

# GRAPEVINE

The paper for parents and carers of children with special needs in Southwark

**October 2007**

## In Brief

### News and updates

New manager starts at Contact a Family front page

Contact a Family Summer Activities report p2

Information booklet p2

Sunshine house p3

Advice sessions p3

### Getting involved

ASD steering group p4

Young and vocal! p5

SEN advisory group p5

Your views needed p6

### What's on

Groups and workshops p7

Family Activities back page



Children and parents enjoyed an ArtZero interactive art workshop as part of Contact a Family's summer programme

## Contact a Family Southwark welcomes new manager

*Naomi Gilbert introduces herself...*

Hello!

I am delighted to have this opportunity to introduce myself to so many people so easily. I have inherited a wonderful team here in Southwark and as you can see from this newsletter, there's lots going on. Over the next few weeks I will be finding my feet and hoping to meet many of you in person.

I am a nurse by background and started my career in Southwark. Since then I have worked for a number of other charities, including Mencap. I have two children, two cats and usually keep chickens, although we are between flocks at the moment, thanks to Mr Fox.

*Continued on page 2*

Grapevine is produced by an editorial team at Contact a Family

**contact a family**  
for families with disabled children  
Incorporating  
**The Lady Hoare Trust**

Southwark Office  
020 7277 4436

# News and updates

*Continued from front page*

I am keen to make a difference to the lives of the families we serve in Southwark and you will find me willing to listen and learn, challenge poor service and facilitate change - all with enthusiasm and a sense of humour!



Here is my picture so if you see me out and about in the borough, please do come and say hello.

*Naomi Gilbert*

## Great fun, despite the rain

Time really does fly, and with the start of the new school year, it's time to report back on our successful family events summer programme. The weather tried hard to put us off this year, so a special thank you to all the families, staff and volunteers who joined us at an event. We hope you all had fun.

During August, we ran eleven different activities, and offered more than 400 places to Southwark families with disabled children. That's a 30% increase in the number of places compared to last year. As always, we tried hard to put together a balanced programme guided by the ideas and needs of families. This summer we offered trips to:

- The Horniman Museum
- Chessington
- London Wetlands Centre
- Southend-on Sea
- London Zoo
- Mile End Climbing Wall
- Discover Centre, Stratford
- Go-karting
- A Park Fun Day
- A family art workshop
- A river cruise to Greenwich

This is what families had to say about some of our activities:

*'We had a great day at the sea-side, my children have never been to the beach before. My daughter said: "...it was really, really, really, really fun.'*

*'My son was so excited to go on the climbing trip. He wanted me to take his picture on the wall so that he could show all his friends at school. I was terrified, but he had a fantastic time!'*

*'I chose this activity [river cruise] because it could be a family outing doing sight-seeing and it lets me meet other parents. Thanks for organising a lovely trip.'*

Look out for information about our half term events and more, being sent to you in the first week of October.

Hope to see you at an event soon.

*Emma Evans and Helen Fleming*

---

## Information – what do you need?

Remember this??

Southwark Children's Information Service is currently doing an update to the information booklet for parents of children with special needs. The last edition was in 2004 so a lot has changed.



What would you like to see in the booklet? Was anything vital missing from the last edition? What sort of information would be useful to new parents trying to navigate the system?

If you have any comments at all, please contact Esther Sagi at Southwark Children's Information Service

Tel: 0800 013 0639

Email: [childrens.info@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:childrens.info@southwark.gov.uk)

# News and updates

## Sunshine House

Sunshine House is the newly built Child Development Centre which will replace the aging Sheldon Centre.



Sunshine House will provide specialist services to meet the needs of children and young people aged up to 19 years old in a child-centred and family friendly environment, including:

- Children with special educational needs and learning disabilities
- Children with speech and language needs
- Children with specific health needs (e.g. hearing impairment, HIV, chronic illness, post surgical care)
- Children at risk of significant harm (e.g. physical, sexual and emotional abuse)
- Looked after children (adopted and fostered).

Services from the Sheldon Centre will be moving in throughout September/ October and be joined by:

- Social Services Children with Disabilities team
- Visual Impairment and Hearing Support teams
- CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services)
- Named Nurses for Child Protection
- Continuing Care Nursing Team

The official opening ceremony is yet to be announced but appointments will start to be

held there from October.

Telephone calls to the Sheldon centre will be re-routed to Sunshine House.

The new contact details are:

**Sunshine House**  
**23-25 Peckham Road**  
**SE5 8UP**  
**Tel. 020 3049 8100**

## Children's Centre advice sessions

Contact a Family is running regular advice sessions in Children's Centres for parents who have children with special needs. There's no need to book, just turn up

### Walworth and Borough & Bankside

Coin St Family and Children's Centre  
10-12 every **Monday** from 15<sup>th</sup> October

Bishop's House Children's Centre  
10-12 **Friday** 5<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov, 7<sup>th</sup> Dec

### Bermondsey and Rotherhithe

Kintore Way Nursery School  
9.30-12 every **Wednesday**

South Bermondsey Children & Parents Centre Tenda Rd  
9.30-12.30 every **Friday**

### Camberwell and Dulwich

Dulwich Wood Children's Centre  
1-3 pm **Wednesday** 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct, 14<sup>th</sup> Nov, 5<sup>th</sup> Dec

Sunshine House  
9.30-12.30 every **Wednesday** and **Thursday**

### Peckham and Peckham Rye & Nunhead

Rye Oak School and Children's Centre  
tba - please ring Contact a Family office

Nell Gwyn Nursery School and Children's Centre  
9.30-12.30 every **Monday**

# Getting involved

## ASD Strategy Steering Group

Southwark Children's Services are currently reviewing the provision and support offered to both children/young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families. A multi-agency Strategy Steering Group has been set up with an aim of improving all the services to children and young people with ASD and their families. This Steering Group is chaired by Romi Bowen, Head of Children's Services in Southwark.

A number of factors have led to the creation of the Steering Group:

- an increasing awareness & concern within Education with regards to the capacity to meet the needs of the growing numbers of children and young people with ASD
- the Education Department's commitment to the National Autistic Society document 'Make School Make Sense'
- an increased awareness by various agencies of the level of frustration encountered by parents/carers, schools/colleges and others when seeking support for ASD children and young people as no central 'system' or coordination group exists
- the move to integrated Children's Services (Health, Education & Social Care) has highlighted the need to look at the development of lifelong services for children and young people with ASD

### Parents' involvement

The Steering Group includes two parents of children with ASD, myself and Teresa Kahn. We were invited to join by Pauline Armour, Assistant Director of Education, who has responsibility for Access and Inclusion. I had previously been involved in a "listening group" set up by Pauline to find out further the problems parents/carers of children and young people with disabilities face, and listen to their views on the best way to reach or to communicate with them

### Working groups

As part of the review, a number of working sub-groups are being established to look at some of the challenges considered to be of common concern to services working with people with ASD, and make recommendations to the Steering Group. I am on a sub-group chaired by Sue Marsh from the Behaviour and Autism Support Service, looking at issues around training, both for parents/carers and for professionals. Teresa is part of a group looking at experiences of diagnosis and how to improve them.

The initiatives taken by Pauline Armour in listening to parents/carers and in particular in involving us in the Steering Group are very welcome, and are a good start to build on. I would like to thank her as well as other professionals, such as Sue Marsh for their encouragement. I believe these encounters will be beneficial for all. I hope more parents, in particular, the 'hard to reach families' will be involved through various channels of communication in the working parties and that their voices will be heard.

I am aware that the challenges ahead are enormous, particularly when I think about the resources which need to be put in place in order to implement the strategy once it is fully formulated. I am also aware of the difficulties which may arise in implementation and co-ordination between various children's services. However, I remain hopeful that with all the co-ordinated efforts and greater resources, the lives of our children will be improved, resulting in alleviating the pain we parents experience every day.

*Shoa Asfaha, parent of a child with ASD*

More information on the ASD Strategy Steering Group, can be obtained from Sue Marsh from BASS or Cara Jones at Southwark Education SEN Team

Information about 'Make school make sense' can be found on the NAS website [www.nas.org.uk](http://www.nas.org.uk)

# Getting involved

## Young Disabled People

### Young and Vocal!

The Young and Vocal! group was a pilot project set up to give young people an opportunity to say what they thought, to make choices and to have fun together. The group met from November 06 to August 07.



The group gave their views on

- School
- Transport
- Friends

A video is being put together of the young people sharing their views and it will be available in the autumn.



Plans are being made for how to continue with the Young and Vocal! group.

### Hard to Hear Voices

A report of the pilot project is to be presented to the Children with Disabilities Team, who funded the project, and will include work that was carried out at the same time with the 'Hard to Hear' group; those young people who would not be able to join a group to speak for themselves but who nevertheless have a 'voice' that needs to be heard.

If you are interested in seeing a copy of the report and hearing these 'Voices', please contact:

Linda Cleverly, Child and Young Person Advocate, Cambridge House Advocacy

Grapevine October 2007

Team, 131 Camberwell Road, London, SE5 0HF

lcleverly@ch1889.org

020 7358 7007

## SEN Parent Advisory Group

Parent Partnership and the Special Educational Needs Team are starting a group to enable parents to participate in the development and maintenance of the SEN Service in Southwark Education.

This will be a group that meets together to discuss new initiatives, policies, procedures and strategies regarding special educational needs in Southwark. The group's discussions will then be fed back by parents, Parent Partnership and SEN management to parent groups, the Assistant Director of Education and other stakeholders. It will not be a forum for discussing individual cases.

The group will meet twice a term. Minutes of the meetings will be publicly available on the Southwark website and also sent to agencies supporting parents of children with special needs.

The group will consist of 6 parents of children with special needs, a parent SEN Governor, Parent Partnership Manager, Head of SEN, Principal Educational Psychologist, Monitoring Team Manager and SEN Team Operations Manager. Parents will be elected to sit for a fixed term and will be responsible for informing other parents of the group's discussions.

If you are interested in sitting on this group please contact the Parent Partnership Team on 020 7525 5256 or email [senadvisorygroup@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:senadvisorygroup@southwark.gov.uk)

*Sandra Gee, Parent Partnership Manager*

---

## Parent/Carers' Council

The Parent/Carers' Council continues to be active. More news in the next issue.

# Getting involved

## Experiences of Diagnosis

Southwark Children's Services has set up a new steering group to look at ways of improving all services to children with an autistic spectrum disorder and their families.

I am a member of a working sub-group with the task of making recommendations about how to improve parents' experiences before, during and following the process of a child's diagnosis of autism. The other members of the group are Wendy Hall from the Educational Psychology Service, Dr Ajay Sharma from the Social Communication Clinic and Sue Marsh from Behaviour & Autism Support Service.

I am the parent of an autistic child myself, and am only too aware of how painful and stressful a time it was for my family when my daughter was diagnosed. Also, how important it is that our views are taken into consideration during the decision making process.

If you are a parent or carer of an autistic child, you may have received a letter asking for your help by telling us three things that could have made things better for you, from the time concerns were expressed to the assessment, feedback and follow up support. We'd also like to have the views of Grapevine readers who weren't on our original mailing list. When the working group meets again we will look at all replies and identify common points to feed back to the ASD steering group.

So, please tell us three things that could have made the experience of diagnosis better for you and your family.

You can write to Wendy Hall, Educational Psychology Service, John Smith House, 144-152 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JL or email [wendy.hall@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:wendy.hall@southwark.gov.uk)

**We need your views by 3<sup>rd</sup> October.**

Thanks for your help.

*Teresa Kahn, parent*

## Childcare in Southwark - what do you think?

Do you use any form of childcare at the moment? What is good about it? What needs to be improved?

Have you tried to find childcare without success? What were the issues you faced? What kind of childcare do you need?

Please get in touch and let us know your views

- **By calling** the Children's Information Service, on 0800 013 0639
- **Email:** [matthew.parker@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.parker@southwark.gov.uk)
- **Write to:** Matt Parker, MIA, John Smith House, 144-152 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JL.

From April 2008 Southwark Children's Services has to ensure that there is sufficient childcare so that parents who wish to work or train can do so. This covers children aged 0-14, or 0-17 if the child is disabled, and we have to make sure that the childcare is in the right places, of high quality, and is affordable.

Before April, we will produce a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, looking at the situation now and what we propose to do to ensure that there is sufficient childcare. To do that, we are gathering the views of lots of parents across Southwark, in various different ways.

We would particularly like to hear the views of parents who have one or more children with a disability or special need - so please get in touch!

### **NAS branch for Southwark?**

If you are interested in setting up a branch of the National Autistic Society in Southwark, please come along to an open meeting at InSpire, The Crypt at St Peter's, Liverpool Grove SE17 on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> October 10-12.

# What's on – groups and workshops

## Information event for families of young children

Parents of children aged 0-5 with disabilities or special needs are invited to come along to an information event run by Contact a Family Southwark.

### Coin Street Neighbourhood Centre

108 Stamford Street, South Bank, SE1 9NT

**Monday, 8 Oct 2007**

**10am to 12noon**

A one stop shop to find out all you need to know, including information on:

- Work and childcare
- Money matters including disability benefits
- Activities for families
- Sleeping, eating and toilet training
- Groups and workshops
- Support for your child's special educational needs
- Improving your child's language development and play skills
- Toys and equipment

Refreshments available. Face painting and goody bags for children.

For more information ring the Family Work Team at Contact a Family on 020 7277 4436

---

## Themed mornings at Contact a Family

This term, instead of the Wednesday drop-ins, the Family Work Team is running a series of themed mornings on Thursdays. They are very informal and we would welcome along any parent who has an interest in the topic or would just like to meet other parents for a chat. Please put the dates in your diary, we look forward to seeing you.

**11<sup>th</sup> October** Meet and chat with African families

**25<sup>th</sup> October** Toilet training for the under 5s

**15<sup>th</sup> November** Coping with the stress of Christmas

**6<sup>th</sup> December** A welcome to new members of Contact a Family

We are hoping that the Wednesday drop-in may resume after Christmas and look forward to parents organising this themselves and making use of our brand new resource room. If you are interested in helping please call the office on 020 7277 4436 and speak to one of the family workers.

---

## Southwark Autism Support

Southwark Autism Support supports families of children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders up to age 19

### Dads' club

For fathers/male carers of children and young people with ASD who would like to meet with other fathers for a friendly chat or to share ideas or strategies.

Prithvi Perepa and Elaine Mulligan from the National Autistic Society will also be available to answer your queries.

**Next meeting 13th December 6-8pm**  
venue tbc

### Parents' Support Group

For all parents/carers of children and young people with ASD. Come along and meet with Elaine Mulligan from the National Autistic Society for a chat and to have a chance to meet other parents in a relaxed and friendly environment.

30th October

14th November

10-12 at Spa School, Monnow Road, SE1 5RN

For more information ring Elaine Mulligan on 020 7771 3491 or email: [elaine.mulligan@nas.org.uk](mailto:elaine.mulligan@nas.org.uk)

# What's on – family activities

## Gift horse Play Club

*Sessions will be starting up again in October*

Club for children with autism aged 0-11, their families and carers at Sojourner Truth Centre, 161 Sumner Road SE15

Saturdays 11am – 1pm Cost 2.50 per child

Yoga therapy every week and regular music sessions

Contact Maureen on 07726 340 407 or email: [gifthorseplayclub@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:gifthorseplayclub@yahoo.co.uk)

## Shrek 3 - Autism friendly screening in Southwark

Come and enjoy a special screening of the film Shrek 3 for families who have children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. All family members are welcome

At Darrell Road Community Centre, Darrell Road, East Dulwich SE22 9NL

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October**

Doors open 3.30 pm Film starts at 4.00 pm.

£2 for adults – children free



For more information ring Elaine Mulligan on 020 7771 3491 or email [elaine.mulligan@nas.org.uk](mailto:elaine.mulligan@nas.org.uk)

This event is being held by Dulwich Paradiso Film Society and Southwark Autism Support

Grapevine is published 6 times a year by an independent editorial group based at Contact a Family, Walworth Methodist Church, 54 Camberwell Road, London SE5 0EN. It is printed by SGHMS.

Please send contributions for the December issue to the above address by 20<sup>th</sup> November or by email to [southwark.office@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:southwark.office@cafamily.org.uk)

## Bag books – multisensory storytelling



Southwark Libraries are committed to reaching children and young people who have learning disabilities. To help us do this we have teamed up with Bag Books, an organisation that provides multi-sensory fiction for children, young people and adults.

Storytellers from Bag Books will visit John Harvard and Blue Anchor Libraries and deliver a storytelling session using their materials, specifically designed for children with severe to profound learning disabilities and young mainstream children with visual impairment.

Blue Anchor Library, Market Place, Southwark Park Road, SE16 3UQ

**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

2.50pm – 3.30pm

John Harvard Library, 211 Borough High Street, SE1 1JA

**Friday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

2.50pm – 3.30pm

Both sessions for children aged 4-14 and parents

Free – please book by 15<sup>th</sup> October

*If you would like more information about these sessions or if you would like to book your place please contact me on one of the following:*

020 7525 3889, 079044 24313 or e-mail:

[elaine.walters@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:elaine.walters@southwark.gov.uk)

*Elaine Walters, Children's Services Manager, Southwark Libraries*