

## New Evening Helpline Service Reaches Out To Working Parents

Contact a Family has extended its Helpline operating hours to offer a new Monday evening service.

From January, the Helpline is open from 5.30 to 7.30pm on Monday evenings, in addition to its usual hours of 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday, in a bid to reach more working parents.

Mark Robertson, National Advice Manager, said "The new evening service will give parents who can't get to the phone during the day - because they're working or caring for the children - the opportunity to discuss the sometimes complex issues they're facing in their everyday lives."

## Dads Enjoy Family Fun Day

Fathers and disabled children from across the West Midlands came together in Birmingham for fun, face painting and to look at how Contact a Family could support them better .



All the dads who attended the day said they would like to meet up regularly and said what they most wanted was information about their child's condition and education.

Contact a Family is focussing on promoting the services we offer amongst particularly isolated families such as those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and fathers of disabled children.

Fathers often feel 'out of the loop' as much of the support available is directed at mothers because they are often perceived to be the main carer of disabled children.

Contact a Family has a dedicated area of its website for dads - *Dads' Zone* - and produces information for dads on CD or tape, for listening to in the car, as well as a *Dads' Factsheet*.



## Expanded Face to Face Services

Contact a Family is set to expand its face to face support for families in many areas across the country, including the North East of England and Scotland, as well as new areas that Contact a Family currently does not cover.

Sufficient funding has been secured to provide new Family Workers who will help families in crisis get the services they need; a number of parent representatives - volunteers who are themselves parents of disabled children; and a range of workshops on matters that particularly concern parents, including tax credits, benefits and influencing services locally.

Family Workers are trained to help families through a particularly stressful time, negotiating with local services and government departments to ensure families get the services and financial assistance they are due. Parent Representatives are volunteers provide families with information on locally available sources of support.

"With our new staff and parent representatives, we'll be able to reach out to many more families, providing the support and advice they need, not just to cope, but to live life more fully," said Contact a Family Scotland manager, Ellenor Anwyl.

*Dear Contact a Family,*

*My partner and I would like to express our sincere thanks for all the support our Family Worker from Contact a Family has given our family during a particularly stressful period.*

*Services and provisions for our 15 year old son, Adam, had become very difficult to obtain, mainly due to a breakdown in communication and trust between ourselves and the professional bodies involved.*

*Through mediating on our behalf, our Family Worker has managed to restore some pathways of communication, enabling us to rebuild vital bridges and ensuring our son receives the services and provisions he required.*

*We would like to say what a fantastic source of support your Family Workers are - we feel they offer a lifeline to families like ours.*

*Once again, our heart felt thanks from a very appreciative family.*

# Supporters' Update

## Camp Shakespeare

As we finally say hello to spring, spare a thought for David Parker, Production Manager with the Royal Shakespeare Company, who spent five cold November nights camping out on the theatre roof in Stratford-upon-Avon to raise money for Contact a Family.

David, whose six-year old daughter, Abigail, has cerebral palsy, said "When we were told Abigail had cerebral palsy it was a difficult and confusing time for us. We did not know where to turn for advice and support. We were put in touch with Contact a Family and they have been amazing. They offered us valuable advice and put us in touch with other families in a similar situation to ourselves. They have always been there whenever we've needed advice or support."

David's five-night campathon, which raised £2,400, involved him enduring a night of snow and was rounded off with an abseil back down to the ground.



*David Parker, who raised £2,400 for Contact a Family during a five night campathon. Photo courtesy of Coventry Evening Standard*

Contact a Family is delighted to have been selected as **Charity Of The Year** by payroll service company, Enable. "The work Contact a Family do is extremely valuable," said Enable. "We hope to raise awareness of Contact a Family through contact with our clients and achieve more funding to support and enhance their services and campaigns."

## Over 1,800 Parents 'Make Contact'

Contact a Family's web-based linking service, **makingcontact.org**, recently celebrated the registration of its 1,800th member, less than two years after it the service was launched.

The website, which was awarded Best Confidential Email Service at the 2005 Helpline Awards, now has 1835 members, with new members signing up at the rate of 120 a month.

Funding has also been received to translate the website into various community languages so that parents from particularly isolated communities can benefit from the service too.

**makingcontact.org**

"I spoke with a young Mum this afternoon, whose child is the ONLY child in Northern Ireland with a particular condition. She visited **makingcontact.org** and found a lady in London with the same condition. She says she has received so much help and support from this lady that she cried over the fact she wasn't in contact with anyone for so many years. Her cousin's little boy was diagnosed with a different condition several weeks ago - and she directed her straight to **makingcontact.org**. She couldn't have praised the website more, saying it was her 'life line'."

## Take The Challenge Of A Lifetime

We've teamed up once again with event specialists, Skyline, to offer you the chance to take part in some truly amazing experiences to raise money for Contact a Family in some of the world's most beautiful destinations.

New for 2006 is a spectacular trek in Iceland. With its striking wild volcanic landscape dotted with streaming lava fields, icecaps, glaciers, waterfalls, bubbling hot springs and geysers, the stunning Icelandic landscape is one you will never forget. Or later in the year we're again offering a trek to Machu Picchu in Peru and a Vietnam Cycle Ride.

Also, don't forget, for something a bit closer to home you can make a freefall parachute jump from one of over 20 centres in the UK, including Scotland and Northern Ireland.

For more information about any of our sponsored activities, contact us on 020 7608 8700.



### 2006 DATES

ICELAND TREK - 18-26 AUG  
PERU TREK - 4-13 OCT  
VIETNAM CYCLE - 29 OCT-10 NOV

## Open Wide?

Families with disabled children are being let down by a lack of information about dental services, according to a new report by Contact a Family. Without the right information, many families are struggling to access suitable treatment for their disabled child.

Once families were able to access care though, most were happy with the treatment their child received.

For many families with disabled children, accessing care at high street dental practices is simply not feasible, due to the need for specially adapted equipment. Families seeking an NHS dentist to treat their disabled child therefore turn to the Salaried Primary Dental Care Service (SPDCS).

The report, **Open Wide?**, found that the main information providers, such as primary care trusts and NHS Direct, were unable to give families correct information about SPDCS. As a result, many were forced to do their own detective work to track down the best treatment options for their child. Also, in many areas vacancies in the SPDCS are leading to a patchy service for many disabled children.

"Although the families we spoke to were largely satisfied with the treatment their child had received, many had experienced difficulty in finding out what services were available and where." said Jill Harrison, Director of External Affairs. "We'd like to see all practices become more accessible to disabled children."

## Staff Take On Marathon Challenge

Contact a Family has its biggest ever team of 16 runners in this year's London Marathon. The 2006 team includes three Contact a Family staff members who will all be donning their trainers for families of disabled children.

Director of UK Operations, Paul Soames is joined by Policy Officer Una Summerson, pictured right with Finance Officer Jairzeno Parris.



With each runner pledging to raise £1,200 in sponsorship, it is hoped the event will bring in much needed funds. You can sponsor the team at:

[www.justgiving.com/team\\_contact\\_a\\_family](http://www.justgiving.com/team_contact_a_family)

We are already looking for people to take part in next year's Marathon. For more information contact Gemma Turner on 020 7608 8733.

Congratulations to JENNIE PARSONS who took part in the **Great North Run** for Contact a Family in September, raising over £300.

Congratulations to our team of runners who ran the **Hydro Active Women's Challenge** which also took place in September in London's Hyde Park. The team included Contact a Family's very own Chief Executive FRANCINE



*Francine and Dawn at the start of the Hydro Active Women's Challenge*

BATES, who ran the event for the third year. She was joined by volunteer VALERIE PRESTON and DAWN CHARLES from Contact a Family's Lewisham office. They raised over £2,000.

Good luck to CHRIS FOSTER-NABI who's undertaking the 190 mile **Coast to Coast Walk** from St Bees on the west coast of Cumbria to Robin Hood's Bay on the east coast of North Yorkshire in May to raise money for Contact a Family. You can sponsor Chris on her web page: [www.justgiving.com/chrisfooster-nabi](http://www.justgiving.com/chrisfooster-nabi)

Places are still available for this year's **British 10K London** road race on July 2nd. The route, over the attainable distance of 10km (6.2 miles) passes right through the heart of London taking in many of the capital's world famous sights. For more information, contact 020 7608 8731.

**Don't forget, if you have a place in an event and would like to raise sponsorship for Contact a Family, call us on 020 7608 8733.**

## Comedians 'Stand Up' for Charity Again

Contact a Family's fourth annual fundraising Comedy Night will this year take place on Monday 18th September.



The evening will once again be compered by comedy legend Arthur Smith, brother of Contact a Family Patron, Richard Smith. He will again be joined by comedian Brian Higgins, whose own son has a rare syndrome, along with some of the best in stand-up comedy.

The event is now an annual fixture which in past years has raised as much as £6,000 along with a few laughs too!

Information and tickets, priced at £15, are available from [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk) or by calling 020 7608 8700.

# Supporters' Update

Don't forget you can get future editions of **Supporters' Update** electronically. You will be sent an email with a link to the latest edition in PDF format which you can read online or download. To get your electronic copy of Supporter's Update just email us at [fr@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:fr@cafamily.org.uk) with your details and 'email supporter's update' as the subject.

## Cinema Screenings Go From Strength To Strength

Families from across the North East will once again be treated to a free film screening this Easter, thanks to local cinema, the Odeon.

The screenings, exclusively for families with disabled children, are now a regular school holiday fixture and demand is always high. "Tickets go within a week of being advertised." said Kathy Rist, Contact a Family North East Development Officer.

Families with disabled children often face difficulties accessing leisure and social activities for their children. They rarely take part in activities together as a family and don't use cinemas for fear of causing a disruption. The special screenings provide a unique experience which other families take for granted.



Patsy Kensit met one of Contact a Family's guests at the Premier, disabled teenager Lucy Swanston.

The Odeon in Newcastle have held the popular screenings since 2003, when they hosted the Charity Premier of 'Brit flick' *The One And Only*, starring Emmerdale's Patsy Kensit, in aid of Contact a Family

At Christmas families enjoyed *The Chronicles of Narnia* and this Easter can see *Chicken Little*.

We hope you've enjoyed reading **Supporters' Update** and hearing about Contact a Family's latest activities to support families across the whole of the UK who are caring for a disabled child. But we'd like to know what you think - send us an email with your comments and suggestions to [fr@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:fr@cafamily.org.uk)

## Ten Minute Rule Bill Fights For Services

Ed Balls, MP for Normanton, West Yorkshire, presented a Ten Minute Rule Bill in the Commons which aimed to make local authorities legally obliged to provide disabled children with residential short term breaks and other services. The Bill would amend the 1989 Children Act which currently does not specifically mention disabled children.

Ed Balls decided to use his Ten Minute Rule Bill to press for better services for disabled children after meeting with Contact a Family and other charities, and visiting a special school in his constituency where he discovered first hand the difficulties facing disabled children and their families in their every day lives.

Unfortunately, Ten Minute rule bills do not generally get any parliamentary time to progress but they are a very useful way of flagging up issues of concern to Government.

Contact a Family would like to extend our thanks to Ed Balls for using this opportunity to promote the welfare of disabled children and their families as we are sure the measures outlined in the Bill would have a hugely positive impact on their lives.

## New Eye Directory

Contact a Family has published a brand new *Rare Eye Conditions Directory* which includes 60 specific conditions and syndromes which affect the eyes.

The Eye Directory complements Contact a Family's flagship publication *The Directory of Specific Conditions and Rare Disorders* which is now available in three formats - on line, on CD ROM and in print.

**'a goldmine of information for doctors and parents' GP Magazine**

The main Directory describes over 400 conditions in a clear and concise way, and includes details of national support groups set up to help affected individuals and families.

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