This year we hosted our 7th joint Annual Conference. It was the largest to date with 245 attendees over two days with workshops & guest speakers throughout. The idea of a two-day event was daunting for all involved, and posed many challenges as this year we coproduced the event with our planning partners and sponsors. The planning group, comprising of DfE, NHS England, Seashell Trust Family Services, Contact, and NNPCF representatives, planned the core elements of the event as well as coproducing the theme of the conference. This year we also coproduced our first ever workshop and networking day with our member Parent Carer Forums.

Day one provided great opportunities to swap ideas, good practice, and share concerns. We lost track of the times people commented how much they had enjoyed spending time with other like-minded people who are all experiencing the same challenges in different parts of the country. We have been really pleased by the success of the workshops and hope to offer this again in the future.

Day two had a very different feel, there were representatives from our national partner organisations, such as Mott MacDonald, DfE, & NHS England. This was an opportunity for them to meet parent carer forums face to face and hear on the ground experiences. The icebreaker, provided by Genuine Partnerships, allowed all our guests to get jiggy with Play-Doh bringing everyone to the same level and setting a great tone for the day.

Whilst we were disappointed that Robert Goodwill MP was unable to join us we were pleased by the announcement by Stuart Miller, Deputy Director of SEN and Disability at the DfE, that there will be 2 more years funding for Parent Carer Forums. We are always extremely proud to be part of the Parent Carer Forum community, representing and supporting you to be champions of coproduction and parent carer participation. - Zara Bowden (NNPCF West Midlands Steering Group Rep) & Gail Walshe (Head of Parent Carer Participation, Contact).
Sometimes I feel we are preaching to the converted ... parents are ready to co-produce and know why it’s important and what the issues are; but do the professionals we work with?"

The NNPCF Annual Report, “Engage, Enable, Empower” is available to download here.
The first day of the conference was exclusive to Parent Carer Forums and Contact staff. Highlights included:

The NNPCF AGM, at which we adopted a new vision and mission statement for the organisation and agreed to authorise the Steering Group to set up a new Community Interest Company (CIC). The Steering Group committed to creating a two-year business plan to deliver this.

Following the AGM there were a number of workshops designed to gather feedback from Parent Carer Forum representatives on topics.

These were:

- Preparing For Adulthood
- SEN Transport Provision
- SEN Support
- The Capacity and Sustainability of Forums

This feedback will be used to inform briefings on each of these topics to be issued by the NNPCF and will inform national discussions.

Maureen Morris, NNPCF Co-Chair said:

“The workshops provided a huge volume of incredibly valuable information that the NNPCF steering group and national representative team will be analysing over the coming weeks. The actions and learnings from these sessions will be summarised in “Talking Point” documents for these topics and be used when planning our work for the coming year”.

“The National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) is the independent national voice of Parent Carer Forums. Our mission is to deliver better outcomes for families living with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

We aim to:

- Create a culture of participation and co-production across the education, health, social care and the voluntary sectors. This means that we are involved in all aspects of designing, commissioning, delivering and reviewing services as an equal partner.

- Empower our members to ensure that their voices are heard at a local, regional and national level inspire our partners by sharing good practice and knowledge.
AGM & CONFERENCE REPORT

Sarah Thomas, previous NNPCF Co-Chair and currently Shropshire Parent and Carer Council Participation Coordinator, has produced a report on the NNPCF AGM and Conference that provides an in-depth synopsis of the 2 days. This will be particularly useful for those of you who were unable to join us at this year’s event. The full report will be released in the new year, but we wanted to share a small snippet with you now.

During 2016/17 the NNPCF reported that it had;

- Worked on over 40 projects
- Delivered approximately 3,500 hours of engagement activity
- Increased its membership to now over 82,000

The key objective of the NNPCF is the delivery of greater levels of co-production and engagement and it was pleased to be able to share that 60% of Parent Carer Forums report that they are fully or largely engaged in strategic planning and coproduction of SEND services in their local areas. The NNPCF acknowledge however that this does mean that 40% of Parent Carer Forums are still not satisfied with their level of involvement in the strategic planning and co-production of SEND services and more worryingly only 13% of Forums report that joint commissioning arrangements with Health are fully developed and only 9% of Forums are reporting that joint commissioning arrangements with Social Care are fully developed.

The conference also provided us with some fantastic examples of Parent Carer Forums activity from the last 12 months that you are extremely proud to have achieved. We will continue to gather these examples in and will be using them throughout our decennial celebrations in 2018. If you would like to share your successes with us, please email them to communications@nnpcf.org.uk.

Farewell to Gethyn Williams

It is with regret that we have to say goodbye to Gethyn Williams. Gethyn joined Contact in September 2015 as Director of Development and Engagement - a brand new post. Collectively this new remit was responsible for Parent Carer Participation, the SENDirect project, Short Break services Project, family linking, volunteering, stakeholder engagement and business development.

Gethyn has been with Contact for over 2 years now. He has been instrumental in the setting up of many of Contact’s existing projects and initiatives aimed at income generation. His dynamic optimism and vision has been a great asset to us here and we all wish him the very best for the future.
The NNPCF are pleased to present their Annual Report for 2016 - 2017. We would like to take this time to thank all the Parent Carer Forums across the country for their passion, commitment and zeal over the last 12 months. It has been a challenging climate and we are grateful that you are all travelling with us on this journey. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank our National reps whose momentum and vision has been instrumental in helping to shape our future.

Every year, the story of the NNPCF has brought a unique set of challenges and opportunities, and 2016-2017 was no different. We are now into the third year of the implementation of the Children and Families Act 2014, and while much has been achieved no-one would say that the job has been done. To quote Churchill, “This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”
A snap-shot of Parent Carer Participation in 2016 from the Contact Annual Report

Parent Carer Participation in 2016-17

Reach is increasing...

82,000 parent carers are now connected to 150 Parent Carer Forums across England. Membership is up 29% since 2012-13.

But engagement is more challenging

However, levels of member engagement remain static, and the numbers of those engaged in leadership roles is decreasing.

This suggests the work of representation and running Forums is falling on fewer shoulders (proportionately) every year.

Stronger governance

In 2016-17, 95% of DfE grants were held by parent carer-led organisations.

There is a clear, positive, year on year trend towards more Forums becoming constituted organisations.

Finance and sustainability

55% of Forums receive some additional income, but 45% still operate on the DfE grant alone. These proportions have remained similar since 2012.

In 2016-17 we saw a small but significant increase in the numbers of areas where the Local Authority and health partners co-fund Forums - rising from 11, to 2 in 2015-16.

The environment for co-production

Since 2011-12 we have asked Forums to what extent they feel they co-produce with local statutory colleagues in Education, Health and Social Care.

Rates of co-production with education partners peaked in 2013-14. Forums’ increasing understanding of co-production may be one factor behind the fall in rates since, as local relationships are judged by increasingly higher standards.

Though starting from a lower baseline, rates of co-production with health partners now appear to be showing an upward trend.

And although rates of co-production with social care partners show little material change over time, the decline since 2013-14 is taking place alongside a corresponding downward trend in participation, as our full report demonstrates.
This month parent carers helped Contact shine the media spotlight on its *Caring More Than Most report* [PDF] - the most up-to-date and comprehensive profile of the half a million households who have a disabled child in the UK. The report reveals the significant disadvantage many families face in key aspects of life and shows that 24 % parent carers provide 100 hours of care every week - the equivalent of working three full-time jobs simultaneously. Families sharing their caring experiences to highlight the impact of cuts to health and social care services like short breaks, meant the issue was widely picked up across UK media.

We want to see an end to funding cuts and reductions to already inadequate health and social care services - cuts that mean too often parent carers are left caring more than most. That’s why as part of the Disabled Children’s Partnership (DCP), Contact has helped develop the DCPs five step plan to address the growing crisis in health and social care for disabled children and their families.

We would like to build up a map of the scale of cuts to short break services so please email una.summerson@contact.org.uk if your area is affected.

**CONSULTATIONS - What’s Coming Up?**

There are a number of consultations out that your Parent Carer Forums may wish to respond to as a collective or as individual parent carers:

1. **Working together to safeguard children** - This consultation seeks views on significant revisions to ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ – the statutory guidance which sets out what is expected of organisations, individually and jointly, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. These revisions are being made largely to reflect the legislative changes introduced through the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and new 'child death review' guidance.

2. **NHS England Complaints and Escalations** - Raising concerns and making complaints about health, social care or education. Your feedback will help with a new project about raising concerns and making complaints called Ask Listen Do. It is not always easy to know when something is a concern and when something is a complaint.

3. **Early Years Free School Meals Eligibility** - This consultation invites views on our proposed approach to the following passported benefits under Universal Credit; Free school meals eligibility for pupils in primary and secondary education and students in further education; and the early years pupil premium.

4. **Short Inspections of Good Schools** - The outcome report is now available.

5. **Transforming CYP Mental Health Green Paper**. We would strongly encourage forums to respond directly and/or submit their views/evidence/good practice to their regional Steering Group member to inform the NNPCF response (deadline for the collective NNPCF response is 18 Feb 2018 - info@nnpcf.org.uk).
Run the London Marathon for Contact

Do you know someone who wants to do something amazing to support families with disabled children? Contact has been supporting families with disabled children across the UK for over 35 years. We can only reach the families who need us with the support of incredible fundraisers and supporters of the charity.

Gail Walshe, Head of Parent Carer Participation at Contact, took on the challenge in 2017 - “the training was tough but race day was amazing, inspiring and an incredible privilege to be part of one of the world's biggest sporting events. It doesn’t matter how fast you do it, just getting to the start and the finish is an achievement and any money raised will make a difference to families with disabled children, which is fantastic”.

We have guaranteed places in the London Marathon 2018, taking place on Sunday 22nd April, and are looking for runners to join our team. There is a minimum sponsorship of £1,800 which will help us to reach more families who need us, and a registration fee of £50. You will have support every step of the way from our fundraising team. If you are interested in a place, please get in touch either by calling 0207 608 8786 or by filling out an enquiry form online. The deadline for registering for a place is 25 January 2018, so sign up today!

Explore Contact’s Webinars for Parent Carer Forums

We have lots of WEBINARS on our website forums can watch at any time. Some topics you may be interested in are:

- **'Reach out a little further'** This webinar looks at building an inclusive and credible forum. Download the presentation from the day [PDF].

- **'CQC and Ofsted inspections'** with NNPCF National Rep Carol Kelsey and Fazilla Amide from Enfield Parent Carer Forum. Download the presentation from the day, along with the further resources handout.

- **'Building Active Members'** The webinar covers: analysing your forum's current strengths and weaknesses in building active members; learn what's worked from forums across the country; explore behaviours that build or prevent participation of new members and much more. Download the presentation from the webinar.

- For a full list of all our webinars please click here.
When we heard about the forthcoming CQC/Ofsted joint inspection in South Gloucestershire, one thing that was concerning us was “how could we keep non-members of our forum updated but without having to constantly share information across all the different Facebook groups we belong to?

With such a busy week preparing for the inspection we thought it would be helpful to direct families to one place for updates. So, we decided to use our website to let families know they could check on the progress. This was lucky as our capacity to respond to emails quickly became a challenge! By posting on our website we could also automatically post onto social media at the same time. Having used the great resources already available from other forums this gave us the time to develop our website. You can see an example of this [here](#). We tried to think of visual ways to promote the inspections by social media and scheduled daily updates to our social media posts. Here are some examples of Facebook visuals one of our parent’s created for us. We produced these visuals using the following organisation to develop this and was free to use. - by Rachel Trueman, Director South Gloucestershire Parents & Carers.

Parent Carer Participation—10 years in the making!

2018 marks the tenth anniversary of funded Parent Carer Participation. Many Parent Carer Forums have existed for 10 years or more, and since the aiming high agenda was introduced the expansion of what Parent Carer Forums have to offer in strategic participation has been phenomenal. With such rapid growth there has been considerable change in the way parent carer forums operate.

Throughout 2018 we will be celebrating the success and growth of parent carer strategic participation, and specifically the development of strategic coproduction.

The NNPCF steering group will be releasing a series of communications next year to demonstrate how far parent carer strategic participation has come, and want to hear your celebrations of success at communications@nnpcf.org.uk.

Dudley Parent Carer Forum:

“So proud of the part WeLoveCarers has had in the re-working of our local offer. We had the launch of the new site today and feedback from all our parent carers so far has been good. It’s still a work in progress but it’s a lot better than what we had before.”
Need Advice?

If you, or any parent carers in your forum want individual advice or have any questions about their service provision or support, then please tell them to contact the Contact free helpline from 09:30 - 17:00 Monday - Friday.

Call: 0808 808 3555
Email: helpline@Contact.org.uk
Website: www.contact.org.uk

To receive copies of our joint bulletin please click onto the following link and sign up to our mailing list. To see a full list of all our newsletters please click here.