



**30 years of
strengthening
families with
disabled children**

In Touch

Contact a Family - Northern Ireland Bi Monthly newsletter October 2009

In Touch is issued every two months and aims to bring you up to date news, details of training courses, group information and new resources available from within Contact a Family and from other organisations. We hope the information is useful and helps you and your family. Feedback, comments and suggestions for articles are always very welcome. For right up to date information on events, consultations, local groups and more see our webpage at www.cafamily.org.uk/inyourarea/nireland.html

Contact us at 028 92627552 or e mail nireland.office@cafamily.org.uk

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1. New podcasts and videos from Contact a Family

- New podcast on Employment and Support Allowance

Contact a Family has produced a new podcast on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

ESA came into effect in the UK at the end of 2008. In this podcast one of Contact a Family's advisers provides more information about this benefit. Listen to the podcast

http://www.cafamily.org.uk/audio/employment_and_support_allowance_podcast.mp3

- New podcast on undiagnosed children and challenging behaviour

Many families have children with special needs whose medical condition is often never diagnosed. This can make it difficult for the family to access information, support and services. Challenging behaviour can be a feature of many different conditions and it can vary from emotional to physical difficulties.

This podcast features a mother's experience of having a child with an undiagnosed condition and challenging behaviour.

Listen to the podcast

<http://www.cafamily.org.uk/audio/undiagnosed_challenging_behaviour_podcast.mp3>

- Three new web videos are available to view.

The first is about the organisation and the services provided to parents, the second is about the benefits of parent to parent contact “ Meet the Parents” and the final one features two fathers of children with disabilities “ Meet the fathers”.

They can be viewed by going to www.youtube.com/user/cafamily

You can also view the other 25 video clips on the site on a range of subject matters including “ Me and my disabled child” series. Some of these stories give you a real insight into the life of a parent with a disability.

2. Study bursaries for lone parents – Gingerbread

Choices Plus is a bursary scheme which aims to support lone parents who want to start or are already following a further education course.

Participants are given assistance towards fees and out of pocket expenses such as travel, childcare and meals. As Choices Plus is a regional project, participants can enrol for an accredited course available at a college of further education or a recognised training provider in their local town. Participants must be on Income Support and studying or about to study a part- time NVQ Level 3 qualification or above.

For more details on the Choices Plus bursary scheme please call 028 9023 1417 or email training@gingerbreadni.org.

3. SEN budget – How is it being spent?

ON 18.9.2009:

Mr R Beggs asked the Minister of Education to detail how the additional £25 million for Special Educational Needs has been distributed to date.

Minister of Education:

“My Department has secured funding of £25 million over two years to commence implementation of the Review of SEN and Inclusion policy

proposals. It is planned that £750k will be spent in 2009-10 and £24.3 million in 2010-11.

The £750k secured for 2009/10 will be used for pre-implementation activities on a capacity building programme for teachers and on developing standards/indicators and good practice guidance for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs); funding has also been set aside for the consultation process which is currently underway.

To date, £5k has been allocated to the 5 Education and Library Boards to provide substitute cover for teachers attending SENCO sub-group meetings which formed part of the pre-consultation process.

The 24.3m secured for 2010/11 will be used for the implementation of a number of proposals contained in the Review and which will be individually costed in the coming months.

4. *IMPORTANT!* Consultation - Every School a Good School- The Way Forward for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion August 2009

The Department of Education has opened the consultation on the policy proposals which have emerged from the Review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion.

The policy proposals as contained in the consultation document Every School a Good School: The Way Forward for SEN and Inclusion, aim to both strengthen the current arrangements for children with special educational needs and address the growing diversity of need in our schools.

Following attendance at one of the public meetings held in September there is a lot of confusion and uncertainty from teachers, unions and parents. They have major concerns about how the ESA and the Dept plan to actually deliver these proposals and where the extra funding is going to come from to support their implementation.

The consultation document has been published together with an associated Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Consultation Response Booklet. A Children and Young Person's version is also provided. All the documents can be downloaded from

www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-about-the-dept/85-about_dept.consultations.htm

If you require the documents in any other format or require a hard copy you can contact the Department of Education on Tel: 028 9127 9762.

Completed responses should be sent by e-mail to seninclusion@deni.gov.uk or by post to Review of SEN and Inclusion Team, Room G18, Department of Education, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down BT19 7PR.

The consultation is open until **31st October 2009**.

As parents and professionals involved in the education and care of children and young people with special needs it is vital that you have your say about these proposals as they will have very profound effects for the future of education provision in N Ireland.

5. Octobers FEATURE – Clothing and equipment



Fledglings can help by giving information and advice about products to help with your child's specific development and learning needs or your needs as a carer. In addition they may be able to order and supply those items or refer you to another source of supply. Fledglings specialise in finding those unusual items which may not be easily available elsewhere or those designed specially for children with additional needs. They can help anyone who cares for children with special needs of any kind: parents, grandparents, childminders, foster carers, playgroup leaders, nursery nurses, after-school club leaders, health visitors, etc.

In addition to searching for and supplying products, Fledglings produces a brochure, a newsletter and a monthly e mail newsletter with articles, general information, and information about helpful products.

- gives presentations and demonstrations to parent groups, schools, etc.
- advises on possible sources of funding for large, expensive but essential items.
- helps families communicate their collective needs for special products to manufacturers.
- refers families to other helpful organisations.

If you have an enquiry, would like to know more about Fledglings they can be contacted at **Fledglings, Wenden Court, Station Approach, Wendens Ambo, Saffron, Walden, Essex, CB11 4LB** Telephone 0845 458 1124 Fax 0845 280 1530

Or e mail enquiries@fledglings.org

- Adaptawear

Provide specially adapted and designed clothing for young people and adults with a disability. They have a range of factsheets including wheelchair users, clothing tips and ideas for clothing and ideas for people who rip clothing. They also have a forum where you can share ideas, tips and information as well as pose your queries and issues. To order a brochure go to their website at www.adapawear.co.uk or telephone 0845 6439492

- The Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)- over 40 years experience

This is a national charity that provides free, impartial advice about all types of disability aids for adults with disabilities and disabled children, older people, their carers and families. From stairlifts to walk-in baths, toys to children's equipment, jar openers to tap turners, bath seats to walking sticks, riser recliner chairs to wheelchairs and scooters, hoists to beds, telecare to alarms, the DLF can help you find independent living solutions and daily living equipment that enable disabled people the opportunity to stay active and improve their quality of life.

They provide a "Living made easy" online service to help you find exactly what you are looking for, the suppliers and costs. They also have an online forum to allow you to put your questions, tips and queries forward. And a very informative range of factsheets covering choosing children's daily living equipment, mobility equipment and play equipment.

They can be contacted through their Helpline 0845 130 9177 – 10am - 4pm. Textphone 020 7432 8009, e mail advice@dlf.org.uk, or visit their website at www.dlf.org.uk

Disabled Living Foundation, 380-384 Harrow Road, London, W9 2HU.

- Learning Space - ignite a child's yearning for learning
Specialises in educational resources, providing an exciting range of toys, games, software, books.... products that captivate, inspire and educate children. The resources are designed to be used either in educational settings or at home. There is a special section of toys for children with special needs and is categorised depending on their condition. You can order a catalogue online through the Contact section or download it.

Visit their user friendly website at www.learningspaceni.co.uk or drop into the shop at **11a Fountain Centre, Belfast, BT1 6ET**

Tel 02890319360 or e mail info@learningspaceni.co.uk

- Evolution Healthcare- Danmar Specialist Helmets

Provides a range of products to assist independent living. These include hard and soft shell helmets, access ramps, hoists, standing aids, seating systems, beds and bathing and showering aids. They provide a full sales service, support and training. Assessments, home visits and product trials are all available to ensure that the product is suitable for the clients needs.

Visit their showroom and see and try out the products for yourself :

Open 9-5 Monday – Friday at Unit 62, Dungannon Enterprise Centre, Dungannon Business Park, 2 Coalisland Road, Dungannon, BT71 6JT

Contact at tel 028 87727855 or e mail sales@evolutionhealthcare.co.uk visit the website at www.evolutionhealthcare.co.uk

- **Special Needs Kids**
Special Needs Kids is an Information Directory and shopping site to help parents and carers of children with special needs.

Visit the website and see the range of information and products available at www.special-needs-kids.co.uk

Information on products and services for special needs kids , events and campaigns, disability issues, support groups, respite care, clothing, equipment, toys, leisure activities and days out, holidays, where to go for help and advice, and much more.

CONTACT AT

If you have any suggestions, contributions, comments or questions about this website or you notice that one of our links is not working, then please contact karen@special-needs-kids.co.uk

For help and information - enquiries@special-needs-kids.co.uk

6. Family fund *extra* - N Ireland Launch on the 10th September!

Families can now make their money go further through a new online website- Family Fund *extra*. And anyone can shop online and help severely disabled children without it costing them a penny more.

How does it work?

All families with a disabled child, as well as disabled young people themselves up to the age of 25 years, can join Family Fund Extra for free and enjoy discounts of up to 25% from leading online retailers, including Comet, Argos, BSM, Haven Holidays and Stone Computers.

That's not all! Anyone who shops online can help severely disabled children at no additional cost to themselves simply by clicking from the extra website through to nearly 100 leading retailers including Tesco, M&S and Boots. As retailers give family Fund *extra* commission on every purchase, shoppers can support families with severely disabled children without spending a penny more.

So get shopping! If you're the parent or carer with a disabled child register first to enjoy the discounts. Or just click on "shop with us" to allow severely disabled children to benefit from retailers commission on what you buy.

As well as these great offers on shopping, families can share their stories and experiences on "Chat with *extra*". Other organisations can conduct surveys using "Your opinion counts" to help improve services for disabled children and their families.

Family Fund *extra* is part of the Family Fund , which provided grants to over 2,400 families in N Ireland in 2008-2009 giving out £1631,000 to help with a range additional costs and needs in caring for their severely disabled child or young person.

To find out about Family Fund Grants visit www.familyfund.org.uk

Or e mail info@familyfund.org.uk or tel 0845 1304542

7. AND FINALLY! - Family Support Service, N Ireland - Eastern area

As you will remember from our last e zine we were very concerned for this service that covers the Belfast, South Eastern and Southern Trust areas. It was under severe threat of closure and due to cease at the end of September due to lack of funding being forthcoming.

We are delighted at this time to tell you that we have secured one off, non recurrent funding for 3 months from the Regional Health and Social Care Board. This has come as a great relief to the organisation here in N Ireland and to our very dedicated and hard working Family Support Officer, Karen Patterson whose post it secures, for now. It also gives us a breathing space to renew our determined efforts to secure longer term and recurrent funding for this vital work. A BIG! Thank you to all of you who wrote letters of support and lobbied our Health Minister and your local MLA's on our behalf. It paid off! Also many thanks for your generous donations which will go directly to supporting this post. Please continue to lobby for this vital work, with your voice being heard, and the Health Trusts and Board will understand the great need for the Contact a Family, Family Support Service that is provided to your family and families just like you.

With kind regards from ;

Frances Murphy, N Ireland Manager

Catherine Flannigan, Information and Development Officer (Maternity Cover)

Karen Patterson, Family Support Officer - Eastern area

Virginia Maxwell, Family Support Officer - NHST area