



Our Impact 2022/23

contact
For families with disabled children

Our year in numbers



Contact helped

291,000

parents with information, advice and support



We helped eligible families increase their household incomes by an average

£5,400

a year, through our Family Finances helpline

631,259

visitors spent time on the advice and support section of our website



Our private Facebook group, a safe space and online community network for parent carers, reached

18,000

members



We inspired

17,558

parent carers to take campaign action including writing to their MPs, taking part in research and speaking out in the media



88%

of families felt more confident after receiving advice and support from us

Introducing our new Chief Executive



We are delighted to welcome Anna Bird, who joined us this year

I am excited to join Contact, which has a hugely important role to play in creating social change for families who need it most. I'm already enjoying working with the brilliant staff team and parent carers who make up the Contact family, to grow the charity's reach and impact at this critical time.

It's great to look back over the last year and see the difference Contact made at a time when sadly, the pressures on families with disabled children continued to escalate. Families face chronic delays in diagnosis and getting support for their child. In addition, the cost-of-living crisis has heaped further difficulty on families. Contact's support is more important than ever.

Throughout the year we not only met increased demand, we also continued to work towards our strategic ambition to double the number of families we support through our advice services. In addition, we made strides in our second strategic ambition to build a more sustainable fundraising model.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all our wonderful supporters. Your donations large and small ensure that we are here to help families with disabled children across the UK. If you are considering supporting Contact please do get in touch.

Anna Bird

Who we are

We are Contact, the charity for families with disabled children

We support families with the best possible guidance and information (3-10)

We bring families together to support each other (13-14)

We help families to improve life for themselves and others (15-18)

We support families with the best possible guidance and information



After finding out a child has a disability, families are faced with a maze of routes to support for their child and themselves. At a time of stress and emotional turmoil everything from getting a diagnosis, help with speech and language or getting equipment and adaptations to the home, as well as finding a suitable place at school, can become a battle.

The triple whammy of the cost of living crisis, fallout from the pandemic and long term underfunding of public services, has made those battles even harder this year.

That's why Contact's support is more important than ever. Contact's advice and information services, provide families with information that is specific to them, helping to navigate those mazes. At the same time our advice team, many of whom are parent carers themselves, provide much needed emotional support.

Making a big difference to families

Lynsey's three-year-old daughter Lucy (left) has Tuberous Sclerosis, a rare condition affecting around one million people worldwide. Lucy is tube fed, has daily seizures and a visual impairment. She is a wheelchair user and needs assistance with every daily task.

Lynsey said: "I got in touch with Contact as I needed help from social services but wasn't sure how to get it. It's very difficult to navigate and can be upsetting.

"It was such a relief to speak to Lynn, one of Contact's Parent Advisers: someone who understands and is on my side. She advised me to contact my local Carer's Centre and gave me information about requesting a Carers Assessment for me and an assessment of Lucy's needs. I didn't know I was entitled to either of these.

"Since then, Lynn keeps in regular contact, checking how things are and to see if I need more support. She's advised on different housing options and she gave me a list of organisations that can help with the cost of a new adapted wheelchair for Lucy, as she has outgrown hers.

"Thankfully we are now well on the way through the assessment process. And with Lynn and Contact, I feel like I have someone there to listen and support me when I need it. It has made a huge difference to how I'm feeling. It has given me more confidence as a mum, and I will be forever grateful."



Helpline and online

Our helpline advisers provided a first-rate service to families, advising them on issues including benefits, education, getting a diagnosis and getting support. The challenges families raise through the service continued to rise in complexity throughout the year.

Our helpline team of dedicated parent advisers responded to

10,455 enquiries

We had over

1M

visitors to our website

Family Finances

Families with disabled children are disproportionately affected by financial concerns due to the difficulties of juggling work and caring combined with the extra costs of disability.

Throughout the year, as cost of living pressures really took hold, the support from our Family Finance team became even more vital.

Much of the team's work involves hour-long call backs, where they do a detailed financial health check for families. This year the team also ran Facebook Q&As and webinars to reach more families.

Our Family Finances team responded to

1,004 benefits enquiries and completed

362 in-depth call-backs

99% of families felt better informed about their rights to benefits and grants after speaking to the team

"I've used the website and helpline countless times since my daughter was born. Thanks to the advice, we receive the benefits we are entitled to and we have ensured that her mainstream education is accessible."

Parent carer

Helping families get money they are entitled to

Derek Sinclair is one of Contact's Welfare Rights experts. He has worked at Contact for many years and during that time he has helped countless families claim the financial support they are entitled to.

Mohammed was missing out on the disabled child addition payment of Universal Credit. He used information on Contact's website to raise this with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

Mohammed also called Contact's Family Finance team and Derek confirmed that he should be getting £415 more in Universal Credit payments each month. Derek also advised Mohammed that the payments should be backdated to when his daughter was awarded DLA, 11 months earlier.

But when Mohammed got back in touch with the DWP to ask for this, they refused and said it could only be backdated by one month. This was inaccurate.

Derek drafted a letter for Mohammed to send to the DWP, including references to the law surrounding Universal Credit and the department's own internal guidance for decision makers. As a result, two months later, Mohammed received a lump sum for arrears of more than £5000.

Mohammed said: *"I was so lucky to have come across Contact's brilliant website, otherwise I would have had no idea that I was missing out. Even then it was really hard to get the DWP to pay us the money we were owed for our daughter. The only reason we got the arrears was down to Contact's help and the letter written by Derek. Not only was the advice really clear and detailed but I really felt that Derek understood our situation."*



Listening Ear

We offer hour-long telephone appointments to parents looking for a listening ear, reassurance and practical and emotional support.

The Parent Advisers in our Listening Ear team are all parents of children and young people with disabilities, plus they have a huge wealth of professional experience. They support parents struggling emotionally and looking for strategies to help them cope.

Contact delivered

920

Listening Ear appointments throughout the year

92%

of parents know what their next step will be as a result of the appointment



“Noreen was wonderful, she listened to all I had to say and provided me with further knowledge and information to carry on fighting for my child’s diagnosis. Thank you for helping me feel a bit better about our family’s journey”

Parent carer

Fledglings

Contact’s e-commerce venture, Fledglings, continued to provide essential products and equipment for disabled children and young people across the UK in 2022-2023.

The products sourced and supplied by Fledglings help make life easier for a parent, and more fulfilling for their child. One of the key developments in 2022 was creating a new Fledglings website. This has significantly improved navigation to all the fantastic products.

Fledglings’ growing offer for schools and hospitals provides a vital service to improve the wellbeing and mental health of disabled children and ease the strain on their families. For example, in 2022 Fledglings delivered a project with Alder Hey Children’s Hospital in Liverpool providing the hospital with sensory boxes, ear-defenders, and sourcing special sunglasses for children and young people with sensory needs attending outpatient appointments.



Hemihelp

HemiHelp is the only condition-specific support group in the UK for families who care for a child with the lifelong condition, hemiplegia. This year, following feedback from parent carers, we re-designed our hemiplegia information, advice and support and created a HemiHelp Hub on our website, which is visited by around 1,400 people each month. We also started sending out a new HemiHelp e-newsletter which goes out to just under 2,000 families each quarter.

We ran two family events in 2022, supporting 40 families including parents, children with hemiplegia and their siblings. Families attending said this was their first time going out as a family in years because of how hard it is to find inclusive activities. We also ran two parent workshops tailored for families living with hemiplegia reaching 29 parent carers.

Our HemiHelp Facebook group continues to grow, offering families much needed peer support and advice.

Just under

6,000

members in our
Hemihelp Facebook
group



Workshops

During the year we delivered sell-out workshops on topics including educational support, encouraging positive behaviour, managing your child's sleep, growing up, sex and relationships, toilet training, support for your child's anxiety, speech, language and communication. Our workshops are a key way that we provide advice and information to families with disabled children. They are also important for connecting families.

We held

570

online workshops, webinars,
outreach or drop-ins,
attended by

4,754

parent carers and

787

professionals



Empowering families

Loraine Robinson is from Carlisle, Cumbria. Her son Kayden aged 11 has Down Syndrome, complex needs, and is currently being assessed for autism. Loraine recently attended one of Contact's speech and language workshops for parents. She said:

"Kayden has very challenging behaviour along with complex needs linked to Down Syndrome. He finds communicating using his speech very difficult. I am always on the lookout for ways to help support Kayden, especially now as he gets older, and I feel like I am in a better place to find out more. I really want to learn as much as possible. When I saw Contact's free speech and language workshop was advertised in their weekly newsletter I decided to sign up.

"The speech and language workshop I attended was amazing and I came away with five pages of notes! The workshop was great for learning more from other parents as well. The workshop covered so much content which I found useful as parts of the discussion I could relate to Kayden this now gives me positive strategies to help support him.

"I would 100% recommend Contact's workshops to other parent carers. Not only did I learn loads it's also a great place to speak openly with other parents and realise that we're not alone – I didn't want the workshop to end! I'm going to try the Challenging Behaviour workshop next."

Around the UK

Birmingham, Glasgow, London, and Newcastle

Our By Your Side team helps families whose children require hospital care. This year they helped 886 families with advice, information and emotional support at the Great North Children's Hospital, Great Ormond Street Hospital, Evelina Children's Hospital, the Royal Hospital for Children in Glasgow, and Birmingham Children's Hospital.

London

Our London teams provided family support on important issues including housing, benefits and education, and organised family meet-ups, events and trips to benefit the whole family's wellbeing.



Wales

Contact Cymru offer bilingual materials and support. Our Strengthening Support Networks for Parent Carers linked existing groups together and created new parent-led support groups. We trained parents to co-design and deliver workshops to other parents. We secured funding to deliver disability sports sessions across North Wales.



We helped
4,380
parent carers with face-to-face or telephone appointments through our teams in London, the nations, in hospitals and our Listening Ear service

Northern Ireland

Our Transitions project worked with parent carers in schools to provide workshops, peer support and training to give parents the tools to support their child as they moved towards adult services. We were also awarded funding from the National Lottery Dormant Accounts Fund to develop our Business Development function in Northern Ireland.

Scotland

We provided vital information, 1:1 advice, workshops and wellbeing days to support parents as well as charities and groups to ensure families with disabled children's needs are met. We ensured the concerns of parent carers in Scotland were heard at influential groups including the Disabled and Young People's Advisory Group.



Family support in action

Jennifer Cole, Contact's parent adviser based in Lewisham, has been supporting families with

finances, education and housing for nine years. Last year she supported Chantal, whose son is 18 and has complex needs, to appeal a Disability Living Allowance decision, prepare for her son's future, and get repairs to their home.

Chantal said: "My son has complex needs. Our home had a history of damp and mould and this year there was a blockage in the bathroom, which has been adapted as a wet room, that made it unusable. The situation was impacting our mental and physical health. Jennifer helped me by gathering all the details of the repairs and reviewing the housing association's policies and procedures. She wrote a formal letter of complaint to the housing association CEO and my local MP.

"The bathroom blockage was repaired which gave me the impetus to fight for a permanent solution to the damp. It took almost two years which was incredibly stressful, but finally structural repairs were carried out and the damp has cleared. As a single parent of a child with complex needs I have so many daily pressures. It made such a difference having someone with the knowledge to fight my corner."



*We bring families together
to support each other*

This year we connected many families at our family events, workshops and in our online communities, helping to forge friendships and support networks.

Parents tell us they feel isolated as they don't know anyone else with a disabled child and don't get to meet other parents at toddler groups and the school gates, like other parents do. This isolation can have a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of the whole family. This year our Better Together family fun days and safe online groups have helped to combat these feelings of being alone.



We held

103
family events with a
total attendance of
962
children and
1,414
parent carers

An amazing day out!

"We signed up to Contact's free event at the National Ice Centre in Nottingham, just before Christmas. We rarely do anything as a whole family because it's too challenging. My youngest is non-verbal and has a lot of meltdowns as well as having no sense of danger, so runs off a lot. Our next youngest struggles in crowded places and wears ear defenders for her sensory needs. It's difficult to find something that is safe and will suit everyone.

"So we were all pleasantly surprised that we had such a great day at the ice rink. The atmosphere was lovely, so calming, so chilled. It wasn't crowded and we had plenty of space.

"We felt really welcomed by all the staff and we even spoke to another family! We don't normally see other parents with kids like ours and it was really nice. It felt amazing to go somewhere and not be judged. Thank you!"





*We help families to improve life
for themselves and others*

Despite progress, disabled children and their families still face significant discrimination and inequalities in many aspects of their lives. We work collaboratively with families to campaign to change this.

We campaigned with families on the extra costs families with disabled children faced in the cost of living crisis. We helped persuade the Chancellor to announce a cost-of-living package including for the first time a £150 disability payment, paid directly to individuals on a disability benefit.

Alongside other charities and campaigners we also successfully argued that the £200 loan for energy bills would no longer need to be paid back and instead converted into £400 discount for families.

We reached almost

40 M

**people with our
media coverage raising
awareness of issues
affecting families
disabled children**

Parent-led campaigns

This year we also supported two parent-led campaigns on Child Trust Funds and Free School Meals.

Parent campaigner and dad Andrew Turner worked with a professional expert to estimate that 80,683 disabled young people in England and Wales will miss out on Child Trust Fund savings worth £209,801,255. His findings were revealed exclusively in a BBC news piece to highlight the travesty.

Andrew Turner said: “The scale of this issue is truly shocking. Hundreds of millions of pounds of savings for disabled young people could be locked away for good. It is vital during this cost of living crisis that young people with a learning disability are able to access money that is rightfully theirs. That’s why we are calling for urgent action from government.

“It’s been great to work with Contact for the Child Trust Fund campaign. They have real enthusiasm to see fairness for families with disabled children. And they are in touch with families across the UK, who are engaged and supportive of their campaigns, which helps to drive things forward.”



Out of Energy campaign

Throughout the year we ran our own campaign, Out of Energy, to highlight the extra costs faced by families with disabled children when it comes to their energy bills. Due to items such as life-saving electrical equipment needed for their child's care, families face bills of almost £1,600 extra each year.

Dad Taran from Kent is a full-time carer to two-year-old Skye. Skye has chronic lung disease, pulmonary hypertension and complex medical needs after being born four months premature. Taran and Skye launched our Out of Energy research on Channel 4 News. He told them:

"Skye is non-verbal, tube fed and has heart and breathing problems. She needs a sterile environment. I haven't paid the electricity bill for two months now. I have no idea what to do. I can't take her off the ventilator. I can't not give her oxygen, but I can't afford to run the equipment that keeps her alive. It's scary. Skye can't be in a cold house. If she gets pneumonia, it will be life threatening. Choosing between breathing or freezing isn't a choice anyone should be made to do."

Thanks to months of tireless campaigning by Contact and families the Chancellor announced a package of measures supporting families, including a first-time £150 disability payment and £400 energy discount.



Parent Carer Forums

Contact is proud to support Parent Carer Forums in England with their important role ensuring the views of parent carers are heard and listened to.

We provide a dedicated Parent Carer Participation Adviser to each forum. The adviser is on hand to help them run their forum effectively. Feedback from forums this year reported 96.6% satisfaction with the support Contact provides.

There are now 110,000 forum members in the 151 local authorities in England this year, up from 99,000. It is testament to the forums' strength that they are still attracting members despite the increased pressures on parents.

Contact's Parent Participation team provided 5,934 hours of support during 2022-23 and delivered 15 online learning sessions with a total of 699 live attendances and 1,511 online views.

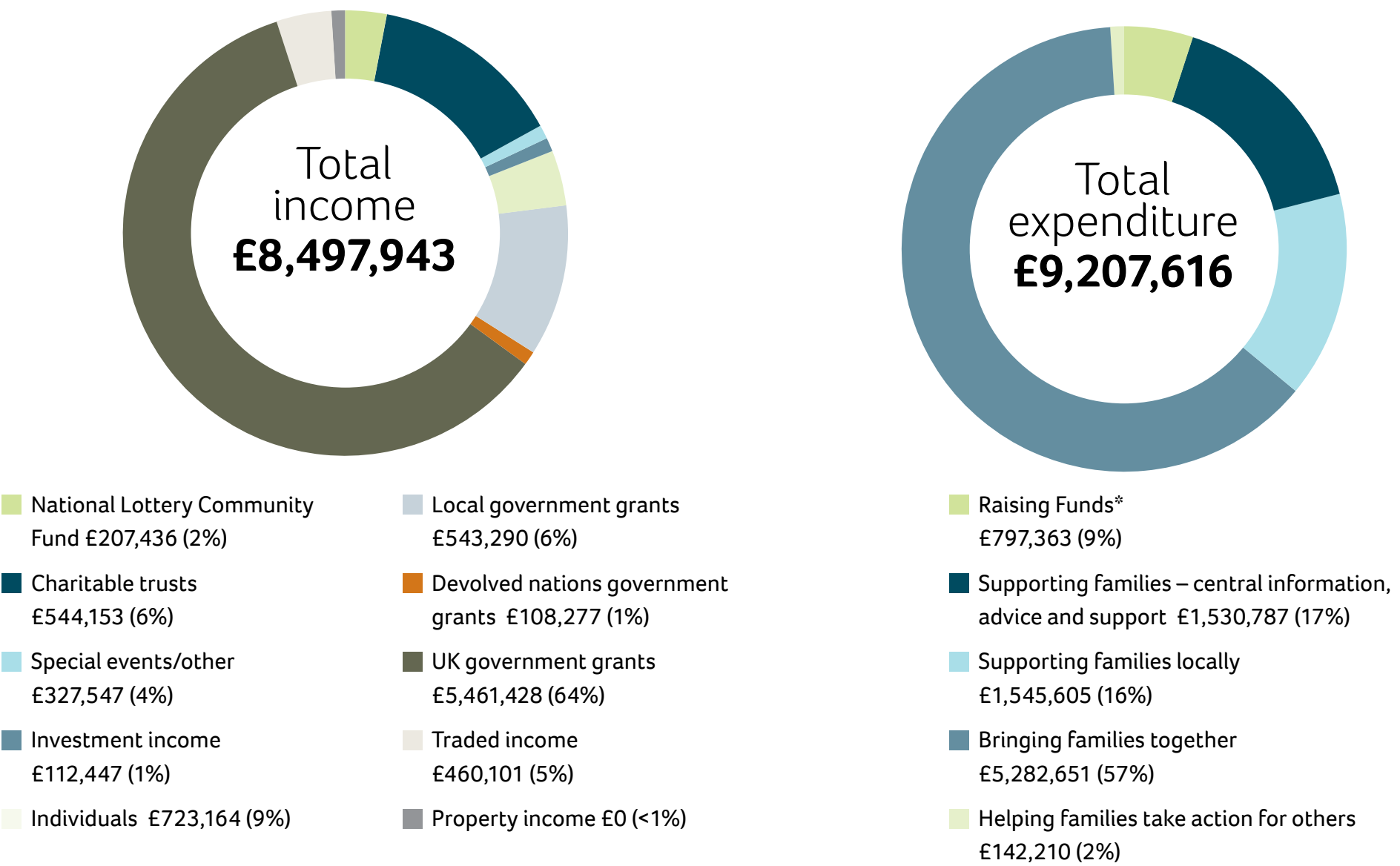
There are now

110,000

forum members,
which is up from
99,000 last year.



Our finances



Our incredible supporters

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 incredibly grateful to our funders and major donors, Contact lottery players and regular givers for their generosity during another challenging year for families, which ensured we could continue to provide our vital support.

Allen and Overy Foundation

British Land


helps children communicate



Scott Bader

Baily Thomas Charitable Foundation

David Family Foundation



Northwick Trust

True Colours Trust

The Barbour Foundation



John Ellerman Foundation

Peacock Charitable Trust

BBC Radio 4 Charity Appeal

Eveson Trust







The Golden Bottle Trust





Our awesome fundraisers

Our marathon marvels ran
208 miles
raising over
£20K



Anthony Sloan took part in the SAS Fan Dance, an endurance challenge of 15½ miles climbing the Welsh Brecon Beacon mountains. Thank you so much Anthony! Formidable!



The Breakway Theatre performed Ladies' Day, to raise funds for Contact in memory of our much-missed colleague Jill Hardman, who was a keen dramatist herself.



One of our team of eight runners, Jeremy Wright, won a Guinness World record for being the fastest male marathon runner carrying a set of golf clubs around the 26-mile course. What a fabulous achievement!



Joe Cooper completed a swimathon Triple 5k and raised over **£650** Fantastic!



Our annual DinoDay saw supporters taking part in dino-inspired activities to raise **£1,000**

Get in contact


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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.