

in contact

The Contact a Family newsletter

Lambeth

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Firework photo credit: Annemarie Mountz

Happy New Year from your local Contact a Family team

Reflections as we welcome in the New Year

Our Lambeth Service has grown in the last year and we now have a well established service delivered through children's centres across the borough.



to share their experiences and knowledge in our newsletter.

If you have an experience or newly sourced information you would like to share please do get in contact.

We hope to hear from more parents with ideas about what they would like to see from their local service and

We are looking forward to meeting more parents throughout the New Year.

Online equipment advice

Disability charity, the Disabled Living Foundation, has launched an advice and information website on equipment for children and young people with disabilities.

The site includes a star rating system showing whether suppliers have provided prices for the product and whether they have signed up to industry Codes of Conduct.

The site, Living Made Easy for Children, has been created by their occupational therapists and aims to bring together information on every product for children and young people with disabilities in one place.

Users can review products themselves, discuss products with other parents or ask for specific advice from occupational therapists.

www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/children

Contact a Family Lambeth workshops and events update

The recent Makaton workshop



Here at Contact a Family we have been busy running events and workshops, including a pampering session at Weir Road children's centre.

Parents enjoyed a massage with our therapist and were able to meet other parents on the day.

Makaton workshop

We also ran an introductory Makaton workshop for parents with the speech and language therapy team which was a great success.

If you missed out on this workshop further workshops are being held by the Speech and Language Therapy Service.

They are running a series of workshops for parents, carers and staff who work with children eligible for Speech and Language Therapy Services in Lambeth.

These workshops look at understanding and supporting children's communication skills and include introductory and follow on sessions in Makaton, PECS and supporting children with communication and social and emotional behavioural difficulties.

If you are a parent or professional and would like further information please contact the Course Administrator on [020 3049 5971](tel:02030495971).

Autism awareness

We also ran an Autism awareness training session for staff from 11 of the children's centres in the borough at Stockwell children's centre.

This was held with the aim of increasing children's centre staff's understanding of Autism, how it impacts on both behaviour and communication and the impact on parents.

Feedback was very positive and included "it helped me understand life from the point of view of a child with Autism" and, "Amazing training, for me it will have a huge impact on my professional practice".

Family guy time!

Calling all fathers – come and talk to other guys about being a dad and spend quality time playing with your child at St Stephen's Children Centre.

The Father's Group is being held every Friday between 11am and 12.30pm at South Lambeth Road Library and includes free days out and information on training and support services for dads.

Call Simon Roberts for further information on: [07538183167](tel:07538183167).



Forthcoming events

Drop-in sessions

We run advice sessions for parents and carers across the borough at the following children's centres. Please contact the office for further details.

The Mary Sheridan Centre
Wednesdays, 10-12am,
27 January, 24 February and
31 March.

Rosendale Children Centre
Tuesdays, 10-12am, 12 January,
9 February and 9 March.

Kingswood Children Centre
Mondays, 1-3pm, 18 January,
22 February and 22 March.

Down's Syndrome Saturday Playgroup

An informal drop-in session
open to all Parents and Carers

of children with Down's Syndrome.
At Chandlers Hall, Lambeth Walk,
Kennington, London SE11 6DU.

10-12 am on 9 January 2010
6 February 2010 & 6 March 2010

For more information please contact
Richard Hurry.
richard.hurry@infocorp.co.uk
Mobile: [07970 418199](tel:07970418199)

Benefit entitlement

We are running a workshop on
maximising benefit entitlement
which our helpline staff are
presenting at Kingswood children's
centre on 8 February 10am-2pm.

Workshops and pamper sessions

We will be holding a one day
pamper session for parents and

carers at Rosendale children's
centre on Thursday 25 February.

For more information on our
workshop and pamper session
and to book a place please call
the office on [020 7326 5270](tel:02073265270).

Creche places are available for
both the pamper session and
workshop and must also be
booked in advance.

Coffee mornings

We will be running a coffee
morning on 2 March between
10-11.30 am at Maytree children's
centre (with a creche).

This will be an informal meeting
open to all and will be an
opportunity to find out more
about our organisation and what
our local service has to offer.

Families with disabled children celebrate family life despite facing bureaucracy and prejudice

Families with disabled children have the same hopes and dreams as other families but often face bureaucracy and prejudice trying to achieve them.

That's the finding of a new Contact a Family report, *Our family, our future*, which features the stories of 30 UK families whose children are affected by a range of disabilities and rare conditions.

All families show strength, determination and creativity in overcoming the challenges and pressures they face and there is a real sense of overwhelming love and pride for their children.

Contact a Family would like to see families with disabled children given the same opportunities as others and is calling for:

- The Government to invest in a campaign to raise awareness of the needs of families with disabled children.
- A stronger focus on disability awareness taught in early years and schools.



- People working in a public facing role to be given disability and equality training – so that they can recognise the unique talents that children bring – because of their disability.

The *Our family, our future* report is accompanied by an exhibition of photographs which will be touring the UK.

For more information please see our national website www.cafamily.org.uk



The London families featured in the Our family, our future report.



Maintaining your relationship

New articles from One Plus One

One Plus One, the relationships research organisation, has launched a new series of articles on their website (details below) to help parents of disabled children strengthen their relationship.

These new articles have been written to help couples strengthen their relationship while facing the challenges and delights of having a child with additional needs.

They have been taken from a new book, *Special needs child: maintaining your relationship – staying connected through the highs*



and lows, by Victoria Dawson and Antonia Chitty.

The book is packed with advice from parents whose children have additional needs, to give the reader insight into how to maintain a relationship whilst recognising the importance of celebrating their child.

Find out more from thecoupleconnection.net



Saving scheme for parents of disabled children

The government has included families with disabled children in their plans for a savings scheme called the 'Saving Gateway'.

From 2010 the savings scheme will be open to people of working age on low incomes and in receipt of specified benefits, including Carer's Allowance. For every pound saved the government will give a contribution of 50p.

Savers will be able to pay up to £25 a month into their account for two years, which means a potential contribution from the government of £300 after the two year period. For more information see the website www.directgov.co.uk

New Warm Homes scheme launched

Measures to keep you warm this winter



The Warm Homes scheme provides a grant to make your home warmer, healthier and more energy efficient. The scheme provides a host of insulation and heating measures to eligible private sector householders who are in receipt of a specified qualifying benefit.

The Warm Homes website highlights qualifying scheme criteria and measures available to

households and households are now able to make online applications to the scheme.

Users can log onto the Warm Homes website to find out the latest news and events, and request a free Benefit Entitlement Check.

For further information call [0800 988 0559](tel:08009880559)

Unemployment creates new child poverty crisis

End Child Poverty calls on the government for additional financial support.

A new report published by the End Child Poverty campaign group, of which Contact a Family is a member, reveals that two million British children now have no parent in work and the number of children in families having to survive on benefits has jumped by 170,000 in a year.

Through Thick and Thin: Tackling Child Poverty in Hard Times also shows that child poverty is growing in affluent areas as well as those traditionally hard hit.

End Child Poverty is calling for the government to provide additional financial support for families on benefits or in low-paid jobs in the Pre-Budget Report in November. They are also calling for other measures listed in their Recession Recovery Package to be implemented, including more childcare, help for parents to work part time without losing benefits and financial help towards extra school costs.



End Child Poverty is calling for people to contact their local MP, the Chancellor and their local newspaper to press the government to invest in financial support for families in the Pre-Budget Report and action the Recession Recovery Package. Email your MP at <http://www.38degrees.org.uk/page/speakout/childpovertyPBR> Find out more at <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk>

Srabani Sen, Chief Executive of Contact a Family, said: "It costs three times as much to raise a disabled child, which means families with disabled children are more likely to be living in poverty and are more likely to have to rely on benefits so we fully support End Child Poverty's campaign."

Contribute to a new *Special Needs Handbook*

If you are a parent of a child with special needs and have a tip you would like to share with other parents and professionals you can contribute to a new *Special Needs Handbook* which is being compiled.

The *Special Needs Handbook* will be available freely over the

internet and will contain useful tips, ideas and solutions for day-to-day problems encountered by people living with, or supporting, a child or adult with a disability or special needs.

To send your tips or for more information e-mail: mail@specialneedshandbook.com

Blue Badge facilities online

Directgov's online map of parking facilities for Blue Badge holders now includes a rail map feature, with accessibility information for more than 2,000 train stations.

This will enable people who have a Blue Badge to plan journeys in the UK more easily and book direct assistance in advance.

The map has also been expanded to feature accessibility information for more than 160 major football stadiums – for a better experience at the game, home or away!



The mapping service has been developed by Directgov's Disabled People and Caring for Someone franchise, part of the Office for Disability's Communications Team.

Find out more at www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/MotoringAndTransport/DG_10038295

Links with other organisations

DisabledGo

Launched to mark the European Year of Disabled People, DisabledGo is a website service which will transform the daily choices available to millions of disabled people. It provides information on accessibility in a range of locations.

You enter the name of the town you are visiting and what type of facility you are looking for, such as parking or a café and it will give you details of venues. Visit www.disabledgo.info and try it for yourself.

Free fixes for London

The charity MERU, based in Epsom, Surrey, has been reporting a short waiting list for its small projects service which is limited to families with disabled children living in London and the South East.

This service offers a free 'speedy turnaround' service whereby MERU's volunteers will design and build, adjust or fix any pieces of 'low risk' equipment that you and the young people that you live or work with require. This includes repairing old disability equipment if the original manufacturer no longer services it, or adapting equipment that has been bought, but that doesn't quite work for its intended users. It could even be very simple activities like making table legs longer so you can fit a wheelchair underneath, or adding blocks or cushions to make equipment fit better.

For more information please contact: Vicky Cable, MERU Volunteer Facilitator & Outreach Project Leader
E-mail: vicky@meru.org.uk
Tel: 01372 725 203
Web: www.meru.org.uk/

AUKIDS

We have had a recommendation from one of our parents for a quarterly positive parenting magazine aimed at families with young children on the Autism spectrum called AuKids.

AuKids, the result of a creative partnership between parent and journalist Debby Elley and speech and language therapist Tori Houghton, has been written with you in mind – designed to provide instant advice, great ideas and practical solutions.

AuKids is available to download for £8 a year. Or you can have the quarterly magazine delivered to your door for just £10 a year.



Go to www.aukids.co.uk or email them directly at aukidsmag@googlemail.com.

Half price accessible activity holidays



Calvert Trust Exmoor provides accessible activity holidays for people with disability and have announced a very special offer.

Throughout February and March 2010 they are offering up to half price holidays – that's £138pp Monday to Friday, and just £95pp for a long weekend, including accommodation, meals and activities.

All activities are accessible and include climbing, abseiling, horse riding (not available at the weekend), sailing, kayaking, canoeing, archery and zipwire.

For more details visit their website www.calvert-trust.org.uk or telephone 01598 763221.



Mailing list

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Please remove me from your mailing list.

Name _____

Organisation (if applicable) _____

Address _____

_____ **Postcode** _____

Tel _____

Email _____

Please detach and return this form to:

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- I am: a parent/carer
 a parents' group contact
 a professional

Registered Office: 209-211 City Road, London EC1V 1JN. Registered Charity Number: 284912. Charity registered in Scotland No. SC039169. Company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales No. 1633333. VAT Registration No. GB 749 3846 82. ® Contact a Family is a registered trade mark. Although great care has been taken in the compilation and preparation of this newsletter to ensure accuracy, Contact a Family cannot take any responsibility for any errors or omissions. Contact a Family cannot accept responsibility for any goods or services mentioned in or enclosed with this newsletter.