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# FAMILIES INFOCUS NEWS

## Winter 2013/2014

*Supporting families of children with disabilities  
& special needs across Essex*

### A Message from our CEO

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As we look forward to the year ahead, I wanted to take time to reflect on the past year and to express my gratitude to the many people who continue to help make our charity so successful.

Firstly, I would like to thank all my wonderful staff, who approach their work with enthusiasm, commitment and dedication to the hundreds of families they support. Their continued focus and tireless work have allowed the charity to both maintain the level of support and to respond to the significant increase in demand from new families.

We sadly said goodbye to Denise Poole who retired after 12 years as a Family Support Adviser. She will be sorely missed. We warmly welcomed Janet Daghan and Linsey Hyde to enhance our team; more details of their roles and background on page 6.

And a huge personal thank you to our great team of highly valued Volunteers and Trustees, who are vital to our success and without whom, many of our activities could not take place.

I am also hugely grateful to our numerous funders, fundraisers and the many businesses and individuals who have made donations, either financial or in kind, or took part in fundraising events during the year.

We operate within a complex environment, with ongoing financial challenges and major changes with Social Welfare and Special Education Needs Reforms. However, I am confident that we will continue to provide vital support and help families navigate through these changes. In particular, we are looking forward to working together with other agencies to contribute to and support parents and families as part of the new 'One Plan'. My thanks too to Chris Perkins, Manager Specialist Teaching Service, who gave a talk on the 'One Plan' at our Annual General Meeting. She has also kindly produced a report, see page 4 and will keep us informed of progress. Finally, may I take this opportunity to wish you and your families a very happy, healthy & prosperous New Year.

*Rachel Ellis, CEO*

**PARENTS' INDULGENCE DAY  
IN CHELMSFORD**  
Alternative therapists providing a range of treatments for parents of children and young people with disabilities/special needs  
Thursday 13th February 2014  
Great Baddow Millennium Community Centre,  
Baddow Road,  
Chelmsford, CM2 9RL  
Between 10am and 2pm  
Buffet lunch provided. A crèche will be available but you must book in advance. This is a very popular event, so book early by filling in the return slip on page 8.

**HOT NEWS: Our Bid to Henry Smith Charity has been successful, £122K over 3 years to fund our Family Support Projects across Essex**

**'Disney and Friends Themed Party'**  
Saturday 15th March 2014  
from 3.30 to 5.30pm  
at Chelmsford Sport & Athletics Centre,  
Salerno Way, Chelmsford CM1 2EH  
Children will be entertained. Bouncy Castle. Prizes  
£2.50 per children. All family members welcome

To all Face book users - please follow the Link below and 'Like' us in order to receive our regular Posts and other useful information. Thank you <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Families-Infocus-Essex>



*Jo Sapstead, Kidzspace organiser*

**Hi Kids**

Happy New Year! Welcome to all our new members. Thank you to everyone who completed the Kidzspace questionnaire. Your feedback is very important to us and will help with future funding! As usual, last year we had lots of fun, including bowling, roller-skating, shelter building/toasting marshmallows and also the wonderful performance of Joseph. We start 2014 with some great events to tempt you, so if you are interested in coming along please book early. **Jo**

<b>Friday 31st January</b> 5.45pm to 7.45pm	£6.50	<b>Cup Cake Party</b> Pinkface Studio, South Woodham Ferrers
<b>Tuesday 18th February</b> 10.15am to 3.00pm	£8.00	<b>Bowling and Grand Central Restaurant</b> Basildon (minibus included)
<b>Saturday 22nd March</b> 2.15pm to TBC	£7.50	<b>The Wizard of Oz</b> Chelmsford Cramphorn Theatre
<b>During Easter Holidays (TBC)</b> All Day	£TBC	<b>Pony Day</b> Details to be confirmed

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 (18<sup>th</sup> Jan, 1<sup>st</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> Feb, 1<sup>st</sup>, \*15<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> March, 12<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> April)**
- **Table Cricket coach (11<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> Jan, 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb, 22<sup>nd</sup> March & 5<sup>th</sup> April)**
- **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: Disney Themed Spring Party will be held on 15<sup>th</sup> March (at the centre).**

**We are closed on 8<sup>th</sup> February as the centre has an event and on 19<sup>th</sup> April, Easter Saturday.**

**For further details please phone us on 01245 353575  
Email: [jo@familiesinfocussessex.org.uk](mailto:jo@familiesinfocussessex.org.uk) or come and visit**

**THANK YOU AND GOOD LUCK LUKE**

We sadly say goodbye to our wonderful volunteer Luke Holmes who has been providing fun football coaching sessions at our activity club over the last few years. The children have really benefited from his help and he will be sorely missed. Luke has also very kindly made a very generous donation of £250 which we will use to purchase play equipment at the club. We wish him and Sally every good wish in the exciting months ahead as they become new parents. We can't wait to see the new arrival!

**CAN YOU HELP? VOLUNTEER?**

Volunteers are needed to help run our successful weekly Saturday activity club and monthly Siblings Support Group.

If you have a few hours to spare please contact us to find out more about these exciting opportunities.

Contact Janet on 01245 353575 or email [janet@familiesinfocussessex.org.uk](mailto:janet@familiesinfocussessex.org.uk)

**STOP PRESS - Activity Club Funding Secured**

We are delighted that our Bid to Essex Community Foundation has been successful thanks to the fantastic support of the Alastair & Patricia Stewart Fund and the Potter Family. We are also through to the final stage with BBC Children in Need so are keeping our fingers crossed for good news in 2014.



Julie Neilson, adviser for Chelmsford



Hilary Popiolek adviser for Colchester (part) & Tendring



Linsey Hyde, adviser for Brentwood, Epping, Harlow, & Uttlesford



Pat Kent, adviser for Braintree & Colchester (part)



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

**We can offer** advice, information or support on any issues of concern about your child including benefits and educational matters.

**Our support is free** and we are able to offer help via **telephone**, face to face, outreach basis through **home visits**, accompanying to **meetings** and at our regular **drop-ins**.

Help with **educational issues** including:

- Support with Statutory Assessment, Statementing and Exclusions
- Advice and support with new SEND reforms and the One Plan project
- Talking through the issues with you
- Helping complete forms/letters
- Offering advice on the processes involved
- Being available to accompany you to

meetings, reviews etc (subject to us receiving enough notice)

Help with **disability related benefits** for the child/young person and family support including:

- Disability Living Allowance (child/young person)
- Personal Independence Payment (young person 16+)
- Family Fund and Carer's Allowance
- Other financial support including tax credits and Employment Support Allowance

Preparing for and attending **appeals** and **tribunals** (both education and benefits related)

Please contact us in confidence on 01245 353575 or email:

[helpline@familiesinfocusessex.org.uk](mailto:helpline@familiesinfocusessex.org.uk)

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

Lancaster House, 140 Mildmay Road, Chelmsford CM2 0EB

Every **THURSDAY** in term time 10am to 12 noon **Therapist available every first Thursday of the month offering reflexology & massage.**

Baptist Church, Coggeshall Road, Braintree CM7 3DA

Every **FIRST THURSDAY** of the month 10am to 12 noon. **Therapist available offering reflexology & massage.**

**Working in Partnership with Barnardo's Canvey Community Children's Centre, Resource Centre, Little Gypps Road, Canvey Island SS8 9HG**

**NEW DAY & TIME** now every **THIRD THURSDAY** of the month 12 noon to 2 pm. **Children can play in a safe and stimulating environment supported by qualified and experienced staff while you enjoy refreshments and access to specialist support, advice and information.**



As the Family Fund has limited funding, and is unable to help all families caring for a disabled child or young person, they use their own disability criteria to determine whether a child is eligible.

You do not need to wait for a diagnosis for your child to make a grant application if you think your child may meet the criteria below.

Disability Living Allowance awards are not an indicator that a child would be eligible for a Family Fund grant.

To meet the Family Fund's disability criteria, children and young people must have additional complex needs, or have a serious or life threatening illness.

AND There must be evidence that the child or young person's additional needs impact on a family's choices and their opportunity to enjoy ordinary life. The degree of planning and support required to meet their needs must also be much

greater than that usually required to meet the needs of children and young people.

AND They must require a high level of support in three or more of the following areas:

- The physical environment
- Education
- Communication
- Access to social activities
- Personal care, supervision and vigilance
- Specialist resources, including information and communications technology, required
- Medical or therapeutic treatment and condition management

AND The child or young person's condition must be long term or life limiting. By long term they mean lasting or likely to last 12 months or more.

If you think your child or young person may meet the Fund's criteria, please contact us on 01245 353575 for further advice.

## WARM HOME DISCOUNT SCHEME

Is a programme run by the Government and Energy suppliers to provide rebates on gas and electricity bills for people who meet certain criteria and in receipt of either Income Support, Income related Employment Support Allowance, Jobseekers Allowance and if you have a child in receipt of Disability Living Allowance. Check with your energy provider to see if you are eligible.

**NEW** Contact a Family - 'About diagnosis' guides for parents and carers concerned with the care of disabled children include:

- *Developmental delay*
- *Living with a rare condition*
- *Living without a diagnosis*

Guides can be downloaded from their website [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk) or call their free phone helpline on 0808 808 3555

The Children and Families Bill, subject to royal assent, will come into force from September 2014 and will bring significant reforms, including a new SEN Code of Practice for children and young people 0 to 25 years.

Major changes will include a requirement for local authorities, health and care services to commission services jointly to ensure that the needs of children and young people with SEN/disabilities are met. An integrated assessment process will need to be established, which involves children/young people and their families in the process. The statement of special educational needs will be replaced by an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, which will reflect aspirations for the future as well as current needs, and there will be some options for a personal budget.

The EHC plan will apply (if necessary) to those aged 16-25 in further education with a strong focus on preparing for adulthood. The local authority will also be required to publish a clear 'local offer' of services.

Until September 2014, the current SEN framework remains in force, but local authorities are already preparing themselves for the changes that need to be made.

Pathfinders are giving a steer to local authorities with key messages about the value of a person-centred approach, a 'tell us once' approach as well as a focus on identifying outcomes. They also report on the challenge of changing a culture which needs to put children/young people and families at the heart of the process, and which requires a different set of skills from the workforce.

In order to support Essex to identify some of the changes required to both practice and process, a number of projects are taking place over the next few months.

The Specialist Teaching and Preschool Service

works directly with staff and parents supporting several thousand children in Essex preschool and primary school settings, and is therefore a potential catalyst for wide scale change.

Each member of the service is currently engaged in a project to develop a One Plan which reflects the aspirations of the new way of working, with SENCOs and parents invited to participate in working differently and giving feedback to the local authority on the experience. Professionals working with those particular children/families will be encouraged to contribute to the One Plan, and Families InFocus (Essex) working together with other agencies are able to support parents as part of this process.

The project is based on the principles of Early Support, with the child/young person at the centre of the assessment, all professionals confident in working with the family, and parents/carers having an active partnership role in identifying, developing and evaluating the plan for their child.

For many children and young people, where resources are required which are beyond those available to the school, the One Plan may well become the basis of the new EHC plan in due course. However, there will also be some children and young people who have complex needs which require a One Plan, but their needs can be fully resourced by the school and other services without the need for an EHC plan.

Once the new SEN Code of Practice is published in Spring 2014, Essex will be in a better position to confirm how the new processes will operate, including the arrangements to transfer current statements of SEN to EHC plans. As they say 'watch this space'!

*With grateful thanks to Chris Perkins, Manager Specialist Teaching and Pre-School Service, SEN/AEN Provider Services.*

## Students Should 'CLAIM IT!

Virtually the only countrywide grant for those who need it, the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is available to any disabled student in England in higher education.

The grant is not means-tested, does not have to be repaid and is designed to cover the cost of specialist technology (both hardware and software).

You may be able to use the grant to help with the cost of other things like a non-medical helper, the cost of extra travel and other items for your course, such as extra books and photocopying.

To receive a DSA you will require a Needs Assessment to identify your extra study-related needs.

For more information please contact us on 01245 353575.

## MY FUTURE CHOICES

The Transition Information Network's free magazine for disabled young people, their families and people who support them.

It has articles about projects that support disabled young people and stories by disabled young people about their lives.

You can read MY Future Choices online or sign up for free membership to get the magazine by post and a monthly e-bulletin.

[www.transitioninfonenetwork.org.uk](http://www.transitioninfonenetwork.org.uk)

“Don’t forget the Indulgence Day on Thursday 13th February Details on front page”

“Don’t forget ‘Disney and Friends Themed Party’ in Chelmsford on Saturday 15th March Details on front page”

**Back by popular demand - A Talk by Dean Beadle**

‘Being Dean: an outline of my day-to-day life with Aspergers’



at PARC Play & Resource Centre,  
Great Notley Country Park,  
Braintree, Essex CM77 7FS

on Monday 10th February 2014

7.30/7.45 pm start to approx 9.30 pm

*Dean is in his twenties and speaks about his experiences with Aspergers Syndrome; discussing how he developed from a child considered a “monster” to an A-Grade student. Dean encourages his audiences to see the condition in a much more positive light, through his humorous and poignant anecdotes.*

£2.50 per head for parents/carers and £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@familiesinfocusessex.org.uk](mailto:karen@familiesinfocusessex.org.uk) or complete reply slip on Page 8.



Working in Partnership



**Support Campaign For New Free Specialist School**

We would like to make you aware of a special free school proposed for South Essex for children with severe speech, language and communication difficulties aged 9 to 19. Grove House School aims to open in September 2015 and will provide a specialist learning environment with teaching staff and therapists working together to deliver a suitably adapted and differentiated mainstream curriculum.

To gain approval from the Department for Education for this school, evidence needs to be sought to prove there is a high demand for this provision. The Grove House School Group therefore needs to hear from parents who may consider Grove House as a placement for their child.

To register your interest and support this proposed school, please visit their website

[www.grovehouseschool.co.uk](http://www.grovehouseschool.co.uk)

or e-mail [grovehouseschool@gmail.com](mailto:grovehouseschool@gmail.com)

to request a parental support survey.

**Want to influence the way we are run?**

The Board of Trustees, which is made up of volunteers, is responsible for overall management and running of Families InFocus (Essex), working closely with Rachel Ellis, CEO. We always welcome new trustees, in particular parents whose families use the services of the charity, and currently anyone with experience of IT, or from a legal background. If you are interested in becoming a trustee and would like to know more, please contact

Rachel on 01245 353575 or email:

[rachel@familiesinfocusessex.org.uk](mailto:rachel@familiesinfocusessex.org.uk)



InterAct are running **Strength2Strength**, a FREE five week Resilience Training course for Parents/Carers of children with Special or Additional Needs at venues across Essex. For more information contact Lesley Bailey on 01245 608307 or email [Training@interact.org.uk](mailto:Training@interact.org.uk)

**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 please contact Janet on 01245 353575 or by email [janet@familiesinfocusessex.org.uk](mailto:janet@familiesinfocusessex.org.uk)

Thank you

Please opt to receive future newsletters by email and help save us money!

Simply send an email to

[jo@familiesinfocusessex.org.uk](mailto:jo@familiesinfocusessex.org.uk) or

Phone Jo Sapstead on 01245 353575

Thank you.



# DIARY DATES - January to April 2014

DATE	ACTIVITIES	VENUE	TIME
<b>KIDZSPACE EVENTS</b> (See Page 2)			
Friday 31st January	Cup Cake Party	Pinkface Studio, South Woodham Ferrers	5.45pm to 7.45pm
Tuesday 18th February	Bowling & Grand Central Restaurant	Basildon	10.15am to 3.00pm
Saturday 22nd March	The Wizard of Oz	Chelmsford Cramphorn Theatre	From 2.15pm
During Easter Holidays (TBC)	Pony Day	To be confirmed	All day
<b>OTHER EVENTS</b> (See Page 3)			
Every Thursday in term time Therapist available 1st Thursday	Drop-in sessions. Coffee, tea and a chat	Lancaster House, 140 Mildmay Road Chelmsford, CM2 0EB	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, CM7 3DA	10am to 12 noon
Every *third Thursday of the month Creche available <b>* NOTE NEW DAY &amp; TIME</b>	As above	Canvey Community Children's Centre, Little Gypps Road, Canvey Island SS8 9HG	12 noon to 2pm

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

**KIDZSPACE (SIBLINGS) EVENTS**

- I will be coming to **Cup Cake Party** on **Friday 31st January** and I enclose ..... (£6.50 per child)
- I will be coming to **Bowling & Meal** on **Tuesday 18th February** and I enclose ..... (£8.00 per child)
- I will be coming to **Cramphorn Theatre** on **Saturday 22nd March** and I enclose £..... (£7.50 per child)
- I will be coming to **Pony Day** during **Easter holidays (TBC)**. Please send further details

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

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

Please send consent form to .....

Tel No.....

**DIARY DATES - January to April 2014**

DATE	ACTIVITIES	VENUE	TIME
<b><u>FAMILY EVENTS</u></b>			
Every Saturday (unless advertised)	Saturday Activity Club	Chelmsford Sport & Athletics Centre, Salerno Way, Chelmsford CM1 2EH	3.30pm to 5.30 pm
Saturday 15th March (see front page)	Disney and Friends Family Party	Chelmsford Sport & Athletics Centre, Chelmsford	3.30pm to 5.30 pm
<b><u>PARENTS/CARERS</u></b>			
Monday 10th February (see page 5)	Talk 'Being Dean: an outline of day-to-day life with Aspergers' by Dean Beadle	PARC Play & Resource Centre, Great Notley Country Park, Braintree, CM77 7FS	7.30pm to c9.30pm
Thursday 13th February (see front page)	Indulgence Day	Great Baddow Millennium Community Centre, Baddow Road, Chelmsford CM2 9RL	10.00am to 2pm

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

Name (s)..... Email:..... Tel No.....

**FAMILY EVENTS**

**Disney & Friends Party on Saturday 15th March.** No of Adults..... No of Children..... (ages .....)  
Payment enclosed £..... (£2.50 per child)

**Indulgence Day on Thursday 13th February**

I wish to secure .... place(s) (any donation at your discretion) £..... enclosed (if applicable)

I would like to book ..... Crèche place(s) Name of child(ren)..... Age(s).....

**TALK**

'Being Dean: an outline of day-to-day life with Aspergers' on Monday 10th February. I wish to secure ..... place(s) £..... enclosed (as appropriate)

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