

*Nominated for PEN
2025:
Contact*

**‘Support for
Caregivers,
Friends & Family’**

**By Your Side:
reaching families in
hospital**

Contact: presented by Ruth and Laura



<https://contact.org.uk/>



Contact:

- Contact supports parent carers / primary carer of disabled children and young people, and parent carers of children and young people with additional needs
- We are pan-disability and your child does not need a diagnosis to access our support
- We are a UK charity, supporting parent carers in all four nations

<https://contact.org.uk/>



Contact values

We believe that with the right support, families with disabled children can overcome the challenges they face. They can take control of their futures, and they can focus on what matters: being together and growing together. We've been supporting families with disabled children for over 40 years.

Families at our heart

We are passionate in supporting families to fulfil their potential
We work in co-production, as equal partners with families
We genuinely care about each other and the families we support



Trusted

We trust each other to do the right thing

We treat each other with dignity and respect

We take responsibility for our actions

Empowering

We support and encourage each other to take positive action

We are non-judgemental and inclusive

We listen to families to discover better ways of doing things together

Bold

We are ambitious about what we can achieve together

We are determined and driven in everything we do

We take positive risks and learn from our mistakes

Contact Values:



The By Your Side Project - What we do:

Having a child in hospital can be overwhelmingly stressful for parent carers. As well as emotional strain, families often face a raft of practical challenges and left feeling confused by the medical system and unsure where to turn for help. They can also struggle under increased financial pressure as they reduce work hours to spend more time with their child.



‘By Your Side’ pop-ups - at BCH Fashion Show, Neonatal Family Fun Day and Sense Family Fun Day, 2025.



Contact's By Your Side team: currently offer support in five UK hospitals to any family who have a child with health needs, guiding them through the maze of medical departments and jargon they face and discussing any issues or challenges they face, for example around benefits, education, social care or how to find local support groups for example. Families are free to drop in with no appointment needed, and ward visits are also possible if that suits the family better.



Great Ormond Street Hospital –
main contact - Jill Ashford.



Make a Wish Contact referral gratitude quote, BCH:

“ I would like to say thank you for 1 of your colleagues (Laura Miller) for referring me to make a wish they sent me and my family to Legoland. It was a lovely brake my little boy ‘M’ is in remission from retinoblastoma he was diagnosed in 2020 he has a cancer gene as well and then in 2021 my boys and I lost my children’s father to cancer as well. I can’t remember her name she was at Birmingham Children’s Hospital. I would like to say a big thank you, for giving us this opportunity, to have a lovely family holiday ,as we have been through so much sadness. Thank you Contact for your kindness. I would love to find her thank you for making my little boys dream come true there are true angels in this world



Parent and child later found Laura Miller at BCH, in person, September 2025.”



Parent becomes 'By Your Side' Team Member @ BCH!

Emma, Contact Volunteers perspective (June 2025):

Dino Puppetry Well Being Day at BCH

The initiative is different, innovative and ambitious, as By Your Side, Contact Partnership with PALS at Birmingham Childrens hospital, uses fun narratives to create engagement. DinoDay on the 19th of June 2025 offered families, carers, staff and children and young people the opportunity to engage with a industry level designed puppet Dinosaur called Tallulah. The meet and greet session opened deeper conversations as adults went beyond the photo opportunity and dino party bag to gain further, personalised advise from the Parent Advisor and Volunteers.



Parents become 'By Your Side' Team Member @ BCH:

Parent Feedback, BCH, anonymous:

Having a child in hospital is really isolating, especially a boy. I felt like my expectations, hope and life had been thrown against a wall. It was good that the contact Lady reached out with a smile. At first, I didn't want to talk. Hospital is like a bubble. I'm tired and I really care about anyone else. The contact Advisor asked me questions that really struck a chord! What was I most looking forward to once my baby and I left the hospital? I don't know. I wanted to go to a baby group but couldn't face other parents' questions. What was wrong with my baby? Why wasn't she sitting up or doing something typical? The Contact lady was able to use her local knowledge to suggest some groups to me where all the babies might have some kind of disability or delay. These were a godsend to me.

I now volunteer with Contact, as part of Laura's team, to make a difference to other families because time and services may have moved on, but the sense of isolation and powerlessness hasn't changed. With Contact, I felt supported, and the communication was effective.



DinoDay Challenge, annual 19th June:

The inspiration behind the DinoDay Challenge is Cameron Mathieson. Cameron had both Cystic Fibrosis and Duchenne's Muscular Dystrophy and sadly passed away when he was five years old after spending over two years in hospital.

At that time, children who spent over 12 weeks in hospital lost their Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Here at Contact, we supported the Mathieson family's legal challenge to this unfair rule. With our support, the family won their case at the Supreme Court and since then, no other family with a child who spends long periods in hospital has been denied this essential financial support.

Cameron, who was born on 19 June, loved dinosaurs – or as he called them, Dowzers. His favourite Dowser was Troy, a green triceratops! The money also helps us campaign to tackle the inequalities that families with disabled children face, like we did for Cameron Mathieson's family and thousands of others since.



The **DinoDay** Challenge is our annual event to raise funds and awareness. Every donation helps provide vital support services to families of children with disabilities and additional needs.



For more information about the DinoDay Challenge or to ask any questions you may have about fundraising for Contact, please email fundraising@contact.org.uk.



DinoDay national children success stories:

Ziggy

After spending most of his life being tube-fed and completely orally averse, Ziggy's parents challenged him to try 19 new foods for DinoDay last year and he absolutely smashed it!!



Imogen

This little superhero is autistic and has ADHD. Sitting still and concentrating was never her strong suit – that is, until she decided to colour in 19 different dinosaur drawings.



Birmingham Children's Hospital – Laura Miller & Elinor Cole Art lead, BCH, DinoDay.



The Evelina Children's Hospital & Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Ruth Stone:

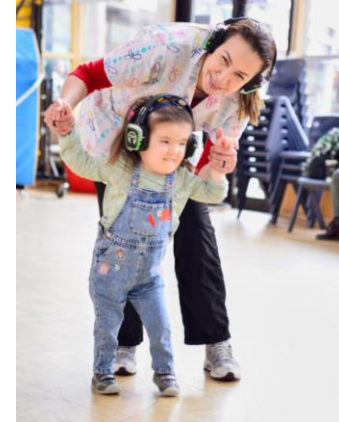
“You don't know the extent of what's going to happen when you first start this journey with your child, so it was great to have someone from Contact to talk to each week where your child is being treated.

“There's a real lack of information out there about what to do and where to turn. You're worried about your child, what the future holds, and no one tells you where to find support or even what support is out there. That's why just having someone there from Contact tell you what's available and how to get it made it feel like there was one less thing for us as parents to have to worry about.”



Contact aims to:

1. Providing high-quality, expert and tailored information, advice & support that helps all parent carers feel confident and supported to navigate their way through a complex system
2. Empowering parent carers, amplifying their voices and channelling their experience and insights to deliver structural change



Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, Glasgow and Wishaw General, Lanarkshire – Lynn Shields:

Mum Carol, has five children, three of whom have additional needs. They live in Scotland. Carol has recently completed training to become a social worker, after her experience of being a mum and a carer and is now working in Edinburgh helping other families.

Carol said: “Over the last few years I have been supported by Contact’s Parent Adviser Lynn. Lynn has been the voice of reason to me at some points where I could not see the light for the dark. Being able to contact someone like Lynn who can give information and advice at some of the darkest of times has been so valuable to me. Without her support I don’t know if I would have been able to complete my degree”.

“She has helped me navigate the systems and every issue I’ve had, she has been able to give me the right information or put me in touch with another organisation who can help”.



'Support for Caregivers, Friends & Family'.

*Thank you for
your time! Laura &
Ruth -BYS Team*

x

