

Dear Parent Carer,

Important update for parents/carers of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Thurrock

The Parent Carer Forum for Thurrock families, CaPa, has unfortunately closed down this summer. I have therefore been asked by Contact, the charity for families with disabled children, to work with parents in Thurrock to set up a brand new parent carer forum. This is a huge and exciting opportunity for you and other families you know to have a say in how the new forum is developed. Even if you do not want to be involved in running the forum, if you have a disabled child or a child who has Special Educational Needs (whether formally diagnosed or not) then we really want to hear from you!

Because CaPa has formally closed, the previous membership database, website, and social media accounts all need to be deleted. So, if you had previously signed up for CaPa updates, we can no longer contact you using those ways, as we are setting up a completely new organisation. We need to set up a brand new database and would love as many parent carers as possible to sign up – whether or not you were previously involved with CaPa.

During the new few weeks we want to let you know about how your voice can be heard in the development of the forum, and we cannot do this unless we have a way of contacting you. We will also be planning some events in the coming months, so please do sign up to ensure you receive information about what's happening. We want as many parents, from as many backgrounds as possible to be involved.

We have set up two ways for you to stay in touch and to get involved as the new forum is set up:

- Please email Sam at thurrockparentcarers@gmail.com to sign up for news and information about the new forum
- Please 'like' our new temporary Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/ThurrockParentCarer>

On the reverse of this letter, I have provided you with some more information about Parent Carer Forums and about Contact. I am also happy for any of you to contact me directly. We really hope that you will sign up to be involved in shaping what your new local Parent Carer Forum will look like. This does not involve any commitment at this stage, other than letting us know what you think, to help with the planning stages. Please do keep in touch!



Sharon Smith
Contact Associate
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About Parent Carer Forums

A parent carer forum is a group of parents and carers of disabled children. In England there are parent carer forums in almost all local authority areas.

Their aim is to make sure the services in their area meet the needs of disabled children and their families. They do this by gathering the views of local families and then working in partnership with local authorities, education settings, health providers and other providers to highlight where local services, processes and commissioners are working well, or challenge when changes or improvements need to be made. This is important because parent carers can often pinpoint problems frequently experienced by families with disabled children. This knowledge is useful to professionals as they plan services to meet disabled children's needs.

Who can join a Parent Carer Forum?

Parent carers of a child or young person (0-25 years) with any type of additional need or disability are welcome to join. Joining your forum does not mean you have to commit lots of time. In most forums you can join and receive information, and then decide if you want to get more involved at your own pace.

How do I get involved with the new Thurrock Parent Carer Forum?

Please email thurrockparentcarers@gmail.com to be added to our mailing list to either be involved in the development of the new parent carer forum, or if you simply want to be kept up to date about the plans.

You can also 'like' our new temporary Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ThurrockParentCarer> where we will also share updates and the latest news.

About Contact www.contact.org.uk

We are Contact, the charity for families with disabled children. We understand that life with a disabled child brings unique challenges, and we exist to help families feel valued, supported, confident and informed.

To make that happen, we work in three closely linked ways. We support families with the best possible guidance and information. We bring families together in local groups and online, to support each other by sharing experiences and advice. And we help families to campaign, volunteer, fundraise and shape local services to improve life for themselves and others.

For further information

The email address for the Contact Associate working with parent carers in Thurrock is sharonsmith@sharonsmith.net.