



## Big Lottery Money to boost Family Events

Contact a Family has successfully raised money from the Big Lottery Learning Awards, for families in the West Midlands. We have money to put on family learning events around the region and want to hear from parents and parent groups who would like to have an event in their local area. The money is to run six events per year for the next five years. We have money for 3 events up to April 2009.



The events need to cover family learning and can include learning new skills together. This could cover cooking, arts and crafts, swimming, relaxation and yoga or parents developing the confidence to manage through learning Makaton and how to deal with challenging behaviour, – **let your imagination run riot and give us a call!**

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## Contact a Family News

### Welcome! 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.'**



**The Pounds for Parents campaign is officially coming to a close November 2008. The 2 year campaign was created to raise awareness of benefit entitlements and stop families missing out on money they might have been owed.**

Despite being some of the most vulnerable and poorest families in society around 476,000 families in the UK are not claiming benefits to help meet the additional needs of a disabled child. By improving the take up of benefits and financial support for families with disabled children, Pounds for Parents was able to assist carers to claim what they were entitled to.

Through the West Midlands office, the campaign has been able to assist a number of families with a particular focus on Disability Living Allowance and charitable funding.

The campaign began with one to one support but over the two years has developed into skill sharing. Parents and professionals were encouraged to understand the background behind Disability Living Allowance and charitable funding, in order to build the knowledge and skills required to successfully complete these forms and applications more independently.

Pounds for Parents in the West Midlands brought together drop in sessions at the Birmingham Children's Hospital, information guides to work through DLA forms and funding, and volunteer training. Each element helped to bring information about the campaign to a wider number of families and professionals.

The weekly drop in sessions provided a valuable outreach service. Through the sessions a number of families unfamiliar with Contact a Family, were able to access private one-to-one assistance. Enquires covered financial advice and general information about additional services. While the information guides provided relevant background on DLA and funding, explaining who is eligible, while providing step by step instructions on how to fill in a form or make a funding application.

We hope that the campaign has helped families to claim valuable benefits and assisted others to understand their rights better. Those looking for support in the future can still contact the helpline and access the expertise of Contact a Family's Welfare Specialist on 0808 808 3555 during 10am to 4pm from Monday to Fridays (free for parents and carers).



### Aiming High for Disabled Children

Aiming High for Disabled Children is a new plan from the Government to help disabled children and their families receive the support and opportunities they need to live ordinary family lives. The Government intends to use Aiming High for Disabled Children to give more money to services for disabled children.

**The Aiming High for Disabled Children Plan will:** Give disabled children, young people and their families more of a say in their local services; Make sure disabled young people have better support as they grow older; Give parents and carers the right support at the right time; Give disabled children, young people and their families more chances to talk about what they want and need.

#### **Why are these changes happening?**

The Government talked to disabled children and their families to find out what they wanted. They found Short breaks, better childcare and support for young people as they become adults were the chief concerns.

From 2008 to 2011 there will be more money for disabled children, young people and family services.

#### **£370 million for short breaks.**

This means more disabled children and young people can take a short break, do new things and make more friends.

#### **£35 million for childcare.**

This means disabled children and young people will get better care.

#### **£19 million for transition support.**

This means better services for disabled young people as they grow up.

#### **£5 million for parent forums.**

This will help parents tell local authorities how to make services better.

For more information about Aiming High for Disabled Children visit website:

[www.everychildmatter.gov.uk/ahdc](http://www.everychildmatter.gov.uk/ahdc)



**together**  
for disabled  
children

**Contact a Family has formed a new partnership with Serco called Together for Disabled Children. The Department of Children, Schools and Families has appointed the Together for Disabled Children partnership to support the Aiming High for Disabled Children short breaks programme and development of parent participation forums.**

Our aim is to provide support and information to parents and professional and to help with the development of successful parent involvement, which should help shape local services for disabled children for the better.

Together for Disabled Children has a small team of Local Advisers (based in Serco offices) helping local authorities get ready to transform short breaks services.

There is also a smaller team of Regional Participation Officers (based in Contact a Family) supporting parents, parent forums, groups and networks involved in parent participation to develop their links with strategic planning so that local services meet the needs of families and disabled children.

**Sarah Lee** is the **Regional Participation Officer** for **West Midlands, East Midlands and South West England**. She continues her role as Regional Development Officer at Contact a Family West Midlands. For further information you can contact Sarah Lee on mob: **07722 821 233**, email: [sarah.lee@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:sarah.lee@cafamily.org.uk)

## Contact a Family News



**together**  
for disabled  
children

### Grants

Together for Disabled Children, a partnership between Contact a Family and Serco, will be distributing grants and providing support to ensure groups develop parent participation activities in each local authority area in England

This year there is one grant of £3300 available for parent participation in each local authority area. **The deadline for this years grant is Friday November 21st.** Next year there will be another grant of £10,000. The grants are available to existing forums, local support groups or voluntary organisations and will facilitate the development of parent involvement.

#### **Liz Ranger, Parent Participation Manager**

at Together for Disabled Children, said: "We are delighted to announce the availability of these grants. Involving parent carers in the decision making process around shaping disabled children's services is key to making them more focused on their needs...Parents with a disabled child are expert in their child's needs and collectively they can help transform services for all children no matter what the disability."

Applications for the grants need to demonstrate an agreement between local parent groups, relevant voluntary organisations and service providers about how parent carer participation is to be developed and how the grant will be spent.

For further information visit website: [www.togetherfdc.co.uk](http://www.togetherfdc.co.uk) or contact **Sheila Davies, Grants Programme Manager**, Tel: **0207 608 8773**, email: [sheila.davies@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:sheila.davies@cafamily.org.uk).

For application forms contact the TDC Programme Administrator, Tel: **020 7608 8783**.

**Join Contact a Family on Facebook, MySpace and Bebo!**



**Contact a Family has increased its online support by creating groups and networks for families with disabled children on popular social networking sites Facebook, MySpace and Bebo.**

More and more people are using social networking sites to talk, share and connect with others. For many parents with disabled children the internet is the first place they go to for information when they learn that their child has a disability. Many 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.

By becoming a fan of our Facebook page or adding us as a friend on MySpace and Bebo, you'll have access to discussion forums, Contact a Family videos and podcasts, information on upcoming events, whilst being able to make new friends and chat online with other parents. You can find us here:

Contact a Family Facebook Fanpage

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

Contact a Family Facebook Profile

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

Contact a Family MySpace page

<http://www.myspace.com/contactafamily>

Contact a Family Bebo page

<http://www.bebo.com/contactafamily>

## Contact a Family News

### Win a laptop! Tell your story and raise public awareness!

Contact a Family has launched a national competition in the run up to Contact a Family's 30th anniversary! Entries are invited from any family member or friend to tell their story of being involved in the care or raising of a disabled child.

The aim of the competition is to highlight the many issues parents and carers face. On the theme of *'Me and my disabled child'*, we want you to make a short video about the joys and challenges of caring for a disabled child. If you don't have a video camera or have other creative impulses, you could tell your story in an essay, make an audio recording or take a picture.

All entries will be considered in a category alongside other entries using the same media you will have the chance to win a digital camera – and for the over all winner, a laptop! The best clips, pics and stories will be featured on our website and other online channels such as Youtube, and in our magazine Connected.

**The deadline for entries is 30th November 2008.** For further details visit

Web: <http://tinyurl.co.uk/pecs>

### Visit our 'virtual office' in Second Life

Contact a Family is one of the first UK charities to open an advice and information centre in the online 'virtual world' *Second Life*. The office is open 24 hours a day – with an experienced parent adviser available to answer your queries every Wednesday from 10am-4pm.

By using this innovative program, you are able to create an avatar (a virtual character you create for your time in *Second Life*) which you use to walk, run, dance, fly and talk within the virtual world. In *Second Life*, parents and

groups can hold meetings, have parties, make friends, receive training, watch a comedy show, and even visit a nightclub.

For details on how to get started on *Second Life*, visit

[http://www.facebook.com/pages/Contact-a-Family/25040545213?ref=ts#/note.php?note\\_id=16630732571](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Contact-a-Family/25040545213?ref=ts#/note.php?note_id=16630732571)

To visit the Contact a Family office in *Second Life*, any time day or night, go to

Web: <http://www.secondlife.com> and use these co-ordinates: **Aloft Island 21.41.23**. Alternatively, you can search for Contact a Family in *Second Life* or add our avatar, **Advisor Somerflek** to your friends list.

### Contact a Family Podcasts

#### Disability Living Allowance

DLA is the main benefit for children and adults with extra care or mobility needs. The podcast explains the 2 main parts of the benefit, how you can claim it, and other helpful information.

#### Carer's Allowance

This podcast explains the main criteria for claiming Carer's Allowance and where to get further support in claiming this benefit.

#### Autism

This podcast features an interview with a mother, giving an honest account of having a son with autism, how she got the diagnosis and family life since.

You can listen to all the above podcasts at <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/news/podcasts.html>

#### Benefits, tax credits and other financial assistance

This podcast gives an overview of all the main benefits and tax credits available. To listen to the podcast visit web:

<http://www.cafamily.org.uk/audio/benefitsgeneraloverview.mp3>

# Useful Organisations



The Face2Face scheme in Birmingham was launched in August 2008. They are now able to take referrals from parents who feel that they just need someone to talk to about their child's disability or additional needs.

Every Face2Face befriender is a parent—someone whose own child has a disability. They know what it's like to cope with a new diagnosis and can offer support parent-to-parent.

Professionals who work with such parents can also contact us and will be sent leaflets giving details of the scheme and information on making referrals.

In the next few weeks we will be launching our bi-lingual support phone line, manned by our befrienders. For more information contact Anne (Birmingham co-ordinator)

Tel: **07827 472 659**, email: [face2face-birmingham@live.co.uk](mailto:face2face-birmingham@live.co.uk)

## Tiny Tim's Children Centre, Coventry

A Coventry based Registered Charity, founded in 1997 to help children with disabilities and special needs. They provide free therapies including, paediatric massage and physiotherapy for children who may benefit from such treatment.

The charity mainly provides help for children who live in Coventry, the surrounding West Midlands and Warwickshire area but sometimes see children from further afield. The centre provides approximately 3000 free therapy sessions every year.

The main aim of the centre is not to replace any treatment provided by the NHS and the private sector, but to give complimentary and additional treatment and support where

necessary. Whilst the therapy provided cannot in of itself cure incurable conditions, they help with some of the secondary conditions children suffer from in their day to day lives. These can include: joint stiffness, impaired mobility, poor muscle tone, lymphatic and circulation problems, developmental delay, sleep problems, stress, constipation and psychosocial problems.

In addition to the clinic treatment room, there is also a sensory stimulation room, indoor soft play area and rehabilitation room. There is also a café where parents can relax and watch their children play.

Tel: **02476 228 254**

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

## Cool2Care

This is a new Social Enterprise organisation (a business that gives its profits to charity or reinvests them for community benefit) that brings together families of disabled children with people who want to care for them. Cool2Care recruits, trains and places skilled care-workers and personal assistants to work with disabled children in a family setting.

If you are the parent or guardian of a disabled child or young adult and would like to employ a high quality, trained care-worker or personal assistant; then cool2care can help you find the care-worker that is right for you and your child. Parents can select the care-worker for themselves. Cool2Care will act as “matchmaker”; linking family and care-worker who can agree terms of employment. Ongoing support is offered to both parents and their care-worker.

All care-workers will receive specialised training in care for disabled children and will be subject to enhanced CRB checks. The service is available at present to families in Surrey and Birmingham. Tel: **0845 123 5484**  
Web: <http://www.cool2care.co.uk>

## Local Information



### **Carers Emergency Response Service (CERS)**

This is a new service for carers in Birmingham which is part of the government funded 'New Deal for Carers'. It will support carers by providing a free 'back up' service to ensure the person they care for is given support in their own home for up to 48 hours in an emergency. CERS will draw up an Emergency Action Plan with the carer and cared for which will determine what type of care will be needed if an emergency takes place. For more information and to register for the service contact the CERS Carers Centre Tel: **0845 468 1338**

### **Fair Access to Short Breaks for Carers**

This scheme has been introduced by Birmingham City Council to give carers a break. Carers who provide substantial care for an adult who has a disability or serious health problems (physical or mental) will be able to get a guaranteed amount of help to take a break from caring each year. For more information contact the Birmingham Carers Centre, Tel: **0121 675 8000** (10am-4pm, Mon-Fri & 10am-1pm Sun).

### **Dudley Parent Partnership: free workshops for parents and Carers 2008**

Preparing for your child to leave school: transition planning (5th November); Help your child understand Autism/Aspergers (12th November); Duties on schools to make reasonable adjustments for your child (4th December); My brother has ASD – The needs of siblings (10th December). Workshops are held between 10am-12pm. Tel: **01384 236667** to book a place.

### **Carers2Carers Helpline, Dudley**

Carers in the borough now have the opportunity to talk and share their experiences with others carers. To speak to someone Tel: **01384 482980**, Text **07794 734366**, Web: **www.carer2carer.com**

### **Walsall Disability Forum: Walsall Deaf Peoples Centre**

Fitness & healthy lifestyles session are held every Wednesday, 9.3am-10.30am for people who have a disability or impairment. Fully trained fitness instructors will be present. Cost: One-off joining fee of £1 per year and £1.50 per session (payable in a 6 week block of £9.00). For more information Tel: **01922 644983**

### **Wolverhampton Speech & Language Therapy department**

A workshop, 'Helping my child with eating & drinking difficulties' will be held at the Gem Centre 25th November 2008, 1-3pm. It is for parents of children with complex feeding challenges. For further details Tel: **01902 444363**

### **Whizz-Kids: Sit to Stand Product Day**

Come along and speak to a therapist and see the range of powered and manual chairs available, Thursday 6th November 2008, Warwick Gates Community Centre, Warwick. For further information and to confirm your attendance contact Dawn O' Sullivan on **0121 472 3261**, Email: **d.o'sullivan@whizz-kidz.org.uk**

### **Just For Me**

This a support group for adults on the Autistic Spectrum (18+). Carers are also welcomed. Meetings are held on the 2nd & 4th Wednesdays of the month at The Wellbeing Exchange, 185 Drayton Avenue, Stratford upon Avon, CV37 9LD. For more information contact Diane Dunnage. Tel: **0785 333 0425**

### **Wolverhampton Multi-Handicap Care & Relief Service**

This is a care service offering care to children with special needs. Services include care in the home, holiday club for children up to 18 years, one-one care at their centre for children 8 years or above, support for service users during hospital visits. Tel: **01902 453700**

## Make a contribution to our newsletter!

### Q&A Corner



Contact a Family West Midlands would like to dedicate in future issues of our newsletter a Q&A corner. Parents and carers are encouraged to submit any queries they may have surrounding the care of their disabled child. Questions will be chosen from the most popular themes arising from the letters we receive. Please submit your questions, in writing, to the West Midlands office. Please mark envelopes Q&A Corner.



### 'A Day in the Life of...'

We are also doing a feature in our next newsletter called, 'A Day in the life of...'. If you would like to share your experiences, an anecdotal incident that others would find positive, in 300 words or less please send your comments to the West Midlands office and mark your envelopes, 'Day in the Life of...'. Alternatively you can submit your stories via email: [westmids.office@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:westmids.office@cafamily.org.uk)



### Inspirational Quote

*"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?" Actually, who are you not to be? ... Your playing small doesn't serve the world."*

**(Marianne Williamson)**

### Contact a Family West Midlands Volunteer Parent Representatives

All our local parent reps are parents of disabled children. For local information in their designated areas or a listening ear, please give them a call – they will be only too happy to help.

**Rizwana Pathan**  
**Sonia Tooray**

Warwickshire  
North Birmingham

**024 7634 9612**  
**0121 331 1248**

The Contact a Family National Freephone Helpline **0808 808 3555** is open Monday - Friday, 10am-4pm and 5.30pm-7.30pm Monday evenings. The Textphone number is **0808 808 3556** and Language Line is available for parents whose first language is not English.

### The next edition of In Contact will be circulated Spring 2009

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 on **0121 415 4624**, or email: [westmids.office@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:westmids.office@cafamily.org.uk)

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