

contact a family

for families with disabled children

Spring time at last...

March - May 2011



Inside this issue: News from the office, What to do this Spring, Workshops, Baked Bean Theatre company, News from localities, Events, National news, Helpline

Feature: focus on bullying

Booking form

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News from the Office

Welcome to our spring edition of the newsletter which has several articles about safeguarding and anti bullying relating to children with special needs or disabilities.

It has been pretty chaotic in our offices as the building is being converted into an Enhanced Children's Centre. We are looking forward to seeing it all completed very soon.

We have had a very busy winter - several trips and outings including the ever popular pantomime, The Lion King and the Guildford Spectrum experience (the second two courtesy of the Aiming High Short Breaks scheme) We are now looking forward to some exciting Easter activities - see later in the newsletter. The Wizard of Oz is beckoning and we hope to be able to book more theatre trips later in the year as they are always so popular. See inside also for taster days at colourscape and swimming sessions - be sure to book your place with the relevant organisations.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to send back our service evaluation questionnaires. It is so helpful to have your feedback and we will take on board your suggestions (although I think it is unlikely that we will get funding to go to Disneyland!). We will share the feedback with our steering group which is made up of parents of children with disabilities and some local professionals. We can discuss with them how we can shape what we offer to families.

As ever, we are looking for new members of the steering group - do get in touch if you are interested.

We have welcomed another new member of staff to our team. Nathalie is covering two days of the Tooting post and is based in the Early Years' Centre on Wednesdays and Fridays.

On Monday 7th March we were delighted to welcome Sarah Teather, minister for education, to our offices to conduct an interview with two of our parents and the BBC - the piece which was to introduce the Green Paper 'Support and aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability' featured on Radio 4 as well as the national news - we were very proud to be asked to host this.

With best wishes for a happy spring and Easter holiday

The Wandsworth Team

News from Suzanne, Battersea Early Years' Team

Monthly parents'/carers' group at Katherine Low Settlement, Battersea High Street,
SW11 3HP

Thanks once again to all those who have joined us at the monthly parents' group. They have been really well attended again so far this year. Just to remind you all, the group meets every second Friday of the month at Katherine Low Settlement, 108 Battersea High Street, SW11 3HP. It is for parents and carers with children with additional needs, who live in Battersea and have a child under five.

The Group is a great opportunity for you to meet with other parents in a friendly, relaxed setting, to share experiences and information.

We also invite a different speaker each time to talk about a subject of interest. Crèche places are available, if booked in advance. For first time users of the crèche, at least one settling-in session with parents will be required. Please call me if you are interested in attending the group. Details of the upcoming sessions are as follows:-

Friday 8th April, 2011 - Siblings

Rosie Noble will join us to lead a session on supporting siblings of children with additional needs, drawing from experiences she has shared with other families over the years, as well as her own.

Friday 13th May, 2011 - Understanding your child's behaviour

Henrietta Ogbonna, Educational Psychologist, will join us to talk about understanding your child's behaviour. This will be an opportunity for you to raise any concerns you may have and share experiences with other parents. Henrietta will also be happy to offer some initial tips and advice on managing any behavioural difficulties your child may have.

Lunch and Play Session - Somerset Children's Centre,
157-159 Battersea Church Road, SW11 3ND.

The lunch and play session at Somerset Children's Centre continues to run every Thursday (except in the holidays) from 11.45 until 2pm. If you have not been before, please call me before attending to check there is a place available. It would be great to see some new families there!

For more information, phone Suzanne on 020 7622 1619 ext.112 or 07831 725126

News from Tooting and Balham Early Years' Team

Jill is the under 5s Family Worker for the Tooting and Balham areas. She is based in the Children's Centre at the top of Smallwood Primary School. Jill can help you with any queries relating to your child's needs and help with forms.

Jill works Monday to Friday 9.00am until 2.30pm. If you would like support or advice on any aspect of caring for a disabled child, please call her on 07508 734 333. Or else email jill.caterham@cafamily.org.uk

News from Roehampton and Putney

Yinka, our Family Worker in Roehampton is based at the Surestart building, 166 Roehampton Lane. To speak to Yinka or to make an appointment for support or advice on any aspect of caring for a disabled child, call 020 8789 0012 or 07971 324 901.

The weekly playgroup sessions run jointly with speech and language therapists at the Toy Library take place on Tuesdays from 1.00pm - 3.00pm. If you would like to bring your child along please call Yinka to book your place.

Autism Awareness event

V & A Museum of Childhood, Cambridge Heath Rd, London, E2.

Saturday 2 April, 11.00-4.00

FREE event learn techniques to help with communication, enjoy object handling sessions and explore our small display, Living with Autism.

Go along and receive a new Making SENse Family Pack to help families raising a child with autism make the most of their visit. The Pack includes Museum trails, art templates to do at home, a book, and support information.

A quiet room will be available to use as a rest area from 11- 4pm.

Tel: 020 8983 5200



Informal support groups

News from parents' support groups

Support group for parent/carers of Nursery and primary aged children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Coffee morning for parents and carers of ASD children

By Jennifer Miles, one of our parents, reports

Last half term, I helped organise a coffee morning with support from Contact a Family for the parents and carers of autistic children in Wandsworth. I wasn't sure how much demand there would be for such an event. I just felt the need to talk to other people in a similar position to me and to exchange ideas and experiences about anything to do with raising an autistic child - schools, getting a statement, behavioural issues and so on.

My son Bryn is now nine years old and was diagnosed with ASD at the age of four. He attends Southmead primary, a mainstream school with a Resource Base for children with ASD. I find it's quite hard to get to know other parents as many children come in on the green buses, so the event was all about making contact with each other.

The coffee morning was very popular indeed with about twenty parents and carers attending. Most of the two hours was taken up with introducing ourselves to each other and talking about our children and the situations we find ourselves in. Afterwards, there was a bit of time for talking amongst ourselves.

In the future, we aim to arrange speakers on subjects which people said they are keen to find out more about. These include, siblings, sensory issues, leisure activities and challenging behaviour.

We have two informal coffee mornings coming up at Siward Road - one for parents of nursery and primary aged children on 6th April and another for children in Year 6 through to 19 years old.

For parents of younger children on the autistic spectrum

When: Wednesday 6th April, 2011: 10.00 - 12.00

Where: Early Years Centre, Siward Road

Refreshments will be served. Call Jennifer, the parent of a young boy with autism for more details on **07921 780 499**, or just to turn up on the day!

**Support group for parent/carers of older children with any type of special needs
- school year 6 and above**

When: Tuesday 10th May 2011

Where: Early Years' Centre

Refreshments will be served. Call Jan our Family Support worker for more details on
020 8947 5260 to book your place

Parent workshops and information sessions

What about the brothers and sisters?

Rosie Noble will lead a discussion about the effect on the siblings of children with disability or special needs. Rosie was the founder member of a local support group and worked with families for many years as well as having her own personal experience in this area.

When: Tuesday 3rd May, 2011: 10.00 - 12.00

Where: Early Years Centre, Siward Road

The Annual Review - Parent Partnership

Following on from our successful workshop on What makes a good statement? We are pleased to present a focus on the Annual Review process - very helpful for anyone whose child has a statement of special educational needs - a crucial part of the transition process where children go from one school to another.

Call to book your place 020 8947 5260

When: Tuesday 17th May, 2011: 10.00 - 12.00

Where: Early Years Centre 1 Siward Road

For more information or to book
your place on any of these sessions,
call Family Worker Jan McCarthy
at Wandsworth Contact a Family
020 8947 5260

News News News

Confused by the benefits changes? Help is at hand from Contact a Family

To help parents make sense of the Government's welfare reforms and what the changes will mean for them, Contact a Family has produced a free guide to Future Benefit Changes.

Derek Sinclair, Senior Welfare Rights Specialist at Contact a Family said that the reforms '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', and cuts in housing benefit.

'It is really important that parents with disabled children understand what these changes will mean, so 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 and some come into affect 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 reforms will mean cuts in financial help, there is some good news. In April, children aged three or above who have a severe visual impairment will qualify for the high rate of the DLA mobility component.

Call the Contact a Family Helpline now to order your free copy of Future Benefit Changes on 0808 808 3555.

'Stop the DLA Takeaway' campaign gathers momentum - help us to keep it going

Contact a Family and The Children's Trust are continuing to campaign to Stop the DLA Takeaway and, thanks to your help, we now have several supportive MPs on board.

Currently, a child's Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is stopped after 84 days in hospital and, subsequently, the parents' Carer's Allowance is suspended. The regulations penalise vulnerable families at one of the most distressing times of their life.

Contact a Family and The Children's Trust are calling for these rules to be scrapped. We need your help now to ensure as many MPs as possible sign the EDM and show their support for the campaign.

If you think these rules are unfair, please e-mail or write to your MP and ask them to sign the EDM Disability Living Allowance for children in hospital, number 1520.

Special focus on bullying

Tackling bullying for children with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities

A recent report says that being marginalised and isolated can lead to victimisation and bullying of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities. The same report also recognises that vulnerable pupils can be bullies as well as victims.

The most common types of bullying are peer isolation and peer difficulties. Children with SEN and/or disabilities may experience more ridicule, manipulation and name-calling. They may also experience new forms of bullying, such as cyberbullying on the internet or mobile phones.

The report says that children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities have specific qualities that can make them a target for bullies, such as physical differences, but also qualities that any child or young person may have, including being shy and having low self-esteem.

It is said that the best protection against bullying at school is peer acceptance - being socially supported by classmates and having friends.

It is also important for children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities to have access to 'social opportunities'; to experience a variety of social situations to help them develop their friendship and communication skills.

The full report, *Responding to Bullying among Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities* by Colleen McLaughlin, Richard Byers and Rosie Peppin Vaughan, July 2010, can be found at: tinyurl.com/69hqld4

Your child's school

There are a number of things that schools do to tackle bullying. Your child's school will have an Anti-bullying Policy and a copy may be available in the reception area in school and on the school's web-site. If not, ask a member of staff.

To prevent bullying, your child's school may be able to provide structured break and lunch time activities and friendship clubs.

When bullying has been reported, the school will challenge bullying behaviour and provide support. Examples of the types of support used in schools include the victim being peer mentored or being assigned a playground buddy.

Some signs and symptoms to watch out for if you suspect your child is bullied might be a loss of appetite, lack of sleep, truancy, real or imagined illnesses brought on by anxiety and/or being quiet and withdrawn.

What is Wandsworth's Anti-bullying Strategy?

In Wandsworth, the Anti-bullying Strategy was launched in 2008.

The strategy is made up of five strands:

- children and young people's participation
- using data effectively
- prevention
- intervention
- working in partnership.

The strategy can be found on the Wandsworth Safeguarding Children Board website: tinyurl.com/6zcyj3dp

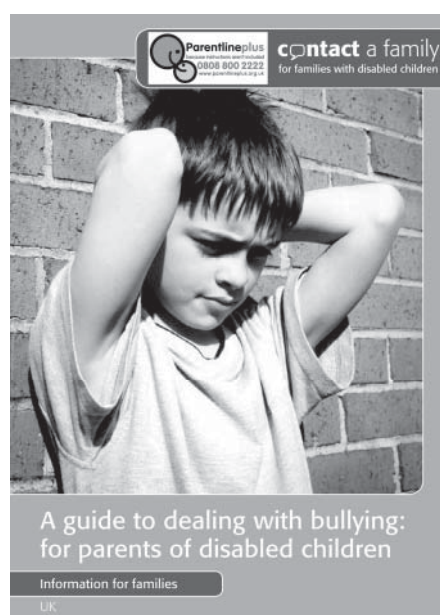
With children and young people's participation key to the strategy's success, events were held to mark Anti-bullying Week 2008. At these events, pupils from mainstream and special schools were asked about their thoughts and feelings about bullying.

What pupils said at the events can be found in the leaflet Your Views, Your Wandsworth, which can also be found on the Wandsworth Safeguarding Children Board web-site: tinyurl.com/4d9pjce

A guide to dealing with bullying: for parents of disabled children (2011)

This guide from Contact a Family is for parents of disabled children. You will find information about spotting the signs of bullying, the action you can take if you think your child is being bullied, your child's rights and tips from other parents. There is also a useful resources and contacts list for more information and advice.

Parents can order a free copy of A guide to dealing with bullying: for parents of disabled children. Just call our freephone helpline on 0808 808 3555 and we will send you a copy.



Free Taster events - book now

Colourscape

FREE Aiming High Family Event



When: Saturday 2nd April, 2011
from 11am - 3pm

Where: Linden Lodge School, Princes Way,
Wimbledon Park SW19 6JB.

Colourscape is a set of large inflatable sculptures made up of an array of beautiful colours. The Colourscape experience creates a multisensory environment of music, colour, light, movement and space and never fails to capture the imagination of both adults and children alike.

Families where queuing can be difficult can pre-book a slot between 11am and 12pm on a first come first served basis. To book a slot or for more information, please call Eleanor Thain, Aiming High Coordinator at the Family Information Service, on 020 8871 7913.

FREE swimming taster days for disabled children aged 8 - 12 years

When: Saturday 26 March 2011, and Saturday 9 April 2011

Time: 2.15 - 3.00pm

Where: Ernest Bevin College, Beechcroft Rd, Tooting SW17 7DF

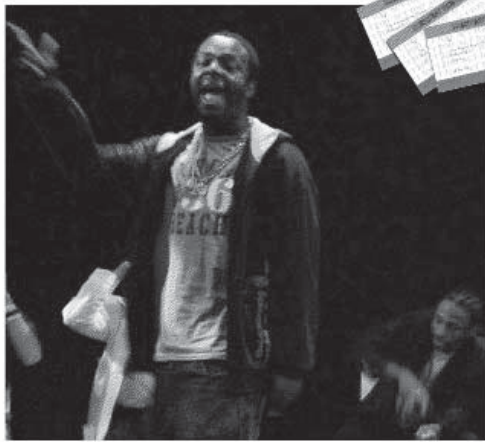
These fun taster sessions, organised by Wandsworth Amateur Swimming Association and funded by Aiming High, will give disabled children the chance to learn to swim and improve their confidence in the water

To book your place, Contact William on 020 8265 8645, or email disability@lbwasa.org

Regular swimming lessons start on Saturday 7 May 2011, so register your interest now!

For more information contact The Association of Swimming Clubs in the London Borough of Wandsworth, please visit www.lbwasa.org

The Baked Bean Theatre Company



If you've seen the Baked Bean Theatre Company perform then you already know what we're talking about.

We create vibrant exciting theatre.

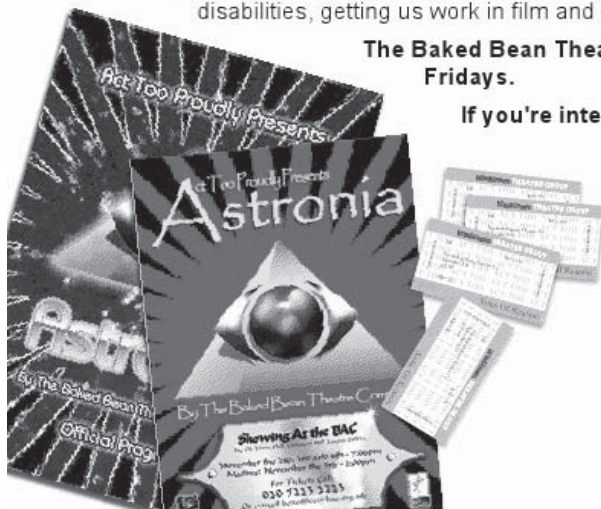
We are coached by Act Too who offer encouragement, support and real passion for the work we produce.

We are all members of 'Baked Bean Pro', the actors agency for people with learning disabilities, getting us work in film and television.

The Baked Bean Theatre Company meet on Wednesdays and Fridays.

If you're interested in joining we'd love to hear from you. Call us or email us:

020 8944 0024
 ican@acttoo.com
 www.acttoo.com



EVENTS



London Duck Tour and the London Eye

We are planning a trip on a London Duck Tour followed by a ride in the London Eye! A London Duck Tour is much more than a sightseeing tour; it's the only way to experience the spectacular sights and sounds of central London by land and river without leaving the comfort of your seat!

The Duck Tour will be followed by a trip on the London Eye. Tickets are a bargain at just £10.00 per person for both activities!

When: Tuesday 19th April 2011

Where: Waterloo, station

What time: 11.00am - 1.00pm

How much? £10 per person

Please note the Duck Tour is not suitable for children under three years old. Full information will be provided once your booking has been confirmed. Please send the booking form to us by Friday 01st April, 2011.

Trip to Bocketts Farm



It's back by popular demand! We are planning another day trip to Bocketts Farm to see and experience the joys of Spring - no more snow!

The tickets are a bargain at just £6.00 per person including transport! You'll need to bring your own lunch or use the cafeteria facilities at the Farm.

We will provide transport to and from the venue. The coach will collect us from the Early Years Centre, 1 Siward Road. Full information will be provided once your booking has been confirmed.

When: Thursday 14th April, 2011

Where: Bocketts Farm, Surrey

Time: 9.30am to 3.00pm

Cost: £6.00 per person!

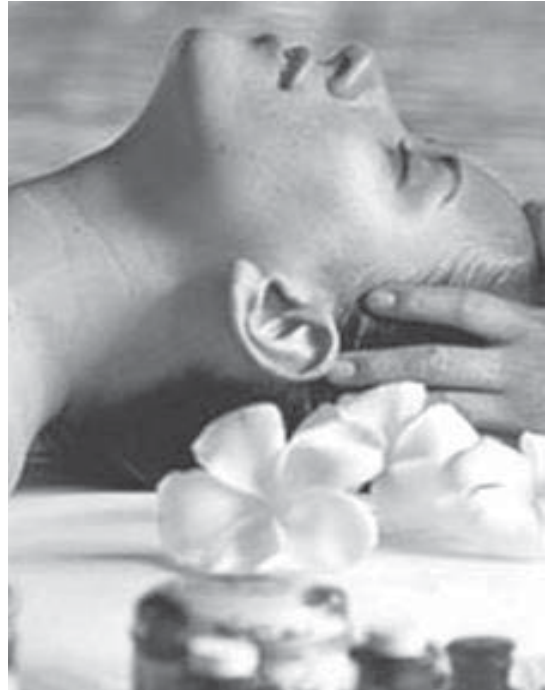
Please send your booking form back by Friday 1st April 2011.

Take time to relax...

Thanks to the Parenting fund, we are able to continue to offer our popular Relaxation sessions at an unbelievable rate of just £5!

Caroline Osland, a registered therapist in head massage, body massage and reflexology. Caroline comes to Contact a Family on the first Friday and third Thursday of each month. Sessions take place between 9.45 and 12.00 and last for 45 minutes.

Parents who come to these sessions are always very keen to book again. So be sure to phone and book early to avoid disappointment!



Friday	01 April	9.45am - 1.00pm
Friday	06 May	9.45am - 1.00pm
Thursday	19 May	9.45am - 1.00pm
Friday	03 June	9.45am - 1.00pm
Thursday	16 June	9.45am - 1.00pm
Friday	01 July	9.45am - 1.00pm

For bookings, please call us on:
020 8947 5260

contact a family

for families with disabled children

Across the UK, a child is diagnosed with a severe disability every 25 minutes. Although some children need hospital care, 98% of disabled children live at home with a parent or other family member who may not have expected to be in this position but who has to quickly become an expert.

When parents find out that their child is disabled, they may feel isolated and alone and usually don't know anyone else facing the same problems. They want contact with another family going through a similar experience and they want information about their child's disability.

Contact a Family is the only UK-wide charity providing advice, information and support to the parents of all disabled children - no matter what their disability or health condition. We also enable parents to get in contact with other families, both on a local and national basis. Each year we reach at least 275,000 families.

The Contact a Family helpline

Freephone 0808 808 3555
9.00am - 5.00pm Mon to Fri

- Give you **information on medical conditions and disabilities** affecting children, including very rare disorders. All the information is written by leading experts in the field for parents and families.
- Advise you about help which may be available, including **special educational needs assessments**, getting help to have a **holiday**, your rights to **benefits and tax credits** and other **services** for families with disabled children.
- We have a wide range of **free guides** for parents which can be sent to you if you call the helpline.
- Put you in touch with **national and local support groups**. Many families like to share experiences with others caring for a disabled child and find the support this can bring invaluable. If your child has a rare disorder and there isn't a group we might be able to **link you with another family**.
- Tell you about specialist **voluntary organisations** which may be able to help.
- **Listen** - many parents simply wish to 'tell their story'.

EVENTS GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- These trips are for Contact a Family members who will be given priority on all trips. If you would like a non-member (i.e. a friend or family member beyond your immediate family) to attend, they will have to pay the full cost and cannot be guaranteed a place.
- Parents and carers are responsible for their children at all times.
- Under no circumstances will staff tolerate verbal or physical abuse from children, parents and carers or other relatives during family outings or other activities organised by Contact a Family.
- The behaviour of children, parents and carers, or other relatives when attending an event or activity should not affect the Health & Safety or wellbeing of others.
- Parents and carers will be responsible for any damage they or their children cause on an event or activity.
- Under no circumstances will Contact a Family tolerate the consumption of alcoholic beverages whilst attending any events unless this is specifically agreed in advance as part of the activity e.g. a carers' meal at a restaurant.
- Please note that Contact a Family cannot be held responsible for any items that have been lost or stolen during an event or activity.
- Under no circumstances will Contact a Family tolerate any acts of criminal conduct of any kind.
- Contact a Family staff, and any organised transport, will not wait for families or individuals who are late and have been informed of the arrival and departure times.
- Under no circumstances should parents and carers behave in a way which could bring the organisation into disrepute.
- Please note: We do not provide free parking at the Early years centre. There is limited parking available outside the centre.

EVENTS BOOKING FORM - PLEASE DETACH AND POST / FAX OR EMAIL TO
US BY FRIDAY 01st APRIL, 2011.

Event	Date	Time	Cost	No of Adults	No of Children	Ages of Children Wheelchair y/n
Bocketts Farm	Thurs 14 th April 2011	9.30am- 3.30pm	£6.00 per person			
The London Duck Tour and The London Eye	Tues 19 th April 2011	11.00am- 1.00pm	£10.00 per person			NB: Children under 3 are not permitted on the Duck Tour - please list ages of children below:

Adult's full name	Children's full name	Contact number / email

Please indicate if you require assistance on the day or if your child is a wheelchair user so that we can accommodate your needs in advance: _____

I agree to abide by the rules set out (above) by Contact a Family, venues and transport and I will be responsible for children's safety at all times.

Signed: _____

(parent/carer)

Date: _____

Please detach and return the booking form either by post to Contact a Family 1 Siward Road, London SW17 0LA, by fax to 020 8947 9506 or scan this form to an email and return it to wandsworth.office@cafamily.org.uk

Closing date for applications: FRIDAY 1st APRIL 2011.