

contact a family
for families with disabled children

incorporating
The Lady Hoare Trust

in **contact**



The newsletter of Contact a Family North East

www.cafamily.org.uk/northeast

Issue 32

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Contact a Family would like to thank Northern Rock Foundation, Big Lottery Fund and the Freemasons Grand Charity for their continued support of the North East Office



Contact a Family News

Welcome Srabani

Contact a Family recently appointed Srabani Sen as our new Chief Executive. Srabani was formerly the Chief Executive for Alcohol Concern and has a wealth of experience in the voluntary sector.

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'.

Transforming short breaks for families with disabled children

In the last edition of "In Contact" we included details of the start of a three year transformation in short break services for disabled children. This transformation includes a new national body to support the delivery of short breaks for disabled children and their families.

Contact a Family is delighted to announce that in partnership with Serco, it has been contracted to be that agency, called **Together for Disabled Children**. Serco will lead on supporting local authorities to transform the provision of short breaks. Contact a Family will work with local parent groups and ensure they are at the heart of shaping new services for disabled children.

We will be updating you on this work in future editions of "In Contact" so look out for this.

New Contact a Family Publications

We have two new factsheets out. They are Getting Direct Payments for your Disabled Child (England & Wales) and Money When Your Child Reaches 16 Years of Age. If you would like your free copy, please give us a call on **0191 213 6300** or e-mail us at **northeast.office@cafamfamily.org.uk**

Contact a Family North East Poster

You may find enclosed with your newsletter a Contact a Family North East poster. We would be really grateful if you could arrange to display this **ANYWHERE** you think families will see it - we are always raising awareness that Contact a Family is here to support families so your help in this would be very much appreciated. If there is no poster enclosed and you want one, just give us a call. Thank you.

Contact a Family North East 0191 213 6300

Contact a Family News

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:

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1186304843>

Contact a Family Facebook Fanpage:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Contact-a-Family/25040545213>

Contact a Family MySpace page: <http://www.myspace.com/contactafamily>

Contact a Family Bebo page: <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.

Reminder ... if you have an e-mail address and would like to receive Contact a Family North East Bulletins then please drop us a line at northeast.office@cafamily.org.uk

Contact a Family North East 0191 213 6300

Get the Gen Event

Get the Gen Event - Sunday 20th July 2008 at Nature's World, Middlesbrough - A Great Day for You and Your Kids

So what is the Northern Genetics Service? What can it do for me? Waiting for a diagnosis for your child? Have a diagnosis but want more information? Have lots of questions around what will happen when your children grow up?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, then this is the conference for you **AND** your kids can come along and whilst you are attending the conference, they will get to enjoy a free day out at the fabulous Nature's World attraction (please note **all** children must be accompanied by an adult so why not ask a grandparent, other relative or friend to come with you).

The conference has been organised by Contact a Family in conjunction with the Northern Genetics Service, Teesside Genetics Unit and will include information sharing and workshops. The day will run from 9.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. and we'll finish with a free lunch for everyone (including kids).

If you would like to attend, then please give us a call on **0191 213 6300** or e-mail us at **northeast.office@cafamily.org.uk** for a booking form. Places are limited so don't delay, call for your booking form today. All bookings need to be made by **Friday 11th July 2008**.

Nature's World has 24 acres of education and fun. Attractions include Play World, outdoor play areas, the space-age Futureworld 2020 development, ride-on tractors, an outdoor sandpit, computer terminals and the region's largest embankment slide. For full details of what's available, see the website at **www.naturesworld.org.uk**

Carer Assisted Changing Facility - Metrocentre

The MetroCentre Shopping Centre in Gateshead has a new fully accessible assisted changing facility which includes a changing bench, hoist and centrally wall-based toilet. Carers must be familiar and competent to use the equipment and use of the facility is via a free membership scheme where you will only need to register once before your first visit.

For an application form, please contact the MetroCentre on **0191 493 2386** or visit the Information Desk outside the ground floor of Debenhams in the Red mall to register.

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Parent Power

Parent Power!

Parents in North Tyneside ('All Together Better') and County Durham ('Making Changes Together') have been working hard recently with the help of Contact a Family and workers in their localities to ensure parents' voices are heard and their views acted upon. With the Government's agenda 'Aiming High for Disabled Children' there is increasing importance on how families collaborate with their local authorities and health staff to make those changes realistic.

Steering Groups of parents in each local authority came together to organise an initial conference in each area designed BY Parents FOR Parents. Both Steering Groups chose the focus of their conference and importantly both groups insisted, independently of each other, that the focus of each day should be 'positive' outcomes.

The Durham Steering Group feature on the cover of our newsletter alongside Kathy Rist, Regional Development Officer for Contact a Family; Elaine Chandler, Parent Partnership Officer for County Durham and Helen Wheatley from the Council for Disabled Children who attended the Durham Conference.

At Contact a Family, we have always known that parents need accurate, timely information and that consultations need good feedback to people who have taken the time to share their views. Both conferences reinforced this and were able to offer families the opportunity to become further involved at a more strategic level.

Reports of the day from both Parent Conferences are now available through the Contact a Family office. Other events to ensure further parental involvement are in the pipeline.

"If you had told me a couple of months ago that I'd be co-chairing a Conference like this, I'd have said you were barmy – but if I can do this ANYONE can do it"

Chris Shield, Co Chair 'Making Changes Together' Conference Durham.

Senior staff in each local authority warmly welcomed parental involvement and financially supported both conferences which ensured each event was given the importance it merited. If you would like to be involved with any initiative - either by setting up a local conference for parents in your area or as part of any of the reference groups that have resulted from the conferences please get in touch.

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Local News

New Parent Support Groups in County Durham

Laurel Avenue; this new support group, run by Durham & Chester-le-Street Carers Support, meets at Laurel Avenue Children's Centre on the second Thursday morning of the month (10am -12noon). The aim is to provide a supportive and relaxing group for parents/carers of children with special or additional needs in the Durham & Chester-le-Street area. They can provide transport from Bullion Hall in Chester-le-Street and a central Durham location (must be booked). Upcoming dates for meetings are 10th July and 14th August

Helping Hands; this group is run in partnership with Sure Start and meets at Grange Villa Community Centre on the last Wednesday afternoon of the month (1.30-3pm). A crèche is provided for under 5s, although there is some flexibility around ages for children with special needs (must be booked). Upcoming dates are 25th June, 30th July and 27th August

For further information please contact Susan Doyle on **0191 3871991** or by e-mail at **susand@dccarers.org**

National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) Weekend for families with newly identified deaf children - Stockton on Tees



NDCS is holding a free family weekend from 19-21 September 2008 in Stockton on Tees. This weekend is especially for families with deaf children who have been newly identified within the last 12-18 months and is an opportunity for families from across England to spend a relaxing and informative few days in the company of other families who all have at least one thing in common – they have a child who has recently been diagnosed with a hearing loss.

The weekend will be led by experienced NDCS staff and guest speakers will be there for specialist sessions. Accommodation & meals are included. Please note that accommodation is not at the venue listed, but is close by.

To book a place (they are very limited so do this as soon as you can) please download a booking form from their website at

http://www.ndcs.org.uk/whats_on/ndcs_events/newly_identified_wd.html
or give NDCS Events a call on **0121 2349820**

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Local News

The Reedham Trust

The Reedham Trust, a children's charity based in Purley, Surrey, has recently got in touch with Contact a Family North East. Reedham began life as an orphanage in the 1840s and then became a school. Since 1979, Reedham has been a Children's Trust giving grants to help children from difficult home circumstances to attend boarding school. The emphasis of the Trust is helping children who need to be away from home for social rather than educational reasons, and assistance is given to children from all over the UK.

Reedham has been very lucky over the past six months to receive substantial donations, which will continue over a number of years. These are to be specifically targeted to help children in the North East of England whose home situation means they would benefit from attending boarding school.

Reedham's main criterion is a lack of parental care where no other suitable care is available, and this situation can arise through:

- Death or permanent absence of one or both parents
- Severe and enduring mental or physical ill health of parent(s)
- Abandonment or abuse of child
- Disability of a sibling of sufficient severity to be seriously prejudicial to the normal development of the child

If you would like further information, please contact the Reedham Trust at The Lodge, 23 Old Lodge Lane, Purley, Surrey CR8 4DJ

Email info@reedham-trust.org.uk Website at www.reedham-trust.org.uk

Hartlepool Special Needs Support Group (HSNSG)

HSNSG run a range of events, offer advice and support and raise public awareness to change preconceptions about disability by positively encouraging inclusive activities. Some of the activities on offer include baby/toddler groups, children's activity clubs, drama group, family nights, multi-sensory rooms, summer play schemes, trips and short holidays.

For full information, see their website at www.hsnsng.org.uk or give them a call on **01429 863766**

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Useful News

Sensory Sessions, Walkergate Early Years Centre Newcastle

This is a group for children with additional needs and their parents/carers which meets on a Monday from 9.30 to 10.30 a.m. Activities include sand play, painting, sensory play, stories, songs and much more. For more information and to book places, please Carol Lloyd on **0191 2632411**

Speech and language therapy vouchers from Cerebra

Cerebra's scheme is for children aged 16 and under who have a neurological, brain-related condition (for example Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Down Syndrome).

Other conditions apply and the voucher is worth up to £500 of therapy. For more information or an application, see

http://www.cerebra.org.uk/parent_support/support/speech_therapy.htm or call Alex on **0800 328 1159** or e-mail alex@cerebra.org.uk

Family Support Service in the North East

Mishy Holt is our Family Support Worker covering the Teesside area. She can provide information on local services and support and explore opportunities available; help families access benefits and other sources of financial help; offer emotional support and help to link families to other families.

For more information, give Mishy a call on **01642 785745** or e-mail mishy.holt@cafamily.org.uk

National Freephone Number - 0808 808 3555

Contact a Family's **National Freephone Helpline** for parents of disabled children is open from Monday to Friday 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. (& 5.30 - 7.30 p.m. Monday)

The textphone number is **0808 808 3556** and Language Line is available for parents whose first language is not English

If you did not receive this newsletter at your own address and would like to be added to our mailing list please give us a call or write to us at Contact a Family, The Dene Centre, Castle Farm Road, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 1PH.

Tel/Fax - 0191 213 6300

E-mail - northeast.office@cafamily.org.uk Website - www.cafamily.org.uk/northeast

The next edition of **In Contact** will be circulated **Autumn 2008**

The views and suggestions in **In Contact** are those of individual contributors and are not necessarily supported by Contact a Family.

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