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P R E S S R E L E A S E

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MINISTER PRAISES SELF-HELP FOR FAMILIES OF HANDICAPPED PEOPLE

Tony Newton, Minister for the Disabled, today (Saturday) paid tribute to the work of Contact-a-Family and other self-help groups which bring together families with mentally and/or physically handicapped members.

Speaking in Bath at a weekend conference attended by members of Contact-a-Family and other self-help organisations, Mr Newton said: "We all know that caring for a disabled child or adult at home can impose a strain on the families. One of the biggest strains can be a sense of isolation. As Minister for the Disabled, I have been encouraged by the growth in the number of self-help groups for these families which seek to break down this sense of isolation and provide support. I am very glad indeed that my Department has been able to contribute £3,000 towards the cost of this weekend and the accompanying newsletter."

Mr Newton went on, "I know that self-help is not a substitute for the more formal support and professional skills which need to come from our health and local authorities services. But we must not underestimate the unique support for a family bringing up a child with a severe handicap which can only be provided by parents joining together. I am pleased to be here today at your Conference to wish you well.."

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The weekend conference for families and their mentally handicapped children has been organised by Contact-a-Family, a voluntary organisation which offers advice and help to local self-help groups throughout the country. About 175 parents, children and professionals representing Contact-a-Family and other local self-help groups are expected to attend the weekend at Bath Youth Hostel.

2. Contact-a-Family receives a two year grant of £25,000pa from the DHSS towards central administrative costs in 1983/4 and 1984/5. The additional grant of £3,150 is to subsidise the cost of the weekend conference and the accompanying newsletter. This will enable families who might otherwise have not been able to afford to attend to do so and to benefit from sharing a weekend away from their everyday routine, with other families who care for handicapped children.