



News from Contact and the NNPCF

Welcome to the September addition of the Contact and National Network of Parent Carer Forum's (NNPCF's) joint participation newsletter. We hope you had some time over the summer holidays to take a break.

We think it is fair to say that we are all experiencing a September like never before! We know that ensuring children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) are supported and settled back into school is a top priority and is hugely challenging. We know that in many cases families' anxiety and stress is high as everyone grapples with new rules, processes, and uncertainty. Forum capacity is strained in new ways, but at the same time, it has never been clearer how crucial forums are in hearing the very real experiences of families in their communities and putting these at the heart of service development.

Here at Contact and the NNPCF we are doing all we can to support forums, families, and raise awareness and influence for positive solutions.

Annual Conference and NNPCF AGM!

[SAVE THE DATES – 30th November – 4th December](#)

Not even Coronavirus can keep parent carer forums from sharing the issues and challenges from this extraordinary time and celebrating the successes and impact of the work we do!

This year's annual Contact / NNPCF conference will be a virtual programme of exciting and informative events. We are delighted that we can go ahead with an online conference - we hope to reach even more of you with a series of virtual sessions!

To ensure we make this conference the best one yet, please help us with the planning by completing this [short survey](#).

Your back to school experiences – NNPCF Minister Vicky Ford

The NNPCF steering group met with Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford to share the feedback from parent carer forums about the return to school for children with SEND.

Ahead of the meeting, parent carer forums continued their outstanding work in listening to the experiences of local families. NNPCF had heard of a number of concerns around a wide variety of topics including Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGP), over-zealous schools sending children with colds home, local and school lockdowns, and access to testing. Read more information about this and to read the briefing document that summaries the issues that were shared on the [NNPCF website](#).

The steering group also touched on the ongoing SEND review and agreed to meet with the Minister and the SEND review team in the coming weeks to discuss progress and plans.

The Disabled Children's Partnership Survey - What's back to school been like?

Another opportunity for families to share their experiences of school will be through the Disabled Children's Partnership's new [short \(5 minute\) survey](#). DCP is [asking families with children with SEND – 'what has the return to school been like for your children and you?'](#) The answers will be used to raise awareness of what is happening for children with SEND in schools and in health and social care settings with the public, relevant ministers and officials. Please do share this with your contacts.

Contact back to school information for families

We know that for many parent carers the thought of their child going back to school in September after months of being at home has been, and continues to be, worrying. To help, Contact has published lots of [Back to School information for families in England](#) where parent carers can find information about the return to school, including answers to some top concerns and questions, the latest government guidance, and useful resources to help both parent carers and their child.

NNPCF Finance and Operations Lead recruitment - Can you help the NNPCF in the next stage of its development?

The NNPCF is constantly seeking to develop and improve the way it operates. In 2018, we set up a management team to work alongside the steering group and run the day to day operations of the organisation. To support the next stage of our development we are looking for a new management team member to support the finance, compliance and HR aspects of running the NNPCF.

If you or someone you know has a background in any of these areas or in administrative work and are able to work up to 30 days a year (flexibly) then please take a look at the attached job description. Remuneration is set at £130 per day.

If you are interested, please submit a CV and a 2 page summary (A4 sheets using a font no smaller than 12 point) describing how you meet the skills, experience and knowledge requirements of the role description and person specification to cochairs@nnpcf.org.uk.

The deadline for applications is 16th October.

Interviews (virtual) will take place in the week commencing 19 October.

Department for Education grant

We are aware that some forums' grant payments have been significantly delayed due to issues with the DfE's new system. We have been working with the DfE to find a solution which minimises any future delays.

Second tranche grant applications

Just a reminder to apply for your second tranche payment if you haven't done so already. All second tranche applications must be received by Monday 23rd November at the latest. Things are slightly different this year with forums being able to spend any underspend from the previous financial year. If your forum has a large underspend to carry forward, it may mean that you do not need to apply for the full £15,000 in 2020-21. If this is the case, please adjust your second tranche claim accordingly, to apply for what your forum can reasonably expect to spend. You can read more about this in the [frequently asked questions](#) and you can apply online [here](#). If you are unsure, please contact your [Parent Carer Participation Adviser](#) and they will be happy to talk it through with you.

Regional discretionary grant applications

Regional discretionary grants are now available. To enable all regions to apply, we have ring-fenced nominal funds (of £3,000) for each region until the application deadline date (23rd November), once funds become available. After which time, if the money is unclaimed, it will be released to other forums applying for a discretionary grant. Go to our grants page to apply for a [regional discretionary grant](#) and to read the regional discretionary grant [frequently asked questions](#).

Discretionary grant applications

The discretionary grant application process has been delayed this year because of the carryover of funds from the 2019-20 grant. Funds will only become available if some forums do not apply for the full grant at the second tranche application stage. We will let forums know as soon as we can if there is money to claim and work out a fair process and deadline for applications.

For the full guidance information about the DfE grant for forums please see the [grant monitoring page](#) of our website.

Shropshire Parent Carer Council - putting the parent carer voice at the heard of the SEND inspection process

The Shropshire parent carer forum worked tirelessly to ensure families with children with SEND could feed in and influence the local area SEND inspection outcomes. This resulted in an inspection letter that the forum felt really reflected the issues highlighted by parent carers, and a written statement of action (WSoA) that addressed the core concerns. The forum is now fully engaged with the development of the WSoA, is focusing on ensuring that Shropshire parent carers are kept well informed about the progress and that their voice remains central to this work. The forum, the clinical commissioning group, and the local authority have signed up to a joint statement of intent that commits to a number of agreed principles which will underpin the development and delivery of the WSoA. Most importantly, it highlights the expectations that co-production with SEND families will be central to all aspects of the work.

South Gloucestershire Parents and Carers – Working hard for their community

The forum in South Gloucestershire have been increasing their engagement with parents through various methods such as social media, blogs, live Q&As, and online support and discussion groups. They have produced a number of easy to read reports on parent carers experience of everything from EHCPs, annual reviews, school attendance, and coping during lockdown. See the forum's [website](#) for further information. The forum has worked on a number of projects, and some highlights have included their work on the content of the local offer, and improving services for families with children with autism through a new autism hub. Read [about this work](#) and the forum's other projects.

Contact FREE online workshops for parent and carers of children with SEND

Contact has a number of free workshops for families coming up, such as Money Matters, Encouraging Positive Behaviour, Helping your child sleep, support for Speech and Language issues in young children, Understanding Sensory Processing, and Wellbeing for parents of children with additional needs. Visit our website for the full list with [dates, times and booking information](#) and share across your networks

We will continue to update [this page](#) with free virtual workshops for families.

Free online workshops for professionals working with parents and carers of children with SEND

We know that early identification and access to networks of support makes a crucial difference to parents of disabled children, and for parents struggling to come to terms with concerns about their child's development. Contact is running a number of free virtual workshops to support practitioners in increasing their understanding of disability, the effects on the family, and enable more effective communication with parents. If you have contacts that could benefit from these workshops, please share the details with them. The dates, time and links to book are below.

[22nd Oct 10 - 12.30](#) [5th Nov 10 - 12.30](#) [12th Nov 13.30 -16.00](#) [26th Nov 10-12.30](#) [10th Dec 10-12.30](#) [15th Dec 10-12.30](#)

Contact's Business Development and Early Years team.

We want to say a big welcome to Claire Robinson - Training and Regional Delivery Project Manager, and Gail Bedding - Early Years Project Manager who have joined Contact's Business Development and Early Years team working with Jill Simkin, Project Administrator (early years) and Ellie Goff Business Development Manager. Gail is responsible for the Early Years [Brighter Beginnings](#) programme. Claire will be looking at Contact's other training delivery and is currently scoping a range of additional content.

The team has been busy developing and creating webinars and workshops and adapting them for online delivery. They have worked hard to fine tune Contact's practitioner training on working with parents and carers of children with SEND. This is an online workshop which gives practitioners practical ideas about supporting disabled children and their families. This has also been adapted as a webinar and was showcased at the Times Education Supplement (TES) virtual show in June.

In some circumstances we can provide [training or consultancy to professionals](#) in developing their skill set and confidence in working effectively with families with children with SEND.

British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD)

Contact have had links with BILD and their Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) programme for a few years. BILD has received funding to be able to offer a telephone support service provided by their Positive Behaviour Support consultants (England Only). BILD's qualified and experienced PBS consultants can provide targeted practical suggestions and strategies to help get through this next phase through PBS approaches. They will be providing phone support, both 1:1 and in small groups. BILD can:

- help with specific strategies and suggest targeted interventions to help reduce the impact of behaviours
- check if there are specific skills or techniques that would help family members with their challenges and help them to develop these
- offer follow up calls to assess if interventions and strategies are effective and to adapt as needed.

You may wish to signpost parent carers to this support and they can [book an initial half hour call](#) if they are interested.

Parents' focus group about resolving disagreements in SEND.

Mott MacDonald is hosting a parent carer focus group to hear parents' thoughts and experiences of resolving disagreements in SEND. The purpose of the focus group will be to listen to parents' and carers' thoughts and experiences of the SEND complaint processes, and the systems in place to resolve disputes, for example, local complaint systems, mediation, SEN tribunal and ombudsmen.

This is a one-off focus group as part of a series of meetings Mott MacDonald is hosting during August and September with different groups with a personal and professional interest in the SEND system, this includes local authorities, children and young people, and practitioners working in or supporting parents to resolve disputes. The focus group will provide an insight into the impact and outcomes of using disagreement resolution and complaint systems and the barriers and drivers to using them.

You don't have to have used all these services as Mott is interested to hear your perceptions as well as your experience. If you'd like to take part, [register for a place](#). This meeting is part of the work Mott MacDonald do for the Delivering Better Outcomes Together project, which is funded by the DfE.

Congratulations Donna Phipps! Merseyside Women of the Year Marvel Award

The Merseyside Women of the Year awards are there to recognise people in the community and celebrate their achievements. Donna was one of Merseyside's winners this year. Donna was recognised for her work to support families with children with SEND. Since lockdown she has continued sharing up to date information for families, led the forum's regular virtual coffee mornings and worked tirelessly with the Council to distribute food and other supplies to families in need, and those shielding. It is great to hear that Donna has been recognised for the difference she makes in her community, through her forum (Livpac), and beyond.

New casework service for autistic people in inpatient mental health care

The National Autistic Society has launched the autistic mental health inpatient service. In summary this service will provide:

- Confidential information and advice by phone and email.
- An explanation of mental health rights and entitlements to help families prevent or challenge detention and secure the care and support their loved ones' need in their communities.
- Assistance with exploring options so that families can make informed decisions.
- Guidance and support on specific issues, such as accessing advocacy, finding suitable provision in the community, making a complaint or appealing against a decision.
- Signposting to advice and support within our organisation and beyond, including education rights, transition support, autism helpline and our branches.

For further information, [visit the NAS website](#).

Flu vaccinations, the time is now! An Update from Contact's Strategic Health Lead, Amanda Elliot

The flu season is upon us and, thanks to Covid-19, it is even more important people get their free flu jab to protect themselves and the people they care for. Eligible and at-risk groups include disabled children, carers, people with learning disabilities, and people with long-term conditions. While the flu jab will not protect us against Covid-19, there is evidence having both together can be more deadly. Some groups are at extra risk of becoming seriously ill from both coronavirus and flu. [More here on who's eligible](#).

What is different this year? Already overburdened families can be understandably confused about who in the family is eligible for the free jab and how to go about getting one. Parent carers are often fobbed off or told they are not a priority. This year is different. Because of Covid-19, NHS England wants more than 30 million 'at-risk' and vulnerable people vaccinated. Contact is working closely with NHS England and others to develop materials to increase uptake and ensure flu jabs are accessible to people with learning disabilities, and families of disabled children.

A key role for parent carer forums. Forums are perfectly placed to encourage parent carers to get themselves and their loved ones vaccinated and protected from flu. Consider sharing clear information on flu vaccinations through your forum social media or newsletters. Depending on your capacity and forum priorities you may want to run a brief FAQ webinar or share information during a virtual coffee morning to empower parents to access the flu vaccination for their child and request reasonable adjustments if needed. Please email Amanda.Elliot@Contact.org.uk if you'd like help with this.

People with learning disabilities In the summer, NHS England wrote to all GPs urging them to ensure everyone with a learning disability is '*identified on their register; that their annual health checks are completed; and access to screening and flu vaccinations is proactively arranged*'. If families in your area have not heard from their GP yet, encourage them to contact their GP practice to ensure their loved one can get a jab. Families can ask for reasonable adjustments and easy read information to help their young person access the jab [NHS advice on reasonable adjustments](#) and [Contact on Making your GP Surgery More Welcoming](#)

Check your child or young person is on the learning disability register. If they are 14 and over, they should be offered an Annual Health Check. Why not ask for the flu jab and health check to take place at the same time? [More on annual health checks for young people with learning disabilities.](#)

Children All children aged 2-11 are eligible for a flu jab, as are all children aged 2-17 who have a long-term health condition. Primary school age children and children in year 7 of secondary school will get their flu jab at school, so look out for consent forms. Home educated children will be vaccinated in community health clinics. Children with long-term conditions can also opt to have the jab at their GP surgery. [Flu vaccinations for children, NHS England](#)

Carers Carers, including parent carers, are eligible for the free flu jab. Criteria includes receiving Carers Allowance or being the main carer for an older *or disabled person* who may be at risk. You can also get a free jab if you live with someone [who's at high risk from coronavirus](#) (on the NHS shielded patient list).

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