

GRAPEVINE

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

January 2009

Contents

	Page
News	2- 5
Becky to Belize, CaF awaits funding news, Aiming High Conference Disabled Children National Indicator The EarlyBird programme explained + reviews Transition - Aiming High, Conference review	
Reviews and pictures	6-7
Smooth Caramel, Squidz, Pamper course, Party and Pantomime	
Consultation Update	8-9
William Chatterton reports on progress made to meet recommendations from February's event	
Money Matters	10-11
Home heat, Credit Union, Unclaimed tax 2002/3 New grants from Family Fund for 16-17 year olds	
Back page	12
Contact a Family events, competition	

Happy New Year from all at
Contact a Family Southwark!



More pictures from the Christmas Party and the Pantomime inside.

It's a New Year

Start as you mean to go on - by being positive!

Look out for a few reasons to be cheerful dotted through these pages and see our competition on the back page! We want your sayings, proverbs and motivational thoughts from your experience, childhood and culture.

To start you off... *'the longest journey starts with a single step'* ...So off you go!

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

Becky goes west!

Many of you will have met Becky at events.

You will know how friendly and helpful she is. Well, she is off to share her talents with the people of South America. Becky came to us from the Wandsworth office on the understanding that she had travel plans.

So she is flying off to Buenos Aires and then travelling slowly up to Belize to take up a three month placement on an HIV AIDS project.

When she comes back to the UK, we might be lucky enough to attract her back to Contact a Family if not to Southwark. We wish her a safe and enjoyable adventure.

Aiming High Conference

26th February at Millwall

This is the next stage in the work of the Southwark Aiming High for Disabled Children Project Board. Parents, children and young people with disabilities or complex needs are invited to come along and hear more about Aiming High in Southwark.

What's the day about?

Included in the day is:

- A summary of all the information gathered from parents, children and young people
- An outline plan of how Short Break services will look in Southwark
- An opportunity to ask questions, make suggestions and generally take part in the planning process
- Lunch, a children's entertainer, information stalls and networking

How do I get an invitation?

Numbers are limited so make sure you return your application as soon as you can. Invitations will be sent to all the people who have said they are interested so far. This

includes you if you said 'ask me again later'. If you want to request an invitation or more information, or want to know how to get a questionnaire, please contact Alison Miles at the office on 020 277 4436 or email:

Alison.miles@cafamily.org.uk

Funding

The credit crunch bites

Southwark Council and the PCT need to know how much money they will be given by the Government and how much they can raise from the Council Tax before they can work out how much money they will be able to spend on services from April 2009. Hard decisions have to be taken.

Commissioned services wait

Contact a Family is commissioned to provide services to families with a child with an additional need in Southwark. This means we have an agreement with the borough to provide services. The borough pays us to do this work and regularly assesses us to make sure we are doing what we said we would.

The current situation

Contact a Family has five separate agreements with the Council. Four of these agreements come to an end in March 2009. We have to wait to find out if the agreements will be renewed and what the level of funding will be if any.

Support your local services

Contact a Family and many of the other services you and your family use need to provide evidence to funders that we are cost effective, value for money and meet a need that is not otherwise being met. Please help us to help you by responding when we ask for your feedback through questionnaires, evaluation sheets. Give us your views, ideas and tell us how we support you.

See page 12 for details of our latest 'ask'.

News

Your experience matters – survey on the Disabled Children's Services National Indicator

In Spring 2009 the government will be sending a survey to a sample of parents of disabled children to ask for their views on the services they receive. Parents' answers will be used to develop a **National Indicator for disabled children**. But what is a National Indicator, why is it important and why should parents complete the survey?

What is a National Indicator (NI)?

In April 2008, a new system was introduced to measure and compare the performance of each local authority in England. Every local authority will now be measured against 198 National Indicators, to see how well they are serving their local community. One of these National Indicators will specifically measure services for disabled children.

Why is the Disabled Children's Services National Indicator important?

This is the first time there has been a specific indicator for disabled children's services and crucially, the indicator will be measured by parents' experiences. Local areas will be able to see how they are performing and compare with others. The government will also be able to compare services for disabled children across different local areas. Local areas that perform badly will be expected to improve their services.

The Disabled Children's Services National Indicator survey

The survey will be sent out to a sample of parents of disabled children in the **Spring**. It will ask parents about their experiences of the services they receive from education, health and social care.

Part of the sample will be made up of families of disabled children who are receiving services. The other part will be made up of families who indicate their child has a difficulty in a 'Health and Well being' questionnaire. This questionnaire will be sent

out to thousands of families by the British Market Research Bureaux in January 2009. This is to make sure families who are currently not receiving any services are included in the survey. The final sample will include families whose children have a range of disabilities, spread across each local area.

Why complete the survey?

The Disabled Children's Services National Indicator is a key tool to ensure services improve in your local area. It will focus education, health and social care's attention on services for disabled children in a way that hasn't been seen before. Your experiences are crucial in measuring local services for families of disabled children. The survey is a unique chance to have your say – it you get the opportunity to take part, please do, and encourage other parents to do the same.

If you, or anyone else you know about has any problems filling in the survey there will be a phone number clearly marked on the questionnaire that you can call to get assistance. This information will also be provided in several community languages.

Aiming High

Thank you to everyone who has responded to the questionnaires sent out before Christmas. There is still time to contribute – see page 2 for how to contact Alison.

What's happening now?

We sent out about 3300 initial letters and got 235 replies. Of these 190 said they were willing to get involved. So far we have had information from 75 families which will be used to help in the planning of services. See page 2 for more details of the Conference on 26th February which is the next stage.

We are waiting to get confirmation that Southwark has been successful in getting the money for Short Breaks. We're on track!

The Aiming High Project Board

News

The EarlyBird programme comes to Southwark

EarlyBird is a programme for families of pre-school children (under 5 years old) with a new diagnosis of an autistic spectrum condition.

This is a new programme to be set up for parents in Southwark. The first course is almost coming to an end and plans are being made to start the next course in January 2009.

How does it work?

The EarlyBird programme consists of 12 weekly sessions and combines group training and individual home visits.

The aim of the programme is to help parents to gain more understanding of their child's autism, help structure interactions, help develop communication, develop strategies around problem behaviours and to support parents in the time between their child's diagnosis and starting school.

The programme is run by professionals with experience of working with children with autism and who have been trained in the EarlyBird programme. Currently professionals from the Speech & Language, KIDS and Parent Partnership teams are running the sessions.

On each course we can work with 6 families. Each family has 2 places offered. This is so that you can bring anyone who is important in your child's life to learn with you.

How to find out more

If you would like further information about EarlyBird please contact the Southwark EarlyBird Administrator on 020 3049 8050.

You would need to complete an application form and attend one of our Information Meetings before registering to take part.

Southwark EarlyBird Team

What parents say about EarlyBird

"... This course is about learning about what 'A' has to deal with, letting 'A' learn life skills, its more about the fundamentals to communication and development;"

"I think its been marvellous, its helped me to think about things I wouldn't have considered, made me think about how he responds to things, what he might be thinking, seeing things from 'B's' point of view, gives more of an insight. Knowledge is power, knowledge about autism and sharing this with people, knowing what I am speaking about gives me more confidence;"

"After the session I felt very comfortable;"

"I find the course fantastic, I had lots of questions and we are learning lots about autism on the course. It came at the right time, its kept me sane over the last few months, I am now seeing traits in him as well as others;"

Autistic Spectrum Conditions Strategy

There is still time to ask questions and have your say. Consultation meeting:

22 Jan, 5 - 7pm at Cator Street, SE 15.

The strategy is free to download at

www.southwarkparentpartnership.co.uk

News

Transition

Aiming High Self Assessment

The Aiming High for Disabled Children Project Board in Southwark is currently working on the self assessment required by the national group leading on this part of Aiming High. In addition to the money the borough hopes to be given to support its work around Short Breaks, we may be eligible for some of the 19million pounds set aside to be spent on transition in England.

A sub group of the Aiming High for Disabled Children Project Board in Southwark is working on this now. This is being led by Norbert Cilia, Children's Transition Manager based at Sunshine House.

Conference review

Susan Elhabbi reports back from a conference on transition challenges for young people with Asperger's Syndrome

On the 25th November 2008 I was lucky to be able to go to a conference about 'overcoming transition challenges for young people with Asperger's Syndrome; run by 'Bookdale - exclusively autism'.

The conference was for both parents and professionals and role covered the specific needs of young people and adults with the syndrome. Professionals were reminded that every person is a different individual even if they have the same condition and that interventions that works well for one person may not work as well with another person.

We heard interesting talks from two adults with Asperger's syndrome: Niba Jackson, a young lady whose mother (who also spoke) Corolann Jackson, is the chair of SAFE (Supporting Asperger Families in Essex) and parent representative on the Department of Health's Autism Stakeholder group and

Andrew Cooksey, a man who was not diagnosed with the condition until he was in his 40's and who is now an Independent Sector Autism Consultant.

We also heard about a very useful scheme called PROSPECTS - the NAS employment service, where young adults with ASD can have training and work experience and help to find autism friendly jobs, sometimes using their special talents and interests.

As well as the talks at the conference there was a choice of workshops to attend. The first workshop I attended was 'Exploring the changes which occur during adolescence'. This looked at how puberty and Asperger's syndrome mix and how to deal with the problems that can be presented. I also attended 'Multidisciplinary support for people with ASD through adolescence'. We looked at a variety of different problems that teenagers with ASD can face and how to help them using a variety of services working together - parents- school- hospital/ specialist services etc.

I found the day very useful and informative.

Thank you Contact a Family for sending me.

Susan Elhabbi

Coming up...

Year 9 Annual Review and Transition Event

4th February 2009

Parent Partnership is holding an information morning on 4th February 2009 at Sunshine House. Information on parental rights around this review, what to expect and who should be there will be available. There will also be input from the Connexions service and a workshop run by Norbert Cilia.

Contact Parent Partnership

For more details and information and support around education issues phone: 020 8525 2886/2866 or

Email: parentpartnership@southwark.gov.uk

Reviews and pictures

'Smooth Caramel'

Dance night for parents

Her moves were very smooth! She was very patient and took us right back to the basics making sure no one was left behind. With her encouragement we learnt how to shake our hips again, which showed us what our ample curves can do! Finishing on the electric slide was brilliant and took me back to my youth. I'd recommended it to any parent who wants to have a good time in a relaxed, fun environment - we all have the same curves and went from novices to those who knew how to shake their shimmy's!

Rosemary Smith

Pamper course

Four weeks of bliss!

I have always wondered how I could pamper members of my family with a massage without it costing me an arm and a leg, how to make sense of the various essential oils and fragrances on the market.

The short pampering course at Contact a Family has given me a great insight into this. It is very practical and also highlighted technical issues such as which muscles to work and the amount of pressure to apply in order to give a very relaxing session.

Today I can prepare my own hair, face and body cream without spending too much on the High Street and it is CUSTOM made to suit my needs!

Eunice Edoh

Extra thank yous

Thank you again to Sufyaan, our very talented magician, for his show at the Christmas Party.

Thanks to all our volunteers - we couldn't do it without your support.

Squidz

Teenager night out at nightclub in Deptford

The minibus was full and no one wanted to leave...



Sounds like a good night out to me!

Parents came along and had their own fun.

From one family to another

Messages to warm your heart



We received many lovely messages in the run up to Christmas and rather a lot of yummy biscuits and chocolates. We thank you deeply but remind you that whilst everyone loves to get presents, we'd just as soon have your good wishes and kind thoughts.

At the Christmas Party many people left messages in Santa's pockets. Some were simple seasonal good wishes, some were drawings. We even had one which was a specific request to Santa. I hope Santa got the message by another means or he wouldn't know Kevin wanted a Pro Evolution 2009!

Most of the good wishes were really **for** all of you, **from** all of you. Pass them on!

Reviews and pictures

Christmas Party

As you can see from the front page, staff and volunteers got into the party spirit straight away. This was taken before our guests arrived. We did really well for our first attempt at a festive party – but wow was it tiring! There were sore feet and droopy antlers by the end.

Children asked for more games and we certainly learned a lot for next time.



It was a really packed afternoon with Pass the Parcel, sing-song, crafty corner, sensory area, disco, refreshments, face painting, magic show and so on.

This dad liked the antler look!



Special thanks to Emma Davies and her mum Sheila who took family photos for those who wanted them.

Your CD will be on its way soon.



Thanks too to Woolworth's charity 'Kids First' who provided many of the prizes, Gloucester Road Primary School who

donated the hamper for the prize draw and the Peter Minet Trust who gave us £500 towards the cost of the party. Cheers!



Pantomime

Jack and the Beanstalk

Our biggest trip yet, with 130 people attending (oh, yes they did!). Everyone had a great time and enjoyed the show, being together and for some, trying something new. Greenwich is a good venue, well served by



public transport and there is plenty to look at before and after the show.

The cast were very energetic and there were the usual Panto favourites like the sing-a-long, hissing at the baddy, and shouting 'behind you!'



Those who wanted extra support got it and Becky got us all in our seats on time. Superb fun. Watch out for next year's show, Mother Goose.

The winner of the Aiming High prize draw was the Knox family. Congratulations!

We are very grateful to DayTrippers for their support of our Pantomime trip.

Reasons to be cheerful

The first snowdrops of Spring

Hot chocolate with marshmallows

A hot bath with perfumed oil

In home care packages consultation

William Chatterton, Service Manager of Southwark's service for children with disabilities and complex needs gives an update

At the end of 2007, the service asked Contact a Family to host a consultation session with parents who had packages of care within their own homes to support a disabled child. CAF set up the day, which took place at Inspire in February 2008. As well as the parents, for the first time we invited the providers of the service, and I came to part of the day with representatives of the CWD&CN team and our brokerage service, which organises the detail of the packages.

Update was agreed

The day was a really lively one, and produced some very clear recommendations from parents to the service. I said I would respond to these, and my response was part of the final report of the day that CAF produced, which went in summary into the Grapevine issue of **, and in full to all the parents who came to the consultation day. I also said to CAF that I would update parents on what progress we had made with the recommendations we had agreed to take forward, through an article in Grapevine in January 2009. This is it.

Aiming High arrived

Since then, one of the biggest things that has happened to the service has been the Government initiative 'Aiming High for Disabled Children' and as you're a Grapevine reader, you will know more about it than most people. The initiative has been an exciting time for the service, though it has to be said quite a demanding one. What it has enabled us to do, is to get our own plans for the development of the service into the draft wider 'Young Southwark' Aiming High plan. In some cases, this has meant both that we have gone further than we expected in getting what parents have asked for onto that wider agenda, but have also had to go at

Aiming High's pace rather than our own! The other major project for us has been the 're-tendering' of the Council's Home Care contract which chooses the providers who provide most of our care within people's homes. We have been able to use that opportunity to revise the contract to build in the recommendations you made to us for skilling up care workers to a higher level.

That's a general look at the last year. Below is a summary of what you recommended, and we agreed to, and where we have got with it in the last year.

Where we have got to

1. *You wanted there to be more safe and stimulating places that children could be taken out to in the day as part of their care package.*

We have begun discussions with the Council's Sport and Leisure services about enabling increased access for disabled children. The Aiming High draft programme includes training for Sports and Leisure staff, after school expansion, and the development of youth and play services.

2. *You wanted us to pull together information on what's available so parents and carers would know.*

We will, but we need to hold on that one until we see what the expanded service looks like.

3. *You wanted care workers to be more widely skilled in caring for your children.*

We have built this requirement into the revised Home Care tender, and will shortly be holding a meeting with providers to take forward a joint programme of care worker training.

4. *You wanted there to be a 'passport' for each child to inform carers of their needs.*

We have done some preliminary work on this, but it is not far advanced yet. Watch this space.

In home care packages consultation

5. *You wanted time at the beginning of a package for care worker to learn about the children they were caring for.*

This will be part of our discussions with the providers, as well as training.

6. *You wanted more and more flexible hours at our Orient St residential short breaks centre , and more access to our fostering 'Family Link' scheme.*

Plans are going ahead to add another bed to Orient St, and an expansion of Family Link is part of the proposed 'Aiming High' strategy.

7. *You wanted us to be more active in helping young people in their transition to adult services.*

We have appointed a Transition Manager to co-ordinate our work on this. We have also put together a three year work plan for the multi-agency strategy group that co-ordinates transition to adulthood. Some of the objectives are: a health passport for young people, a 'Transition information and resources pack' for families and professionals, work with schools on SEN reviews, and the creation of a befriending and mentoring scheme, the last of which is also in the draft Aiming High programme.

8. *If we cut the hours of your package after we review it, you wanted clear and detailed reasons why.*

We are working really hard on this in the Panel, and hope you have noticed the difference.

9. *You wanted more work done on Emergency Plans.*

We will look to getting this on the agenda for next year's strategy group so we can push ahead on this.

What will happen next

The next year is going to be a really busy one, where we are also going to have to become increasingly 'smart' with our planning and resources in what is going to be quite a difficult economic climate. We will be

keeping you up to date with progress, involving you wherever we can, and will be holding another consultation session in 2009 to seek your views again of how we are doing, and where we need to put our energies.

Yours,

William Chatterton

Home care tender

Contracts reviewed

All home care contracts were reviewed last autumn. As part of this, agencies were invited to tender for a generic home care contract serving adults, with children, people coming out of hospital or requiring continuing or palliative care as enhanced homecare categories. This means Children's services were not considered separately.

Process was complex

The process was very complicated, involving partners from a number of council departments and service users with differing experience of home care services. It would be fair to say that a great deal was learnt from the process which was new to all concerned. This is the way services will be commissioned in the future so we all need to understand the process and accept the amount of work involved.

The results

The end result for families who receive in home care is yet to be announced. The situation for Children's services has been dependent upon the generic or overarching situation being settled.

Alison Miles, Parent/Carer Council Development Officer was involved in the interviews for the Children's service, acting as an observer. Recommendations were made but a final announcement is yet to be relayed to the Parent/Carer Council.

Grapevine will report developments.

Money matters

Home Heat Helpline



The helpline is the only national service set up to enable people to access the free grants and services they need to manage their fuel bills and reduce their energy consumption.

Aimed at older people, families with young children and people with disabilities or long term health conditions, it provides vulnerable customers with a direct link to specialist teams within their energy supplier and access to a range of services including:

- The Priority Service Register, which provides extra services including bills in large text or braille, security passwords and free gas safety checks
- Grants for free home insulation
- Flexible payment options for customers in fuel debt
- Benefits entitlement checks
- A disconnection safety net, which ensures that no vulnerable customer is ever knowingly disconnected

Since it was set up by the Energy Retail Association in 2005, the Helpline has received over 80,000 calls from across the UK, with a quarter of customers reporting reduced energy bills and many more accessing benefits that they were previously unaware of. As part of the re-launch of the service, for the first time, customers or their relatives and friends will be able to make enquiries and access support online at www.homeheathelpline.org.uk.

*Reasons to be cheerful - A thank you
Please pass on my thanks to all your colleagues for a lovely party on Saturday. Isaac thoroughly enjoyed himself and was chuffed and surprised at the gifts he received. He said the best bit was the magician! Parent*

Bills Bills Bills

Credit Unions can help

After the festive season it can seem as if there is a mountain to climb to pay for it all.

people regain a measure of control over their finances. Saving with a Credit Union couldn't be simpler; you can save as much or as little as you like. Benefits can also be paid into the Credit Union helping those on a low income to save a little each week.

When you borrow you may carry on saving meaning that by the time you have repaid the loan your savings have grown as well. Low cost loans could save you hundreds of pounds an average high street loan of £1000 will accrue interest of £650 whilst a Credit Union Loan will only accrue an average of £67 for the same £1000.

There are no hidden costs and no penalties for repaying the loan earlier. An added bonus is that you are covered by life assurance at no cost to the borrower for the term of the loan

Southwark Credit Union also offers a range of other financial services to members from Home Insurance to Car Insurance.

By this time next year you could have saved enough to cover Christmas or take a holiday with your family.

So make a New Years resolution get in touch with Southwark Credit Union and take control of your finances.

For further information please contact Southwark Credit Union
79 Denmark Hill, 020 7787 0770.

Reasons to be cheerful – family



Money matters

Unclaimed Children's Tax Allowance for 2002/3

Up to £1,040 may be yours

The year before Tax Credits were introduced there was a different non-means tested allowance available which was **never** advertised by the Inland Revenue.

It is called the **Children's Tax Allowance** for the Year **2002/3**.

You can still claim this tax allowance before the **31 January 2009 deadline**.

You need to phone HMRC on 0845 302 1437 and ask them to check whether you have already received this allowance and, if not, enquire as to what action you need to take.

Claim £520.00 allowance if;

- You have a child born between 6 April 1986 and 5 April 2003
- The child lived with you for all or part of 2002/2003
- You worked and paid tax for all or part of 2002/2003
- You or your partner earned £6,000 plus in the year 2002/2003 tax year

Claim £1,040 allowance if;

- If you can answer yes to the four questions above, and
- One of your children was born between 6 April 2002 and 5 April 2003

Notes:-

- Making a claim does not affect your current or future entitlement to Working or Child Tax credits.
- Your Marital status is irrelevant
- You cannot claim the allowance twice and if your final tax code on your April 2003 P60 ended in a H or a T, you have already had the allowance.

Family Fund increases age limit for grants

Important message about grants for 16 & 17-year-olds

Our age limit has increased and we can now give grants for severely disabled children aged 16 and 17 in England and Wales,

As this is something new we want to make sure we are giving grants for the things that will make the most difference to young people.

Whilst we are happy for you to apply for the things we usually help with, such as holidays, washing machines, driving lessons, computers and hospital visiting costs, we would welcome alternative requests that are of particular help for your child at this time. For more information and to apply visit www.familyfund.org.uk

If you would like to talk to us about an application for your 16 or 17-year-old please contact us by email at policy@familyfund.org.uk or by phone on 01904 550037

Reasons to be cheerful – enjoying a family outing



Every cloud has a silver lining

The back page

Contact a Family Events

Enclosed with this edition is your Spring Events Programme. You must be registered with us in order to join in. It's easy, just give us a ring and we'll arrange a meeting. Places are limited on most of our events and we urge you to get your requests in as soon as possible. We cannot guarantee places. Some of our events are free but we make a small charge for most. You must pay in advance and please, let us know if you can't come so we can offer the place to someone else.

Coming up...

Pampering sessions – come and feel very special at one of our relaxing sessions

Male grooming – a new adventure for us, an evening just for the men at a local barber's shop. A Sweeney Todd night to remember!

Pampering Course – we're running this 4 week course again in March. See the review on page 6.

Half term events for the whole family include our ever popular Fun Day, Music Therapy and a trip on the London Eye.

There's our usual mix of drop ins, workshops and more so get your diaries out and your booking forms in!

Very important – please fill in the questionnaire

We're also asking you to tell us what you think about our Events programmes. Please send us your completed questionnaires in the envelope provided.

We need your input – it helps us make sure we are offering what you want. It is also really important to us to be able to prove to our funders that we are doing our jobs well. As you read on page 2, this is particularly important at the moment!

Lush – 'Thank you'

We are extremely grateful to the fresh, handmade cosmetics company, Lush, who have given us lots of super goodies to give away to mums, dads and carers. In a beautiful red box, these goodies (soap, bath melt, massage bar and moisturiser) are a great way to continue the pampering process.

So thank you to Lush and make sure you come to one of our lovely relaxing pampering events and collect your fantastic gift.

You're worth it!

Competition.... Competition!

Send us your sayings, proverbs, song titles or the things you tell yourself to keep yourself cheerful. Every culture has this kind of thing. Maybe you count your blessings – tell us what they are. We will share everything we get in February's email update so send them in quickly! We'll choose one winner to receive a suitably cheerful prize!

Here's a couple of examples (more inside too):

- Don't worry; be happy
- The darkest hour is just before dawn

Good luck!

contact a family
for families with disabled children

National Freephone helpline

0808 808 3555 (10am -4 pm Mon-Fri, and Monday evenings 5.30-7.30pm)

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