

Grapevine newsletter

The paper for parents and carers of children with additional needs in Southwark

Autumn 2011

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celebrating 15 years in Southwark and a new home – almost!



left to right: Naomi Gilbert, Contact a Family Manager; Catherine McDonald, Cabinet Member for Children's Services; Mayor Lorraine Lauder; Steering Committee members: Nadia Crichlow, Ella Baines, Nik Hood, Soulaf Rizki

Contact a Family Southwark will shortly be moving to our new home at Cambridge House. Like all good house moves, there have been a few hitches with the builders!

Please make a note of our future contact details:

Contact a Family Southwark
1 Addington Square
London SE5 0HF

telephone: 020 7358 7799
email: southwarkoffice@cafamily.org.uk

Stop press!

**Until we move, please keep
using this number:**

020 7277 4436.

Contact a Family news

the move

We will send a text to families and an email to all our contacts when we finally move. In the meantime, we are very grateful to Walworth Methodist Church for letting us stay on.

freebies!

In your mailing, you will find a small gift from us to remind you of our new contact details. Please keep it in a safe place until it is relevant! We have a number of goodies to give away at events and when we visit you. These include a red tote bag, pens, coffee coasters, fridge magnets and trolley token keyrings.

for sale

There are still some items of furniture we would like to find a new home for when we actually move. Contact us to find out what's left.

celebrating... now and then



the party

Celebrations started early as parents had the opportunity to meet others with the children safely back at school. Coffee, cakes and a good chat were enjoyed in the new boardroom at Cambridge House. Parents also had the opportunity to hear about the new Family Relationships project being run by Contact a Family UK. A local workshop is planned for later in the year. See the events programme.



More cake!

A wonderful lunch was followed by a piece of the marvellous anniversary cake made by parent Charity Mauluka. Although Charity could not be present to see how much her cake was enjoyed, she spoke of how pleased she was to be involved with the event, saying that she had made the cake "for her family". Thanks, Charity!



Contact a Family news

Parents, and representatives of the many local organisations we work with, came together to celebrate our move to Cambridge House (a bit prematurely, as it turns out!) and our 15 years of service in the borough (right on time).

Councillor Catherine McDonald, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, congratulated Contact a Family on its anniversary and pointed out that this means many hundreds if not thousands of families have benefited over the years: "It is clear to me from talking to parents, how much Contact a Family means to local families. The advice, information and support they receive is hugely valued."



Catherine McDonald and Mayor Lorraine Lauder chat with Paul Soames, Contact a Family's Director of Operations

Catherine went on to talk about how much she values the briefings she receives from Contact a Family which mean that she is fully informed about issues affecting local families.

Nik Hood, Steering Committee vice chair, said: "It was a fantastic event recognising 15 years of Contact a Family engaging with local families. The lunch gave a time to reflect, to feel proud and to celebrate that achievement."

"Catherine McDonald showed real understanding of the importance of Contact a Family's role in supporting families in Southwark."

coffee mornings

1st Place Children's Centre

Chumleigh Street Burgess Park SE5 0RN
10am–12pm

- Tuesday 18 October
- Tuesday 15 November
- Tuesday 13 December

Pop along to catch up with staff and other families whilst your children play in the sensory room or out on the sandy beach. All welcome: no need to book, just turn up.

Rye Oak School and Children's Centre

Whorlton Road, SE15 3PD

- Friday 18 November
- Friday 16 December

Pop along to Rye Oak for one of our breakfast mornings where you can meet other families, share tips and experiences and find out what is going on locally. No need to book, just turn up (includes a play area for young children).

drop-ins

Sunshine House

Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9.30am–12pm

Rye Oak

Fridays, 9.30am–12pm (term time only)

Wednesdays, 4.30–6.30pm by appointment only, venue to be confirmed

DLA renewal workshops

If you have a DLA renewal form to fill out between now and Christmas please book onto to one of the sessions listed below by emailing: rebecca.jones@cafamily.org.uk

Please note these sessions run from 9.30 to 12.30

- Tuesday 25 October
- Thursday 21 November

news from head office

Don't let disabled children pay the price for welfare reform

Proposed policy in the Welfare Reform Bill will result in a halving of a benefit that targets financial support on low income and out of work families with disabled children. Contact a Family has signed up to a petition, launched by the Children's Society on 4 August, calling for a reversal of the proposals.

The halving of these 'disability additions' will result in many families losing up to £1400 per year (£27 per week) compared to the current system. In total, the Government estimates that 100,000 disabled children would lose out under this change – other estimates suggest the number could be considerably higher. 25 major charities and other organisations have together launched a petition to call on the Government to change these damaging plans.

This petition builds on work that Contact a Family's welfare rights team has been doing to support Every Disabled Child Matters in their work on the same issue.

Please help us by promoting the e-petition through your networks, newsletter, facebook, parent groups, friends and family etc.

The main text of the e-petition is:
"We the undersigned petition the Prime Minister to... make sure that disabled children are not made to pay the price for welfare reform. We urge him to reverse his Government's unfair plans to introduce a welfare cut of up to £27 per week for 100,000 disabled children, so that Britain's most vulnerable families are protected."

You can sign the petition here:
<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/915>

Is your child bullied?

The results of a Contact a Family online survey, asking parents and families with disabled children about their experiences of bullying at school and how it was dealt with, supports findings in a new report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

The report, "Hidden in Plain Sight", says that many disabled people have come to accept harassment – including verbal and physical abuse, theft and fraud, sexual harassment and bullying – as inevitable. In fact, thousands of disabled people regularly experience harassment or abuse but a culture of disbelief is preventing public authorities from tackling it effectively.

Nearly all respondents (85%) to the Contact a Family survey, which ran from January to April 2011, believed that the bullying their child was suffering was because they had disabilities. When parents report bullying, 68% of parents said that they didn't think the school's response was effective and appropriate.

For support with bullying or to order a copy of 'A guide to dealing with bullying: for parents with disabled children', please get in touch with Contact a Family on **0808 808 3555**.

Family Fund: important news

Every field in the Family Fund application form must be filled in even if there is nothing to say. If you return your form with sections not filled in, it may be rejected.

For example: medication. If your child does not have regular medication, make sure you say 'none' or 'not applicable' to avoid your application being refused.

local news

Councillor McDonald addresses the cuts

In March, members of Contact a Family's Steering Group and the Parent Carers' Council, along with representatives from other agencies which support families, met with Councillor Catherine McDonald, Cabinet Member for Children's Services. It was an opportunity to strengthen links between parent carers and the council, and to put forward some of the most burning issues for the council to address.

Rory Patterson, Deputy Director of Specialist Children's Services, now responds in full.

1. Cuts may well lead to fragmentation of services to vulnerable families. This will make it harder to reach the most vulnerable. Where is the holistic approach the Council speaks about?

Fragmentation of services is always a risk. The families we are aiming to support are often isolated and can experience real difficulty in finding out what services are available and which would be the most helpful for their children. Over the coming 12 months we are planning to establish a series of forums with partner voluntary organisations working to support families with disabled children, so that together we can monitor patterns of need and the impact of reductions in service provision across the board.

2. What commitment does the Council have to ensuring that families of children with disabilities receive short breaks and ensuring that this is not restricted to those at the top of the needs triangle?

The Council is required to publish a statement of the short breaks offer by October 2011. Work is being undertaken on this at the present time. In order to provide some

additional specialist resource and "critical friend" challenge, an independent consultant has been engaged to assist in carrying out a range of consultation exercises during August and September 2011 with parents, carers and voluntary organisations working with disabled children. This work will be important in mapping current service patterns, in finding out what parents and carers want, and in shaping a service development plan for the next three years. Funding has been allocated to ensure a spread of resource across low-, medium- and high-need groups of children and young people. We want to get the right balance in being realistic but also challenging in making sure that services really do make a difference to families.

3. What can the Council do to make sure that cuts do not cause families and children to lose hard-won skills and abilities and so become more dependent upon services in the future?

It is important that eligibility criteria are clear and understood by parents, carers and relevant professionals. Eligibility criteria provide a basis for making fair and rational decisions about allocating resources. Family situations do change over time, of course, and children's needs change, so regular review of needs assessments and care packages is essential.

Parents and carers quite understandably become used to receiving a particular type and level of service and can react badly when they perceive that something is being taken away from them. But, if resources are to be directed in a rational manner to those families most in need, then it is necessary that sometimes the level of service to some families will have to change or reduce as the circumstances of that family improve – for example children's conditions may respond to treatment and therapy, or extended family support may become more significant.

local news

free nursery places for two year olds: programme extended

The Two Year Old Early Learning Project aims to support and improve outcomes for children through early access to high-quality Early Years provision. The key target groups are economically disadvantaged two year olds and their families.

Children offered a place on the scheme will receive up to 15 hours free early education a week over 38 weeks a year. The place will be provided by an early years setting approved by Southwark Council – a childminder, pre-school, day nursery or Children’s Centre.

Children can access these hours over a minimum of two days and it can be stretched over more weeks, thereby offering fewer hours per week. There should be a smooth transition to the Free Early Education Entitlement, in the term after the child turns three.

The Project also aims to engage parent carers in supporting their child’s learning and development. Parent carers must be offered the opportunity to access other services for young children and families. The Family Information Service (FIS) will provide advice about what services are available in their area and Children’s Centre Outreach Workers will support families to access these services.

Children become eligible for the project in the term after they turn two. Children must have an additional need, identified by a social care assessment, and families must be getting a qualifying benefit, such as Income Support or Tax Credits.

Speak to your family worker, social worker, or healthcare professional for more information or a referral.

ADHD research at Kings College

Is your family interested in taking part in a study about Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, ADHD, and special educational needs? The study is looking for people aged 12–16 with mild learning disabilities, with or without ADHD, and without autism. The research is based at King’s College London, Institute of Psychiatry. The aim is to learn more about the cognitive challenges that young people with ADHD face in their everyday life, to contribute to a better understanding of the condition.

Participants will be asked to complete five tasks designed as computer games for one hour, and can earn up to £20. Location is flexible and travel expenses will be covered.

Please contact Maria Bescos for more information, on: **020 7848 0469**, or email: **maria.bescos@kcl.ac.uk**

advice and info event

6 October, 11–3pm, Kingswood Community Shop, Kingswood Estate, SE21 8QR

Contact a Family and Southwark Legal Advice Network are offering families in the south of the borough an opportunity to get advice and information from a range of local agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, Blackfriars Advice Centre and Southwark Law Centre. Meet other families, enjoy a head or shoulder massage, and get expert help on benefits, housing, or anything else that is bothering you.

For more information please contact: **sarahrose@southwarkcabservice.org.uk** or call: **020 7740 1744**

Southwark Parent Carers' Council

news from Southwark Parent Carers' Council

It's always difficult to get people together during the summer holidays and so, as far as meetings go, it's usually a quiet time for the PCC. Not this year, though, as without paid staff, we are solely reliant on the good will and commitment of members to prepare the paperwork for charitable company registration, and pull together a questionnaire that will help us learn more about the families on our mailing list. We have been contacting parents this month, with a view to setting up a database in October. This will help us target parents according to their interests, and to extract information for fundraising and monitoring purposes.

Money-wise, the PCC is doing well. We've been awarded a small grant by the United St Saviour's Charity to produce our quarterly newsletter and undertake activities in the north of the borough, and will be holding our next meeting at Alfred Salter School on Wednesday 19 October. We've also applied for a fourth parent participation grant from the Department for Education, and hope to receive this before the end of the month, as we've just learned that Contact a Family has been awarded the contract to manage the grant-giving process and will continue to work with the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) to develop parent participation nationally.

We have, in recent months, contributed to the NNPCF's response to the Government's 'calls for views' on proposed health and education reforms, and two of us will soon be meeting with strategic leads from Southwark and Lambeth to discuss first steps in the development of a single, holistic assessment, action planning and review process, to replace the myriad of assessments our children

undergo to access statutory services, including support at school. We're approaching this with caution, however, as we believe that organisations like Contact a Family may be asked to carry out assessments on behalf of the local authority, and take on the role of key-worker, liaising with statutory providers to develop individual care and support packages, and monitor and review their implementation.

Since the local authority is under tremendous pressure to identify and achieve savings *now*, we fear that it is likely to take such decisions without us, and rely on the PCC to inform parents after the event. We hope this doesn't happen and will try our best to pass on information as and when we receive it.

On a positive note, Antoinette (Southwark PCC Chair) and Alison recently met with Chris Saunders (Assistant Director, Children's Services), Paul McCarthy (Interim Service Manager for the Children with Disabilities Team), and Chidi Okeke (Children's Commissioning) to arrange meetings with a Short Breaks Consultant to inform the development of a local short breaks offer and commissioning plan. The local authority is obliged to develop a local offer that is based on families' views of what works well, and to ensure that they meet the new legal duty to provide carers with short breaks from caring. Consultations took place at Cambridge House on 8 and 15 September, and were facilitated by local authority consultant Kim Leatham. A lively discussion took place where Kim had the opportunity to hear both positive experiences and also the difficulties that families have had in accessing universal services.

For further information about the Parent Carers' Council, please call Antoinette on: **07983 493976**, Alison on: **07508 124789**, or email us at: **info@southwarkpcc.org.uk**


southwarkparentcarers council

our summer events

Mondays in Burgess Park

Every Monday in the summer holidays was Burgess Park day for the Contact a Family team. We set up shop for a couple of hours in the park and invited families to join us for an ice cream.

“I didn’t realise there were fountains here. We will definitely be coming back!”

“He was very happy to bump into some friends from school.”

“This is more relaxing than going to Brighton Beach but just as much fun!”



Arsenal Stadium Tour



The Emirates stadium was taken over by our families for an hour on 27 July whilst we had a grand tour.

We walked out of the tunnel like true football pros and sat in the players’ dug out, spent time in the directors’ box and ran amok in the home team changing rooms. Future Arsene Wengers took some tough questioning from parents in the press room, and then we finished off with a visit to the Arsenal museum.

“Thank you for a great day, we had an amazing time!”

“My son loves football and would love to play for Arsenal one day.”

“What an amazing stadium. I felt like a player for a day.”



our summer events

beach trip

For the second year running, families had an amazing time at Littlehampton beach in two trips funded by Daytrippers.

People, and not just children, were amazed by the size, saltiness and “dirtiness” (seaweed) of the sea.



Not even the riots that were going on at home put parents off having fun, and the sun really did come out making it once again one of the best trips of our summer programme.

We made friends with other people on the beach and Yvonne went swimming.

“The day was really nice and the weather was wonderful. How did you know the sun would be shining today?”



When it was time to leave, one girl asked:

“Are we coming back next summer?”

Mousetrap Theatre Family First nights

This summer Family First nights were as popular as ever. Fourteen of our families applied for tickets. We hope you enjoyed the shows!

your Family First experiences:

“The application process was extremely easy. *The Pirates* was a wonderful play... The length, feel and storyline of the production was spot-on, both Dante and I were fully engrossed from start to finish. Thank you, Contact a Family, for giving Dante and I a great opportunity, and Family First nights for a fantastic experience!!”

“Our experience with Family First nights was fantastic. Once I took in the application form and payment, they responded within two days with our first choice of show. We went to see *Oliver!* and it was fantastic: the singing, the acting, the costumes and scenery. We would definitely go again!”

“We sent the application form and luckily got our first choice, which was *Oliver!* Felix loves *Oliver!* so he was so excited and the seats were fine so we all had a brilliant time. Felix is still singing the songs.”

“I filled out the form and sent it off and I got a reply within a couple of weeks. We also got an extra treat on the night we went to see *Oliver!* the organisers phoned me and asked would we come early to the performance as they wanted to take some pictures of us outside the theatre holding our tickets. After we had our pictures taken we were invited up to the royal room for some drinks before the show. That was a fantastic experience for us all as a family and something we will always remember. Then we went to watch the show and thoroughly enjoyed it and, yes, we would definitely go again.”

working with your GP

Ella talks about how to get the most from the relationship with your family doctor

In the last copy of Grapevine, were the results of a recent national Contact a Family survey about GP involvement in the healthcare of children with disabilities. It showed that three-quarters of families surveyed felt their GP had no involvement in the management of their child's condition.

As a GP in Brixton and a mother of a child with complex needs, I am in a good position to see things from both sides! I look after quite a few families with disabled children and aim to help with their general health problems and more specific challenges associated with their disabilities.

These are a few suggestions on how to get the most out of your GP.

- Get to know your GP. Find out which GP you are registered with by asking at reception at the surgery. Hospital letters will usually be sent to the GP you are registered with. If you regularly see a doctor you are not registered with, ask if you can swap to their care.
 - If you are not happy with your GP, look on the practice website to see if there is an alternative doctor. Your Health Visitor can also advise you. You may find a GP who has an interest in an area such as Child Health or Learning Disabilities. You could even consider whether a doctor has their own children – they may be more sympathetic to your needs.
 - Make a routine appointment with your GP when you and your child are well.
- This will give you an opportunity to discuss your family and your child's unique circumstances without the pressure of an urgent medical problem that needs dealing with.
- Give them information. If you feel they don't know enough about your child's condition, offer information and have it scanned into your child's notes. If you have to see another GP in an emergency, they will also have access to information you have given. You could consider general information about your child's condition (such as from a support website) and specific problems related to your child. Remember, not all GPs will have worked extensively in Paediatrics (children's healthcare). They may not have treated children with your child's condition before.
 - Whenever possible, try to see the same doctor each time. You can build a good rapport and they won't ask the same questions over and over again.
 - Tell them what you need. GPs can write supportive letters for DLA and charity grant applications or housing problems, etc. They can act as your advocate, such as writing to speed up appointments or emailing a consultant about medication changes. They may not be able to answer questions about complicated medical problems related to your child's condition, but they can contact someone who can!
 - Make sure the hospital and community services have your GP's name and address. Ask hospital staff/community therapists to send a copy of the clinic letters or reports to your GP. Often, GPs **do not** routinely receive these letters (especially if your child receives medical care/therapy through their school).

working with your GP

- Get to know the reception staff – they may be able to take into account your child's condition when booking an appointment, e.g. at the beginning of surgery before the waiting room gets too busy. They can also suggest the best place to wait if your child gets distressed in noisy places. Receptionists can explain the appointment system at your practice – most surgeries have pre-booked appointments and urgent 'same day' appointments. Some surgeries also offer telephone appointments which are useful if you need to discuss problems which don't need the doctor to see your child.

Remember: you are an expert on your child. If your child is unwell, tell the doctor. Your GP should view new symptoms in the same way they would if your child did not have a disability.

New symptoms should not just be put down to your child's disability without looking for another cause.

Do not overlook the pressures on you and your health. Carers often forget to look after themselves. GPs can offer advice on problems such as stress, low mood or poor sleep. They can also offer talking therapy and tell you about local services for carers.



Having a good GP can be invaluable. They should take into account your concerns and ideas so that you can make joint decisions about your child's healthcare. Many health centres are now establishing Patient Participation Groups to enable patients to become more involved in how practices are run. Ask at the reception if you are interested in joining a group.

Ella Baines

Remember: you are an expert on your child. If your child is unwell, tell the doctor. Your GP should view new symptoms in the same way they would if your child did not have a disability.

secondary school transition

tips and strategies

In June, Contact a Family Southwark held a coffee morning for families to hear others' experiences of transition to secondary school, and to share their concerns and suggestions for improving the process. The session was attended by two parents whose children have already begun secondary school, and seven mums whose children are approaching transition.

Below are some of the parents' concerns and tips for key points in the transition journey.

what worries parents

- the number of Academy Schools (mainstream) in Southwark and their SEN policy, in particular that the council cannot name an academy in a statement unless it has been agreed with governors beforehand
- The size of the school, both in terms of layout and student numbers
- striking a balance where the child feels secure but also challenged and stimulated
- difficulties in contacting SENCOs and concerns around the qualifications and experience of SENCOs
- securing transport and/or preparing for independent travel

when to take action

year 5 or earlier

- start viewing different types of schools
- when visiting schools, think about what your child excels at and enjoys and find out how the school can support them in these activities
- speak to other parents about school choices
- think about the differences between primary and secondary school, e.g. timetable, size of school, uniform, exams etc., when deciding between mainstream and special schools

once you have decided on a school

- remember you can apply for school uniform grants if you are in receipt of certain benefits such as Income Support (applications must be made between April year 6 and March year 7)
- apply for free school meals if entitled to them
- ensure you have worked with the primary school to produce a school passport with useful information about your child's likes and dislikes
- ask to visit the school with your child to prepare for the change (mainstream schools will just have one inset day so you may want to ask if your child can go up on other days as well)
- get information about the school beforehand for both yourself and your child, e.g. pictures of the school, information and pictures of staff if possible, timetable, rules, uniform etc.
- ensure your child has their timetable before the end of the summer term so they can prepare
- encourage and prepare your child to take responsibility for themselves and their belongings, e.g. remembering their PE kit

during the summer holidays

- don't forget to sew or write your child's name into all of their clothes and bags

when your child starts school

- just as the school should be communicating with you, you need to communicate with the school – if your child had a bad night let the school staff know
- be prepared for your child to be tired and out of sorts during the initial transition stage!
- encourage them to take responsibility for themselves, e.g. packing their bag the night before school, helping to make their own lunch, remembering to write down their homework
- Try to be as available as possible during at least the first few weeks of school (be there when they leave for school and when they come home) so you can pick up on worries and issues

what's on locally

keep up to date!

For a full listing of local events and activities, sign up for our regular email update.

Contact: rebecca.jones@cafamily.org.uk

free Whippersnapper sessions

Whippersnappers are running workshops for under fives during term time at various venues. Sessions feature African drums, songs, puppets, dressing up, and are free for children with additional needs.

- **1st Place Nursery**
Chumleigh Gardens, SE5 0RN:
Mondays 2pm
- **The Albrighton Centre**
Dog Kennel Hill Estate, SE22 8AH:
Wednesdays 10am–11am
- **Dulwich Wood Children's Centre**
Kingswood Estate, Lyall Avenue, SE21:
Wednesdays 1pm
- **Rockingham Community Centre**
Falmouth Rd, SE1 6RQ:
Fridays 11am–12pm
- **Rye Oak Children's Centre**
Rye Oak School, Whorlton Road, SE15:
Mondays 10.30am
- **St Lukes Church**
Chandler Way, off Commercial Way, SE15:
Wednesdays 1.30pm
- **Bird in Bush Community Centre**
616 Old Kent Rd, SE15:
first Thursday of the month at 10.30am
- **College Lodge, Dulwich Park**
Wednesdays 9.30am, Fridays 9.30am and
10.30am, Saturdays 10am

For more information, call Whippersnappers, on: **020 7738 6633**.

cycling for disabled young people

Wheels for Wellbeing are running cycling sessions for young people with disabilities until the end of October. Sessions take place at the all-weather pitch, near the lido in Brockwell Park, and are open to non-disabled siblings too, and cyclists must be accompanied.

There are two sessions for 5–19 year olds:

- Wednesdays 10am–12:30pm
- Saturdays 2:30–4:30pm

and one session for 14–24 year olds:

- Wednesdays 1:30–4pm

There is no need to book, but participants will need to register beforehand or on the day. To find out more, call: **020 7346 8482**.

cot available for a parent in a wheelchair

A parent is hoping to hand on a specially adapted cot to another family with a wheelchair-using parent. The bed is an extendable Stokke cot with a door added for access at low level.

“The adaption was made about 6 years ago by REMAP to allow my husband – a wheelchair user with post-polio syndrome to access the cot. We ideally would like it to go to a wheelchair user parent as that was what the adaptation was for and on the basis they wouldn't sell it on but give it away again when they no longer need it.”

For more information and to enquire about the cot, call the Contact a Family office, or email: southwark.office@cafamily.org.uk

focus on autism

National Autistic Society

NAS Southwark branch support groups for parents and carers of all children with an autistic spectrum condition.

The Mag group meets on the last Wednesday of the month at:

The Mag pub
211 Lordship Lane
East Dulwich
SE22 8HA

The Alfred Salter support group meets on the last Friday of the month, term time only, at:

Alfred Salter School
Quebec Way
Rotherhithe
(less than 10 mins walk from Canada Water tube and bus station)

Future dates are:

- Friday 21 October
- Friday 25 November
- Friday 16 December

Access 4 All news

Ellen Brown Centre and Spa Gardens Adventure Playground is no longer offering targeting drop-ins. However Peckham Rye Adventure Playground is planning a weekly Access 4 All session. Details to come.

Ellen Brown offers open access play during term time:

Tuesday to Friday, 3:30–7pm;
Saturday, 10:30am–4pm

and in school holidays:

Monday to Friday, 11:30am–5pm

For more information, call: **020 7231 1356**

Billy the Kid at the Unicorn Theatre



In October, the Unicorn Theatre is putting on an autism-friendly performance of Billy the Kid, adapted from the children's novel by Michael Morpurgo. The performance is recommended for anyone aged 7+, and will feature reduced audience capacity and a chill-out room with

activities for anyone who needs some time out. Before the performance, social stories will be sent out to familiarise your child with the theatre and the cast. The theatre also offer a familiarisation visit the evening before the show for families to see the auditorium and stage.

Unicorn Theatre, 147 Tooley Street, SE1 2HZ

- autism-friendly performance:
Saturday 15 October, 1.30pm
- familiarisation visit:
Friday 14 October, 5pm

Tickets cost £5 per person. For more information or to book, contact the box office, on: **020 7645 0560**, quoting "access Billy offer".

Cygnets Course

Parent Partnership will be running a six-week Cygnets Course this autumn for parents of children with ASD aged 3–11. The course includes sessions on communication, sensory issues and understanding and managing behaviour.

For more information, contact Parent Partnership, on: **020 7525 5256**.

hearing your voice

how I spend my DLA

Over the summer holidays we have been asking some of you what you spend your DLA money on and this is what you said:

- “taking my son swimming and paying for his swimming classes at Peckham Pulse”



To book swimming classes please visit your local Fusion centre. Don't forget to sign up for a Leisure Access card to receive discounted prices.

- “buying new clothes for my child as they grow so quickly and make such a mess of their clothes!”
- “I put £10 DLA into a savings account for my son for when he is older.”
- “warm winter clothes for my child who has sickle cell”
- “youth group sessions with Fast Forward”

Fast Forward provides a safe place for young people with special needs to come together to socialise with their peers, as well as develop their social skills. There are various activities from Monday to Thursday evenings including healthy living, cooking sessions, life skills and trips. To find out about please call Sharon or Rachel on **020 7732 1847**.

- “Trips out!”
- “I pay privately for 3 to 4 hours' respite a week so that I can have a break and get the shopping done in peace!”
- “I take my child with a disability out for the day so we can spend some quality time together away from everyone else!”
- “I pay for particular toys or games which interest my child and aid their development.”
- “I pay for my child to attend Resources for Autism play sessions at the weekend.”

Resources for Autism provide practical services for children and adults with an autistic spectrum condition and for their families and carers. They run a Sunday session, 1–4pm, for children aged 8–14 and a session on Monday evening, 6pm–8pm for those aged 12–19. To find out more please visit: **www.resourcesforautism.org.uk** or call: **020 8458 3259**.

- “I pay privately for additional speech and language therapy for my child.”



To find a private speech and language therapist visit: **www.helpwithtalking.com** or call: **01494 488306**.

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.

the helpline

freephone: 0808 808 3555

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**

Contact a Family Southwark

**Cambridge House
1 Addington Square
London SE5 0HF**

tel: 020 7358 7799

southwark.office@cafamily.org.uk

contact a family
for families with disabled children

registered office:

209–211 City Road
London EC1V 1JN

helpline: 0808 808 3555

www.cafamily.org.uk

reg. charity number: 284912

charity registered in Scotland, no: SC039169

company no: 1633333

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.

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