



Family News Stockport

Family Link Stockport's Newsletter for Parents and Carers

ISSUE No. 9 Autumn 2013

Autumn 2013

Welcome to the ninth edition of Family News Stockport. Thank you to The Co-operative Membership Community Fund who have sponsored this edition.

In this issue we have included information on starting and returning to school. Pages 4 to 8 contains information on supporting your child at school, packed lunches, free school meals, homework help, walking buses and much more.

Is your child due to start Nursery, Primary or Secondary school in September 2014? Page 8 contains important information on how and when to apply.

From October 2013 Universal Credit will be introduced across the UK. Find out more on page 9.

Don't forget you can now follow us on



Facebook and Twitter.

Search for us '@familyinfolink' on
www.twitter.com or

'Like' us on Facebook 'Family info Link'.

Supported by **The co-operative membership community fund**

Contents

- Page 2** Do you need childcare etc.
Could you be a Trustee?
Leisure Activities
• • • • •
- Page 3** Love Food Hate Waste
Are you a Single Parent?
Change4life
• • • • •
- Page 4** Support your child at school
• • • • •
- Page 5** Packed lunches
Beat the Back to School Blues
• • • • •
- Page 6** Encourage your child to be safe
on the roads
• • • • •
- Page 7** Homework Help
Free School Meal/Clothing Grants
• • • • •
- Page 8** School Holidays
Nursery/School Application
Dates
• • • • •
- Page 9** Universal Credit
Get Me Toasty



Do you need childcare or other information for your family?

Family info Link, a service of Family Link Stockport, a registered charity, has for many years delivered an information service for Stockport families through a telephone helpline and outreach service. The service has been delivered on behalf of Stockport Council.

Following a recent council decision to end funding, a reduced service will be provided by Stockport Council from 1st February 2014 enabling parents to self serve information via the council website with support for those not able to access the internet. In preparation for this change you can now find information on registered childcare providers on Stockport Council's website www.stockport.gov.uk/childcare

If you are having difficulties finding childcare or another service for your family you can contact Family info Link on FREEPHONE 0808 800 0606. The service will continue to run until 31st January 2014.

Could you be a Trustee?

Family Link Stockport has delivered high quality services in Stockport since 1983. We make life easier for families by delivering independent and impartial information about local services and by supporting families.

We are looking for trustees to support and lead the service as we explore new areas of work that will make us sustainable in the future. We would like to hear from you if you:

- Have experience of finance, fundraising, business planning, marketing, social enterprise or setting up new business
- Are able to make a commitment of approximately 3 hours per month, regularly attend meetings, and read relevant information

We pay trustees' travel expenses and provide an induction into Family Link Stockport's work.

For further information contact Fiona Clear on 0161 477 0606 or
Email fiona.clear@familylinkstockport.co.uk

Leisure activities

Family Link Stockport can give you information about leisure activities in Stockport for you and the children you care for. These can range from parent and toddler groups to school holiday activities.

Parent and Toddler Groups

You can download a list of Parent and Toddler Groups from our website. Please note this is not a full list as not all toddler groups have given permission for their details to appear on the website. If you would like us to send you the full list, please contact our helpline.

Leisure Guide

We also have our own Leisure Guide that you can download. Please contact our helpline if you would like us to send you a copy.

School Holiday Activities

A range of activities take place in Stockport during the school holidays. These include sports courses, events at local parks and activities at Stockport attractions.

We produce a booklet for each holiday with ideas of things to do. This also includes information on the Open Access Playschemes run by Play Development. Contact us before each holiday to request a School Holiday Activities Booklet.

Also visit our website to download a list of Places to Visit 2013 throughout the year.

Family Link Stockport Ltd, Tel: 0161 477 0606
E-mail: info@familylinkstockport.co.uk
Web: www.familylinkstockport.co.uk



In Stockport, around a third of all the 'waste' thrown away in our household bins is food, and more than half of this wasted food and drink could have been eaten or drunk

There are numerous reasons why we end up throwing away food and drink, the most common ones are we prepare or serve too much or don't eat food in time before it goes off.

Understanding 'use by' dates and knowing the best way to store food to keep it fresher for longer can help save us on average £50 a month. Check the date. Did you know, you can freeze food right up to 24hrs before the use by date?

Best Before - These dates refer to quality rather than food safety. Foods with a 'best before' date should be safe to eat after the 'best before' date, but they may no longer be at their best.

Use By - These dates refer to safety. Food can be eaten up to the end of this date but not after, even if it looks and smells fine. Always follow the storage instructions on packs

Display Until and Sell By - You can ignore these dates as they are for shop staff and not for shoppers.

Did you know? - To extend the life of food beyond its date, freeze it before the date and defrost and use within 24 hours.

Providing eggs are cooked thoroughly, they can be eaten a day or two after their 'best before' date. Try and plan your meals. Check your cupboards, write a list, take it to the shops and stick to it. Use a meal planner to make the most of your food.

Store your food correctly to keep it fresh for longer. Apples go in the fridge, potatoes in a cool dark place, and store bread in the cupboard or freezer. You can freeze all sort of surprising foods, such as milk.

Do you make too much food? Try and get your portions right.

Last night's leftovers could be today's feast. Check out recipes on the website for great ideas to use up any extra food.

For more information about saving money and the environment visit <http://england.lovefoodhatewaste.com>

Are you a Stockport single parent? Are you looking to get back into work? Single Parents REACH would help you!

Family Link Stockport are offering FREE workshops for single parents throughout 2013.

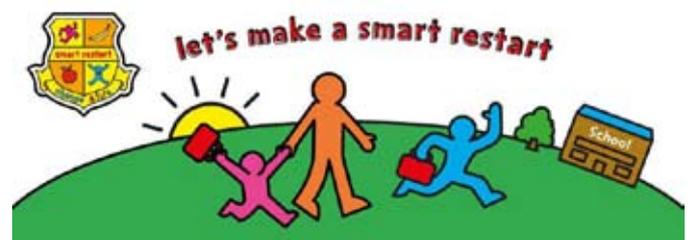
These high quality, informative work shops will deliver practical help on finding childcare, help with job search, family finances and employment rights.

- 1 day per week 10am to 2pm over 4 weeks.
- Lunch is provided.
- Small friendly groups.

Please contact us if you need help with childcare costs whilst attending the workshops (Funded by The Equity Foundation).

Next courses are running: -
Thursday 19th September, every Thursday for 4 weeks
Thursday 31st October, every Thursday for 4 weeks

For more information or to book on to the course contact **Laura McDonald** at Family Link Stockport on 0161 477 0606 or email laura.mcdonald@familylinkstockport.co.uk



Change4Life - Smart Restart

This year a new campaign from Change4Life will help families start the new school year off on the right foot. It's a great time to make a healthy change and with Smart Restart you'll get loads of free stuff, fun ideas, support and offers all the way to half term.

It's all about building physical activity and healthy eating into children's school time routines. TV, radio and online advertising goes live from mid-August onwards and there will be a free app to get families on the right track to keep children active.

By signing up you can get information via the app, by email and by text. Also see their website www.nhs.uk/Change4Life for lots of other ideas.

Supporting your child at school



Children can achieve well at school when their family and friends take an interest in their school and schoolwork. Getting involved in your child's education, even in the simplest way, shows that you care about their school life. Often, the more supported a child feels at home, the more effectively she or he will learn at school.

Helping your child get the best out of school

Try to give encouragement and show appreciation of the child's achievements, whether great or small, this will help boost their confidence. Try to teach them necessary organisation skills and how to manage their time so they are not overwhelmed with projects or homework. Be realistic and avoid putting your child under pressure by having over-high expectations. Let your child develop at their own pace, but if you do have concerns, please speak to their teacher. Try to give feedback rather than criticism, e.g. saying 'that didn't seem to work' rather than 'you got it wrong'. This helps them think about where they went wrong rather than feel a failure.

You might find contacting the school or talking to your child's teachers difficult, or think they will not have time for you. But finding out more about their school life and what they are learning shows your child how much you care about their education. And getting to know the school and the teachers is the best way of finding out more.

Tips to help you keep up with what's happening at the school

- Make sure your child gives you any letters that are sent home.
- Look out for notices and posters for parents.
- If you can, check the school website.
- Try to make it to the fun events, like school fairs, and to parents' evenings.
- If you are worried about anything go and talk to a teacher. They will want to help.

Out of school support

Often parents like to introduce a variety of interests in and out of school too so children have the opportunity to explore other interests that they enjoy. Learn together, do things together, visit interesting places, talk about things you've seen on television and allow your child to ask questions. Encourage reading by having books, magazines and newspapers in the home and let your child see you and other family members reading them.

When a child comes home from school, they may be tired so try not to fire too many questions at your child as soon as they walk through the door. They may be tired or hungry and not feel like talking. Be available to listen later if they want to talk.

If your child is struggling at school

If your child has Special Educational Needs (SEN), it is even more important to be involved so you can understand what support your child is receiving at school and whether he or she is on target. You can speak to their class teacher or the SENCO if your school has one. You may hear terms that are unfamiliar and if this is the case, you can always speak to the school or your Local Education Authority about what these mean. Your child may have an IEP (Individual Education Plan) which is reviewed on a quarterly basis, this will indicate what support your child needs and how this is being met by the school. These plans should be set with your involvement in a meeting with the teacher and SENCO. If your child does need extra help, find out from the school how he or she can be supported at home, it may be something as simple as allowing them to draw more often to help with fine motor skills, etc.

Helping your child make new friends

A child's main anxiety may be the fear of not knowing anyone when they first start school or having no friends. But children are usually very flexible in making new friends and some schools will actively help new pupils to get to know one another through peer mentoring or buddying schemes. Children sometimes make friends and then fall out again for a short time - many different groupings and regroupings can occur in the early days. You can help your child by encouraging them to:

- get to know as many classmates as possible
- talk to you about them if he or she wants to
- encourage them to build a social life with friends outside of school
- invite and visit friends after school or at weekends, if circumstances permit
- ask them to join clubs that they are interested in, as there may be like minded friends attending too

If they are struggling to make friends, speak to the school and see if they are able to support your child and offer suggestions too.

For more support and advice contact Family Lives, confidential helpline on 0808 800 2222 or email via familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/email-support/

Packed lunches with a nutritional punch

If you're opting for packed lunches for your child, you'll want to make sure they meet your child's nutritional needs. After all, when children eat better at lunchtime, they do better in class in the afternoon.

But research also shows that the vast majority of packed lunches aren't meeting the same healthy standards as school meals. The Children's Food Trust have put together their top tips on what makes a healthy lunchbox and how to introduce a healthy packed lunch policy at your school.

Your child's school may have a packed lunch policy to make sure that all children, whatever lunch they have, are getting a consistent message about healthy eating in school. Lots of parents say they are not sure which foods to put in a lunchbox to be sure your child's getting a good lunch. These packed lunch menus do take a bit more time and effort than you might expect - because the trick to a balanced diet is lots of variety, so that your child's getting a range of the nutrients they need to grow.

The Children's Food Trust have produced three different packed lunch menus for primary school-aged children with tried and tested recipes. They meet the same healthy standards as school lunches.

Visit their website www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/parents/resources/packed-lunch-menus-and-recipes

You can also find a guide for secondary school children's meals and loads of other information about improving what children eat.

Beat the Back to School Blues

Starting out at a new school, many pupils may not know many other students. Maybe their friends from primary school are going to different secondary schools and even if they do know other pupils they might feel nervous that they don't know any of the older pupils.

This can lead to concerns about how they are going to make friends among this sea of unknown faces. Most secondary schools now hold new pupil orientation sessions before school term actually starts. These are helpful not only because they give pupils the chance to learn their way around the building and get to meet some of the teachers, but they also get to meet fellow pupils. That way on their first day of school new pupils may already recognise a few familiar faces.

When talking to people at orientation sessions, new pupils find that a lot of them are feeling the same way. They're all new to the school and don't know what to expect. Talking about a common concern with fellow classmates can spark new friendships.

Tips for making friends:

- Smile, introduce yourself and ask questions
- Say to myself 'this person is a bit left out, shall I ask them....'
- If they are lonely, go ask them if they want to play.
- If they tell you to go away, say 'ok then, I'll be over here if you want me.'
- Write all your friends down on a piece of paper and 1 reason why they are a good friend.
- There will be other people in your tutor group who are going to the same lessons as you, so stick with them.

Anti-bullying advice:

- Bullying affects lots of young people and happens in many schools but it's the way it's dealt with which makes the difference between life being tolerable and a misery for many.
- Bullying can happen anywhere: at school, travelling to and from school, in sporting teams, between neighbours or in the workplace.

For more information about starting a new school and keeping safe visit: www.safetynetkids.org.uk

Encourage your child to be safe on the roads

Cycling and walking to school is good exercise and the freedom to travel alone encourages children to develop a number of skills - awareness, planning and self-dependency. It also helps develop their social skills as they will see and interact with others as they travel. Most children start to walk and cycle independently at about age 10, so it is worth preparing them to make sure they know how to behave safely on roads.

The Department for Transport gives the following advice for parents depending on the age of your child.

Ages 5 to 6 - Leading the way

- When you are out together, teach your child the basics of the Green Cross Code - THINK! STOP! LOOK! LISTEN!
- Practice on quiet roads near your home, firstly crossing together, then letting your child lead you across.
- Always cross the road at the safest place - use a proper crossing if there is one. If not, make sure that you have a good view of what's coming and that traffic can see you.
- Explain why you are crossing there. Also explain the need to be careful around driveways, bus lanes, etc.
- Setting up a rota with other parents to take your children to school can be a good way of keeping your child safe whilst both reducing congestion on the roads and freeing up your time. Make sure you have a car seat for each of your child passengers.
- It's always a good idea for children to wear clearly visible clothing such as a high-visibility vest and/or bright, pale coloured clothing so drivers can see them.

Ages 7 to 9 - The Green Cross Code

- Now is the time to explain the Green Cross Code in full to your child. When you are sure they know and understand it, let them cross the quiet roads where you have been practicing, watching and testing before letting them do it alone.
- Gradually start crossing busier roads together, but do this many times before you let your child cross alone.
- Make sure your child can be seen easily by ensuring that they are wearing bright or fluorescent clothing during the day and retro-reflective clothing at night, whenever they are out and about.
- Make sure that whenever your child is out on the road they are constantly aware of what is happening around them and are not distracted by personal stereos, mobile phones or friends.

Ages 10 to 15 - Gaining independence

- This is the age at which children usually start to travel on their own. They are also likely to be moving to a new school and travelling further a-field.
- Make the school journey as safe as possible by discussing together any dangers along the route. Consider whether your child could take an alternative route (even one that's slightly longer) to avoid hazards such as roads with fast traffic and explain to them the importance of sticking to this route.

Taken from www.3m.co.uk/intl/uk/3mstreetwise

Homework Help

Make Stockport Libraries your first stop for resources to help you complete your homework or school project. Library staff can help you find the information you're looking for in books, e-books, encyclopaedias and on the Internet with a selection of homework help websites.

Help online

Libraries have lots of information online including encyclopaedias and dictionaries. You can look at them in the library and even from your home computer (you'll need the number on your library card). It's like having a reference library at home for free.

Help from Enquire

This is a free live chat, question and answer national service available 24/7. You will be connected to library staff in the UK or one of their international partners. Visit the www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk to find out how.

Text Help

You can text your question to 07624 805 621 and library staff will find the information you want and text you back.

PCs4U

If your child is aged 7-11 they can join PCs4U, an after school club where they can explore websites with games and quizzes, get help with homework and find out how to use books and encyclopaedias to find information.

Parents

By showing an interest in homework parents, carers and other family members can make a real difference to children's learning. If you want to brush up on your Maths or English there are lots of courses available locally. To find out more visit www.stockport.gov.uk/services/education/educationtrainingandemployment/continuingeducation

For more information on Libraries contact Stockport Direct on 0161 217 6009 (Lines open from 8.00am to 8.00pm Monday to Friday and from 9.00am to 4.00pm on a Saturday)

Free School Meals and Clothing Grants

Some Stockport families are still paying for school meals for their child when they do not have to. Free school meals could save families up to £380 a year for each child.

Families that receive any of the following benefits or meet the criteria below are entitled to Free School Meals:

- Income Support
- Income-Based Job Seeker's Allowance
- Income related Employment Support Allowance
- Guarantee part of Pension Credit
- Or if you have an annual income (as assessed by the HM Revenue & Customs) of less than £16,190 each year, but not Working Tax Credit - your child will be eligible to receive Free School Meals

Registering your child for a Free School Meals also benefits their school as they receive extra funds as the government is giving money to schools to help children from lower income families do their best - this funding is called a 'Pupil Premium'.

For every child registered, and entitled, the school gets £900 to help children from lower income families. If you don't want your child to have the school meals they can continue as normal - as long as you qualify and are registered, the school will still receive the additional funding.

To check if your family is eligible for Free School Meals call into any Stockport Direct Local Centre for a benefits check.

If you are receiving Free School Meals and have children either entering or attending secondary school you will automatically qualify for a school clothing grant. If you have a child in year 7, you will receive £80 towards the cost of the uniform and £20 each year for children in years 8 to 11.

For further information call 0161 217 6009 or visit www.stockport.gov.uk/benefits

Taking children out of school for holidays

The Department for Education (DfE) has informed schools that there will be changes that will affect any parent/carer who chooses to take a holiday during term time. All schools will no longer be able to authorise absence for the purpose of taking a holiday for up to 10 days.

The press and media reports have begun to report on the recently amended Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 which removes the rights which Head teachers' had, to authorise holidays in term time. This will take effect from 1st September 2013 and applies to all Local Authority maintained schools.

The aim of this change is to prevent the routine authorising of term time holidays, and to discourage parents/carers from taking holidays in term time for whatever reason. In the past Head teachers have authorised or considered authorising where a parent cannot take leave or a special family event/celebration takes place. It will no longer be possible for Head teachers to authorise absences on this basis.

Is your child due to start nursery or school in 2014? Be aware of the dates for your applications.

Two year old children who would meet free school meal eligibility criteria and those looked after by the Local Authority will be entitled to 570 hours free early education. To confirm your eligibility you can simply drop into your local Sure Start Children's Centre where they will check for you.

- You will need to provide your national insurance number, name and date of birth.
- They will then provide you with a letter that you can take to the provider of your choice as proof of your eligibility.

All three and four year old children are entitled to 570 hours free early education. In Stockport this is provided by a wide range of settings:

- Voluntary, Private & Independent
- Nursery schools and classes maintained by the Local Authority for 3 and 4 year olds

If you want to apply for a 3/4 year old place in a maintained Nursery school or class for September 2014 you will need to apply using the Stockport Council online admissions system by 31st March 2014.

You can ask to be considered for your child to start at your preferred nursery school or class before the normal start date in September 2014. If there is room your child could start in January 2014 or after Easter 2014.

Date of Birth	Place From	Deadline to Apply
1st September - 31st December 2010	Start of Spring Term 2014 (January)	2nd Nov 2013
1st January - 31st March 2011	Start of Summer Term 2014 (After Easter)	15th Feb 2014

If your child will be 4 years old by the end of August 2013 you will need to apply for a primary school reception place to start in September 2014 by 15th January 2014.

To apply for a secondary school place to start in September 2014 you will need to apply by 31st October 2013. More information on the procedures to apply for your child's place can be found on the council website

www.stockport.gov.uk/services/education/educationtrainingandemployment/schooladmissions/applyingforaplace/

From October 2013 Universal Credit will be introduced across the UK.

Universal Credit is a new benefit which will replace the following benefits nationwide in Great Britain from October 2013.

- child tax credit
- housing benefit
- income related employment and support allowance
- income based jobseeker's allowance
- income support
- parts of the social fund
- working tax credit

Universal Credit is an attempt to simplify the current benefit system in order to remove barriers to you getting and keeping work. The Government sees work as the route out of poverty rather than benefits.

Universal Credit is being phased in over a period of four years from 2013 to 2017 and the old benefits will not disappear for some time.

Who can claim Universal Credit

To claim Universal Credit you will need to satisfy the following conditions:

- be 18 or over (or age 16 or 17 in certain cases)
- be under state pension credit age
- be in Great Britain
- not be in education
- have accepted a claimant commitment

The intention is that most claims will be made either online or by telephone (there may be alternative ways of claiming in exceptional circumstances).

If you have a partner

- you will make a joint claim for Universal Credit. If one of you does not meet any of the above conditions they will be ignored for the purposes of calculating the Universal Credit maximum amount - although both of your savings/capital, income and earnings will still be taken into account.
- and only one of you is over state pension credit age you will both have to claim Universal Credit unless either of you was already receiving state pension credit before Universal Credit is introduced.
- and only one of you is in full-time education both of you will still have to claim Universal Credit.

Find out more about Universal Credit by visiting www.gov.uk/universal-credit

Feedback: We welcome your feedback on this edition of Family News Stockport. Please contact us with any comments or suggestions for future editions on 0161 477 0606 or Email: info@familylinkstockport.co.uk

If you would like this publication in large print, Braille, on audio tape or disk, please Tel: 0161 477 0606 or Email: info@familylinkstockport.co.uk

Although every effort is made to ensure information in Family News Stockport is accurate, Family Link Stockport cannot accept responsibility for errors arising from information we have been given. Views expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of Family Link Stockport staff and parents and carers are advised to carry out their own checks of services.



Registered Charity No. 1079948
Registered Company No. 3896754

The co-operative membership
community fund

Do you qualify for funding to help make your home warmer and more energy efficient?

**Exclusive offer for residents in Stockport
Boilers – Insulation – Help & Advice**

As part of our commitment to improving the housing in our borough, Stockport Council is working with our approved installer Forrest; as part of the Greater Manchester 'Toasty' initiative, to identify homes that may qualify for free or heavily subsidised home energy efficiency improvements including new boilers and insulation; this also now includes those hard to treat homes that could not be insulated under our previous schemes.

Want to find out if you qualify?
Call the Greater Manchester Energy Advice Service (free phone) on **0800 009 3363** – one of their knowledgeable and trained advisors will be able to give you an idea of the sorts of things you may be entitled to and if your home is likely to be suitable. Alternatively, you could try our online tool at www.getmetoasty.com.

What happens next?
A friendly, **local council** approved surveyor will arrange to come round to your property at a convenient time for you to carry out a free energy efficiency assessment of your home. If you qualify, an installation date will be agreed with you and you can then look forward to a warmer property and cheaper energy bills.

Don't forget!
Your family and friends may also be able to benefit from this offer so please spread the word.

We look forward to helping you keep your home warm and 'Toasty' as well as reducing your energy bills!

CALL NOW ON - 0800 009 3363

NEW OFFER Find out by giving us a call on **0800 009 3363** or visit getmetoasty.com

forrest GET ME TOASTY