24 NOVEMBER, THE CHOLMONDELEY ROOM & TERRACE, HOUSE OF LORDS, LONDON

CONTACT Awards 2025

celebrating families with disabled children

contact

FOREWORD

from The Rt Hon the Lord Young of Cookham CH

I'm delighted to host Contact's Awards in the House of Lords, celebrating the many wonderful achievements of families with disabled children up and down the country. Contact established these awards to recognise the countless and often unseen things families do when caring for disabled children. In this booklet you'll be able to read the inspiring stories of the finalists, shortlisted from hundreds of entries. It's clear from the nominations that families give back to their communities in so many different ways. The nominations also point to the pivotal role Contact plays in giving families the confidence and hope to overcome the battles they face.

It is a pleasure to be able to welcome all of the families to Parliament and celebrate with them in such a unique way.

We would like to thank our judges Charlotte Warner, Vanessa Longley and Anna Bird

WELCOME

Anna Bird, CEO of Contact

At Contact, we're here when things are tough – and for families with disabled children and children with additional needs, that can be all too often. From daily battles for support and cuts to essential services, to the growing pressures of the cost-of-living crisis, we understand how hard life can be.

But it's important to pause and celebrate the joy, strength, and love that shine through the families we support. Our Awards honour the countless and often invisible achievements of families with disabled children. In a world that doesn't always make space for these stories, we're proud to shine a spotlight on the positives: the deep bonds, the small wins, the powerful resilience, and the incredible community of parent carers we stand alongside. Because at our hearts, that's what Contact is – a community of support, on your side and by your side.

Jane Garvey, BBC Radio 4 Women's Hour

I'm delighted to be presenting Contact's Awards for what will be my third time. A lot has changed since the last awards took place five years ago – and life has become even more difficult for many of the families with disabled children that Contact supports.

That's why celebrating the finalists today feels more powerful than ever.

Their achievements shine even brighter against the growing challenges they face and reflects their extraordinary strength, resilience, and determination. These awards, like Contact, are one of a kind and I'm proud to help share families' inspiring stories.

HOW WE HELP

Contact is the UK charity for families with disabled children and children with additional needs. We're here to make sure every family feels valued, supported, confident, and fully informed every step of the way. We make this happen in three powerful ways:

We guide and inform: Our trusted advice and practical support help families navigate everything from health and education to finances and wellbeing.

We connect families: Through family events and online communities, we bring parent carers together to share experiences, exchange advice, and lift each other up.

We create change: We empower families to speak out, campaign, volunteer, and shape the services that matter most.

Our impact in numbers

Last year, Contact:

- **Helped** 381,000 parents with our trusted advice and information
- **Amplified** the voices of over 14,000 parent carers via our campaigns and local influencing work
- **Boosted** the incomes of eligible families by an average £ 5,538 a year.

With Contact by their side, families never have to face things alone. Together, we transform lives.

SHORTLISTED NOMINATIONS

Parent Carer Award

Cath Peaty from St Helens

Lynsey McLuckie from Motherwell

Michelle Redfarn from Brighton & Hove

Proudest Moment Award

Harvey Doak from Bridgend

Lee James and Stuart Deadman from Cumbria

Stephen Kelly from East Sussex

Sibling Award

Raphael Chiwandire from London

Tabitha Foxwell from Exeter

Violet Craze from Worcestershire

Grandparents Award

Chris and Jeff Morton from Wakefield

Yvonne Evans from Billericay

Emma Steel from Doncaster

Friendship First Award

Louise Orange from Leeds

Linda Dennison from London

Sends4Dad from Northamptonshire

Change Maker Award

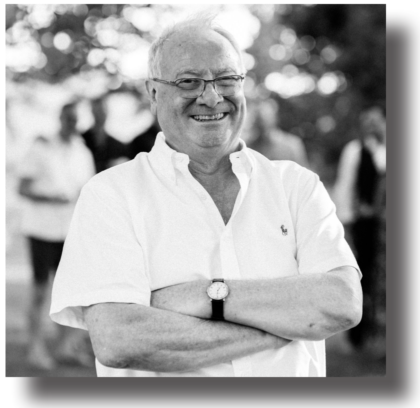
Warrington Parents and Carers from Warrington

Alma White from Lisburn

Laura Brown from Taunton

PARENT CARER AWARD

In memory of Joseph Hockley Wright



Joe, as he was known to family and friends, helped transform the lives of thousands of parent carers across the UK. He and his wife, Ry, saw the huge challenges their friend faced when caring for her autistic child and stepped in to help. They then did the same thing for thousands of others by donating to Contact.

As a man devoted to his family, Joe deeply felt and understood all that parents do for their children. He recognised that life can throw things at families that make it harder to cope – but that he could provide a bridge to life-changing support.

And so through his incredible generosity, Joe helped thousands receive immediate assistance by underpinning vital Contact projects like *By Your Side*, supporting families with children in hospital, and *Family Finance*, guiding parents through fiendish financial systems. Joe enabled us to develop new services like our early years *Brighter Beginnings* workshops and our *Helpful Guide for families* early in their journey. He upgraded and then replaced our website so that hundreds of thousands more families could easily access support online.

Very sadly, Joe passed away earlier this year. He would have been so proud of everything the children and families at our Awards have achieved and we are so sorry he cannot be here to witness them. Instead, with his family, we remember and celebrate all that he and Ry made possible with the Joseph Hockley Wright Parent Carer Award.

Thank you Joe

PARENT CARER AWARD

In memory of Joseph Hockley Wright

Recognising the amazing things parent carers do, everyday.

LYNSEY MCLUCKIE

Powerful advocate and devoted parent carer
Motherwell, Scotland

Lynsey is an extraordinary woman whose life is defined by compassion, resilience, and dedication. A full-time carer to her six-year-old daughter who was diagnosed at birth with Tuberous Sclerosis Complex (TSC) a rare, lifelong genetic condition. Every day brings challenges, yet Lynsey meets them with courage, love, and tireless resolve.

"Lynsey uses her skills as a former law student to navigate the complexities of a rare medical condition. From learning intricate medical terminology and understanding treatment protocols, to researching clinical trials she has become an expert in her daughter's care and her fiercest protector, devoted in her pursuit of the best possible quality of life for her child.

"But what makes Lynsey truly stand out is that her compassion and determination extend far beyond her own family. She is a passionate advocate for the entire TSC community in Scotland, working tirelessly to raise awareness of a condition that remains underrepresented and misunderstood. As Chair of TSC Support Scotland, she raises awareness, helps organise fundraisers and her leadership empowers others. A quiet powerhouse whose tireless efforts make a lasting different to families like hers, Lynsey is a true inspiration."

"Lynsey's honesty breaks down stigma, and her advocacy empowers families to speak up and seek help. Her leadership, experience, and love ripple through the TSC community, making her truly deserving of recognition for the extraordinary carer and advocate she is."

CATH PEATY

A remarkable mum and advocate
St Helens, England

SEN professional Louise Green nominated her sister and devoted mother of three, Cath Peaty, for her unwavering advocacy and love that have transformed her children's lives. Louise told us:

"When Cath's eldest, Matthew, was excluded from nursery, Cath fought for his inclusion – he's now thriving at university. Her daughter Willow is dyslexic and awaiting an ADHD diagnosis, faced challenges at school but with Cath's support and persistence, remains strong and supported. Her youngest, Flo, who has autism, spina bifida, sensory needs, and Type 1 diabetes, now receives the right educational provision after Cath won a tribunal. Cath's strength and compassion make her an inspiration and role model to all families navigating the world of SEND."

"As an SEN professional myself, I often signpost families to Contact for their resources - especially in relation to DLA applications and parent workshops."

"Contact's research into the challenges of SEND families has been exceptional. I am too exhausted to react to the multiple challenges so it is much appreciated that Contact continues to balance the misinformation with facts."

MICHELLE REDFARN

Quiet hero who gives unconditional love
Brighton & Hove, England

Michelle was nominated by her friend Victoria who said:

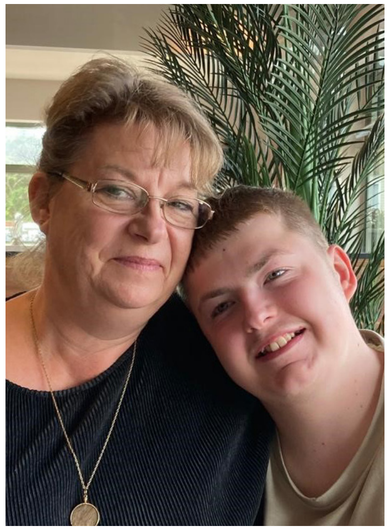
"I am here to nominate Michelle because she is a hero! Michelle has raised three sons with complex needs, including one requiring full-time care. She has shown unconditional love to her sons, that helps them daily to rise above their challenges, and what the world throws at them.

"Despite many challenges, Michelle's sons have become respectful young men. She's a quiet hero – humble, gentle, and endlessly giving. In her role as a Vehicle Passenger Assistant, she supported children with SEND with compassion and dignity, despite no formal training or recognition.

"Often overlooked, Michelle stands out for her patience, kindness, and deep care. Her life is a testament to the power of unconditional love."

PROUDEST MOMENT AWARD

Recognising the challenges your disabled child has overcome that fill you with pride and make you smile.



STEPHEN KELLY

A remarkable young man with a heart of gold
East Sussex, England

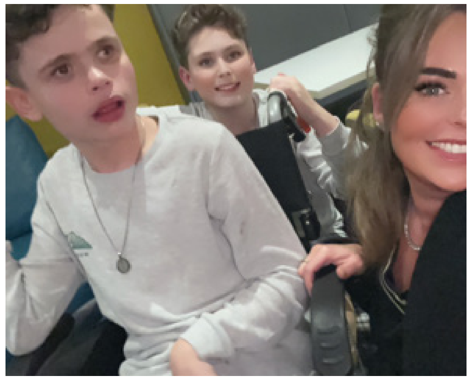
Mum Louise nominated her 17-year-old son, Stephen:

"Stephen has a unique chromosome deletion – the only one in the world with this deletion We were told he wouldn't talk or grow. He struggles with his speech but he's worked hard to make sure he's understood and defied all the odds with his determination and empathy. As a son of a foster carer he's supported me through 19 parent and child placements, many with disabilities, lovingly sharing his home, mum and his heart without complaint.

"Stephen loves all the children that come into our house and stay with us. Together we are helping so many families to have a chance – to have what we have. He has a heart of gold and loves supporting me, his mum, with my job. He fundraises for a local sports disability charity and has even had a sensory bus named after him.

"Stephen is truly extraordinary, the lives he's touched speaks volumes for the amazing young man he's become."

"Over the years Contact has helped me with behavioual issues, as well as school transport queries once Stephen turned 16."



LEE JAMES & STUART DEADMAN

Sibling superstars
Cumbria, England

Lisa-Marie nominated her sons Lee James and Stuart and told us:

"Lee James has a rare genetic condition, Joubert Syndrome, autism, severe learning difficulties and is totally blind. Since 2015 Lee James has been very restrictive about what he allows in his mouth after getting painful sores on his gums. But thanks to Stuart's determination and care he has now been able to taste 19 new foods - something I thought I'd never see!

"We would be lost without Stuart who shows wisdom beyond his years. He's been covered in ice cream, custard and jelly but has never given up and actually got Lee James to eat new foods. Well done to you both – you're mam's superstars!"

"If it wasn't for Contact's DinoDay challenge, we would have never been at the stage we are now and seeing Lee James tasting some completely new things this year. It's something I lost all hope in him ever doing – thank you so much Contact!"

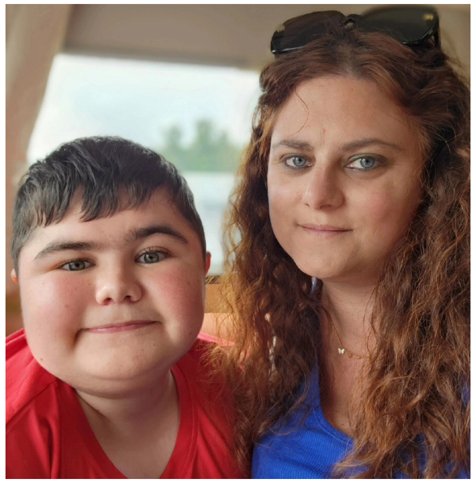
HARVEY DOAK

Determination in the face of hardship
Bridgend, Wales

Kirstie from Wales nominated her son Harvey saying:

"Harvey has duchenne muscular dystrophy and is unable to walk independently. At the moment we are homeless but despite this, he still goes to school with a big smile on his face and has embraced the changes that his condition brings as it progresses.

"He has become head of his form at school and managed to keep up with the best of the best despite missing a lot of school due to all his hospital appointments as they increase."



"Contact's social media feed is really helpful."

SIBLING AWARD

Celebrating the often unseen but great things siblings do for their disabled brothers and sisters, or that help make mum and dad's lives just that little bit easier.

TABITHA (TABBY) FOXWELL

Inspirational sibling
Exeter, England

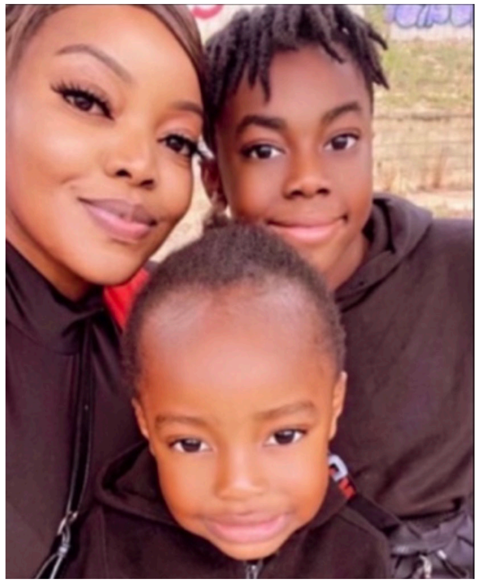
Mum Sharon nominated her 13-year-old daughter, Tabitha:

"Tabby is an exceptional young carer to her sister Polly, 11, who has a rare genetic disorder and frequent seizures – sometimes nightly.

"Tabby stays calm, helps with personal care and communication, and diffuses tough moments with sensitivity. A self-taught cook since 11, she makes family meals - including special ketogenic dishes for Polly – and even assists during emergencies.

"Tabby also advocates for families like hers, speaking on local radio and contributing to research. Mature, caring, and dedicated, Tabby is a true role model. We are so proud of her."

"Contact has been an excellent source of information from the early days of having a disabled child to now. Contact's policy work gives me hope for the future. They also gave me the opportunity recently to speak in Parliament and advocate for better school holiday provision for disabled children."



RAPHAEL CHIWANDIRE

Amazing big brother and young carer
London, England

Mum Nyasha nominated her 13-year-old son, Raphael:

"Raphael is an incredible big brother to his 5-year-old autistic sibling, showing an extraordinary level of patience, care, and emotional maturity beyond his years – especially at night when his younger brother struggles with sleep. Raphael never complains. He always shows up each day with compassion and understanding for his brother's additional needs

"As a single parent with type 1 diabetes, there are times when my health is not good. I often rely on him, and he always steps up with kindness. Even with these challenges at home, Raphael is incredibly dedicated to his education. He goes to school every day and gives 110% in everything he does.

"His love, resilience, and quiet strength inspire me beyond words. I'm so proud of the young man he's becoming."

"Contact's Ealing team helped us find us a local young carers group that Raphael attends weekly to get some respite from his duties and responsibilities and be amongst other siblings who are in the same situation as him ."

VIOLET CRAZE

Young advocate for deaf awareness
Worcestershire, England

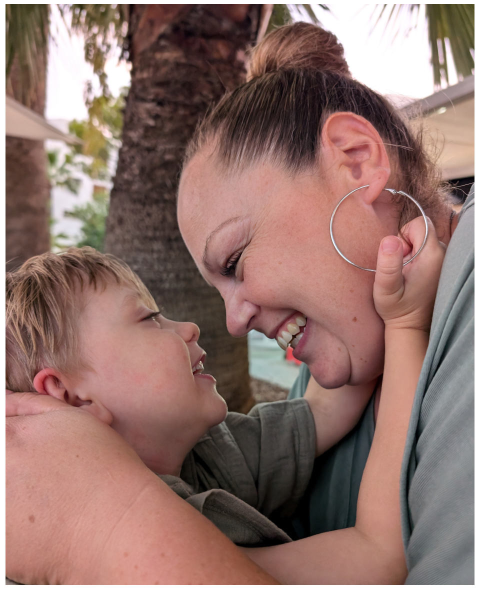
Mum Maria nominated her daughter Violet who is 10 years old:

"Violet is an inspiring sister and advocate for the Deaf community. Her younger sister, Penelope, is Deaf and uses British Sign Language (BSL). Violet recently passed her Level 1 BSL qualification and goes above and beyond to promote Deaf Awareness among her peers.

"She actively supports our local Deaf Children's Society, helping with events and fundraising, and volunteers at a BSL club, assisting other students with their learning. Violet's empathy, dedication, and passion are truly making a difference. She is a remarkable young woman."

GRANDPARENT AWARD

Recognising all the wonderful and everyday things grandparents do for their family.



"The knowledge and reassurance we've gained from Contact have shaped the way we support other families in our community, making your impact go even further. Thank you for being such a vital part of our journey."

EMMA STEEL

Nannan, carer and lifeline
Doncaster, England

I'm nominating my mum, Emma, because she is the most incredible nannan to my son Orpheus:

"From the moment he was born, she's been hands-on and wholeheartedly involved. When Orpheus' additional needs became apparent , she threw herself into learning everything she could to support him.

"When I became a disabled single parent, Emma left her job to become his full-time carer, took us into her home, adapted it completely to meet his sensory and safety needs, and completed countless courses to give him the best possible care.

"With patience, love, and joy she attends every therapy appointment. Together, we co-founded SEN frienDs, offering inclusive sensory sessions and support for local families. Emma's dedication has transformed Orpheus' life and made a real difference for families across Doncaster.

"She's not just a grandparent – she's our strength, our support, and our hero. We couldn't do this without her."

"Contact has supported us through their shop to purchase incontinence swimwear."

YVONNE EVANS

Devoted and adventurous grandmother
Billericay, England

Yvonne who lives in Billericay in Essex was nominated by her daughter, Victoria who lives in Wales:

"Yvonne is a devoted grandmother to Eva Mae, who has MEF2C Haploinsufficiency, is non-verbal, uses a wheelchair, and has epilepsy.

"Despite living over 200 miles away, Yvonne is always willing to drop everything to jump in the car or train to help care for her when she is sick, and is always there during hospital stays, giving us vital support and respite.

"She might be 72 but she's the first one to take Eva on rollercoasters, down ski slopes in an inflatable ring or on a trampoline. She keeps our home running and makes it possible for me to work as a teacher. She really is the best grandmother and we would be lost without her and her support. We truly couldn't do it without her."

CHRIS & JEFF MORTON

Lifesaving support and unwavering love
Wakefield, England

Chris and Jeff were nominated by their daughter Lyndsey:

"My parents have shown extraordinary love and support. They've resuscitated their twin granddaughters multiple times, managed complex medical needs, and provided constant care.

"During a four-month hospital stay, they visited daily with homemade meals and emotional strength. After discharge, they stepped in so I could return to work.

"Even now, with nursing care in place, they remain our rock – always ready in emergencies and celebrating every milestone. Their selfless, steady love has not only enriched Ruby and Sophia's lives but given us the strength to keep going."

"We attended one of your family days recently and had a great day together – it was lovely to have some fun time as a family."

FRIENDSHIP FIRST

Celebrating the wonderful friends who make your life better, just by being in it!

"Lots of activities and days out are put on to enable men who have children with SEN or disabilities to access other services"

SENDS4DAD

A vital support group for fathers & male carers

Northamptonshire, England

Scott and Mykel both nominated support group SENDs4dad:

Scott said: “Sends4dad is a support group for dads and male carers who have a child with special educational needs and/or a disability. The group has made a huge difference to our lives.

"My son, who has combined ASD/ADHD, now enjoys a range of events and activities that we wouldn’t have otherwise been able to access.”

Mykel said: “This group helped me realise I am not alone and can beat anything with friends and confidence. They are quite simply lifesavers.

“Sends4dad is a lifeline for a lot of dads and other male carers in the Northamptonshire area. It not only helps the men out, it helps the families also. Quite a few of us have built friendships with one another through this group.

"If the group wasn’t available then this couldn’t of happened. A big shout out goes to the founder Paul Meadows who created SENDs4dad 10 years ago.”

LOUISE ORANGE

A true friend and advocate

Leeds, England

Louise was nominated by her friend Lora, who says:

“Louise is such a supportive, thoughtful friend to me, my son who has quadriplegic cerebral palsy, my daughter, and my partner. She uses her time off to help us, plan accessible days out, and lift my spirits when I’m struggling.

"Despite not having a disabled child herself, Louise has become a passionate advocate – contacting the council about inclusive play and accessible spaces so I don’t have to. She’s helped me navigate benefits, shared her contacts, and stood by us from the very beginning.

"Louise never judges, always shows up, and cheers us on loudly. She’s a diamond, and we’re so lucky – she deserves the world.”

“Contact’s Facebook group has helped me through shared experience.”

"Every parent carer needs a friend like Linda!”

LINDA DENNISON

A friend who gives hope at the darkest of times

London, England

Linda's friend Melanie nominated her for this award, saying:

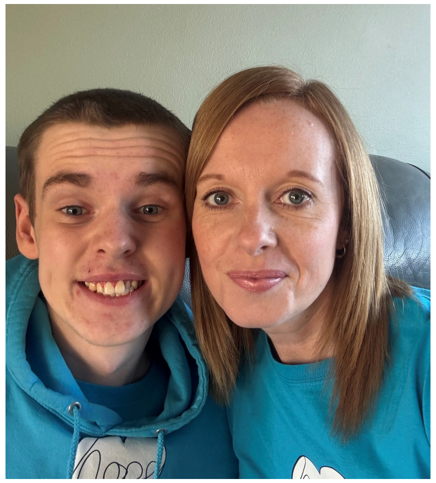
“I've known Linda since I was at preschool. She worked for Guys and St. Thomas Hospital, and when I was pregnant my daughter Ieisha was given only three days to live. Linda always told me not to worry and always encouraged me to stay positive during my pregnancy. When Ieisha was born she was in Intensive Care and Linda would be at the hospital, very often for long periods, with me encouraging me continuously even though she could see that I had given up hope on Ieisha living.

"Linda would also accompany us to Great Ormond St Hospital to regular appointments over many years of Ieisha's childhood, and visited us 3 to 4 days a week and even do babysitting so that I could have a bath take a nap or go shopping.

"Every parent carer needs a friend like Linda!"

CHANGE MAKER AWARD

For an individual, family or a group of parents who have campaigned or worked together to make life better for other families with disabled children in their community.



ALMA WHITE

Leading change for disabled young people beyond 19

Lisburn, Northern Ireland

Alma was nominated by her friend Jaclyn for her tireless grassroots advocacy through Caleb's Cause NI, a campaign fighting for post-19 rights for disabled young people in Northern Ireland.

"With no legal entitlement to education or support once a young person with special educational needs turns 19, families face a cliff edge in care. But Alma is changing that. While caring full-time for her son, she has mobilised thousands, engaged politicians, spoken at TEDx Stormont, and become a powerful voice for reform.

"Alma is leading a movement that is reshaping awareness and policy around a critical gap in provision affecting countless families. Her work exemplifies the spirit of the Parent Changemaker Award: community-led, courageous, and profoundly effective.

"Alma has created momentum for change that cannot be ignored. Compassionate, strategic, and relentless, Alma is not just raising awareness she's leading real change. Her work deserves national recognition."

"Alma campaigns with compassion, clarity, and determination. She is not just highlighting what's wrong, she is offering solutions and leading change."

LAURA BROWN

Championing communication for all

Taunton, England

Laura was nominated by her partner Pete who said:

"Laura is the definition of a parent changemaker. Through Spinning World of Autism, she advocates for autistic individuals, the SEND crisis, and, most notably, AAC (augmentative and alternative communication).

"A parent of a non-speaking autistic child, Laura supports families daily – sharing accurate AAC information, breaking down myths, and guiding new users. She has spoken at Communication Works, the Houses of Parliament, and co-led webinars. Despite running a business full-time, Laura's volunteer advocacy is life-changing. She believes all children deserve to communicate and shows families, professionals and schools how to achieve this.

"Her work empowers families, builds awareness, and ensures every child has the right to a voice."

"We use Contact's social media channels and find all their posts informative and helpful. Knowing people understand, care and just get it is so valuable for families of disabled children."

WARRINGTON PARENT CARER FORUM

Helping families navigate the SEND system

Warrington, England

A dedicated group of volunteers from Warrington parent carer forum, WarrPAc, were nominated by their Chair, Jean:

"This group of volunteers are amazing. Despite busy lives and full-time jobs, this team give up their limited spare time to support local families navigating the SEND system. They also lead collaboration across eight other forums in Cheshire and Merseyside.

"When I stepped back after a medical diagnosis, my team, stepped up without hesitation – offering personal, emotional, and professional support. They are passionate, caring, put other families before themselves and work tirelessly with some of them holding down full time jobs.

"They truly deserve recognition for their commitment to the SEND community."

"Contact have been a constant source of support to Warrington PCF. They are nothing but helpful, always responding in a timely way to queries, are consistent with their advice and guidance – so thank you Contact, you too are amazing!"

FUN WAYS TO FUNDRAISE!

It is only through the generosity of our community that Contact can continue to be there for families at every step of their journey – helping children with additional needs to flourish.

Please donate to support Contact's life-changing information, advice and support. Your gift helps parent carers across the UK to overcome barriers in accessing education, health, welfare and social care support for their children.

Get your children involved in Contact's flagship DinoDay challenge event in June. This year, over 440 children raised a ROAR-some £50,442! Many disabled children took part, completing creative challenges including 19 acts of kindness, reading 19 books and trying 19 different foods.

We're incredibly grateful to children like Lee James and Stuart Deadman, Proudest Moment finalists, for their inspiring fundraising – proud of how they overcame personal challenges, and touched by how DinoDay creates special family moments.

Find out how to get involved and support Contact at: **contact.org.uk/donate**

Contact's DinoDay challenge takes place in June. Find out more: **contact.org.uk/dinoday**

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR CAMPAIGNS

Unlocking Child Trust Funds

Contact is proud to stand beside parent carer Andrew Turner, whose courage has shone a light on a heartbreaking injustice: thousands of disabled young people are locked out of their own Child Trust Funds (CTFs) and Junior ISAs.

CTFs were created to give every child a fair start in life. But when young people without mental capacity turn 18, many families discover they can't touch the savings without going through the Court of Protection – a long, costly process few can face. More than 80,000 disabled young people are missing out on over £210 million that could transform their lives.

For Andrew, this fight began with his son Mikey. He simply wanted to buy him an adapted bike – something to bring joy and freedom – but red tape stood in the way. Refusing to give up, he launched a campaign that's now giving thousands of families hope.

Alongside Contact, One Family, and Renaissance Legal, Andrew's message is clear: it's time to unlock these savings – and unlock futures.

"It's been great to work with Contact. They have real enthusiasm to see fairness and justice for families with disabled children."

We would like to thank our generous funders and friends
who have made these awards possible:

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and The Gripple Foundation

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