



# The "F-words" in Action - Clare DCD Sports Group

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## OVERVIEW

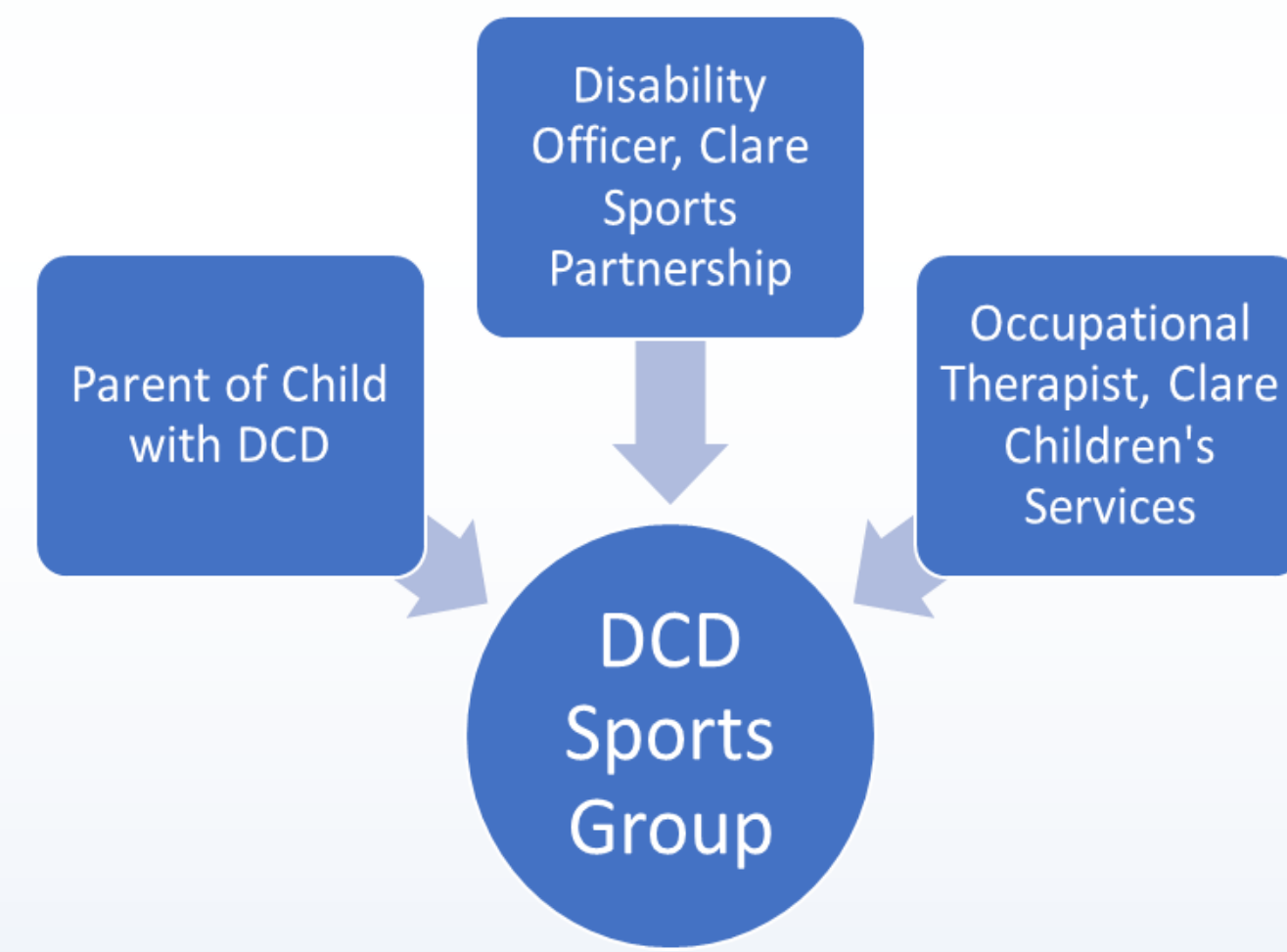
The need for a sports group for children with Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) in Clare was identified in late 2014 by a parent, because her child's attempts to participate in established local sports activities groups were unsuccessful.

## INTRODUCTION

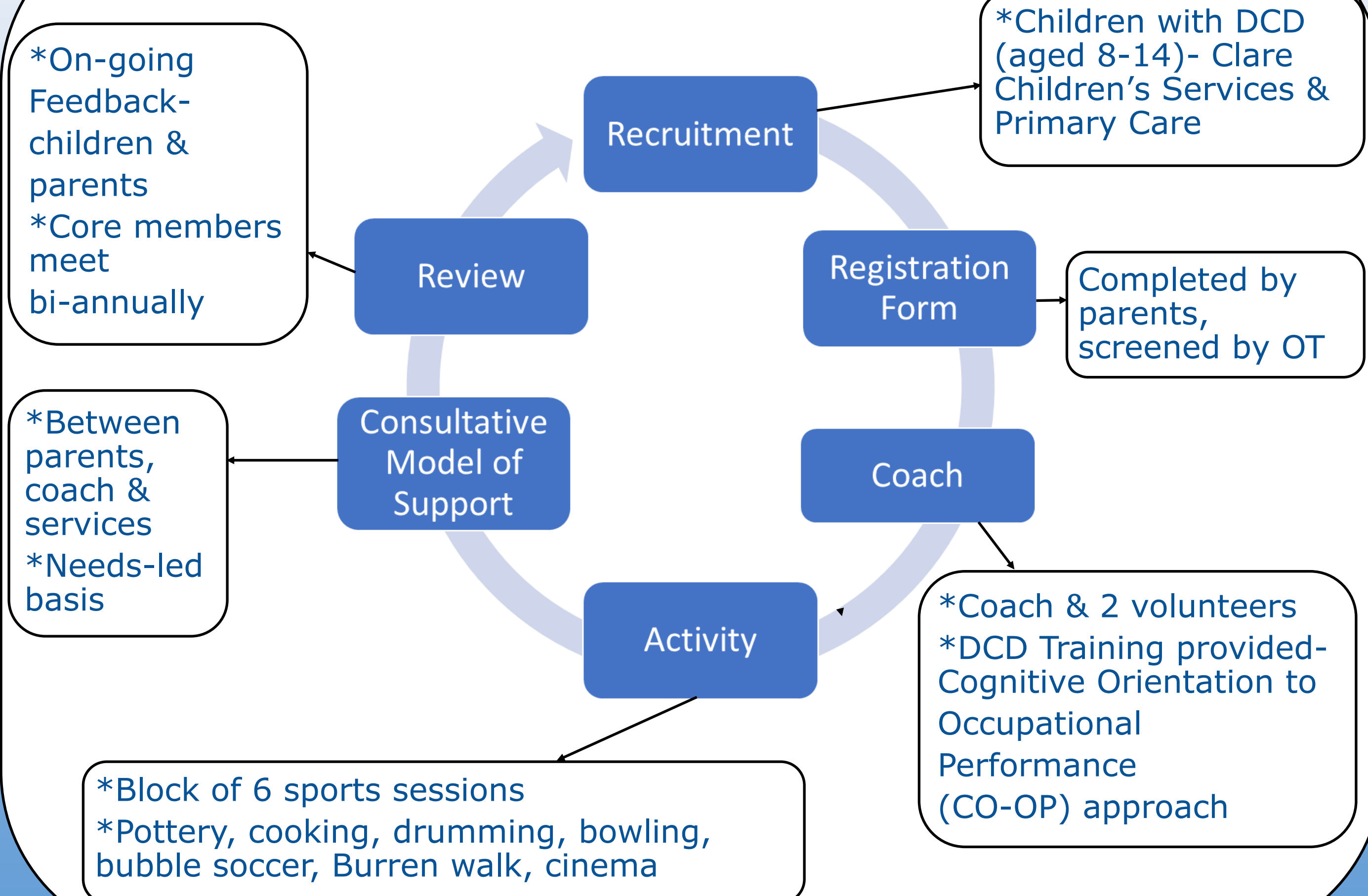
DCD is a life-long motor skills disorder which impacts on a person's ability to perform everyday tasks including dressing, writing and playing sports.

Children with DCD often participate less in social activities and have low self-esteem which can cause isolation and emotional problems (Engel-Yeger & Kasis, 2010) and lead to negative long-term consequences in future life.

The necessity for a group with children of similar abilities and needs, to practice motor skills in a safe and secure environment and to meet other similar children was recognised. The parent, Occupational Therapist (Clare Children's Services) and Disability Officer (Clare Sports Partnership) worked together to establish this group.



## PROCEDURE



## THE "F-WORDS"

The "F-words" in childhood disability- **function, family, fitness, fun, friends & future**- is a new way of thinking about children's health and disability in everyday life. It is based on the World Health Organisation (WHO-2001) International Classification of Functioning, Disability & Health (ICF) framework. These new ideas are inspiring us to implement a more family/child centred approach in our work practices.

### Function

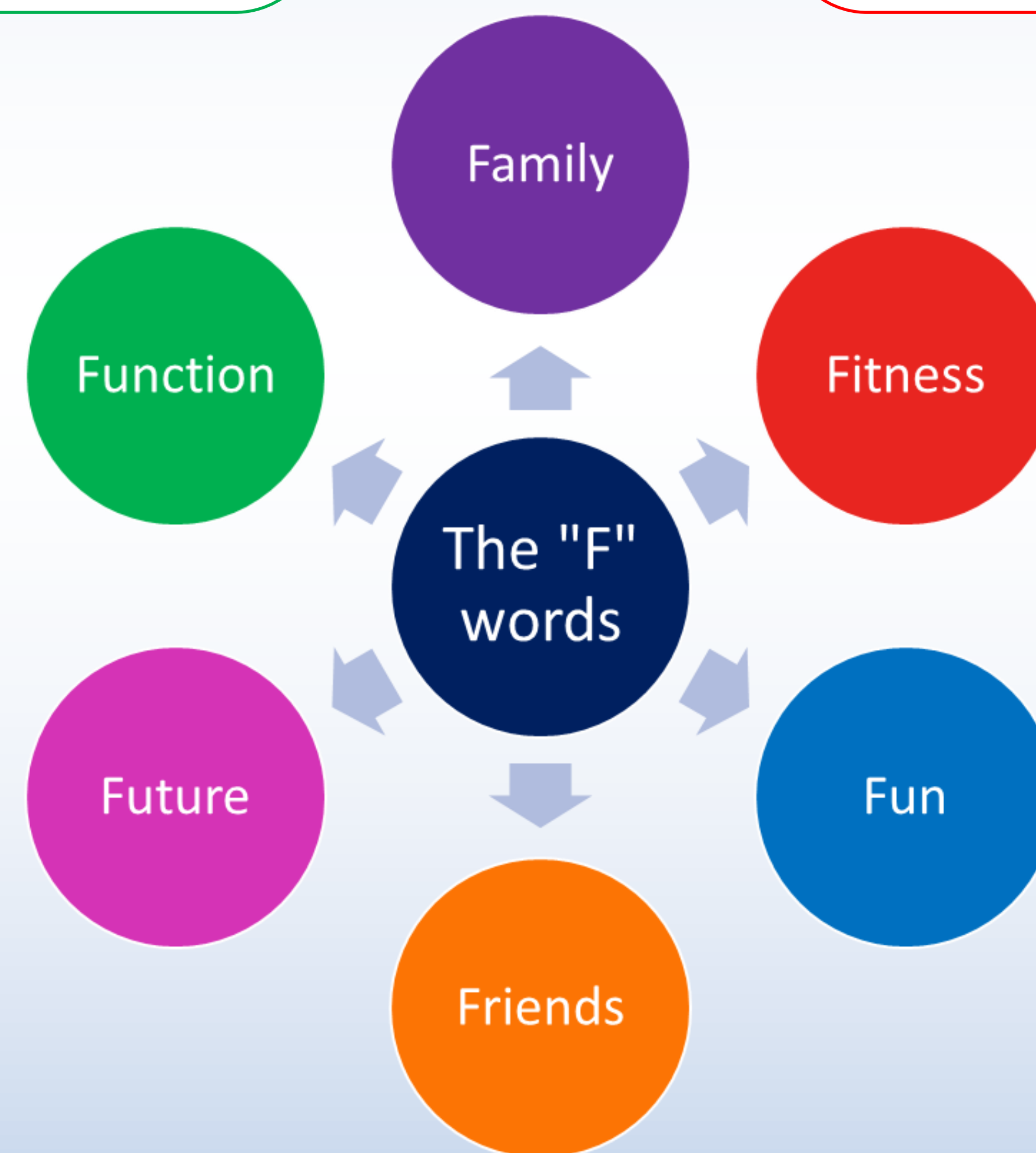
- \* Sports games
- \*Burren walk- children had to plan trip, problem solve around potential anxieties e.g. getting lost
- \*Opportunity to learn new skills e.g. cooking and pottery

### Family

- \* Activities => Child & Parent and Child & Sibling
- \* Parent Support Group => coffee and a chat, information sharing, even nights out!

### Fitness

Children with DCD are not as fit as other children (Rivlis et al., 2011). Sports activities have a fitness element to help improve their cardiovascular fitness. Good physical fitness is an important part of a healthy lifestyle.



### Future

- \*The group provides an opportunity for children to experience and gain many abilities which will have a positive impact on their future life: friendships, skills, confidence and fun.
- \*One of the volunteers is a former client of the OT who has DCD. He is a role model for both the children and parents in the group.

### Friends

- \*When asked what they gained most from the group, 90% of children reported making new friends.
- \*One child reported: "Meeting people like me as none in my school has DCD except I".

### Fun

- \*On-going feedback is sought from the children.
- \* The coach is very skilful in transforming core stability exercises into more enjoyable

## OUTCOMES

Children and parents were asked what they enjoyed about the group.



Learning new skills

Playing games and getting out for an hour or two

I made new friends and liked a lot of the activities

Seeing my child being happy to join in...inclusion...meeting other mothers!

...he didn't realise he was exercising so much as he was having so much fun

Two participants gained sufficient confidence to join their local teams: soccer club and running club respectively, after completing the first block of 6 sessions.

## CONCLUSION

The formation and functioning of this group is in line with current best practice guidelines (Camden et al., 2015) which highlight the necessity to focus on the wide-ranging challenges for children with DCD and their families. It also emphasises the benefits of families and services collaborating together to offer evidence-based services promoting function, inspiring participation and preventing secondary issues.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the participants and their dedicated parents, in particular Niamh Ryan who created the vision for this group, James Murrhly (Disability Officer with Clare Sports Partnership), Sean Hayes (coach) and volunteers for keeping the momentum going in the group.

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