

contact a family
for families with disabled children

in contact



The newsletter of Contact a Family Northern Ireland
www.cafamily.org.uk/nireland

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Summer Newsletter Issue No 17

With thanks to the Children's Fund

New Manager For Contact a Family Northern Ireland

Frances Murphy has started as Northern Ireland Manager at Contact a Family NI.

Frances has seventeen years experience in both a political and community background and she is very aware of the issues on the ground. Frances has nineteen years experience in the political and community sectors, particularly in relation to children's and disability issues.

Frances has a degree in Human Communications and Social Work experience and is focussed on the importance of communication for families of disabled children. She is also a keen supporter of a parent/user led approach to service planning for disability.

With this in mind Frances is determined to drive Contact a Family NI forward to become the leading disability charity in Northern Ireland, with disabled children achieving their full potential, and to empower families to live the lives they want to lead.

You can reach Frances at the office on Tel 028 92 627552

New Chief Executive at Contact a Family.

Srabani Sen, former Chief Executive of Alcohol Concern, has started as Chief Executive at Contact a Family.

With an extensive background in communications and public affairs, Srabani is determined to see Contact a Family through to its next stage of development.

Srabani said: 'I am thrilled to be working at Contact a Family. It is a great organisation, which has achieved much success since its inception, due to the hard work, energy and commitment of staff. I am looking forward to seeing it through to its next stage of development.'

Inside this edition

Find out more about Changes in Benefits, NI Policy, Emergency Care Project Rolled Out Across the Province, CaF News and more.....

Contact Family Helpline 0808 808 3555

Benefits Update

Changes in Benefits from 1st April

DLA has two main parts, called 'components'. The care component is paid for children who need extra care and attention. It can be paid at one of three weekly rates, depending on how much extra help your child needs. The new rates from April 2008 are:

lower care	£17.75
middle care	£44.85
higher care	£67.00

The mobility component can be paid for children who have problems walking or getting around in unfamiliar areas. It is paid at one of two weekly rates. The new rates from April 2008 are:

lower mobility	£17.75
higher mobility	£46.75

Carer's Allowance (CA)

From 1 October 2007, the maximum amount of money that carers in Great Britain will be allowed to earn without losing their entitlement to Carer's Allowance (CA) will rise from £87 to £95 a week, after taking off certain childcare costs and other expenses such as income tax and national insurance contributions.

Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Rights

The standard rate of Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Adoption Pay and Statutory Paternity Pay is now £117.18 pw or 90% of wages (whichever is less).

The lower earnings limit for these payments is now £90 pw.

The earnings limit for Carers Allowance is currently £95 per week. This figure is likely to increase in October 2008.

Child Tax Credit

If you qualify for Child Tax Credit but not Working Tax Credit, the amount of tax credit will be reduced if your annual income for tax credit purposes is more than £15,575. If you do qualify for Working Tax Credit the amount of tax credit will be reduced if your annual income is more than £6,420.

Job Grant

A job grant can be claimed by people who have been on Job Seekers Allowance for regardless of whether it is the contribution based or income based form of this benefit. In addition there are no longer restrictions on 18-24 year olds claiming a job grant.

Extra Help in pilot areas

The In-Work Credit of £40 pw for lone parents moving into work should apply to all parts of the UK from April 2008. This payment is made for the first year of a return to work. Lone parents in London will receive £60 rather than £40. A similar payment known as the Return to Work Credit, applies to people moving into work after claiming benefits on the basis of incapacity for work.

Maximum for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) now GBP30,000

From April 2008 the maximum for Disabled Facilities Grants in England and Northern Ireland has increased from GBP25,000 to GBP30,000. Help above this limit might be available under the local authority's discretionary powers.

For more information about DFGs ring the Contact a Family helpline or visit:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/HomeAndHousingOptions/YourHome/DG_4000642

News from Northern Ireland

Who Speaks for Us? (NI).

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People has published a report showing a lack of advocacy for disabled children and young people with complex needs - 50% have no-one speaking out on their behalf. See Web: <http://www.niccy.org/article.aspx?menuid=668> .

NI - Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) proposals for health and social care consultation.

This DHSSPS consultation document sets out proposals to reform the health and social care system. The proposals aim to improve health and social care services, and the health and well-being of the people of Northern Ireland, by making services more efficient, more patient and client centred, with a stronger focus on prevention and primary care. See Web: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/hss/rpa-home.htm> .

Emergency Care Project Rolled Out

Health Minister Michael McGimpsey has launched a new Emergency Care Project for patients attending A&E and Out-of-Hours services.

The Southern Health and Social Care Trust will be the first in Northern Ireland to introduce the NI Emergency Care Record (NIECR).

Based on a system successfully operating in Scotland since 2005, the Emergency Care Record is a summary of patient information taken from G.P. practices. It includes the patient's date of birth and gender, their address and phone number, current medication and known allergies.

Launching the new project during a visit to the GP out of hours centre based at Craigavon Area Hospital, the Minister said "Most people imagine that if they need medical help in the night or at the week-end and are treated by staff in an Out-of Hours setting, or at an A&E Department, the staff there will have access to their medical records. This is not the case. All of the diagnoses and treatments carried out by the clinicians on what the patient tells the doctors, for example, what they are allergic to or what medication they are currently taking, and any information that is available from previous visits. But this carries a degree of risk to patients, particularly when they may be too ill, confused or traumatised to remember.

"The NI Emergency Care Record will now make key information from patients' medical records, held by GP practices, available to GP Out-of-Hours and Accident and Emergency Staff"

The scheme will be extended to the Accident and Emergency and GP Out-of-Hours Services at Craigavon Area Hospital over the coming months before hopefully being rolled out across the rest of Northern Ireland.

Assembly Debates Carers Allowance

David McNarry MLA, the Ulster Unionist Chief Whip and Assembly Member for Strangford, has introduced a Private Members Bill into the Northern Ireland Assembly to prevent Carer's Allowance being cut when a carer receives the state pension. This is the first Private Members Bill of the reformed Assembly.

Commenting on the proposed bill, Helen Ferguson, Director of Carers Northern Ireland said -

"We are delighted to see our Assembly Members tackle the overlapping benefits rule for carers who are pensioners" said Helen Ferguson, Director of Carers Northern Ireland. "Carers at our conference last autumn highlighted this issue as a greatest injustice to older carers. They feel that older carers are not being recognised for what they do, and they want to see the law changed.

"Ideally we would prefer to see a complete overhaul of benefits for carers across the UK" continued Helen. "We hope that the review of the 'National Carers Strategy', which will shortly report to Gordon Brown, will deliver the changes that carers need. However any developments by the Northern Ireland Assembly will add to the pressure on Government to bring carers benefits into the 21st Century.

"This Bill will also challenge the Assembly to 'put their money where their mouth is' when it comes to properly supporting Northern Ireland's 185,000 carers."

The Bill passed its first stage on 31st March.

Carers Week 2008 runs from 9-15 June. This year it will highlight the impact caring can have on your health and well-being.

Sports and Leisure News

Sport grants programme for disabled children launched.

The Caudwell Children 'Enable Sport' programme has been launched by Caudwell Children in partnership with Barclays Wealth. Initially a three-month programme it will fund adapted sports equipment for gifted and talented disabled children to enable them to participate in competitive sport. Children with sporting potential across the UK will receive donations such as individually adapted sports wheelchairs worth around GBP3,000 and other equipment like hand bike tricycles worth around GBP1,000. Application packs can be requested by contacting the charity on Tel: 0845 300 1348 or <mailto:charity@caudwellchildren.com>.

Do it 4 Real Summer Camps.

Do it 4 Real is a residential programme for 10 to 16-year-olds from all walks of life, aimed at providing them with structured adventure and creative activities during the summer. Young people contribute to the cost of their stay, with subsidised rates for economically disadvantaged young people. The scheme enables young people to mix with their peers and have a fun-filled time in a safe environment while enjoying new and challenging experiences. Camps include Performing Arts, Watersports Plus, Action Adventure and Make Me a Star. For more information visit Web: <http://www.doit4real.co.uk>.

UK School Games ban on children with learning difficulties competing is dropped.

A campaign by Mencap, parents, the UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability and other agencies has overturned an International Paralympics ban on children with learning difficulties taking part in the UK School Games. It was dropped after the threat of legal action by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The Trust has now agreed the young people can compete in bespoke athletics, swimming and table tennis events at future games. See Web:

http://www.mencap.org.uk/html/enewsletter/2008/2_feb/uk_games.asp.

Self-Catering Holiday Centre

For families that include a child or adult with a communication impairment/autism. The Thomas Centre, Louth, Lincolnshire. www.thethomascentre.org.uk or telephone: 01507 363463

Holiday Accommodation with adaptations for physical disabilities. Organic and Eco-friendly. Clynyfw, West Wales. <http://www.clynfyw.com> or telephone 01239 841236

Shopping Website and Facilities Directory for families of children with special needs. www.special-needs-kids.co.uk

Mental Health Legal Advice for Children

The Children's Law Centre now has a dedicated mental health law service for children and young people, following the appointment of Kiera Duddy. The post is dedicated to advocating for the rights of children and young people with mental health issues:

- Offering legal advice, information and representation to children and their parents who are experiencing problems accessing appropriate child and adolescent mental health services;
- Giving advice and on some occasions representation to children and young people and their parents when the child and young person has been detained under the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986;
- Providing advice and on some occasions representation to children and young people applying to the Mental Health Review Tribunal;
- Raising awareness of the children's rights issues related to child and adolescent mental health;
- Advocating for the implementation of the Bamford Review recommendations and the reform of mental health legislation and policy with regard the children and young people;
- Working in partnership with others to promote children's rights in mental health law and practice

Contact Kiera Duddy at the Children's Law Centre 028 9024 570

Contact a Family News

Help other parents of disabled children deal with bullying

Contact a Family is joining forces with Parentline Plus to produce a guide for parents of disabled children to help them cope if their child is being bullied and we're looking for your help.

Research suggests that more than one in three disabled children have been bullied at school and many parents can feel they have nowhere to turn. Bullying can take place at school, on school transport, in playgrounds, at leisure activities, online; bullying can take place anywhere.

The guide will be a tool for parents to help them cope if their child is being bullied. As well as containing information about the action schools should be taking and the legislation around bullying, it will include parents' experiences.

If your child has been bullied or is being bullied because of their disability and you'd like to share your experiences to help other parents please get in touch. We want to know how you spotted signs of bullying, the strategies you used to deal with the bullying, whether they worked or not, how you coped with the situation and any advice you would like to give to other parents in similar situations. Your experiences will be used anonymously in the guide.

If you would like to share your experiences or have any questions about the project, please contact Penny Roper on the freephone helpline 0808 808 3555 or email penny.roper@cafamily.org.uk. We look forward to hearing from you.

Contact a Family Directory 2008 out now!

The Contact a Family Directory 2008 – the ultimate guide to disabilities, medical conditions and support – is now available to buy. The 2008 paperback edition comes free with a wall-chart setting out the range of benefits and support available to families with disabled children. Also, buy two copies before the end of this month and get a third copy free. For more information and to buy your copy of the Directory today visit Web: <http://store.securehosting.com/stores/sh201819/shophome.php> to order your copy or download a flyer at Web: <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/dirsubs.html>

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10am-4pm, Monday to Friday and 5.30-7.30pm, Monday

Contact a Family NI Needs You !

Can you help us raise much needed funds?

Many of you may be running marathons, doing sponsored walks or having pub quiz's please bear Contact a Family NI in mind if you are. We are a severely under funded charity covering all disabilities across NI and beyond and any financial help would really help. This year we would really like to hold a series of fun days to mark our 10th anniversary, we would also like to produce more NI specific information and facilitate more workshops so if you can, please help us.

Help Contact a Family Raise Our Profile Across NI

Can you help us raise our profile across the province? Whenever you are at your G.P's surgery, Child Development Clinic, Hospital, Sure Start, Post Office or Pharmacy for example, ask if you can put up a Contact a Family poster or distribute our leaflets at your local group or school. You can request leaflets and posters at the office Tel 028 92 627552

Road Shows in SHSST a Great Success

In the ten weeks that the project ran we managed to help 21 parents, 23 children and 83 professionals. We have made some really good contacts and are building good working relationships, this has generated a lot of extra work for our Family Support Officers and the feedback is very good.

Counting the costs – Contact a Family survey

Finances can be a major concern for families with disabled children. It costs almost £7,000 a year more to raise a disabled child due to direct costs such as special aids and adaptations, transport, heating and childcare. With rising living costs affecting all families, Contact a Family wants to find out the effects on families caring for children with disabilities, serious health conditions or rare conditions living in the UK. This research will be used in future campaigning work. Please take the time to fill out our short online survey at <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/quiz.html>

Free Palliative Care Symptom Control Manual

The 2008 edition of the children's palliative care symptom control manual has been launched. The manual, 'Basic Symptom Control in Paediatric Palliative Care: the Rainbows Children's Hospice Guidelines' has information about how to appropriately treat a range of systems including: infections, mouthcare, nausea and vomiting, seizures, muscle spasm and pain management. The manual also provides detailed information on the quantities, calculation and frequency of administering drugs and treatment for babies and children.

The manual is available to download, free of charge, at the Association for Children's Palliative Care (ACT) website; <http://www.act.org.uk>

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').

Mark Robertson, Contact a Family's Head of Information and Publications, said: "More and more people are using social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace and Bebo to talk, share and connect with others. And for many parents with disabled children the internet is the first place they go for information when they learn that their child is disabled. Most also search for contact with other parents caring for a disabled child like their own." Recognising this, Contact a Family has now launched an innovative online support network for families with disabled children on all these popular social networking sites.

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 Profile Web: <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1186304843>
- Contact a Family Facebook Fanpage Web: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Contact-a-Family/25040545213>
- Contact a Family MySpace page Web: <http://www.myspace.com/contactafamily>
- Contact a Family Bebo page Web: <http://www.bebo.com/contactafamily>
- Contact a Family office on SecondLife
- Web: <http://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.

Are you reading someone else's **In Contact?** To receive your own copy please complete the following details and send to us at the address below. Pass it on! If you already get your own copy please pass it on to a friend once you have read it.

I would like to be added to your mailing list and receive the Contact a Family Northern Ireland Newsletter (free of charge). OR Please remove me from your mailing list

Name.....

Organisation.....

Address.....

..... Postcode.....

Tel:..... Email:.....

I am a parent/carer voluntary org health professional other.....

Please detach and return this form to:

Contact a Family Northern Ireland,
 Bridge Community Centre,
 50 Railway Street,
 Lisburn, BT28 1XP.

Tel: 028 92 62 7552 Freephone Helpline: 0808 808 3555

E-mail: nireland.office@cafamily.org.uk Web: www.cafamily.org.uk/nireland

Contact a Family cannot accept responsibility for any goods or services mentioned in or enclosed with this newsletter.

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10am-4pm, Monday to Friday and 5.30-7.30pm, Monday