

Spring/Summer 2011

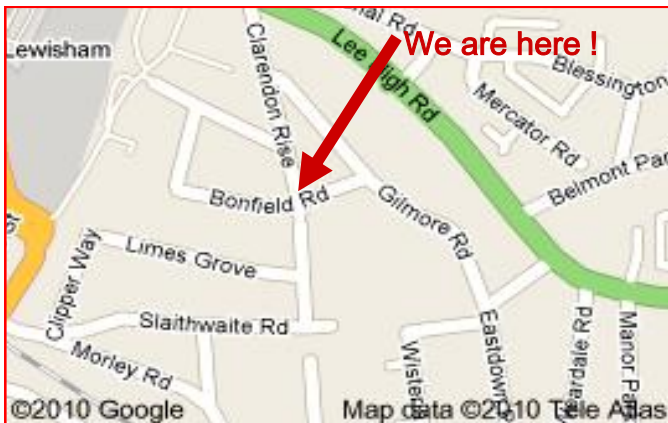
The Newsletter of Contact a Family Lewisham



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Its been really exciting year so far for the Lewisham Parent & Carer's Forum (some members of the Steering Committee pictured above) to find out more, turn to page 3



Contact a Family Lewisham Office

Leemore Central Community Hub
Bonfield Road
SE13 5EU

Tel: 020 8297 8056

Fax: 020 8297 6961

Email: lewsham.office@cafamily.org.uk

News & Updates

Across the UK, a child is diagnosed with a severe disability every 25 minutes. While some children need hospital care, 98% of disabled children live at home with a parent or other family member who may not have expected to be in this position, but who quickly has to become an expert. When parents find out their child is disabled, they feel isolated and alone, usually because they don't know anyone else facing the same problems. They want contact with another family that has been through a similar experience and they want information about their child's disability.

Contact a Family is the only UK-wide charity providing advice, information and support to the parents of all disabled children, no matter what their disability or health condition. We also enable parents to get in contact with other families, both on a local and national basis. Each year we reach at least 275,000 families.

Contact a Family has been supporting families in Lewisham for almost 30 years

(See Page 12 for info about anniversary party!)

We do this through offering information, advice and support, workshops and members social events, family activities and parent participation.

The office is staffed by:



Manager
Nancy Woodcock

Community Black and Minority Outreach Worker
Dawn Charles



Events Coordinator
Christine Lesmes

Family Worker
Martin White-Peart



Parent Participation Officer
Jacky Spigel

News & Updates

Putting Families With Disabled Children First; How we achieve key outcomes for families with disabled children in London

In November last year Contact a Family held a London wide showcase at the Dorchester Hotel to celebrate the contribution of parents in supporting and developing our services.

We were very lucky to have some members of the Lewisham Steering Committee in attendance.

From right to left: Joyce Brako-Amoafo, and Jacqueline Paschoud (Steering Committee members) with Christine, Nancy and Dawn from the Lewisham team



The Gold Challenge is a unique platform to challenge yourself in multiple Olympic and Paralympic sports, help raise £20 million for charity and be part of the official mass participation legacy for London 2012.

As an individual or team you have the choice of participating in 5, 10, 20 or 30 sports. So go on, try a new sport, push yourself in a sport you already do or revive an old favourite and raise valuable funds for Contact a Family.

We have places into the Gold Challenge and are looking for anyone who is keen to take part, irrespective of age and ability. Plus we've free child places into the Gold Challenge so why not get the family together to participate in a fun leisure activity, learn a new skill and support Contact a Family.



For more information visit the Gold Challenge website at www.goldchallenge.org/contactfamily or call Lisa in our Events Team on **020 7608 8731**

Donate by text to Contact a Family

If you would like to donate to Contact a Family we have set up a new 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



Cover Story-Lewisham Parent & Carer's Forum



What is the Parent's Forum?

It is somewhere where you can:

- Talk about things that matter to you with other parents and carers
- Make sure your collective voices are heard
- Gain valuable information about what is happening locally and nationally
- Help plan services
- Influence local services such as health, education and social care
- Attend training/workshops to empower you as parents and carers about topics that are important to you
- Be involved in events targeted at parents with disabled sons and daughters

Who is it For?

The Forum is for all mums, dads and carers in the London Borough of Lewisham who have children and young adults of up to 25 years. You can come along as:

- A parent or carer
- A representative from your child's school
- A representative of local or borough-wide parent groups



Why get Involved?

You can be as involved as you want to be.

The opportunity is there for a more active role where you will play a big part in shaping services both now and in the future. You can also come along and listen, give your views or meet other parents and carers.

Cover Story-Lewisham Parent & Carer's Forum

Meetings:

The wider Parent & Carer Forum meetings are held at least once every school term during the day. We also have an elected Steering Group of parents who will meet more frequently and become actively involved in the following:

- Taking issues forward to key policy makers
- Working in partnership with local services and policy makers
- Raising awareness of the issues faced by disabled children, young people and their families
- Developing mutual respect between parents and professionals

If you would like to find out more about the Forum, please contact our Parent Participation Officer: **Jacky Spigel**

Email: info@lewishamparentcarer.org.uk
or jaqueline.spigel@cafamily.org.uk

Telephone: 0208 297 8056

Mobile: 07794 482 632



Or take a look at our website **www.lewishamparentcarer.org.uk**.

Here you will find all the latest news from the Forum plus dates of meetings and training.

Dates for you diary:

"Empowering Families" training run by the charity Scope will be taking place on Wed June 29th and Thursday July 7th, 10am-3pm. Please contact Jacky to find out more and book a place.

Contact a Family National Helpline

Freephone: **0808 808 3555**

New Opening Hours

9:30am–5:00pm, Monday to Friday

For information: on disabilities and medical conditions

For advice: on assessments, breaks, benefits and finances

For signposting: to support groups, organisations and services

For linking: to other families

For listening

Reg. charity number: 284912

Events

This year has given us the chance to share many activities with you already.

In February, half term holidays, we were able to go to Hever Castle. We had planned this trip at Christmas, but due to the weather conditions we had to cancel. Luckily, in February we were able to offer it again and most of the families that applied at Christmas were able to attend. For those families who preferred something more local, we planned a visit to the Sea Life London Aquarium.

Some of the comments families made about these activities include

**“Lovely day. Lots to do and see”,
“Was nice to be in the fresh air. Castle was fantastic”,
“I think it was perfect”**

We are still washing the mud from our jeans after a fabulous weekend spent at Macaroni Woods. It was great to see your children playing and enjoying the open air. Macaroni Woods is based in 17 acres of woodland in the Cotswolds, near Cirencester, about 3 hours drive from London. The grounds offer an unequalled sense of freedom. The trees, wildlife, plants and open spaces are a marked and welcome contrast to city life. The centre provides a safe, sheltered setting, free from traffic, pollution and noise. Families had the chance to meet each other and relax while children were busy riding bicycles, baking cakes, visiting the amazing Cotswold



Wild Life Park, making their own Easter bonnet or hunting Easter eggs in the woods! Days started by collecting fresh eggs for our breakfast and ended with toasted marshmallows and songs around the campfire.



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We would like to thank everyone who attended for making it an unforgettable weekend.



Events

During the Easter break, we also had a day out to London Zoo where we enjoyed a fantastic sunny day. And just a couple of days later we embarked on a Thames Clipper to arrive at the London Eye in style!



We have also just had some great trips out for half term events. Starting with an night out at the theatre, to watch a premier of the musical Shrek and a visit to the Horniman Museum.

Look out for a write up and photos of these events in our next edition of the newsletter.

Summer programme

This includes some family favourites such as a day trip to a theme park, a theatre night and a day out to the beach, plus much more. You will find your Summer Programme enclosed with this newsletter. Please take a note of dates and deadlines to avoid disappointment!

We will also be organising some free, local events and will be able to keep you informed of what is happening by using our new text messaging system.

Please make sure we have an up to date mobile number for you so that you don't miss out on coffee mornings, picnics in the park and other impromptu events!

If you do NOT wish to receive texts from Contact a Family, please tick the box on the slip and send it back to us so we can update your information on our database:

Name of Parent/Carer.....

I do not wish to be sent texts from Contact a Family



Cut this out and keep somewhere useful to remind you of the dates!

Swimming sessions at Wavelengths Giffin Street, Deptford, SE8 4RJ

Don't forget that we continue holding our monthly free swimming sessions at Wavelengths Leisure Centre. These sessions take place the first Saturday of the Month (except January and December) and contact a Family has exclusive use of the pool during these sessions.

You will always find a Contact a Family staff member there to help you.

The dates for the sessions for the rest of the year are:

7 th May	4 th June	2 nd July	6 th August
3 rd September	1 st October	5 th November	December: no session

News & updates

Membership: We have had a really good year so far with lots of new members joining us, as well as past families returning; welcome to all of you! Look out for information coming your way about training, workshops and family events. If you would like to arrange to see one of our Family Workers, please call or email the office.

Workshops: We continue to run workshops and training covering topics such as challenging behaviour, transition and stress management.

To find out more, please contact Dawn **Tel: 020 8297 8056**
Email: dawn.charles@cafamily.org.uk

SEN Days at the V&A Museum of Childhood

The Museum's SEN scheme strives to ensure that children with special educational needs gain access to the wealth of learning opportunities available at the Museum. The Museum is fully accessible and SEN days are tailored exclusively to SEN groups.

Forthcoming Special Educational Needs Days Thursday 23 June 2011

For more information or assistance during or in advance of your visit, call **0208 983 5220**, email **cchinn@vam.ac.uk** or ask at the Information Desk

Debt advice in London

Contact a Family has entered into a pilot project with Citizens Advice Bureau to improve the supply of face to face debt advice to families with disabled children. The Greater London area is one of the pilot areas in which the new service has started. There are seven workers based in Camden CAB who offer advice and help for families with disabled children anywhere in the Greater London area.

They will arrange to visit you at home anywhere in London. If you would like to make an appointment, please call the Contact a Family helpline on **0808 808 3555**

The Lewisham office now has a specific support service around finances, income maximisation and debt management.

If you would like to discuss your finances confidentially or would like to know more about your entitlements, please contact us in the office for a chat or to arrange an appointment.

Tel: 020 8297 8056
Email: Lewisham.office@cafamily.org.uk

News & updates

Blue Badge Changes

From April 2011 there will be new changes to the blue badge. The main measures are to:

Implement a new badge design that is harder to copy, forge and alter. This includes changing arrangements for printing, personalising and distributing badges to prevent fraud from happening in the first place. Amend primary and secondary legislation to provide improved powers for local authorities to tackle abuse and fraud



Transfer control of eligibility assessment funding from the NHS to local authorities
Amend legislation to require wider use of independent mobility assessments to determine eligibility, including where previously that assessment was carried out by a GP

Extend eligibility to more disabled children under the age of 3 with specific medical conditions.

Provide continuous automatic entitlement to a badge to specific severely disabled service personnel and veterans

Establish with local authorities a service improvement project that will deliver operational efficiency savings, help to reduce and prevent abuse and improve customer services.

The project will also deliver an on-line application facility and should result in faster, more automatic renewals for people whose circumstances do not change between renewal periods

Raise the maximum fee for a badge that local authorities can charge from £2 to £10

SOS! SEN ADVICE CENTRE

Registered Charity 1112475

If you live in the **South London** area and want to talk to someone about your child's special educational needs, come to SOS! SEN's new weekly walk-in advice centre.

**First Monday of each month -
10.15am -12.15am**

**The Salvation Army
66 High Street
Thornton Heath
CR7 8LF**



The Squidz Club is for young people with learning disabilities, aged 10-25 years, their families and friends. It features young DJs, VJs and artists in a fun and friendly atmosphere. **Squidz Club** is a family friendly event for young people aged between 10 and 25.

Younger and older family members and friends are welcome when accompanying a young person. Children under 16 must be accompanied to the event by an adult. Children under 11 must be supervised at all times during the event. Adults can take part or relax in the parents' and carers' room

<http://www.heartnsoul.co.uk/squidznext.html>

Confused by all the benefits changes? Help is at hand from Contact a Family

Contact a Family has issued an urgent call for families with disabled children to get advice about forthcoming benefits changes.

To help parents make sense of the recent welfare reforms announced by the Coalition Government and what the changes will mean for them, Contact a Family has produced a free guide to Future Benefit Changes. The guide is available from the Contact a Family Helpline on **0808 808 3555**.

Derek Sinclair, Senior Welfare Rights Specialist at Contact a Family, said: "The recently announced benefits changes amount to the biggest shake up to the benefits system in generations, changes include replacing means tested benefits such as income support with a new 'universal credit', major reform of Disability Living Allowance and cuts in housing benefit. It is really important that parents with disabled children understand what these changes will mean and that is why we are making our guide to Future Benefit changes available to them for free."

The changes will impact on all families with a disabled child. While some of the changes will not take effect for a year or two, others will start to impact from this April - including changes in housing benefit for many private tenants, and a number of tax credit cuts including reduced help with childcare costs. While many of the changes proposed will mean cuts in financial help – there is some good news. One of the changes being made in April will allow children aged 3 or above who have a severe visual impairment to start qualifying for the high rate of the DLA mobility component.

Call the Contact a Family Helpline now to order your copy of Future Benefit Changes – 0808 808 3555

The National Autistic Society & Picture House Cinemas

The National Autistic Society has been working in partnership with Picture house cinemas since January 2009 on a series of autism-friendly cinema screenings across their network.

These screenings are designed for people on the autism spectrum, their families, friends and carers. During the film, low lights are left on inside the auditorium and the volume of the soundtrack is reduced. Cinema goers are free to move around, make a noise or take a break during the film if they need to.

The cinema is often not a place that is easily accessible for families affected by autism. These screenings aim to make families feel welcome, comfortable and relaxed in an environment that can otherwise seem traumatic - among other families experiencing similar issues.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/en-gb/get-involved/get-your-company-involved/company-case-studies/picturehouse-cinemas.aspx>

Useful information

SIGNAL

Support, Information, Guidance and News for Autism in Lewisham hold monthly meetings to which all members are welcome.

The group hold monthly meetings which include talks from experts on a variety of topics related to autism. Coffee mornings are held in different members houses, are open to all members to exchange ideas, experiences and information or just have a chat. The group produces a quarterly newsletter and runs a borrowing library with many specialist books, journals and articles, videos, and specially selected children's books. For more detailed information about SIGNAL access their website: www.signalonline.org.uk

Sally Fricker
c/o Amersham Road Children's Centre Annexe
75 Amersham Road
London SE14 6QQ
Telephone number: 07946 632477

Email: signalewisham@googlemail.com

Kaleidoscope User Group

Do you use Kaleidoscope, Children and Young Peoples Centre in Lewisham?

If you would like to have more of a say about services, the way Kaleidoscope runs and the services provided then please contact Fiona for more information about the quarterly meetings

Fiona.hurst@nhs.net

Carers Lewisham:

Lewisham Carers Centre,
Waldram Place, Forest Hill,
SE23 2LB.

Tel: 020 8699 8686

Lewisham Autism Support:

Email: lewishamproject@nas.org.uk

Tel: 020 8699 3066

Hyperactive Children's Support Group

Hyperactive Children's Support Group (HACSG) – information for parents who suspect their child is hyperactive/allergic and/or ADHD Web: www.hacsg.org.uk

Tel: 01243 539 966

Parent Partnership Service:

Parent Partnership Services (PPS) are statutory services offering information advice and support to parents and carers of children and young people aged 0-19 with special educational needs (SEN).

Lewisham PPS
The Kabin
Forster Park School
Boundfield Road SE6 1PQ

Tel: 020 8695 5955 Email: lewishampps@pre-school.org.uk

Get Involved



Your local office needs YOU!

At Contact a Family, we listen to parents and families and encourage others to have their say.

We have a Steering Committee made up of parents and professionals which guides our work and keeps us focused on the real issues for families. We are always looking for new parent carers to get involved. If you are interested, please call the office and ask to speak to Nancy.

Become a Volunteer

When organising our activities we always welcome a helping hand. Sometimes its something as simple as having a little help on the coach to put wristbands on children for our days out or baking a cake for our parties. If you think you can find some time to help us, and therefore, help other families, do not hesitate to get in touch with us on **020 8297 8056**. Plus you will enjoy a day packed with fun and make new friends!

Subscribe to our newsletter:

Our newsletter is available free of charge to families, parent groups, support organisations and professionals who work with families of children with disabilities.

If you would like to be on our mailing list please call the office or email:
lewisham.office@cafamily.org.uk



This year, Contact a Family will be celebrating **30 YEARS** of supporting families in Lewisham.

We will be holding a party to celebrate in August and you are all invited!

Look out for more info coming your way...

We would like to feature you in our newsletter:

We would really like to include more from families in our newsletter. If you have any stories to tell, photos to share, advice for other families ... please let us know.

Contact Nancy in the office: **020 8297 8056**
Email: **Nancy.woodcock@cafamily.org.uk**

Lewisham Contact a Family Spring/Summer 2011. The views expressed are not necessarily those of Contact a Family.

Data protection: Contact a Family is committed to the confidentiality of your personal information. Personal data will be held and used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and will not be shared with any third parties for commercial use.