parents with disability have choice and give truly informed choice

Task
1) Read the following case example from maternity care practice where care could be compromised as informed choice or consent was difficult to obtain.

Judith and her partner both have a hearing impairment. Throughout the antenatal period an interpreter has been used for all appointments with the midwife in the health centre and in the antenatal clinic at the hospital. Judith and her partner developed a birth plan and a plan for labour was discussed with her midwife. Judith goes into labour at term plus six days. It is bank holiday Monday. No interpreter in available for Judith whilst in labour.

...(Note to facilitator - suggest you could use a different example/setting and alter the questions accordingly)

2) Now answer the following questions
• How can informed consent be gained from Jane for example to perform an examination or a drug?
• Could alternative strategies used to gain her consent?
• Consider the consequences if informed consent is not gained from Jane

3) Using your answers to the above questions to add to...*(Note to facilitator – suggest a wiki)* a care plan which demonstrates how the maternity team could improve Jane’s care and experience? What choices can be offered to her? What role would each member of the team play?

a. During her pregnancy
b. During her labour
c. If her baby is admitted to the neonatal unit
d. When she goes home with her baby
e. If her child is admitted to a paediatric ward

Respond
Read and comment on at least one other team member’s contribution to the care plan from a different profession to your own.