



SEND newsletter

Special Educational Needs
and Disability

Welcome from Victoria Courtis - SEND Lead

Welcome to the final newsletter of this academic year. It has certainly been a busy year in SEND with lots of positive changes being made that will improve the outcomes for our children and young people. We are really excited about the new short breaks service with lots more activities on offer. There has been a SEND Youth Council established that share the voice and views of all children and young people with SEND and their contribution has been so valuable in making improvements and continuing to do so as we look ahead to the future. From September we see the opening of our new SEND Units offering much needed specialist places, the SEND team will be visiting the settings in the new academic year and meeting the children accessing them. On behalf of the Local Area we want to thank all our children, young people and families for the contribution and difference they make. We wish you a restful and enjoyable summer break and we look forward to working with you in the new term.



Meet the Team Principal Educational Psychologist - Rachel Caldwell

Hello I'm Rachel Caldwell and I was appointed to the position of Principal Educational Psychologist earlier this month. I have been an Educational Psychologist for nearly 25 years, having started my career in Birmingham. More recently I worked in Luton where I worked across the social care and education teams.

I have previously worked in Milton Keynes and am very excited about being back here. I live just outside of the city and have seen it grow and flourish over the years. It has some of the best green



spaces compared to any other UK city and there is so much to offer children and families.

Inspection Action Plan – MK Area SEND Partnership

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) visited Milton Keynes earlier this year to conduct an Area SEND Inspection. After an inspection report is published, Ofsted and the CQC require that the local area partnership updates their strategic plan based on the recommendations set out in the report.

We have now completed the action plan which outlines the work that our partnership will do over the coming years to respond to the areas for improvement, and how this fits with other strategic work that we are doing to improve services for children and young people with SEND in Milton Keynes.

Take a look [here](#).

Short breaks

Following recent improvements to our **Short Breaks offer**, we understand there has been some confusion around what is now available for children and young people with an EHCP. We've listened to your feedback and would like to apologise for any misunderstandings as a result of these changes.

We know that each family has unique needs which is why unfortunately, there is no one offer that can cater for everyone. What we've done this year is to expand what is available for children and young people with EHCPs to ensure that most activities are free for them to attend.

The Short Breaks offer in MK now consists of three elements:

Offer 1- Sports Works This commissioned service provides Saturday and after-school sports sessions, plus sessions in the school holidays. To find out more about Sports Works you can view their website here: [Home - SportWorks \(sportworksltd.co.uk\)](http://Home - SportWorks (sportworksltd.co.uk)) Details on how you can apply for the provision can be found [here](#).

Offer 2 – MKCC Short Breaks summer holiday events This is a new addition to the offer and does not replace paper vouchers. Booking went live on Monday 8 July and offers children and young people a range of free events that have been funded by MKCC Short Breaks to access over the summer holiday. There is still availability and you can look at what options there are and sign up via this [link](#).

Please note: These activities are for children and young people with a EHCP. Some of the activities will enable you to pay for additional tickets should you wish to access this as a family. So far, over 600 sessions have been booked from a total of 1,300 so it is proving popular.

Offer 3 – New online voucher scheme

This online scheme will replace the old paper vouchers. Following feedback from children, young people and parents/carers, we were asked to replace the paper vouchers as the offer was limited to local providers and for some families this didn't work.

We are currently working with a new provider and hope that you will be able to sign up for these online vouchers from 22 July, with the site going live on **Monday 5 August**. We will email you in advance with full instructions and arrangements as soon as we have completed the set up.

Please note: Voucher use will be for the child/young person with the EHCP, not for siblings. The vouchers will cover both local and some national providers. Plans are in place with our local providers to enable them to sign up so you can still access them via the vouchers.

The online vouchers will be with you as soon as we can facilitate this. In the meantime, please do look at the Short Breaks summer holiday events and reach out to us if you have any difficulties.

All communication about Short Breaks can be found on our Local Offer page which is updated regularly. This should be the first place families look for information. We will contact you via email if there is a change via MKshortbreaks@milton-keynes.gov.uk.

Thank you for working with us and continuing to share your views which are vital to ensure we deliver the right support for local children. We have heard your concerns and will be looking at how we can simplify this offer moving forward. If you have any further questions that are not answered through the Local Offer page then please email the above address and a member of our team will respond within 5 working days.

Sensory bags

We still have some sensory bags available from our Easter short breaks offer. Families with children or young people with an EHCP are invited to collect a sensory bag from the designated Family Centres. Please note each bag contains a variety of items, please check the items are suitable for your child or young person. There are a limited number of bags and they will be allocated on a first come first serve basis.

- [Conniburrow Children's Centre](#)
 - [Daisychain Family Centre](#)
 - [Moorlands Family Centre](#)
 - [The Rowans Family Centre](#)
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SEND Local offer



Calendar of events on the Local Offer

The SEND Local Offer provides a calendar of events for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The calendar includes a variety of activities, events and workshops designed to support children, young people and their families.

The calendar can be found at the bottom of the Local Offer homepage!

SEND Video Resources

Please remember that we have our SEND videos available on the SEND Local Offer in our [parent and carer programme section](#), that support a number of topics, for example:

[Introduction to ASC and SCD](#)

[What is Sensory Processing](#)

[Recognising Sensory Signals in Children](#)

[Emotional Regulation](#)

[Autistic Spectrum Condition and Sleep Difficulties in Children and Young People](#)

[Autistic Spectrum Condition and Toileting Difficulties in Children](#)

[Supporting Your Child To Manage Their Anxiety](#)

[Supporting Siblings and Encouraging Socialising](#)

[Strategies To Support Behaviours of Concern](#)

These videos can be found in our Programmes and workshops section on the Local Offer!

Please keep an eye out for our updated programme and workshops available in the autumn term.

Summer Holiday, Activities and Food Programme

FREE activities and food from 29 July to 22 August for children, young people and their families who are in receipt of benefit related Free School Meals

What is the HAF Summer Activities and Food programme?

A range of free activities and food for children, young people and their families who are in **receipt of benefit related Free School Meals (FSM)** to access from 29 July to 22 August.

From fun activities to multi sports camps, mobile farms, beach trips, teen basketball camps, outdoor adventures, football camps, film making, music, gymnastics, arts, and crafts and more, we hope there is something for everyone.

Across Milton Keynes, we have **24,200 individual sessions** planned for the

Summer Holidays. To book your activities, simply browse our programme and contact your chosen providers through the [online booking system](#).

Children and Family Centres servicing all of Milton Keynes will be delivering all-inclusive family HAF trips for children in receipt of **benefit related Free School Meals (FSM)** to their reach areas and can be found on our booking system [HAF Milton Keynes - Eequ](#). Please book with the centre that covers the area where you live, further information on Children and Family Centre services and each centres reach areas can be found [here](#).

Where can I find the activity programme?

Evouchers will be distributed to children and young people identified through the school census that are **in receipt of benefit related Free School Meals (FSM)** Evouchers will be sent out by hello@holidayactivities.com by **1 July** and will include a link directly to the booking system.

If you are in receipt of **benefit related Free School Meals (FSM)** and have not received an Evoucher, please speak to your child's school in the first instance if you have not received a code after 1 July.

All HAF activities and sessions will be found in one place and are easy to book by registering with our online booking system with the programme available to view [here](#) with bookings commencing on 1 July.

Further information and updates can be found on the [HAF page of the MKCC website](#).



Transition support

Starting or moving school can sometimes seem a daunting step if your child has SEND, or you have concerns about their development.

[The Local Offer](#) has lots of information and resources for you to use with your child as offering practical ideas for supporting transition.

Please find some useful advice to support with transition:

Visits: (these could be by virtual means) ensure that your child gets the opportunity to visit the school and become more familiar with the surroundings. This might be done by a video tour - many schools are using technology to show young children their new environment. The tour might include the classroom, cloakroom, playground...meeting the teachers and key staff is also important at this point, either virtually or face to face.

Transition meeting (this may be virtual): Parents/carers, class teacher and settings can arrange a Transition Meeting in June/July. This is an opportunity for everyone to talk and find out about your child so that support and adjustments can be put in place to ensure a smooth, happy transition. It is also a good time to plan the handover of any paperwork, resources and equipment that would be helpful to the child at school.

Talk to your child about school and what will happen there. The school may have a short video tour of the school on their website for you to look through together during the summer term and school holidays. Or you could create a book of photos or a Transition Passport, which your setting or school may help you make or make with you. Alternatively, you might like to load photos onto a tablet to swipe through. You could wander past school as you are out and about.

If your child will be wearing a new uniform in September, allow your child to try it on and allow them to become familiar with it. The same applies to new school shoes, bag and equipment such as, a lunch box, drink bottle and pencil case.

Visuals: Calendars are useful visuals; you can cross off the days until school starts (an example calendar can be found in the resources link for you to print and use if you wish). This can help children with anxiety and provide a count down and timeline.

Help your child with their independence skills such as dressing, undressing, organising equipment, eating, drinking and toileting where possible. Remember that all children develop at different rates, so just work on the next step that is appropriate for your child.

Communication skills: if your child has identified ways of communicating and specific strategies/resources to support their communication skills, this information should be shared with the setting/school or new staff members. The SENCo will ensure that the required provision is in place.

Consider what will stay the same: during transition there are so many changes

which can lead to children and young people with SEND feeling anxious. It can be helpful to ensure the child knows what will also be the same to reduce anxieties.

Having a concrete item: it can be helpful to have a concrete item that children/young people can refer back to over the summer holidays, for example a letter from the teacher, pictures or key information.



SEND Youth Council

The [SEND Youth Council](#) met for the final time this academic year. The focus on this session was a reflection of the positive changes that the SEND Youth Council have achieved so far.

It was also an opportunity to thank the young people for all their hard work over the last six months.

The group discussed some of the topics/themes they would like to look at next year and the group gave their feedback on some of the services in Milton Keynes.

The SEND Youth Council shared some inspirational quotes on what being part of the SEND Youth Council has meant to them. We will be sharing these on our SEND Local Offer!

The SYC are also considering what they would like to be called, the group have come up with some fantastic suggestions. The SYC will vote in the autumn term - we will update everyone with our new SEND Youth Council name.

We are looking for new members to join our SEND Youth Council!

Are you a young person with SEND who is passionate about making a difference for children and young people with SEND in Milton Keynes?

We have four vacancies in our SEND Youth Council, minimum age being year 5.

We are looking for young people to join our SEND Youth Council to:

- Share your experiences of education, health and social care
- Represent the views of young people with SEND in Milton Keynes and make positive changes!
- Attend a SEND Youth Council meeting every half term with a member of staff from school or supporting adult

If you would like to find out more information about joining please contact SENDYouthCouncil@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Transport Update

June 2024 Update – We are going to finish the academic year with just under 1,700 children receiving some form of travel support each week and there are still two more panel meetings planned for any further in year transport requests.

September 2024 Update – Our annual project to plan the transport for September has gone really well so far with more applications and renewal agreements sent in than at the same time last year. We have processed all the September applications we have had in and there is still time in July to apply if you need transport for the first time or are on transport and your circumstances have changed such as moved school or want to change to a different transport option.

Next Steps – Commissioned transport is where we arrange for a vehicle from an approved supplier to transport children to school. These vehicles are usually shared and where appropriate, might have local pick up points rather than being automatically from home. To ensure we are getting value for money on these contracts, they are commissioned for 1-3 years depending on the needs of the passengers and then are put back out to the market to get the best value. When routes go back out to the market, providers, drivers and passenger assistants could change due to factors such as us needing a different vehicle size/type, the provider not bidding on this route again as they have won other contracts elsewhere or us being to move children onto existing routes as other children leave school. If your provider and driver/passenger assistant does change then you will be notified of the changes by the end of July and will be contacted by the new provider to arrange an introductory meeting to discuss your child's needs and travel times.

If you have any questions about your provider please contact the team on

Milton Keynes SENDIAS Service



What is MK SENDIASS? MK SENDIASS is the Milton Keynes Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service. We offer free, impartial and confidential information, advice and support to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their parents and carers. Our remit covers education, health and social care between the ages of 0 - 25.

What we do? MK SENDIAS support children and young people and their families on a range of SEND issues such as the SEND support in schools; Education and Health Care applications; applying for home to school transport application; appealing to SEND tribunals; supporting conversations with a school or local authority complaint process. We can help parents understand their rights and offer guidance on the legal framework that all schools and local authority adhere to.

Our aim is to empower parents, carers, and young people by providing information and support on all matters relating to SEND, enabling them to participate in any decision-making processes and make informed decisions. Our experienced Caseworkers can offer support in a range of different ways, including listening to concerns, helping parents make sense of SEND related paperwork (forms, letters or reports).

What we don't do? SENDIAS are not the decision makers and cannot influence the local authority or school's decisions. We do not carry out assessments or offer counselling. As an impartial service, we cannot recommend specific school or make decisions on your behalf.

How we offer help? Our support is mainly offered via phone appointments. We can where appropriate offer individual casework and support, including attending meetings with parents. We also have a full program of workshops and outreach sessions including drop-ins, coffee mornings, wellbeing and career fairs at schools.

Our next information session for parents/carers is on 26 September – **Supporting Young People (14-17 years old) in a Mental Health Crisis/Distress**. Details for this session will be shared soon on our website and Facebook page.

How to contact us? If you need information, advice and support, you can contact us in a number of ways; by email at contact@mksendias.org.uk or leaving a message on our advice line 01908 254518 or by completing our [online referral form](#).

On our website you can find SEND related information, advice and support including factsheets and template letters. Our website can be accessed via this [link](#).

More about SENDIAS Service - This [animation series by DfE](#) explains more about SENDIAS service.

Summer holidays: During school summer holidays, SENDIAS service is operating as usual.

SEND Support Line

The SEND Team have made some changes to the SEND Support Line. Over the summer break this will be an email only service. The emails will be monitored between 9.30 and 12.30 Tuesday to Thursday during the summer holidays. Depending on the query this will either be replied via email or you will receive a call back.

For general advice you can view the Local Offer following this [link](#) that offers a wealth of information on SEND.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub

We would like to share some information that may be supportive over the summer period and to highlight some of the services included in our [mental health and wellbeing hub on the SEND Local Offer](#).

Young People Sanctuary for Milton Keynes

Mind's Young Person's Sanctuaries are safe, non-judgemental spaces where young people aged 14-17 can come if they find themselves in crisis or mental distress in the evenings. The sanctuary is now open at CAMHS Eaglestone Health Centre, Standing Way, Milton Keynes, MK6 5AZ.

Please find further information on the [mental health and wellbeing hub on the Local Offer](#).

Reflect / Shout

Reflect is a free, confidential and 24/7 text support service for anyone in the UK who needs advice or help. It is delivered by trained volunteers and clinicians who are available around the clock to listen and support anyone who is feeling anxious, lonely, overwhelmed or not quite themselves.

Please find further information on the [mental health and wellbeing hub on the Local Offer](#).

Children and Family Centres

We understand the pressures of family life. Most families need additional help every now and again, or maybe just someone to talk to. We can offer support within our centres or at outreach premises.

We offer support and activities for families from our 17 Children and Family Centres across Milton Keynes. These centres are hubs of activities and services for families

and the local community

All of our Children and Family Centres offer a range of services for families from pregnancy to 5 years old. Our Family Centres also have services for families with children up to the age of 19 years, support the community with sessions and support for adults who may not have children or whose children may have grown and left home.

You can [register here online](#) alternatively you can register when you visit any one of our Children or Family Centres

Once registered we will assist you and your family to give every child the best possible start in life and give you the support and advice you need. [Find out more about what our centres offer.](#)

PACA



We have had another busy couple of months since the last newsletter, and we hope you have been able to take part in our activities, courses or meet ups ranging from our ADHD wise course, coffee mornings through to our sound bath meditation session.

Please do keep up to date on our upcoming events by following our page <https://pacamk.org/calendar/>

Our upcoming events are below:

16 July - The Discovery Room, John Lewis 10am-12pm where we will be joined by Speak Up! Act Out! Who will be offering fun, creative workshops to residents in Milton Keynes to gather feedback which will help to inform how future development can support the needs of citizens in the city.

This is open to all PACA members, past and present, to share their experiences. In addition to this, Sportworks will be in attendance should any families have any questions about their summer SEND provision. No need to book, just turn up!

31 July - Our Family Picnic for SEND Families in Milton Keynes At: Caldecotte Miniature, Railway, 12 – 4pm FREE event, All welcome No need to book – just turn up! Please bring your own picnic. Bouncy castle, face Painting and much more.

Our PACA MK annual survey is still open for completion until the 19th July Complete the survey by using the QR code below or following this link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PACA_SENDSURVEY24



School holiday activities

We are continuing to update our SEND Calendar of events, please do check the calendar at the bottom of the home page on the [SEND Local Offer](#). Please see below some examples of the activities and providers that are available over the half term.

- [Thomley have a variety of activities available over the summer holidays.](#)
- [Bletchley Leisure Centre SEND Splash Swim sessions](#)
- [Gravity SEND sessions](#)
- [Willen Lake Splash n Play SEN sessions](#)
- [Xtra Special Families Summer Family Fund Day](#)
- [MK Gallery SEND Exhibition Tour](#)
- [Ragdolly Annas SEND sessions](#)

By sharing this information, we are not endorsing or quality checking any events or activities, and parent/carer/families remain responsible for their own research. We recommend contacting providers directly.

We would like to wish all families a wonderful summer break!



Sign up!

We produce this newsletter half termly. If you are not receiving this directly and would like to, [please follow this link to sign up.](#)

We welcome your views on the newsletter and any ideas you have for future editions, please share your views via [email.](#)