

A photograph of a woman with glasses and a young boy looking through a microscope together. The woman is on the left, holding the microscope, and the boy is on the right, looking through the eyepiece. They are both smiling and appear to be in a classroom or laboratory setting. The background is bright and slightly out of focus, showing some greenery and a window.

Annual Review 2016/17

contact *For families
with disabled children*

Our ambition
is to reach
more families
and to reach
them sooner.



INTRODUCTION

We are Contact, the charity for families with disabled children. We support families, bring families together and help families take action for others.

There is a desperate lack of services and support for the hundreds of thousands of UK mums and dads who care for a disabled child. As a result, families face a huge range of challenges and many feel isolated and alone. It's vital that they receive support in the early stages following a diagnosis, before issues spiral and they reach crisis point.

Contact's ambition is to reach more families and to reach them sooner and this forms a key part of our strategy 2015-20.

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, this year we made great strides towards achieving this goal. We reviewed our brand to increase awareness and strengthen our appeal to families and ensure they understand what we do. In addition, we improved our support offer to families — via our helpline and a dedicated support programme — helping parents to cope early in their journey caring for a disabled child.

"Contact was literally a life-line. The first time I had contact with them was the day we received our son's diagnosis. I was given information and understanding. Most importantly I was given hope and support. I will never be able to say thank you enough."

Parent carer.

But we are not complacent. Life for many families is getting harder due to continued cuts to vital services and support, so our work is needed now more than ever. With the continued support of our donors, campaigners and advocates we can reach more families and reach them sooner to ensure they have someone to turn to when they need it most, who understands their needs and can provide trusted advice and support to help them enjoy family life.

Thank you!

IMPACT OF OUR WORK IN 2016/17

After receiving support or a service from Contact:



93%
parent carers said they felt better informed about getting the support they need



78%
felt less isolated



88%
told us they felt more confident

5,826
families supported
through our
hospitals project



790,121
visits to
our website

12,333
received support
from our free
helpline service



Our helpline

Our helpline team provided advice by email, social media, and a dedicated Freephone helpline to **over 12,000 people** last year. Responding to demand from parents, the top issues we helped people with were welfare benefits, accessing education and health and social care.

Thanks to our detailed welfare rights advice, we are pleased that families caring for a disabled child are expected to receive an estimated **£1.3m in additional income** in the coming year – money that they would otherwise not have been able to access. This is just one example of how our helpline team are making a tangible difference to families across the UK.



“My social circle has changed because I see and feel differently. Parents who don’t have disabled children find it hard to relate to me - they don’t understand what I’ve been through.”

OUR NEW NAME, LOOK AND FEEL



To help us reach more families and reach them sooner, we undertook a brand review and worked with families to develop a clearer, simpler and more accessible look.

Parents of disabled children told us that our old name was confusing and acted as a barrier. It stopped some families from finding out how we can help them. So this year we shortened our name to Contact – it’s pretty much what we do in every area of our work. We put families in contact with each other or in contact with us for vital support, advice and information.

Our new brand (launched in August 2017) aims to help families quickly and easily understand the support we offer.

We also made our online information more accessible and developed brand new resources including our free *Helpful Guide for Families with Disabled Children*, a little book with everything parent carers need to know.

The majority of costs for re-branding were met by two generous supporters of Contact’s work and with pro bono support from Brunswick PR and brand agency ASHA.

Importantly, who we are and the way we work hasn’t changed. Families remain at the heart of everything we do, and the new brand shows this clearly and confidently.

HELP WHEN THEY NEED IT MOST – OUR HOSPITALS PROJECT

Two year old Henry Bancroft suffers from a very rare and life threatening condition. He has spent most of his life in hospital. His mum Vicky was forced to give up her job to look after Henry. She spent a whole year by his hospital bedside, torn apart from the rest of the family – her partner James and her seven and three-year-old daughters Milly and Sophia.

Vicky says: “My health suffered because I didn’t have time or the energy to think about looking after myself. I missed my girls terribly and was worried sick about how they were coping. Due to the risk of infection there were days and weeks that passed without me seeing them. We also had financial difficulties and our house was at risk.

“Obviously, the last thing that you want to think about is finances – how you’re going to pay your mortgage or even put food in your stomach. All you want to do is concentrate on your child, and you can’t.

“That was where Contact helped. It was such a relief to be able to approach Contact’s parent adviser Ruth in the hospital. I could get my worries off my chest and Ruth explained the help that was available.

“Ruth helped me apply for Disability Living Allowance (the main benefit for disabled children) for Henry which helped to ease our money worries. We could keep our house. That was so crucial to our family.

“The work that Contact does in hospitals is so important for families whose children need hospital care. Knowing Contact is in the hospital and you can pop along to get advice and support on lots of issues, is a big support.”

*Our **Help When They Need It Most** project is crucial for families with a child in hospital – a time of overwhelming stress and uncertainty. It is made possible by generous charitable trusts, individuals and corporate sponsorship. Our ambition is to be in every children’s hospital in the country.*



BRINGING FAMILIES TOGETHER

At Contact we bring families together to support each other by sharing experiences and advice.



2,700
parents and
children

had fun, relaxed and forged new friendships through our family fun days



4,364
parent carers

attended our workshops and a further 6,900 visited our information stands and drop in sessions



82,000
parent carers

came together to improve lives through our parent participation work

Our workshops

Our workshops provide thousands of parent carers with face-to-face support, offering tailored information on a wide range of topics. Last year this included helping parents cope with stress and isolation, access health services, improve sleep and reduce money worries.

Developed in collaboration with families, this year we also re-launched our online community where parents can connect with other families in a safe environment and talk about the issues they are facing.

HELPING FAMILIES TAKE ACTION FOR OTHERS

Contact has secured real change through our campaigns work, which is run by a small team of one staff member with the support of a volunteer.



20 Million
people

*were reached through
our media work*



18,000 people

*supported our campaigns on issues
including Carer's Allowance, waiting
times for mental health services
and school transport*

In September 2016, we launched an inquiry into home to school transport on Radio 5 Live, receiving over 1,000 responses in the first 24 hours. The issue is a growing challenge for parents and one of the top concerns for callers to our helpline. As a direct result of our campaigning work we went on to secure a major win in September 2017, when the government announced a review of school transport statutory guidelines to make sure all local authorities provide school transport for eligible children with special educational needs.

In March 2017 Contact led the public launch of the Disabled Children's Partnership (DCP) – a growing coalition of over 50 disability and children's charities working to improve health and social care for disabled children, young people and their families. The DCP is chaired by Contact's CEO, Amanda Batten and fills the gap left by the ending of the Every Disabled Child Matters group of charities.

CELEBRATING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF FAMILIES WITH DISABLED CHILDREN

The nature of the services we provide can mean we hear a lot about when things go wrong for families with disabled children. But we know there are lots of positives about caring for a disabled child and we wanted to celebrate that. So in January 2017 we held our first ever Contact Awards, to shine a spotlight on the inspiring work families do when caring for a disabled child.

We were overwhelmed by the sheer number of applications we received, with over 100 nominations submitted by families and friends. The judges had a tough task selecting the winners. Finalists were invited to an awards ceremony at Speaker's House at the Palace of Westminster in January 2017, where they were joined by over 100 MPs and families. Eight winners were picked from an inspiring group of finalists.

Ten year old Sophie Nesbitt from Stockport won the sibling category of Contact's first ever Awards. She was recognised for the help and support she gives her family caring for her two year old brother Jack who has a myelin deficiency in his brain which causes global development delay.

Mum Tina who nominated Sophie, said: "Sophie is the most fantastic big sister to her brother Jack. Jack was a very noisy baby due to reflux and he would cry inconsolably throughout the day. This didn't phase Sophie in the slightest though and she continued to play with him and cuddle him and do her very best to cheer him up. Later when Jack learnt to smile and laugh, Sophie would take it upon herself to make sure Jack cracked a smile before she left for school.

"She's talked to her school friends about Jack and his condition and even campaigned for her school to choose Contact as their chosen charity. When she gets home from school she will read Jack a story and give him an uncontrollable fit of giggles. They are the best of friends and Sophie is extremely protective of him. I've been in touch with Contact in the past about a number of different issues and when I heard about these awards I just knew I had to nominate Sophie - she completely accepts Jack for who he is - no more, no less - and I absolutely adore her for it!"



DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODEL



The funding environment remains difficult. We want to maximise our assets, reduce costs and raise commercial income. This will enable Contact to spend more on our frontline services supporting families. As a result we are:

- Reorganising and updating our central office space in order to rent out two floors to other organisations. This has been made possible by the generosity of a charitable foundation.
- Developing a training consultancy service for other organisations working with families with disabled children
- Outsourcing our back office functions to the charity Sense, reducing our costs and benefitting from the investment Sense have been able to make in their resources (investment we would not have been able to make for our own systems).





THANK YOU FOR HELPING FAMILIES WITH DISABLED CHILDREN

We continue to receive crucial support from our Ambassadors, charitable trusts, companies and philanthropists. Thank you so much. Your generosity has supported thousands of families with disabled children including by:

- Developing specialist Early Years support for families whose children are under five years old
- Supporting families whose children have rare conditions
- Providing family fun days which offer much-needed opportunities to relax and build support networks
- Offering expert advice via our free helpline, online resources and specialist Welfare Rights service.

We also rely on unrestricted donations from all types of funders to allow us to provide the full breadth of support families need.

In addition we are diversifying our income streams through individual and community giving. For example, our supporter Stephen Kingdom cycled to every Crystal Palace game in the Premiership season raising a fantastic £17,000. Others have run marathons, dressed up as dinosaurs and responded generously to our written appeals. We also saw the launch of the Contact Collective – a fun and creative network of young philanthropists.

THANK YOU

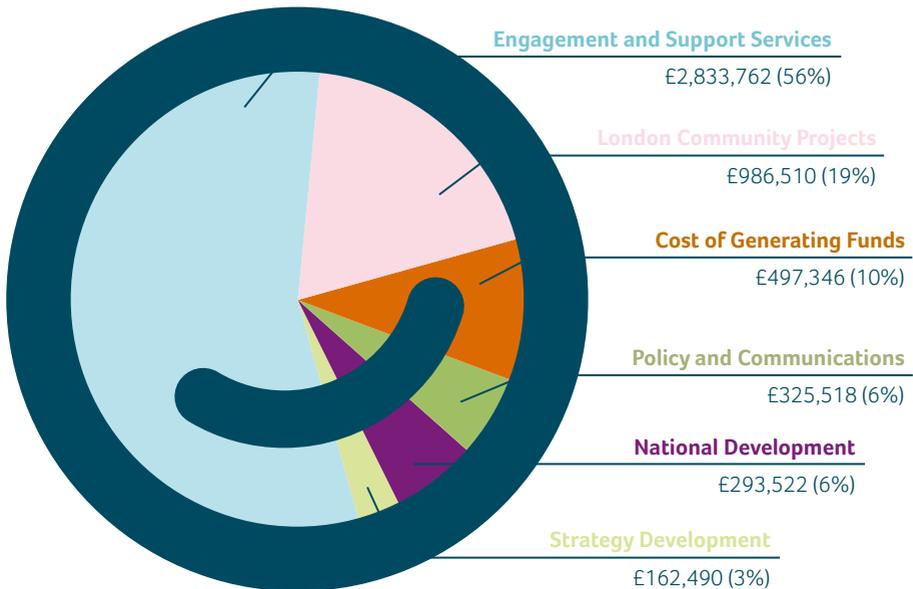
Contact would like to thank every individual and organisation that has helped families with disabled children get the support they need.



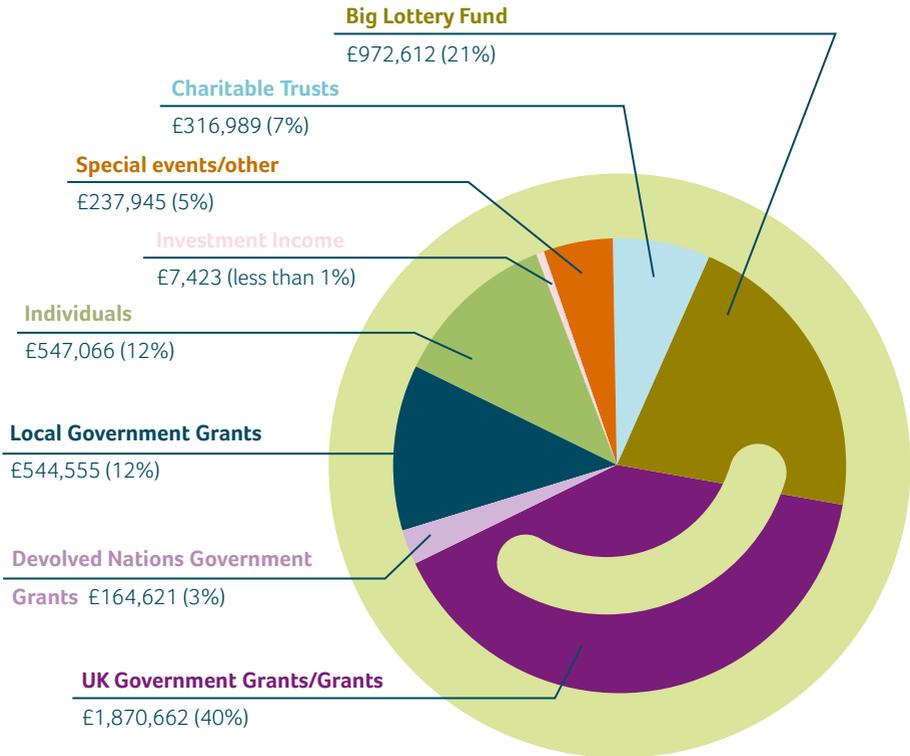
OUR FINANCES



Total Expenditure
£5,099,148



Total Income £4,661,873





We are Contact,
the charity for
families with
disabled children.

We support
families, bring
families together
and help families
take action
for others.

*We put families
at the heart
of everything
we do*

*We are
dependable*

*We are
determined*

*We are
approachable
and we
never judge*

With your help, we can achieve our vision that families with disabled children feel valued and are strong, confident and able to make the decisions that are right for them.

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with disabled children*

*Our ambition
is to reach
more families
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to reach them
sooner.*

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