

contact a family

for families with disabled children

The Newsletter of Contact a Family North West Autumn/Winter Bulletin, 2012

Registered in England and Wales: Number 1633333

We are the only UK-wide charity providing advice, information and support to the parents of all disabled children no matter what their condition. Our services are for families with children aged 0-19 and up to 25 if your child is not yet in adult services.



Have a Happy Christmas from the whole North West team...

The North West Team would like to wish you a very happy Christmas.

Here are our Twelve Days of Christmas Energy Saving Tips!

- 1. Get switched on...** Get to know your energy costs, rates, tariffs and discounts and see if there is a better deal you can get with your existing supplier.
- 2. Consider switching...** Check out the suppliers at www.consumerfocus.org.uk to see if you can get a better deal with another supplier.
- 3. Insulation... wrap up!** Most energy companies have discounts on insulation and some schemes offer it for free. Ask your energy supplier, or contact the Energy Savings Trust for grants and discounts in your area on **0800 512 012**.
- 4. Heating... turn it down!** Turn down your thermostat by just 1°C and cut your bills by a huge 10%.
- 5. Curtains... draw them closed!** Shutting the curtains will stop heat escaping through your windows.
- 6. Hot water... use less!** Zip up your cylinder with a Winter jacket and take a shower not a bath it uses 30% less water.
- 7. Lighting... switch!** Switching to energy saving light bulbs and switch off when you're not using them.
- 8. Washing... cooler!** Washing at 30°C uses about 40% less electricity.
- 9. Appliances... 'A' rate them!** Look out for the A rated appliances when you buy them, they're more energy efficient.
- 10. Don't standby... switch off!** Turn off appliances and don't leave them on standby as they will continue to use energy.
- 11. Get involved... it's a family affair!** Get the whole family involved in saving energy; they'll become very energy conscious!
- 12. If you get stuck... get help!** If you are struggling to pay your energy bills, phone your energy supplier and tell them, they should offer you some sort of payment plan. You can get more advice from Contact a Family freephone helpline **0808 808 3555**.



Contact a Family North West



Website www.cafamily.org.uk/northwest

National Freephone Helpline **0808 808 3555** (Mon – Fri 9.30 - 5.00). The Language Line interpretation service is available for those whose first language is not English.

North West Team

You can e-mail general enquiries to the team at northwest@cafamily.org.uk or get in touch with individual team members below.

Corriena Tomkinson – Parent Advisor (North West)

corriena.tomkinson@cafamily.org.uk Telephone **01772 812 294**

Corriena is based in Lancashire but provides advice, information and support to parents across the North West region.

Catherine Tyrie – Parent Advisor (North West)

catherine.tyrie@cafamily.org.uk Telephone **0161 445 3749**

Cath is based in Manchester but provides advice, information and support to parents across the North West region.

Diane Astill – Parent Advisor – (Cumbria)

diane.astill@cafamily.org.uk Telephone **016973 23309**

Diane is based in Cumbria and provides advice, information and support to parents.

Carolyn Deveney – Parent Carer Participation Advisor (North West)

carolyn.deveney@cafamily.org.uk Telephone **07905 917 066**

Carolyn will be supporting parent carer forums across the region.

Debbie Armstrong - SEND Development Officer (North West)

debbie.armstrong@cafamily.org.uk Telephone **0781 080 4697**

Siobhan O'Connor - SEND Development Officer (North East, North West & Yorkshire)

Siobhan.OConnor@cafamily.org.uk Telephone **01482 341268**

Karen Robinson – Senior Children’s Centre Advisor and Regional Manager

karen.robinson@cafamily.org.uk Telephone **01706 220 578**

Karen works with Children’s Centres across the region and manages the work of the parent advisors in the North West region.

Volunteer Parent Representatives

Ruth Card (St. Helens area)

ruth.card@cafamily.org.uk Telephone **01942 721 323**

Ruth is the Area Volunteer Parent Rep, she is the parent of a disabled child and offers peer support and local signposting for parents in the St. Helen’s area.

What do we campaign for?



We campaign to remove the barriers, which prevent families with disabled children participating in everyday life. We want to ensure that government policy, as it relates to families with disabled children, delivers the best outcomes for all families across the UK. We base everything on what parents have told us in research or what we learn from working with them.

Over the last few months we successfully argued that parent carers should be exempt from the Working Tax Credit hours rule change, making a vital difference to families with disabled children. And through consultations, media work and working with other disability organisations, we continue to try and influence government plans to minimise the negative effects of changes to the benefits system.

For more information on our campaigns and how you can help us, join us at www.cafamily.org.uk or follow us on Facebook and Twitter. We are stronger together...

Stop the DLA Takeaway, we need your help!



Contact a Family and The Children's Trust, Tadworth, would like to hear from parents and carers of children who spend long periods in hospital. The charities are asking families to fill out a short survey which could provide vital information to strengthen our campaign.

'Stop the DLA Takeaway' highlights that disabled children who spend long periods in hospital are at risk of having their Disability Living Allowance (DLA) suspended. Current regulations mean DLA is removed from a child if their hospital stay is over 84 days. The days do not have to be consecutive, so hundreds of severely disabled and sick children, who are regularly in and out of hospital, could be affected.

The government argues that when a child spends longer than 84 days in hospital 'a patient's needs are fully met free of charge'. However, Contact a Family and the Children's Trust, Tadworth hear from families that they provide the same, or more care, when their child is in hospital and incur extra costs such as loss of earnings, travel to and from hospital, parking and childcare expenses.

If you are the parent or carer of a child who spends large periods of time in hospital please complete our short survey. It won't take more than five minutes! The closing date for the survey is Friday 30 November, 2012. This information could help us strengthen our call for the government to scrap the rules that deny some of the UK's most severely disabled children financial help when they need it most.

If you are a parent and have been affected by these issues and need advice and information, call our freephone helpline **0808 808 3555**. For more information go to <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/news-and-media/our-campaign-needs-your-help/>

Help us to fight the cuts to council tax benefit...

Some families with disabled children could see cuts to their Council Tax Benefit of over 10% from April 2013. Contact a Family is concerned the cuts will lead to some of the poorest families experiencing further financial hardship. We are encouraging families to write to the Chief Executive of their local council to make sure the council treats families with disabled children as a protected group under Council Tax Reduction Schemes. More information and help with the letters can be found at www.cafamily.org.uk/news-and-media/act-now-changes-to-council-tax-benefit-in-england/ If you do write to your local council to help with this campaign, please drop Una (our Policy Officer) an e-mail, just to let her know.



Changes to the law leaves out parent carers...

Contact a Family recently responded to a consultation on the proposed Care and Support Bill. We welcome the aim of simplifying adult social care law giving carers a right to support for the first time 'to put them on the same footing as the people for whom they care'. We are, however concerned about the 'adult' focus of the Bill and want it extended to parent carers (or young carers) who will still have to request an assessment – whereas adult carers will be exempt from the requirements. Contact a Family would like to see legislation that ensures fairness for carers looking after a disabled child or an adult.



Help us to reduce poverty...

Poverty is widespread amongst families with disabled children in the UK. In our report 'Counting the Costs 2012' we asked over 2,000 families about their situation. The report shows the levels of poverty that families with disabled children are experiencing and that they often face difficult decisions about what to go without including food, heating, bills.



Contact a Family is campaigning for families with disabled children to be exempt from the cuts to financial support. We are doing this by calling on the government to pledge additional support to families through Universal Credit and continuing to raising awareness of the persistent poverty of families of disabled children in the media.

We are also asking you to join the hundreds of people so far who've signed up to campaign and written to their MPs. If you think something must be done to stop the persistent poverty experienced by so many families with disabled children - you can write to your local MP and/or councillors by visiting writetothem.org:

- simply enter your postcode
 - click into your MP's/councillor's name
 - fill out your details
 - include the points we've raised below in your letter
 - if you have a disabled child please add your own experience
 - There are tips on what sorts of things to mention on our website at <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/reducing-poverty/>
 - don't forget to let us know that you have taken action by emailing Una Summerson at una.summerson@cafamily.org.uk so we can keep track of the impact of the campaign.
- Thank you!

Sleep deprivation is under-recognised...

Family Fund, a charity giving grants to low income families raising disabled children, have carried out research which shows that widespread sleep deprivation is often overlooked by services. The report highlights Vicky, who cares for her grandson. "It's like his brain never ever turns off," she says. "Even in his sleep he shouts out: he sits up, bangs back down again. It's so sudden – it makes you jump. He's banging his arms, his legs, and then he turns round and he's not kicking his bed – it's my bed that's being kicked and me in it. My quality of sleep is terrible. I wake up and I'm absolutely lethargic. Everything's an effort to do, and I have to get on and do it." Vicky's situation is painfully common, with parents in the research indicating that sleep deprivation is one of the most difficult health issues for them.



Among families on low incomes, often living in cramped accommodation, it's not uncommon for parents or carers to end up sharing bedrooms with disabled children, sometimes sleeping on the floor. Parents and siblings sleep can be disturbed by children's behaviour, or because they need feeding, monitoring or treatment throughout the night.

Last year alone the Family Fund gave grants for 5,107 beds, as well as items such as monitoring devices, specialist bedding to allow children to sleep comfortably, blackout blinds for those who find it hard to settle because of sensory stimulation and sofa beds so that parents can sleep near to their children if they need to.

"There's a need to take a proper broad view, weighing up the cost of the investment in effective sleep management support services against the extra strain on all kinds of services – from respite provision to behaviour management and mental health support – created by families who are simply not able to cope because, on top of everything else, they are just too tired to function". If you are a low income family and would like to know more about Family Fund, please go to www.familyfund.org.uk email info@familyfund.org.uk or 08449 744 099.

9/10 unemployed parents want to work...

The charity 'Working Families' announced that their research shows, 91% of unemployed parents of disabled children, want to work. The survey of over a thousand parents also found that 64% of parents in work, had turned down promotion, or accepted demotion, to balance care and work.

Yet flexibility around the time of diagnosis and at other crisis points, together with affordable childcare, could prevent many parents from opting out of the labour market.



Of the 73% who were in paid work:

- Only 38% worked for 30 hours or more.
- 61% had changed or tried to change their pattern of work while 56% had reduced or tried to reduce their hours, in order to manage their caring responsibilities.
- 64% had refrained from seeking promotion, declined promotion or accepted demotion in order to balance caring and paid work.
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Of the 27% of respondents not in paid work:

- 82% had given up work in order to care for their disabled children.
- 83% felt that finding suitable childcare was the main barrier to paid work.
- Over 50% had been unemployed for at least six years.
- 91% would like to undertake paid work at some level.

Sarah Jackson, of Working Families, said “There is often an assumption that parents of disabled children will not be in work, which affects the way they are treated by the services around them. The sheer cost of childcare means that even if work is flexible enough to cope with the demands of appointments, it is difficult to make work pay, even when you want it to.”

She went on to explain that: “Our research shows there is a lack of suitable childcare, flexible working options, and financial incentives to work. These factors, together with the higher costs of childcare, all conspire to force parents of disabled children to reduce their hours, accept less well paid work or opt out of the labour market altogether. This is not only detrimental to the welfare of these families but it also represents a loss of skills to employers and a cost to the wider economy through loss of tax revenues and additional benefit payments.”

She concluded by saying: “Working Families is calling for action by Government, by employers and by service providers to acknowledge that parents of disabled children CAN and DO want to work alongside caring for their children. We are asking for measures to address the availability and affordability of suitable childcare and to increase the flexibility of work options. And as a matter of priority, systems need to be put in place to support parents at the point of diagnosis or crisis and thus enable them to remain in work. From the pattern of employment amongst parents of disabled children it is clear that ‘staying put’ is a more realistic option than ‘getting back’.”

Children’s Centres, what are we doing there?

Sure Start Children’s Centres

Contact a Family has now reached 156 Children’s Centres across the North West area providing advice, information and support to staff who work in Children’s Centres, helping strengthen them to support families caring for a child with additional needs. We also provided drop in sessions and workshops to parents to increase their confidence.

After talking to parents and professionals about what they want, we designed five core workshops. We delivered the ‘*Disability Awareness: Impact on Family Life*’, the ‘*Difficult Behaviours That Challenge Us*’ and the ‘*DLA and Benefits*’ workshops to Children Centre staff increasing staff confidence and understanding of the impact caring for a child with a disability has on family life. Parent information sessions also included ‘*Helping Your Child to Sleep*’ and ‘*Coping and Support*’.

In addition to this we offered drop-in information sessions at a number of children’s centres and local parent support groups, providing lots of information, resources and support. Links with parent carer forums in some areas have also been developed and strengthened.

Evaluations have been very positive with parents feeling less isolated and more confident, sharing information and learning from each other. Children Centre workers have also told us that they feel more confident in supporting families with disabled children, feeling more informed and understanding better the support that families need. If you are a Children’s Centre or local parent support group and would like to develop something in your centre please contact Karen Robinson on **01706 220578** or email karen.robinson@cafamily.org.uk

Calling all SENCOs...

There is still time to access the SEND Information project if you are a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), *but time is running out* so get in touch by the 31st March to be able to access all the freebies and support. The SEND Information project is working in partnership with Special Educational Needs Coordinators, SENCOs by:

- Supporting them to providing a wider range of information on issues that may affect families who have a disabled child or a child with special educational needs
- Broadening their signposting capabilities.

SENCOs who sign up to the project will get:

- Free Resources – resource pack, free parent guides and the Good Practice e-newsletter
- Support from a regional development worker debbie.armstrong@cafamily.org.uk or siobhan.oconnor@cafamily.org.uk
- Free access to a dedicated SENCO enquiry service
- Free access to the online Contact a Family Directory with information on conditions and UK family support groups www.cafamily.org.uk

For more information about the project please visit www.cafamily.org.uk/sendinformation

Cumbria gets a new Parent Advisor...

Diane Astill is working across Cumbria with families, professionals and partnership agencies providing advice, information and support. In addition she supports parent groups and will be offering workshops. Diane has worked with lots of families over the years she has been a Nanny, worked in schools and been a family support worker as well as being a parent. She has worked with families in rural areas of Cumbria and in Cumbrian towns. She has delivered family learning sessions on behaviour, sleep, play and routines and has also been involved in multi agency working with Health, Education and Housing as well as several charities. Diane is looking forward to her role with Contact a Family. If you would like to get in touch with Diane you can contact her at diane.astill@cafamily.org.uk Telephone 01697 323 309.



Get your flu jab and get protected this winter...

As a carer you may be worried about getting the flu because it would affect your ability to care for the person you're looking after. You may be able to get a flu jab because of this, or because of your age or your own health. Government policy states that the flu vaccine should be offered to the following groups:

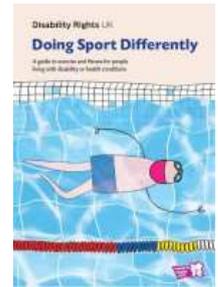


1. Everyone aged 65 years and over.
2. Everyone aged six months or over who is in a clinical risk group.
3. People living in long-stay residential care homes or other long-stay care facilities where the infection could spread (this doesn't include university halls of residence).
4. People who are receiving **Carer's Allowance**, or who are the **main carer** for an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill.

People who fall into this last category should explain their concerns for the welfare of the person they're looking after, if they should fall ill, e.g. if there is no one else who would be able to step in. If you have health problems of your own, ask your GP if you fall into one of the clinical risk groups. Your GP will decide whether you need a flu jab based on this information.

‘Doing Sport Differently’, a new guide...

The London 2012 Paralympic Games were a great success, and it is hoped that these games will inspire more children and young people to take up sports. In order to promote this there is a new resource out called *Doing Sport Differently* written by and for people with lived experience of disability or health conditions.



This guide hopes to inspire disabled people to get active by demonstrating how to overcome barriers to participation and get involved with sports locally. *Doing Sport Differently* shows the varying ways in which individuals with a disability can engage in sport, be it playing, coaching or watching. It may help inspire you and your children into trying a new sport in the coming weeks. This resource is part of the *Doing Life Differently* series produced by Disability Rights UK and is free to download at www.radar.org.uk/publications/doing-sport-differently/

Want to know about meningitis? Get a free app or signs and symptoms card?...



“Every day the UK sees as many as 20 cases of meningitis. The Meningitis Trust is there to support each and every one of these people.” Meningitis is a disease which can strike quickly and kill within hours, leaving thousands of people to face a future without a loved one. Every year around 3,400 cases of bacterial meningitis are reported in the UK – leaving 10% dead and 15% of those who survive with severe after-effects. There are many more cases of viral meningitis which, whilst less serious, can still make people seriously ill.

Babies and children under five are most at risk of meningitis, with over half of all cases occurring in this age group. However, it can affect anyone, of any age, at any time. The symptoms of meningitis include fever with cold hands and feet, vomiting, headache, stiff neck, dislike of bright light, joint or muscle pain, pale blotchy skin, drowsiness, confusion, convulsions and in babies, a dislike of being handled, an unusual cry, rapid breathing and bulging fontanelle. Both adults and children may also have a rash that does not fade under pressure. Symptoms can appear in any order and some may not appear at all. Advice is to always seek urgent medical attention.

The Trust supports people as they face life after meningitis, providing them with the widest range of free services and community-based support. These services offer emotional, practical and financial support. It is the only organisation in the UK that is focused on support after meningitis. But, it is also dedicated to raising awareness of the disease and funding research into its long-term impact. Its mission is support for life, helping improve lives whenever and wherever it is needed.

The Trust is asking people to familiarise themselves with the symptoms of the disease and trust their instincts. A free symptoms download for iPhone and Android is available at www.meningitisapp.co.uk. To request free credit card sized signs and symptoms cards, simply call its freephone 24-hour nurse-led helpline on **0808 80 10 388**, or visit the website at www.meningitis-trust.org.

Resources

Mencap supports young people into adult life...



Mencap is the voice of learning disability. Everything we do is about valuing and supporting people with a learning disability, and their families and carers.

We offer a range of projects and services to support young people to move from childhood into adult life.

A Mencap Personal Assistant (PA) is someone who, although employed and managed by Mencap, works with a young person and their family, providing a range of support. This can include support to:

- Develop independent living skills
- Gain skills for work
- Find and maintain a job
- Socialise with friends and meet new people

Support is flexible, reliable, and person centred. Mencap make things easy by dealing with all the practical issues like pay, training and holiday cover. Families can pay for a Mencap PA with a personal budget or other form of direct payment, or with private funds. To find out more contact Mencap Direct on 0808 808 1111 or email help@mencap.org.uk

Inspire Me is an exciting project that has been developed by Mencap to give young people with a learning disability the chance to change their future. The Inspire Me team work with schools, colleges and local community organisations across the UK, providing practical activities and training to help young people build their confidence and learn new life skills.

Mencap Direct is the easiest way for you to access advice and information about learning disability and find out about Mencap services in your area. You can call us for free on **0808 808 1111** (9-5 Mon – Fri) or email help@mencap.org.uk You can also follow Mencap on Facebook and Twitter!

Over 420 Changing Places toilets in the UK...



Changing Places

There are now over 420 Changing Places toilets in the UK thanks to the Changing Places Consortium's campaign to open up a more accessible world of possibilities to disabled people when out and about. Designed to accommodate children and adults who require support from at least one carer when they visit the toilet, the new toilets differ to standard disabled ones. The toilets have more space to accommodate carers, screens or curtains in the cubicle also allow privacy and equipment includes a height-adjustable changing bench and a hoist. More of these toilets will mean families no longer have to face changing the person they care for on cramped and dirty toilet floors, or be forced to limit outings to a few hours, or simply not go out at all.

You can find Changing Places toilets in a number of public places including major shopping and town centres, train stations, airports, tourist attractions, motorway service stations and some community centres. Families with disabled children can look up a postcode to see where these specific toilets are located at www.changing-places.org/ and then go to 'find a toilet'.

As well as campaigning for even more of these toilets to be built across the country, the Changing Places Consortium is also hoping to get Westminster, the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland and Welsh Assemblies to show their support by installing Changing Places toilets in their buildings.

Free workshops from the Family Life Project...

Are you running a parent support group? Would you like Contact a Family to come and deliver a free workshop? Our Family Life project has developed free sessions for parent support groups on family relationships, the couple, siblings and the wider family, plus managing and coping with stress.



Parents gave us this feedback: *'Lots of brilliant ways to de-stress.'* *'Meet other parents and learnt something new.'* *'Although I can't always avoid the things that cause stress I have hopefully learnt some new ways to deal with it.'* Professionals told us *'Really helpful as a professional to get another perspective. Will definitely pass information on to parents I work with. Thank you.'* And *'I feel more confident in my knowledge of issues that families [with disabled children] face on a daily basis.'*

Our training sessions are free and available across England. To book a workshop or find out more contact Karin Beeler on **020 7608 8726** or email Karin familylife@cafamily.org.uk

Free workshops from the Children's Centre Project...

Are you a children's centre worker or a parent who attends, or would like to attend, a children's centre? Would you like to talk to us about your children's centre and your experiences good or bad! Please get in touch with Karen Robinson at karen.robinson@cafamily.org.uk . The following workshops have been set up from November to March.



- Tuesday 20th November Mayfield School and Duke Street Children's Centre at Mayfield School, Gloucester Road, Chorley, PR7 3HN – (10.00am - 12.30) – *'Difficult Behaviours that Challenge Us: developing understanding and getting support'* - to help increase your understanding, knowledge and confidence.
- Tuesday 27th Nov Mayfield School and Duke Street Children's Centre – (10.00am - 12.30) - *'Helping Your Child to Sleep'* – an opportunity to explore and discuss sleep issues, and getting support.
- Tuesday 4th December Mayfield School and Duke Street Children's Centre – (10.00am - 12.30) *'Disability Living Allowance and Benefits'* – to develop confidence and knowledge, explore other benefit entitlements, recent changes and support available.
- Tuesday 11th Dec Mayfield School and Duke Street Children's Centre – (10.00am - 12.30) - *'Coping and Support'* – looking at stress and ways to manage this – free relaxation gift at the end of the workshop!

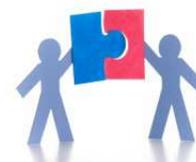
For bookings on the above workshops at the Mayfield School and Duke Street Children's Centre please contact Sally Cunniff, on 01257 263063 or sally.c@chorleymayfield.lancs.sch.uk or Anne Callander, on 01257 276253 or anne.callander@lancashire.gov.uk .There is a crèche available during the workshops but places are limited so please book in advance.

- Friday 23rd Nov Poulton Children centre, Morecambe, Lancashire (Parents only) - *'Difficult Behaviours That Challenge Us'* 10.00- 12.30 (**now fully booked**).
- Wednesday 5th Dec Family Tree Children Centre, Brierfield, Lancashire (Children centre staff) – *'Disability Awareness: Impact on Family Life'* and *benefits* overview, (bookings through Helen Mohatta on **01282 648001**)

Events - workshops and drop-ins

- Wednesday 12th Dec, Family Tree Children's Centre, Brierfield, Lancashire (Children Centre staff)- *'Difficult Behaviours That Challenge Us'*, (bookings through Helen Mohatta 01282 648001).
- Tuesday 22nd Jan, Pear Tree Children's Centre, Kirkham, Lancashire, 6pm till 8.30pm - *'Difficult Behaviours That Challenge Us'* (Booking with the children centre, 01772 687629)
- Thursday 25th Jan, Poulton Children's Centre, Morecambe, 10.00am till 12.30pm - *'Difficult Behaviours That Challenge Us'* – (Booking with the children centre, 01524 833644)
- Tuesday 29th Jan, Pear Tree Children's Centre, Kirkham, Lancashire, 6pm till 8.30pm - *'Helping Your Child to Sleep'* – (Booking with the children centre, 01772 687629)
- Thursday 31st Jan, Workington Children's Centre, Cumbria ADHD West Cumbria support group – *'Coping and support'* 12.30pm till 2.30pm (enquiries to Karen 01706 220578)
- Tuesday 8th Feb, Pear Tree Children's Centre, Kirkham, Lancashire, 6- 8.30pm - *'Disability Living Allowance and Benefits'* – (Booking with the children centre 01772 687629)
- Tuesday 12th Feb Pear Tree Children's Centre, Kirkham, Lancashire, 6pm till 8.30pm - *'Coping and Support'* – (Booking with the children centre 01772 687629)
- Friday 15th Feb Poulton Children's Centre, Morecambe, 10.00am till 12.30pm –*'Helping Your Child to Sleep'* – (Booking with the children centre 01524 833644)
- Thursday 28th Feb, West Lancashire area, Children centre and time to be confirmed - *'Difficult Behaviours That Challenge Us'* – (enquiries to Karen Robinson 01706 220578)

Pop in to our drop in sessions in Blackpool...



Contact a Family, in partnership with The Together Centre, are offering drop-in sessions- *"A one to one parent friendly advice and information session for parents who care for a child with additional needs, a disability or a medical condition... to listen, help and provide information and support"*. Pop in from 10am – 12pm to any of the sessions below. No need to book, just turn up!

- Wednesday 14th November,
- Wednesday 5th December,
- Wednesday 16th January

The Together Centre, Rear Woodlands School, Whitegate Drive, Blackpool, FY3 9HF. For further information contact Corriena 01772 812294, or corriena.tomkinson@cafamily.org.uk

Autism Conference in Stockport...

'Autism A Hands On Approach' are holding their 9th Annual National Conference on 20th November 2012 at Stepping Hill Hospital, Stockport. Organised by professionals and parents in partnership the conference offers world renowned speakers and workshops. For more information please contact Tanya Farley on 07966 399 709.



Kidz Up North 2012..

Come along to the Reebok Stadium (Premier Exhibition Suite) in Bolton on 29th November and visit the free exhibition dedicated to children with disabilities and special needs, their families and the professionals who work with them. You can also meet some of the Contact a Family North West team who will be there to promote publications and services which may help you.



At the exhibition you can also see the latest products and services on the market and get advice and information on mobility, seating, beds, accessible vehicles, communication, sensory, bathing, continence, wellbeing, sports and leisure, schools and colleges, benefits. A new feature for this year is 'the funding point', set up so that you can access information on alternative funding streams for equipment. You could also attend the free seminars available on a range of issues. For more information, a floor plan of exhibitors, list of seminars and to download free entry tickets please visit <http://www.disabledliving.co.uk/Kidz/North>

A great free day out at Eureka...



Eureka! In Halifax are inviting families with disabled children to come and enjoy special tailored activities and support from our trained staff. Activities will be flexible and open-ended for both disabled children and their siblings to take part in. All activities and car parking are free!

- Wheelchair Users Club - 10, 17, 24 November
- Autism Early Years Club - 8, 15, 22 December
- Down's Syndrome Club - 2, 9, 23 March (2013)
- Hearing Impaired Club - 20, 27, April and 4 May (2013)
- Autism Primary Club - 8, 15, 29 June (2013)
- Easter Holiday Clubs - 26, 27 March and 2, 3, 9, 10 April (2013)
- Summer Holiday Clubs - 25, 26 July and 1, 2, 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23, 29, 30 August (2013).

Families can also take advantage of the Extra Pair of Hands service which offers families free one on one support from a member staff, up to twice in a year. Pre booking is essential for both packages. Visit www.eureka.org.uk/helpinghandsclub or call 01422 330069 for more information or email Trizia trizia.wells@eureka.org.uk or Jenny jenny.goodall@eureka.org.uk

Performing art and creative play sessions...



Activate Arts offers Performing Arts and Creative Play sessions for children and young people with disabilities from ages 4-19. Sessions are available in Halton, Wirral, Lancashire, Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Knowsley on weekday evenings, Saturdays during term time, and the school holidays. The session dates, times, age group and activities offered vary depending on the area where they are based.

Evening sessions take the form of a youth club for teenagers to make friends and express themselves using music, singing, dance and drama. Saturday sessions are designed to ensure that children and young people have fun while developing skills and making friends. Activities Arts and Crafts, Creative and Messy Play, Music, Singing, Dance, Drama, Games and Sports. The cost of each session is £1 per hour, and they are designed to provide respite for parents and carers. For more information call 0151 482 4884 or email Caitlyn@activatearts.com.

Christmas Skate night in Wigan...



Leisure for All, their staff and volunteers, invite you to a Christmas Skate Night on Tuesday 4th December. Children and young people, their parents, carers, families and friends can come along to try out the skates and enjoy some festive music. Children and young people can also access the rink in their wheelchair. There will be lots of volunteers and staff available to help skaters of all abilities.

The Roller Rink is off Swan Meadow Road, Wigan. Sat Nav – WN3 5BD. The cost is £6 per child / young person – this includes one free carer, all other skaters over the age of three are £6 each, spectators are free. Please contact Kelly or Lynne to book your places on the Christmas themed skate night on - [01942 486073](tel:01942486073) or e-mail – k.piper@wigan.gov.uk

Homework clubs and play scheme for hearing impaired children in Lancashire...



East Lancashire Deaf Society

East Lancashire Deaf Society are running Homework Clubs for deaf and hard of hearing children in Burnley and Blackburn. Now they're going to set up one in Lancaster! If you are interested please contact Joanne Edwards by email joanne.edwards@elds.org.uk.

There is also a half term Play scheme running in February in Burnley for deaf and hard of hearing children - to register your interest please contact Chantelle by email chantelle.delacroix@elds.org.uk or send a text message to [078 7556 4233](tel:07875564233).

Support for parents in Carlisle...



Bouncer's Parent and Child Behaviour Support Group offers a support network to parent carers and families in Carlisle and surrounding areas who have children who have been labelled with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Bouncers was set up in early 2012 after two parents had both struggled with the impact their children's behaviour had on their daily lives and the affect that was having on their children themselves. Realising there was very little support and information available, the two parents decided to set up the group.

The group now meet once a month on a Friday morning, (10-12) at St Herbert's Church Hall, Carlisle, Cumbria. The group is regularly attended by parents and grandparents of children with different behaviours, diagnosed and undiagnosed, where they can access up to date information, share experiences, get advice and support, an ear to have a good moan and a cup of tea!

Bouncers is growing and developing plans for training and awareness raising. We have even put on social events for the children where they can be in an environment where they are not judged for their behaviour. If you would like more information on Bouncer's you can find us on Facebook under 'Bouncers Parent and Child Behaviour Support Group' or call Emma on [07720943251](tel:07720943251) or Lindsay [07845411395](tel:07845411395).

Contact a Family recommends that before attending any activities you contact the service provider to check it is suitable for your needs. We do our best to ensure accuracy but cannot be held responsible for any changes made to services, times or dates advertised.

Useful contacts and numbers

Useful contacts and numbers...

Contact a Family

Contact a Family is the only UK-wide charity providing support, advice and information for families with disabled children, no matter what their condition or disability. We have a freephone helpline staffed by expert parent advisers who can help with any issue to do with your child's disability and we also have specialist workers in Special Education Needs available. Just call 0808 808 3555 (mon-fri, 9.30- 5.00). We also have a wide range of publications with free parent guides covering issues such as benefits, rights and entitlements and relationships. Contact a Family also produces newsletters, booklets and research reports, helping parents to stay informed. Check out the website for further information at www.cafamily.org.uk

Family Fund

Family Fund are the UK's largest provider of grants to low-income families raising disabled and seriously ill children and young people. We help ease the additional pressures families face. We can help with essential items such as washing machines, fridges and clothing but can also consider grants for sensory toys, computers and much needed family breaks together. For more information please go to www.familyfund.org.uk email info@familyfund.org.uk or 08449 744 099.

Family Information Service (FIS)

Your local Family Information Service (FIS) provides a range of information on all services available to parents and carers, to help you support your children 0-19 or 0-24 if your child has a disability. They provide a free, impartial and confidential (unless there are reasons for concerns about a child's safety and/or welfare) service to parents/carers, young people and professionals providing information on: Childcare and options available; Benefits and grants; Parenting support; Family matters; Support for children with additional needs/disability (including short breaks). You can search for your local FIS at www.gov.uk/find-family-information-service and enter your postcode. There is no national number.

Motability

The Motability Scheme enables disabled people to exchange either their Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance to obtain a new car, powered wheelchair or scooter. Motability will cover insurance, breakdown, maintenance and provide a new vehicle every 3 years. For more details contact www.motability.co.uk or phone 0845 456 4566.

Occupational Therapists (OTs)

Occupational therapists aim to enable people to 'achieve as much as they can for themselves and get the most out of life'. An occupational therapist can identify problem areas such as dressing, sitting, walking, and will carry out an assessment. By using techniques to improve someone's ability or by changing the environment or equipment they are using, an occupational therapist allows that person to regain or improve their independence. You can be referred for an assessment by your GP or consultant (specialist doctor); a nurse; another healthcare professional; a social care professional.

Parent Carer Forums

Parent carer forums are made up of parents of disabled children who aim to provide service providers with the views and concerns of all parent carers to influence the improvement of service development, design and delivery. A parent carer forum is generally made up of a committee or steering group which manages the work of the forum. The forum usually provides parent representatives for strategic decision making committees and/or task groups who are able to represent the views of a wider range of parents. Successful forums are regularly involved in joint work to shape and develop services for disabled children and their families. To find out more about Parent Participation at www.cafamily.org.uk

Useful contacts and numbers

Parent Partnership Services (PPS)

Parent Partnership Services fulfil the legal requirement to provide information advice and support to parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN). PPSs have a role in making sure the views of parents are heard and understood with regard to SEN and that these views inform local policy and practice. The PPS can also signpost parents to other local and national organisations. You can find your local PPS at www.parentpartnership.org.uk/find-your-pps

Parent Support Groups

Parent support groups are local groups that provide support for families of children with additional needs/disabilities, within a specific town, geographical area or school. They can offer parents the chance to make friends, share experiences and learn about local services. National condition specific groups, support families in the UK who have a child with a specific condition. Some of the larger groups also offer local support (for example the National Autistic Society). They are a good way for parents to find out about their child's condition or disability, latest treatments and current thinking and are usually linked to expert medical professionals. To find out about local groups contact the local PPS, FIS or Contact a Family's freephone helpline on: **0808 808 3555** (Mon–Fri).

Portage Services

The Portage service is a home visiting educational service for pre-school children with additional support needs and their families. Their aim is to support the development of young children's play, communication and relationships. For more information please see the National Portage Association at www.portage.org.uk. New parents can e-mail parents@portage.org.uk.

Speech and Language Therapists (SALT)

Speech and language therapy is concerned with the management of disorders of speech, language, communication, feeding and swallowing. Speech and language therapists (SLTs) work closely with parents, carers and other professionals, such as teachers, nurses, occupational therapists and doctors. If you think you, or your child or relative needs to see a speech and language therapist ask your GP, district nurse, health visitor, your child's nursery staff or teacher for a referral. You can also refer yourself to your local speech and language therapy service by ringing your local health authority and ask for the telephone number of your local NHS speech and language therapy service.

Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)

The SENCO is the member of staff in school whose job it is to coordinate support for children who have special educational needs (SEN) both inside school, and, if necessary, drawing in expert help from outside the school. It is the SENCO's duty to keep parents informed about their child's progress and consulted on decisions that may affect them. They are the point of contact if a parent has any concerns about their child. To find out more go to www.education.gov.uk and search for SENCO.

Sure Start Children's Centres

Sure Start Children's Centres are a 'one-stop shop' for children primarily 0-5 and their families offering: childcare, play and early learning; expert advice, healthcare, parenting and family support; brushing up on your skills and learning new ones; taking qualifications; links to training and job opportunities; family fun and meeting friends. Most services are free but you will usually need to pay for childcare. If you're on a low income you may be able to get some extra help to cover the costs. You can find your local sure start centre at www.gov.uk/find-sure-start-childrens-centre and enter your post code.

If you notice any of this information as no longer correct or you would like us to add something to it please contact the North West team at northwest@cafamily.org.uk

Registration

Not your own copy? Need to update your details? Fill out our registration form...



Thank you to all the parents and professionals who have filled out the new registration form since September 2011! If you are new to Contact a Family or have or have changed your contact details since filling out the form, we need you to fill in our parent or professional registration form.

If we have your details we can send you our free newsletters, information about family events and news about all kinds of issues that may affect your family or the families you work with.

You can get a form sent by e-mail from our staff at northwest@cafamily.org.uk and send it back to us electronically. If you would like us to send you a registration form or you would like to write to us about something, you can send a letter to us at North West Registration, Contact a Family, 209-211 City Road, London, EC1V 1JN.

Contact a Family would like to thank the following for their generous support of our work in the North West Region: Kathleen and Ivy Barnett, Children in Need, The Big Lottery Fund, ScottishPower Energy Trust, Irwin Mitchell Solicitors, The Camelia Trust, The Sunflower Foundation, The Elizabeth Rathbone Charitable Trust, The Miss Jo Torrington Children's Fund, Chrimes Family Charitable Trust and the Duchy of Lancaster Benevolent Fund.

Don't forget to take a look at our...

Podcasts, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter discussions by clicking on the links on the website www.cafamily.org.uk You will find lots of information and advice there including:

- Publications and leaflets
- News stories
- A to Z of medical conditions
- Fundraising activities
- Our Cash Counts (on-line benefits advice)
- Making Contact (to get in touch with other parents)
- Support for professionals

Donate by text to Contact a Family...

If you would like to donate to Contact a Family we have an easy to use text service. It's quick and convenient – simply text 'FAMILY' to 70007 and donate £3 to Contact a Family. You will be charged £3 plus one message at your standard network rate. Contact a Family will receive a minimum of £2.40 from each message sent. All your money will help us to carry on the services we offer to parents and is much appreciated.