



TRANSFORMING LIVES TOGETHER

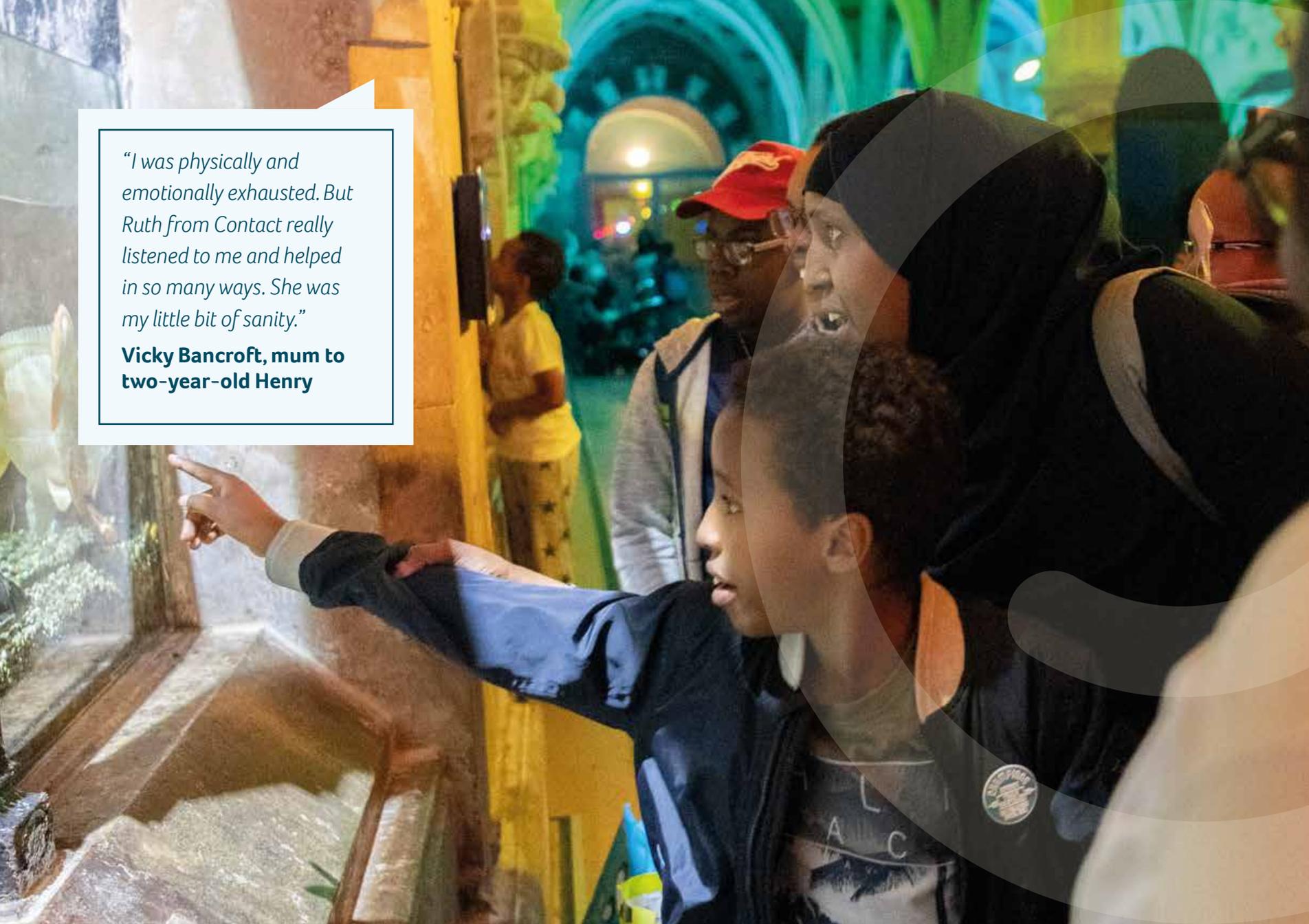
OUR STRATEGY FOR 2020-23

contact

*For families with disabled children*

*"I was physically and emotionally exhausted. But Ruth from Contact really listened to me and helped in so many ways. She was my little bit of sanity."*

**Vicky Bancroft, mum to two-year-old Henry**





**Every day in the UK, 100 children are born or diagnosed with a disability.** It's something few parents are prepared for. The impact can be overwhelming.

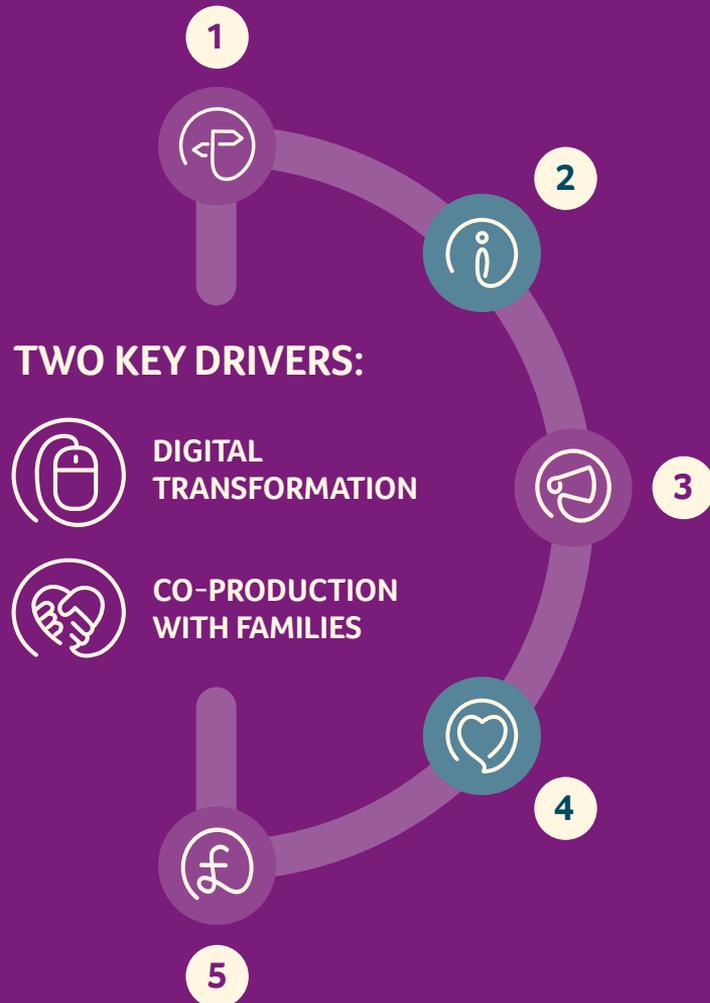
**With the right support, families can overcome the challenges they face.** They can take control of their futures. They can focus on what matters – being together and growing together.

**This strategy explains how we're changing to make sure we support families with disabled children as effectively as we possibly can.** We're transforming our use of digital technologies to reach more people in the ways that work best for them. We're working more closely with families so that together we can create the support they need the most.

**By focusing on five clear aims, we will respond more closely and more effectively to the specific and changing needs of families with disabled children.** A better future for those families starts here.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Amanda Batten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Amanda Batten, CEO**



# Transforming lives together

A summary of what we'll do and how we'll do it

## Five guiding aims

### By 2023:

1. We will be the first charity for families to turn to when they find out their child has a disability
2. We will double the number of families we support through our high quality information and advice service
3. We will drive social change, raise more money and support more people – by helping families feel more connected to Contact
4. Families will shape our work, so that they get the local help they need in the ways that work best for them
5. We will develop a sustainable business model that ensures Contact is here for families with disabled children long into the future.

# Complexity, confusion and a lack of support

## Why it's time for action

**The 620,000 families with a disabled child in the UK today face a huge range of challenges.** Financial pressures. Practical issues. Isolation.

There is a desperate lack of services and support available to help – and the situation is only getting bleaker.

A decade of austerity policies has reduced the availability of state and charitable support for families, at a time when the population of disabled children has grown by a third.

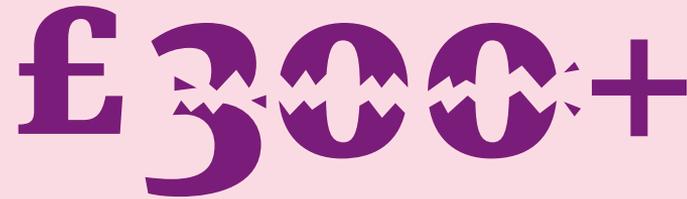
In addition, the hugely complex education, health and social care systems only make it more difficult for families to access the limited support that is available.

**For any family with a disabled child, seeking help is at best baffling and at worst a battle.**

1 Contact, Counting the Costs (2018)

2 Disabled Children's Partnership (2018)

3 Contact, Forgotten Families (2011)



£300+

Over **1/3 of families** spend £300+ monthly on costs related to their child's disability and care.<sup>1</sup>

**4%**

of parent carers feel they get the right support to safely care for their disabled children.<sup>2</sup>

**64%**

of families say they felt most isolated when their child was first diagnosed with a disability.<sup>3</sup>

# Our impact today – and our ambition for tomorrow

---

Our work already transforms lives. With our support, families with disabled children grow in confidence and feel less isolated. They feel able to face the challenges of caring and enjoy family life. They take action to create social change, pushing for better services and better support together.

But we know many more families need our support – and we're determined to reach as many as we possibly can. By responding more closely and more effectively to families' needs, and by being led by parents in everything we do, we will:

- Help more families build connections and find answers and support – when they need them and in the most relevant ways possible
- Run the services that families tell us will be most valuable
- Extend our reach, without duplicating the work of other organisations
- Work in a more agile, responsive and cost-effective way, always guided by the families we work with.

By taking the approach outlined in this strategy, we'll make sure our transformative services for families with disabled children are here to stay.



*“Contact has helped my family with endless issues over the years including helping me understand what benefits we’re entitled to and answering questions I’ve had about my daughter’s education. And we’ve taken part in many workshops, family events and activities organised by Contact. But one of the biggest factors for me has been that Contact has stopped us feeling so alone. We are part of a bigger family who can support each other.”*

**Emine, Mum to Aysen**

# How we work with families



## WE SUPPORT FAMILIES

We are there from the start – to enable families to get the support and information they need.



## WE BRING FAMILIES TOGETHER

When they are ready, we support families to contact a family like theirs for mutual support.



## WE HELP FAMILIES TAKE ACTION FOR OTHERS

We enable families to give back through campaigning, fundraising and volunteering so that together we can support more families.



# The two key drivers behind our 2020-23 strategy

---



## Digital transformation and co-production

### 1. Digital transformation

#### Why focus on digital?

Because it gives us a powerful opportunity to develop our information and advice services and reach more families, while ensuring we are truly responsive and our support is always relevant and accessible. Focusing on digital will make it easier than ever to identify the needs of families and test what works best – at a time when 90 per cent of us go online every day. Through digital, we want to increase our reach, bring families together, build awareness of the support we provide and empower families to fundraise for us and campaign for change.

#### What are we planning?

We will continue to be there for families in person and on the phone. We know how important this can be, and will always make time to listen. Digital, for us, is about building on the way we work, expanding the ways in which families can access support.

When we talk about digital transformation, we're talking about much more than tools and technology. With digital at the heart of everything we do, we'll empower our staff and the people we support, improve our processes and evolve our organisational culture. This new focus will require investment in new tools and technology, but these are simply vehicles to engage with people in new ways and deliver high quality services with impact we can measure.

Our vision is that families with disabled children feel valued and are strong, confident and able to make the decisions that are right for them.

## 2. Co-production with families

### Why focus on co-production?

It's always been in our DNA to work in partnership with parents and other groups and charities. This strategy places this approach front and centre of everything we do. Co-production with families of disabled children will define both how we work and what we do to deliver this strategy.

### What are we planning?

All of the support we offer needs to reflect and respond to the local community and what the families there need most. We also need to make sure we enhance what other groups and charities are doing, rather than competing with them. So we'll focus on co-production at a local level, joining with parent carer forums and local family groups to identify what families need and to understand how we can make the biggest difference together.

## The change we'll inspire

### In summary

#### By the end of 2023, we will:

- Reach more families and reach them faster, so families have support sooner after a child is born or diagnosed with a disability
- Provide high quality advice and information, and double the number of families we support annually through our information and advice service by 2023
- Influence government policies on issues such as welfare and healthcare, to directly benefit families with disabled children
- Support a wider network of families to advocate for the needs of others in similar situations
- Strengthen parent-led local support groups and parent carer forums and provide services that are led by local need.
- Secure the sustainability of our organisation through a wider range of income streams.

# The five aims that will guide our work

---



**We will be the first charity** for families to turn to when they find out their child has a disability



**We will double the number of families we support** through our high quality information and advice service



**We will drive social change, raise more money and support more people** – by helping families feel more connected to Contact

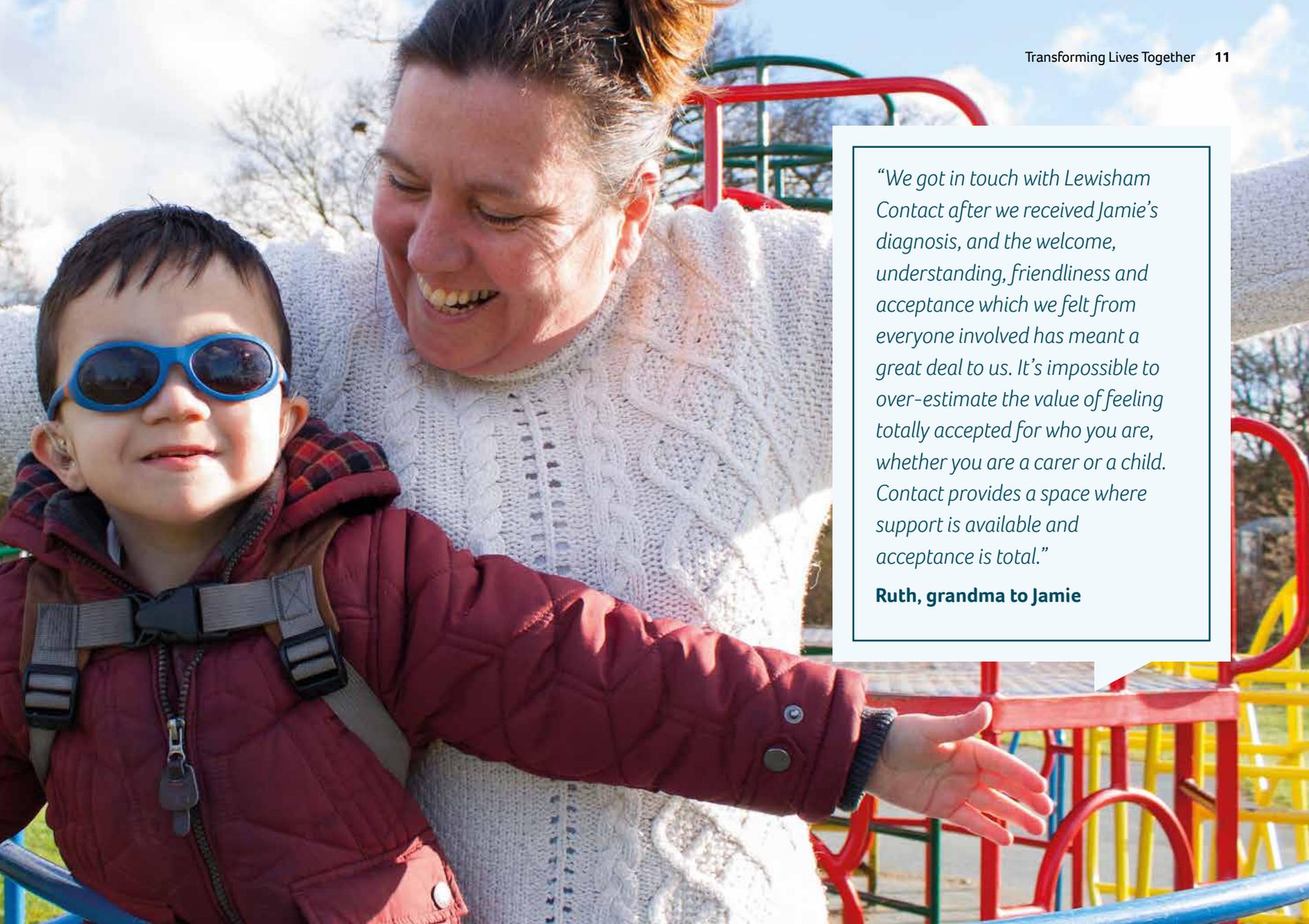


**Families will shape our work**, so that they get the local help they need in the ways that work best for them



**We will develop a sustainable business model** that ensures Contact is here for families with disabled children long into the future.





*“We got in touch with Lewisham Contact after we received Jamie’s diagnosis, and the welcome, understanding, friendliness and acceptance which we felt from everyone involved has meant a great deal to us. It’s impossible to over-estimate the value of feeling totally accepted for who you are, whether you are a carer or a child. Contact provides a space where support is available and acceptance is total.”*

**Ruth, grandma to Jamie**



## Aim 1:

We will be the first charity families turn to when they find out their child has a disability

### The challenge

There's one piece of feedback we hear from parents more than any other: 'I wish I'd found you sooner'. Every day in the UK, more than 100 children are born or diagnosed with a disability. Many parents simply don't know where to turn as they begin searching for answers and support. Without the right help, families can quickly spiral into crisis, with health and relationship problems both very real risks as people struggle with caring responsibilities, financial challenges and practical issues.

### Our ambition

By 2023, we want to be *the* charity families turn to from the moment a child is born or diagnosed with a disability. We want to reach out to many more families at this critical point – providing information, support, advice and opportunities to connect with others, so people feel more confident and less alone from the moment they first need help.



## Our plans

### To achieve this aim, we will:

1. Build our understanding of what families need and how they want to be supported when their child is born or diagnosed with a disability
2. Clarify the language we use to speak about ourselves, to make sure our messaging appeals to younger families and clearly points people towards available support
3. Develop our online presence, to ensure it's an active, empowering place where all families can chat and share experiences, advice and support
4. Fundraise for and deliver our By Your Side and Brighter Beginnings support programmes, to help families when they first begin to seek answers and connections
5. Strengthen our links with early years' professionals, so more people with young children are pointed towards Contact and our sources of support.

## What success looks like

### To make sure we deliver on this aim, we will monitor:

- The number of enquiries we respond to from parents with children aged five and under
- How many people are using our early help resources
- Whether families can use our advice to move forward and take their next step.



## Aim 2:

---

We will double the number of families we support through our high quality information and advice service

### The challenge

There are 620,000 families with disabled children in the UK today. Just four per cent feel they have the right support to care for their child safely, and close to a third receive no additional help beyond what they receive from family and friends. We know our helpline can make a vital difference, and we currently respond to more than 11,000 advice enquiries each year – helping people find the answers they need, on the phone or online, to move forward with confidence. However, we are constrained by our limited digital capacity and up to 30% of callers are unable to get through on their first attempt.

### Our ambition

By 2023, we will invest in digital to double the number of families we support annually via our high quality information and advice service. At the same time, we'll ensure the quality of our support continues to improve, based on what families tell us matters most.



## Our plans

### To achieve this aim, we will:

1. Develop more tailored digital information, advice and support, using a 'test and learn' approach to respond to the way parents use our information and advice service
2. Strengthen our use of data analytics, to ensure that families' needs and preferences are driving the delivery of our information and advice
3. Maintain the breadth and high quality of our information and advice – including our Family Finance and We Care About Rare programmes – to meet families' priorities
4. Use digital tools to build new partnerships, develop a cohesive programme of work and strengthen Fledglings, our new online shop
5. Ensure families in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland can access information and advice by pointing people to existing resources and developing content to fill any gaps.

## What success looks like

### To make sure we deliver on this aim, we will monitor:

- The total number of advice enquiries we respond to
- The number of parents using our online advice
- Whether families can use our advice to move forward and take their next step.



## Aim 3:

We will drive social change, raise more money and support more people – by helping families feel more connected to Contact

### The challenge

Too many families with disabled children are failed by a system that is poorly funded, poorly coordinated and abysmally difficult to navigate. The painful truth is that disabled children aren't a political priority, so families are increasingly forced to contend with rising costs of dealing with disability, falling financial support and disappearing local services.

### Our ambition

We know from experience that when we join forces with families and other organisations that share our determination, change happens. By bringing families closer to our work, empowering parents to push for progress and coordinating targeted campaigns led by parents, we will secure changes to services and secure more financial support for disabled children and their families.



## Our plans

### To achieve this aim, we will:

1. Create online content based on the needs and experiences of families, to showcase our warmth, knowledge and ability to create change
2. Develop a series of personalised communications to ensure new supporters feel welcomed and connected to Contact and all we have to offer
3. Inspire more families and supporters to stand with us to drive social change
4. Launch a series of family-led campaigns and appeals to improve the welfare system and education, health and care services for disabled children
5. Launch a fundraising programme based on content that shows the power of our work, so we can generate income to extend our services.

## What success looks like

### To make sure we deliver on this aim, we will monitor:

- The number of families who join us to campaign for change, fundraise and raise awareness of the issues facing families with disabled children
- How services, policies and legislation change as a result.



## Aim 4:

Families will shape our work, so that they get the local help they need in the ways that work best for them

### The challenge

Funding to support families with disabled children is falling – and too much of the limited money that remains is spent in ways that fail to take into account what will make the biggest difference to families. At best, this leads to services that only partially meet people’s needs. At worst, it leads to scarce resources being wasted – and families spiralling to crisis point.

### Our ambition

Families have always been at the heart of our work, but we’re strengthening our commitment to ensuring our local service delivery is truly led by parents. We’ll empower families to share their experiences and expertise. We’ll make sure they are listened to. As a result, more people will feel strong, confident and ready to support themselves and others – and we will be able to provide the support services that are needed most.



## Our plans

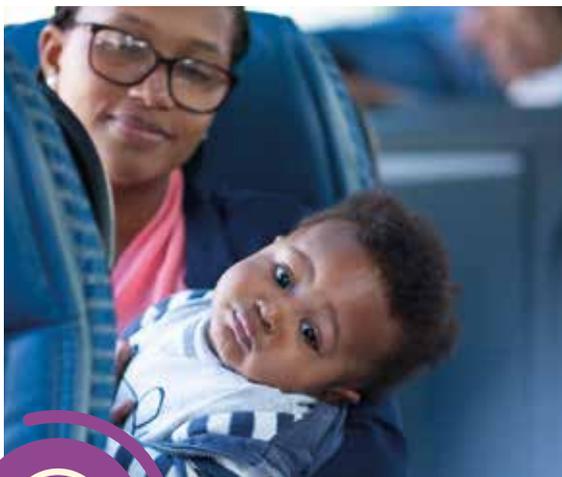
### To achieve this aim, we will:

1. Develop a core range of support for families, local support groups and parent carer forums, based on what people tell us they need and our own expertise
2. Reach more families with our support by building awareness of what we offer and by working more effectively with local partners
3. Recruit, develop and retain a skilled, flexible workforce so we can deliver high quality support
4. Develop processes to ensure what we learn and hear from families informs our local work, fundraising and national campaigns
5. Help families connect with each other by fundraising for, and delivering, our Better Together, Wellbeing and HemiHelp programmes
6. Strengthen parent carer forums and the National Network of Parent Carer Forums, so parent carers are included in strategic decision making and can build pressure for change.

## What success looks like

### To make sure we deliver on this aim, we will monitor:

- The role of parents and carers in leading the development of our local support
- The levels of satisfaction with our local services
- Whether the local groups and parent carer forums we work with are able to become more resilient.



## Aim 5:

We will develop a sustainable business model that ensures Contact is here for families with disabled children long into the future

### The challenge

In the past five years, we have doubled the amount of income we raise from major donors, trusts and community events. We couldn't be more grateful for this incredible support. It's helped us reach many more families with disabled children – at a time when we've also reduced our overheads. But to ensure our work has a secure, sustainable future, we need to strengthen our business model with a range of new, unrestricted income streams.

### Our ambition

We've detailed our growing ambition throughout this strategy. We're determined to reach more people in more ways, helping families to find answers and build connections in the ways that work for them. Diversifying our income is a key part of turning our ambition into reality and securing our long-term future.



## Our plans

### To achieve this aim, we will:

1. Develop and deliver a new fundraising strategy, building on existing income streams and identifying new ones that will help us run more services and begin our digital transformation
2. Develop our Fledglings online shop to increase our trading income
3. Create a three-year business development plan to raise more from consultancy and to attract more commissioned income
4. Deliver a financial plan to make more of partnerships and of our own assets, to help support our long-term sustainability
5. Ensure our people and our infrastructure are aligned, so we are truly able to deliver on this strategy.

## What success looks like

### To make sure we deliver on this aim, we will track and analyse:

- Growth in our overall income
- The diversification of our income streams.

# Will you stand alongside families with disabled children?

---

**At Contact, we believe there is nothing inevitable about the challenges and injustices too many families with disabled children are forced to face.**

We know the changes we need to bring about over the next three years. We are determined. We are focused. But we can't bring about this change alone.

Everything we want to do depends on our funders and supporters. Every contribution we receive – from a one-off donation to a multi-year grant – will help us be more responsive to the needs of families with disabled children.

We know that we are stronger when we work with others who share our energy and our ambition. If that sounds like you, please join us to help turn this strategy into reality.

**Together, we can transform the future for families with disabled children.**





*“The programme increased my confidence and taught me that I’m doing the best I can. I found out so much information about local groups and organisations that could help us. I also made several friends, and we have met up since. I found that, although our children’s issues were different, we had a common understanding, which I really appreciated. Since doing Contact’s Brighter Beginnings workshops, my stress has reduced, as I’m now able to reassure myself I’m doing my best and I’m not on my own.”*

**Victoria, mum to two-year-old Oshi**

# GET IN CONTACT

---

FREEPHONE HELPLINE

**0808 808 3555**

Access to interpreters

[helpline@contact.org.uk](mailto:helpline@contact.org.uk)

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

Open 9.30am–5pm Monday to Friday

---

Contact Head Office

209–211 City Road

London EC1V 1JN

 020 7608 8700

 [info@contact.org.uk](mailto:info@contact.org.uk)

---



---

Contact is a trading name of Contact a Family.  
Charity registered in England and Wales (284912)  
and Scotland (SC039169). Company limited  
by guarantee registered in England and Wales  
(1633333). VAT registration GB 749 3846 82.

© Contact, January 2020

Order code i19



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

We support families with the best possible guidance and information.

We bring families together to support each other.

We help families to campaign, volunteer and fundraise to improve life for themselves and others.