



ADVICE

INFORMATION

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Autumn Newsletter Issue No 18

With thanks to the Children's Fund

Families with disabled children – Win a laptop. Tell your story. Raise public awareness.

Contact a Family is calling on parents to tell their story of raising a disabled child in a national competition which aims to highlight the many issues they face.

On the theme of 'Me and my disabled child', Contact a Family is looking for families to make a short video about the joys and challenges of caring for a disabled child. For those families who don't have a video camera, or have other creative impulses, you could share your experience in a written story, make an audio recording or take a photograph.

The competition has been launched in the run up to Contact a Family's 30th anniversary and entries are invited from any family member or friend involved in caring for a disabled child since the charity was set up in 1979.

Mark Robertson, Contact a Family's Head of Information and New Media, said: "The best clips, pictures and stories will be featured on Contact a Family's website and other online channels such as Youtube, My Space and in our parent magazine, Connected. "And throughout our 30th anniversary year we'll be using submitted stories whether they're in words, images or video footage, to raise public awareness of the everyday challenges families face raising a disabled child."

Entries can be a diary account, show a day in the life, or focus on a particular time raising your child, such as around diagnosis. Or entries can highlight a particular challenge – using public transport, coping with behavioural problems, peoples' attitudes, attending endless assessments and meetings.

All entries will be considered in a category alongside others using the same medium, with a chance to win a digital camera – and for the overall winner, a laptop. Prizes for the competition have been kindly donated by Hobbs the Printers.

Entries must be submitted by 30 November 2008. Video entries should be no longer than three minutes and written stories no longer than 2,000 words. Videos, podcasts, word documents and digital photos can be submitted by e-mail to new.media@cafamily.org.uk with Competition in the subject header. They can be submitted either as an attachment or a link. All printed stories, photographs, tapes, DVDs can be posted to: Competition, Contact a Family, Freepost Lon8801, London EC1B 1EE.

Inside this edition

Updates on welfare rights and benefits, Fare deal on Taxi's, Parent carer wins legal battle, Good Luck to Gary Keatings and much more!

Contact Family Helpline 0808 808 3555

Fare deal on taxis

Whether you're going to the doctor's, the shopping centre or a night on the town, taxis are an important way of getting from A to B. Here's the Consumer Council's guide to getting a "fare" deal.

- Pre-book a taxi if you've any special requirements
- If you've booked a taxi by phone, when it arrives, confirm it's for you by checking the driver knows your name and destination
- Make sure the taxi is displaying proper licence plates and a roof sign
- Check that the driver's ID is on display
- If there's a meter, ask the driver what the minimum fare is and ensure it has been reset to that amount
- Ask how much the fare will be and have the correct money ready if possible
- Wear your seatbelt



License plates

Every taxi must have one of these coloured licence plates:

Green – means the taxi must be pre-booked. They don't have to have a meter or be wheelchair accessible.

Yellow – means the taxi can be flagged down in the street. They must have a meter and are wheelchair accessible.

White – means the taxi can be pre-booked or flagged down outside a five mile radius of Belfast. They don't have to have a meter.

White and Blue – Are issued to some taxis that operate like buses, ie they charge passengers an individual fare on some routes. They don't have to have a meter but are wheelchair accessible.

Complaints

If you're unhappy with the fare, quality of the vehicle, driving or behaviour of the driver, complain to the driver or taxi company. If you can't get it sorted out, contact the Driver and Vehicle Agency on 9025 4100.

"The Consumer Council's Guide to Using Taxis" is packed with helpful information and top tips. For your copy, contact 9067 2488, download it at www.consumercouncil.org.uk or pick up a copy from hotels, pubs, shopping centres, tourist information offices and student unions across Northern Ireland.



New Chief Executive Srabani Sen visiting Northern Ireland Office: Meeting with parents and professionals to discuss future plans for Contact a Family NI

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Check your tax credits

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 27th 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

Changes to Lone Parent and Income Support Rules

From November, lone parents with older children will no longer be entitled to income support. Currently, a lone parent with a child aged under 16 can claim income support but this is to change to only those with a child under twelve. A lone parent with a child aged twelve or over will be expected to claim jobseeker's allowance instead so will have to meet the labour market conditions by proving that they are actively seeking work. Lone parents with an existing IS award who have a youngest child of 12 or over, or whose youngest child reaches 12 between 27th October 2008 and 27th January 2009, will continue to receive IS until the payday before their first Work Focused Interview after 27th January 2009. They will then have to make a claim for JSA. Lone parents of a child receiving the middle or highest rate care component of Disability Living Allowance, receive Carer's Allowance or who are fostering children can continue to claim IS.

The age limit will drop again to ten and then seven so that by October 2010, lone parents with children aged seven or over will not be entitled to income support.

The DWP is currently sending letters to existing claimants advising them of this.

If you have any benefits enquiry please do phone the helpline

Chip and Signature Card

Any disabled person having trouble using personal identification numbers (PIN) is entitled to have a Chip and signature card rather than a chip and PIN. Card issuers should be contacted to request this. Both cards look identical and a cashier would not be able to tell from looking at the card that it is a Chip and signature card. As a result of this some retailers are telling consumers that they cannot use Chip and signature cards which is incorrect. If a retailer is unsure about accepting the card ask them to insert the card in the terminal and follow the instructions provided. These will tell them that a signature rather than a PIN is needed.

If the retailer is adamant that they will not accept the card then this could be in breach of the Disability Discrimination Act. For further advice contact Equalities and Human rights commission <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/Pages/default.aspx> Equality Commission NI 028 90500600

Further advice can be obtained from APACS – the UK trade association for payments and for those institutions that deliver payment services to customers (<http://www.apacs.org.uk/>)

Sarah Rush, Head of Advice at Contact a Family, says: '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**.

Changes to Child Support Agency Reduced Benefit Decisions

A lone parent who does not comply with the Child Support Agency (CSA) should no longer have their benefit reduced from 14th July. Reduced benefit decisions used to be applied to parents with care who failed to provide enough information for a child support maintenance assessment to be made. This could result in income support or income-based jobseeker's allowance being reduced for up to three years. Since 14 July, all reduced benefit decisions cease to have effect and anyone whose benefit is reduced in these circumstances will have the full amount reinstated.

Also from 14 July, a lone parent claiming income support or income-based jobseeker's allowance will not automatically be treated as making an application to the CSA for maintenance.

The government has set up a new "Child Maintenance Options" service providing advice to parents about the choices available re child support arrangements. In particular it is aimed at IS/ibJSA claimants. There is also a helpline on 0808 988 0988. Website at <http://www.cmoptions.org/index.htm>.

The Government has also announced that single parents on income support will be able to keep all of any child maintenance they receive, on top of their benefit, from 2010.

The change has been announced in the Welfare Reform Green Paper and it is hoped will encourage more non-residents parents to pay up since the money will go straight to their children.

If you have any queries about Child Maintenance do call us on the helpline.

New European regulation on air travel

From 26 July 2008, a new European regulation on air travel will mean airports will have to provide services that enable disabled passengers to board, disembark and transit between flights. The rights will also apply to people with reduced mobility, such as someone with a broken leg, and will give a right to assistance once on the plane.

This is the second stage of measures designed to protect disabled passengers when traveling by air and creating a consistent standard across Europe. Last year it became illegal for airlines, travel agents or tour operators to refuse a booking on the grounds of disability or to refuse to board a disabled person who has a valid ticket and reservation, except for safety reasons.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has a responsibility to promote the new regulation to the public and any person who feels that there has been a breach of the law has the right to complain to them. The EHRC will handle and monitor complaints and offer conciliation where appropriate. It can support people to take civil action and could refer the matter to the Civil Aviation Authority who will have the power to prosecute. If guilty an airport operator, airline, travel agent or tour operator could face an unlimited fine.

The Equality Commission is a statutory body established under the Equality Act 2006, which took over the responsibilities of the Commission for Racial Equality, Disability Rights Commission and Equal Opportunities Commission. It is the independent advocate for equality and human rights in Britain, and aims to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people, and promote and protect human rights.

For further advice contact Equality Commission Northern Ireland 028 90500600.

Contact a Family has produced a new podcast on the subject of Disability Living Allowance

Disability Living Allowance is the main benefit for children and adults with extra care or mobility needs. The podcast explains the two main parts of the benefit, how you can claim it, and has other helpful information around getting the benefit.

To listen visit Web: <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/news/podcasts.html>

The podcasts are also available to our fans on Facebook.

Web: <http://www.new.facebook.com/pages/Contact-a-Family/25040545213?ref=ts>

Parent carer wins legal battle – and new employment rights for all parent carers

Sharon Coleman mum and carer to her disabled son, Oliver, will see an employment tribunal consider her case against former employer Attridge Law after a decision of The European Court of Justice (ECJ). The ECJ agreed that Sharon was, in law, protected from ‘discrimination by association’ with a disabled person if she was harassed for wanting to look after her disabled child.

This ruling promises to give new rights to parent carers in the work place and, possibly, all unpaid carers across Britain.

Register for New Service From Family Fund

The Family Fund is launching ‘Family Fund Extra’ during October and is calling on families with disabled children to register their interest. Family Fund Extra is a separate scheme from their grant making programme and aims to help families make their money go further. It will offer a variety of discounted goods and services like electrical products and holidays. It will also allow supporters of Family Fund to make a difference to disabled children through donations and ‘donate as you shop’ opportunities.

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If you care for a child or young person up to the age of 25 years old and would like to benefit from the discounts and services Family Fund Extra will offer, register now at

Web: <http://www.familyfundextra.co.uk>

The Family Fund Comet gift card is a first step towards the fully-fledged Family Fund Extra and is already up and running. Web: <http://tinyurl.com/667tbv>

New A-Z guide for carers in Northern Ireland

Carers Northern Ireland and the Northern Trust have launched a new A – Z guide for carers. The guide provides carers with details on how to access information and support. It's available at community pharmacies and other healthcare facilities or direct from Carers Northern Ireland on Tel: 028 9043 9843 Mon-Fri, 10am-12pm and 2-3pm.

Web: <http://www.carersni.org/Home>

Contact a Family urges 'Keep the Promise' to end child poverty

Contact a Family has announced its support of the biggest event to end child poverty in the UK. The campaign charity End Child Poverty is organising the 'Keep the Promise' event – to be held in Trafalgar Square on Saturday 4th October 2008. The event is intended to mobilise public support while putting pressure on Government to keep its promise to end child poverty by 2020.

Mark Robertson, Contact a Family's Head of Information and New Media, said: "It costs three times as much to raise a disabled child and many parents struggle to hold down a job due to the pressures of caring. As a national charity supporting families of disabled children, we support Keep the Promise and call on government to make the significant investment necessary to end child poverty."

The event will begin with a short march from Millbank to Trafalgar Square where there will be children's activities, family fun, film and speeches. This will be followed by everyone being asked to make as much noise as possible to show their support to end child poverty.

If you want to attend the event in Trafalgar Square or would like to find out how else to support the campaign visit Web: <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/keepthepromiseevent>

What is Ouch?

Ouch is a website from the BBC that reflects the lives and experiences of disabled people. It has regular columns, features, quizzes, a monthly near-cult podcast, a blog or two and a community messageboard amongst other stuff. All contributors, well, 99% of them, are disabled – and Ouch's editorial team is rather wonky and deserve big fat special diversity badges too.

You can contact us in a number of ways with any enquiries, ideas, information, gossip, stories, loves, desires or web access issues.

Ouch website <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/> Email: ouch@bbc.co.uk

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Good Luck to Gary and His Family

Gary Keatings is a 4 year old boy who suffers from Cerebral Palsy, Microcephaly, Epilepsy, visual impairment, developmental delay and is fed by gastrostomy tube.

Gary has severe complex needs requiring total 24 hour care.

Gary's parents have researched specialised therapy in America and are due to travel to the USA on 19 September 2008 for a period of 4 weeks. His parents have fundraised tirelessly for this opportunity and have been overwhelmed by people's generosity.

Gary also has a sister called Rachel who is 2 years old and has a congenital heart defence known as Fallots Tetralogy for which she has underwent heart surgery in February of this year and has made a remarkable recovery.

An sincere expression of thanks and gratitude for all the money that has been raised comes from Gary's parents who realise that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for their son.

They are open minded about the therapy but feel strongly that considering Gary's condition and prognosis he deserves any opportunity which will improve and enhance his quality of life.

Contact A Family would like to wish them all a very safe journey and look forward to hearing about their visit to America on their return.



Starting a New Group?

Group Action Pack Guides

Our Group Action Pack guides cover a range of topics of interest to both local and national parent support groups. All the guides can be downloaded free of charge from the Contact a Family website at: <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/GAP.html>

If you would prefer paper copies, please send me your name, address and the titles you would like and I will post them out to you.



For Local Groups

Starting a local parents' group
Holding an open meeting
Attracting and keeping members
Local campaigning
Professional workers and parent support groups

For Local and National Groups

Charity registration
The role of trustees
Leaflets

Publicity
Speaking to the media
Writing a news release
Patrons and celebrity support
Public speaking for parents
Effective meetings
Reaching Out to Disabled Parents
Reaching Out to Black and Minority Ethnic Parents
Reaching Out to Fathers
Data protection

Local Groups Officer

You can contact me for information and advice on all issues around starting, running and developing a local parent support group. Whatever your query is, please get in touch and I will do everything I can to help.

Jemma Black, Local Groups Officer. Direct telephone number: 020 7608 8775

Email address: jemma.black@cafamily.org.uk

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TinyLife is Northern Ireland’s premature and vulnerable baby charity dedicated to reducing premature birth, illness, disability and death in babies.

TinyLife was established in 1988 by a group of health professional and concerned mums and was formally known as NIMBA.

Any parent watching their little one fight for life finds it emotionally and physically draining. Mum’s and dad’s try to juggle the commitments of everyday life with visiting the neonatal unit, often once or twice a day, to be with their premature baby.

TinyLife offer a range of services across N Ireland including:

- **Family Support** – TinyLife is there to lend a hand by carefully matching a trained volunteer with a family to assist with visits to the hospital and to provide help with practical tasks when they bring the baby home. These volunteers also provide a listening ear and give mum and dad time to themselves. Increasingly, the volunteers support families who have had twins and triplets.
- **Breast Pump Loan Service** – TinyLife provides electric pumps for mums who wish to express their own milk to be fed to their baby in neonatal care.
- **Parent Support Groups** – these groups provide parents with the opportunity to come together to share their experiences and receive support from one another.
- **Resource Library** – TinyLife has a small range of books, videos, DVD’s, information leaflets and useful contact details relating to the development and needs of premature, ill and disabled babies.

If you would like more information about services in your area please contact:

Catherine Flannigan, Family Support & Information Manager, TinyLife, Unit 1, 33 Ballynahinch Road, Carryduff BT8 8EH.

Tel 02890815050catherine@tinylife.org.uk

www.tinylife.org.uk

Inland Revenue Charity N

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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 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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