

SEND MATTERS

Autumn Term edition

The official newsletter of SEND related issues in Bedford Borough

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WELCOME from Chief Officer for Education, SEND and School Infrastructure - Ben Pearson

Welcome to the third edition of SEND Matters. We hope that you find the content in this edition both informative and helpful. Since our last edition of SEND Matters, the vast majority of children have returned to school which I recognise was a stressful time for many involved. The resilience shown by children on their return to school has truly blown me away, as has the commitment from all staff

within all education settings to ensure the children managed to return to school safely. This has been one of the most challenging half terms of my career and I know that there is more uncertainty to come, however I also know that the relationships we have across the system here in Bedford Borough hold us in good stead to work through whatever is to come over the Winter months.

THINGS TO DO THIS OCTOBER HALF TERM

We always receive fabulous feedback on our dedicated school holiday pages on our Local Offer. This October Half Term will be no different and you can visit the [page here](#). We have selected a few highlights over October half term but do keep checking the Local Offer page which will be updated every day with new events and activities to keep you and your family safely entertained this half term.

The Place Theatre is putting on an outdoor performance of 'The Lion Inside'; a play about confidence, self-esteem, and a shy little mouse who sets out on a journey to find his roar. This play is perfect for children aged 4 – 10 years of age. Tickets are free but a small booking fee will apply and donations are welcomed. To find out more information [click here](#)

Gravity Trampoline Park in Milton Keynes is offering SEND Specific sessions in half term. During these times the whole trampoline park will be dedicated to children and young people with SEND. Carers attending with a child with additional needs are entitled to a complimentary carer ticket. To find out more information [click here](#)

Autism Bedfordshire @ Animal Edge Farm. Autism Bedfordshire are offering families a chance to allow children to get close to the animals in a quiet and safe environment at a local farm. The animals are all well handled and bred to be pets and part of our family. You will need to be a member of Autism Bedfordshire to book a space . To find out more information [click here](#)

RSPB Sandy have organised a 'FUNgi trail' (see what they did there?) for the whole family to enjoy. This is a chance to get out into nature, explore the nature reserve and complete an activity sheet dedicated to the fabulous world of fungi (AKA mushrooms). All Fungi are marked around the trail and there is an activity sheet available at the shop or to print at home. To find out more information [click here](#)

RETURN TO SCHOOL UPDATE

Many of our schools remained open for certain groups of children and young people through-out the lockdown period, however with the Government announcement that all schools and colleges would be fully open in September a great deal of hard work had to be completed by all to ensure all pupils could return safely for the start of this academic year. Indeed, thanks to the hard work and commitment from countless people, Bedford Borough's school attendance this term has been above national average and is the highest in the Eastern Region.

To ensure schools addressed the emotional needs of pupils, the school improvement team, Early Help, CAMHS, Education Psychology and Public Health colleagues worked throughout the summer to develop an offer of emotional wellbeing support for our schools upon pupils returning. This included:

- *An emotional wellbeing focused conference run during the holiday and which was attended by over 40 senior leaders from schools. (The remainder of leaders accessed the conference in Sept)*
- *The completion of risk assessments and action plans in readiness for the safe reopening of schools*
- *The creation and implementation of documentation designed specifically for schools to use in supporting children and young people with SEND to ensure they could be welcomed back safely and warmly and to ensure their individual needs were met.*

The work to ensure all our children and young people remain safe and can learn continues, and the regular meetings between Public Health, School Improvement and School Leaders to share practice, knowledge and updates remain in place. You will have seen an example of this collaborative approach in the letter to parents that you will have received via your child's school, regarding symptoms and what to do if you suspect that they may have COVID. This is only one example and much of the work remains hidden but it is vital that this partnership work continues as it supports school leaders in keeping your child safe in school.

FAQ'S

FROM THE BEDFORD BOROUGH PARENT CARER FORUM MEMBERS REGARDING RETURNING TO SCHOOL



If I can't get my child to school, what should I do? I am worried I will be in trouble with the educational welfare officer.

If you are struggling with getting your child to school, you should start by discussing this with the school as soon as the problem arises. The school will be able to support you through meetings and joint strategies between home and school to monitor and encourage good school attendance. There are many reasons why children may struggle to attend school and the school should explore with you the reasons for this, however the sooner the problem is discussed and addressed the better the outcomes on increasing school attendance. Bedford Borough's Education Welfare Service is there to support with improving school attendance and will endeavour to work with families to create supportive plans to increase school attendance.



Do the COVID behaviour policies make reasonable adjustments for SEND children, I am concern it could turn into a negative for my child, what should I do ?

The Department for Education issued advice and guidance to schools when planning for reopening to pupils in September 2020. You can view this [document here](#). This guidance advises schools to review their current behaviour policies to ensure they recognise that "Some school cultures, norms and routines have been disrupted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and some pupils may have been exposed to a range of adverse experiences. Schools will need to make changes to reset behaviour and attendance expectations and consider additional support to successfully reintegrate pupils back".

Any revisions to behaviour policies should be shared with parents and made public. It may be that schools have not revised behaviour policies but have taken into account reasonable adjustments in its application during the reintegration of pupils with SEND. The DfE guidance does make reference to the need to engage with parents of children with SEND who may be at risk of struggling to adhere to the behaviour policies and to engage with local services and support. If you have concerns regarding your child's behaviour at school this should be discussed with the child's school in the first instance so that support can be put in place.



How do we get a social care assessment for our SEND child? We have never had social care input but now we feel like we need help?

If you as a family feel that you would like more support from Children's Services then you may be able to access Early Help Support. Please call 01234 718 700 or email EarlyHelpHub@Bedford.gov.uk

If you feel that your child's social care needs are resulting in a potential need for respite in the family home, you may wish to discuss this with the safeguarding officer at your child's school who can discuss potential options of your child attending school.

You may be entitled to a parent carer assessment; if you feel that you might qualify for a parent carer assessment from social care then please call 01234 718 700 to discuss your family's situation, however this does not guarantee respite unless your child meets the criteria for Children With Disabilities Team. You can read more about the thresholds for accessing support through children's social care can be found on the [Local Offer here](#).

MEET THE TEAM – BEDFORD BOROUGH EDUCATION PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

The Educational Psychology Service is a team of psychologists (including assistants) who have post graduate training in child development and how children learn, behave and manage their emotions. Educational psychologists also have in-depth knowledge of the education system and how features of this system can help or hinder learning.

The Educational Psychology Team focus on supporting schools children and families so that students can do as well as possible at school and beyond. We work closely with educational settings, families and young people to develop ways forward which are personal and meaningful. Support for schools and educational settings can range from things like classroom teaching practice or improving playground behaviour through to group-based interventions and individual support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs.

Our team is available to provide bespoke guidance and support for concerns including learning, behaviour and emotional wellbeing. We offer a variety of services including assessments, advice, training, drop-in consultations for teachers and parents/carers and structured, close support for SENCOs and teachers.

The Educational Psychology service is a 'Buy Back' service and access to support is purchased by educational settings. For questions and queries please contact the team on 01234 228693 or email school.support@bedford.gov.uk. Or if you want to make a referral and seek advice please speak to the school SENCO

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BBPCF Update

BBPCF are the voice for Parent Carers of children & young people 0-25yrs with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities in Bedford Borough.

We feedback your views to Education, Health, Social Care and other departments that

provide SEND services. BBPCF are still working to reach families in Bedford Borough. We are listening to all parent / carers of children with special educational needs and / or disabilities (SEND) aged 0-25 years. We are signposting to usable information, sharing ideas and experiences, while still fulfilling our forum duties to listen to the lived experience of parent carers and feedback to the relevant services.

BBPCF are running a series of online events for parents and carers in Bedford Borough. Ranging from parent training, to virtual get togethers and even Pilates and relaxation sessions for parent carers. You can see our calendar of events by [clicking here](#).

We have an online membership form for anyone that is involved in SEND (a diagnosis is not required to join).

You can view our NEW website at www.bbpcf.co.uk

Follow us on our social media @bedsboroughpcf on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

SUNFLOWER LANYARD SCHEME IN BEDFORD BOROUGH



Bedford Borough Council has teamed up with Cambridgeshire Community Health Services NHS Trust, The Harpur Centre, Love Bedford (Bedford BID), Bedford Borough Parent Carer Forum and Access Bedford to support a project to help people in the Borough feel more confident when going into the community again.

Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyards can help people who have disabilities that are not immediately obvious to others. This could include people with learning difficulties, those living with dementia or poor mental health, as well as mobility, speech, visual or hearing impairments.

Wearing the sunflower lanyard indicates to others, including shop workers, members of the community, colleagues and health professionals that additional support, help or a little patience may be needed.

Cllr Wendy Rider, Portfolio Holder for Adults Services, said: "There are around 35,000 people with a disability in Bedford Borough, 80% of whom will have a hidden disability. Many will have been self-isolating due to Covid-19 and be anxious about getting back out and about. We hope that by taking part in this initiative we can help them feel more confident in their communities.

"Some people with a hidden disability are not able to wear a face covering and are therefore exempt

and unfortunately we have heard instances where people have been criticised and even verbally abused for not following guidance. We hope that this initiative will help with people's understanding as well as increasing awareness of the support people with hidden disabilities may require."

Cambridgeshire Community Health Services NHS Trust, which runs adults and children's services in Luton and Bedfordshire, has become one of the first organisations in the borough to sign up to the Sunflower Lanyards.

Matthew Winn, Chief Executive said: "Our organisation is delighted to support the Sunflower Lanyard scheme. Anything that we can do to improve people's awareness and understanding of those living with a disability is hugely worthwhile. This is such a simple but extremely effective idea that we can all get behind and I wish it every success."

Hidden disabilities affect each person in a different way, and can be painful, exhausting, and isolating. Without visible evidence of the hidden disability, it is frequently difficult for others to acknowledge the challenges faced.

To get a free lanyard for yourself, a family member or friend with a hidden disability, visit one of the following places in Bedford Borough. Please continue to follow social distancing guidelines:

- Bedford Central Library
- The Higgins Bedford
- Halifax bank
- Lloyds Bank
- Morrisons
- Sainsbury's
- Tesco
- M&S food halls

We have a dedicated page to the Sunflower Lanyard Scheme on the Local Offer where you can keep up to date with where you can access a sunflower lanyard locally. To view the Sunflower Lanyard page [click here](#).

TALKING SUCCESS TRAINING IN BEDFORD BOROUGH A BIG HIT WITH SCHOOLS

Raising pupils achievement through improved Speech, Language & Communication Skills



Over the past three years 'Talking Success' training has successfully been rolled out across Northamptonshire; enabling mainstream teaching staff to identify & support children with speech, language and communication

needs. Following exceptional reviews, we are delighted to be able to offer this fantastic training opportunity free to all mainstream schools across Bedford Borough.

Talking Success enables schools to:

- Identify and support pupils with speech, language and communication needs through targeted interventions and class-room strategies
- Accelerate the speech, language and communication development of pupils in order to raise achievements in school
- Make successful and appropriate referrals to the Speech and Language Therapy Team when more specialist support is needed
- Engage in school to school networking and sharing of good practice
- Talking Success training is six days long, spread out over the course of two months. Primary and Secondary Schools will be trained separately, so be sure to book with your age group.

Course Details:

- 'Talking Success' is a comprehensive course compiling both theory and practical learning opportunities.
- The first sessions cover 'typical' development of speech, language and communication skills. There is also a focus on promoting 'communication friendly environments' and clear guidance on who and how to refer children to the Speech and Language Therapy service.
- The last three sessions cover how to support children with a range of speech, language and communication needs including vocabulary teaching, supporting children with Selective Mutism and stammering.

The training is facilitated by NHS speech & language therapists from Bedfordshire Community Health Services and Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust. 4 cohorts of the training have already taken place in Bedford Borough with extremely positive feedback received already. There are just two more cohorts being run this academic year with limited places left, make sure your school is booked on! For more details [click here](#).

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES UPDATE

Bedfordshire Community Health Services have produced a letter outlining their plans for restoring their services as Covid-19 restrictions ease. This can be [viewed here](#). As the country moves into potentially more restrictions being put in place you can keep up to date with the latest updates on community health services by visiting their [website here](#).

If your child has an upcoming appointment with community health services, this helpful video has been produced to help you and your child prepare for what to expect as you attend your appointment.

Bedfordshire Community Health Services have now launched their first ever stakeholders newsletter where you can keep up to date with all of the work they have been up to. To read the latest edition of their stakeholders newsletter, please click [this link](#).

CAMHS UPDATE

As the country started to move out of lockdown a number of CAMHS services started to return to more face to face appointments. The service has created a helpful video explaining all of the changes that have been made due to Covid-19 and what to expect when attending your appointment. To view the video please [click here](#).

Throughout lockdown the CAMHS Talk podcast has continued to roll out short podcasts with CAMHS Service Users and special guests from the clinical team and beyond. Ranging from topics such as the changes in service during Covid-19 to how to cope with the return to school after lockdown, you can always find an engaging and thought provoking podcast by going to their [website here](#).

FUN ACTIVITIES TO DO AT HOME THIS HALLOWEEN

Trick or Treating may not be possible this year due to Covid-19 but that doesn't mean there aren't lots of other activities you can do to keep the children entertained this Halloween. Here are some ideas for activities at home as well as trick or treating alternatives.

Crafting ideas



- Make your own Autumnal Tree. [Click here](#)
- Why not make your own Autumn Wreath for your front door. [Click here](#)

- Why not make your own Halloween decorations this year. Here are 50 ideas for Halloween decorations you can make yourself. [Click here](#)

Outdoor Fun

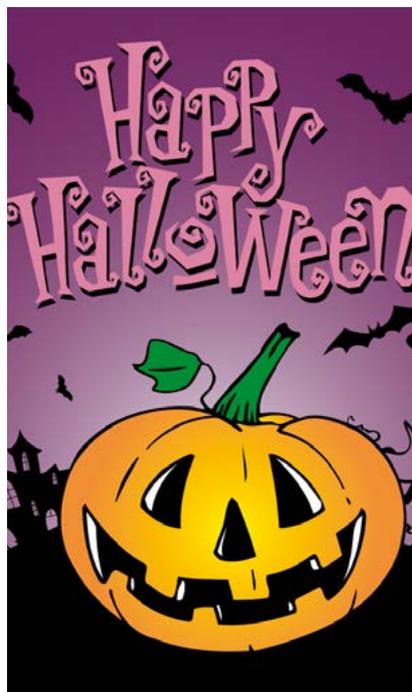


- Why not go for a walk and see who can be the first to complete this Autumnal Scavenger Hunt. [Click here](#)
- If there is an autumnal breeze this half term, why not try your hand

at making your own kite? [Click here](#)

- Bark rubbing is an excellent way of getting your kids closer to nature. Did you know that you can identify a tree just by its bark? For a helpful guide from the team at BBC wildlife [click here](#)

Trick or Treat alternatives



Due to covid-19 regulations and with scientific evidence suggesting that the virus may stay on surfaces longer than previously thought, trick or treating as we know it is not likely to be possible. That doesn't mean that you and the children can't still get dressed up though and the

below might be one option to try and recreate that trick or treating feeling.

Why not encourage your neighbours to take part in a **Community Pumpkin Hunt**. The idea is similar to the window rainbow campaign during lockdown, encourage your neighbours to put an image of a pumpkin in their window and see how many pumpkins you and the kids can spot. We have created a free downloadable pumpkin image that can be used for this, there is a full colour version and another for you to colour in yourselves. To download the image [click here](#).

SENDIASS PARENT TRAINING

Bedford Borough SEND Information Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS) have arranged for a series of free bitesize virtual training sessions for young people, parents and professionals. These sessions have been organised alongside Bedford Borough Parent Carer Forum.

You view more details of the training courses available and the dates and times of the sessions by [clicking here](#).

To book your place on any of the training sessions, please email communications@bbpcf.org.uk SENDIASS has also launched its new website. You can view the [new website here](#)



LOCAL OFFER CORNER

It has now been almost 7 months since the country first went into Lockdown on the 23rd March 2020. Throughout those months, Bedford Borough's Local Offer has worked tirelessly to be a place where anyone involved with children and young people with SEND could go to find out up to date information, advice and support throughout such all of the uncertainty. We thought it would be good to reflect on all that has been achieved in those 7 months....

"The local offer lets me know about activities that were still open during the lockdown, which allowed us just to get out a bit."

In March, the Local Offer created a dedicated Coronavirus page to ensure that there was one page with all of the information people needed in one place. This started with details of the special shopping times available at local supermarkets and went on to include wellbeing information and latest services update. Through regular feedback from parents and carers and other practitioners, the page was updated throughout the pandemic to ensure it continued to provide the information people wanted. This dedicated coronavirus page alongside all of the other update on the website led to over 160,000 visitors to the Local Offer website between March and August 2020.

"The local offer is well updated, you can find information that helps with getting support and things to do all in one places, could we get reviews on the SEND activity so other families can know how inclusive these places are."

On top of the work being done to keep the Local Offer website updated, our Local Offer Officer also worked extremely hard throughout lockdown to

ensure that the Local Offer social media accounts were providing people with all of the latest update on services as well as helpful ideas for activities and support to do as a family.

These posts reached huge numbers of people between March and August, with over 120,000 views of posts by the Local Offer Facebook page, a further 140,000 views of Tweets from the Local Offer Twitter page and the number of Instagram Followers doubling to 250 Followers.

"The information in other languages was helpful; some family member are bilingual and this helped."

Throughout the pandemic, the Local Offer reached over 300,000 people through its website and social media presence. This ensured children and young people with SEND, their parents and carers and all professionals supporting them, have a dedicated place to go for information on services, support and activities for children and young people with SEND in Bedford Borough. If you have any suggestions or ideas about what else you would like to see on our Local Offer or any gaps you have noticed then please do contact us on local.offer@bedford.gov.uk

"More people need to know about the local offer i.e. schools, the charities and youth groups. I have asked lots of people for advice once I was told about the local offer I was able to get correct, usable information thank you."



You can follow us on Social Media here:



KEEPING IN TOUCH

If you would like to receive emails directly into your inbox relating to SEND and general Childrens Services updates in Bedford Borough we would love for you to sign up to our Gov Delivery System.

Visit the Gov Delivery website by [clicking here](#), enter your email address and then select 'Your Child and You' to subscribe.

If you have any suggestions as to what content you would like to see in future editions of SEND Matters then please email your ideas to sendprogramme@bedford.gov.uk