

SEND Newsletter

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Newsletter – February 2025

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Introduction

Anthony Webster – Head of SEND

Dear North Somerset SEND Community,

As we move into 2025, I'm delighted to share the latest SEND updates from across the North Somerset area. The start of this year has brought significant momentum to our ongoing initiatives and new programs.

I'm particularly excited about the impact of our LINK Programme in early years settings. This innovative approach has been instrumental in supporting our youngest learners, providing crucial early intervention and creating smoother transitions into Reception classes. The feedback from both parents and early years practitioners has demonstrated how this structured support is making a real difference in preparing children for their next educational steps.

Recently, we had the privilege of hosting Dr. Guy Clayton, our Principal Educational Psychologist, who delivered an insightful presentation to our SEND Young People Council focusing on ADHD. This session provided valuable perspectives and practical strategies, directly addressing the needs and experiences of our young people. It was wonderful to have this session as the first hybrid session which allowed us to be in person at Churchill school, with everyone enjoying both the engaging discussion and the biscuits! We are looking forward to visiting Mead Vale next time.

As we continue through 2025, we remain committed to enhancing our SEND provision across North Somerset. The dedication of our teams, working alongside families and young people, continues to drive positive change in our community.

Best wishes,

Anthony Webster

Events



February 2025

Monday 24th February: [SEND and You North Somerset 1:1 appointments @The Firs](#)

Monday 24th February: [SEND and You North Somerset SEN Support appointments @The Firs](#)

Monday 24th February: [NSPCWT – An introduction to understanding and supporting communication at The Firs](#)

Tuesday 25th February: [NSPCWT are holding an informal drop in coffee for anyone who would like support in relation to their child's school placement](#)

Wednesday 2th February: [NSPCWT Exploring benefits, grants and resources \(Zoom\)](#)

Thursday 27th February: [SEND and You EHCP Appeal Process: online \(Zoom\)](#)

Thursday 27th February: [NSPCWT Emotionally based school avoidance \(Zoom\)](#)

March 2025

Thursday 6th March: NSPCWT Autism and mental health (on Zoom). **LINK NEEDED.**

Thursday 13th March: [NSPCWT An introduction to understanding and supporting anxiety at The Firs](#)

Wednesday 26th March: [SEND and You EHCP Appeal Process: online \(Zoom\)](#)

Wednesday 26th March: NSPCWT Emotionally based school avoidance coffee at Nailsea Methodist Church, BS48 2DS (no link is available for this one)

News from the Early Years Team

Karen Jarvis

Early Years Consultant (SEND)

Transition is a process, not an event.



We are pleased to be able to offer The Inclusion Link Programme for those children starting Reception in September 2025 who are in receipt of Early Years Top-up Funding.

As part of this year's programme, in addition to the usual activities, the Early Years Team will be holding a coffee morning in partnership with SEND and You and NSPCWT for parents and carers who have a child eligible for The Link to find out more about how we can work together for a positive transition into Reception. The Inclusion Link Programme (The Link) supports children to have the best possible start to school life through a smooth, supported, and effective transition from their early years setting to school by:

- Promoting positive partnership working between parents/carers, early years settings, schools, and other professionals/agencies.
- Facilitating information sharing to support an effective and smooth transition from early years setting to school.
- Sharing knowledge and expertise about the child.

Those children who access The Link benefit from an individualised transition plan which is developed in partnership with the family, early years setting, receiving school and any professionals working with the family. It also allows crucial information to be shared about the child's strengths, needs and current support strategies.

Feedback about last year's Link mentioned:

"It allowed me to meet and spend time with child in a setting familiar to her. I was also able to speak to her key worker/adults who worked at the setting who knew her and could pass on useful information to support her transition." Receiving school

"Really pleased with how it went and how on-board the school were with working with us to give the child the best start. Parents appreciated the joint support." Early Years setting

"Provided us with early visibility of key support staff and put plans in place from the outset to support my child." Parent

We look forward to welcoming parents and carers to the coffee morning which will be held on Thursday 6th March from 9.30-12.00 at Castlebatch Children's Centre.

Karen Jarvis and Sarah Evans

News from North Somerset

Riccardo Enoch
Strategy and Policy Development Officer

Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care System (ICS) has published an All Age Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The Strategy builds on the overall Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire ICS Strategy that identifies mental health as one of our main health priorities across our local communities.

It sets out the vision of ‘people having the best mental health and wellbeing in supportive, inclusive and thriving communities’ and outlines six ambitions to support this:

This All Age Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been co-produced and is co-owned by people with lived experience and their families.

[Vision and aims of the All Age Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy can be found here.](#)



Six ambitions:

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1 Holistic care People of all ages will experience support and care which considers everything that might help them stay well. | 2 Prevention and early help People of all ages, their families and carers will get the support they need in the right place and in a timely way, as early as possible. | 3 Quality treatment High quality treatment is available to people of all ages as needed, closer to home, so they can stay well in their local communities. |
| 4 Sustainable system We will have an economically and environmentally sustainable mental health system where maximum benefit is delivered to the community. | 5 Advancing equalities We will reduce health inequalities by improving equity of access, experience and outcomes throughout people's lives. | 6 Great place to work We will have a happy, diverse, inclusive, trauma-informed and stable workforce across our system. |

Underpinned by:
Working together to create the wider social and economic conditions to support positive mental health and wellbeing, including investing in a healthy start in life.

Content of the graphic:

Six ambitions:

1. Holistic care: People of all ages will experience support and care which considers everything that might help them stay well.
2. Prevention and early help: People of all ages, their families and carers will get the support they need in the right place and in a timely way, as early as possible.
3. Quality treatment: High quality treatment is available to people of all ages as needed, closer to home, so they can stay well in their local communities.
4. Sustainable system: We will have an economically and environmentally sustainable mental health system where maximum benefit is delivered to the community.
5. Advancing equalities: We will reduce health inequalities by improving equity of access, experience and outcomes throughout people's lives.
6. Great place to work: We will have a happy, diverse, inclusive, trauma-informed and stable workforce across our system.

Underpinned by: Working together to create the wider social and economic conditions to support positive mental health and wellbeing, including investing in a healthy start in life.

NSPCWT Update

Francesca Betts (she/her)
Senior Business Lead
Media and Resource Lead



North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together are the local parent carer forum, there to support parents and carers of children and young people between the ages of 0-25 that have an emerging need, additional need and/or disability.

Our Peer Support Coffees

We offer a broad range of safe, supportive meet ups for our community, some within settings, others at our base at The Firs in Weston-super-Mare or at locations suitable to those living further north. Often these coffee mornings are attended by informative services such as SEND and You (the local SENDIAS team).

If you would like a peer support session arranged at your school or setting, or if you would like to attend to discuss how you could support our community, [please contact us at admin@nspcwt.org](mailto:admin@nspcwt.org)

If you know a family receiving an update soon naming a special school or setting for their child or young person and it might not be the one they were hoping for, please direct them to this coffee meeting: North Somerset Council's SEND team, SEND and You - SAY (the local Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information and Advice Support Service) and NSPCWT are holding an informal drop in coffee for anyone who would like support to move forwards. Please pop in on the 25th of February between 10.30am to 1.30pm to ask any questions that you may have and access any support you feel you need.

Address: The Firs, Parent Carer Resource Hub, 89a Drove Rd, Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset, BS23 3NX.

[Head here to find out what else is coming up](#)

Our Upcoming Training

Parent Carers and Professionals are welcome to access our training offers covering topics such as An Introduction to Understanding & Supporting Communication, Exploring Benefits, Grants & Resources, Emotionally Based School Avoidance, An Introduction to Understanding & Supporting Anxiety, Autism & Mental Health and more.

[Check out the NSPCWT calendar.](#)

[Check out our 2023/24 Annual Survey, Annual Report and Impact Reports on the NSPCWT webpage on survey reports.](#)

Recently we carried out our Parent Carer Survey – the responses are currently being collated and will be released soon on our website and social media channels.

Free Online Resource: Sensory Processing Difficulties (SPD) Video

Created by professionals with Debbie Meintjes, Occupational Therapist; this supportive video covers the 8 senses and provides information and tips. You can **[access it on the NSPCWT webpage on SPD.](#)**

Contact details:

Our Resource base is at The Firs, 89a Drove Road, BS23 3NX

01934 440844

www.nspcwt.org

admin@nspcwt.org

SEND Children and Young People's Council



Shelly Smith, SEND Engagement and Participation Officer

SEND Children and Young Persons Council – The Return!

After a well-earned Christmas break, the Council met again—this time with a surprise! The members had an idea: instead of always meeting in the same way, online, why not take the show on the road? Meaning Pip, Anthony, Shelly, and Guy - the SEND children and young person's council team, will now be leading meetings at different schools each time. February marked the first co-hosted meeting, with Churchill Academy and Sixth Form being the first to host.

One of the topics on the agenda? Understanding different abilities and conditions that young people experience. This month, Guy Clayton provided his knowledge and experience sharing an insightful and very relatable presentation on ADHD. With an engaging PowerPoint and plenty of discussion, the feedback from both students and staff was overwhelmingly positive—turns out, learning about ADHD was a worthwhile surprise for both attending members and school staff!

As part of the session, members were asked some thought-provoking questions:

- If you had ADHD, what do you think would be the biggest challenges at school?
- What could teachers do that's helpful? What's not helpful?
- How could schools do better to meet different needs?

Their answers? Absolutely brilliant. Not only did they give thoughtful insights, but they also handed Guy an extensive wish list of other conditions and 'extra' abilities they really want to learn more about.

Next stop? Mead Vale Primary School.



Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)

Tracy Humphris and Shelly Smith
HAF Coordinators



The HAF Team are delighted to confirm that HAF (holiday activities and food) funding has been confirmed for a further year by the DfE. This means that all children who receive benefits-related free school meals will continue to be able to access a range of activities during their school holidays (Easter, Summer and Winter). They are also provided with a meal and offered healthy snacks during the day.

Last year, more than 7,000 activity days were booked by the children and young people in North Somerset. They got to enjoy a range of activities, including a variety of sports, dancing, animal encounters, days out, art, crafts, learning circus skills, climbing, canoeing, caving, cooking, skiing (dry ski slope), tobogganing, woodworking, trips to the theatre, gymnastics, trips to the park, to name just some of them!

The exact amount of funding North Somerset will receive is still to be confirmed by the DfE, but we have put our thinking caps on now to try to come up with an even better programme of events and activities for our children and young people for 2025/6.

We are particularly interested in working with our community and voluntary sector. If you know of an organisation which would be interested in providing HAF activity days, then please let us know: HAF@n-somerset.gov.uk

[You can find out more about North Somerset HAF here.](#)

Santa pays a visit to children at a HAF activity day during the Winter (Christmas) holiday.

#HAF2025



SAY: SEND and You

Jenna Hollywood
Media Officer/IAS Advisor



We have the following 1:1 support sessions coming up in North Somerset:

[North Somerset 1:1 appointments @The Firs- Monday 24th February](#)

[North Somerset SEN Support appointments @The Firs- Monday 24th February](#)

These sessions fill up fast, if you are unable to make an appointment, please use SEND and You's contact form, so they can arrange a call back to advise you [on the SEND and you website.](#)

SEND of You's topic of the month is "Mediation" you can find out what mediation is and when you can request it in our information series: [SEND and you webpage on mediation.](#)

Many North Somerset families with EHCPs will be receiving a Local Authority decision regarding secondary school placements in February. If you disagree with the decision made, you may wish to attend our free online appeal information session:

[EHCP Appeal Process: online \(Zoom\)- Thursday 27th February](#)

Or

[EHCP Appeal Process: online \(Zoom\)- Wednesday 26th March](#)



Emma Heath
Health Liaison Officer – Workwell West

Content of the leaflet:

WorkWell West

Are recent problems with your health affecting work?

WorkWell West offers a helping hand by putting you in touch with local services. Our friendly work coaches give free personalised support, advice and guidance at a pace you're comfortable with.

If you are over 16 and live in Bristol, South Gloucestershire or North Somerset and you have a health issue that affects your ability to work, get in touch and let us help.

Telephone 0117 922 3623

Email workwell@bristol.gov.uk

[The workwell website.](#)



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Telephone 0117 922 3623

**Email workwell@bristol.gov.uk
workwellwest.org**



WorkWell West working in partnership with:



Mind of My Own

**Beth Swann,
Participation Support Officer**



Parents and Carers Training

Every 6 weeks Mind Of My Own host training sessions for Foster and Kinship carers to learn more about the apps we provide to your organisation.

The upcoming sessions are as follows;

- **Tuesday 18th March 6:30pm to 7:30pm**
- **Monday 24th March 10:30am to 11:30am**
- **Tuesday 25th March 6:30pm to 7:30pm**
- **Express App session; Tuesday 13th May 6:30pm to 7:30pm**
- **Express App session; Monday 19th May 10:30am to 11:30am**
- **Tuesday 20th May 6:30pm to 7:30pm**

[We also have a dedicated email address for all carers to get in touch to ask us any questions or for 1-2-1 support with the apps. Carers@mindofmyown.org.uk](mailto:Carers@mindofmyown.org.uk)

[If you would like to book onto these sessions please let us know by e-mailing mindofmyown@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:mindofmyown@n-somerset.gov.uk) using “parent/carers training” as the subject line.

Children and Young People

Mind Of My Own are always looking for feedback on our digital participation tools. We want to hear from those who love it, hate it, used it once, are a super user and everyone in between on how we can best improve our apps for all. If you have children and young people who would be interested in taking part, we have a few different sessions coming up that they can be involved in.

- Voice Of Our Own (aged 14+) runs on the last Tuesday of each month from 4pm-5pm
- Voice Of Our Own Juniors (aged 6-13) runs on the first Tuesday of each month from 4pm-5pm
- Voice for Express App, Tuesday the 18th of February 4pm-5pm

[All sign up links for the sessions above can be found on the voice of our own website](#) or [you can email the team at voice@mindofmyown.org.uk](mailto:voice@mindofmyown.org.uk) to join a session or find out more!

[For all other enquiries specific to mind of my own please e-mail: mindofmyown@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:mindofmyown@n-somerset.gov.uk)

Calibre Audio

Helen Mee
Head of Communities and Learning



Free Audiobooks for Children and Young Adults with SEND

National charity, Calibre Audio, offer free audiobook memberships to children and young adults (0-25 years) with SEND - giving them unlimited access to over 17,500 titles. We believe that everyone deserves to enjoy a good book, but we know not everyone enjoys reading, and our audiobook services make books accessible to all.

The charity is on a mission to encourage as many eligible young people as possible to join and use audiobooks to support their education and relaxation. The collection is full of leading contemporary children's authors, including Michael Morpurgo, Jacqueline Wilson, J.K Rowling, Malorie Blackman, David Walliams, Phillip Pullman – as well as classics. Calibre also ensures titles that support the GCSE, A Level and PSHE national curriculum are available.

Children's enjoyment of reading has plummeted to an all-time low, so Calibre wants to ensure young people can access stories through audio. "A life-long love of stories can be ignited, and nurtured, in many ways"; the latest research from the National Literacy Trust shows that listening to stories, such as audiobooks, can spark children's interest in reading books and is also positively associated with reading enjoyment.

Calibre Audio supports anyone with a print disability, that is any special educational need, health condition or disability that impacts on the ability to read print. No referral is needed, and no medical evidence is required to create a membership.

[Find out more about membership by visiting the calibreaudio website](#) or by calling Membership Services on 01296 432339.



The Poetry Basket



“Popcorn”, the Early Years Poetry Basket Poem for February

The Poetry Basket is a project which aims to develop children’s language, learning and development in a fun and effective way. The Poetry Basket scheme was launched by the Early Years Team in partnership with [MakeBelieveArts](#) in 2020. Each month children in early years settings across North Somerset learn a new poem and how to sign it in Makaton.

Popcorn

Popcorn, Popcorn, sizzling in the pan.

Shake it up, shake it up,

Bam, Bam, Bam.

Popcorn, Popcorn, now it’s getting hot.

Shake it up, shake it up,

Pop, Pop, Pop.



[Use this link to watch “Popcorn” signed using Makaton language.](#)

[Check out the Poetry Basket on the Helicopter Stories website.](#)



Key SEND Partnership Contacts

The Early Years Team

Contact details for the early years team, SEND support for early years settings:

Ey.send@n-somerset.gov.uk

Sarah Evans and Karen Jarvis have an overview of SEND support in early years and their individual email addresses are:

Karen.jarvis2@n-somerset.gov.uk

Sarah.evans@n-somerset.gov.uk

SEND and You

SEND and You provides the statutory Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) in South Gloucestershire, Bristol and North Somerset.

Our role is to help parents, carers, children, and young people build their knowledge, understanding, and confidence in SEND procedures, policies, practices, and law. We work to enable people to communicate their own needs, wishes, aims, and rights. This means people playing an active and informed role in making decisions about their education, health and social care.

SAY SENDIAS service is free, confidential, impartial, and independent from the local authority and health services. We work with professionals, organisations and services in delivering our function as a SENDIAS service with a team of trained practitioners, based on and within the legal SEND framework.

Contact SEND and You in the following ways:

- New or [first-time users can use our web-contact form](#).
- Call on 0117 9897725 (24-hour answerphone)
- Email: support@sendandyou.org.uk

Please be aware that young people aged 16 and older will need to give consent and permission for their parent carer to speak to SAY on their behalf.

Calibre Audio

Calibre Audio is a national charity providing a collection of over 17,500 audiobooks for anyone who finds it difficult to read print. Membership is completely free of charge for children and young adults (0-25 years) with SEND. We support anyone who is unable to see, read, manipulate or comprehend printed text due to difficulty or inability.

[Find out more about membership by visiting the calibreaudio website.](#)

Telephone: 01296 432 339

North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together: NSPCWT

We are here to support parents & carers with children between the ages of 0 to 25 that have an emerging need, additional need and/or disability. We signpost families to relevant organisations, host regular coffee mornings, training sessions & events plus we previously organised free wellbeing days out for parent carers to enjoy.

North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together aim to improve the service, provision and the quality of life for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs by being the collective voice of parent carers and a strategic partner for the Local Authority, Education and Health.

The Firs, Parent Carer Resource Hub, 89a Drove Rd, Weston-Super-Mare, North Somerset, BS23 3NX

Tel: 01934 440844

Email: admin@nspcwt.org or visit [the NSPCWT website.](#)

We are continually developing the SEND partnership newsletter.

If you have any feedback or would like to contribute, please email tracy.humphris@n-somerset.gov.uk.

This publication is available in large print, Braille or audio formats on request.

Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English.