

# in **contact**



**The newsletter of Contact a Family West Midlands**

[www.cafamily.org.uk/wmids](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/wmids)



**Women & Theatre** is a Birmingham-based theatre company, that for over 23 years has been using theatre and interactive drama to promote the wellbeing of the whole community, and affect change. They have been commissioned by Scope to develop a new play and an awareness raising DVD as part of their Strengthening Families programme, exploring the experiences of parents of children with additional needs and specifically, the effect this has on the parents' relationship with each other.

A DVD will be made with extracts from the play, direct interviews with parents and professionals, interspersed with key points and learning objectives where appropriate. They would like to speak with parents, carers, local support groups, befriender groups and other professionals for help with research that will inform the writing of the play. They also want help with the distribution of promotional posters/leaflets and finding a suitable venue for performances e.g. school hall, community centre etc. If you would like to help or require further information, contact Jess Williams, General Manager, on **0121 440 4203**.



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## Contact a Family News

### Contact a Family Chief Executive Officer

Contact a Family's Chief Executive, Francine Bates OBE, has been appointed as Special Adviser to Ed Balls - the new Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families. This has meant that she has had to resign with immediate effect. Although this is sad news for Contact a Family - we feel sure that parents and those working with them will join us in wishing Francine every success in her new role. Chair of Trustees, Rosey Foster commented, "This is a wonderful opportunity for Francine, who will be able to use her expertise at the heart of Government." Rosey and the Senior Management Team will be holding the fort until a new Chief Executive is appointed later this year.

### Parents Make Every Disabled Child Matter: Campaign Workshop

Every Disabled Child Matters (EDCM) is the campaign to get rights and justice for every disabled child. It has been set up by Contact a Family, Council for Disabled Children, Mencap and Special Educational Consortium. It aims to challenge politicians and policy-makers to make good on the Government's commitment that 'every child matters'.

Thanks to the efforts of campaign supporters, Every Disabled Child Matters has successfully campaigned for government to invest an additional £340 million in disabled children's services. Local authorities across England are also signing up to the campaign charter after campaigning by local parents.

Contact a Family and the EDCM campaign have come together to run parent workshops across the country. The workshops will focus on how parents can support the campaign and help them get involved in local decision making which impacts on their lives.

Join us in Birmingham on **18th October 2007**, 10.30am-3.00pm at the Birmingham & Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham, B3 3BS.

For further information and booking details contact Liz Ranger, Parent Participation Manager on **020 7608 8784**. Email: [liz.ranger@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:liz.ranger@cafamily.org.uk)  
Web: [www.cafamily.org.uk/influenceevents.html](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/influenceevents.html). Alternatively, you can contact the West Midlands Office.

### Pounds for Parents: New Information Guides

**Shazia Malik, Asian Development Worker, has written and produced two new 'Pounds for Parents' information guides, for families who would like support and advice about how to complete a Disability Living Allowance form or charitable funding applications.**

It is important to remember that the DLA Unit and Charitable Funders do not know your child or your background. Unless you provide all the information they need, it is unlikely they will fully understand the extent of your situation. The guides are aimed at encouraging parents to carefully think through their circumstances, understand the background to DLA and Charitable Funding, and help them to develop the skills to put together better applications.

Both guides provide parents with the necessary information to keep a comprehensive file for their claim. Record or progress sheets, care and supervision checklists, health professional forms and sample diary sheets are just a few of the things that have been included to help parents.

For a guide or further information please contact Shazia on 0121 415 0415. Email: [shazia.malik@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:shazia.malik@cafamily.org.uk)

## Get Connected for a Fiver!



Connected is Contact a Family's quarterly magazine giving news and up-to-date information about a wide range of issues of interest to parents of disabled children. For a limited period the subscription fee for 1 year

has been slashed from £10 to £5 for parents and family members subscribing for the first time. For a free sample copy, ring the West Midlands office on **0121 415 4624**, or Helpline on **0808 808 3555**. To subscribe visit our online store at web:

[www.free2build.com/stores/cafamily/shophome.php](http://www.free2build.com/stores/cafamily/shophome.php)

## New Factsheets: A guide to claiming Disability Living Allowance

We have published a new factsheet, 'A guide to claiming Disability Living Allowance for children'. This guide is useful whether you are claiming DLA for your child for the first time or you are already getting DLA and want to check if they are entitled to a higher rate. We also give information about how to challenge a decision if you are unhappy with an outcome. Individual copies can be ordered for free from the West Midlands office on **0121 415 4624** or downloaded from [www.cafamily.org.uk/factsheets.html](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/factsheets.html)

## Factsheets: Updates



Two of our factsheets: 'Disabled Children's Services in England and Wales' looks at Social Services assessments and the rights of families to get the support they need.



'Preparing for adult life and transition' explains the Transition Plan and aims to identify the main areas that parents and young people need to think about in planning for the future. Individual copies can be ordered free of charge from the West Midlands office on **0121 415 4624**.

## £2bn in council tax benefits unclaimed



Council tax benefits are restrictive and too few people claim them, a cross-party group of MPs has warned. Council tax benefit has the lowest take-up of any state benefit, leading the communities and local government committee to call for a shake-up. The benefit is meant to help people on lower incomes with their council tax bills. There are also non means tested discounts and reductions for some carers and disabled people. Find out if you qualify with our guide 'help with council tax bills' or ring our Helpline on **0808 808 3555**.

## Online Reports

Contact a Family has produced a number of online reports which can be downloaded in either summary or full report format from [www.cafamily.org.uk/reports.html](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/reports.html) Leisure. Titles include: Leisure - Everybody Here?, Relationships: No Time for Us, We're Listening, The Juggling Act, Parent Support Groups - from parent support to providing services, and Come On In - Inclusive play and leisure.



# Starting a Parent Support Group

## What parent support groups aim to do

Parent support groups vary in what they do from informal coffee mornings, providing family leisure activities and playschemes, to campaigning and awareness raising.

### Parent support groups help you to:

Feel less isolated and give mutual support.

Laugh about life and talk about shared problems, helping each other to find solutions.

Identify and achieve mutual goals.

Share information, ideas and resources.

Reinforce positive coping skills.

Build self esteem and a sense of community.

Focus your energy in a positive way.

## Contact a Family Group Action Pack

The Group Action Pack consists of a series of guides for anyone wishing to set up their own parents' group.

### For Local Groups

- Starting a local parents' group
- Holding an open meeting
- Attracting and keeping members
- Local campaigning
- Professional workers and parents' support groups

### For National Groups

- Questions before you start
- Starting a national support group
- Developing a national support group
- The role of a medical advisor
- Holding a national family day

### For National and Local Groups

- Charity registration
- The role of trustees
- Leaflets and Publicity
- Patrons and celebrity support
- Writing a news release
- Speaking to the media
- Public speaking for parents
- Effective meetings
- Reaching Out to Disabled Parents, Black and Minority Ethnic Parents and Fathers
- Data protection, Websites and Virtual communities



The Action Packs are available **ONLY** as a FREE Adobe Acrobat download from [www.cafamily.org.uk/GAP.html](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/GAP.html). Multiple copies can be ordered via our Helpline on **0808 808 3555**.

**Further resources and publications on starting a parent support group including finance and funding, can be found at the following websites:**

**Brighton Resource Centre:** [www.resourcescentre.org.uk/Information/raising\\_money/index.asp](http://www.resourcescentre.org.uk/Information/raising_money/index.asp)

**Charities Information Bureau:** [www.fit4funding.org.uk/](http://www.fit4funding.org.uk/)

**Finance Hub:** [www.financehub.org.uk](http://www.financehub.org.uk)

# Contact a Family: Local Group Network Scheme

## Local Parent Support Group Network Scheme: Becoming a member

Contact a Family is an organisation that was founded on the principal of mutual support between parents and families caring for disabled children. We endeavour to offer a flexible, relevant and inclusive service to families offering support to one another, and sharing information, as part of a support group. This is achieved through the Contact a Family Local Parent Support Group Network Scheme.

**What are the benefits of joining the Contact a Family Local Parent Support Group Network Scheme?**

1. As a member of the Network your group will be entitled to a FREE copy of **Connected**, Contact a Family's magazine that is published four times a year, and Contact a Family West Midlands newsletter, **In Contact**.
2. You will also be offered advice and support from the Contact a Family development

team staff about any matters relating to the setting up and/or management of your support group.

3. We will refer families or individuals who want to use your services or become members of your group.

4. The choice of being consulted on:

- Contact a Family Policy.
- Matters arising as a result of our work, relating to the support of families and the welfare of disabled children.
- The option of having your group details and activities publicised on the Contact a Family West Midlands office webpage.
- Permission to state that your group is a member of the Contact a Family Local Parent Support Group Network on all group literature.

**What does Contact a Family expect from members of the Network?**

**In joining the Contact a Family Local Parent Support Group Network, all we ask is that you:**

1. Run your group in a non-discriminatory way.
2. Manage any funds your group has in an accountable way.

3. Wherever possible, inform Contact a Family of any changes to your group which affects the information we hold on our database.

4. Return an updated form on an annual basis.

5. Comply with the law of the land.

### Sign up!



### Join in!

If you would like your group to be a member of the Contact a Family Local Parent Support Group Network, or know of a group that may be interested, please contact the West Midlands office for an application form on **0121 415 4624**.

## Local Information



**The Dudley Carers Network** provides information to people who support a relative or friend of any age with a long-term illness or disability. Either carer or cared for person must live in the borough.

Contact: Christine Rowley, Carers co-ordinator on **01384 818723** or Email: [carers.network@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:carers.network@dudley.gov.uk)

**Disability Sportszone** provides activities for young people aged 5-16 years old with varying disabilities, and their siblings.

Contact: Kay Robbins, Sports development officer (inclusion) on **01384 814176**. Email: [kay.robbins@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:kay.robbins@dudley.gov.uk)

**Spectrum Support Group** is for parents and carers of children and young people with Aspergers Syndrome, ASD, ADHD or challenging behaviour. Contact: Alison Hart on **01939 220567** or Christine Harrison, Parent partnership Service, on **01952 211402**. Email: [Christine@parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk](mailto:Christine@parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk)

**Walsall DIAL** provides a range of services for people with physical disabilities and sensory impairments. They also offer support to carers, families, health professional and organisation's that work for the benefit of people with disabilities. Tel: **01922 622227/650794**.

Email: [info@walsalldial.co.uk](mailto:info@walsalldial.co.uk).

**Independent Travel in Worcestershire:** The County Council is developing pilot schemes to provide training for people who have the potential to travel independently, but presently do not. This will help people with disabilities to travel to and from schools, colleges, work etc. by public or community transport, walking or other means. For further details about the steering group contact Bob Robinson on **01905 766013**. Email: [rrobinson2@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:rrobinson2@worcestershire.gov.uk). For general information Tel: **01905 26500**.

**Worcestershire Association of Carers:** Programmes for carers groups in Bromsgrove, Droitwich, Evesham, Inkberrow, Malvern, Martley, Stourport, Kidderminster, Pershore and Worcestershire can be obtained from Maggie Parker, Carers Group Co-ordinator, on **01905 26500**.

**Carers Association Southern Staffordshire:** For details about Carers Learning & Leisure courses/events from September to December 2007, contact the CASS Learning & Leisure Team on **01785 606675**.

**Carers into Education Project** offers a range of courses including GCSEs, AS and A2s, vocational subjects such as child-care, creative writing, counselling and study skill. Courses are through Distance Learning with a subject tutor and a personal mentor. For details, contact Sue Crowley, Carers Education Manager, on **01223 400387**. Email: [sue.crowley@nec.ac.uk](mailto:sue.crowley@nec.ac.uk)

**Autism West Midlands** are undertaking a number of seminars/one day conferences in November and December 2007. Topics include: the sensory impact of ASD, ASD within the Criminal Justice System and developing self help skills for people with Autism. Contact Ian Carty on **0121 450 7576** for details. Email: [ianc@autismwestmidlands.org.uk](mailto:ianc@autismwestmidlands.org.uk)

**Birmingham Carers** autumn events include information days, craft/exercise sessions and coffee mornings. For details, contact the Carers Helpline on **0121 675 8000**.

**Headway West Midlands** have two new Support Groups for relatives caring for someone with a brain injury. *Support group-with a twist!* offer's free pampering. Contact Alice Bassett on **0121 457 7541** for details. *Black & Minority Ethnic Support Group:* for more information contact Rekha on **0121 457 7626**.

## General Information

**BDF Newlife** has had thousands of pounds worth of incontinence wear donated by a generous company, based in Northern Ireland. The charity will offer these items free or cheaply to visitors to its superstore in Hemlock Way, Cannock. Families with disabled children and young adults will be able to collect appropriate supplies as long as stocks last, free of charge, as will incontinence nurses collecting on behalf of families. For further information contact BDF Newlife, BDF Centre, Hemlock Way, Cannock, Staffordshire, WS11 7GF. Tel: **01543 468888**.

**Daytrippers Charity** aims to help children suffering from disabilities and chronic or life limiting illnesses by offering financial support for daytrips. They are actively looking to make new contacts, especially with small support groups who receive little or no funding. Daytrippers tend to provide trips for groups with a minimum number of 10 children with disabilities and encourage as many as possible. Although Daytrippers do not organise the trips, they can help with ideas and suggestions. For further information please have a look at Web: **www.daytrippers.org.uk** where you can download an application form. Alternatively, you can contact Keeley Williams on **020 7758 0030** or Email: **keeley@daytrippers.org.uk**

**Birmingham North Autistic Support Group** in partnership with **Treehouse** have organised a seminar, **Transition in preparation for 13-25 year olds**, for parents of young people with any special needs, Tuesday 30th October 2007, 10am - 3pm at Sutton Library, Room 1, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham. Guest Speakers: Chris Bush (Head of Transition), Cathy Dale (Transition Pathway) Martin Fleet (Connexions). Admission is FREE, including lunch. To book a place, please contact Lin Lloyd on: **0121 357 4928**, Email: **kidzlikedanny@blueyonder.co.uk** or Debbie Stableford on **0121 353 6116**, Email: **kevin.stableford@btinternet.com**

**The UK Clinical Research Network (UKCRN)** is a Department of Health/National Institute of Health Research sponsored initiative, to encourage and support research in specific areas. The UKCRN is subdivided into several topic-specific networks, one of which is Medicines for Children. The aim of the **Medicines for Children Research Network (MCRN)** is to support good quality clinical research into the medicines prescribed to children and young people. The **West Midlands Medicines for Children Local Research Network (WMLRN)** covers all hospitals with paediatric services in the West Midlands Strategic Health Authority. They aim to promote and support high quality paediatric clinical trials and research, The WMLRN want to involve parents and carers, young people and children in their consultations and decision making to make sure their views and opinions, as consumers, are heard. If you would like to get involved or require more information, contact Claire Callens, Consumer Liaison Officer on **0121 333 8739**. Email: **claire.callens@bch.nhs.uk**. Web: **www.meds4kids.nhs.uk** (currently under construction). MRCN Web: **www.mcrn.org.uk**.

**The Challenging Behaviour Professionals Linking Scheme** is a new initiative in response to requests received by the **Challenging Behaviour Foundation** from professionals seeking specialist information in the field of challenging behaviour associated with severe learning disabilities. For further information telephone **01634 838739** Email: **info@thecbf.org.uk** or download an application form from **www.thecbf.org.uk**

The specialist publishers **Speechmark** have recently launched a series of six story books called 'Off we go!', to prepare children aged 3-7 and those with learning disabilities for particular events by explaining 'what comes next' on an outing. There are six books covering: Going to the Dentist, the Doctor, to the Restaurant, to the Supermarket, to the Hairdresser and Swimming. The cost of each book is £6.99 or £37.75 for all six. To place an order contact Speechmark Publishing on, **0800 243755** (Freephone UK only) or **01280 845571**.

## Children's Centre's

**The Children's Centre team at Contact a Family is looking at how Children's Centres across England are involving disabled children and their families.**

Children's Centres are based on the concept that providing high-quality integrated services in health, education, family support and childcare, leads to positive outcomes for children, families and their communities. By 2010, there will be one in every community serving children and families from the antenatal period, through until children start in reception or Year 1 at primary school. At present, Children's Centres are at different stages of development and will vary in what they can currently provide.

In the long run each centre will offer, or help families access: Good quality early learning integrated with full day care provision; Good quality teacher input to lead the development of early learning within the centre; Parental outreach; Family support services; A base for a childminder network; Child and family health services, including antenatal services; Support for children and parents with special needs; Effective links with Jobcentre Plus, local training providers and further and higher education institutions. Children's Centres will also act as a link to other daycare provision, out-of-school clubs, and extended schools for families with older children.

Eventually children's Centres should offer, or help families with disabled children to access: Personalised & inclusive services; Family support services (e.g. training in managing sleep problems, challenging behaviour etc); Portage (home-visiting services); Key workers (as per NSF); Therapy services (physiotherapy, speech & language etc); Information & advice and Counselling and support.

**We'd love to hear from you if you would just like further information about Children's Centres, or would like to tell us about what is happening locally with your Children's Centre.**

Contact either Una Summerson on **020 7608 8742**. Email: [una.summerson@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:una.summerson@cafamily.org.uk) or Sheila Davies on **020 7608 8773**. Email: [sheila.davies@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:sheila.davies@cafamily.org.uk).

### Contact a Family West Midlands Volunteer Parent Representatives

All our local parent reps are parents of disabled children. For local information in their designated areas or a listening ear, please give them a call – they will be only too happy to help.

**Rizwana Pathan**  
**Sonia Tooray**

Warwickshire  
North Birmingham

**024 7634 9612**  
**0121 331 1248**

The Contact a Family National Freephone Helpline **0808 808 3555** is open Monday - Friday, 10am-4pm and 5.30pm-7.30pm Monday evenings. The Textphone number is **0808 808 3556** and Language Line is available for parents whose first language is not English.