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## **New Book Applies Raymond Williams' Landmark Method to the Language of Child Disability**

*Keywords: A Vocabulary of Child Disability* examines 177 words and phrases, tracing how language shapes the lives of disabled children and their families in Britain

**Kuopio, Finland** — Dan McEvoy, a writer and bereaved parent, announces the forthcoming publication of *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Child Disability*, a comprehensive work that applies the method of Raymond Williams' *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976) to the medical, educational, legal, bureaucratic, and everyday language surrounding disabled children. The book will be published by Small Engine Press in 2026.

Arranged alphabetically from *Abandonment* to *Young carer*, the book contains 177 entries totalling approximately 330,000 words. Each entry takes a single term from the vocabulary of child disability — words like *special*, *need*, *care*, *sorry*, and *quality of life* — and traces its etymology, examines its current usage, and reveals the ideological work it performs. The approach is analytical rather than prescriptive: the book does not tell readers which words to use, but shows what the words are doing once they have been used.

McEvoy began the project following the birth of his daughter Elisa, who lived with cerebral palsy, dystonia, and complex medical needs for nearly ten years before her death in January 2023. "I began this project because of a word," McEvoy writes in the introduction. "The word was *sorry*. People said it to me constantly after my daughter was born, and then differently after she died. It was always well-intentioned. It was never examined."

The book argues that the language used about disabled children is not a reflection of how society thinks about them, but a mechanism by which it avoids thinking about them. "Every euphemism, every clinical classification, every sentimental phrase, every bureaucratic formula exists in part to manage the discomfort that disability provokes in a society organised around productivity, independence, and physical normality," McEvoy writes.

Drawing on etymology, disability studies scholarship, policy analysis, and a decade of lived experience inside the systems that surround disabled children in Britain, *Keywords* is both a rigorous academic contribution to disability studies and an accessible resource for parents, professionals, disabled people, and anyone interested in how language shapes understanding.

McEvoy, who was diagnosed as autistic at forty-eight, lives in Kuopio, Finland.

## Key Facts

**Title:** *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Child Disability*

**Author:** Dan McEvoy

**Publisher:** Small Engine Press

**Publication:** 2026

**Entries:** 177

**Formats:** Ebook, Paperback, Hardback

**Price:** To be confirmed

**Subjects:** Disability Studies · Linguistics · Cultural Criticism · Education Policy · Childhood Studies

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## Notes to Editors

Raymond Williams (1921–1988) was a Welsh cultural critic and literary scholar whose *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976, revised 1983) pioneered the method of tracing the shifting meanings of culturally significant words. His approach revealed how words like *culture*, *democracy*, and *welfare* carry competing meanings that reflect political and social struggles. Williams' method has since been applied to other fields, most notably in *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (2005), edited by Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris.

McEvoy's *Keywords* is the first application of Williams' method specifically to the language of disability, and the first to focus on the vocabulary surrounding disabled children. Entries range from historical terms (*Idiot*, *Feeble-minded*, *Monster*) to contemporary policy language (*SEND*, *Person-centred*, *Eligibility*) to the affective vocabulary of everyday encounter (*Sorry*, *Brave*, *Inspiration*).

Review copies are available in ebook and print format. The author is available for interview and is willing to provide adapted versions of individual entries for publication. High-resolution author photograph and cover artwork available on request.

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