

# In Touch

February / March 2011

Contact a Family Northern Ireland bi monthly newsletter

## NEWS

- Confused by all the benefits changes?
- New! Podcast on Kleefstra syndrome
- Carers Allowance
- Father's rights
- Organisational restructure

## RESOURCES

- Useful Links
- Young Peoples Forum
- Child maintenance

## TRAINING AND EVENTS

- Autism
- Volunteering
- Dyslexia
- Sleep

## CONSULTATIONS

## Confused by all the benefits changes? – help is at hand from Contact a Family

Contact a Family has issued an urgent call for families with disabled children to get advice about forthcoming benefits changes. To help parents make sense of the recent welfare reforms announced by the Coalition Government and what the changes will mean for them, Contact a Family has produced a free guide to Future Benefit Changes. The guide is available from the Contact a Family Helpline on 0808 808 3555.

Derek Sinclair, Senior Welfare Rights Specialist at Contact a Family, said: "The recently announced benefits changes amount to the biggest shake up to the benefits system in generations. "Changes include replacing means tested benefits such as income support with a new 'universal credit', major reform of Disability Living Allowance and cuts in housing benefit.

"It is really important that parents with disabled children understand what these changes will mean and that is why we are making our guide to Future Benefit changes available to them for free."

The changes will impact on all families with a disabled child. While some of the changes will not take effect for a year or two, others will start to impact from this April - including changes in housing benefit for many private tenants, and a number of tax credit cuts including reduced help with childcare costs.

While many of the changes proposed will mean cuts in financial help – there is some good news. One of the changes being made in April will allow children aged 3 or above who have a severe visual impairment to start qualifying for the high rate of the DLA mobility component. Call the Contact a Family Helpline now to order your copy of Future Benefit Changes – 0808 808 3555.

### **NEW! Kleefstra syndrome - a parent's story**

There are many chromosome disorders and each has different features. This podcast is an interview with a Mother whose son has a disorder affecting chromosome 9 which was recently named Kleefstra syndrome. The condition was previously known as 9q34.3 syndrome or 9q syndrome.

[www.cafamily.org.uk/](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/)

### **Organisational restructuring**

Since our last E-Newsletter in December 2010, it has become clearer that the environment in which Contact a Family is working is changing, so we have been looking actively at what we might need to do to respond to these changes. We are currently looking at possible changes to our staffing structure, and we should finalise any changes during March 2011.

Like many of our colleagues across the sector, Contact a Family are currently working to ensure that the legacy of our work continues so that disabled children, young people, their friends, families and advocates are empowered to ensure their voices continue to be heard. Now more than ever it is vital for everyone to respond to calls for views and provide evidence for consultations that demonstrate the value and necessity of including disabled people in all aspects of society.

Contact a Family continues to seek out and secure sources of funding for future work and to ensure we continue to support the families and carers of children with disability across the UK.

## Carer's Allowance to remain outside of Universal Credit

Carers UK has welcomed the Government's announcement to keep Carer's Allowance outside Universal Credit. Commenting on the publication of the Government's Welfare Reform Bill, Carers UK Chief Executive Imelda Redmond CBE, said:

"We are pleased to see that Carer's Allowance will remain a non means-tested benefit. It is clear that the Government were considering drawing Carer's Allowance into the new system and if this had been the case, hundreds of thousands of carers would have faced a means-test and the risk of losing their Carer's Allowance."

## Child Maintenance Choices

Child Maintenance Choices provides impartial information and support to help separating or separated parents to make informed choices about Child Maintenance in Northern Ireland. They can also offer practical information in areas linked to Child Maintenance, such as housing, employment, and money. Although they're not experts in these other areas, they can put you in touch with specialist organisations that provide help and advice. This service is free and confidential, and is available from Monday to Friday, 9.00am - 5.00pm, by calling Freephone 0800 028 7439. You can also text "Choices" to 66101 and get a call back, or visit [www.nidirect.gov.uk/choices](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/choices) for more information.

## Changes to Fathers' Rights: Additional Paternity Leave and Pay

In Northern Ireland fathers of babies due (or placed for adoption) on or after the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 2011, have the right to avail of Additional Paternity Leave and Pay (APL&P). This is on top of the two weeks Statutory Paternity Leave already due to fathers. Fathers can take between two and twenty-six weeks Additional Paternity Leave (APL) after the 20<sup>th</sup> week since the baby's birth or adoption, providing the mother has returned to work. The father's APL must be completed by the baby's first birthday, with Additional Paternity Pay in line with the mother's maternity period. Fathers considering APL&P should provide eight weeks notice to their employer, advising them of their intention to take APL. For further information on APL&P, including rules and eligibility, and other childcare and work related issues, call Employers for Childcare's Freephone Helpline on 0800 028 6538.

## Resource links

Playday 2011 resources available [www.playday.org.uk](http://www.playday.org.uk)

SkillsActive pocket guide to Playwork Principles [www.skillsactive.com/playwork/principles](http://www.skillsactive.com/playwork/principles)

National Quality Improvement Network now has a new website hosted by NCB  
[www.ncb.org.uk/nqin](http://www.ncb.org.uk/nqin) or [www.ncb.org.uk/qualityimprovement](http://www.ncb.org.uk/qualityimprovement)

C4EO have developed a micro site for children and young people [www.c4eo.org.uk](http://www.c4eo.org.uk)

Anti-bullying resources from Changing Faces [www.changingfaces.org.uk](http://www.changingfaces.org.uk)

[www.iface.org.uk](http://www.iface.org.uk) – is a new website for young people with facial disfigurements

The Register of Play Inspectors launches its Play Inspector Finder [www.playinspectors.com](http://www.playinspectors.com)

European Network of Child-Friendly Cities [www.childfriendlycities.eu](http://www.childfriendlycities.eu)

'I could do that – become a short break carer' DVD available from Shared Care network  
[www.sharedcarenetwork.org.uk](http://www.sharedcarenetwork.org.uk)

Disability Direct – general resource website for disabled people [www.disabilitydirect.org](http://www.disabilitydirect.org)

Child Poverty Assessment Toolkit, developed by Local Government Improvement & Development Agency [www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk)

ChiMat – 'Tackling Stigma', a mental health toolkit [www.chimat.org.uk](http://www.chimat.org.uk)

NSPCC launches a Child Protection Toolkit [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

Practical information, tools and activities to respond helpfully to troubling behaviour in children and young people <http://www.handsonscotland.co.uk>

## **New online forum for young disabled people**

Scope has launched a new online forum for young disabled people. It's a secure place to talk, share ideas and information and raise concerns with peers.

The forum, Meeting Point, has been set up as part of Scope's young people's project Trendsetters, developed to highlight priorities for support and information.

It enables young people to work with them to produce resources for other young disabled people facing similar challenges in their day to day lives.

Contact Scope Response on 0808 800 3333

## Training and Events

### NAS - family support programmes

The following parent seminars/ help! and help! 2 programmes are provided free of charge to parents and to make a booking phone 028 9068 7066.

Title: Siblings

Venue: to be confirmed

Date and Time: 23rd March 2011, 10.30am- 2.30pm

This seminar is for parents /carers who have a child with autism who has siblings younger than 18. It focuses on the needs of the siblings and provides strategies for teaching them about their brother/sister and autism

Title: help! Programme - Lisburn

Cost: Free

Event Date: 22nd March 2011, 23rd March 2011, 29th March 2011

Venue: Trinity Methodist Church, Knockmore Road, Lisburn, Northern Ireland BT28 2EA

**Details:** *The help! family support* programme provides information, support and advice for parents/carers, family members and people with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This particular three-day programme, starting on the 22nd March 2011, is for parents/carers of children aged between 5 and 11 years with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The programme provides basic information on the following: an overview of ASDs; tips for communication; practical strategies for education and educational rights/law; managing behavioural difficulties; and accessing support services and benefits. There is no cost to parents - refreshments are provided but please bring your own lunch. Up to 10 families, two places per family may attend (or one family member and a friend). Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. Contact Address Family Support Worker Administrator Janine Vaughan, 59, Malone Road, Belfast BT9 6SA, tel: 028 9068 7066

**Duration** 3 days, 9.30am to 2.30pm

**Target Audience** Parents/carers

## Volunteering Conference

As part of events to celebrate the European Year of Volunteering 2011 **Volunteer Now** is hosting a one day international conference on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2011 at the Park Avenue Hotel in Belfast.

The Conference will:

- Present alternatives to turn the challenge of an ageing population into opportunities for communities.

- Encourage organisations from all sectors to see the positive opportunities for community participation offered by increasing numbers of people, often highly skilled, moving into retirement.
- Promote employee involvement in volunteering both pre and post retirement.
- Inform policy makers as well as health and social care providers of the positive impact of volunteering on the health of older people.
- Explore different methods of service delivery, income generation, and sustainability through initiatives such as Time Banking and Social Enterprise.

Conference delegates are also invited to a civic reception, hosted by Belfast City Council in the City Hall on the evening of Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2011.

Delegate Fee: £70.00 inc vat per person. For further information on the conference or accommodation, please contact Karen Hoey at Morrow Communications on 028 9039 3837 or email

[events@morrowcommunications.com](mailto:events@morrowcommunications.com)

## New! - online course on Dyslexia for Parents

Who is this course aimed at?

The course is tailored to the needs of parents of children with dyslexia. It provides comprehensive information on dyslexia and practical strategies for meeting the challenges faced, and will be of benefit to all those whose children are having literacy or numeracy difficulties.

For more information log on to: <http://www.icepe.ie/dyslexia-parent.html>

## Sleep Practitioner Training for health professionals working with families of disabled children

23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> May 2011  
10am - 4.30pm  
Belfast

As part of the Handsel Trust's ongoing Sleep Initiative to tackle sleep deprivation in families of children with disabilities, we are offering a two-day Sleep Practitioner training workshop. The workshop will be an introduction to the principles of sleep assessment and management and will be especially useful to professionals new to this area of practice.

**Purpose of the training:** To provide a sound knowledge of sleep theory and equip professionals with the specialist skills to apply this to families of disabled children. The topics to be covered are:-

1. Mechanisms of typical sleep e.g. sleep phases and cycles
2. Different categories of sleep disorder commonly seen in disabled children
3. Partnership working with families of disabled children

4. How complex health needs associated with disabled children impact on sleep
  5. Understanding the role of medication in tackling sleep disturbance
- Preventing sleep problems and developing positive sleep habits  
Assessing sleep problems using diaries and questionnaires  
Understanding how different strategies for change work and knowing how to apply them

Suitable for: The training is specifically designed for frontline health professionals who work with families of children with disabilities / special needs, including such Public Health Practitioners as Health Visitors, Community Children's Nurses and School Nurses. This is an opportunity to gain practical skills and develop best practice in sleep work with these families.

In brief: The Sleep Practitioner Training would provide delegates with a sound knowledge of the mechanisms of typical sleep and what can go wrong. The different types of sleep disorder which commonly affect children with disabilities will be covered in some detail. We will cover very thorough assessment tools which can be used with all children and we will explore creative strategies for helping children sleep better.

Cost: £230.00 for the two-day course – to include lunch and refreshments  
Places are limited and therefore confirmation of places is required.

## Consultations

### Physical and Sensory Disability Strategy - A Consultation Document 2011-2015

Closes on 21 April 2011

This strategy (2011 – 2015) confirms the Department's commitment to improving outcomes, services and support for people in Northern Ireland who have a physical, communication or sensory disability. It has been developed in accordance with the articles stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability and therefore supports the values of dignity, respect, independence, choice, equality and anti-discrimination for disabled people. The principles of family and person-centred care and self directed support are promoted throughout the strategy and recognition is given to the need to adopt a life cycle approach to the provision of services and support. The requirement for integrated working, not just across government departments and health and social care organisations, but also in partnership with the third sector is emphasised throughout the document. The Strategy and Action Plan are now available for public consultation. A consultation questionnaire and response proforma are available at the link below. <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/showconsultations?txtid=46845>

Response Details Responses to the consultation can be sent by post to:

Paul Cassidy  
Physical and Sensory Disability Unit  
Room D1, Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate

BELFAST

BT4 3SQ Tel: 028 9052 8357 Fax: 028 9052 2500

Or by e-mail to: [paul.cassidy@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:paul.cassidy@dhsspsni.gov.uk)

The consultation phase closes on 21 April 2011.

**For right up to date information** on events, consultations, local groups our most recent Newsletter and more see our webpage at [www.cafamily.org.uk/inyourarea/nireland.html](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/inyourarea/nireland.html) bookmark this page and then you can access it quickly!

We are available to help with any issues that affect the disabled child or young person, parents, families and professionals.

Contact us at 028 92627552 or e mail [nireland.office@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:nireland.office@cafamily.org.uk)