



Welcome to the **Christmas Issue** of the Families InFocus E-Bulletin.

December is an exciting month for children (and big children alike!) but can bring a new set of challenges to those who struggle with transitions and changes to their daily routines. It can also place an extra financial burden on parents and carers. There are several charities that have produced fantastic survival guides to help during the festive period including;

THE NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY

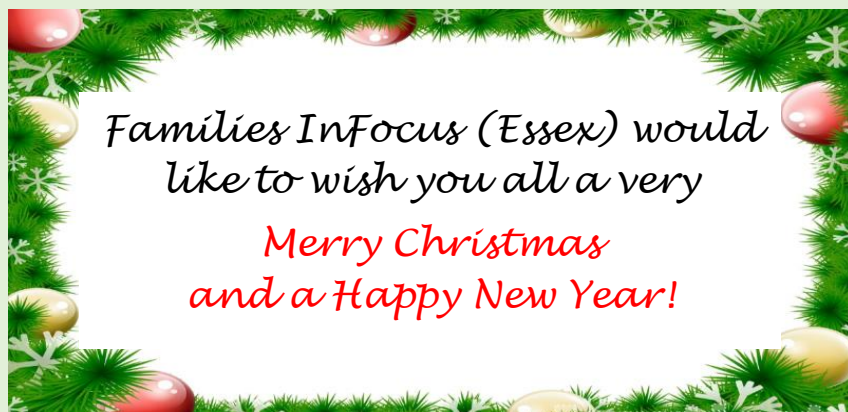
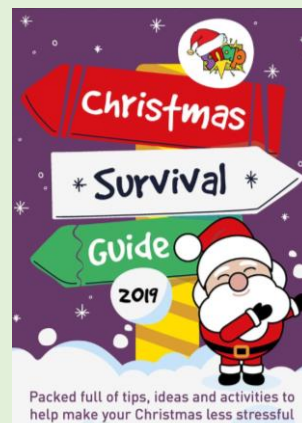
Autistic people and their families tell their stories, how they celebrate (or don't celebrate!) Christmas, and share their thoughts on what the 'perfect Christmas' means to them.

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/christmas>



SNAP have produced their annual Christmas Survival Guide which is full of handy hints and tips to make Christmas less stressful -

<https://www.snapcharity.org>



HOT NEWS: Our Bids to Henry Smith Charity and The National Lottery have both been successful and we have been awarded £129,870 over three years from Henry Smith and a total grant of £403,770, over three years from the National Lottery. This money will fund our Family Support Project across Essex. More information will follow in our next E-Bulletin!



Information

Families InFocus (Essex)

Supporting Essex Families for over 22 Years

Who are we?

We provide a free INDEPENDENT SEND Information, Advice and Support Service to any Essex family of a child/young person (0 to 25) with any special educational need or disability.

Our Family support Advisers provide support via telephone/email helpline, face to face, drop-ins, advice surgeries, and outreach through home visits/meetings (*Subject to availability*).

Help with Educational Issues includes:

- Information, advice and support with Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment and EHC plan and One Planning
- Information, advice and support with all other SEN support
- Talking through the issues, 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).

Other sources of help and support available:

- National Helpline from Contact (formally Contact a Family): Tel: 0808 808 3555 contact.org.uk
- SENDIASS Essex: Tel: 0333 013 8913 or visit send.iass@essex.gov.uk
- Essex Local Offer: essexlocaloffer.org.uk/content/send-information-advice-and-support-service

Our services are seen as essential, invaluable and our holistic approach means we can tailor our support to the individual families we help

Client Questionnaire



**Please could you spare a moment
of your time to help us?**

**Have we recently provided you
with support (in the last six
months) from one of our Family
Support Advisers?**

If so, we would be most grateful if you could kindly complete a **client feedback questionnaire**; via the survey monkey link;

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/2T3523X

Your participation in our survey will be vital in helping us to support future funding applications and will also provide important evidence to existing funders in highlighting the work we do with Essex families.

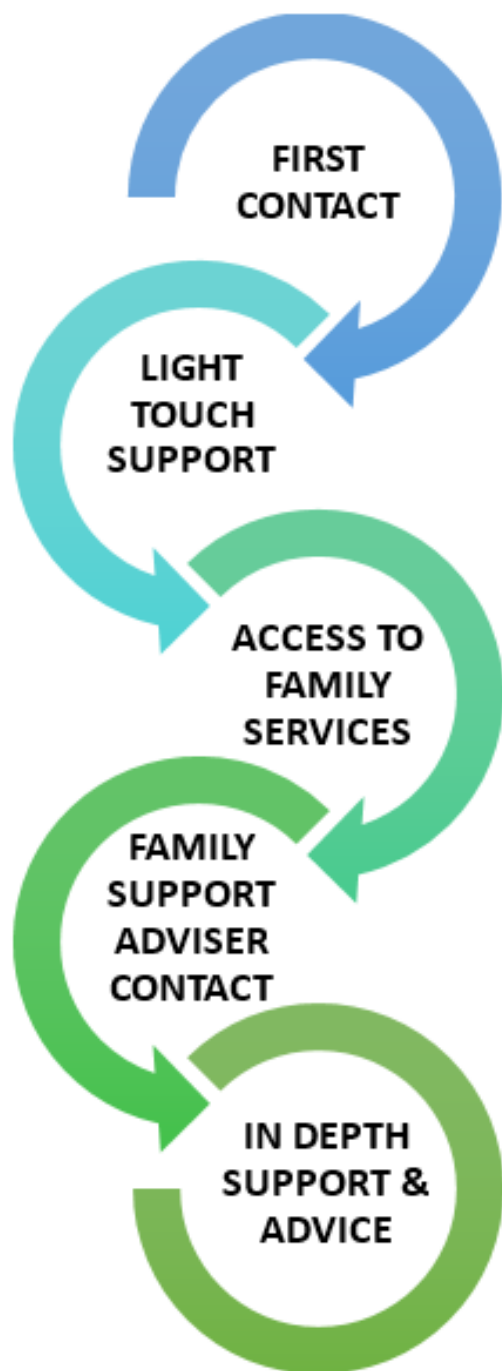
As an independent charity, Families InFocus (Essex) is funded almost entirely on donations and funding applications.

The survey should take no longer than 7 minutes to complete and please be assured that we will not share any personal or sensitive information to third parties.

Thank you for your support!



FAMILIES INFOCUS (Essex) offer a one stop information and advice service which can be accessed free and without a GP referral.



CONTACT US

Via Phone, Facebook message or by filling out a Referral Form on our website.

INITIAL ADVICE VIA OUR HELPLINE STAFF

Signposting to other sources of help
Practical advice and guidance by our trained helpline staff given to parent carers

ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR ALL THE FAMILY

Outreach clinics
Saturday Activity Club
Kidzspace
Parent drop-ins
Indulgence days

A DEDICATED FAMILY SUPPORT ADVISER

If further support is required you will be assigned your own Family Support Adviser who will give you independent and trusted support every step of the way.

IN DEPTH SUPPORT

Support can be given via 1:1 parent meetings; professional and school meetings. Also offer help with form filling (Benefits and Education), Mediation and Tribunal Support.



Website: familiesinfocussessex.org.uk



facebook.com/FamiliesInFocusEssex



Helpline: 01245 353 575



helpline@familiesinfocussessex.org.uk



What's On

SATURDAY ACTIVITY CLUB

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



Every Saturday 3.30pm – 5.30pm*

(* unless otherwise stated. Up to date closures announced on Facebook)

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

£2.00 per child

CLOSURES:

Saturday 28 December

Saturday 21 December - Christmas Party**

**CALL 01245 353 575 or email the helpline
helpline@familiesinfocussessex.org.uk**

Our club has recently been awarded funding from Action for Children Essex Short Breaks. If you have a passport number, please say at time of registration/ or when signing in.



Kidzspace Events

Activities for siblings aged 8+ living with a child who has a disability or a special need

Date: Saturday 25th January 2020

Event: Trampolining

Where: Jump Street Chelmsford

Time: 11.00 am - 1.00 pm

Cost: £12.00

To book email helpline@familiesinfocussessex.org.uk



SATURDAY ACTIVITY CLUB NOTICE

Saturday 21 December 2019

The Saturday Activity Club will be closed this week, as we will be having a Christmas party for our registered members.

Unfortunately our bookings will be closed to non-members and we won't be operating a drop-in.

If you are interested in coming to the Sessions beginning on 4 January 2020 please email helpline@familiesinfocussessex.org.uk

FAMILY INFOCUS BRAINTREE DROP-IN SESSIONS

Come and join us and meet other parents, for a coffee, cake and chat.

DATES: Wednesday 15th January 2020

Wednesday 19th February 2020

Wednesday 11th March 2020

TIME: 10 am – 12pm

VENUE: Alec Hunter Academy, Learning Village, Stubbs Lane, Braintree. CM7 3NR

Meet our new Family Support Adviser covering the Braintree area. Who will be able to discuss any queries you may have.

A trained therapist will also be available offering a free treatment!

Pre-school children welcome





Out and about.....

Relaxed performances for Panto Season

Relaxed performances are suitable for customers with learning disabilities and their families or anyone who may benefit from a more flexible theatre experience! Below are just a small selection of relaxed panto performances this season....

Robin Hood and The Merry Men **Cliffs Pavilion, Southend-on-Sea**

13 DECEMBER 2019 - 4 JANUARY 2020

<https://southendtheatres.org.uk/Online/>

Box Office 01702 351135



Cinderella

Mercury at Abbeyfield, Colchester

30 NOVEMBER 2019 - 5 JANUARY 2020

<https://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/>

Box Office 01206 573948



Peter Pan

Civic Theatre, Chelmsford

29 NOVEMBER 2019 - 5 JANUARY 2020

<https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/>

Box Office 01245 606505



Dick Whittington

Towngate Theatre, Basildon

27 NOVEMBER – 5 JANUARY 2020

<https://towngatetheatre.co.uk/dick-whittington>

Box Office 01268 205 300



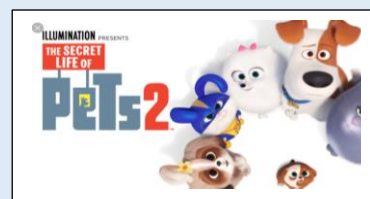
Other entertainments for the New Year

A relaxed movie screening of The Secret Life of Pets 2

At the Mega Centre in Rayleigh from 5pm on 11 January

Book in advance via Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/relaxed-movie-secret-life-of-pets-2-tickets-86347215847>



A Family Event at Lambourne End, with Essex Short Breaks, Clubs and Activities Team and Providers. *Children with Disabilities and Special Educational Needs, their siblings and families are invited to join in for some winter fun!*

Lambourne End Centre for Outdoor Learning, RM4 1NB, 11 January 2020 1.30 for 2pm start. To register your interest to this free event RSVP to: essexshortbreaks@actionforchildren.org.uk or call 07540919616



Thank you.....

To all our supporters and volunteers for their generous donations and time.

Donations were received from the following organisations and individuals;

Dr. Gail Bridgman in memory of Valerie Farr

Chelmsford Lioness Club

Chelmsford Salvation Army – *for their donations of toys and food hampers*

Andrea Hall, Parents Support Group (PROUD) – *for money raised at a recent quiz night*

Marconi (Chelmsford) Employees Charities Trust Fund

Pamela Stack

Rotary Club of Chelmsford

We are delighted to be the **Chelmsford Rotary Club's Charity of the Year**.

On 16 November, the Rotary Club kick started their fundraising year with a quiz night.

An impressive £680.00 was raised on the night! A big thank you to everyone who came and supported the event. It was so nice to see so many people there.

Congratulations and commiserations to our winning and losing teams (not naming and shaming!) a great night was had by all.



Thank you to Phil and his Team at the Chelmsford Lions Club! We were thrilled to be part of the Santa Sleigh Run again this year! Thank you to everyone who supported this event.



NOMINATING FAMILIES INFOCUS AS YOUR CHARITY OF THE YEAR

There are many benefits of us being your chosen Charity of the Year;

- Demonstrate to your employees, customers and potential customers, your company's commitment to an issue that affects lives every day
- Encourage team building
- Boost staff morale
- Positive PR opportunities

Put your company at the heart of the community and adopt Families InFocus (Essex) as your Charity of the Year.



Thank you cont.....

Guest Speaker – Dean Beadle

We were delighted to welcome back our special guest speaker, Dean Beadle to an event we hosted at the end of November. It was a fantastic evening and Dean's talk was engaging, funny, insightful and inspirational!

A huge thank you to Dean and all who attended the evening.



Recent Funding Successes

Realising Ambitions Funding

Programme, which is administered by Essex Community Foundation, awarded £10,000 towards our Family Support Project in North East Essex.

Garfield Weston Foundation awarded £40k, over 2 years for our Family Support Project across Essex.

Walter Farthing Trust awarded £3,000 towards our Family Support Project in Mid Essex.



We are incredibly lucky to have a group of fantastic volunteers who help support our vital work with Essex parent/carers and families.

A big thank you to the following volunteers who give up their time to help support Families InFocus, we think you're brilliant!
Abi, Andy, David, Gemma, Hazel, Jen, Joanna, John, Josh, Karen, Leah, Maralee, Martin, Matt, Mel, Michael, Peter, Pippa, Sarah, Toby, Wendy and our newest recruit **Kerry**

Goodbye and good luck

To our colleague and friend Hilary Popilek. Many of you will know Hilary from her invaluable work with North Essex Families and her devotion to Families InFocus.

We will miss you very much but look forward to hearing all about your wonderful new adventures!





Supporting a good cause



To start supporting, visit:
www.essexlottery.co.uk
and search for: **Families InFocus**



- ★ Your support makes a real difference to our local community
- ★ 60p from EVERY £1 goes to local good causes
- ★ You also get the chance to win £25,000
- ★ Lottery gift cards make great presents

Raise funds for Families InFocus (Essex) every time you shop online

Find us on easyfundraising to start:

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/familiesinfocus/>



Shop with over 3,300 online stores



£20 Million raised 1.2 Million users 100,000 causes

If you are taking part in any fundraising events, please do consider supporting Families InFocus (Essex). It is easy to make your own free online fundraising page <https://www.justgiving.com/FamiliesInFocusEssex>

Family and friends can donate securely via justgiving.com, Facebook or text message.

JustGiving™

Volunteering Opportunities

You can also support us by volunteering. We have various opportunities, from volunteering at our Saturday Activity Club, to helping at Kidzspace to being a helpline/office support volunteer.

Please email Melanie James

melanie@familiesinfocusessex.org.uk for further details.

VOLUNTEER



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, especially parents whose families use the services of the charity. If you are interested, and would like to know more, please contact Rachel on 01245 353575 or Email:

rachel@familiesinfocusessex.org.uk