

contact a family
for families with disabled children

incorporating
The Lady Hoare Trust

in **contact**



The newsletter of Contact a Family North East

www.cafamily.org.uk/northeast

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Playing Around

Pictured left are children enjoying themselves at a Gateshead Toy Library session.

See page 6 for more information.

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**northern rock
foundation**

Contact a Family News

Future Benefit Changes

Confused by all the benefits changes? – help is at hand from Contact a Family.

Contact a Family has issued an urgent call for families with disabled children to get advice about forthcoming benefits changes.

To help parents make sense of the recent welfare reforms announced by the Coalition Government and what the changes will mean for them, Contact a Family has produced a free guide to Future Benefit Changes.

Derek Sinclair, Senior Welfare Rights Specialist at Contact a Family, said: “The recently announced benefits changes amount to the biggest shake up to the benefits system in generations.

Changes include replacing means tested benefits such as income support with a new 'universal credit', major reform of Disability Living Allowance and cuts in housing benefit.

It is really important that parents with disabled children understand what these changes will mean and that is why we are making our guide to Future Benefit Changes available to them for free.”

The changes will impact on all families with a disabled child. While some of the changes will not take affect for a year or two, others will start to impact from this April - including changes in housing benefit for many private tenants, and a number of tax credit cuts including reduced help with childcare costs. While many of the changes proposed will mean cuts in financial help – there is some good news. One of the changes being made in April will allow children aged 3 or above who have a severe visual impairment to start qualifying for the high rate of the DLA mobility component.



Call the Contact a Family Helpline now to order your copy of Future Benefit Changes – **0808 808 3555** (open Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 5.00pm)

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KIDS - Short Breaks

The KIDS Direct Short Breaks Service is designed to be flexible and can help you care for a disabled child or young person. Their Short Breaks are an opportunity for you to have a break from caring for your disabled child, or to get extra help in caring for them, while providing them with new and exciting opportunities. The service offers an opportunity for you to use trained Short Break Workers in whichever way is best to meet your needs, and the needs and aspirations of your disabled child or young person.

The service is provided by Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checked, trained, and supervised workers who will share the KIDS ethos of inclusion. The Short Break Worker can stay in your own home, come out with you to help out with family activities or holidays, or take your child or young person out to the local park or to access social activities. It's up to you!

The service is open to all (for children and young people aged up to 25) and can be paid for by local authority arrangement (if appropriate) via Direct Payments and Individualised Budgets or self funded. They select, vet, train and supervise all Short Break Workers who are contracted directly to KIDS. In January 2011 they provided 400 hours of breaks to families in the Gateshead area.

So, what is a KIDS Short Break?

The KIDS Direct Short Breaks Service provides a worker who is there to support the young person/child to do the things they would like to do. This could be:

- Go to the local Play Activity Centre, Play Scheme or Youth Club
- Stay at home and do hobbies
- Go to the cinema or go shopping
- Have a day out with the family



KIDS want children and young people to make their own choices about the types of activities they want to do. To learn more, visit www.directshortbreaks.org.uk or email them at enquiries@directshortbreaks.org.uk or give them a call on **0845 453 100**

The North East Region contact is Gail Wilson who you can call on **0781 859 4253** or email gail.russell@kids.org.uk

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Farewell Aiming High

Farewell Aiming High

On the 31st March this year, the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme comes to an end. The programme was set up to improve short break services for families who have disabled children by looking at how families wanted to be supported.

At the beginning, families with disabled children across the country were surveyed to ask what changes they would make to local services to improve how their family were supported. Parents told us overwhelmingly that they wanted flexible short breaks rather than fixed 'respite' arrangements that can only deliver a 'one size fits all service'. We were also told that improvements needed to be made to the transitions between child to adult service arrangements and most significantly of all "do not make any changes without involving parents – we are the ones with experience and local knowledge".

As a result of the consultation carried out through the Every Disabled Child Matters campaign, **Aiming High for Disabled Children** came into being and work began and here are some examples of what parents, carers and grandparents have achieved working in partnership with lots of professionals from health, local authorities and the voluntary sector:

- ✓ A Parent Forum now exists in each Local Authority area
- ✓ Conferences and Events gather the views of local Parents & Carers
- ✓ Information to families has improved
- ✓ Menus of Short Breaks have been developed
- ✓ Leisure and play activities have been created & developed
- ✓ Most parent/carers have seen an improvement in short breaks and some other services in their area
- ✓ Most parent/carers say they feel better informed
- ✓ Most parent/carers say they feel listened to & valued
- ✓ Some workers say they are enjoying their jobs again

While we know that Aiming High has made a considerable difference to a lot of children, not everyone will have heard of local support systems or of the activities on offer and if this is the case please contact us for the details of your local Parent Steering Group or Parent Forum.

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Aiming High ... continued

Parents and Carers have been working very hard to make sure this opportunity has not been lost and that the changes, however small, have been sustainable for a future generation of disabled children.

Congratulations to everyone who has been involved in making sure local change happens.

Parent Participation - Dates for Your Diaries

Parental engagement and participation is continuing and there are a number of conferences take place over the next few months. Brief details are below, please get in touch through the relevant contact for more information or to book your places now:

Middlesbrough - Parents 4 Change Conference on Friday 18th March 2011 at the Riverside Stadium, Middlesbrough

Cumbria - Learning to Change Conference on Friday 25th March 2011 at North Lakes Hotel, Penrith.

Bookings for both these conferences can be made through the Contact a Family North East office so give us a call on 0191 213 6300 or email us at northeast.office@cafamily.org.uk

Stockton - United for Change Conference on Tuesday 29th March 2011 at MM Banqueting and Conference Suites. Contact 01642 647481 or email stocktonunitedforchange@gmail.com

County Durham - Making Changes Together Conference on Thursday 5th May 2011 at the XCEL Centre, Aycliffe Business Park (and a shorter evening conference on Tuesday 10th May 2011 at Durham Town Hall). Contact 0191 5873541 or email ann.connor@durham.gov.uk

Redcar & Cleveland - Small Steps = BIG CHANGES on Friday 17th June 2011 at Gisborough Hall.

Contact 01642 771248 or email stuart_myers@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

Newcastle - Putting Words into Action on Wednesday 29th June 2011 at the Assembly Rooms. Contact 0191 277 4605 or 0191 277 4700 or email disabled.childrens.register@newcastle.gov.uk

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Local Information

Gateshead Toy Library

As featured on the front cover of **In Contact**, Gateshead Toy Library is a community resource to improve play facilities for children and families in Gateshead. Based at Chowdene Children's Centre (opposite the Angel of the North), the library is open Monday-Thursday 9:00 am - 4:30 pm and Friday 9:00 am - 12:30 pm

As well as providing a loaning service of toys and resources, there is also a dedicated space for children to play and explore. Toys range from baby gyms and rattles to jigsaws, sensory equipment and outdoor activities. You can browse all of the catalogues online at

www.gatesheadearlyyears.org/toylibrary or at any of the Children's Centres across Gateshead.

The Toy Library also offers an Outreach service across the borough which means that you are able to join the library and hire and return toys during these times. For more details, see their website or call **0191 4335055**.

Heel and Toe - on the move

In February 2011, children's charity Heel & Toe moved to new premises located at Jordan House, Finchale Road, Framwellgate Moor, County Durham. DH1 5HL



The move has been long awaited for Heel & Toe as they have continued to grow. Since opening in 2008 with only 4 children they now help over 50 children by providing free Conductive Education to children with Cerebral Palsy, Dyspraxia and other Motor Disorders.

Centre Manager, Doug Long said "We are delighted to have found Jordan House. The new building is 3 times larger than the previous premises, allowing the charity to expand even further".

The new building consists of 3 session rooms, a sensory room, a parents' lounge and offices. Full disabled access is available and there are 20 car parking spaces for visitors and parents. For further information contact Heel and Toe on **0844 3350512** or email info@heelandtoe.org.uk. You can also visit the website at www.heelandtoe.org.uk

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National Information

Trendsetters

Trendsetters is an exciting new project co-led by a group of young disabled people and Scope. The need for the project became clear from the rising number of referrals received by their National Response Helpline concerning young disabled people attending mainstream schools, but who were feeling isolated, perhaps experiencing exclusion, low self-esteem, anger and frustration.

Scope has launched a series of new web pages written by and for young disabled people and led by the original "Trendsetters". The web pages were launched on 20th January 2011 and will grow and develop as more people join and feed in their ideas.

One of the key developments is "Meeting Point" a secure young people's forum where young people aged from 10–18 years can talk to each other about the things that are important to them. The original Trendsetters valued the opportunity to 'chat' safely with other young people on the forum. 'There are other people like you out there. Knowing you're not the only one helps!' said one Trendsetter, aged 13 and so Meeting Point was born!

For more information visit:

<http://www.scope.org.uk/help-and-information/young-people>

or contact Scope Response on **0808 800 3333**

Cerebra

Cerebra are holding a free event looking at legal/police issues surrounding young people with neurological conditions at The Assembly Rooms, Newcastle on Wednesday 29 June 2011. For full information, please contact Gaynor Ellis at gaynore@cerebra.org.uk or telephone **01267 242580**

Cerebra are also offering free online Accredited Learning courses which parents and carers can do at home in their own time. The modules are very useful in their content as they are all about helping parents to help their children.

If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact the course administrator at Rachels@cerebra.org.uk or call **01267 244225**. Full details of the available courses and how to reserve your place may be viewed on their website at <http://tinyurl.com/65xtg2a>

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NAS Hexham Branch

National Autistic Society – Hexham Branch

Covering the Tynedale area of Northumberland, this group meets monthly, offering day and evening opportunities. They arrange for speakers and provide information on local support. They also provide links to “Rainbow Support Group”, a monthly coffee morning, usually held on the last Wednesday of the month. There is also a free library of books and sensory equipment that members can loan out and the group offers telephone support via the branch mobile.

For full information of meeting dates and venues, please contact Eileen Robinson on **07786856379** or e-mail **NASHexhamBranch@nas.org.uk**

Contact a Family North East & Cumbria Local Contacts

Family Support Worker for Cumbria

Debbie Armstrong is our Family Support Worker in Cumbria. Debbie can provide one to one support & help with lots of information about local services etc. You can contact her on **01228 550069** or by email at **debbie.armstrong@cafamily.org.uk**

Volunteer Parent Representative

Bob Mitchell is in Northumberland and is happy to help local parents & professionals who would like more information about Contact a Family. You can contact him on **07532450218** or by email at **bob.mitchell@cafamily.org.uk**

National Freephone Number - 0808 808 3555

Contact a Family's **National Freephone Helpline** for parents of disabled children is open from Monday to Friday 9.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

The text phone number is **0808 808 3556** and Language Line is available for parents whose first language is not English

If you did not receive this newsletter at your own address and would like to be added to our mailing list, please give us a call or write to us at Contact a Family, The Dene Centre, Castle Farm Road, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 1PH.

Tel/Fax - 0191 213 6300

E-mail - northeast.office@cafamily.org.uk Website - www.cafamily.org.uk/northeast

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