

Winter 2010



**contact** a family  
for families with disabled children

## The Newsletter of Contact a Family Lewisham

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### Welcome to our winter newsletter

In this issue you will find information about everything that has been going on at Lewisham Contact a Family this year.

You will also find useful information and resources to help you and your family to deal with your child's disability.

#### Local office

#### Contact a Family

Leemore Central Community Hub  
Bonfield Road  
SE13 5EU

Tel: 020 8297 8056

Fax: 020 8297 6961

Email: [Lewisham.office@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:Lewisham.office@cafamily.org.uk)

Registered Charity No 284912

 **Lewisham**



**HELP A  
LONDON  
CHILD**

[www.cafamily.org.uk/Lewisham](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/Lewisham) 020 8297 8056

## About Contact a Family

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 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

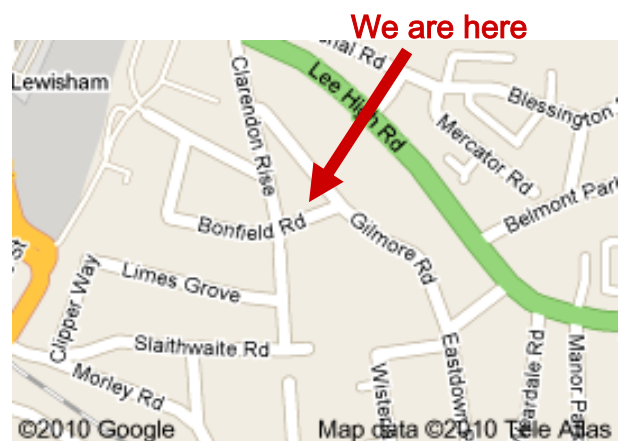
**For linking:** to other families

**For listening**

### Local office – new premises

It's been a really exciting year for us at Contact a Family Lewisham. At the start of the year, we moved offices to the Leamore Central Community Hub. This has made us much more conveniently located in the borough and most importantly, more accessible to our families.

We are a five minute walk from Lewisham town centre and ten minutes from the station. We have all settled in really well with lovely clean (and dry!) offices and great space for our family meetings, events and activities.



[www.cafamily.org.uk/Lewisham](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/Lewisham) 020 8297 8056

## Staff update

This year, we said goodbye to Kimberly Muzanenhamo but we are really pleased to welcome Christine Lesmes into the role of Events Coordinator:



Christine

'A lot of you already know me from any of the activities we have shared in the summer or half term. For those of you I haven't met yet, let me introduce myself: I moved to London 6 months ago, from Spain. I studied Psychology in Barcelona University, specialising in Neuropsychology. In the past I have worked supporting older people with dementia and children. My last job in Barcelona was as an Events Organiser. I am very excited to use my past experience and knowledge to work in the charity field.

**Christine's working hours are Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, from 9 to 5**

Yvonne Glen has also left Contact a Family and we are currently recruiting for a Big Lottery funded post to continue the work with the Parent Forum.

Another exciting addition to the team is Martin White-Peart, our new Family Worker, this is also a Big Lottery funded post.

'I have enjoyed a warm welcome at Contact a Family and I am looking forward to using my past experience to help support our families. I have a background in healthcare and sport as well as a range of disability and community projects. One of my main duties with Contact a Family will be to provide advice around benefits, debt and financial issues. If you feel that this service will be of use to you or if you have any general support enquires; please don't hesitate to contact me.'



Martin

**Martins working hours are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, from 9 to 5**



Monica

We are also very lucky to have Monica Daniels helping us out in the office as a Volunteer.

And the rest of the team:  
Nancy Woodcock, Manager  
and Dawn Charles, Family Worker.



Nancy



Dawn

## A year packed with activities!

This year we launched the Parent Forum in Lewisham, we held a lunch party to celebrate this and the move to our new offices in the main hall of our new premises.

Early in the Summer we had a Pamper Day, to allow parents & carers to relax and pamper themselves with treatments such as massage, eye brow threading, manicure and the benefits of yoga and laughter therapy. All this took place in our Main Hall, and gave parents and carers a chance to relax and socialise with other families. We've had some great feedback and hope to hold another day like this soon...watch this space!



### Summer Events

It's great to look back at all the good memories we have from our summer activities. We travelled to Legoland, to enjoy a whole day of fun amidst Vikings and dragons. Then we spent a day out by the beach, in Littlehampton, enjoying the beautiful seaside. We learned how to cook our own fresh and healthy pizzas and bread rolls with The Kids' Cookery School. And finally, as the end of the summer approached, we spent a whole day out, visiting the Museum of Childhood and enjoying a relaxed picnic at Victoria Park.

### Macaroni woods

Macaroni Woods is a residential centre set in the Cotswolds. Every year Contact a Family Lewisham offers our family members the chance to spend a weekend surrounded by nature which is also a chance to meet other families, have fun and get away from the city for a few days. Last Easter, a number of families enjoyed the Macaroni Woods weekend away and shared some of their unique experiences with us "My daughter made her first friend" or "My child playing without being judged, I don't think it can get any better".

Early next year we will hold an information session for those interested in Macaroni Woods 2011. You will receive more information nearer the time.

## Half term

It only lasted a week, but we managed to pack in two great events: a whole day out at Drusillas Park, where children could ride Thomas the Tank, enjoy the playground and view the animals.

We couldn't let Halloween go by without a fancy dress party. Held in our main hall, we enjoyed dance, music, refreshments, games and lots of surprises!



## Workshops and social events

We run a series of workshops and members social events covering topics such as challenging behaviour, transition and stress management. We also hold new members socials so that the families who have recently joined us can get to know each other and offer mutual support..

The Behaviour Management workshop this year was very well attended and we had a great feedback from members, who said “excellent session” & “was helpful to have different ways of managing challenging behaviour”.

The Law & Social Service workshop was a one day workshop facilitated by Nick Clarke from the DLS (Disability Law Service). If you are interested in receiving more information from them, you can call them on their advice line: **0207 791 9800** or look them on their website [www.dls.org.uk](http://www.dls.org.uk). The workshop was a very popular session, with 22 parents/carers attending. The feedback from all of them was very positive, highlighting that it was “very informative!”,

Our Parenting Workshop ran over 5 week. Parents and carers really enjoyed the space and the chance to come together and talk about issues that concern them, regarding their parenting skills, along with practical help and information.

Regarding all of the above workshops; members have requested a repeat and depending on funding, we hope to hold more next year. We will keep you informed about all our future workshops, activities and events, so please keep an eye out for the information we send you.



## Transition Event

Parents and Carers who attended our Transition day in November have given us very positive feedback. “Great venue, and a good range & quality of stalls” Information provided was also rated to “very good” or “excellent”.

**Plans for next year:** We hope to hold an even bigger Transition event next year with an evening slot for working Parents.



## Upcoming events

Christmas is approaching and with specially planned Christmas activities we hope to help you have unforgettable family memories.

We will start with a family favourite and a Christmas classic; pantomime. We have two sessions, Cinderella on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December, and a special autism-friendly session on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> January. We will defy the winter cold to visit Hever Castle and its beautiful gardens, touched by the magic of Narnia on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December. If you prefer an indoor family activity, you can't miss our Christmas party (Monday 20<sup>th</sup> December), where you'll have the chance to meet Father Christmas before he departs for his travel around the world! And now some time for yourselves: On Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> December we are holding our not-to-be-missed Parents' Dinner. Enjoy some socialising while having a delicious Christmas menu and afterwards some dancing in the club!

**Please contact Christine if you have any questions about our  
Christmas activities**



### Swimming Sessions at Wavelengths

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

Finally, let us remind you that we are holding **free** monthly swimming sessions at Wavelengths Leisure Centre, Deptford. These sessions take place the first Saturday of every month (except January and December) from 6 to 7pm. We have exclusive use of the pool during this time. You will always find a Contact a Family staff member there to help you. The dates of **2011** swimming sessions are:

|                                 |                                |                                 |                                 |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>January:<br/>No session</b>  | <b>5<sup>th</sup> February</b> | <b>5<sup>th</sup> March</b>     | <b>2<sup>nd</sup> April</b>     |
| <b>7<sup>th</sup> May</b>       | <b>4<sup>th</sup> June</b>     | <b>2<sup>nd</sup> July</b>      | <b>6<sup>th</sup> August</b>    |
| <b>3<sup>rd</sup> September</b> | <b>1<sup>st</sup> October</b>  | <b>5<sup>th</sup> November:</b> | <b>December:<br/>No session</b> |

For more information about Wavelengths Leisure centre, including how to get there, you can check their website:

<http://www.leisurecentre.com/centres/58/home/Wavelengths-Leisure-Centre.aspx>

**[www.cafamily.org.uk/Lewisham](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/Lewisham) 020 8297 8056**

# Campaigns

## Stop the DLA Takeaway

Some of the UK's most severely disabled and sick children and their families are being denied financial help when they need it most. A child's Disability Living Allowance is stopped after 84 days in hospital and the parents' /carer's allowance is suspended. This is despite the extra costs to a family when their child is in hospital, such as loss of earnings, travel, parking and food.

Contact a Family and The

Children's Trust have submitted a response to the Department of Work and Pensions' '21st Century Welfare' consultation, calling for the rules to be scrapped.

Contact a Family and The Children's Trust estimate that there are between 400 and 500 UK families affected each year and the cost to the Government to scrap the rules would be no more than £3.1 million per year. Andrew Ross, Chief Executive of The Children's Trust, said:

"These DLA regulations are adding to the difficulties of families when they are in most

need of stability and support. The Government has pledged to make the welfare system work for those who need it most. Here is a clear opportunity to do just that."

To support the campaign, Contact a Family are urging parent carers to send an automatically generated email to the Department of Work and Pensions.

You can find it here:

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

## Every Disabled Child Matters campaign



Why are we campaigning?

Disabled children don't get the same chances as other children. They have to fight for their rights and their parents have to fight to get services. Contact a Family is one of the founding members of Every Disabled Child Matters (EDCM), the campaign to get rights and justice for every disabled child. We want rights and justice for every disabled child. All disabled children and their families should get the services and support they need to live ordinary lives. The Government must make spending on services for disabled children and their families a priority.

Contact a Family urges all its members and supporters to sign up to support EDCM at Web: <http://www.edcm.org.uk>

We are lobbying government to fight for rights and justice for every disabled child and working with councils and health authorities to improve services.

Almost 30,000 people, including disabled children and young people, parents, professionals, disabled adults, and others working in the field, have already signed up to support the campaign. But the campaign needs this level of support to keep growing.

Campaigning by EDCM, its partners and individual supporters helped put enough pressure on government to release an additional £430 million for services for disabled children and their families, alongside a programme of change that will start to transform lives.

[www.cafamily.org.uk/Lewisham](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/Lewisham) 020 8297 8056

## Extra support for families with disabled children

### outlined in Families Green Paper

**Support for All: the Families and Relationships Green Paper**, launched by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, proposes new measures to support families with disabled children to lead ordinary lives.

Srabani Sen, Chief Executive of Contact a Family, said: "We are delighted that families with disabled children feature so prominently in the government's Families Green Paper. It is acknowledgement of the particular pressures that families with disabled children face and we hope these proposals will lead to stronger families.

The investment in key workers is great news. Families have always told us that they need a central point of contact for support and information. Key workers will help families with disabled children enjoy family life rather than being bogged down and stressed out with never ending appointments and meetings."

The Green Paper proposes to extend the offer of key worker support to families with disabled children aged 0-19, initially with a testing phase in 2010-11 and with a view to creating a national programme. There is also a proposal to increase relationships support specifically for families with disabled children, with extra support for Contact a Family's helpline.

"Families with disabled children want to lead ordinary lives. We believe that these measures will help them to achieve this."

#### Counting the Costs 2010 - Families with disabled children struggle to afford food and heating

Families with disabled children are going without essentials such as food and heating. This is the norm, not a temporary crisis brought on by the economic slump. These are the findings of Counting the Costs 2010, a survey and report from Contact a Family. The survey, a repeat of one carried out in 2008, asked over 1,100 UK parents caring for a disabled child about their current financial situation.

#### Key findings include:

- Almost a quarter are going without heating (23%). Up from 16% in 2008.

- One in seven (14%) are going without food. Down from 16% in 2008.
- More than half have borrowed money from family or friends (51%) to keep financially afloat or pay for essentials, such as food and heating. Up from 42% in 2008.
- More than 40% have applied for a charity grant. Up from 25% in 2008.
- Almost three quarters (73%) are going without days out and leisure time with the family. Up from 55% in 2008.

Srabani Sen, Chief Executive of Contact a Family, said: "Many families with disabled children are in financial dire straits. Everyone has been hit hard by the recession but families with disabled children

were already having to cope with a harsh combination of extra living costs and the difficulty of holding down a job and caring. These financial pressures have been worsened by the economic slump and have left many at breaking point. Time and time again research shows that families with disabled children have an above-average risk of living in poverty. Steps must be taken to address this imbalance from the Government, from businesses and employers, from local authorities and the voluntary sector."

You can read the full report in [www.cafamily.org.uk/pdfs/CountingtheCosts2010.pdf](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/pdfs/CountingtheCosts2010.pdf)

### Changes in carers benefits rules will help more families with disabled children claim

From 12th April 2010 Carer's Allowance, the only state benefit specifically aimed at carers, will be made available to a greater number of those who are working.

Carer's Allowance cannot be paid to a carer if they work and earn more than a set amount. The government has announced that this earnings limit will be raised from £95 to £100 after tax deductions - the first time it has been changed since 2007.

For working families caring for a disabled child, the Carer's Allowance rules allow certain childcare costs to be deducted from earnings, so some may qualify even though they are earning slightly more than £100 per week.

From April, Carer's Allowance will also rise from £53.10 per week to £53.90.

Contact a Family's freephone Helpline can advise families with disabled children who want to know if the change in the rules will help them claim Carer's Allowance.

**Call: 0808 808 3555**

To qualify for Carers Allowance you must meet the following criteria:

- Be aged at least 16 years old
- Provide at least 35 hours per week care to someone who gets either Disability Living Allowance at the middle or highest rate or Attendance Allowance
- Not be studying on a course involving 21 hours or more supervised study
- Meet certain residence and immigration conditions
- Have weekly earnings below the earnings limit

### 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**

Don't forget that you can get support around benefits and finance from our Family Workers here at Contact a Family in Lewisham  
We are here to give you all the information and advice you need. Call us for more information or to book an appointment: **020 8297 8056**

**Dawn Charles:** Monday to Friday 8.30 to 2pm  
**Martin White-Peart:** Tuesday to Thursday 9-5pm

**[www.cafamily.org.uk/Lewisham](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/Lewisham) 020 8297 8056**

# Useful information

## 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 - 10.15 -12**

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

Get initial advice on how parents of children with SEN or disabilities can fight for their educational rights.

Talk to experienced educational and legal advisers.

Bring with you any useful documents (statements, letters from SEN Officers, school documents)

No appointment necessary. Just come along - first come, first helped. No fee - although a donation is always welcome.

## PART WORKS

Below is a list of some of the activities available when you become a member of Part Works;

Crafts  
Gentle exercising  
Dance  
Debt Advice

For more information please contact Pauline on 07517602577 or 0208-691-3332 or email

[Partworksproject@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Partworksproject@yahoo.co.uk).

Open:  
Monday – Friday  
From: 4 – 9pm  
Wednesday  
11am – 8.30pm  
Thursdays  
11am – 8.30pm

21 McMillan  
Street, Deptford  
SE8 3EZ

## **A new British Sign Language website for families**

NDCS is pleased to announce the development of a new and exciting website for families of deaf children. The Family Sign Language website is a fun and interactive website for families of deaf children aged 0-5 who wants to learn basic British Sign Language (BSL).

The website includes a dictionary of over 300 everyday signs and phrases, activities and games to use at home, storytelling and communication tips and lots of other exciting resources for learning BSL as a family. A summary DVD will soon be available for families who do not have access to the internet. The website has been developed as part of the I-Sign project. Enjoy exploring the Family Sign Language on

[www.familysignlanguage.org.uk](http://www.familysignlanguage.org.uk)

## **AFASIC**

Being able to speak and communicate with other people is an essential life skill. For most children and young people, learning to communicate comes easily. For some children and young people however, it is a major challenge as they have a speech and language impairment. Afasic England is working to support these children and their parents, enabling them to overcome their speech and language difficulties.

Helpline: **0845 355 5577**

Web: [www.afasicengland.org.uk](http://www.afasicengland.org.uk)

## Lewisham Portage

### Service:

Kaleidoscope,

Lewisham Centre for  
Children & Young  
People  
32 Rushey Green  
Cattford  
London SE6 4JF

Tel: **020 138 1315**

## Useful information

### SIGNAL

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

The group holds monthly meetings, which include talks from experts on a variety of topics related to autism. Coffee mornings are held in different members' houses, and 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 childrens' books. For more detailed information about SIGNAL access their website: [www.signalonline.org.uk](http://www.signalonline.org.uk)

Sally Fricker  
c/o Amersham Road Children's Centre Annexe  
75 Amersham Road  
London  
SE14 6QQ

### Carers Lewisham:

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

Tel: 020 8699 8686

### Let's Face it:

Offers support and advice to  
individuals and children with a  
facial disfigurement.

Tel: 01843 833724

email: [chrisletsfaceit@aol.com](mailto:chrisletsfaceit@aol.com)

web:

[www.letsfaceit.force9.co.uk](http://www.letsfaceit.force9.co.uk)

### 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](mailto:Fiona.hurst@nhs.net)

### Lewisham Autism Support:

Email: [lewishamproject@nas.org.uk](mailto: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](http://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](mailto:lewishampps@pre-school.org.uk)

# Get Involved

## Our Steering Committee- 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. Meetings take place every 6 weeks.

### Research studies

We sometimes get asked to pass on details of research projects. We do this in good faith and ask that you take every care to find out about projects before you participate.

**Naureen Whittinger**

#### Trainee Clinical Psychologist:

"I am a researcher interested in talking with people in south London who hold parental responsibility for a child formally diagnosed with a developmental learning disorder and who feel that religion has influenced their experience of parenting.

If you'd like to take part in my research, please contact me by email:

[nw99@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:nw99@canterbury.ac.uk) or telephone: **01892 507673** (please mention my name when leaving a message), leaving your name, address and daytime contact telephone number and good times for me to contact you.

## 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](mailto:lewisham.office@cafamily.org.uk)

Lewisham Contact a Family Winter Newsletter 2010. 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.