



SEND in the News

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Welcome to our new SEND newsletter for parents, carers, children and young people. We have spent the summer meeting with all of you to find out what you want from a newsletter and how we can communicate better with you about what is on offer here in Sefton. SEND in the News has been named by our young people and has been put together with the help of the Sefton Parent Carer Forum, SEND parents and professionals working across SEND.



In this issue you will find a spotlight on Preparing for Adulthood, half term activities, a case study on transition from child to adult health services, details of support for the whole family and so much more!

We want to keep improving this newsletter so send in your thoughts about what should be included next time to bridie.finnan@sefton.gov.uk

Sefton Parent Carer Forum

The Sefton Parent Carer Forum is a group of parents and carers with personal experience of raising children with SEND. The group work with Sefton Local Authority, Education settings, Cheshire and Merseyside ICB and NHS, Social Care and other service providers to ensure that the services they plan and deliver, meet the needs of children and young people, aged 0-25 years with SEND.

The forum is a fantastic support network to meet other parents/carers who may be dealing with similar issues, make friends and find support. Come and Chat coffee mornings are held every week with guest speakers from Sefton services so parent and carers can ask questions, find out information and give their lived experiences. The group do similar sessions in Sefton schools. The group arrange marketplace events in schools and other locations across Sefton so parents/carers can find all the support they need in one place. You can find details of the next one later in this newsletter.

You can find the group on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. On Facebook we have a private page which is just for parent carers, this is a great platform to ask questions and talk about any difficulties, and get support from others who won't judge you and understand. We also offer a public Facebook page where professionals are invited to follow and post, and parent carers are able to get information and upcoming events direct from the source. [You can also visit our website to find a full timetable of events.](#)



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Transitions: Everything You Need To Know

Each newsletter will focus on a specific theme and we thought we'd tie in to the recent Parent Carer Forum event around transitions and make this issue a transitions and preparation for adulthood special. Progress and transitions are an inevitable part of life and bring a level of uncertainty and challenge. There needs to be support available at a level that reflects each individual's needs. This support should create consistency between services and reflect the changing needs and aspirations of the young person.

There are four main elements when creating a successful path to adulthood, these are: employment/education, independence, community and health. Below is a range of relevant information about the support available across Sefton and beyond. If you want a more in depth look at this information, read our [Preparation for Adulthood Guide](#)

What Our Kids Said

For a successful transition to adulthood, you have to have good communication. You have to have people listen to what they are interested in and what they want. You need people to give clear information about what they will need to do to move forward and help build on the strengths that they have.

Sefton Parent Carer Forum Preparation for Adulthood Event

Earlier this month, the Sefton Parent Carer Forum held an event at Crosby Library to bring together professionals from across Sefton with the sole purpose of finding out more about what is available for young people who are preparing for adulthood.

The event brought together services from across health, social care, mental health as well as the voluntary sector and it was attended by around 40 parents across the evening. Not everyone was able to attend in person so we caught up with some of the professionals who attended and asked them to summarise their support offer in 30 seconds. [You can watch it on our YouTube channel here.](#)

We know how important it is for parents/carers and young people to think about preparing for adulthood at an early stage to make the transition as simple as possible. The event was a great way to meet a range of services at once, keep an eye out for the next one!



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Health

Transition Nurse Specialist

The role of the transition nurse specialist is to work on all the areas that will support in making transition effective and positive for young people and their families, as they transition into the adult world within the community and relevant acute trusts.

The Transition Nurse Specialist here in the MerseyCare NHS Trust is Meriam Ghobrial-Wright Meriam.GhobrialWright@merseycare.nhs.uk

Alder Hey have created a handy guide to transitioning between child and adult services called The 10 Steps to Transition. [You can find them here](#)

CAMHS: Child Mental Health Services to Adult Services

Mersey Care have a specialist transition team that work across young person's mental health services in Alder Hey. They support those who will transition from CAMHS (Children and young person's services) to AMHS (Adult mental health services).

Transitioning from children and young person's mental health services can be a difficult time for some and can lead to people feeling overwhelmed, it may be helpful to know what support will look like as you move to adult services and how it is delivered. You should be given the opportunity to discuss your transition with your current service provider along with the transition lead from Mersey Care, who together with yourself will consider your needs along with your wishes to develop a transition plan. They will remain involved whilst you meet people from adult services and ensure you are engaged with your new team before you move on.

The transition team also can help you think about other services you may find useful along with practical advice and signposting. You can email jenny.balmer@alderhey.nhs.uk who leads the team for further support and information.

Designated SEND Officers.

The primary role of the DCO (Designated Clinical Officer) is to ensure that the NHS system is meeting it's statutory functions for children and young people with SEND. The DSCO (Designated Social Care Officer) has a primary focus on social care. They work in partnership across education, health and social care, with families.

Ingrid.bell@cheshireandmerseyside.nhs.uk (DCO) and rufus.beer@sefton.gov.uk (DSCO)



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Education and Employment

Virtual School

Sefton Virtual School is responsible for overseeing the Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for children in the care of Sefton. From Year 9, there is an increased focus on preparation for transition from school to the next destination. Many of our pupils have SEND needs and we strive to ensure that they receive an enhanced transition. The Virtual School works with colleges, parents and carers, and colleagues in Children's Social Care to ensure that pathway planning is clear and based on the child's skills and preferences. We also support schools and other educational settings to overcome barriers to progress by funding bespoke interventions such as Educational Psychologist consultations, wellbeing interventions and specialist careers coaching.

We have a partnership agreement with local colleges and training providers and this ensures that the planning and support is continued beyond the transition from school to a new setting. As a result of this, our young people don't often drop out of a course or training, but they are quickly supported if they need to change course.

If you care for a child who is also in the care of Sefton local authority, please contact [Mary Palin](#) for further information about the support on offer in the Virtual School.

Post 16 Education

The thought of Post 16 educational transition can be a worrying time for young people and parents/carers but there is help available. In the first instance, you should speak to your school for advice. For those young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan, Career Connect can support. Please contact Sarah.vaughan@careerconnect.org.uk

It is vital that parents/carers and young people begin to think about Post 16 options as early as possible, certainly from Year 9 onwards. In year 10, it will be useful to visit potential Providers, and, by Year 11, transition visits should be taking place.

In Sefton, there are 2 local Further Education Providers; Hugh Baird College and Southport College. The Colleges hold Open Nights throughout the year and this is a good opportunity to visit and get information about the support on offer.

Key information is also available from Sefton's Local Offer pages [Post 16 Education](#), [Training & Employment](#) | [The Sefton Directory](#)



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Supported Internships

Supported Internships help young people aged 16-24 with an Education, Health and Care Plan move towards paid employment. Young people will participate in a structured study programme, spending time at an employer, while also attending College to continue to learn at an appropriate level. The aim is to help young people by equipping them with the skills they need to achieve sustainable employment

The programme can last from 6 months to a year and a Job Coach is on hand to help the young person in the workplace. Hugh Baird, Southport College and SWRAC currently deliver our Supported Internship programmes. Contact details: [Southport College on 01704 392 8919](#) or [Hugh Baird College on 0151 353 4444](#) or [SWRAC on 0330 2020 383](#)

To see videos featuring young people who have participated in the Supported Internship programme, [visit our website](#)

Strawberry Fields

The Steps to Work initiative empowers people with learning difficulties or barriers to employment, guiding them towards meaningful careers, making a lasting impact on their lives and the wider community. Over 40% of Steps to Work graduates achieve paid work, surpassing the national average of 4.8% for adults with learning difficulties.

A 12–15-month programme for 18–25-year-olds with learning difficulties, who are neurodivergent or have other barriers to employment. Steps to Work combines classroom-based learning with real-life work experience and employability skills to support each young person into paid sustainable employment.

They support young adults who:

- are neurodivergent
- who are autistic
- have anxiety and depression
- lack confidence and social skills
- have ADD or ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia or dyscalculia
- have physical disabilities

If you want more info, go to the [Strawberry Fields website](#)



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Support and Community

Transition Coordinators

Sefton Council has two transitions co-ordinators who work with young people from the age of 14-25 years old. The co-ordinators attend regular meetings with children's social care professionals, SEND, and wider health colleagues to track new and existing referrals ensuring all young people requiring a Care Act Assessment for social care support post 18 are supported.

The co-ordinators will provide a person-centred approach when working with young people to create a transition that is clear to all involved and represents the views, opinions, and choices of the individual.

Recently, Sefton has developed a new specialist Learning Disability & Autism team, there are currently ongoing plans to introduce a Transition to Adulthood Social Work team into this team to widen our support offer. To contact the transitions coordinators, email Andrew.Gladwinfield@sefton.gov.uk or laura.mepham@sefton.gov.uk or contact the office on 0151 934 3079.

Sefton Carers Centre

The Sefton Carers Centre young adult carers team support carers through big milestone life changes as they go from childhood to adulthood. These can include moving from high school to college or apprenticeships, going from college to university or going out into the world of employment. These life changes bring up a range of challenges for everybody, and we understand that our young adult carers are also needing to balance their caring role as well. Our aim is to give support to ensure that our young adult carers can remove barriers in accessing and staying within education and employment.

We also understand the importance of emotional support through these life changes, and this can be accessed in the form of one-to-one informal meetings with us, supported referrals to other services for more specific help, and helping to ensure our young adult carer voices are heard at all times. We understand that it can be difficult to talk to professionals within education, employment and other services, and we can provide advocacy support so that views and wishes of young adult carers are heard.

The young carers and young adult carers team at Sefton Carers Centre can be contacted by calling 0151 288 6060 or emailing yc@carers.sefton.gov.uk.



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Community

Buddy Up+ is a social group for young adults aged 18 to 25 who have mild to moderate Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and are socially isolated. The Buddy Up project provides weekly social clubs for participants to meet other young people their own age, make friends, build confidence and improve emotional health and wellbeing, in a safe space with support from staff who understand the barriers they face. Buddy Up+ not only provides social opportunities, but also fosters and encourages independence during this transition into adulthood. The majority of our Buddy Up+ participants have progressed from our 13-18 Buddy Up group, which also offers social opportunities for individuals.

During our Buddy Up+ sessions we provide many different activities depending on the space we are using. We encourage active games such as football, catch and basketball, along with group games on the Nintendo Switch, creative activities such as bag making, tie dye, colouring and baking as well as offering chilled opportunities to catch up with friends discussing their week accompanied with a hot chocolate.

If you are interested in what Buddy Up has to offer or would like a referral form for our service, please email erin.bennett@seftoncvcs.org.uk or buddyup@seftoncvcs.org.uk

Independence

Technology Enabled Care

TEC can help transform people's lives. The provision of digital solutions and equipment for children and young people with SEN and disabilities can be key in promoting independence, social inclusion, safety, and quality of life. It can support carers and families and make a difference to everyday lives. Some examples of TECS include:

- Reader/Scanner pens – have an inbuilt text reader.
- Apps for emotional wellbeing-Brain in Hand or NHS apps Chill Panda/Think Ninja
- AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication)- To help people with communication challenges.

[TEC Stories](#) is a powerful collection of stories that showcase the transformative effects of TEC for people with differing personal stories and needs. If you want more information on TEC in Sefton, contact [Hannah Dollard](#)



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Longer Read: Transitions with Autism

The transition to adulthood represents a huge period of change. For autistic young people the challenges associated with transition can include navigating change, managing social situations, envisaging possible futures, developing practical life skills and sometimes a lack of understanding from those around them. As a result, autistic young people have poorer outcomes, not only compared with their non-disabled peers but also to young people with other disabilities. How these factors impact a young person is very individual and hugely due to the heterogeneity of autism and each individual autistic “spikey” profile. Therefore, transition processes and preparation need to be tailored to each individuals’ autistic strengths and needs, making transition a transparent and concrete process.

Of particular consideration during the transition to adulthood is the huge demand placed on one key area of skills particularly relevant to autistic young people- executive function. Executive function skills enable us to organise everyday tasks and set goals to get things done. They develop over time. They help us manage our thoughts, actions and emotions enabling us to complete tasks and stay safe. The frontal lobe region of the brain is responsible for our executive function. It is among the last areas of the brain to fully develop, often not until late adolescence or early adulthood. Executive functioning skills are one of the key autistic areas of difference. It is not that autistic young people cannot develop these skills rather they may develop differently, they may need explicit teaching or to be learnt in a particular way.

There is often an assumption that young people have developed these skills by the time they reach college age. Supportive adjustments may be removed or not fully considered to the detriment of any young person with executive function differences. An issue that disproportionately impacts autistic young people. The experiences and support a person have available to them can impact the development of these skills. Autistic young people need consideration to these skills as a key part of any transition.

Autistic differences should be respected and celebrated as they make autistic young people who they are. Given the right support, understanding and empathy autistic young people can not only contribute to society, but enrich it and the transition to adulthood can be a key part of this. The Autism and Complex Needs team are the only licensed training hub for all three phases of the Autism Education Trusts programmes including the Post 16 programme. For more info, contact Kathryn.Dutton@sefton.gov.uk



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Upcoming Events

Local Offer Live

Sefton SEND teams will be out in force this half term to meet parents and carers along with SEND service colleagues from across the health and voluntary world and more! The Sefton Aiming High Team will be on hand to entertain and look after children and young people with a range of activities so families are able to chat with professionals, find support and gather the information they need. You can [watch our video](#) from last time to see what to expect from this event.

Date: Wednesday 30th October 2024 Time: 10am-4pm

Location: St Michael's CofE High School, St Michael's Road, L23 7UL

Half Term Activities

Wheels For All

Wheels for All Wheels for offers inclusive cycling for all ages and abilities the sessions run every Wednesday 12pm-5pm at Litherland Sports Park and cost £5.

Flip out Aintree

The ASD Sessions while still having access to the whole arena the sound & lighting are reduced to provide a more relaxing atmosphere. The sessions run every Tuesday from 5:30pm until 7:00pm and Sunday 10:00am until 11:30am.

Cinema

The plaza offers an autism friendly screening once a month. All films take place on a Monday and start at 5:30pm. They provide low level lighting in the auditorium and will have the soundtracks at a reduced volume. The Vue cinema offers autism friendly showings the 10:00am on the last Sunday of every month.

Soft Play

Kinderworld have an indoor play area and soft play. They have a group every Saturday 9:30-11:30 which specialise in activities for children with additional needs.

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Half Term Activities

Aiming High

This Summer, Aiming High offered a programme with a variety of activities and trips to appeal to different interests. Outdoor activities included Archery, Wall Climbing and kayaking at Rock and River in Mawdsley. One group went to the Climbing Hangar at Awesome Walls and we supported water activities at the Crosby Lakeside Activity Centre and Waterside Lodge in Southport. We took groups to the adapted bikes facilities (Wheels for All) at Litherland Sports Park. We organised a music themed tour around Liverpool and staff showed the young people around famous sites and told stories and anecdotes about the landmarks. A group of budding artists visited a graffiti studio in Liverpool where they were given a session of freestyle street art. They made several artistic pieces which they were over the moon to take home with them.

We offer youth clubs in the evenings in Aintree, Crosby and Southport based on the interests of the regular members like tie-dying T shirts, shopping and cooking, singing and listening to music, dancing, games and yoga. Young people can attend some events and trips with their families such as trampolining at Flip Out, Splashworld, Blackpool Pleasure Beach and Chester Zoo. Every half term, the team offer a wide range of activities. If you want more information, please contact the office on 0151 288 6811.

The Aiming High team have encouraged some of their 16+ young adults to volunteer over the summer programme. Volunteers are inducted, trained and supported to be a valuable member of the team. This is a planned process which gives them some experience and hopefully develops employability skills. Aiming High are also intending to develop services and support for young adults aged 19 to 25 to supplement the services already available in the borough. If you are interested in any of the activities, please contact the office on 0151 288 6811.

