In January, Contact a Family helpline adviser Sean Meaney came to Southwark to talk about the upcoming changes to the benefits system. Sadly, many of the changes will have a negative impact on families with disabled children. However, we are working hard to ensure parents and carers know what support is available to them.

According to Sean, the most important message for families is this: if you are worried about how these changes will affect you, ask. There is no substitute for individual advice, either from Contact a Family Southwark or our national helpline.
Welcome to the Spring edition of Grapevine!

You’ll be delighted to know that the London Borough of Southwark has confirmed our funding from April to September 2013. This means we will be able to continue providing you with our services for at least the next six months.

There are new changes to the welfare and benefits system, including the introduction of the ‘bedroom tax’ and changes to housing benefit, council tax, crisis loans, and community care grants. You’ll find information inside, and if you need help, there is also a number you can call (see p.10).

You’ll also find information on events, drop-in sessions, workshops, and coffee mornings Inside (p. 3).

Lastly, please join us at the annual conference and general meeting on Friday May 17th. The keynote speaker will talk about the proposed changes to the Special Educational Need (SEN) Bill and SEN Code of Practice (p. 3).

As the funding remains tight, it’s important for us to show that our services are valued by families. We always welcome your feedback so please, feel free to drop us an email or call us.

Natalia Sali, Manager

A couple of goodbyes...

We are very sad to be saying goodbye to Alice Cameron, our Senior Family Worker, who has worked for Contact a Family for eight years. Alice has decided to retire, and we wish her a very relaxing and enjoyable retirement.

We are also saying goodbye to Blagoje Vucinic, aka Mr B. For the last two years, Blagoje has been based at Sunshine House, working as an Autism Post-Diagnosis Support Worker. From April, he will be permanently based at Sunshine House and no longer part of Contact a Family staff. However, we will continue to work closely with Mr B, and congratulate him in his ‘new’ role.

Annual Survey Winner!

Congratulations to Winifred Odoi, who won the prize draw out of all the families who had responded to our Annual Survey. Winifred said, “This has made my family’s week!” We’d also like to say a big thank you to everyone who completed our survey. Your feedback is really important to us!
Contact a Family news

Annual Conference

We are hosting our annual conference this year on Friday 17th May at Cambridge House. Our annual conference is always a great event, giving parent-carers and professionals a chance to come together and find out about different services. It’s also a great way of meeting Contact a Family Southwark’s Steering Committee.

This year our theme is ‘inclusion’ and we will be talking about the positives and negatives about the proposed changes to the SEN framework. Our guest speakers include:

- Jane McConnell, Chief Exec of IPSEA (Independent Parental Special Education Advice)
- Alison Miles, representative from Parents Carers’ Council
- Jill Davies, SEN Advisor from Contact a Family
- Matthew Hart, Educational Psychologist in Southwark

We will be having a panel discussion, workshops and lunch, as well as giving an update about Contact a Family and our Steering Committee.

When: Friday 17th May, 10am-1.30pm
Where: Cambridge House, 1 Addington Square, SE5 0HF

If you would like to come along, please return your completed events booking form, or call 020 7358 7799 for more information.

Drop-ins

Come and speak to a family worker at one of our weekly drop-in sessions around the borough.

**Wednesdays and Thursdays**
9.30am–12pm, Sunshine House

**Fridays**
9.30am–12pm: Rye Oak Children's Centre
1pm-3pm: Crawford Children’s Centre

**All drop-ins are now term-time only.**

We also run monthly drop-ins in each of the localities - go to pages 4-7 to see what’s happening in your area!

DLA renewal workshops

To book onto a DLA workshop, please call 020 7358 7799.

Tuesday 21st May, 9.45am-1pm
@ Cambridge House

Tuesday 18th June, 9.45am-1pm
@ Sunshine House

Coffee mornings

Come and join us for a delicious coffee and a chat with some of our family workers and parents.

Tuesday 14th May 2013, 10am-12pm
Tuesday 28th May 2013, 2pm-4pm
Tuesday 18th June 2013 10am-12pm

@ Park Life Cafe, Chumleigh Street, Burgess Park, London, SE5 0RJ
We’re Carys Kennedy and Elaine Mulligan, and we are both family workers in the Bermondsey and Rotherhithe locality. We have joint responsibility for working with parents and professionals in the locality, and already know lots of families in the area. We’d both be happy to hear from more of you!

Phone: 020 7358 7799, ext. 2116 (Carys) and 2115 (Elaine)
Email: carys.kennedy@cafamily.org.uk elaine.mulligan@cafamily.org.uk

Our local drop-in session

Kintore Way Children’s Centre
Where: 97-102 Grange Road, SE1 3BW
When: Friday 24th May, 9.30am-12pm and Friday 21st June 9.30am-11.30am.

These sessions run alongside SEN Soft Play at the Ellen Brown centre (opposite Kintore Way). No appointment necessary.

Special Needs tea party

Come along to the SEN tea party for soft play, tea and treats! This session is specially for parents and carers of children with special educational needs, and is a chance to meet other families and the SEN team.

Where: Ellen Brown Play Centre, Grange Road, SE1 3EB
When: Friday 21st June, 9.30am-11.30am
Contact: 020 7525 1196

Salmon Youth Centre
‘Mixables’ Disability Club

Salmon Youth Centre’s ‘Mixables’ club is for disabled young people aged 14+ with mild to moderate levels of disability and involves sports, arts, music and social activities. It’s a really good way for young people to come and try out Salmon’s facilities and meet the workers and other club members.

Where: 43 Old Jamaica Road, SE16 4TE
When: Every Friday afternoon, 3.30-5.30pm
Contact: Matt Perkins, 020 7232 5305 matt.perkins@salmonyouthcentre.org

Speech and Language Sessions

These monthly sessions run by Rotherhithe Children’s Centre look at different areas and issues around speech and language development.

Advance booking essential.

Where: Southwark Park Playroom, Hawkstone Road, SE16 2PF
When: 23 April, 28 May, 25 June and 23 July, 9.30am-11am.
Contact: Rotherhithe Children’s Centre, 020 7231 5687
My name is Yvonne Lubwama and I am the family worker for the Peckham, Peckham Rye and Nunhead locality. I have already worked with many families in the area over the last year and look forward to meeting more of you!

Phone: 020 7358 7799, ext. 2119
Email: yvonne.lubwama@cafamily.org.uk

My local drop-in session

Rye Oak Children’s Centre
Where: Whorlton Road, Peckham, SE15 3PD
When: Every Friday morning, 9.30am-12pm (term-time only). No appointment necessary.

Fast Forward SEN Youth Project

Fast Forward provides a place for young people to come together to socialise with their peers, as well as develop their social skills. There are various activities throughout the week, Monday to Thursday such as healthy living, healthy lifestyle, cooking sessions, life skills and trips. These session currently cost £1.50 per session and is payable on the day.

For more information, visit the website: http://www.whtvr.org/get-involved/fast-forward

or call Sharon or Rachel on 020 7732 1847.

Ivydale SEN Play Session

Stimulating activities and support for families with children with additional needs, including music, games, and yoga sessions. This drop-in session is a chance to meet other parents and share experiences. Individual support available.

Where: Peckham Rye Play Room, Peckham Rye Park SE15 3VA
When: Wednesdays, 10-11.30am, term-time only.

Parents’ Forum and Coffee Morning Sessions

Nell Gwynn Nursery School and Children’s Centre is to host a Parents’ Forum, which is a group for local parents and carers to discuss various topics, meet different people and have lots of fun learning new skills. This is an opportunity for interaction, relaxation, and a chance to discuss issues that affect parent carers and their families.

Where: Nell Gwynn Nursery School and Children’s Centre, Meeting House Lane, SE15 2TT
When: 3rd Wednesday of the month, 9.15am-11am.
My name’s Elaine Mulligan, and I’m the family worker for Camberwell and Dulwich. I’ve been working with Contact a Family since October, and have lots of previous experience working with the National Autistic Society in Southwark. I look forward to meeting you!

Phone: 020 7358 7799, ext. 2115  
Email: elaine.mulligan@cafamily.org.uk

My local drop-in session

Where: Crawford Children’s Centre, Crawford Road, SE5 9NF  
When: Every Friday afternoon, 1pm-3pm  
(term-time only)

These sessions run alongside Messy Play. No appointment necessary.

Kingswood Community Shop

The Kingswood Community Shop is located on the Kingswood estate in Dulwich and provides a wide range of services for residents and those who live locally to. These services include NHS health checks, Citizens Advice Bureau drop-ins, internet access, IT training, employment and support workshops, volunteering opportunities, children’s activities, knitting circles and much more.

Where: Kingswood Community Shop, 37-38 Seeley Drive, SE21 8QR  
Contact: Rebecca, 020 8670 1578

Burgess Park Adventure Playground - Access 4 All

Access 4 All sessions, which targets access for disabled children and young people. Burgess Adventure Playground provides opportunities for children and young people to play and learn in safety. It is supervised by experienced and trained staff. The Playground costs nothing to use, and the staff will be pleased to provide further information and give details on access to the wide range of activities. Activities include football, pool, arts and crafts and bouncy castle.

Where: 285 Albany Road, Camberwell, SE5 0AH  
When: Every Sunday, 11am-2pm

Song and Rhyme Time

Bessemer Grange Children’s Centre run a weekly story and rhyme time session at Starbucks coffee shop. This is a great opportunity to make new friends and have fun with your child while they learn new action rhymes and songs. Free refreshments for children.

Where: Starbucks, Dog Kennel Hill, SE22 8AA  
When: Thursday mornings, 10am-11am (term-time only)  
Contact: Bessemer Grange, 020 7274 2520
My name’s Carys Kennedy and I’m the family worker for the Walworth, Borough and Bankside locality. I’ve worked in the locality off-and-on for a number of years so know lots of families already, and I look forward to meeting even more of you!

Phone: 020 7358 7799, ext. 2116
Email: carys.kennedy@cafamily.org.uk

My local drop-in sessions

Coin Street neighbourhood centre
Where: 108 Stamford Street, SE1 9NH
When: Thursday 25th April, Thursday 23rd May, Thursday 27th June, 9.30am-12pm

No appointment necessary. This session coincides with Superstar Stay ‘n’ Play.

Sensory Time for Children

Children can experience sensory stimulation with toys that aid learning and have fun in a den with sensory lights. It is also an opportunity for parents to share experiences and make new friends.

Where: Victory Children’s Centre, Elba Place, Rodney Road, SE17 1PT
When: Friday mornings, 10am-12pm
Contact: Sarah Quinn, 020 7703 5722

Superstar Stay ‘n’ Play

A dedicated session for children with additional needs. This is an opportunity for families to relax, play and talk with specialist early years staff about their child’s needs. In partnership with Lark Hall Children’s Centre and Speech & Language Therapy Service.

Where: Coin Street neighbourhood centre, 108 Stamford Street, London SE1 9NH
When: Thursdays, 10-11.30am, term-time only.

Osteopathy for Children

If your child cries all the time, does not sleep well, is often getting colds, suffers eczema and seems unhappy, this service may help you. It is a free osteopathy session from the British School of Osteopathy.

Where: 1st Place Children’s Centre, Chumleigh Street, SE5 0RN
When: Thursdays, 9.30am-1pm
Contact: Elena, 020 7740 8070
Last term’s events

Peckham Plex
Cinema Trip

During February half-term, we took a trip to Peckham Plex to watch the film Wreck-It Ralph. We hired out the cinema just for our families, keeping the sound down and the lights up so not to frighten children with sensory issues. It was great for the kids to be able to watch the film, but also to get up and walk around if they needed to. Everyone had a fantastic time and we look forward to visiting the cinema again soon!

Pees and poos workshop

In February, we facilitated a Peers and Poos workshop run by the Special Needs Health Visiting Team (SNHVT) based at Sunshine House. The SNHVT gave parents lots of practical information in a friendly, entertaining way. The feedback from parents was very positive, and the vast majority of attendees reported that they feel more confident about toilet training thanks to the workshop.

One parent said: “I have learned to use different strategies to toilet train my son, and to have a communication book between the school and home to see if he could get into a regular routine.”

The workshop was so successful that we are now planning a series of regular workshops with the SNHVT, so watch this space!

Our visit to Gambado, Chelsea

Over the Easter holidays, we took a coach to Gambado in Chelsea. This soft play centre also has bumper cars and spinning teacups, and our families were even given our own ‘chill out’ room in case the excitement was too much for some of the kids. It was a really fantastic trip—even our inclusion coordinator Ed had a go in the ball pit!

Coffee mornings

Contact a Family run coffee mornings at least once a month, with additional meet-ups during school holidays. Since last year, we have been running these sessions at Park Life Cafe in Burgess Park and this new location has been very successful. There’s always a family worker there who is available to discuss any issues families may be facing. It is also an invaluable chance to have a chat with other parent carers to share experiences and expertise. And if that wasn’t reason enough to come along, we always buy parents a coffee too!
What’s on in Southwark

Parent Partnership information sessions

Parent Partnership are running the following information sessions for parents of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

- 3rd May: Preparing for tribunal
- 10th May: Exclusions and exclusion appeals
- 17th May: What are my legal rights if things go wrong?

These sessions will be held at Bessemer Grange Children’s Centre, SE5 8HP.

All sessions must be booked in advance. Please ring Denise Allen 020 7525 5866 or email: denise.allen@southwark.gov.uk

Down’s Syndrome Saturday Playgroup

This friendly drop-in play session for children with Down’s Syndrome and their Families has been running for a long time, and is a great way to meet and get to know other local parent-carers whose children have Down’s Syndrome.

Where: Chandler Hall, 15 Lambeth Walk, Kennington, SE11 6DU
When: First Saturday of every month (excluding August), 10am-12pm

Creative Therapies project

The Creative Therapies Project (CTP) is a community based mental health project based in Peckham and funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

CTP’s aim is to offer services that help improve the lives of those dealing with issues surrounding their mental health. They offer several different types of interventions to ensure that clients can access something that they will find helpful.

These include:

- complementary therapies
- art and music therapies
- exercise classes
- cooking clubs
- counselling and psychotherapy

Services are free of charge to Southwark residents with mental health concerns.

For more information or to self-refer, please contact Marcela Vielman on 020 7732 5880 or mvielman@coplestoncentre.org.uk

ADDitude Carers’ Group

A support group for carers of people with autistic spectrum disorders, ADHD and other demanding behavioural problems.

Where: Southwark Carers, Walworth Methodist Church, 54 Camberwell Road SE5 0EN
When: second Wednesday of each month at 11.00 am to 12.30 pm.
News from Contact a Family head office

Benefits changing from April 2013

Between April and October we will see the introduction of the ‘bedroom tax’, the scrapping of council tax benefit, personal independence payment replacing DLA for those aged 16-64 and a new universal credit that will be paid instead of tax credits and most means tested benefits.

To help you make sense of what these changes will mean, Contact a Family have produced a new guide for parents called

Personal independence payment, universal credit and other forthcoming benefit changes.

Parents with a disabled child can get a free copy by calling our freephone helpline on 0808 808 3555.

Important information about the ‘bedroom tax’

In light of the announcement on 'bedroom tax' our benefits adviser Derek Sinclair has some important advice for families.

"If your child's condition prevents them sharing a bedroom with a sibling, make sure that you contact your local housing benefit office to explain this. New government guidance for your housing benefit award must allow for a disabled child to have their own room if their condition means they cannot share.

You may be asked to provide medical evidence to confirm this. If they don't accept that your child can't share, seek advice about reviewing or appealing that decision.

Unfortunately the new guidance won't help where a disabled child needs an extra room for other reasons for example to store disability equipment or for an overnight carer. It may be that families in these circumstances could challenge the housing benefit rules on the basis they discriminate against disabled people. Contact a Family is seeking clarification on this point. In the meantime consider applying to your local authority for discretionary housing payments.

Whilst the new rules are great news for those families with a disabled child who is unable to share a bedroom, Contact a Family will continue to campaign for all carers and disabled people to be exempt from the bedroom tax. For further advice about these issues please contact our freephone helpline on 0808 808 3555 or email us.

Take action! Have your say on the Children and Families Bill

Contact a Family wants the Children and Families Bill to be better for parent carers.
Tell your MP it’s unfair that new and improved rights to support for carers of disabled adults in the draft care and support bill are being denied to parent carers. Get in touch with Una Summerson on 020 7608 8742 or email una.summerson@cafamily.org.uk to find out more.

More about the Children and Families Bill can be found in the campaigns section on our website or call our SEN helpline on 0808 808 3555.
News from our partner services

Parent Carers’ Council

Southwark Parent Carers’ Council (PCC) is a parent carer-led special interest group, supported by 280 local families. Their Steering Group comprises five parents of children with autism, global developmental delay, Down’s syndrome and congenital myasthenia, and former Contact a Family Southwark Manager, Naomi Gilbert.

The PCC volunteer time and energy to the promotion of parent carer participation in local (and national) decisions affecting their children and families, and are supported by other parents, who help us maintain the PCC website, produce and distribute our newsletter, and generally ‘spread the word’.

They meet every 4-6 weeks at Southwark Carers, 54 Camberwell Road, hold regular information events for parent carers, and are currently supported by two workers based at Southwark’s Play and Afterschool Service at 285 Albany Road, SE5.

The PCC are always on the lookout for more members, so if you would like more information, please call Linda on 07944 107019, or email us at: info@southwarkpcc.org.uk. You can also visit the PCC website: http://www.southwarkpcc.org.uk or find them on Facebook.

Southwark Carers

Southwark Carers provides information, advice and support to carers across the borough. They also aim to raise awareness of the rights and needs of carers in Southwark. They work in partnership with other local organisations to make sure that carers get as much support as possible.

Some of the services the provide include:

- Advice on issues such as benefits and dealing with social services
- Advocacy service
- An information pack and regular newsletter
- A confidential counselling service
- Financial assistance to help carers take a break
- Carers’ support groups
- Social activity groups
- Massage and relaxation sessions
- Support planning
- Training and information sharing events
- A voice for carers in the borough

All of their services are free to carers in Southwark.

It is possible to self-refer to Southwark Carers; alternatively, you can ask a member of Contact a Family staff to support you with this.

You can also contact Southwark Carers directly by calling 020 7708 4497 or via the website, www.southwarkcarers.org.uk.
About Contact a Family

Across the UK, a child is diagnosed with a severe disability every 25 minutes. While 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 quickly has to become an expert.

When parents find out their child is disabled, they feel isolated and alone, usually because they don’t know anyone else facing the same problems. They want contact with another family that has been 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 helpline
freephone: 0808 808 3555
9:30am–5:00pm, Monday to Friday

for information: on disabilities and medical conditions
for advice: on assessments, breaks, benefits and finances
for signposting: to support groups, organisations and services
for linking: to other families
for listening

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Gambado Chelsea
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our fantastic volunteers and session workers

for helping to make our events programme such a success

Data protection: Contact a Family is committed to the confidentiality of your personal information. Personal data will be held and used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and will not be shared with any third parties for commercial use.

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