

Bringing the local offer in Leicestershire to life

SEND NEWS

FREE

A pilot project in Leicestershire

Developing an autism friendly
community – see page 4



Produced by

A warm welcome to the third edition of SEND News

Words by:

Paula Sumner

Assistant Director,
Education and SEND,
Leicestershire County Council



I would like to welcome you to the latest edition of SEND News. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect our daily lives, it is more important than ever that we stay connected. As we respond to the difficult and evolving situation, we are further developing our own expertise and knowledge, maximising the technologies and tools available, so that we can support Leicestershire families.

The county council, schools and partners are continuing to work hard to deliver services and support children, young people and their families. This may be in different ways due to social distancing, self-isolation or shielding but please be assured that we are here to support children and families in Leicestershire.

I'm sure you will also share my thanks for the incredible dedication, commitment and kindness shown by so many people during this time of adversity. Special thanks must also go to schools and early years settings for their hard work. They have gone above and beyond, doing their very best to support children and families. As we move forward with hope for the future we can celebrate positive stories of autism friendly communities and the development of a new school for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

We will continue to update you regularly through our different communication channels and encourage you to contact us for support and advice, if needed - by telephone, online or by accessing the many useful resources available on the **Local Offer website**.

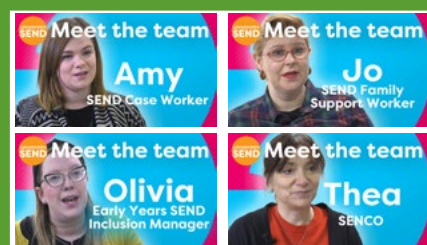
Stay connected

The Local Offer Facebook Page has been busier than ever and it's great to see so many providers being so innovative in offering support to families at home. From daily seated exercise to virtual quizzes, families have been able to take part in various activities to help keep children active in body and mind! Don't forget to give the page a follow for lots of daily inspiration, support and to stay connected during this time.

www.facebook.com/Leicslocaloffer

Meet our Local Offer team

In response to what young people and families have told us, we have developed a series of short videos of professionals talking about their roles. The "Meet the team" videos are here to help you understand what support is available, how you can access it and what to expect from their service. Find out more about our **SEND Local Offer team**.



Keep an eye on our new **Local Offer web pages** for more videos in the coming months!



Short breaks, play and leisure

▶ Due to Covid-19, many summer play scheme providers will not be able to deliver activities this year. Those that are providing services will only be able to offer places to a small number of children due to social distancing guidelines. We have worked closely with the Leicestershire Parent Carer Forum and want to make sure there is still support available to you in the summer holidays.

Direct payment card

Following feedback we're offering all families who have an agreed summer play scheme in place, a direct payment card instead of the usual service.

This money will be for you to spend on activities or resources before September 2020 - it can also be used with providers who can offer 1-1 play scheme places or online services. Examples could include a subscription to an online magazine, a digital device and apps, sensory resources, garden equipment or entrance fees to an attraction - any activity that's going to best meet the needs of your child.

Already have a summer playscheme agreed?

For those families who already have a summer playscheme

agreed, you will be receiving a letter and form providing you with all the details, including how to contact providers who are offering 1-1 support and other activities.

You should have received this letter by 25 June. Please complete and return the form as soon as possible in the enclosed pre-paid envelope.

If you do not receive a letter or are uncertain whether this applies to you, please contact your Social Worker or SEND Family Support Worker. If you're unable to reach your worker, please call the Children and Family Wellbeing Service on **0116 305 8727**.

If you have recently requested a short break or summer playscheme, but have not yet heard back from us, please speak to your SEND Family Support Worker or call the Children and Family Wellbeing Service on **0116 305 8727**.

Here to support you

We will continue to accept and assess new requests for support. If you would like to self-refer we have a request for service form **here**. You can also ask any professional involved with your family to make a referral on your behalf.

For the latest information please see our **Activities and Groups page**. ■

Parent Carer Forum

▶ Due to social distancing measures we haven't had face to face meetings, however we recently held our first virtual hub!

Hubs are where our members can get to know and support each other, find out what the forum has been doing, meet with service providers who are sometimes invited as guests and give their voice for us to take back to service providers. If you're interested in finding out more or getting involved please email us:

admin@leicestershirepcf.org.uk

For updates please visit our:

Website

leicestershirepcf.org.uk

Facebook page

www.facebook.com/leicspcf/ ■

Domiciliary care

▶ We continue to work with providers of home care to ensure essential services are provided, but anticipate there may be some disruption in the coming weeks.

Where families have agreed, alongside their school and social worker, not to access a school place, discussions should be held with your social worker or SEND Family Support Worker if you feel your needs have changed. They can be contacted by telephone on **0116 305 0005**. ■

A Pilot Project in Leicestershire

Developing an Autism Friendly Community

Words by:

Kevin Baskerville

Team Manager,
Autism and Learning Support Team

With the impact of Covid-19 and the lockdown period, it's more important than ever to build on the positive community spirit we've been seeing across the country. Harnessing greater awareness of the needs of people with autism is part of that process as we move forward.

► An inspiring project, underway before social distancing measures were implemented, has taken a closer look at what an 'Autism Friendly Community' (AFC) could be like, what would be required and what a community can do to achieve it.

The goal was to encourage a village community, that has both primary and secondary schools, GP Surgeries, shops and local businesses and other amenities, to understand the challenges faced by people with autism, their families and carers and to develop local support based on five main objectives:

1. to put **KNOWLEDGE** into communities understanding that different people will require different things
2. to build an **EMPATHY** – enabling communities to take care of each other, develop trust and decrease isolation, loneliness and improve communication
3. to strengthen an **UNDERSTANDING** – of diverse needs and how these can contribute towards better community cohesion, vibrancy and long-term sustainability
4. to increase **TOLERANCE** and **ACCEPTANCE** – communities not just tolerating but accepting, celebrating and embracing difference





5. to forge a **PUBLIC LIFE PARTICIPATION** – where disadvantaged people and people with diverse needs feel able to fully engage, sharing skills and experiences to enrich the community.

Good progress has been made with the following activities and initiatives taking place so far:

- Training available at Kibworth Library that's accessible to the public and a section comprising recently purchased books and resources relating to autism, to help develop a better understanding within the community.

- Establishment of an Autism Friendly Kibworth Facebook page
- Parent training sessions planned within the community
- Steering committee established and voluntary organisations within the area contacted and engaged
- Plans in place for an autism friendly junior parkrun within the village and other ventures

The pilot project is ongoing but engaging the local community to develop local strategies and solutions is key to building ownership and people feeling more accepted, understood and included both within their local schools & community. ■

The idea for the project was inspired by both the 'Friendly Community' initiatives and areas within the UK where an Autism Friendly Community has been actively developed - most notably the cities of **Aberdeen, Liverpool and Glasgow**

The project in Kibworth, Leicestershire was established as a joint initiative between the Kibworth area community and teams at Leicestershire County Council including Adults & Communities, Chief Executives Community Development and Children and Families Autism Outreach.

The strategies and solutions identified are now embedded into the LLR (Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland) Autism Strategy.



www.kibworthcommunitylibrary.org.uk | Supported by your Parish Council

- Informative and inclusive posters in shops that suggest positive ways to help someone with autism
- Autism friendly times for shopping and awareness to reduce lighting and sound within increased awareness within the Co-Op
- Establishment of 'The Well' café as a hub with groups developed where people can come together to discuss their needs
- An Autism Champion identified within the village

All aboard!

Social distancing and 'lock-down' can be challenging but, here in the Autism and Learning Support team our hearts were lifted when we were sent this wonderful picture by email, drawn by a young child who receives intensive support for autism. His advice? We can just stay on the 'Smile Train'!



Action plan will boost SEND support



▶ The county council and NHS partners are drafting a plan of action to boost and improve support to young people in the county, following an inspection of the area's SEND offer by OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The Leicestershire Parent Carer Forum (PCF) and children and young people will also be involved in developing this plan.

There were two areas for improvement and work on both is already underway:

- The way education and health care (EHC) plans are assessed, planned and monitored

- A clearly defined joint commissioning strategy, along with implementation of a redeveloped neurodevelopmental pathway.

The main findings of the report identified many strengths, such as the way partners work together to identify and meet the needs of children and their families, the value parents put on the county's specialist educational units and special schools, and the range of health and leisure services available to young people with SEND.

The inspection was carried out between 3 and 7 February this year and the report was published on

15 May. Along with our partners, we will now prepare a 'Written Statement of Action'. We have until the 7 October 2020 to submit this to Ofsted and our progress will be monitored by the Department for Education as we develop the plan. A steering group of key partners has been set up to develop the action plan, anyone interested in getting involved in this work can email **Brenda.Wile@leics.gov.uk**

Further information, including the final inspection report, can be accessed on our web page **SEND inspection by Ofsted and Care Quality Commission** ■

Pause of new transport policy

▶ Leicestershire councillors have formally acknowledged the decision to further pause the introduction of the county council's special educational needs (SEN) home-to-school transport policy.

The new approach to providing post-16 SEN transport will now be introduced in September 2021.

The move to pause the policy for a further 12 months had been taken to end uncertainty for parents and carers as the council awaited the outcome of a court ruling.

The Appeal Court announcement made at the start of the month ruled that the policy is lawful after

certain elements of a Judicial Review ruling were challenged.



Councillor Blake Pain, the county council's acting deputy leader, said:

"It's understandable that families raised concerns – introducing a new policy was a tough decision for us to make, but we continue to face significant financial challenges.

"We're fully committed to working closely with families over the next 18 months."

The policy was originally due to be introduced in September 2019, but this was paused while the challenge through a Judicial Review was in progress. The most recent court case considered an appeal into limited aspects of the

original hearing.

Under the new policy, the council provides direct financial support through a Personal Transport Budget (PTB), which has been enhanced and ensures that existing voluntary holders of a PTB are unaffected in the short term.

The policy also recognises that taxi or minibus transport may be required for certain students with disabilities.

The policy allows the council to fully consider individual circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

For more information parents and carers can visit **www.leicestershire.gov.uk/PTB** or they can call **0116 305 0002** for more information. ■



Healthy, happy eating

► At the start of the year, public health (school) nurses were busy measuring the heights and weights of children in Reception year and Year 6 as part of the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP). This national initiative is designed to give a broad picture of how children across the country are growing. On the new 'grown-ups' section of the Health for Kids website, senior public health dietitian Paula McKee answers a lot of the most common questions parents have about NCMP. Take a look at this video in which Paula explains **how you can support your child to eat a healthy and balanced diet** whatever their weight.

On the site, you'll also find advice on how to support children who are very fussy when it comes to eating, or children who struggle to stay seated at the table. Mealtimes can be particularly difficult for families with children on the autistic spectrum. Take a look at these **useful tips to help make mealtimes a more positive experience** for everyone.

There's a fun **'Food for Thought' quiz** for kids to try too – challenge them to compare the fat, sugar and salt content of everyday foods. The results might surprise you!

Remember, if you're worried about your child's eating, or need support and advice, get in touch with your public health (school) nurse. Normally you can do this via the school office, but you can also text the service using the secure messaging system ChatHealth. In Leicester, text 07520 615381, and in Leicestershire/ Rutland text 07520 615382. The service is operational 9am -5pm Monday - Friday, and you will receive a response within 24 hours during these times. You may also want to check out the Change4Life recipes and resources at www.nhs.uk/change4life ■



Looking after yourself self-care kit for children

► Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust have developed a self-care kit for primary school aged children which is aimed at looking after their emotional health and wellbeing during this difficult time. The kit covers lots of topics, including staying healthy, handling emotions, letting go of worries and staying connected – plus there's some fun things to do whilst at home.

From breathing exercises to try, advice on conversation starters and a postcard that can be filled in with a message to a family member or friend they are missing. **Download the kit** from the Health for Kids website. ■



New provision for Oakfield Short Stay School pupils

▶ **Oakfield staff and pupils have now moved in to the new facilities on offer at both Shepshed (North) and Earl Shilton (South) schools.**

Oakfield South

The new provision is located within Newlands Community Primary School in Earl Shilton

Despite all the challenges associated with Covid-19 restrictions, pupils have been settling in well and they're enjoying meeting the new teachers as well as making the most of the lovely summer weather!



"Our new school is amazing thank you
Newlands Community Primary School for welcoming us!"



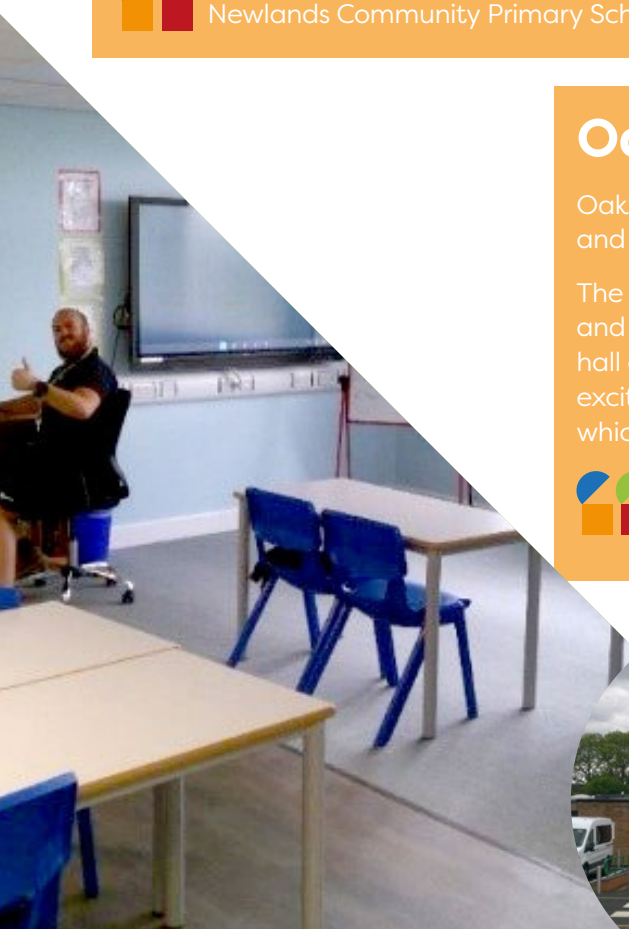
Oakfield North

Oakfield North is based at Shepshed, part of the Iveshead Campus and is a brand new school.

The new classrooms offer a completely different experience for pupils and there are lots of resources to help them learn. There's a large hall on site and a small 'forest schools' outside area. Pupils are also excited about the possibility of having additional outdoor equipment, which will help to support their health and wellbeing.



"We're really enjoying our new school
- thank you for building this for us!"



To find out more about
Oakfield Short Stay School
please visit the website
www.oakfield.leics.sch.uk

New school underway for pupils with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs

▶ Foxfields Academy, a new 50-place school for pupils aged 7 – 16 years with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, is being developed on the former Oakfield School site in Blaby.

The Community Inclusive Trust (C.I.T) has been approved as sponsor, by the Secretary of State for Education, to run the new school.



Councillor Ivan Ould,
county council cabinet
member for children

and families, said: “We consider a number of things when

recommending a sponsor, including a desire to help build a strong community and provide an inclusive learning environment. The C.I.T has an excellent track record in supporting young people with SEND and we look forward to working with them in the coming months to ensure a successful launch for the new school.”



Peter Bell, chief executive of C.I.T, said: “We are looking forward to working

in partnership with the county council to deliver the highest quality education and care to some of the county’s most vulnerable and complex pupils.”

As the council and C.I.T continue to move forward with the development it is estimated that the proposed opening date for the new school is September 2020.

You can learn more about the Trust’s proposal and feedback from the **recent consultation** for the new SEMH Free School.

You can also download a **leaflet** and an **admissions statement** for Foxfields Academy. ■

Fusion Academy – a new communication and interaction school in Barwell

▶ Construction work at the exciting new Fusion Academy communication and interaction school in Barwell has been delayed by a few weeks, due to the important social distancing measures in place. The estimated completion date is now 30th September and the council is continuing to work closely with both providers and contractors to remain on track.

So that the school can still accept pupils for the start of the new academic year, Dorothy Goodman school will be making one of their existing buildings available for pupils who will then be able to

move across to the new Fusion Academy in October.

To find out more about the new school in Barwell visit

www.thefusionacademy.co.uk ■





Mental Health Support in Leicestershire

► **Partners across Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland have come together to offer mental health support to children, young people & families in need.**

The coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis has caused major disruptions to family life, through the introduction of social distancing, school closures and lockdown. In difficult times like these, looking after our mental health is just as important as taking care of our physical health. It's normal to feel anxious at the moment, and children and young people of all ages are just as affected as adults by the worry and stress coronavirus can cause.

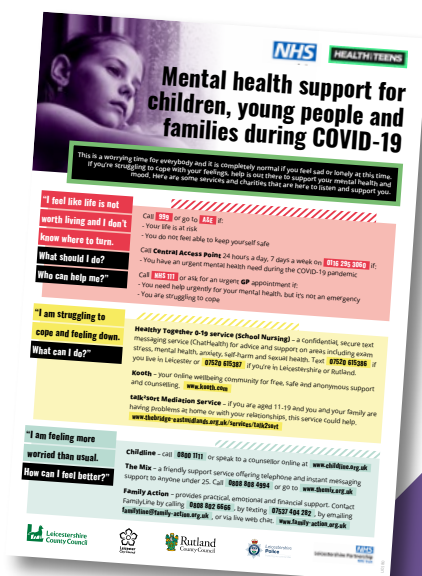
This may be even more pertinent if we or those around us are directly affected by Covid-19. All those involved will have been affected in some way, though each person's experiences of the event will be personal and therefore different. We may have thoughts and feelings which we have not experienced before. This is a normal reaction to a very abnormal experience and these emotions may last for some time.

Mental Health Resource Pack

Help is at hand for young people, parents, carers and professionals with a comprehensive **Mental Health Resource Pack**.

What's included?

- A **poster** with key contact information including urgent help
- A **leaflet** listing both local and national resources
- A **guide** for young people



Are you a young person struggling to cope, feeling down or more worried than usual?

It's okay not to be okay and you're not alone. There's a useful online guide with lots of information on further support and advice **here**.

Urgent help

If you're at breaking point you can call 999 in an emergency, NHS Central Access Point on 0116 295 3060, NHS 111, or your GP. ■