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Factsheet PC1 Help for Parent Carers

A key source of information on many aspects of caring for a child with a disability in Hertfordshire is the county council website www.hertsdirect.org. This factsheet therefore makes frequent reference to it. If you do not have access to the internet, or if you would prefer us to print off the information for you, please contact *Carers in Hertfordshire*, and we will be very pleased to help.

Getting services for your child

If you have a child under 5, you should ensure that you are in touch with a health visitor (through your GP surgery). If your child is over 5, you should contact the school health nurse instead. The health visitor and school health nurse can provide advice and information and sometimes arrange services.

If your child's daily living is substantially affected by a disability or special needs, an assessment can be requested from Hertfordshire County Council's Children, Schools and Families department (CSF). The social worker will be able to tell you about useful organisations and sources of practical help and can arrange services if your child meets the eligibility criteria. The HCC leaflet 'Disabled Children and their Families – How we can help', which outlines the criteria, can be downloaded from <http://www.hertsdirect.org/infobase/docs/concscs/pdfstore/howwecanhelp08.pdf> or contact us.

As part of your child's assessment, a carer's assessment will also be carried out for you. This considers your needs as a carer, and is your chance to describe the impact that caring has on your life, raise any issues or concerns you may have, and discuss the things that could make caring easier for you. For more information about carer's assessments see our factsheet G3.

To arrange an assessment call Children, Schools and Families (CSF)

On 300 123 4043. The Customer Service Centre will arrange for you to be contacted (within 3 days) so more details can be taken before the request is passed to your local team for a time and date to be arranged. If you would like to discuss any aspects of the assessment and what to expect, please contact us. If you would like to have an advocate present to support you and help you to express your views clearly, one can be requested from **POhWER**, Hertfordshire's independent advocacy agency, on **01438 726990**.

Direct payments - Also see our factsheet G6

If your child is entitled to services, you can opt to have money equal to the cost of the services instead. This 'direct payment' must be used to pay for services for your child that you arrange yourself, and aims to give families flexibility and control over the support their child receives. Families have used direct payments to employ someone to provide their child with personal care, accompany them to a community activity (youth club, sports/leisure activity etc) or provide practical assistance in the home – you can discuss the options with your social worker.

Leonard Cheshire Direct Payments Support Scheme provide support in managing direct payments, including recruiting staff. **Website:** www.directpayments.info
Tel: 01462 439002 Fax: 01462 423245

Education

If your child is pre-school age, they might be eligible to attend Opportunity Classes – ask your health visitor for more information.

The **Parent Partnership (Tel: 01992 555847)** provides parents with information, guidance and support on special educational needs. They can help if there is a disagreement with the school or local authority about the way your child's needs are being identified or met. See www.hertsdirect.org – search on 'parent partnership'.

Transition

Transition is the time when a child leaves school and moves into adulthood. It can be a difficult time for families and planning should start early, ideally at age 13/14. Hertfordshire has a Transition Protocol that all professionals should work to. Copies of this and other information are available from www.hertsdirect.org – search on 'transition'. We also have available copies of *Progress*, a newsletter dedicated to the subject of transition. The **Connexions Access-Ability team (Tel: 01462 704901)** provides support to young people with disabilities who are going through transition.

A good starting point for national information is **Contact a Family** www.cafamily.org.uk
Tel: 0808 808 3555. They produce a range of publications, including an 'Education and Disability pack' and a factsheet on 'Transition'. Both can be downloaded from the website or requested through their helpline free of charge.

Financial Help

Your child may be entitled to Disability Living Allowance and you may be entitled to Carers Allowance, Council Tax discount or other benefits. More information on www.hertsdirect.org under 'disabled children'. For a copy of the factsheet 'Benefits for Children with a Disability' look under M in the A-Z search for Money Advice Unit (MAU). Contact us if you would like to be referred to the MAU for a free benefits check to ensure that your family is receiving the full entitlement. For general advice, or to obtain claim forms, contact the national Benefit Enquiry Line on 0800 88 22 00.

There are many charitable organisations that can provide grants and funding. Many require a referral from social services or other health professional, so if you have a social worker it is worth asking them to help you apply for financial help.

For details of local charities that can help to fund a holiday or day out see our factsheet G6 'Grants and Funding'. The **Association of Charity Officers 01707 651777** have a free helpline which can link you up with the charity most likely to assist your situation, along with details of how to make an application.

Extended Opportunities Funding

This is a government fund aimed at helping children do the things that they want to do, to take part in sports and activities and get involved. These activities can be after school, at weekends or during school holidays. This funding runs from June 2010 to August 2011 and is for parents who meet certain criteria. Parents of children who receive free school meals or are managing on a low income and have a child with special educational needs or disabilities, are eligible to apply. To apply parents need to contact their school and ask to speak to the person coordinating Extended Opportunities funding.

Registering with the Hertfordshire Additional Needs Database (HAND)

HAND is a database held by the County Council that records details of the 0-19 year olds in the county who have additional needs. Parents can describe their child's additional needs, explain the effect on the family, and say what services they receive.

HAND aims to provide a better understanding of what families most need and inform the planning of future support and services. Families who join will receive a card, which can be a great help in getting assistance, understanding and sometimes a discount on the entry price to certain attractions. You do not have to register your child with HAND, but if you would like to, visit www.hertsdirect.org/hand or contact us for an application form.