

Standing together to support families

ANNUAL REVIEW
2019/20

contact
For families with disabled children





Changing lives together

This Annual Review covers the financial year 2019-20, but it is hard not to mention the Covid-19 pandemic which started to unfold during this period and has changed all of our lives so dramatically.

It is a particularly challenging time for the families we support, and has sadly deepened many of the inequalities they face. They truly are the unsung heroes of this crisis: caring around the clock, not only home schooling during lockdown but home nursing with very little support. I am proud that we have not only been able to maintain our support to families during the Covid-19 pandemic, but have adapted and extended our services at this time, when families need us most.

During 2019-20 Contact helped a total of 178,000 parents with information, advice and support. We also continued to support the 88,000 members of parent carer forums who work together with their local services to influence positive change for all families with disabled children.

We know that our support transforms lives. With our support, families with disabled children grow in confidence and feel less isolated. But many more need our support.

2019-20 marked the final year of our 5 year strategy. So as well as delivering, we developed a new three year strategy – Transforming Lives Together – which builds on progress made.

Our new strategy for 2020-2023 is all about responding more closely and more effectively to families needs by being led by parents in everything we do. The strategy drivers of digital development and working more closely with families are made ever more relevant and vital in the context of Covid-19.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Amanda Batten', is located below the main text block. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Amanda' being more prominent than the last name 'Batten'.

Amanda Batten, CEO

Our year working with and for families



We helped
178,000
parents with advice,
information and support



We sent out
3,064
copies of our
Helpful Guide



We supported
1,580
parents with children
in hospital through our
By Your Side project



90%
of parents who use a Contact
service report feeling more
confident afterwards



Families using our Family
Finances helpline service were
on average better off by
£4,546
a year



We reached
1,184,729
people through our
digital media channels



2,344
parents attended our workshops
on key topics including
sleep, managing challenging
behaviour and finances



We held
77
fun family events
attended by 1,725 children
and 1,309 parents

Here for families at the start

BRIGHTER BEGINNINGS

Parents who have just received a diagnosis for their child or are worried that their child needs extra support, often feel lost and scared. We are here for them from the start, helping them navigate the often confusing system of services and support.

Our Helpful Guide and Brighter Beginnings programme help us to reach families when their children are still young.

Our Brighter Beginnings workshops build skills and confidence of parents with young disabled children. They also provide an opportunity for parents to come together to form networks of friends and support. We hosted 20 series of our Brighter Beginnings workshops, with 239 individual parents attending and a total of 98 workshops being held overall. The workshops are delivered in a series, so parents benefit from several sessions, growing in confidence each time.

100%
of families said our Brighter Beginnings workshops made a positive difference

BUILDING CONFIDENCE TOGETHER

“My son is 8 years old and he has right middle infarct, hemiplegia and cerebral palsy, as well as epilepsy and global developmental delay. The Brighter Beginnings workshops helped a tremendous amount, in particular the sleep and behaviour sessions. Before I attended my son was getting increasingly frustrated with day to day tasks and his behaviour worsened. These workshops changed the way I speak and interact with my child. I have a lot more understanding and I speak to him using more positive language, which I learned at the workshops. Since I’ve gone on the workshops I’ve managed to put things into practice. We’re a much happier family, the quality of my family life has gone from a 1 to a 10. There are still difficult moments, but I now know how to handle it.”

HELPFUL GUIDE

In 2019-20 we sent out 3,064 copies of our Helpful Guide. Aimed at parents of young disabled children, our guide helps families make sense of what can sometimes seem a confusing system of support.

“The Helpful Guide is a great starting point for families. It’s easy to read and so reassuring to families that there is help out there”

OUR HELPLINE

Parents with a disabled child often don’t know where to turn to for help as their child reaches different stages in their life – getting a diagnosis, getting practical help and equipment to help support their child, and ensuring their child’s school meets their needs. Contact’s telephone helpline continued to provide a much valued service to families with 10,067 enquiries responded to by our parent advisers over the year. Top calls during 2019/20 from parent carers to our Special Educational Needs helpline included getting the right SEN support in school, school transport and getting an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.





Here for families at times of crisis

BY YOUR SIDE IN HOSPITALS

Families with children in hospital are understandably experiencing enormous stress. They may have just received a diagnosis and be coming to terms with what that means for their child. Or their child may have ongoing assessments and critical treatments.

During the year, our By Your Side project team worked in some of the biggest NHS children's hospitals to support 1,580 parents and 427 professionals.

Our specialist parent advisers meet families inside the hospital, providing them with emotional support and practical advice.

97%
of parents felt better informed about how to get the support they need following our support in hospital, and 90% felt more confident

"I feel very privileged and glad that I walked past the Contact stand at Great Ormond Street Hospital when I was visiting with my son. Contact's parent adviser was so eager to help to find me support. Contact is an extremely helpful charity."

FAMILY FINANCES

Families with disabled children are at greater risk of living in poverty due to the difficulty of working and caring and the extra costs of raising a disabled child. It is vital they get the support they are entitled to, but the benefits system is complex and difficult to navigate. Our dedicated Family Finances helpline team provide expert advice to families with disabled children about financial support.

This year our Family Finances team helped 673 families with 760 benefits enquiries. They also made 289 in-depth call-backs to help parents through the complex benefits system.

Families eligible for a financial gain were better off by an average of

£4,546

a year after help from our Family Finances team

Here to help families grow in confidence

WELLBEING

We know that the parents and siblings of disabled children are often under enormous practical, physical and emotional pressures. Our Wellbeing programme is a personal development programme for family members to build new skills and increase confidence. The programme also includes fun, recreational activities to promote the idea that carers need to look after themselves too.

This year we ran 16 Wellbeing programmes (3 across England and 13 across Northern Ireland, called the Me, Myself, I and Us programme) with 94 mums, dads and siblings attending.

96%
of those who attended our Wellbeing programme said it helped them cope better with the challenges of caring

BUILDING SKILLS TOGETHER

Jessica is mum to two wonderful boys with additional needs and a two year old daughter.

“I hadn’t heard about Contact until I saw the Wellbeing course advertised on our school facebook page. At the time I was always rushing around for the kids and looking for activities for the family. But this was just for me. I was a bit lost with who I was as a person, I was so tired, tired all the time and my health was not great. It was great to find out about services and activities locally, as we are new to the area. Hearing other people’s stories made my life a bit easier. We had a lot of fun, even though the topics of the sessions and discussions were serious. It’s the best thing I’ve ever done! Since the course I’ve done training in mental health, play and Makaton. And I’ve started volunteering for a community group. My self-belief and confidence has grown. I’m like a different person.”

BETTER TOGETHER

Families with disabled children can feel isolated and alone because they don’t know anyone else in their situation. That’s why putting families in touch with others remains at the heart of what Contact does. We do this in lots of ways, including family fun days, providing opportunities to enjoy shared experiences, make friends and find support.

This year we ran 77 family fun days including a trip to an indoor climbing centre in Manchester, forest school sessions in Wales, trips to the seaside, pottery cafes and sports days for families in London and relaxation and pampering days in Northern Ireland.

1,725
children and
1,309
parents enjoyed Better Together events this year





Adapting services during Covid 19

At the start of the pandemic it became apparent that families understandably had greater emotional needs and wanted time and space to talk to our Parent Advisers. We needed to adapt some of our services to have the capacity to offer more time for in depth emotional support.

With the support of the True Colours Trust, the Department of Health and Social Care and the National Lottery’s Coronavirus Community Support Fund we developed a new Listening Ear telephone service to offer personal one to one telephone appointments with a Parent Adviser. This service provides confidential support and reassurance with practical and emotional help. We launched our new service at the end of April 2020 which is currently supporting 30 families each month.

To ensure the families we support and the children they care for remain as safe as possible, all of our face-to-face events and workshops were moved online at the start of lockdown.

We now run free virtual workshops as a way of delivering our family support services during these challenging times, which have been very well received. The workshops are being delivered at different times of day and in the evenings to ensure they are accessible to all. They are on topics including money matters, behaviour, Brighter Beginnings and helping your child sleep; take up has exceeded expectations.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Jasmeet is mum to seven-year-old Charanj Singh who has Autism. They live in Ealing with Charanj’s dad and grandparents. Jasmeet is originally from Afghanistan.

“Since finding Contact, I have found a listening ear which has helped me with useful information and emotional support. I now feel much better and more positive about the future. If I need help and support, I know where I can turn. I am the only carer of 4 people, but now I feel like there is somebody to takes care of me too. Any parent of a disabled child should get in touch with Contact for support.”

Reaching more families

NEW STRATEGY

This year we developed a new three year strategy – Transforming Lives Together – which will guide our work over the next three years and builds on the progress made in the last five years.

Our new strategy is all about responding more closely and more effectively to families needs by being led by parents in everything we do. This will ultimately help us to reach more families.

Digital development is a key driver for our new strategy as is working more closely with parents. We will work alongside parent forums and groups to ensure that the services we deliver enhance and fill a gap rather than compete with other support already being delivered.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

In 2019/20 we reached 1,184,729 people through our digital media channels which includes the Contact website and online community, Facebook and Twitter engagement and You Tube plays. We have 44,848 Facebook followers and this year our online community membership grew to 1,925.

As part of our new strategy to transform Contact digitally we began providing our trusted advice and information in new and innovative ways. We developed digital tools and channels to extend access to our information and advice. This includes common questions tools on the Contact website accessed by 8,445 users, Facebook Q&As on a range of popular topics, webinars, Live Chat and benefits and grants calculators.

This complements rather than replaces our face to face and telephone support and will double the number of families we help each year by the end of the three-year strategy.

FLEDGLINGS

Parents of disabled children often talk of the challenges finding products to help with their child's needs. Contact's not for profit Fledglings shop is full of practical products especially designed for children with additional needs.

Throughout the year we have recruited a new team, identified the best selling products and concentrated our product list on those popular items. We have improved our communications to families, highlighting how our products can help with feeding, drinking, sleeping and getting out and about.

Fledglings has improved the sustainability of Contact's work, by introducing a new income stream. The profit is directly reinvested in support for families.





Working with families to affect change

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Research shows that involving service users in the shape and design of services, leads to improvements.

This year Contact continued to support and champion parent participation in parent forums across England. During 2019/20 membership of parent carer forums was an impressive 88,687, demonstrating the huge commitment made by parents to proactively help shape and improve services in their local area.

Contact continued to lead the strategic participation consortium for parent carers and children and young people alongside the Council for Disabled Children, KIDS and the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF).

98.6%
of forums reported they were satisfied with the support that Contact provided

CAMPAIGNS AND MEDIA

We know that the families we support continue to face inequalities in many aspects of their lives. That's why we work hard to make disabled children and their families a political priority.

This year we celebrated our 40th anniversary and wanted to showcase the countless and often unrecognised achievements of families with disabled children across the UK. Our Contact Family Awards received 500 nominations with finalists being invited to a special, celebratory event in Parliament in July.

Throughout 2019/20 we were actively involved in the Disabled Children's Partnership, a coalition of 70 disability charities campaigning for better health and social care for disabled children. The partnership, chaired by Contact's CEO Amanda Batten, launched its Give It Back campaign in partnership with the Sun newspaper. The Give It Back campaign calls on the government to give back the £434 million of support which has been cut from disabled children's services.

This year we continued to campaign on the school transport loophole for under 5s and post-16. We supported a family in the High Court who challenged their council's decision to remove school transport for their daughter when she turned 16.

20.8M
people were reached with our key messages through our media work



Our awesome supporters



Our awesome supporters, who took part in marathons, bike rides, bake sales, raffles and coffee mornings throughout the year, raised an amazing

£56K



Our supporters ran

626

miles run, raising

£41K

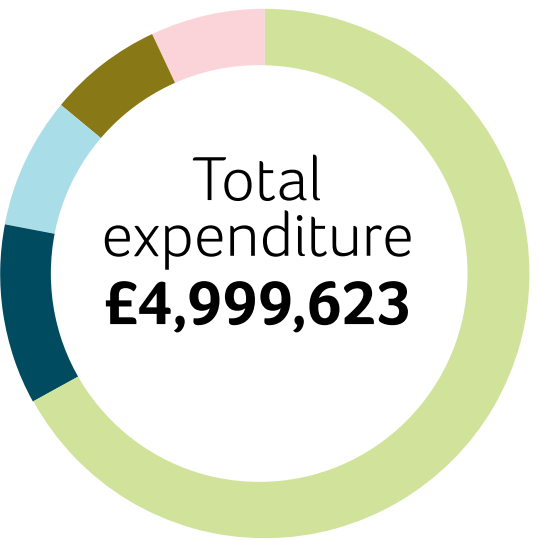


Bake sales, band nights and picnics, held across the country raised

£12K



Our finances



Engagement and Support Services £3,361,535 (67%)	National Lottery Community Fund £353,407 (7%)	Local government grants £358,329 (7%)
London Community Projects £547,196 (11%)	Charitable trusts £533,557 (11%)	Devolved nations government grants £106,327 (2%)
Cost of Generating Funds £388,358 (8%)	Special events/other £148,369 (3%)	UK government grants £2,779,066 (57%)
Policy and Communications £341,191 (7%)	Investment income £1,578 (0%)	Traded income £199,274 (4%)
National Development £361,343 (7%)	Individuals £285,557 (6%)	Property income £137,260 (3%)

Our incredible funders

The achievements highlighted in this annual review would not have been possible without the vital support of our funders. Grants and donations from the Department for Education, National Lottery Community Fund, NHS England, local authorities, companies, trusts and foundations and philanthropists enabled Contact to deliver our life-changing services. We are extremely grateful for their support.

- Appletree Trust
Ballinger Charitable Trust
BioMarin
Blandford Trust
BoltBurdonKemp
Chance to Flourish
Charles S French
CRH Trust
D D McPhail Charitable Settlement
Edith Murphy Foundation
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- R C Snelling Charitable Trust
Royds Withy King
Simon Gibson Charitable Trust
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The Basil Samuel Charitable Trust
The David Family Foundation
The Dulverton Trust
The Eveson Charitable Trust
The Golden Bottle Trust
The Hamer Charitable Trust
The Hospital Saturday Fund
The Iron Bridge Trust
The Irving Memorial Trust
The James and Grace Anderson Trust
The May Gibson Charitable Trust
The Peacock Charitable Trust
The Russell Trust
The White Top Foundation
The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
Vassie Charitable Trust
William Allen Young Charitable Trust
Wimbledon Foundation
Woburn 1986 Charitable Trust





GET IN CONTACT


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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.