

# ANNUAL REPORT

2017/18

A photograph of a man and a young girl interacting. The man, wearing a blue polo shirt, is sitting and looking at the girl. The girl, wearing a striped long-sleeved shirt and a patterned skirt, is standing and pointing her finger at the man. They are in a room with a large window in the background. On the wall, there is a colorful mural of a tree with fish hanging from its branches. A purple hat is visible on a table to the right.

contact

*For families with disabled children*



## WHO WE ARE

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Contact is here for all families with disabled children – supporting families, bringing families together and helping families take action for others. We provide advice on everything from getting a diagnosis, to securing a suitable place at school, from receiving the right financial support to finding friends and support networks.

### THANKS TO YOU

We couldn't do what we do without you. Together we are changing families' lives for the better, ensuring they get the right support at the right time.

1 million  
children live with a  
disability in the UK.

Almost all are cared for  
at home by their family.

Parents with disabled  
children face many  
challenges when all they  
want is to enjoy family  
life and see their child  
reach their full potential.

## INTRODUCTION

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We want to say a heartfelt ‘thank you’ to staff, volunteers, supporters, fundraisers and campaigners. Your skills, commitment, enthusiasm and generosity have helped us make a tangible difference to the lives of families with disabled children up and down the country this year.

It has been an important year for Contact as we continued to implement our ambitious strategy, which at its heart lies the goal to reach more families and reach them sooner. Thanks to the generous support of our donors and supporters we made great strides towards achieving this goal, achievements you can read more about in this annual review.

Of course there are challenges: a prolonged period of austerity has chipped away at services and financial support that many families with disabled children rely on, so there is increased need. In addition as a charity we are operating in a very challenging funding environment. To meet these challenges we are campaigning alongside families as well as supporting Parent Carer Forums in their work to influence the decisions that affect them and their children. We are also working towards a more sustainable business model to ensure our services are here for the foreseeable future. With your ongoing support we can continue to make a difference.



**Amanda Batten**  
Chief Executive



**Chris Carr**  
Chair of Trustees

# OUR IMPACT

2017-18



2,363

parents and  
children  
enjoyed our  
family fun days



94%

of families who  
have used our  
service felt  
better informed  
about getting  
the support they  
need



852,554

people were reached  
through our digital  
media channels



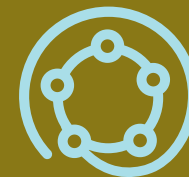
20,000

people engaged  
with our  
campaigns



11,502

calls answered by  
our expert Helpline  
Advisers



44,641

parents took part in  
parent participation



2,700

parents were  
supported while  
their child was in  
hospital



## BY YOUR SIDE – REACHING FAMILIES IN HOSPITAL

We know that if we reach families with the right support at the right time, the impact of our work can be life changing. Our **By Your Side: Reaching Families in Hospital** project enables us to pro-actively reach out to families in the most challenging of circumstances. We have Parent Advisers based in some of the biggest children's hospitals in the country, providing support to families when they need it most.

Toni Rushton is Contact's Hospitals Parent Adviser at Evelina Children's Hospital:

“We support families who have just received a diagnosis for their child or their child is unwell and requires hospital care or surgery. Some families have babies who were born prematurely and have associated health conditions. We work to address their immediate concerns at our information stands and during ward visits. This can be anything from getting financial help to explaining medical jargon and where to turn for support. For those who need more intensive advice or emotional support we follow up with a meeting in a quiet space at the hospital or email or call them once they return home.”

We supported  
**2,700**  
parents in 8 hospitals  
across the country:

**Great Ormond Street Hospital**

**Evelina Children's Hospital**

**Birmingham Children's Hospital**

**Alder Hey Children's Hospital**

**Manchester Children's Hospital**

**Great North Children's Hospital**

**Sunderland Hospital**

**Royal Victoria Infirmary**

Bolt Burdon Kemp generously fund our hospitals project work in London. They are expert solicitors dedicated to helping people with serious injury claims. Caroline Klage, Partner at BBK says: “The exceptional work of Contact's experienced Parent Advisers in hospitals is invaluable.”







## BRIGHTER BEGINNINGS

Getting support early can be the difference between flourishing and floundering for families with disabled children. So this year, with the support of a generous donor, we developed a new programme of early years workshops.

Our Brighter Beginnings project has been developed with parents, and helps families with disabled children aged 0–8 years old.

It involves:

- a six week programme of workshops to give parents the skills they need to deal with daily challenges, reduce anxiety and increase family wellbeing
- drop in sessions for families
- vital information and support in their local area.

### HOW WE HELPED

Sally's three-year-old son Mason has been diagnosed with autism and hypermobility syndrome.

The special needs nurse at Mason's nursery let Sally know about Contact's Brighter Beginnings workshops and Sally, who was struggling to understand Mason's behaviour, felt they would be useful for her. Sally says:

"The workshops were welcoming, friendly and professional. They taught me that I'm the expert on my child – I know more because I live it every day. But now I understand more about triggers for his behaviour and strategies to deal with them. When Mason had a breakdown in public I used to run away and try and remove him, but now I try and deal with whatever is bothering him at the time. I used to be worried and anxious taking him out. Now I'm not.

"If it wasn't for the workshops I would be anxious and down in myself. My confidence has increased and I can deal with the difficult situations and daily challenges now. They have changed my and my son's life – they have made things better, they really have. I can enjoy being a mum to Mason. I would advise anybody who has a child with additional needs to go."



# THE CONTACT HELPLINE

Our Helpline provided a much valued service to families with 11,502 calls handled by our expert advisers over the year. The top issues for families calling our helpline were financial support and special educational needs. As a result of our Family Finances team's advice, families secured an estimated additional household income of £2 million. That equates to £5,200 per family per year.

## THE CONTACT HELPLINE CHANGED MY LIFE

"Hello my name is Natasha, a mum with three children and I want to tell you how Contact's Helpline changed my family's life.

I'm a single parent with disabilities and my nine-year-old daughter has ADHD.

I called Contact's Helpline for advice about my financial situation but little did

I know that one phone call would make such a difference to my life. Lisa, Contact's Helpline Adviser did a full benefits check, and advised me to claim Carer's Allowance, despite my own health problems. She provided me with a letter to give to my local council explaining that we should be exempt from the benefit cap because my daughter receives Disability Living Allowance.

Contact called me back several months later and I was pleased to tell them that thanks to their help, we had seen a substantial increase in the financial support we receive. I feel more in control and less stressed about my finances now, which in turn helps us enjoy just being a family. I want to say thank you for your generosity in supporting Contact, which in turn helps many families with disabled children across the UK."

Our Helpline was highlighted on BBC Breakfast news as part of a feature about school transport for disabled children. We've seen a staggering increase in calls to our Helpline from parents concerned about school transport in the past year and we continue to campaign on this issue.





# BRINGING FAMILIES TOGETHER

Putting families in touch with others for support remains at the heart of what Contact does. We do this at our own workshops and family events as well as through our parent support groups network and our support of Parent Carer Forums.

This year 4,872 parents attended our workshops learning about their rights and entitlements, how to manage daily challenges and reduce stress.

In Wales we received funding from Children in Need to run a series of Forest School

family events to enable disabled children to enjoy the outdoors and get families together.

Kate Wyke, Contact Wales Manager, said “Our Forest School events bring families together to enjoy nature and reduce isolation.

“65 per cent of families with disabled children report feeling isolated frequently or all of the time. So we are delighted with the overwhelmingly positive feedback about our Forest School events. Children who attend are making friends, feeling less stressed and anxious, gaining a sense

of independence and enjoying simple pleasures like walking, climbing and building fires. Parents enjoy socialising with others in a similar situation in the great outdoors.

“Following our Forest School events, parents report a huge improvement in the behaviour of their children. In addition children are getting exercise to support a better night’s sleep. And Contact’s Forest School is creating happy family memories and accomplishments to build on.”





Families celebrate  
outside the High Court  
following the successful  
Nascot Lawn decision  
(see p18)



## CAMPAIGNING TOGETHER

We've been campaigning shoulder-to-shoulder with families and other charities for more than fifteen years. Our campaigns are trusted by families because they are built on what they tell us.

Together with a growing network of 20,000 campaign supporters we are continuing to highlight the injustices faced by disabled children and their families and fight against them.

Years of austerity and cutbacks to local authority budgets are really taking their toll. So it is no surprise that our campaigns this year have focused on trying to reverse these cuts.

### SCHOOL TRANSPORT

In September 2017 we published our School Transport Inquiry report, which included a survey of 2,500 parents with disabled children, a Parliamentary Hearing and desktop research. It found that:

- **families can't work due to poor school transport arrangements**
- **many disabled children have stressful journeys to school**
- **many local school transport policies in England include unlawful statements.**

Following the launch, the Secretary of State for Education announced plans to review school transport statutory guidance. This is

a huge positive step towards achieving our campaign goal. We are now working with officials to ensure the new guidance does help disabled children get the transport they are entitled to.



### CARING MORE THAN MOST

In November 2017 we published Caring More than Most, research we conducted with the University of Leeds and one of the biggest studies of families with disabled children ever. It revealed the significant disadvantage many families face in key aspects of life and shows that 24 percent of parent carers provide 100 hours of care every week – the equivalent of working three full-time jobs simultaneously. It was highlighted in a Guardian newspaper feature and on BBC 5Live Investigates.





## DISABLED CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP

The Disabled Children's Partnership (DCP) is a campaign group of 60 charities calling on the government to address the growing crisis in health and social care for disabled children. Chaired by our Chief Executive Amanda Batten, Contact is a key partner in DCP.

Last year, DCP launched the Secret Life of Us campaign. It aims to raise public awareness of the challenges that disabled children and their families face. Only through understanding will we be able to affect change. In tandem with the campaign, DCP has been urging politicians to make disabled children a priority, publishing a 5 step plan to address the crisis in services for disabled children.

## HELPING PARENTS CHALLENGE THE LAW

In January 2018 we supported parents using respite centre Nascot Lawn to successfully challenge the decision to close it in the High Court. The courageous families won their judicial review case, but cruelly 10 months later the vital centre was closed, demonstrating the uphill battle that families are faced with in an era of austerity.

## BBC PANORAMA - FIGHTING FOR MY CHILD

In June 2017 the coalition launched its first campaign The Secret Life of Us and throughout the year worked with BBC Panorama on a programme, *Fighting for my child*. The feature highlighted the consequences of diminishing support for disabled children and their families and was shown on BBC One in July 2018.



# FAMILIES COMING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE SERVICES AND OUTCOMES

This year Contact continued to support Parent Carer Forums in their work to improve service delivery and outcomes for families with disabled children in their local area.

In 2017-18 membership of Parent Carer Forums hit an all-time high with 93,412 Forum members in total – up 14 per cent from last year. In November we held our largest ever conference with over 100 Parent Carer Forums represented.

Anne Gross, Director of Special Needs and Children's Services Strategy at the Department for Education, said: "It's incredible to see how, since 2008 – a relatively short space of time – parent

participation has gone from strength to strength. Thanks to the hard work of thousands of Parent Carer Forum members and Contact, now more than ever parent carers are increasingly at the heart of the shaping and redesign of disabled children's services, which is benefiting all. Parent participation means to me, better decisions and a brighter future for disabled children."

The forums now have

93,412  
parent  
carer members

14%  
up on last year





## YOUR AMAZING EFFORTS

Throughout the year families, staff and supporters went to supersonic and heroic lengths to fundraise for Contact and help us help more families with disabled children.

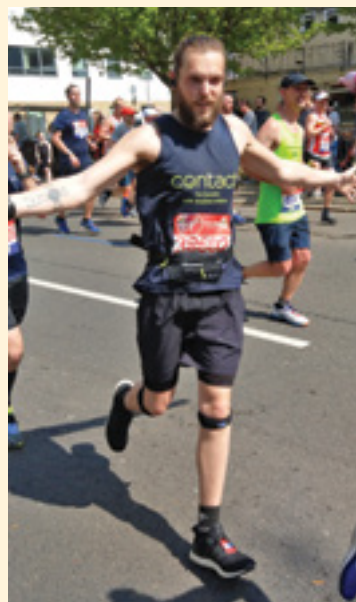
We continue to receive crucial support from our Ambassadors, charitable trusts, companies and philanthropists. Thank you to every individual and organisation that has helped families with disabled children get the support they need.



(left) Isle of Wight Challenge 50km walk.  
(below) Wheels and Wellies Walk



11 runners  
took part in the London  
Marathon 2018 and  
raised a fantastic  
£31,463



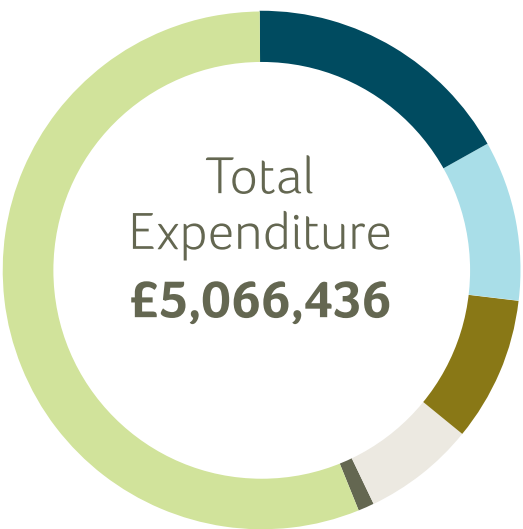
We had  
5 runners  
take part in the Great  
North Run 2017 for the  
first time ever

Dinosaur Day  
raised more than  
£5,000  
in 2017



In 2018 Contact was one of the charities showcased in BBC One Countryfile's Ramble for Children in Need. Contact and some of the families we support in Wales were invited to take part in Countryfile's ramble in Snowdonia, which was led by TV legend John Craven and former Paralympian turned presenter Steve Brown. The programme highlighted our Forest Schools programme in Wales, funded by BBC Children in Need, which brings families together to enjoy the great outdoors.

# OUR FINANCES



- Engagement and Support Services  
£2,830,018 (56%)
- London Community Projects  
£869,650 (17%)
- Cost of Generating Funds  
£506,810 (10%)
- National Development  
£440,479 (9%)
- Policy and Communications  
£352,227 (7%)
- Strategy Development  
£67,252 (1%)



- UK Government Grants  
£2,099,913 (44%)
- Big Lottery Fund  
£1,009,238 (21%)
- Local Government Grants  
£545,238 (11%)
- Individuals  
£498,954 (10%)
- Charitable Trusts  
£333,936 (7%)
- Special Events/Other  
£146,214 (3%)
- Devolved Nations Government Grants  
£164,621 (3%)
- Investment Income  
£1,110 (0.02%)


WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL OUR GENEROUS DONORS, INCLUDING:





# GET IN CONTACT

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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.