



Winter 2012

Issue 32

Happy New Year

Julie and Mark Burgess and their daughters were amongst five families from the West Midlands who were invited to the Children's Christmas Party at No.10 Downing Street.



Julie said "We were all both nervous and excited at having the opportunity to visit the Prime Ministers home.

The staircase at No 10 have portraits of previous Prime Ministers and led the way to the rooms where the party was taking place. There were lots of art and craft activities for the children as well many famous TV personalities for them to meet.

My eldest daughter, Charlotte has a severe communication and language delay, and is an avid fan of the children's programme 'Something Special', she stood open mouthed in disbelief when she saw Justin Fletcher aka Mr Tumble in front of her, the look on her face was priceless".

Julie's youngest daughter Isabelle adds 'it was very nice to meet the Prime Minister.' Looking back it was a fantastic day'



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Contact a Family News

The Cumulative Effect – The impact of Welfare Reforms on families with disabled children now and for future generations

Contact a Family is planning to highlight in the media the potentially harmful cumulative impact of the welfare reforms on families with disabled children.

We are concerned that government proposals to halve disability additions under the Universal Credit as well as reforms of tax credits, council tax and housing benefit will have a snowball effect on many households.

We are looking for families with a disabled child or children under 16, willing to talk to the media about their situation who fall into one or more of the below categories:

- Getting child tax credits and has a disabled child whose DLA does not include the high rate for personal care.
- The parent/s are on a low income or don't work.
- Live in private rented accommodation and have their housing benefit restricted under the Local Housing Allowance rules.
- Have experienced a reduction in the amount of support they receive for childcare, through the working tax credits.
- Couples where only one partner is employed and they work between 16 and 23 hours a week.
- Live in council/housing association accommodation and have a child whose disability means they cannot share a bedroom with a brother or sister.

If you are interested in taking part in our media work to highlight the impact of welfare reforms on families with disabled children, we'd love to hear from you.

Please get in touch with our media team:

elaine.bennett@cafamily.org.uk and michele.cefai@cafamily.org.uk

MakingContact.org.uk

A service from Contact a Family.

Linking families with disabled children



Being the parent of a disabled child can be very isolating and lead to stresses and strains on individuals within a family. Here you can share your experiences with others and get support too.

The website allows you to find families who can really understand what you are going through, post a question to the forum and get advice from other parents, find out news and information about events and workshops locally.

Check it out at www.makingcontact.org.uk

Contact a Family News

West Midlands 2011 Round up



As we all look to the future and start making resolutions and plans for the New Year I thought we could have a quick look back at 2011. It was a busy year for the team organising and supporting a wide range of events and workshops across the West Midlands region. This is what the West Midlands team got up to in 2011.

On behalf of Contact a Family we:-

- Attended over 30 events sharing information, advice and guidance with over 200 families and professionals on a variety of topics.
- Organised 12 workshops and events for parents on issues including Sleep, Financial issues, Legal rights as well as family activities such as the fun day at Ludlow Castle, Coventry City Football Club and a Cookery session. These were attended by over 500 parents, carers and children.



Our Family Support Worker, Amy, has provided 1:1 support to 70 families helping them with a range of issues including help with benefit claims, appeals, support at meetings and issues with schools. In addition to this she has been successful in accessing grants totally £5,000 for equipment and adaptations to help make life a little easier for the families she works with. She has also delivered a number of group sessions on financial issues parents and professionals.

The newsletter readership has increased by over 500 and we now have a circulation of over 4000 receiving the quarterly newsletters.



We are planning an equally busy 2012 and are actively recruiting volunteers to support us with our work. If you have a few spare hours and would like to find how you can volunteer with us

Contact Angie on 0121 415 4624

SEND Information Parent Partnerships update

As you will know from our previous newsletter, the SEND team have secured DfE funding to work closely with SENCOs, Parent Partnerships and Parent Support Groups, supporting them and enhancing their 'information giving role' to families with disabled children.

Over the past couple of months the SEND team have been working hard to meet and talk with as many SENCOs as they possibly can. They have been to national events in Birmingham and London, and talked to them about the project; how it can help them in the information giving role when working with families of disabled children, and also offering the free access to our online Directory.

So far over 200 SENCOs have signed up to the Directory, and many have come back and requested a Resource Pack which has been developed to support them.

**If you wish to discuss the project, please contact the Development Officer for your area
Liz Reynolds Elizabeth.reynolds@cafamily.org.uk**

Transition

Transition

Leaving school or disabled children's services and moving into adulthood can be a challenging time for young people and their parents. What kinds of choices exist and will they help the young person lead a fulfilling life? Many parents feel anxious at this time, predicting poor services or a possible lack of choice for their children.

What should a transition plan cover?

The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Codes of Practice covering England and Wales make it clear that transition planning should address questions concerning the young person, their family, the school and the professionals supporting them. Questions should include:

- what are the young person's hopes and aspirations for the future and how can these be met?
- will parents experience new care needs and require practical help?
- how can the curriculum help young people play their role in the community?
- does the young person have any special health or welfare needs that will require planning and support from health and social services, now or in the future?

A transition plan should build on the conclusions reached and targets set at previous annual reviews of a child's statement of SEN.

When should a transition plan be drawn up?

The Education Act 1996 states that the Local Authority (LA) must include a transition plan in the first review after 14 years of age. The process starts with the annual review meeting in Year 9 where a transition plan is drawn up. Parents are invited on equal terms with professional staff.

Contributing to the plan

Who may attend the transition plan review meeting? The Year 9 review follows the same procedure as previous annual reviews but with some additions. All local services can be invited to the meeting, but some services must be invited and some have obligations to attend:

- social services must be invited to ensure that the young person's care needs are fully assessed
- health professionals involved in the care of the young person should provide advice towards the transition plan and where possible attend the meeting
- the Connexions service must be invited.
- a relevant teacher and a representative from the LA must be invited
- parents and carers must be invited
- your child's views must be sought and recorded
- the head teacher can invite anyone else they consider appropriate.

How parents can contribute?

You have a vital role in collecting relevant information because you know all the important people and activities in your child's life. You also know what you may be able to do to help in the future and may be aware of some of the choices available.

Make a checklist - It is helpful to make a checklist of everyone who has been working with your child and who has information that will be important in the review meeting.

Not everyone who is invited will be able to come to the meeting so positive written information from professionals who know your child well is vital for devising the transition plan.

Your views

It is also helpful to think about your input as a parent and carer, for example:

- how can you contribute to your child's personal and social development?
- will your child's care needs change as they get older?
- how do you see your child's future?

Transition

How the young person can contribute?

Young people with communication difficulties will need to be represented by a close family member or support worker who can advocate on their behalf.

Some young people find it helpful to talk to someone they already know and trust. Others find it more helpful to work with local advocacy or support schemes which can help them identify what they would like to do. Social services or a local disability information service will know about local advocacy schemes. It is important that young people have a chance to share their concerns and ideas - both inside and outside the family.

They might need to discuss personal concerns such as:

- making friends and having a social life
- sexual relationships
- the financial implications of leaving home
- getting enough help at college or university
- ageing parents
- personal care.

After the transition plan review meeting

Responsibility for the plan—the head teacher, in consultation with the Connexions Service must ensure that the transition plan is drawn up. The Connexions service is responsible for overseeing how the elements of the plan relating to further learning, training or employment are put into action. The Local Authority must ensure that all the services identified as necessary in the transition plan are available for the young person as they go through the transition period until they leave school.

Reviewing and updating the plan—the plan should be reviewed at all subsequent annual reviews until then.

Getting a copy of the plan - Once the transition plan has been drawn up, this must be circulated to you, the head teacher, social services, relevant health contacts and any other relevant professionals and carers.

Tips for talking about transition

Parents

- try not to assume what your child wants from the future – ask them what's important to them
- get information about all the options in advance of meetings, for example education and support for living independently
- before meetings, encourage your child to make a list of the items they would like to discuss
- ask your child how they want you to support them in meetings
- encourage your child to do the talking if they feel able to
- in meetings, prompt rather than take over. If you think your child's questions haven't been answered, ask them if they would like to go back to any issue to discuss more.

Professionals

- in advance of meetings, make sure you get information about other sources of help such as support groups, specialist agencies and medical information
- make a point of asking the young person what they want, then asking the parent if there is anything they would like to add
- listen to both the young person and the parent
- allow time for the parent to speak in the meeting.

For more information download a copy of **Preparing for Adult Life and Transition** from our website www.cafamily.org.uk/publications

Spotlight on...

KIDS DIRECT ACCESS SERVICE



KIDS Direct Access Service is about providing leisure and social opportunities to disabled children and young people aged 0-25 years and their families.

We can provide you with a qualified and experienced Buddy, Mentor, Support Worker or Key worker to enable you to access activities in your local community.

Whether you want to widen your social network, join a new group, learn a new skill or just get more out of life, we can tailor a package to suit you providing a flexible and varied programme to suit individual interests and family need. We can also provide home based support.

KIDS Direct Access Service is about you choosing how your services are delivered. Direct Payments is just one of the many funding options you can use to access our service.

There are a variety of ways **DIRECT ACCESS SERVICE** can be purchased directly from KIDS

Direct payments, Personalised budgets, Disability Living Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Private funding

Direct Access Service can provide you with the support to enable you to access further education placements, work experience, volunteer opportunities, leisure and social opportunities within your local community. You can have support to take you out, to support you to join out of school clubs. You can also have support to travel on public transport or be supported in shared living accommodation. You may just want support at home, a friend to visit and play with you, listen to music or play on the computer; you may just need a short break so you and your husband can enjoy an evening out. We can make all this happen!

For further information, please contact

Christine Moohan Tel 07793 777 302 or Margaret Sheikh Tel 07585 790 554



Country Connections and Taking the Reins

Are both Circles Network projects designed to introduce the benefits of Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL) to children and adults. This pioneering work helps people to connect with each other and the horses and ponies to find solutions to issues that trouble them.

If you live in rural Warwickshire the sessions could be free of charge.

This projects allows family groups of 2 - 8 people to come along and work with the horses learning how to develop calmness, relaxation, communication and problem solving skills. Skilled facilitators will take you through horse handling skills that are useful in promoting confidence, communication and relationships. You don't even have to share the details out loud, just be open to how the unspoken qualities of being together with your family and well trained horses and ponies can result in a positive change.

EFL is not about riding, it is about working and walking with the horses on the ground, using natural body language, voice and posture to gain results. Sometimes just a small shift is all a family needs to make the breakthrough that makes life run smoothly again.

**For more information contact the Project Facilitators Rhianna McCallion or Ellie Morhan
Tel: 01788 816671**

Spotlight on...



Midland Mencap run a Saturday Play scheme for children with learning disabilities aged 5—12 years of age. Supported by a team of qualified, trained and experienced staff they offer a wide range of activities and outings.

From 10.00am - 3.30pm at The Enterprise Hub, Bottetourt Road, Weoley Castle, Birmingham. For more information call 0121 256 1500

Old Fallings Adventure Playground Peach Tree Garden and Sensory Room

Why not have a go on Wolverhampton's longest zip wire, test you skills on the giant climbing frame or take a friend on the extra wide slide. Play session for children with additional needs will take place on

Tuesdays 5.00pm - 7.00pm for 5-12 yr olds
Wednesdays 5.00pm - 7.00pm for 5-18 yr olds



For more information contact the Play Office Tel: 01902 552170

Short Breaks in Worcestershire run activity sessions for children with disabilities aged 8 -14 yrs of age. The session in all venues are term time only until the end of March 2012.

Evesham—Wallace House, Oat street Evesham

Every Monday 4pm—6pm

Malvern—Malvern Youth Centre, Albert Rd North, Malvern

Every Wednesday 4pm—6pm

Tenbury Wells—Tenbury Primary School, Bromyard Rd, Tenbury Wells

Every Thursday 4pm—6pm



For more information contact Serena Marshall or Kirsty Pykett on 01684 891081



Sporting Club Albion
Disability sport @ West Bromwich Albion offering football for the whole disability community



Pan Disability Development Centre - For all Ambulant Disability Groups
Sandwell Academy, Halfords Lane, West Bromwich

For Ages 12 - 16 years of age

Every Wednesday 6.30pm - 8.00pm

Contact **Paul Hunt** on 08712719840 or e-mail paul.hunt@albionfoundation.co.uk

For Ages 16+

Pan Senior Disability Team

Every Wednesday 6.30pm - 8pm

Contact **Adam Crowle** on 08712719840 or e-mail adam.crowle@albionfoundation.co.uk

And finally.....

We would like to say thank you to:

Quayside Frozen Food for their kind Christmas Donation which will be used to enable 20 families to access a safety event at Safeside @ Eastside.

Irwen Mitchell Solicitors for their time and expertise over the year as well as their kind donation which supported the Legal Rights conference attended by 98 parents/carers

Anthony Collins Solicitors for their kind donation which also supported the Legal Rights Conference attended by 98 parents/carers

Forthcoming Events

Sexuality and Relationships.

26th April 2012 at Point 4 Venn Lane Hereford

21st June 2012 at Irwin Mitchell Offices in Birmingham

Together with Mencap, Shine and Scope we will be running 3 workshops on the legal rights of disabled children and their families in the West Midlands during 2012

In addition to these events we are finalising our 2012 programme of events and will advertise these in future newsletters.

The Editor retains the right to omit, include or edit any contributions. The views and suggestions in this newsletter are those of individual contributions and not necessarily supported by Contact a Family. Contact a Family cannot accept responsibility for any goods or services mentioned in or enclosed in this newsletter



LOTTERY FUNDED

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