

SEND MATTERS

Summer Holiday 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 second edition of SEND Matters. On behalf of the Council and all partners, we were delighted to receive such positive feedback regarding our first edition and we hope that you get a lot out of this edition. It has been an incredibly challenging few months due to covid-19 and whether you care for a child with SEND or work and support those that do, I would like to offer my sincere thanks for all that you

have done and are doing. The summer holidays can be both a time of great family fun and enjoyment but also bring its own pressures and stresses. We hope some of the information in this edition proves useful to you but please do contact the Early Help Hub on 01234 718700 or the [Local Offer](#) should you feel that you and your family need more support and help at this time.

THINGS TO DO OVER THE SUMMER



Summer Holidays 2020 are certainly going to be a bit different this year, but after these past few months of lockdown, now more than ever families will be looking for activities and clubs to keep the children occupied and spend some quality time together outside of the family home. Of course, whilst it has been lovely to spend time with the children at home, it is also nice to find activities to keep them occupied and give everyone a little break from each other every once in a while!

Below, we have listed just a few selected activities that you and the kids can do at home, free activities you can do outside and various clubs, play schemes and paid for activities available across Bedford Borough.

These are just a few highlighted examples; our Local Offer has a dedicated Summer Holiday page where you can find all sorts of activities and events. This is being updated throughout the Summer so please do keep checking to find events and activities for you and your family. To view the dedicated summer holiday page [click here](#).

ACTIVITIES TO DO AT HOME

The Higgins Museum may be closed until further notice, but the team have been working hard to bring activities online. Your children can take part in 'sketch Friday' where they draw / model / paint various items from the Higgins collection, they have online jig saw puzzles and a chance for you and the kids to record your experiences during covid-19 to be used in future exhibitions! For more information [click here](#).

Is your child a lover of nature? Do they love to hunt for creepy crawlies, or watching the birds in the sky? Then the **Woodland Trust** have pulled together lots of fun games, activities and craft ideas that you can do in the garden or local parks and woods that they will love. The 'Nature Activities for Kids' blog on their website has been a huge hit with many families during lockdown. For more information [click here](#).

Libraries may be closed at the moment but the **Summer Reading Challenge** is still here – they have just moved it online. Teaming up with the Silly Squad website there is a new way of recording what your kids have read. Stuck for ideas regarding what to read? Do not worry – the dedicated page on the Local Offer has many recommendations for children of all ages, as well as information as to how to access books online. For more information [click here](#).



PAID FOR HOLIDAY CLUBS AND PLAY SCHEMES



SSG have been providing socially distancing activities and respite during the covid-19 lockdown and they are bringing this knowledge and experience to their regular summer holiday club in 2020. Everyday will be action packed and fun filled for the children attending with a range of superb activities on offer, supervised by the experienced SSG Activity staffing team. Fun-filled themed weeks including daily Inflatable Fun sessions, Active Play, Adventure and Challenge and Wacky Craft sessions. For more information [click here](#).

Premier Education are delighted to announce their summer programme

is now online and ready to book at Goldington Green Academy, Bedford. At Premier Education, we're on a mission to give every child the opportunity to get active safely, and this summer is no different.

Each group will operate as a 'bubble' during each day of the Holiday Camp. All activities on offer during the day can be delivered whilst observing the 2m social distancing rule, enabling us to provide fun and engaging activities in a SAFE way. Bookings will available for 3 or 5 full days only. This will limit the number of children coming in and out of the school for just one day at a time and reduce the risk of infection. Check out the page on the Local Offer for more information and how you can get up to 50% discount, [click here](#).

"Extraordinary activities for extraordinary young people" – **Bedford and District Cerebral Palsy Society** will be running their 'Skool's Out' playscheme for children and young people with complex disabilities between 8 and 18 years old. These are full days (9:30am – 3:30pm) of fun, inclusive, creative and empowering activities led by experienced staff and volunteers who are all fully trained and DBS checked. For more information as to how you can book your place [click here](#).

Bedford Mencap is running its Summer Play Scheme in 2020. There will be smaller group sizes due to covid-19 but this play scheme remains a fantastic opportunity for children and young people with learning disabilities to take part in fun activities and trips. For more information [click here](#).



BBPCF are the voice for Parent Carers of children & young people 0-25yrs with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities in Bedford Borough. We feed back 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. 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. During Covid-19 we have been hosting regular virtual get togethers to allow some face to face interaction for parents to chat as well as talk to different services.

A quote from a parent that joined a recent event, **"It's great to speak to people that get what it's like for me."** Please check out our website or social media to find out more about upcoming virtual get togethers.

PAID FOR ACTIVITIES

If you and the kids love board games but have already played everything in your home (Twice!) then head on over to **Ready Steady Roll Café** in Sharnbrook. With over 350 board games to choose from, and helpful staff to guide you through the rules of how to play, you are sure to be able to have a lovely morning or afternoon as a family. Social distancing measures are in place and advance booking is required. For more information [click here](#).



Do your little monkeys love little monkeys? Are your wild things running wild? Then how about a day out at **Woburn Safari Park**. We have updated the Local Offer with all of the latest coronavirus updates from the Safari Park and links to where to find more information [click here](#).

The theatre may be closed at the moment, but both **Cineworld and Vue** are hoping to open with social distancing measures during the summer holidays – watch this space on the Local Offer for more details as we get them. In the meantime, you might fancy a bit of a nostalgic drive in experience; **MK Bowl Drive In** is putting on a range of theatre performances, music concerts and other events suitable for younger children through to teenagers alike. Plus there is some Tony Hadley for the oldies too! For more information [click here](#).

They may have been cracking you up during lockdown, but can they crack the code? **Bletchley Park** has reopened with social distancing measures in place. This is a fantastic piece of local history for all the family to enjoy. For more information [click here](#).

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Being out of school for such a long time, with restricted access to their usual social spaces, is likely to be difficult for many young people and families. Schools, parents and carers can take steps now to manage this difficult period, look out for signs of stress in young people, in the [last edition of SEND Matters](#) our Education Psychology service listed steps that could be taken to support with family wellbeing at this time.

Stress and anxiety in such an unusual and unpredictable situation is normal, but for some children additional support and guidance may be required. Bedfordshire CCG has dedicated page with a list of commissioned Mental Health and Support services which can be [found here](#).

Online self help

Across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes, clinicians have created an information sheet to bring together resources and phone apps that may be useful to maintain mental well-being during the Covid-19 crisis and beyond. These resources are free to use unless otherwise stated. Phone apps are available for both Android and IOS (Apple) operating systems unless otherwise stated. Some resources are area specific. These resources have not been tested by the compilers of this information sheet.

To see the full list of resources please [read this Information sheet](#).



“MEET THE TEAM” – SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY SPECIAL SCHOOLS TEAM



Bedford Borough Council, Bedfordshire CCG and Bedfordshire Community Health Services have worked together to jointly commission a new speech and language therapy service for the Special Schools in Bedford Borough. Working in coproduction with Bedford Borough Parent Carer Forum the local area identified this as a key need and worked collaboratively to commission a new service to support. Now fully operational, we asked the team to write a piece for SEND Matters to introduce themselves:

Hello! We would like to introduce ourselves as the new Speech and Language Therapy special schools team in Bedford Borough, working as part of the wider NHS CCS Team.

Nicky Ash, Claudine Sharples and Jess Price (Speech and Language Therapists) and Wendy Hodgson (Support Therapy practitioner) will be working across the 3 special schools in Kempston.

We are very excited to all be in post and will be working to provide ongoing assessment, therapy, reviews for the children and then training, advice and support for our families and schools.

Throughout the COVID pandemic we have been remotely offering telephone consultations, virtual assessments and resources in order to support our families and schools. We will continue to work

remotely until it is safe for us to return to schools, as we will need to move between classes and sites.

We are committed to working together with our families and schools in order to provide a service that is accessible for everybody. We want families to know that they can come to us for support and we are always at the end of the phone / email and will be providing drop In sessions so that parent / carers can share their concerns, ideas and feedback with us alongside a cup of coffee.

We are also looking forward to coming along to sessions at the Parent Carer Forum so you will also be able to meet us here and ask any questions you may have.

We are developing further resources that will benefit everyone and these will be posted on our [Website](#) and [Facebook](#) page. We are also going to be developing resources and information for the [local offer](#) so you will be able to find out more information there.

Please do let us know if there is anywhere else you feel we could post information so that you can find things easily.

We are very excited for the future and would love to hear your views on how we can support you further.

For more information or support please contact us on:

General enquiries:

ccs.beds.childrens.slt.admin@nhs.net

Nicky Ash: Nicola.ash4@nhs.net

Claudine Sharples: claudine.sharples@nhs.net

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[Children's Speech and Language Therapy in Luton and Bedfordshire Facebook Page](#)

ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT YOUR AUTISTIC CHILD AT HOME THIS SUMMER

We asked Bedford Borough's Autism Advisory Service to provide some advice and guidance for things parents and carers can do at home to support:



If possible, try to aim for an assortment of structured activities mixed in with free time and / or time to engage in favoured activities.

- Aim for at least one outdoor activity each day.

If possible, visit somewhere outdoors away from home whenever you can. This will help maintain the skills for coping in less familiar environments where the social demands are likely to be higher than at home.

- This can be
 - a visit to the local park,
 - going on a sensory walk – encourage the use of all 5 senses to explore as you walk.
 - or even a day away if your child can cope

In each case, your child will need some structure in place. They will need to know where they are going, what they will be doing and when it will end. If it is somewhere new, it might be an idea to go on a pre-visit alone to take photos, or you could investigate online if this is not possible. If your child is able to cope, you could try to find a map and decide on a route together.

Ideas from Twinkl resources

These resources can be accessed online and printed off. There are resources applicable from children from early years to 18 years in some of the activities.

You can personalise the settings by selecting the most appropriate key stage / age level to suit your child. You can also opt to use a different language.

Art Activities include

- a 3D cactus template pack
- Create your own superhero worksheet
- Self -portrait frame templates
- Addition to 20 seaside themed colour by numbers

Cooking activities include

- Recipe templates
- Instruction writing templates
- Halloween pumpkin soup
- How to cook a turkey
- Traffic light biscuits
- Gingerbread people differentiated instruction activity
- Biscuit recipe sheets
- Yummy melting snowman biscuits

If you enjoy cooking, there is also the accessible chef website which has over 100 visual recipes to enjoy. <https://accessiblechef.com>



Outdoor activities

- How to grow a plant
- Walk through a forest activity

You can also access lots of ideas for growing seeds, plants and vegetables in the paid versions.

Apps ideas for use with tablets

Keystage 1

Twinkl Colouring Book app.

This has background easy listening music (which you can mute if you prefer). The free version has 5 items to colour on each page. There is a paint palette and a creation studio where the child can paint and save their own designs. You have more options available for a small fee. (Different packs cost .99p each.)

Quiver 3D colouring app Key stages 1 & 2

With this app, you can print off pictures for your child to colour.

When your child has coloured it in they can hold their tablet over the top of the picture capturing the picture within the coloured square and the picture comes to life in 3D. The picture moves with sound effects! Simply follow the instructions on the app

There are a number of different versions. There is Quiver Masks, Quiver Education, Quiver Spectacular Entertainment. Older Children may enjoy creating comics on Strip Design or brushing up on different languages with Duolingo.



Lists of Activity ideas online

www.autismspeaks.org/blog/10-fun-summer-diy-sensory-games-kids

This website lists ten sensory-based activities that children can make and play with to include

- *balloon printing*
- *Coloured beans*
- *Polka dot slime*
- *A Spider web walk*

This website lists 30 activities many of which can take place outdoors: <https://theautismhelper.com/30-summer-fun-activities>

YOUR WELLBEING

The past few months have been a challenging time for all parents; for those caring for children with additional needs this challenge can be tenfold. As well as keeping their children safe from coronavirus, many have had the added responsibilities of working from home and home schooling, or they've been worried about losing their job and the financial impact that would have on their family. Having to contend with these extra pressures over such a long period of time, it is understandable that some parents could be feeling the strain. It's important for all parents to look after their own mental health and recognise the signs that they may be struggling emotionally or mentally.

Common symptoms of stress and anxiety include feeling tense or nervous, being unable to relax, worrying excessively about the future, being tearful and having difficulty sleeping. Some patients report physical symptoms such as a faster heartbeat or headaches or loss of appetite. But the important thing for every parent to remember is that if they are suffering from anxiety, fear or panic – help is available. In Bedfordshire there is a range of services offering mental health support, many of which can be accessed without a GP referral. One such service is Parentline, which is a free, confidential text service providing advice and mental health support to parents and carers of children and young people between the ages of 0 to 19 years. Don't let stress and anxiety affect you and your family, seek help right away.



Dr Roshan Jayalath

Clinical Lead for Mental Health, NHS Bedfordshire CCG.

HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD WITH ANXIETIES REGARDING RETURNING TO SCHOOL

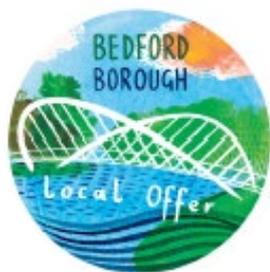


When students return to school in September, the changes and uncertainty are likely to lead to some anxiety. Working closely with your child's school will help to reduce both you and your child's worries or concerns. Below are some suggestions of how you may wish to help your child manage their return to school as well as what you may expect from school.

- *Effective communication:* You should have a key point of contact in school to talk to and share specific information that may impact on your child's return to school (e.g. bereavement due to Covid-19).
- *Create a plan around the transition:* Talk through what the first day back at school after lockdown may look like, and emphasise the positives as well as the potential challenges.
- *Plan for separation anxiety:* Your child may find it difficult to be away from you when school starts in September. Even if they have not experienced difficulties separating from you in the past, their experiences during the lockdown period (whether positive or negative), may mean that they become anxious when they have to leave you. Inform the school of how they feel and work with their teacher in setting some high interest activities at the beginning of the day.
- *Predictability and routine:* It is important to maintain consistent daily routines, especially during the settling-in phase in the initial weeks. Try to prepare your child for changes ahead of time, and schedule pleasant events and 'special time' with your child wherever possible.
- *Listening to your child:* Ask gentle questions and provide opportunities for your child to voice their concerns.
- *Help your child to manage his/her feelings:* Help your child to understand a range of different feelings. Reassure your child by emphasising that adults are working hard to keep them safe. Normalise feelings and remind your child that everyone is experiencing difficulties at this time, and there is no 'right' way to feel.
- *Self-esteem:* Help your child to develop a sense of mastery and control wherein they are able to connect with their personal strengths. Encourage discussions which consider their lockdown experience, and how they have dealt with potential challenges.

More information on managing your child's transition back to school is available from the [local offer](#) or contact the Educational Psychology Team

LOCAL OFFER CORNER



[Bedford Borough's Local Offer](#) continues to provide up to date information for children and young people with SEND their families and all practitioners working to support them. It lists services available to children and young people, ranging from social and sporting clubs to family support groups, health services and specialist support services. If you are a service provider who would like to add their service to the Local Offer or if you are supporting a family and want to identify what support is available locally then please do check out the Local Offer.

All of the information regarding covid-19 has been pulled together into a dedicated page which is regularly updated as well as our dedicated Summer Holiday page. Please also follow us on Twitter and Facebook where we share lots of useful resources and information.

We are keen to have young people with SEND, their families and those that work and support them involved in ensuring our Local Offer is as useful, relevant and interesting as possible. If you have any ideas as to what you would like to see on our Local Offer then we would love to hear from you! Contact us at local.offer@bedford.gov.uk

“A SENDCO’S PERSPECTIVE” OF COVID-19

The last term has certainly had challenges but SENCOs have been reflecting on the positives and how these can change the provision in the future. The reduction in noise and amount of pupils in school has meant that some pupils have thrived and have been able to learn and enjoy school.

“I have loved watching our high anxiety and vulnerable children come out of their shells! Working better, talking to staff and peers, no shutdowns, less self-harm and smiles! I’d love school to work this way every day!”

“We had a pupil stay a whole day yesterday- the first time for two years”. Another SENCO reported that a Year 7 pupil was able to walk home on their own because the pavements were less busy.

Technology and remote learning do not suit everyone but many report that pupils that have loved remote learning because of the reduction of peer interaction and distractions. Going forward SENCOs are talking about how technology and a greater amount of quiet times can help with supporting pupils to engage and learn in and out of school. Embracing technology to support pupils learn without stress could make the new normal be a more accessible one. The following links provide more details of how technology can support learners through speech to text, text to speech and changes to the colour scheme.

www.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility www.apple.com/accessibility
www.google.co.uk/accessibility/products-features.html



Virtual meetings have proved a great way to get all agencies together and SENCOs have reported this increase in communication to be beneficial to the provision and support for pupils and families. There have been challenges but the sense of community around schools and amongst SENCOs have been strengthened.