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FAMILIES INFOCUS NEWS

Spring 2012

Supporting families of children with disabilities & special needs across Essex

Chelmsford Star Co-operative *Viva Italia!* Success

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Thank you to everyone who supported the recent *Viva Italia!* Shopping Evening at Quadrant Chelmsford which was a huge success and raised £1,009 for Families InFocus (Essex) and the Federation of Essex W.I.

As our 'charity year' is drawing to a close we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for all the

support, encouragement, commitment, enthusiasm and fantastic fundraising efforts of everyone at Chelmsford Star Co-operative Society who has and is still continuing to support us. Thank you from us all.

On-line Donations, Face book and Keeping You Updated

We are pleased to announce that we have taken advantage of a new on-line charitable giving concept launched by Essex Community Foundation called Localgiving.com which offers people the opportunity to support a local charity. Please consider supporting us by donating on-line through our direct webpage link: Localgiving.com/charity/familiesinfocusessex (also accessed via our own website). The facility will also collect Gift Aid on our behalf.

To support fundraising activities we are registered on Just Giving via www.justgiving.com/FamiliesInFocusEssex.

We are now also on facebook. If you like facebook, then send us a friend request, share the link and help us spread the word! Our page will be regularly updated with important news and activities but not as a forum as we believe that confidentiality is important for our parents/carers so we would ask that you continue to contact us directly via email or phone if you need support. Our website is also regularly updated with news of our charitable work and the fundraising that goes to help fund our work.

Visit www.familiesinfocusessex.org.uk

STOP PRESS: Thank you to Karen Saye for nominating us for the Heart of Essex 2012 chance to win a share of £8,000. If we are fortunate enough to be short-listed our entry will be printed in the Essex Chronicle Group supplement on 4th May. Please vote for us. Thank you.

PARENTS' INDULGENCE DAY IN BRAINTREE

Alternative therapists will be providing a range of treatments for parents of children and young people with disabilities/ special needs on

Wednesday 13th June 2012
at the Baptist Church,
Coggeshall Road, Braintree
between 10.30am and 2.00pm
Buffet lunch provided.

Donation discretionary. A crèche will be available whilst you have treatments but in order to use this you must let us know in advance.

This is a very popular event with limited spaces, so book early by filling in the return slip on page 8.



Hi Kids

I hope everyone at Kidzspace has enjoyed the activities so far this year, especially those of you that have joined recently. January was a great start to the year celebrating Chinese New Year at Izumi, followed by bowling. February was all about burning off energy at Laserquest and fun was had by all in March with Easter Crafts. Here are the forthcoming events to tempt you so book early! **Jo**

Jo Sapstead, Kidzspace organiser

Friday 25th May 6.15pm to 8.15pm	£5.00	Roller-skating Madison Heights, Maldon
Friday 8th June 10.30am to 2.00pm	£5.00	Pond Dipping/Mini Beasts & Dens Hanningfield Reservoir
Monday 30th July 11.15am to 2.45pm	£8.00	Skiing/Tobogganing & Lunch (mini-bus included) Brentwood Ski Centre
Tuesday 21st August 10.15am to 2.45pm	£5.00	Team Building & Assault Course (mini-bus included) Belchamps Scout Camp, Hockley

You are advised to book early as we only have a limited number of places on most events. To confirm your booking, we require an updated consent form, completion of reply slip returned with payment (postal orders acceptable if no bank account held). Cancellations are non refundable. If you do not have a consent form or details need updating, please contact the office on 01245 353575. We do not wish children to be excluded due to financial difficulty. Please contact us in confidence as there may be a means of providing help.



FAMILIES INFOCUS (ESSEX) ACTIVITY CLUB

at Chelmsford Sport & Athletics Centre
Salerno Way, Chelmsford, CM1 2EH

Join us for FUN every Saturday Evening 3.30 to 5.30pm (unless advertised)

Play activities for children with a disability or special needs and siblings, accompanied by their parents/carers

- *Qualified trampoline coach available (every Saturday)*
- *Free play, games and equipment (every Saturday)*
- *Gymnastics circuit and coach (9th June, 7th July, 2^{1st} July, 4th August)*
- *Sports coach - football (to be confirmed)*
- *Set in nice airy, secure and friendly environment for the children and somewhere parents, friends, family and carers can come to relax, talk to other parents or rush about with the children*
 - *Suggested donation £1 per child*

***PLEASE NOTE:**

There will not be a club on 12th & 19th May, 16th & 30th June and 18th August as the centre has events.

For further details please phone us on 01245 353575
email: karen.fif@btconnect.com or come and visit

PLEASE NOTE: We will not be running the Family Saturday Activity Club on 12th & 19th May, 16th & 30th June and 18th August as the centre will be holding events.
So how about a trip to London Zoo on 19th May?



Children with disabilities and their families are invited to London Zoo's Special Fun Day with reduced admission on **Saturday 19th May 2012**

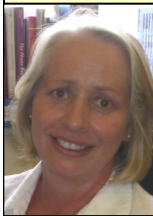
Children under 3 years FREE, ages 3 up to 18 years tickets £8.50, one Carer (over 18yrs) per family gets in FREE, additional Adults £12.50.

Don't miss: Discovery Zone: hands-on activities and a chill-out zone. Animal displays: exciting animal feeds & talks accompanied by British Sign Language interpreters. Olli the signing monkey: NEW FOR 2012 learn some animal-themed sign language at Olli's show or meet him around the zoo. Rainforest Experience: sensory experience for children with sight impairment (limited places, must be pre-booked). Animal Adventure: meet animals in the touch paddock, play in the splash zone or secret garden. Arts & Craft Zone: make your own badge, treats and toys for the animals or draw with the resident artist.

For more details and to buy tickets contact Steve Marriott Tel: 0207 449 6551, email: steve.marriott@zsl.org or visit www.zsl.org/zsl-london-zoo/whats-on/special-childrens-day-2012



Julie Neilson, adviser for Chelmsford



Hilary Popiolek, adviser for Colchester (part) & Tendring



Denise Poole, adviser for Braintree, Harlow, Epping & Uttlesford



Pat Kent, adviser for Colchester (part), Maldon & Chelmsford (part)



Amanda Whitehead, adviser for Basildon, Brentwood, Castlepoint, & Rochford

Please contact us in confidence on 01245 353575 if you require any advice, information or support on issues of concern about your child including benefits and educational matters.

BENEFITS UPDATE

If your child has care needs, over and above that of a child of the same age without a disability or special need, then they could be entitled to Disability Living Allowance (DLA). This is a non-means tested benefit and has two components - the mobility component and the care component.

New rates of DLA from April 2012

Level	Care Component	Mobility Component
Higher	£77.45	£54.05
Middle	£51.85	N/A
Lower	£20.55	£20.55

If you aren't sure if your child qualifies, please contact us for more information

Come along to our drop ins, have a pamper, a coffee, tea and a chat. Pre-school children welcome too

Lancaster House, 140 Mildmay Road, Chelmsford

Every Wednesday in term time 10am to 12 noon. **Therapist available every 1st Wednesday of the month offering reflexology & massage.**

Baptist Church, Coggeshall Road, Braintree

Every first Thursday of the month between 10am and 12 noon. **Therapist available offering reflexology & massage.**

FAMILIES INFOCUS (ESSEX) WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP



parent forum

For families who have a child with additional needs



Families InFocus (Essex) has been successfully working in partnership delivering support groups with Sure Start Children's Centres across Essex, notably Sure Start Children's Centres in Chelmsford, Maldon and Tendring.

The award of contracts for the future delivery of Children's Centres has seen a change in service providers which means that at this stage the future of our joint initiative is unclear.

We will keep you informed.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks and best wishes to past and present staff and hope that we can continue to work in partnership to support families.

When?
10am – 12 noon
The first Tuesday of the month.
Term Time Only

Where?
Millhouse Junior School
Tavistock Road
Laindon
SS15 5QF

We would like to invite you to our **B.I.G.** (Basildon Inspiration Group) parent forum.

Come and find **support, friendship, information,**

For more information please contact:
Amanda at Families InFocus (Essex) on **01245 353575**

Autism Anglia Conference
'Autism: Exploding the Myths'
Conference

Thursday 28th June 2012
Weston Homes Community Stadium, Colchester

The day will include notable speakers and practical workshops together with a marketplace for organisations to exhibit their products and services. Please email: conferences@autism-anglia.org.uk for more information.



Carers Week
18 - 24th June 2012

The theme this year is "In sickness and in health". Organisers are keen to hear how much a caring role impacts on health and wellbeing; worries and effects of cuts to local services affecting lives. Are employers sympathetic? More information on Page 4. Also visit: www.carersweek.org or call 0845 241 2582.

In the recent budget the government agreed to exempt carers from their plans to withdraw working tax credit from families working between 16 and 23 hours.

As a result of campaigning by Contact a Family and other organisations, the government agreed that a couple can continue to be eligible for Working Tax Credit, so long as one parent works 16 hours and their partner is entitled to Carer's Allowance.

Unfortunately some benefit changes previously announced, will still take place in April. These include:

- Scrapping of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) 'in youth' for new claimants on 30th April. Most young people will be able to claim income related ESA instead but some may lose out. The government also intends to time limit payments of contributory ESA to 12 months for less severely disabled claimants.

- Reducing backdating of tax credits following a new claim, or a change of circumstances from 3 months to 1 month. In addition the timescale for notifying the Tax Credit Office about a Disability Living Allowance award for the purposes of getting full backdating of disability elements will also be reduced to 1 month.
- The introduction of a new rule which means that if your annual income drops, the first £2,500 of any reduction is not taken into account in calculating your tax credit award.

Source: with thanks to Contact a Family

If you are concerned or unsure about changes to benefits or tax credits please email your Family Support Adviser at Families InFocus (Essex) or phone us on 01245 353575

DID YOU KNOW?

Carers Week is a partnership of eight national charities: Age UK, Carers UK, Crossroads Care, Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie Cancer Care, MS Society, Parkinson's UK, and The Princess Royal Trust for Carers.

The partnership was formed in 2001; the week having previously been organised by Carers UK (then known as Carers National Association). Since that time the number of events and activities has expanded from 200 to over 5,000, and the number of local partners from 70 to over 1,200.

In 2012 they will be highlighting how:

- the health and well-being of carers is paramount
- cuts to local services does have a knock on effect on the health and well being of unpaid carers.
- recognition by professionals, and by others who impact on carers day-to-day lives, can help to make a massive difference

For more information visit: www.carersweek.org
or call 0845 241 2582.

The British Dyslexia Association e-petition calling for mandatory Dyslexia teacher training

The British Dyslexia Association e-petition proposes that Initial Teacher Training course providers should be required to deliver mandatory and consistent dyslexia awareness sessions to ensure teachers understand dyslexia, its impact on learning and what constitutes dyslexia friendly practice.

Information about the petition can be found at: www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

The petition itself can be found at <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/20674>

Future Fundraising Dates for your Diary

“Don't forget the Indulgence Day on Wednesday 13th June Details on front page”

2nd & 3rd May Charity Production of 'Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead'
a comedy set during the events of Hamlet. An open-air performance (weather permitting) by Year 13 students from KEGS in full period dress! with proceeds to Families InFocus (Essex).

Sunday 1st July Caprice Essex Wind Band Children's Charity Concert
4pm at Boswells School. The programme will include Disney Fantasia, Harry Potter and Blues Brothers amongst other things! Proceeds to Families InFocus (Essex).

Sunday 16th September Blackwater Charity Triathlon in aid of ourselves and Action for Family Carers. See www.blackwatertri.org.uk for full details. Our own Julie Neilson will be taking part and other participants very welcome!

To register your interest or for more information on any of these events please complete slip on page 8 or email us at familiesinfocus@btconnect.com



Families InFocus (Essex)

Supporting families of children with disabilities and special needs

In partnership with



Present

'Wills, Probate and Trust Funds'

Jonathan Schoop

Partner at Prettys Solicitors

will provide advice and information for parents/carers of children with special needs/disabilities and the legal issues surrounding planning for their futures

at

**PARC (Essex),
Great Notley Country Park,
Great Notley,
Braintree CM77 7FS**

on

**Wednesday 23rd May 2012
7.30 pm to 9.30 pm**

FREE for parents/carers

Present

**'Living With Autism'
a talk by Ros Blackburn**

Ros Blackburn was diagnosed severely autistic at just over a year old. Now in her 40s, Ros tends to feel that while many areas of her autistic condition have remained very severe, others, such as her severe language delay, have disappeared almost completely.

Ros gives an invaluable insight into her world of autism. She uses humour and gives graphic examples of her experiences and all aspects of living and working with autism.

at

**Wat Tyler Country Park,
The Green Centre,
Pitsea Hall Lane, Pitsea,
Basildon SS16 4UH**

on

**Tuesday 26th June 2012
10.00 am to 12.00 midday**

Please note that this talk may be difficult for some parents

FREE for parents/carers

£5 per head for Professionals

Contact Karen at Families InFocus (Essex) for more information or to reserve your place (phone: 01245 353575 or e-mail karen.fif@btconnect.com) or complete reply slip on Page 8.

Thank you to all our supporters

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO:

Chelmsford Star Co-operative

and everyone who has taken part in the many fundraising activities and events during the year.

The Staff at Moulsham Grange

Children's Centre, Chelmsford

for donating £141 instead of sending Christmas Cards.

Witham Round Table

for presenting us with a cheque for £500 raised from their extremely successful charity fundraising events including the Witham Carnival and annual fireworks.



Paul Gardner, Chairman of Witham Round Table, Priti Patel MP and the Mayor of Witham presenting cheque to Rachel Ellis, Director

THANK YOU ALL

If you would be interested in helping with fundraising events and activities, either on a one-off basis or regularly, or would like to join our friendly fundraising committee or discuss other ways you might be able to help us, please contact Rachel on 01245 353575.

THANK YOU.

New Sponsor of Newsletter Required

We are looking for a new sponsor of our termly newsletters. If you can help or know of anyone who we can approach we would love to hear from you. Please contact Rachel on 01245 353575.

Thank you



Our Director, Rachel Ellis presenting the Charity Cup to Lee Hutchings, Co-operative Team Captain

Congratulations to the Co-operative Football Team who beat the Essex Police 5-2 in the first Charity Football Final at Halstead Town FC. Well done to all the players and everyone who came along to give their

support. Special thanks to John Trice, Manager at Great Notley Co-op who was the driving force behind it all. Well done John!



Vanessa Howard

Thank you to Vanessa Howard, Marketing & PR Manager for her wonderful talk on the History of Nightwear and for sharing her exquisite collection with lots of interesting stories and also raising an impressive sum for us too.

Well done Vanessa!

Thank you to all our Volunteers and Trustees who work tirelessly with enthusiasm and passion in achieving such positive outcomes for our families.

A very warm welcome to Tasha Cornwell, Dani Roberts, Valerie Schormans, Harriet Whiteside and Margaret Wills who have recently joined our team of Volunteers. We are delighted to have you on board.

We say goodbye to Tim Farmborough who has stepped down as a Trustee due to work commitments. Thank you for your hard work and dedication.

Thank you to those parents who have already opted to receive their newsletter by email helping to save us money. If you would also like to receive future issues by email please contact Karen Mathews on 01245 353575 or send an email to karen.fif@btconnect.com

DIARY DATES - May to August 2012

DATE	ACTIVITIES	VENUE	TIME
KIDZSPACE EVENTS (See Page 2)			
Friday 25th May	Roller-skating	Madison Heights, Maldon	6.15pm - 8.15pm
Friday 8th June	Pond Dipping/Mini Beast & Dens	Hanningfield Reservoir	10.30am to 2.00pm
Monday 30th July	Skiing/Tobogganing	Brentwood Ski Centre	11.15am to 2.45pm
Tuesday 21st August	Team Building and Assault Course	Belchamps Scout Camp, Hockley	10.15am to 2.45pm
OTHER EVENTS (See Page 3)			
Every Wednesday in term time Therapist available 1st Wednesday	Drop-in sessions. Coffee, tea and a chat	Lancaster House, Chelmsford	10am to 12 noon
Every first Thursday of the month Therapist available	Drop-in sessions. Coffee, tea and a chat	Baptist Church, Coggeshall Road, Braintree	10am to 12 noon
Every first Tuesday of the month in term time Refreshments available	As above	Millhouse Junior School, Tavistock Road, Laindon	10am to 12 noon

PLEASE INDICATE WHICH EVENTS YOU ARE INTERESTED IN: (PLEASE SEE OVERLEAF FOR OTHER EVENTS)

KIDZSPACE (SIBLINGS) EVENTS

- I will be coming to **Roller-skating** on **Friday 25th May** and I enclose (£5 per child)
- I will be coming to **Pond Dipping** on **Friday 8th June** and I enclose (£5 per child)
- I will be coming to **Skiing/Tobogganing** on **Monday 30th July** and I enclose (£8 per child)
- I will be coming to **Team Building/Assault Course** on **Tuesday 21st August** and I enclose £..... (£5 per child)

TOTAL PAYMENT FOR KIDZSPACE EVENTS £.....(include in total overleaf)

Name (s) of child(ren)..... Age(s).....

.....

Please send consent form to

Tel No.....

DATE	ACTIVITIES	VENUE	TIME
<u>FAMILY EVENTS</u>			
Every Saturday (unless advertised)	Saturday Activity Club	Chelmsford Sport & Athletics Centre, Chelmsford	3.30 to 5.30 pm
Sunday 1st July (see page 5)	Caprice Essex Wind Band Children's Charity Concert	Boswells School, Chelmsford	4pm start
<u>PARENTS/CARERS</u>			
Tuesday 2nd & Wednesday 3rd May (see page 5)	Charity production of 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead'	KEGS, Chelmsford	TBC
Wednesday 23rd May (see page 5)	Wills, Probate & Trust Funds Talk by Prettys Solicitors	PARC, Great Notley Country Park, Great Notley, Braintree	7.30pm to 9.30pm
Wednesday 13th June (see front page)	Indulgence Day	Baptist Church, Coggeshall Road, Braintree	10.30am to 2.00pm
Tuesday 26th June (see page 5)	Talk 'Living with Autism' by Ros Blackburn	Wat Tyler Country Park, Pitsea, Basildon	10.00am to 12 noon
Sunday 16th September (see page 5)	Blackwater Charity Triathlon - Entries very welcome	Maldon Location	am start

PLEASE INDICATE WHICH EVENTS YOU ARE INTERESTED IN: (PLEASE SEE OVERLEAF FOR OTHER EVENTS)

Name (s)..... Address..... Tel No.....

Indulgence Day on Wednesday 13th June.

- I wish to secureplace(s) (any donation at your discretion) £..... enclosed (if applicable)
- I would like to book..... Crèche place(s) Name of child(ren).....Age(s).....

TALKS

- 'Wills, Probate & Trust Funds' on Wednesday 23rd May. I wish to secure place(s)
- 'Living with Autism' on Tuesday 26th June. I wish to secure place(s)

Fundraising Events (Please send me further information)

- 'Charity Production of Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead' on 2nd & 3rd May.
- 'Caprice Essex Wind Band Children's Concert on Sunday 1st July.
- 'Blackwater Charity Triathlon' on Sunday 16th September.
- I/We are unable to attend or take part but would like to make a donation £..... Eligible for Gift Aid: yes/no (please circle).

TOTAL PAYMENT ENCLOSED (KIDZSPACE/FAMILY/PARENT EVENTS/OTHER) £.....