

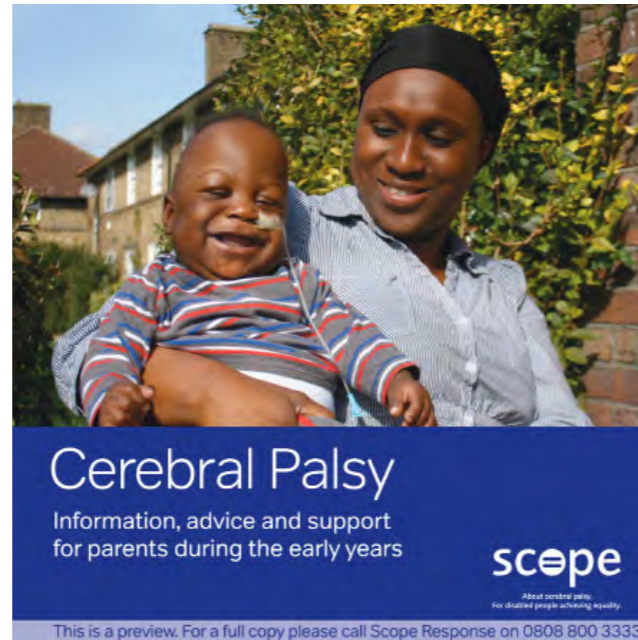
## Scope's new guide for parents

Scope, the charity for people with cerebral palsy, has just brought out a new free guide for parents. The guide contains a wealth of practical information and advice as well as details on where to find support. The Scope flier quotes a parent, Susan Evans, whose three-year-old son Sonny has cerebral palsy. She said, "Having all this information in one place and set out in a clear way is really helpful. This is a really useful guide and I like the fact that is based on the experiences of other parents."

The guide can be ordered by calling 0808 800 3333. Scope also has a support service called Scope Response which offers free information, advice and support to disabled people, families and professionals across the whole disability spectrum. The service comprises experienced multi-disciplinary staff who will receive your telephone calls, answer your emails, provide written leaflets and send publications to you; and regionally based staff whose focus is on cerebral palsy and can provide additional support and local information. Scope Response is open from 9am – 5pm weekdays and is closed weekends and Bank Holidays.

Scope contact details:-

Address: PO Box 833, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK12 5NY  
Telephone: 0808 800 3333  
Email: [response@scope.org.uk](mailto:response@scope.org.uk)  
Web: [www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)  
Text: SCOPE plus your message to 80039.



## Online support and advice

Patientlawyers.com is a specialist website offering information and advice on current healthcare topics, legal and medical issues and patient support groups. You can 'have your say' in the online forum section and share your thoughts, experiences and contacts with others in similar situations.

To find out more visit [www.patientlawyers.com](http://www.patientlawyers.com)



## Keeping everyone safe

A new body called the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) has recently been set up to help prevent unsuitable people from working with children and vulnerable adults.

Increased safeguards were introduced in October 2009 under the Vetting and Barring Scheme. It is now a criminal offence for individuals barred by the ISA to work or apply to work with children or vulnerable adults in a wide range of posts - including most NHS jobs, Prison Service, education and childcare.

Employers also face criminal sanctions for knowingly employing a barred individual across a wider range of work.

This has implications for anyone who employs their own care staff using direct payments. At the moment, if you employ someone to look after your child, you should carry out a police check, unless you are purchasing their services from an agency that already carries out these checks. From July 2010, you can check their ISA status by contacting the ISA yourself.

For further information go to [www.isa-gov.org.uk](http://www.isa-gov.org.uk) or contact the ISA on 0300 123 1111.

# Touching Base

Spring 2010 edition

### Inside this issue:

- Direct payments: what are they and how do you get them?
- Keeping everyone safe
- Who supports Dads?
- Scope's **new** guide for parents

### Spotlight on Fathers

Welcome to the latest edition of Touching Base, the newsletter for families of special needs children. In this issue we are highlighting the different kinds of support available for fathers – everything from useful information available online, fun things to do with your kids and real and virtual support groups. Hopefully there is something for everyone!

We've also included articles about direct payments which allow you to employ your own care staff and changes to the vetting procedures, which may affect you if you become an employer.

There is also exciting news about a free guide for parents of children who suffer with cerebral palsy produced by Scope.

## Direct payments: what are they and how do you get them?

Every family would like to be as independent as possible. Sometimes, the care given by local authorities might not be exactly what the family needs. Direct payments are a way of promoting the independence of parents and their disabled children who would like to manage their own social care needs.

You can use direct payments to purchase services which offer your child stimulation, new experiences and independence such as short breaks or respite care, a day care placement, assistance to attend an activity e.g. youth club or summer holiday activities or personal care. You can't use direct payments to pay for food or for items for other family members.

To get direct payments, you must first contact your local Social Services to ask for an assessment. You may be sent a self-assessment form or you may get a visit from a social worker to assess the needs of your child and family. Based on that assessment Social Services will decide if you meet their criteria for support services. This may take some time, especially if the local authority is suffering from a budget deficit. If you do meet their criteria, you will be offered support services or instead, be offered direct payments to arrange and purchase your own services or a mixture of both.

If your child is under sixteen, direct payments will usually be made to you as their parent. When a child becomes sixteen, she or he can receive payments in their own right to allow them to buy in the services they have been assessed as needing. The amount of money you receive should be enough to meet all costs equivalent to what you would have been charged had Social Services arranged the services. They may make the payments in full and ask you to reimburse them any assessed charge. Any payments you receive must be used to pay for services to meet the assessed needs.

Receiving direct payments does mean more responsibility for the family. If you employ someone, you will need to pay their tax and National Insurance and arrange for a police check. You won't need to do this if you buy a service from a registered care agency, a voluntary organisation or a nursery.

For more information and advice about Direct Payments go to the Special Kids in the UK website [www.specialkidsintheuk.org/Services/Directpayments.php](http://www.specialkidsintheuk.org/Services/Directpayments.php) or the Contact a Family website [www.cafamily.org.uk/families/rightsandentitlements/disabledchildrenservices/directpayments.html](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/families/rightsandentitlements/disabledchildrenservices/directpayments.html) or call the Contact a Family Helpline on 0808 8083555

If you have any subjects you would like us to include in future newsletters or comments about items we have already covered, please contact us

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## Who supports dads?

It can often feel that looking after children is a mother's responsibility and a father's contribution is discounted. In the past few years more work has been done to try to ensure dads are recognised.

In 2004, the Department of Health produced a document called the National Service Framework which looked at services for children. It stated, "The role of fathers in parenting their children is frequently overlooked. Their contribution to their child's development and well-being is important. Good parenting by fathers can significantly promote their child's development."

### Meeting with others

Across the country, local authorities and voluntary organisations are trying to support fathers in different ways. In Wychavon, Worcestershire County Council is urging dads and male carers in Wychavon to take part in sessions designed just for them. A club for dads, dads-to-be and male carers of children aged from pre-birth to pre-school children are held in the district once a month.

Kate Jones, Wychavon Sure Start Children's Centres Cluster Manager, said: *"These groups offer a fantastic opportunity for dads to get involved in some fun activities with their young children, which are often seen as being for mums only. Dads are welcome to come to any of the events run by the Children's Centres, but these groups may be of particular interest to them."*

Activities at the sessions are all aimed at being male-friendly and include den-making, football and rugby coaching.

Middlesborough Sure Start Centres also offer fun activities for dads and male carers. Examples include 'Dads & Toddlers' groups, football fitness & sport sessions for dads, male carers, children & families. There are also positive parenting courses & support as well as employment support advice & guidance.

Sometimes dads and male carers want to run their own support group. This has happened in Lewisham and Chester. The Lewisham group was started by Carers Lewisham, who carried out research into the needs of male carers during 2005/6. They started a group where a few male carers, encouraged by the respite care manager, came together once a month for coffee and to share their caring experiences.

Over the months it grew to 20 members. Although someone from the Carers Centre co-ordinates and helps facilitate the meetings, the agenda is set by the men themselves. In an article written in 2006, it was said they were so passionate about how the service helped them to cope better with the demands of being a male carer, they wanted to show how it could help other men in similar situations.

*"Meeting others makes you feel you are still normal,"* said Brian, one of the original members who cares for his wife. *Some of the others are single parents caring for adults or children with disabilities. Coming to the group also helped to break down their sense of isolation."* Dave, a long-term carer looking after a disabled child, said, *"In the caring role we have no choice. It can make you resentful, jealous and bitter."*

Carlisle Carers have set up a similar Men's Club where men meet monthly for social events in pubs and restaurants over lunch. Outings are also arranged.

Contact a Family have held a Breakfast Club in Grimsby for fathers of newly diagnosed children with special needs. Birmingham Carers also run a group for male carers, many of who look after special needs children. Some Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) will also run groups for new fathers.

It is worth asking your health visitor or looking at both the PCT and local authority websites to find out what is available in your area. If there is no group locally, you may want to think about setting one up yourself. There is help available from Contact a Family either through their helpline 0808 8083555 or through their Supporting Groups webpage [www.cafamily.org.uk/families/supportinggroups.html](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/families/supportinggroups.html)

### Information on the web

**Contact a Family** have a section of their website called 'The Dads Zone'. Here there is information and advice for dads. They also produce a leaflet with useful advice and stories from other dads of special needs children. The website can be found at [www.cafamily.org.uk/families/familyissues/dads/index.html](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/families/familyissues/dads/index.html)

Here is some of the information from 'The Dad's Zone'

#### Your role

*A dad's role is a mixed one. Many dad's stress the fact that they need to be the breadwinner particularly because of the extra costs of caring for a disabled child, but that this can mean being absent from meetings or from carrying out much of the day-to-day care of their child. Service providers often presume, wrongly, that fathers who are not seen at meetings are not doing anything. As a dad you may feel you have a dual role; you may need to offer support but also provide the practical help that is needed.*

#### Support for dads

*It is important to be listened to - to have a sounding block. Try to make use of all your support networks - it might be your wife or partner, friend or neighbour. It might be helpful to try and just get some time to yourself or to spend some time alone with your partner. Remember that it's OK to ask for help.*

*You might find it hard to talk to friends or neighbours about your child's disability and you may feel your wife or partner has access to other friends and support that is not available to you. But it is important to find someone to talk to if you can and realise that you are not alone in this feeling; other dads feel this way too.*

*Sometimes there is a key professional who can open the door to lots of information or contacts. This could be a health visitor, occupational therapist or person working for a voluntary organisation. There are a few support groups now for dads of disabled children in the UK. There are also many children's centres, which are initiatives to work with parents of pre-school children. Ask your GP, health visitor or social worker for more information.*

*You might find a professional counselling service a helpful way of unloading some of your thoughts and feelings. Your GP should be able to tell you about any local services.*

**The Fatherhood Institute** is the UK's "Fatherhood Think Tank". The Institute's vision is for a society that gives all children a strong and positive relationship with their father and any father-figures; supports both mothers and fathers as earners and carers; and prepares boys and girls for a future shared role in caring for children.

Their website has a wealth of information on services for fathers and research into specific areas such as vulnerable and separated families. You can find them at [www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/](http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/) and register for their free newsletter.

**Dads Space** is another online area of information for dads. There are lots of articles about developing relationship, debt advice, coping with behaviour and other useful subjects. It can be found at [www.dads-space.com/](http://www.dads-space.com/)

**Birth Trauma Association** offers support to partners and close friends who have witnessed a difficult birth or who wish to support a woman who is going through a difficult time caused by a birth trauma. Their website can be found at [www.birthtraumaassociation.org.uk/fathers.htm](http://www.birthtraumaassociation.org.uk/fathers.htm)

### Meeting online

Sometimes it can be really difficult to find the time to meet other people in person, however much you would like to. A supportive alternative is to join an internet chat forum and talk to people who may be in similar situations to your own.

**Special Kids in the UK** has an online chat forum for their members. You can find it at <http://www.specialkidsintheuk.org/>. The forum provides support and useful advice from other mums/dads/carers/professionals and is well regarded by its members.

**fathers.myfreeforum.org** is a free online chat forum where dads from all over the world can share their thoughts, ideas, experiences of caring for a child with a disability. A large majority of members are from the UK and new comments and queries are answered promptly. It can be found at [fathers.myfreeforum.org/index.php](http://fathers.myfreeforum.org/index.php)

If you are a "stay at home dad" (SAHD), you may like to share experiences with other fathers by joining the **Home Dad Forum** at [homedad.org.uk/forum/index.php](http://homedad.org.uk/forum/index.php)

Some online forums also offer regular meet ups. One example of this is **Londondads.com** which can be found at [www.londondad.com/home.php](http://www.londondad.com/home.php). It provides a wealth of information and an online chat forum as well as offering bi-monthly meetings for any father who is interested. Fathers are also encouraged to set up their own groups locally.



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