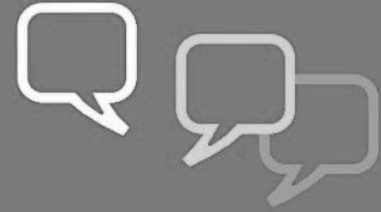


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The newsletter of Contact a Family Lewisham
www.cafamily.org.uk/lewisham



Here's What's Inside!

- News from the Office
- Workshops & Socials
- PIP News
- Ideas for the Summer
- News & Information



Contact a Family National Helpline

Freephone: 0808 808 3555
Textphone: 0808 808 3556

Mon - Fri: 10:00am – 4:00pm
Mon Eve: 5.30 - 7.30pm



News from the Office

Hello and good bye

We are sadly saying farewell to Carl Handley who has been a valuable member of the team as the Play Inclusion Project Administrator and Book Keeper. Due to a lack of funding we are no longer able to continue this position. I'm sure you will all join us in wishing Carl all the best, especially those of you who have met and got to know Carl at events.

This month we are welcoming Kharman Adhim as the new Information and Resource Officer based at Kaleidoscope. Kharman works for Contact a Family but will be based on the ground floor at Kaleidoscope.

A message from Kharman:

My name is Kharman Adhim. I am the new Contact a Family Information and Resource Officer. I am based at Kaleidoscope Children and Young People Centre, 32 Rushey Green, Catford, SE6 4JF. I work five days a week, Monday to Friday from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm.

My role is to help parents, carers of children or young people with disabilities or additional needs in accessing information and resources around disability – anything from information on benefits to finding support groups. I provide advice and information and signpost parents/carers to where they can access help and services for their child.

An electronic system is available for parents and carers who would like to access information from the internet.

I hope to see you at Kaleidoscope.

Phone: 07505900402

Parents!! – We would like to have some parents on the monitoring group for this Kaleidoscope post. It will be 12:00 – 12:30pm at Kaleidoscope on the first Weds of every month. If you can help please phone Jocelyn on 020 7635 6333

Free Massage

Would you like to spend an hour relaxing and unwinding?

We now have a massage chair in the office. Parents can book in to use the massage chair for a one hour session every Wednesday between 11:00am & 3:00pm. There will be no crèche facilities so please do not bring your children.

To book please phone the office on (020) 7635 6333

Free Computer and Internet Access

We now have a computer in the office that parents can use. It will be available for a one hour session between 11:00am & 3:00pm every Wednesday.

To book please phone the office on (020) 7635 6333

If you need to use the computer at another time we may be able to arrange this. Please phone the office first.

Contact a Family Workshops & Socials



July social Kelly Pudney Assistant Co-ordination Manager from Door 2 Door; Wearside service centre will be giving a talk.

Wednesday 9th July 2008

12pm – 2pm

Venue: Contact a Family Lewisham, Friendsbury Road, Brockley, London SE4 2LB

September's workshop will be a welcome Stress Management & Basic Massage technique session for all to enjoy. This is a whole day session 10-3pm there will only be 15 places, so book early to guarantee a space.

Tuesday 23rd September 2008

10:00am – 3:00pm

Venue: Kaleidoscope, Rushey Green, Catford SE6

Places are limited and booking is essential

To book your place please phone Dawn on 020 7635 6333 or fill in the booking form sent with the PIP playscheme allocations information.

PIP News

Hi All!

Well we're all still waiting for the summer to kick in weather-wise, but let's hope that the sun will be out shining all through the holidays.

In the past couple of months, the PIP team have been out spreading the word about Contact a Family and the Play Inclusion Project to many services, ranging from Children's Centres, pre school groups, primary and secondary schools, libraries - you name it, we went there! Our visits were a great success with all service providers that we met really keen to take up training that we are offering to help them to become more inclusive. Our belief is that disabled children and young people should have the right to be part of any local play environment they choose - and that through focusing on what works in including disabled children in play settings we consistently uncover what works in including any child in any setting.

The summer information for all the holiday schemes that we've been working with has now gone out to families, it is a little later than in previous years due to the fact that we have waited longer than usual for providers to let us know whether they'll be running. Hopefully the wait will be worth it as there is a much wider choice this year of activities for all ages.

Sadly we say goodbye to Carl who was the PIP administrator. We will all greatly miss him at the office as I'm sure many of the families will that met him over the last 18 months on events.

Wishing you all a brilliant summer.

Aly & Jennifer



Ideas for the Summer

Swimming

As you will be aware, Parkwood Leisure in partnership with Lewisham Council is building a new swimming pool at Wavelength Leisure Centre which was due to open in August 2008. However, these works have not been completed, so for safety reasons the closure of Wavelengths will be extended until September 08. During this time the venue for the swim sessions was to be temporarily moved to Ladywell pools, however, Ladywell pools has been closed on the grounds of health and safety and will be closed over the summer. Therefore as both Wavelengths and Ladywell pools are temporarily closed Contact a Family swimming sessions for July 5 and August 2 have been cancelled.

Therefore the monthly swim sessions will commence on **Sat 6 September 2008.**
6:00pm – 7:00pm

- Sat 5th July - CANCELLED
- Sat 2nd Aug - CANCELLED
- Sat 6th Sept – sessions resume at Wavelengths
- Sat 4th Oct
- Sat 1st Nov

Bexley Beavers Swimming Club

FREE fun swimming sessions for disabled people and their immediate family including siblings.

The Club meets on Friday at Splashworld, Crook Log, Bexleyheath and has the use of both the teaching and large pools.

The sessions run on Friday evenings from 6pm – 7:30pm and are a fun splash session for the whole family to enjoy. A hoist is available, and all families need to do is turn up for the start of the session and register at the desk situated just outside the changing rooms.

Crook Log Leisure Centre, Brampton Road, Bexleyheath, Kent DA7 4HH

Downham Leisure Centre Swimming Sessions

This is a swimming club for disabled people named Seals Swimming Club. They are fully insured and have a Christmas dinner and a party at Christmas. Family members are also welcome. They have the use of the whole pool. There is also a lift for disabled people to get into the pool.

Where: The swimming is at Downham Leisure Centre, 7-9 Moorside Road, Bromley, BR1 5EP

When: It starts at 6.30 on a Friday evening and finishes at 8.00pm.

Cost: The entry fee to the pool is £1.10 at the present there is no membership but a passport size photo is required.

Contact: Any further info contact Bob Gilham 020 8516 4617

Ideas for the Summer

Love Catford!

Catford Shopping Centre

Mon 14 - Thur 17 July

3.30-5pm

Come along for a bouncy castle, face painting, drawing competition and community keep fit sessions.

Free

For more information call 020 8613 9133 or visit www.catfordonline.org.uk

All Stars summer kids' club

Venue TBC

Mon 4 - Fri 8 August

10am-12 noon

Bouncy castle, crafts, games and prizes, music, fun, sports, quizzes, refreshments.

Free

For more information call 020 8613 9133 or visit www.catfordonline.org.uk

Catford Library

Phone: 020 8314 6399



Sat 5 July, 2.15-3pm - Make a healthy salad plate with surprises!

Ages 5-7, 8-11 and 12-15

Sat 26 July, 2.15-3pm

Make a beautiful bird mask

Ages 5-7 and 8-11



Mon 28 July, 2-3pm

Sports quiz to test your knowledge

Ages 8-11

Wed 13 August, 2-3pm

Create an Olympic rings mobile for your bedroom

5-7 years and 8-11 years

Torridon Library

Phone: 020 8698 1590

Tue 29 July, 11.30am-12.30pm

Help us decorate the library with your own Olympic flags

Ages 5-7 and 8-11

Tue 7 July, 2.30-3.30pm

Create your own Olympic torch

Ages 5-7 and 8-11

Ideas for the Summer

The Mayor's Thames Festival

The Mayor's Thames Festival is a spectacular, free, outdoor annual celebration for London and the River Thames. An exciting mix of arts, spectacle and entertainment attracts people of all ages to what has grown into London's largest family-friendly festival.

The Mayor's Thames Festival transforms unusual spaces on and around the River Thames with a mixture of street arts, carnival, pyrotechnics, illuminations, art installations, river events, massed choirs, circus and music.

The finale is a spectacular illuminated Night Carnival on the streets of the capital, a vivid mix of masquerade, dance, music, illuminated sculptures and fantastic costumes, followed by spectacular fireworks fired from the centre of the river itself.

The Mayor's Thames Festival 2008 takes place on **Saturday 13 & Sunday 14 September, 12midday-10pm**. For more information visit www.thamesfestival.org/

Waterloo Carnival



11 Jul 08

Follow the yellow brick road to Waterloo.....Make the most of summer with Wizard of Oz themed entertainment for all ages with interactive stalls, street performers plus music and cabaret continuing into the evening, plus a fabulous carnival procession! Noon-10pm
FREE

Utsavam Fest

Sun 27 July, 1-6pm

The Utsavam Festival will feature the best in Indian music, dance, food, crafts and more, linking into the Horniman's ground breaking Utsavam-Music from India exhibition. **In the gardens**
FREE



Horniman Museum & Gardens, 100 London Rd, Forest Hill, London, SE23 3PQ

Ideas for the Summer

Brilliant - WIMBLEDON, London

A dazzling new show for 3-4 year olds Imagine it's bedtime. Imagine it's time to turn out the light. Imagine the moon outside, and the stars, bright. Imagine the flickering of a thousand candles, or the sparkle of a grand chandelier. Imagine being in a place that is made of light. Imagine how brilliant that would be. Combining live music, beautiful lighting, movement, and captivating imagery, Brilliant is the latest in a series of acclaimed projects made for the very young by Fevered Sleep, one of the UK's leading creators of theatre. Brilliant premiered at Polka in March this year and returns following a national and international tour.

When: Wed 9 Jul '08, to Sat 16 Aug '08

Times: Usually 2 shows per day- see

www.polkatheatre.com for full list of show times

Ticket prices: £5.50 - £7.50

Where: Polka Theatre, WIMBLEDON, London
Polka Theatre for Children
240 The Broadway, Wimbledon SW191SB
020 8543 4888 / boxoffice@polkatheatre.com



Unicorn Theatre

Nottingham Playhouse Roundabout presents

The Whales Tooth

Adapted by Gill Brigg from the Arctic Fox by Mary Ellis for Ages 11+



Designed for people with profound and multiple learning difficulties, complex disabilities or an autism spectrum disorder – The Whale's Tooth uses interactive, sensory theatre to engage the

audience in a play about relationships, journeys, loss and reconciliation.

The play follows the story of Canny, a young Inuit girl, as she goes on a long and dangerous journey through snow, wind and ice to look for her missing father. The production takes place in a large igloo-shaped tent, transporting you to a stunning arctic environment rich in sound and light.

Where: Unicorn Theatre (Clare Theatre) 147 Tooley Street, More London Southwark London SE1 2HZ

When: 2 - 20 July 2008,

Tickets: Children £6.50

Running time 1 hour

Each ticket includes 1 free ticket for a companion

Additional observer tickets can be bought for £6.50 or Concessions £5

<http://www.unicorntheatre.com/pl143.html>

Please Note: There is no online booking for this production. Please call the Box Office on 020 7645 0560.

Ideas for the Summer

Beyond Boundaries Live Exhibition

Please find below some information about an exciting FREE event taking place in Maidstone (Kent) on the 25th & 26th July at the Kent Showground. The event will be offering endless opportunities for disabled people of all ages, their families, carers and professionals to touch, test and compare the latest commodities.

For every registered visitor, the organisers are going to donate £5 to the National Autistic Society's three Branches in Kent!



To get the £5 per visitor, visitors will need to register for a place online (www.beyondboundarieslive.co.uk) or via telephone by calling 0208 971 8286 and use the following special promotional code: NAS005. Please find below some further information about the event.

Beyond Boundaries will be presenting a wide range of products, services and exciting interactive activities to the disability sector including sports, the arts, career advice, cooking, holidays, rock climbing, test driving, kids activities and lots more. Plus visitors can attend a series of seminars featuring celebrities who have overcome their disabilities in order to achieve amazing feats of endeavour. Including the face of BBC Beyond Boundaries expeditions, **Ken Hames**, Olympian **Ade Adepitan**, X factor finalist **Kerry McGregor**, 11 times Paralympic gold medal winner **Dame Tanni Grey Thompson** and lots more. Visitors can also attend a series of Healthcare seminars hosted by various professionals such as the College of Occupational Therapists and Kids Aware. It's an event not to be missed!

For more information please visit the website at www.beyondboundarieslive.co.uk.

British Sign Language - Assisted Family Day

Sat 16 Aug, 11 - 4pm

Experience our Hands On, Art and Craft and Family Storytelling workshops with support of BSL interpretation. Let us whisk you off to other worlds and cultures using objects, craft, music and storytelling.

FREE ADMISSION

Check at the Information Desk on the day for the location and timing of each session.

Open to all. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Hands On and Art & Craft Sessions are ticketed, with limited spaces. Tickets are available half an hour before the start of each session from the Information Desk.

Horniman Museum & Gardens, 100 London Rd, Forest Hill, London, SE23 3PQ

News & Information

BIG NEWS!

Parents - have a say in how Lewisham spends 2.4 Million on short breaks!

Aiming High for Disabled Children – what you need to know

The government has a programme of transformation for services for disabled children. It's called Aiming High for Disabled Children. It's big and you need to know how it will affect you.

The programme has some big money attached to it:

- **£370m** to deliver a step change in the provision of **short breaks**
- **£35m** to pilot accessible **childcare**
- **£19m** for a **Transition Support Programme**,
- **£5m** to help more parents get involved in shaping services at a local level, including through **parents forums**.

From this the short breaks money coming to Lewisham is £60,000 (08/09), £601,700 (09/10), £1, 760, 700 (10/11). These figures are revenue plus capital.

For the first time ever there is a national indicator for services for disabled children. This means that local authorities will be required to monitor these services and report to national government. The indicator will ask parents about their experience of services for disabled children (aged 0 - 19) and how satisfied they are. It will be measured through a survey which is currently being developed and should be available from autumn 2008.

These changes are happening now. How this extra money will be spent is being decided now in each local authority. This is the best opportunity we have had in years to improve the lives of our disabled children.

Contact Kharman Adhim at Kaleidoscope on 07505900402/
Kharman.Adhim@lewishampct.nhs.uk to become involved in the decision making process as a parent.

To find out more go to: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00319/

To subscribe to a free e-newsletter to keep up to date with these important changes go to: <http://lists.cafamily.org.uk/lists/> .

Contact a Family will be working to help local areas across England to develop parent participation. We will do this under the banner of 'Together for Disabled Children'.



EDCM Reminder

If you are interested, sign up to be a supporter of the Every Disabled Child Matters Campaign. Their web address as is www.edcm.org.uk

News & Information

Broadening Horizons Project – Free access to leisure

Broadening Horizons is a new and exciting project funded by the Big Lottery Fund. The aim of this project is to broaden opportunities for key priority groups of children and young people in Lewisham giving them free access to a range of opportunities, which includes services such as Leisure activities, Library resources such as DVD's, videos, books etc, performing arts activities and other types of clubs providing access to sports equipment etc. This provision will be made available through the Lewisham *One Card*, which is a swipe card that will enable children and young people to access a range of services in Lewisham at a discounted rate or free of charge. You can phone the project co-ordinator to check whether you are currently eligible.

We have recently launched the service which is available to looked after children and in the second year of funding, the project will roll out to children and young people with a disability but before long all children and young people will be able to get a Lewisham One Card. The scheme is managed by the Broadening Horizons project at Lewisham Council.

For further information contact:

Charlene Brown

Broadening Horizons Project Co-ordinator

Direct line: 020 8314 3369

Lewisham's Directorate for Children & Young People

Email: Charlene.Brown@lewisham.gov.uk

Help to Pay for Childcare

You may wish to consider using Direct Payments to purchase some help for your child to attend a local club or play scheme. Local authorities can give payments instead of services, to allow disabled people and carers to buy in the services they have been assessed as needing. Direct payments are intended to promote the independence of parents and their disabled children who would like to manage their own social care arrangements. The amount you receive should be enough to meet all costs including tax and national insurance, as well as the fee for a police check. Any payments you receive must be used to pay for services to meet the assessed needs. To find out about Direct Payments in Lewisham phone: 020 8314 7239

There are a number of other options available to help pay for childcare that you may be eligible for. These include The Childcare Affordability Programme, some charitable trusts, workplace child-care and childcare vouchers, Disability Living Allowance, Carers Allowance, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and New Deal-Childcare Subsidy. Go to www.cafamily.org.uk/factsheets.html for the relevant Contact a Family factsheets about various benefits, Finding and Paying for Childcare and the Tax Credits Guide. Alternatively, contact us on 020 7635 6333 for copies.

News & Information

Getting in Touch with Other Parents and Carers

Do you sometimes feel isolated as the parent of a disabled child? You're not alone. If you would like to link up with another local parent or family give Dawn (our Family Worker) a call on 02076356333

www.makingcontact.org/

When you or your family is affected by disability or a medical condition, it can sometimes be an isolating experience. Often being able to contact someone who knows what you are going through can be the biggest help but how do you find those people?

Contact a Family has been putting families with disabled children in touch with each other for over 25 years. **MakingContact.org** complements our existing services and gives you the chance to safely and easily get in touch with others who are affected by the same or similar disabilities or medical conditions as you are.

With thousands of medical conditions and disabilities listed and thousands of people signed up and looking for contact, this site could help you find the people you are looking for. It's free*, safe and easy to use.

* Finding people, posting your details and replying to others is free. We make a nominal annual charge if you want to initiate contact with others.

New website and forum for carers

A new website and forum has been developed for carers whose domestic situation can often be isolating, and those who work in the care sector for whom unsociable hours and stressful situations may affect their social life.

Membership of the site is free. See Web: www.carersconnect.com

Disabled Young People – Freedom to live

A report on Disabled young people moving towards adulthood by the disability charity Livability (the new name for merged charities John Grooms and the Shaftesbury Society) found widespread failings in terms of education, work, housing, advocacy services, friendship and social opportunities. The year-long investigation by the charity which led to the publication of the report 'Freedom to live' involved Disabled young people and their families from across the UK. As a result of the findings the charity has created a panel of young people to contribute to the ongoing development of the charity and to inform the wider policy arena. For further details go to: www.livability.org.uk

News & Information

Fair Play – England’s first National play strategy

Following the announcements made in the Children’s Plan, the Government has now launched its consultation on England’s play strategy (3rd April). The government is proposing to invest £235 over the next 3 years - £10m more than the Children’s Plan had originally promised. All councils will get funding for play (3500 play areas); with 30 pathfinder authorities getting an extra £2 million for adventure playgrounds, and 44 play builder authorities receiving an additional £1million for play areas. The strategy also promises to develop a national indicator for play, work with planners and developers to make neighbourhoods child-friendly and take steps to develop the Play workforce (see item below).

The National Play Strategy signifies the biggest ever policy commitment and investment in children’s play that England has ever seen. The strategy promises ‘a variety of places for play, free of charge, supervised and unsupervised, in every residential area.’ With reference to Disabled Children, the document states: ‘Disabled Children are a part of their local community, and inclusive, safe and attractive play spaces are an important part of the provision that enable them to interact and participate in activities with their peers... It is essential that facilities are accessible to disabled children and that the skills, attitudes and behaviours of those organising provision support the inclusion of all children, rather than acting as a barrier.’

Fair Play: A consultation on the play strategy

Proposals in the strategy aim to create strong communities which have a variety of places for children to play and in which they have a stake through their active involvement in design and decision making. Government proposes to make public space more child-friendly through a variety of actions including placing a stronger focus on spaces for play in the planning system; training for people who design and manage public space; supporting local community ownership of space suitable for play; and supporting more positive relationships between adults and children in public space. Closing Date: **Friday 18 July**

www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/conDetails.cfm?consultationId=1543

Extending Inclusion

The Council for Disabled Children has launched a new guide to support the inclusion of Disabled Children in children’s centres and extended schools. It also includes useful case studies and a CD of resources. This new guide will support planners, managers and staff in all services to enable Disabled children and their families to lead ordinary lives. www.ncb.org.uk/cdc

A Transition Guide for All Services

New government guidance outlining key information for professionals about the transition process for Disabled young people has been launched. The document recommends that health and other professionals working with Disabled children approaching adulthood should put together plans detailing the workers who are involved, the support the young person needs and when they will get it. To download the guidance go to:

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/TransitionGuide.pdf

News & Information

Urgent call...

...for families with disabled children to get advice on their benefits and tax credits entitlements

Contact a Family has identified that some families with disabled children could miss out on vital income due to imminent changes in benefit rules.

From 27 October 2008 Incapacity Benefit and income support for people with health problems will be replaced by Employment Support Allowance (ESA).

Families with a disabled teenager born before 27th October 1992 have a choice – they can either claim the existing benefits now or wait and claim ESA at a later date. Some will be worse off on the new ESA depending on individual circumstances

Sarah Rush, Head of Advice at Contact a Family, said: “We know that families with disabled children face enormous financial challenges with more than half living in poverty. It is therefore vitally important that families get advice now, to find out how these benefits changes will affect them.

“The Contact a Family freephone helpline – 0808 808 3555 - is staffed by benefits experts and trained parent advisers who can help to maximise a family’s income.”

Contact a Family working with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), has also identified there are 28,000 families in the UK who are missing out on much needed extra income through additional tax credits. Families who have not informed HMRC that they receive Disability Living Allowance could be missing out on this additional income, which is paid in addition to existing tax credits they may already receive.

If you feel you might be affected by either of these issues or simply want to check that you are getting all the money you are entitled to, telephone the Contact a Family helpline – 0808 808 3555.

Flexible working rights for parents of older children

Plans to extend flexible working to parents of children aged up to 16 have been announced and the government intends to introduce the reforms from April 2009. It is thought 4.5 million more parents will be able to ask for flexible working arrangements.

For more information visit: www.berr.gov.uk/employment/whats-new/index.html

Free Money Advice Sessions with CAB

At Kaleidoscope Centre, Lewisham for people who are caring for a sick or disabled child.

For an appointment phone: 07948447926

Email: fif@camdencabservice.org.uk

News & Information



workingfamilies.org.uk

***Getting into Work* is a new Working Families guide for the parents and carers of disabled children**

Working Families, the work-life balance charity is to publish a new guide to help the parents and carers of disabled children who are interested in getting back into work or in stepping up their current work. ***Getting into Work*** has been written to answer the particular questions of parents and carers of disabled children.

Getting into Work draws on the extensive experience of Working Families' network of working parents and carers of disabled children as well as helpful advice from those experienced in recruiting. The illustrated pages include information on how people can use their experience as the carer of a disabled child when applying for jobs.

The tailored guide provides reassurance that *it is possible* to combine work and caring responsibilities. It also contains information and tips on searching for jobs, completing CVs and going for interviews. *Getting into Work* advises parents and carers who are thinking about returning to work on subjects such as finding childcare, their rights to time-off and flexible working and the financial implications of paid work on their benefits.

Getting into Work includes advice on every area a job-seeker needs to know about including:

- How to audit your skills, experience and interests
- Where to find jobs
- How to write a CV and complete applications
- Interview skills
- Self-employment
- Sources of education and training
- Benefits available
- Rights to flexible work and emergency/parental leave
- Childcare

For further information contact: Liz Whitehead, Media Officer, Working Families. Press@workingfamilies.org.uk . Order via the Family Zone of the Working Families website www.workingfamilies.org.uk or by emailing office@workingfamilies.org.uk or by calling 0207 7253 7243

The *Getting into Work* guide is free to parents or carers of disabled children (one per household). There is a charge of £5 per copy for organisations. For details of bulk orders, contact janet.mearns@workingfamilies.org.uk

Working Families is the UK's leading work-life balance campaign organisation. It supports and gives a voice to working parents and carers, whilst also helping employers create workplaces which encourage work-life balance for everyone. Low income families can call the free legal helpline for advice on flexible work, childcare and benefits. Call 0800 013 0313. Working Families has a network of parents and carers of disabled children, Waving not Drowning.

News & Information

Dads' website and information service launched

The Dad Info card and website cover all aspects of pregnancy, birth and new parenthood from a dad's perspective, including the most important health issues for their partner and baby. There is information on paternity leave and fathers' legal rights, financial help available to families, and entertainment features such as the 'best toys for dads'. Visit: www.dad.info for more information.

Put parents in control of special educational needs policy - new report

A new report on special educational needs (SEN), entitled 'Learning the hard way', sets out a number of measures to ensure that SEN policy is driven by parental choice, rather than 'expert' opinion, in the future. In particular, it recommends turning 'statements' for children with the most severe learning difficulties into 'personal budgets' for their parents to manage together with schools and reforming the statementing process. Read the full report at Web: <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/libimages/385.pdf>

Win a laptop in the Contact a Family video competition

Contact a Family is calling on parents to create a short video on the theme of 'Me and my disabled child', for the chance to win a Dell laptop or a Nikon 'Coolpix' digital camera.

The competition has been launched alongside Contact a Family's new channel on popular video sharing website YouTube where all entries will be made available to view.

To enter the Contact a Family competition you should submit your video clip by August 31st 2008. Your entry should be no longer than three minutes and show what life is like for you as a family or parent caring for a disabled child.

Hobbs the Printers have very kindly donated fabulous prizes for the competition - one Dell laptop for the winner and five Nikon 'Coolpix' digital cameras for the runners up.

For information on how to submit your video clips, more details about the competition and competition rules visit Web: http://www.cafamily.org.uk/video_competition_tandc.pdf or telephone Contact a Family's New Media Advisor, Louis Yung-Hoi on Tel: 020 7068 8727.

Bliss needs your help

We frequently hear from parents who feel that they “lost out” on their allotted time while their baby was being cared for in a neonatal unit. Allied with this is the financial burden that is associated with having a premature or sick baby (recent Bliss research estimated an extra £189 per week on average during the time their baby stays in hospital).

“One of the problems Bliss often hears about from parents of premature or sick babies is that they lose out on some of their maternity and paternity leave while their child is in hospital. For those without sympathetic employers, this period of time can be financially as well as emotionally straining.

We would like to find out more about parents’ experiences of maternity and paternity leave and to discuss how we campaign on this issue. To do this we will be holding a focus group in central London on Friday 1 August. If you would like to come along, or even if you can’t make it, email Peder Clark at pederc@bliss.org.uk for more details on how you can contribute. Bliss will cover reasonable childcare and travel expenses.”

Please call Peder Clark, Campaigns and Policy Officer, on 020 7378 5742 if you have any queries.

Contact a Family on MySpace, Facebook, Bebo and Second Life

Contact a Family has increased its online support in an exciting new project – creating groups and networks for families with disabled children on MySpace, Facebook, and Bebo. We’ve also set up a virtual office on Second Life (a popular online ‘virtual world’).

We are also one of the first UK charities to open an advice centre in virtual world Second Life where a trained parent adviser is available to answer your queries every Wednesday from 10am-4pm.

So why not look us up when you’re visiting Facebook, MySpace, Bebo and Second Life.

Contact a Family Facebook Page

www.facebook.com/pages/Contact-a-Family/25040545213?ref=ts

Contact a Family Facebook Fanpage

www.facebook.com/pages/Contact-a-Family/25040545213

Contact a Family MySpace page

www.myspace.com/contactafamily

Contact a Family Bebo page

www.bebo.com/contactafamily

Contact a Family office on SecondLife

www.secondlife.com - You’ll be able to find us using these co-ordinates: Aloft Island 19.40.22. Alternatively, you can search for Contact a Family in Second Life or add our avatar, Advisor Somerflek to your friends list.

Please note the views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Contact a Family