

Journal of Intellectual Disabilities

<http://jid.sagepub.com>

Sibshops: An evaluation of an interagency model

Fiona D'Arcy, Jacinta Flynn, Yvonne McCarthy, Catherine O'Connor and Edel Tierney

J Intellect Disabil. 2005; 9; 43

DOI: 10.1177/1744629505049729

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://jid.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/9/1/43>

Published by:

 SAGE Publications

<http://www.sagepublications.com>

Additional services and information for *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://jid.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://jid.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations (this article cites 6 articles hosted on the SAGE Journals Online and HighWire Press platforms):
<http://jid.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/9/1/43>

Sibshops

An evaluation of an interagency model

FIONA D'ARCY Brothers of Charity, Cork, Ireland

JACINTA FLYNN COPE Foundation, Cork, Ireland

YVONNE MCCARTHY Brothers of Charity, Cork, Ireland

CATHERINE O'CONNOR Enable Ireland, Cork, Ireland

EDEL TIERNEY COPE Foundation, Cork, Ireland



**Journal of
Intellectual Disabilities**

© 2005

SAGE PUBLICATIONS
London, Thousand Oaks

and New Delhi

VOL 9(1) 43-57

ISSN 1744-6295(049729)9:1

DOI: 10.1177/1744629505049729

Abstract The study evaluates the effectiveness of a sibling support programme (Sibshops) involving three disability agencies in Cork, Ireland. Qualitative and quantitative data were obtained using semi-structured interviews and the Piers–Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale with siblings, together with parent feedback. Results from the Piers–Harris showed that there was no significant increase in sibling self-esteem following attendance at the Sibshops. However, the interviews revealed that the majority of siblings enjoyed and benefited from the Sibshops. Parents reported satisfaction with the Sibshops and felt that their children had benefited. Reflections on the experience of working on an interagency basis are outlined. Recommendations are made regarding further research and development in the organization of Sibshops and in staffing and staff training.

Keywords disability; Ireland; sibling support; sibshops

Whether one celebrates or denies the sibling bond – as long as one has a brother or sister alive, there is always another human being who has known one as a child, who has experienced one in a unique and intimate way over which one has had little control, who has been a mirror, however distorted, of one's childhood and youth – someone, in short who has been a child of, and has shared the same parents. (Bank and Kahn, 1982, p. 13)

This sibling relationship is lifelong and influenced by family dynamics. It is also influenced by a constellation of sibling characteristics and patterns of interactions in the family. Siblings have a powerful influence on the lives of their brothers and sisters through having longitudinal, physical and emotional contact at critical stages throughout their lives (Gallagher and Powell, 1993).

Early studies focused on sibling status and the structure of the sibling relationship (e.g. Jacobs and Moss, 1976). However, more recent studies have focused on patterns of interaction within the family relationship (e.g. Egan and Noonan Walsh, 2001; Kaminsky and Dewey, 2002).

Siblings within the family system

In general, the literature suggests that parents and siblings of children with disabilities as individuals as well as a family unit are at risk for numerous difficulties in comparison with families who do not have a child with a disability. Much attention has also been devoted to the reactions of siblings to their brother or sister with a disability (e.g. Fernell et al., 1992; Harvey and Greenway, 1984; Lobato, 1990). The results have been contradictory. Research is not conclusive in terms of whether or not siblings are at risk of experiencing difficulty in psychosocial adjustment. Contradictory findings may be partly due to the nature of the disability, the ages of the children, social factors and the methods used in research.

Support for siblings

A consistent theme in the literature is the importance of social supports for siblings. Social supports may be one of the most important factors in buffering the effects of potentially stressful situations. A point repeated in the literature (Burke and Montgomery, 2000; Glendinning, 1986) is that the brothers and sisters of children with disabilities receive less attention from parents because of the additional help the disabled child requires. They may also be expected to help out more at home. It appears that siblings are aware that their situation is different from that of other children and that they see both advantages and disadvantages in such a relationship. Therefore, it is expected that the role of support groups should be helpful to siblings in order to address their own needs.

The need for sibling support groups has been highlighted in the literature (e.g. Burke and Montgomery, 2000; Evans et al., 2001; Powell and Gallagher, 1993). Burke and Montgomery (2000) reported that the positive aspects identified by the children who had participated in a support group included outdoor activities, being part of the group, and meeting other children with similar needs. The opportunity to discuss feelings was also highly valued, while they found it difficult to write about their feelings on an individual basis. Children expressed a preference for the activities over discussion. The children were uninterested in the relaxation sessions. There was an increase in sibling involvement post-group. All the children demonstrated an improvement in knowledge after sibling support group attendance. They also reported that their ability to play and relax with their

brother or sister had increased. Parents reported that their children had enjoyed the group, were more understanding and felt less isolated. Four parents reported that they felt the group had a good effect on their home life.

Kiernan (2001) measured changes in self-esteem and quality of life of siblings as well as physical symptoms following attendance at a sibling support programme. The study validated previous findings and further strengthens the impetus to include fun and recreational activities as an integral part of sibling support programmes along with reflective listening and group discussion activities.

Sibshops model

Sibshops are based on the model developed by Don Meyer in Seattle, Washington, USA (Meyer and Vadasy, 1994). They are run on a group-work basis, where a group of siblings (usually aged 8–13 years) come together to share information about their siblings with disabilities and to have fun.

The Cork Sibshops run monthly for four consecutive months. They are held on a Saturday from 10.00 a.m. until 1.00 p.m. The morning consists of high and low energy activities, interspersed with discussion about disability and each sibling's experience.

Consistent with the Don Meyer model, the goals of the Cork Sibshops are to provide siblings with opportunities to:

- 1 meet other siblings in a relaxed, recreational setting
- 2 discuss the common joys and concerns of having a brother or sister with a disability
- 3 learn how others handle situations commonly experienced by siblings of children with a disability
- 4 learn more about the implications of their brothers' and sisters' special needs.

In addition, Sibshops aim to provide parents and other professionals with opportunities to learn more about the concerns and opportunities frequently experienced by brothers and sisters of people with a disability.

Research aims

This research project was undertaken to examine qualitatively and quantitatively how effective Sibshops are in meeting the four goals listed above. It was also anticipated that consulting with siblings and families would inform service provision for the future.

Methodology

Participants

The participants were 16 children referred by social workers and psychologists from three disability agencies in the Cork area in the South of Ireland. These agencies were the Brothers of Charity, COPE Foundation, and Enable Ireland. The children were aged between 8 and 10 years (11 boys and 5 girls) (Table 1). All children had a sibling with a disability (a physical or intellectual disability, or a combination of both).

An introductory letter and a pamphlet were sent to parents describing Sibshops, giving the dates when Sibshops would be held and detailing the evaluation which was to take place. Consent was obtained from parents for the children to attend the Sibshops and participate in the study. Parents were consulted regarding the content of programmes and information was provided to them in an evening presentation and via information leaflets.

Design

A pre-test/post-test design was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Sibshops programme. Each child was interviewed at home on an individual basis within 6 weeks prior to the first Sibshop. This included administering a psychometric questionnaire, the Piers–Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale (Piers and Harris, 1984), and a pre-Sibshop interview schedule which was designed by the research team. The aim of the pre-Sibshop interview was to evaluate the children’s knowledge and attitude with regard to their sibling’s disability, and to assess their feelings towards their sibling. It also assessed children’s contact with other siblings of children with a disability and their wish to meet them. Children were asked if they discussed their sibling’s disability at home. Their experience of being a sibling within the family was also explored.

The interview schedule content reflected the four aims of Sibshops. Language was age appropriate, and the researcher/interviewer was a clinical psychologist who works with children. The interview schedule was

Table 1 Description of Sibshop participants

<i>Characteristics of participants</i>	<i>Details</i>
Male	11
Female	5
Age range	8–10 years
Family size	2–6 members
Older siblings	50%
Younger siblings	50%

piloted with four children to assess the content validity. As no changes were made to the schedule or the procedure following the pilot stage, it was deemed appropriate for use with the larger group. Therefore all remaining children were interviewed with the same schedule and procedure. The four children from the pilot study were included in the larger sample for analysis.

Children were interviewed again in their homes in the 2 months post-attendance at Sibshops. The Piers–Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale was readministered, along with the post-Sibshop interview schedule. In addition to the topics explored in the first interview, this interview also explored siblings’ feelings around meeting other siblings and their opportunities to discuss similar issues at the Sibshops.

Parents were also given the opportunity to provide feedback on a parent feedback form. This was to evaluate their perceptions of the Sibshops and whether they had benefited their children. This form was adapted from Meyer and Vadasy (1994). Eight of the 16 parents returned this form.

Results

Goal 1: to meet other siblings

The primary goal of Sibshops is for children to meet other siblings who have a family member with a disability.

Prior to Sibshops, in answer to the question ‘Would you like to meet other brothers or sisters?’, nine children indicated that they would ‘maybe’ or ‘would love to’ meet other brothers or sisters (Table 2).

Following attendance at the Sibshops, the children were asked ‘How did you feel about meeting other brothers and sisters?’ Nine said that they enjoyed meeting other siblings, though six were unsure (Table 3). These responses indicated that meeting other siblings was a positive experience. Moreover, five of the children had met other siblings again after Sibshops had concluded.

Table 2 Replies to pre-Sibshops Q1(d): ‘Would you like to meet other brothers or sisters?’

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Don’t know	7	43.8
Maybe	4	25.0
Love to	5	31.3
Total	16	100

Table 3 Replies to post-Sibshops Q1(d): ‘How did you feel about meeting other brothers and sisters?’

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Don't know	6	37.5
Enjoyed it	9	56.3
Loved it	1	6.3
Total	16	100

Goal 2: to discuss common joys and concerns

Sibshops encourage siblings to discuss the positive and negative aspects of having a sibling with a disability.

Prior to Sibshop attendance, the children were asked ‘Do you talk about what it is like having a brother or sister with special needs in the family?’ Thirteen of the children reported that they did not discuss their sibling with other family members (Table 4). Of the three children who did discuss having a sibling with a disability, this happened infrequently (once a week, once a month and once ever).

Following attendance at Sibshops, the children were asked ‘At the Sibshops, did you talk about what it is like having a brother or sister with special needs in your family?’ Twelve children reported that they did (Table 5).

Looking closer at their experiences of Sibshops, 12 children reported that they had had a chance to talk about their own experience of being a sibling. It appears from the children’s reports that three-quarters of the

Table 4 Replies to pre-Sibshops Q2(a): ‘Do you talk about what it is like having a brother or sister with special needs in the family?’

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	3	18.8
No	13	81.3
Total	16	100

Table 5 Replies to post-Sibshops Q2(a): ‘At the Sibshops, did you talk about what it is like having a brother/sister with special needs in your family?’

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	12	75
No	3	18.8
Don't know	1	6.3
Total	16	100.0

Table 6 Replies to post-Sibshops Q2b(a): 'Did you have a chance to talk about your experience?'

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	12	75.0
No	2	12.5
Don't know	2	12.5
Total	16	100.0

group were benefiting from being able to talk about the positive and negative aspects of having a sibling with special needs (Table 6).

Over half of the group (nine) said that they heard others talking in Sibshops about experiences similar to their own (Table 7). Common experiences cited were:

[He] said that he gets embarrassed when his sister does things in church.

They said it was hard and annoying too.

His brother embarrasses him in mass [church] too.

Responses indicated that children had shared experiences of being embarrassed about their sibling's obsessional or inappropriate behaviour in public and were aware of the adverse public response in some social situations.

To assess further the joys and concerns of having a sibling with a disability, prior to and following Sibshop attendance, children were asked about the positive and negative aspects of having a sibling with a disability: 'Are there good parts and not-so-good parts to having a brother/sister with special needs?'

Prior to attending the Sibshops, 10 of the children said there were 'good parts' and four children said there were none. Positive experiences cited included:

She gets me out of trouble.

He's very snuggly.

We get a quick pass to Disneyland and he can't tell on me.

Table 7 Replies to post-Sibshops Q2b(b): 'Did you hear anyone talking about an experience like yours?'

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	9	56.3
No	6	37.5
Don't know	1	6.3
Total	16	100.0

We can talk and draw pictures.

She's good at art.

These responses reflect the regular experiences of being a sibling such as intimacy and friendship.

Similarly, 12 children said that there were 'not-so-good parts' to having a sibling with a disability:

I have to do things for her.

I have to play with him when I don't want to.

He wakes me up and slaps and pinches me.

Playing together can be a disaster and I end up hitting him and I shouldn't.

The not-so-good parts are mainly for him.

These responses reflect resentment, guilt and the extra responsibilities of being a sibling of someone with a disability.

Following attendance at the Sibshops, nine children reported that they talked about the 'good parts' of having a sibling with a disability (compared with six prior to Sibshops attendance). In addition, at follow-up the participants appeared to be more specific in their descriptions of the negative aspects of having a sibling with special needs. The examples reported were more indicative of what was difficult for them as a sibling:

The worst parts are the noises and turning off the TV.

Speech therapy and stuff.

When he falls I can't lift him up.

She's hard to understand.

These examples demonstrate the time-consuming nature of interventions, the interruptions in regular home life and difficulties in communication.

Goal 3: to learn how to handle situations commonly experienced by siblings

A further goal of Sibshops is to learn how to handle situations commonly experienced by siblings, i.e. 'tricky situations'. There appeared to be some difficulty around the children conceptualizing this question, although almost half of the group (seven) reported that they experienced 'situations which they found tricky to handle'. When questioned further, nine children reported that they did not talk about the difficulties they encounter.

Following attendance at Sibshops, eight children said that they spoke about tricky situations at the Sibshops, which was a positive development.

The participants' comments on tricky situations and how they handled them included:

I run away in tricky situations.

When he says something and you don't know what he's saying.

When she is crying and you don't know what she wants.

These comments reflect some coping mechanisms and difficulties in communication for the siblings.

Most of the participants were unclear whether they had learned new skills in handling tricky situations following Sibshops. However, two were clear that they had learned new strategies, e.g.:

I try to play with her more now.

Yes, I learned I could ignore her sometimes.

Goal 4: to learn about the implications of siblings' special needs

Knowledge about disability has been shown in the literature to affect siblings' adjustment. Therefore an aim of the Sibshops is to give children information about specific disabilities and their implications for the lives of their siblings.

The participants were asked before and after Sibshops attendance how their sibling's special needs affected their sibling in four aspects of their lives: school, home, play and the future. The children described how their siblings' lives were different from their own in these four areas.

The post-Sibshop answers were more specific than the pre-Sibshop answers in identifying the areas of difficulty and difference for their siblings with special needs in home, school and play. Responses yielded more detailed information describing the implications of the disability for the child:

- School: 'It might take her longer to read and write.'
- Play: 'Sometimes he can't let go of the ball.'
- Home: 'He gets jealous of us with Mum and Dad'; 'He's in a wheelchair all the time; he's bored so he cries/shouts.'
- Future: 'She won't be able to get a proper job.'

Opinion of Sibshops

When asked did they enjoy the Sibshops, 14 children said yes. There was a similar positive response when they were asked 'How would you best describe Sibshops?' and given four choices (Figure 1). Eleven children enjoyed Sibshops; they thought they were 'excellent' or 'very good'.

The children were also able to describe how the Sibshops helped them.

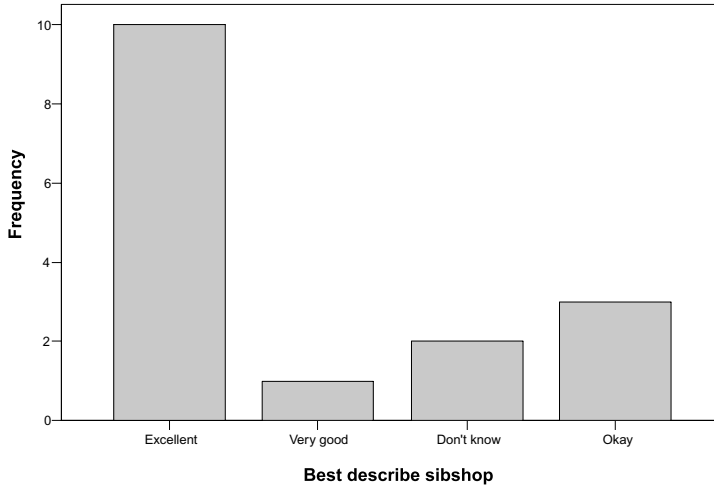


Figure 1 Replies to the question: 'How would you best describe Sibshops?'

For at least one child Sibshops simply meant having a place to go which was exclusively for him:

I had somewhere to go where [disabled sibling] wasn't.

When asked 'Did the Sibshops help you in any way? And if yes, in what way were they helpful?', some comments included:

Help me calm myself.

Help me understand and get along with [disabled sibling].

It helped me to be a bit nicer.

I can work better with her.

Self-esteem

It is not an aim of Sibshops to increase self-esteem. However, to determine if it had any effect the Piers–Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (Piers and Harris, 1984) was administered before and after Sibshop attendance. Paired-samples t-tests were conducted on all subscales of the Piers–Harris to determine if there were any changes in self-esteem. There was no significant differences between self-esteem scores prior to and following attendance at Sibshops (see Table 8).

Two children were identified as having low self-esteem. Consequently they were referred back to appropriate services for follow-up. Therefore, the Piers–Harris scale was useful for identifying children at risk of low self-esteem.

Table 8 Paired sample t-test on Piers–Harris total and subscale scores before and after Sibshops interviews

<i>Pair</i>	<i>Piers–Harris subscale</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>d.f.</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tail)</i>
1	Total	-1.064	14	0.305
2	Behaviour	-1.351	14	0.198
3	Intellectual and school status	-0.381	14	0.709
4	Physical appearance and attributes	1.128	14	0.278
5	Anxiety	-1.763	14	0.100
6	Popularity	0.695	14	0.499
7	Happiness and satisfaction	0.000	14	1.000
8	Inconsistency index	1.389	14	0.186
9	Response bias index	2.118	14	0.053

Parent feedback

Parents were also asked for their opinions regarding Sibshops. This was explored by means of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was an amended version of the one used by Don Meyer (Meyer and Vadasy, 1994). Parents were asked their opinion of Sibshops following the completion of the programme. Eight returned the questionnaire.

When asked to rate how often their children spoke about the Sibshops (from a choice of: a lot, occasionally, once, not at all), five of the parents said that their child spoke 'a lot' about the Sibshops; the remaining three reported that their children spoke 'occasionally'. Every parent reported that their child enjoyed the Sibshops 'a lot' (given a choice of: a lot, it was okay, a little, didn't enjoy it at all) and all said they enjoyed the games. Some mentioned particular games that they enjoyed. All reported that attending Sibshops did not upset their children. Parents' comments included:

Probably understands [disabled sibling] better.

How and why he needs to be looked after.

More aware of other disabilities.

Taught him how to make new friends.

Likes being part of a special group.

These comments demonstrate that the parents felt that their children were more aware of the implications of having a disability for their sibling and were relating better with their disabled sibling. They welcomed the support of a special group for their child.

Discussion

This study shows that Sibshops were successful in meeting the first three goals. Goal 1 was clearly met: 81 percent of siblings expressed a wish to meet the siblings again once the Sibshops were complete. They reported enjoying the activities, and the attendance rates across Sibshops were consistent. It was observed by facilitators that the children had great fun and that the Sibshops were enjoyable for participants.

Goals 2 and 3 aimed to provide siblings with opportunities to share common joys and concerns, and ways of handling common experiences of having a sibling with special needs. These goals were met, and there was a dramatic increase in children's reported discussions around their feelings. Following Sibshops, 75 percent of children recalled talking about the good and not-so-good aspects of their sibling. They were also more articulate about describing 'tricky situations' and could identify that the greatest difficulties were in the areas of communication and understanding their siblings' needs. Sibshops provided most of the children with an opportunity to learn something new, and half of the children with the opportunity to discuss tricky situations. This was a new experience for most of the siblings, who previously had not discussed such experiences within the family. Children made more negative comments during and after Sibshops about their siblings with a disability. Frustration over issues such as rivalry or perceived lack of parental attention could be vented in a safe environment. Sibshops provided an effective medium to articulate these feelings, while interspersing the discussions with other fun activities.

Goal 4 aimed to provide information and education about the implications of specific disabilities. The qualitative information indicated that children's responses were more specific in relation to their siblings' needs with regard to home, school, play and the future. According to parental reports, the disability-related discussions did not cause upset for any of the children. Post-Sibshops, children described disability in terms of a more social model. Some of the children explained disability in terms of the child's needs. Children and their parents saw the benefit for themselves and both wished the contact to continue. It was felt that the Sibshops were provided at a crucial age when peer contact is of paramount importance. Providing children with knowledge on disability and opportunities to share feelings and coping strategies was of particular benefit at this time in their development.

In addition to the Sibshop content outlined above, there were additional organizational factors that the researchers deemed positive. First, this study served as a model for inclusive practice. The approach was interdisciplinary

and interagency, and involved a consultative process with parents and siblings in planning and evaluating the Sibshops. The interagency approach enriched knowledge of facilitators and children, and of different disabilities and resources, and eased recruitment, administrative and cost implications for the agencies involved. The interdisciplinary committee comprised social workers, psychologists, a researcher, and an adult sibling, which allowed for a sharing of theoretical perspectives and real-life experiences. The inclusion of family members such as a teenage sibling and an adult adds credibility to the process. Their inclusion provided participants with mature models with whom they could identify.

Recommendations for future research

Siblings were matched for age in this study. However, the authors recognize that limitations in the study design exist. In common with much practice-based research, the sample size was small and the participants were not matched for gender. Factors related to the type and severity of disability, and aspects of family composition and socio-economic status have been shown in the research literature to impact on adjustment. It was not practical to control for these variables in the current study, but this would prove a useful focus for investigation in future studies.

The literature on sibling characteristics has highlighted some interpersonal factors that could reveal interesting processes for the future design of Sibshops, including deidentification and sibling attachment. Factors intrinsic to the child that could act as 'buffers', such as their ability to manage stress and coping, and individual cognitive styles, could reveal useful ways of explaining how different aspects of the programme work for different children.

In light of the dearth in the current available literature, larger-scale comparative studies are warranted. These could include families with and without a child with special needs. Longitudinal studies that follow families through their lifespan and transitions and those that track the developmental age of the child would prove very useful in targeting areas for support in children of different ages.

Recommendations for future practice

Home-based interviews with children prior to attending Sibshops proved to be very useful. This should continue to be incorporated into Sibshops preparation. Information for parents and information packs for the children also proved to be a much-valued resource. Information is vital for families in their adjustment to having a family member with a disability.

As a result of the findings, children are now provided with two resource books (Meyer, 1997; Meyer et al., 1985) which are discussed at the Sibshops and can be used later by each child as needed. More specific information in relation to individual conditions is now sourced and more valid ways of handling 'tricky situations' are being considered.

Sibshops are about having fun. A primary recommendation from this project is to retain the fun elements and recreational activities for children. This is a very useful way for children to socialize and learn from each other.

References

- BANK, S. & KAHN, M. D. (eds) (1982) *The Sibling Bond*. New York: Basic.
- BURKE, P. & MONTGOMERY, S. (2000) 'Siblings of Children with Disabilities: A Pilot Study', *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 4 (3): 227–36.
- EGAN, J. & NOONAN WALSH, P. (2001) 'Sources of Stress among Adult Siblings of Irish People with Intellectual Disability', *Irish Journal of Psychology* 22 (1): 28–38.
- EVANS, J., JONES, J. & MANSELL, I. (2001) 'Supporting Siblings: Evaluation of Support Groups for Brothers and Sisters of Children with Learning Disabilities and Challenging Behaviour', *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 5 (1): 69–78.
- FERNELL, E., GILLBERG, C. & WENDT, L. (1992) 'Self-Esteem in Children with Infantile Hydrocephalus and in their Siblings: Use of the Piers–Harris Self-Concept Scale', *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 1 (4): 227–32.
- GALLAGHER, P. A. & POWELL, T. H. (1993) *Brothers and Sisters: A Special Part of Exceptional Families*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- GLENDINNING, C. (1986) *A Single Door: Social Work with the Families of Disabled Children*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- HARVEY, D. H. P. & GREENWAY, A. P. (1984) 'The Self-Concept of Physically Handicapped Children and their Non-Handicapped Siblings: An Empirical Investigation', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 25 (2): 273–83.
- JACOBS, B. S. & MOSS, H. A. (1976) 'Birth Order and Sex of Siblings as Determinants of Mother–Infant Interaction', *Child Development* 47 (2): 315–22.
- KAMINSKY, L. & DEWEY, D. (2002) 'Psychosocial Adjustment in Siblings of Children with Autism', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 43 (2): 225–32.
- KIERNAN, G. (2001) 'Therapeutic Recreation Camping Programme for Children with Life-Threatening Illnesses and their Siblings', PhD thesis in psychology, Trinity College, Dublin.
- LOBATO, D. (1990) *Brothers and Sisters with Special Needs*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- MEYER, D. J. (1997) *Views from Our Shoes: Growing Up with a Brother or Sister with Special Needs*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine.
- MEYER, D. J. & VADASY, P. F. (1994) *Sibshop Workshops for Siblings of Children with Special Needs*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- MEYER, D. J., VADASY, P. F. & FEWELL, R. R. (1985) *Living with a Brother or a Sister with Special Needs: A Book for Sibs*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- PIERS, V. E. & HARRIS, D. B. (1984) *Children's Self-Concept Scale: Revised Manual*. Los Angeles, CA: Western Psychological Services.
- POWELL, T. H. & GALLAGHER, A. P. (1993) *Brothers and Sisters: A Special Part of Exceptional Families*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

Correspondence should be addressed to:

EDEL TIERNEY, Research Department, COPE Foundation, Bonnington House,
Montenotte, Cork, Ireland. e-mail: tierne@cope-foundation.ie.

Date accepted 05/06/04