

Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service

Autumn 2023

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Welcome to the Autumn edition of our newsletter - Moving on,
Looking Forward



Welcome to our Autumn 2023 edition of the BSCS newsletter and to our new editor Hannah Mundy who has taken over the newsletter. Thank you Hannah for pulling everything together and to everyone who has contributed, especially our young people.

As part of developing the newsletter we are going to try and have a key focus for each edition starting off on Transition as well as having our regular features and celebrating the achievement of the children and young people. The start of every new academic year is always busy as we support transition into school for the first time, move between primary and secondary schools and start college, apprenticeships or university as part of transition to adulthood. I am sure you will enjoy hearing from a number of our young people and parents about the transitions they have been making and what they have found challenging and what advice they want to share with us.

Don't forget all of our events are advertised on our website, via our Facebook page and through our emails to you so do check in regularly to keep up to date with what is happening within the service and the events we are running. We will also be running our Information sessions on the 1st February which is a chance to ask general questions and for us to spend some time looking at what we mean by 'reasonable adjustments' when supporting those with sensory impairment.

We also need to know if you have changed any of your contact details so do email us at: sensory.consortium@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Seasons greetings

Jane

Head of Service



Pre-School Groups

Chatty Monkeys - West





Chatty Monkeys, our pre-school group for children who are deaf/have a hearing loss, in the West has been in full flow this term. We have had great attendance at the sessions but as always, we love to see new faces so please feel free to come along.

Some of the lovely things that the Chatty Monkeys have been doing include making playdoh pictures, scooping pumpkins for Halloween, vegetable printing for harvest and making edible fireworks.

Remember, we are also lucky enough to have audiology attend each of our sessions to take ear impressions if your child needs them.

We hope that all of our Chatty Monkeys have a wonderful Christmas and we look forward to seeing you in the new year. Our first session back is Tuesday 9th January 2024.

Busy Bees

Busy Bees, our pre-school group for children with vision impairments, has been buzzing with activities this term.

Every other Friday morning, families gathered to embark on sensory adventures with their little ones. The soft play area became a realm of exploration, whereas the sensory room, decorated with captivating lights, provided a fascinating environment for our young learners.

During the sessions, our little ones' creativity had no boundaries! From crafting doves for International Peace Day to carving pumpkins for Halloween, they engaged in themed craft activities that allowed them to express themselves in unique ways.

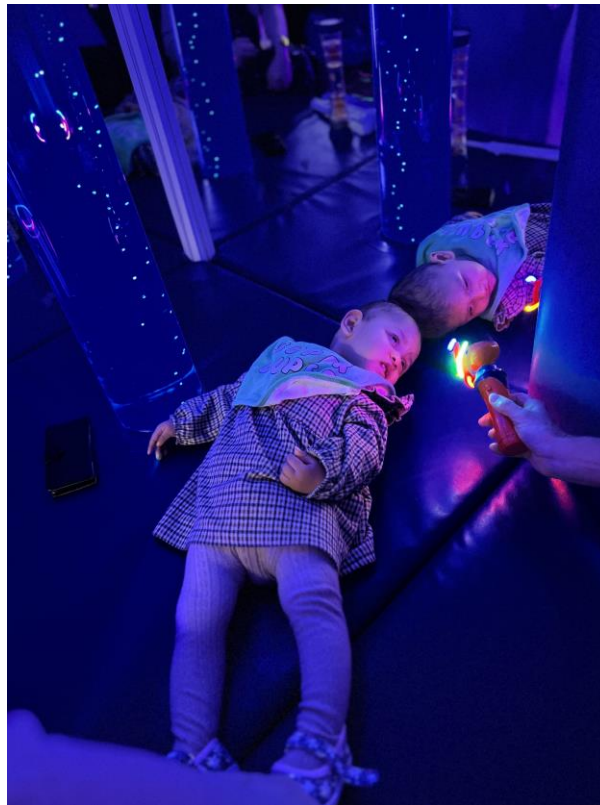
Amongst all the fun and play, we took moments to refuel with delicious snacks. This was also an opportunity for parents to come together, share experiences, and build connections with others on a similar journey. The supportive community at Busy Bees extends beyond the children, fostering a network of understanding and friendship among parents.

At Busy Bees, we believe in celebrating every milestone, big or small. Whether it was a successful craft creation, a moment of connection between children, or simply enjoying a snack together, every experience was a cause for celebration. These shared moments contribute to the warmth and positivity that defines the Busy Bees group.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to each family for being a part of our Busy Bees journey. Your presence, enthusiasm, and commitment make Busy Bees the vibrant and supportive group it is. We look forward to more adventures and laughter in the upcoming sessions.







Chatty Monkeys - East

Chatty Monkeys East has moved to a new venue this term and is becoming established. Currently we are a small group and are keen to welcome more families to our sessions.

We have been making collage pictures and craft sparklers. We also have members of the audiology team attending our sessions to take ear impressions if your child needs them.

We hope that you all have a very happy Christmas and we look forward to seeing you in the new year. Our first session back is Monday 22nd January 2024.





Chatty Monkey's Christmas Parties

Chatty Monkeys East and West had fantastic Christmas parties to celebrate the festive period and end of term. Thank you to all the families who attended these and made the parties so special. See you all in the new year 2024!

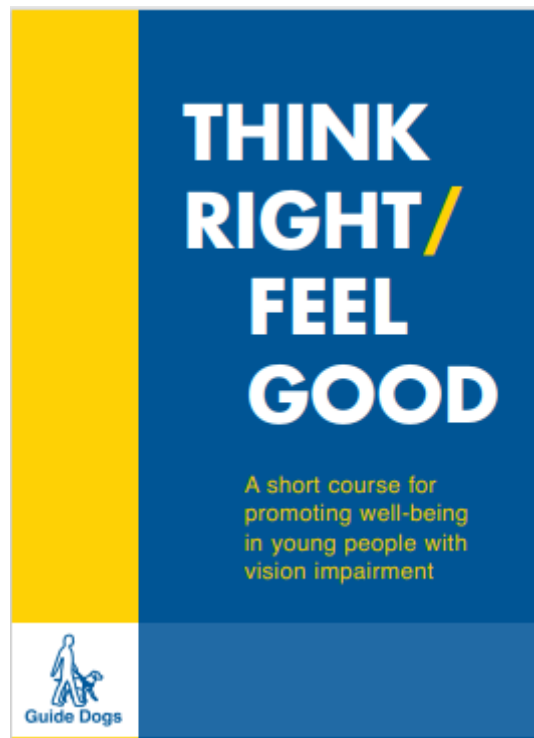








Think Right, Feel Good Course



We were again delighted to welcome some of our secondary-aged VI students to attend the Think Right, Feel Good course. This course focuses on the development of self-advocacy skills and well-being but also provides an opportunity for CYPs to meet other students who have a vision impairment and share experiences across a variety of topics.

We had a very enjoyable day with lots of positive and interesting discussions. Students shared their experiences of different situations and worked as a group to help develop new skills and learn how to respond in different situations.

Some of the feedback from the day included:

- I learned about different methods and ways to respond to things.
- I learned that everyone has different opinions.
- I know how to communicate with people to tell them about my vision impairment.
- I know I have things in common with other people.
- Discussing different scenarios and working out ways to solve situations was helpful.

- It helped me learn a lot.
- The discussions were really fun and engaging and it was fun meeting other visually impaired people.
- I found the day very enjoyable.

Also, a big thank you to Highdown School & Sixth Form Centre in Reading, who again provided a venue for this event and made us all very welcome.

Our Story - Parent

Our Journey - Starting school

As soon as we knew the school we wanted Robin to attend, we set the wheels in motion to get the support she needed. Her ToD Hannah has been amazing since the beginning - helping us fill out forms and providing letters of support for the school with information about Robin's hearing loss. At the same time Hannah has liaised directly with Robin's teachers and the school SENCo for training and to provide resources the school would need to understand how to best to support Robin with her hearing loss. Hannah knows the questions to ask before we do, so she's a wonderful support to have and it makes things much easier for us.

One thing we were worried about after Robin started school is that, compared to her peers, she's still struggling with the high-frequency speech sounds that cause her some difficulty. So we approached the SENCo and Hannah, who both immediately provided extra support to Robin, all the time keeping us informed. From our perspective as her parents, it's really important to know she's settling in the same as any other child, so we are constantly sharing information with the school and asking questions. We're lucky that Robin's teachers and all the staff at her school are extremely understanding of her needs and more than willing to help with everything.

Of course as parents, we get anxious when thinking about how her hearing loss may develop over time, and whether her peers will notice anything "different". But the school environment she's in is one of absolute acceptance and respect, and she's made some lovely little friends already. After looking at what school setting would be

best for Robin, we're so glad we did our research, asked important questions and had the necessary support when making our applications. It's made all the difference for us as parents, and knowing that Robin is a happy little girl going to school every day is the most important thing.



Our Stories - Pupils Moving On

Lubna - My University Life

Hello, I'm Lubna, currently in my second year as an undergraduate student pursuing a BSc Honours in Psychology and Criminology. Despite facing the significant challenge of severe hearing loss in both ears, for which I rely on hearing aids, I am determined to share my university experiences and discuss how I've triumphed over the obstacles. When I was applying to universities during my time in sixth form, the idea of securing a spot in higher education seemed improbable due to my disability and the anticipated challenges. Nevertheless, I persevered and worked diligently to turn my dream of studying a course I am passionate about into a reality.

The university environment offers a diverse and comprehensive education experience, making the transition to higher education thrilling and challenging for me. Despite having a hearing disability, I refused to be daunted by the journey. Instead, I embraced the opportunity to step out of my comfort zone and express my authentic self. The unique and exciting experiences I've encountered so far have been remarkable. Building connections with students from various backgrounds, each with their own culture has been particularly fascinating. Engaging in group work not only introduced me to new faces but also provided opportunities to socialise, have fun with new friends, and delve into understanding their perspectives on the modules of the courses. Furthermore, navigating through the expansive campuses of my university has been an adventure in itself. Exploring distinctive buildings has complemented my academic journey, where delving into lectures on psychology and criminology has been intellectually enriching. Interactions with professors and peers have expanded my knowledge base, fostering a positive shift in my perspective on many topics.

However, I have faced some obstacles, but I have managed to overcome them with the help of the disability team and myself, as being independent was a skill I needed that helped me express my needs in university. The first challenge was communication barriers. I have encountered difficulties in communication during lectures, seminars, group discussions and social events. For example, the teachers would move back and forth while teaching, and I would have difficulty reading their lips to understand what they were saying. Their teaching methods often relied heavily on verbal interaction, e.g., leading verbally rather than using slides to explain the topic. Thus, I overcame that challenge by communicating with my teachers at the end of the lectures or seminars about my hearing disability. This allowed the teachers and me to explore alternative communication methods, such as written instructions, presentations with visual aids (if teaching primarily verbally without presentation), and using my radio aid during lectures, seminars, group discussions, and social events. Another was an acoustic obstacle. Sometimes, the university's physical environment, including lecture halls with poor acoustics, created additional hurdles and echoes, and understanding lectures and participating in group discussions became a constant struggle due to the suboptimal sound conditions. So, I embraced this obstacle through advancements in assistive technology, where I have explored and utilised tools designed to enhance my

learning experience. This included radio aids and using specialised apps that wrote me a transcript while the teachers were talking in lectures.

In conclusion, I successfully completed my 1st year of university through perseverance, adaptability and a proactive approach and experienced personal growth. The challenges I faced were the main challenges, but they became learning opportunities. Thus, by actively participating in my support system, I not only improved my academic experience but also contributed to becoming a role model for future students with disabilities.

To the parents, if I can do it and achieve my dreams, I believe your children can achieve them!

Ellie - Work Experience

Ellie has started a work experience course at college and has been going from strength to strength. For the first term, Ellie has been working at the college shop, canteen and post room. The first photo is of Ellie exploring different equipment with Berkshire Vision's Equipment Officer. Ellie chose a Humanware magnifier to help her access the shops till. The second photo is of Ellie using the magnifier. She is now independent at the till and no longer needs assistance from the Learning Mentors. She definitely deserves employee of the month!





Chloe's Story



My name is Chloe Martin and I am a student at BCA College. I started in September and am studying for a BTEC Level 2 technical diploma in equine studies.

I'm enjoying working with the horses and learning new things everyday about how to look after them. Every Monday I work on the yard with the horses and on Wednesday and Thursday I have riding lessons. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday I have lessons in classrooms where we learn about biology, illness, first aid, feeding, and equipment - saddle, bridle, rugs, boots.

Next term I am doing a 2 week work placement at Burley Lodge Equestrian Centre and I am looking forward to going there.

Before starting college I went to Mary Hare Secondary School. It is different because in Mary Hare there are people who are just like me with hearing aids but here at college I am the only one who is deaf. The tutors are supportive and learning about deaf awareness. They use my radio aid and give me printed out slides. They also take notes so later on I can look back at the notes which helps me.

Every Monday Louise comes in and we work on my assignments and look through the notes and the vocabulary.

Zannah's Stay at New College Worcester



I (Jean Weiss) interviewed Zannah (Susannah Ives) about her stay.

1. How long did you stay?

I stayed for 4 days.

2. Where did you sleep?

In a boarding house. It was very warm and had 3 beds in each room. There was a boys corridor and a girls corridor. There was a kitchen downstairs and a lounge where we could sit around, play piano and phone mum and dad.

3. What lessons did you do during your stay?

I did History, maths, independent living skills (ILS). I also did reading and maths with Miss Ridley, Braille with Miss Potts & PE with Miss Price. I also went to the library and met the librarian and I had to write a story for Miss Perks.

4. What was your favourite lesson?

My favourite was ILS because we made vanilla ice cream.

5. Was there anything you didn't like?

I didn't like it when I heard a boy and girl arguing.

6. How did you find your way around the school?

Lots of different teachers and people showed me around.

7. Did you do any after school activities while you were there?

I did walking club. It was like going for a walk with my mum and dad. I was guided by a man so I talked

to him during the walk.

8. Did you make any friends during your stay?

I made friends with a boy in year 10 who was in the same house. .

9. What was the best thing about your stay?

I really liked going to see the fireworks on Saturday night. I liked this because they're loud, colourful and

fun and it's an excuse to stay up late. The visit was really really good.

Our Stories

Arwa - Painting Workshop

Arwa, aged 8, recently took part in a painting workshop. She produced a lovely picture on the theme of Remembrance. Arwa really enjoyed learning to use oil paints and different techniques along with older children in the school. Arwa said "I liked painting the mountains. It turned out well, better than I expected it to". We are looking forward to seeing more creations from this budding artist! **Click on the image below for the full painting.**



Archie - Learning through play

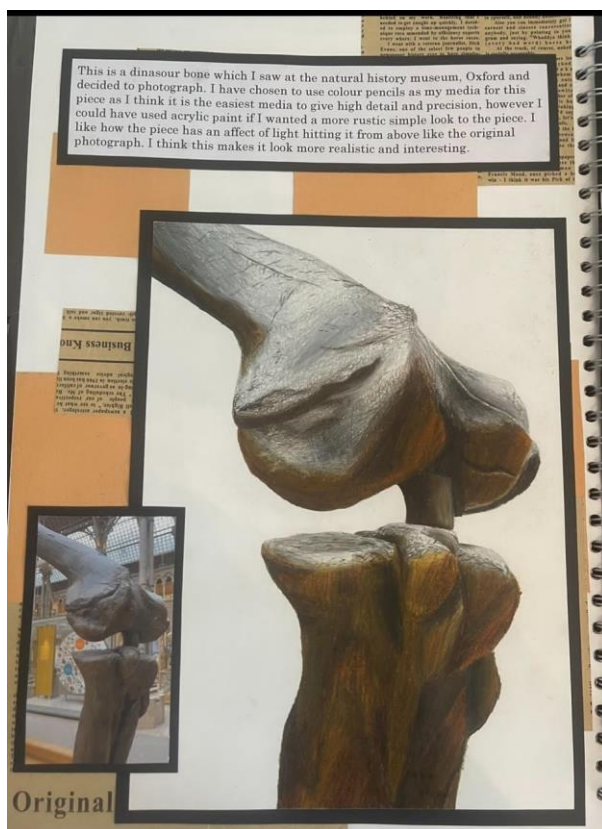
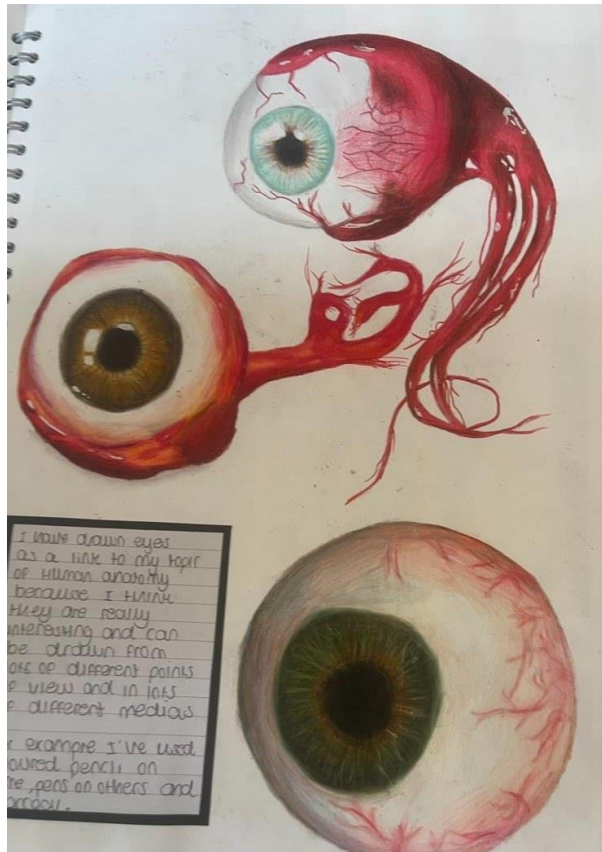


Archie's mum, Gemma, engages in lots of lovely play with him and he's been developing his language skills, his motor skills and his visual skills. In addition to working on sorting by colour and category, Archie is also developing his skills in recognising pictures.

Charlotte - GCSE Art Student

Here are some examples of Charlotte's drawings using pencil and coloured pencils from her GCSE Art portfolio. The level of detail is amazing and the pictures are so realistic they look like photographs. An inspiration for any VI student who loves Art!





Poppy Day by Ethan - Year 7

How did you remember remembrance day?

I made a flower. We made the poppy out of paper using stems, tissue paper and glue.

My poppy is half red for the people who died.

Half purple for animals - puppies, horses and pigeons.

Pigeons helped people send messages to far away wars.

Dogs helped to sniff out people.

Horses picked up people and carried food to people in the fields.



Spotlight - Transition from Paediatric to Adult Audiology Services

In Audiology, transition is considered throughout the whole of the child's journey: from the point of diagnosis, starting at nursery or pre-school and then school and moving onto sixth form or college.

As we look towards the transition from the Paediatric to an Adult Audiology service, we want to make sure the young person has all the information they need to move through that transition confidently, so that they can begin to become responsible for their own hearing health and self-advocate in their adult lives.

It can be useful to use tools such as those produced by the IDA institute to promote conversation around the young person's individual needs.

This link gives tips and advice for those starting to make their adult life choices

https://idainstitute.com/tools/growing_up_with_hearing_loss/get_started/18_years

At Royal Berkshire Audiology an individualised transition information booklet is created at the last few appointments within the Paediatric Audiology Service and a specific transition appointment is offered to the young person, with the Adult Audiology Service.

If there is any feedback from families who have been through the transition process with their young person, the department will always gratefully receive this to help us improve our services further.

Royal Berkshire Hospital Audiology Department

Post 16 Update for Year 13s applying to University

It is that time of year again, many of you will be completing your UCAS forms and hopefully beginning to receive offers. Don't forget, when you are completing your Student Finance England Application, to apply for Disabled Students Allowance. Once you have done this the applications for DSA open on March 1st 2024. PUT THIS IN YOUR DIARY NOW!

Ahead of this date: Make sure you know what support you need - speak to your ToD or ToVI and be ready for the assessment. You don't need to have had an EHCP to

qualify for extra support or equipment. DON'T buy any equipment before you have been assessed and have been offered support as the costs cannot reimburse you.

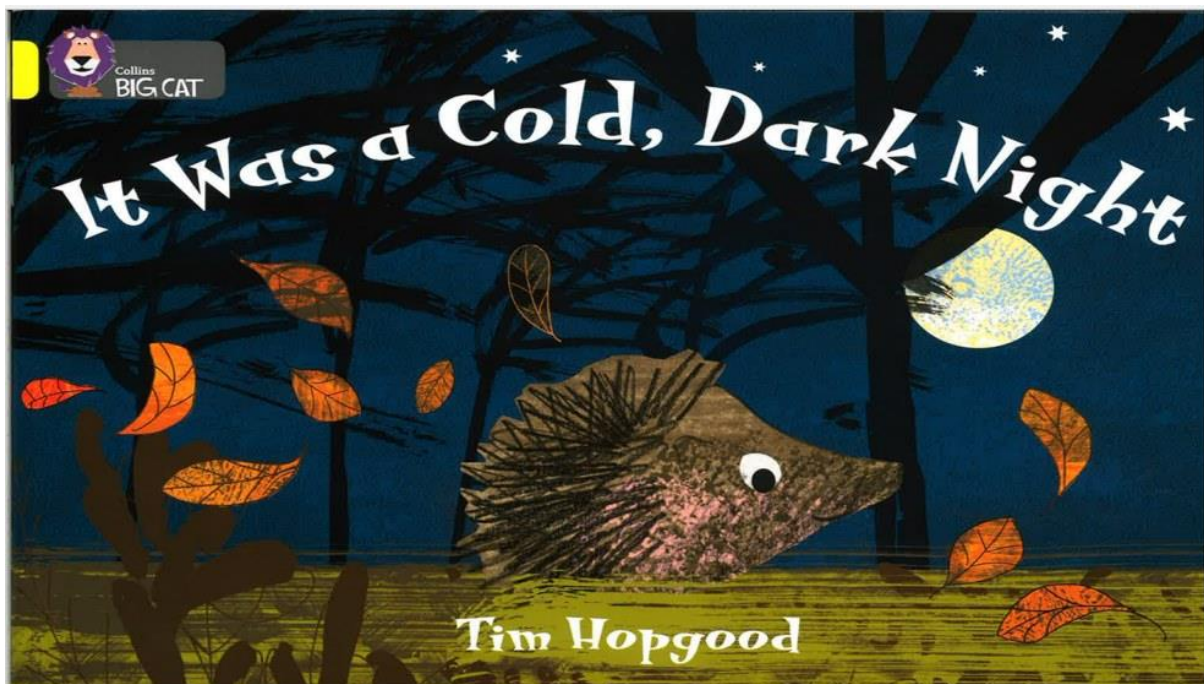
Apply in March as soon as you can to make sure you have your assessment and time to purchase your equipment from their recommended suppliers before you go off to Uni. Good Luck!

Further information from your Tod or ToVI and on the website links here:

<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa/how-to-claim>

<https://www.ucas.com/student-finance-england/disabled-students-allowance#:~:text=2023%20to%202024%20academic%20year,26%2C291%20a%20year%20for%20support.>

Story book translated in British Sign Language by Jemma Sanders, Teacher of the Deaf (ToD), Created by Louise Corfe, ToD



[Click on the link to watch 'It's was a Cold, Dark Night' by Tim Hopgood with your child.](#)

[Click here for 'It was a Cold, Dark Night' by Tim Hopgood with BSL and voice-over](#)

Ask a Question!

A new section of the newsletter where we answer your questions. Each newsletter a member of staff will answer a parent or child question about the service. So if you have a question about the Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service please send it to hannah.mundy@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Events Coming Up....

Thursday 25th January 2024 - Parents Evening for parents with children with vision impairment

Thursday 1st February 2024 - Information Session for parents and carers 'Making reasonable adjustments

BSCS are running a series of events in collaboration with Guide Dogs & Berkshire Vision during 2024 for children and young people with a vision impairment.

Tuesday 13th February 2024 - Try a Train organised by Berkshire Vision

Wednesday 20th March 2024 - Parents, Carers and Professionals Day - Surviving or Thriving?

Developing Social, Emotional, Mental Health and Wellbeing

Thursday 14th March 2024 - Coffee Morning with Tim Kehoe - Teacher for pupils with multi sensory impairment

For further information see the leaflets below, look on Facebook or ask your child's Teacher of the Deaf, vision or multi-sensory impairment.



Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service

Information Session for Parents and Carers

'Making Reasonable adjustments'

Good Outcomes Positive Futures

Date:
Thursday 1st February 2024

Time:
10am or
7pm session
(Max 1 hour)

Online:
[Google Meet link](#)

To attend either of the sessions please click on the google link above for the 10am or 7pm meetings. If you are planning to attend it would be great to know but there is no need to book as this is an open event Email us at sensory.consortium@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Following your feedback via our annual surveys we realise that a number of families would like more opportunity to have communication with the Service. We are putting on two short (60 mins max) online sessions (a morning and an evening). The two sessions will be the same.

They are an opportunity for parents and carers to find out more about the service, how our programmes of support are determined and what we offer to schools. As well as any Service updates and upcoming events, we will also be covering the topic 'Making Reasonable Adjustments'. There will be an opportunity to ask questions although we won't be able to talk about specific children but can answer lots of relevant more general ones. If you have something more specific to discuss please contact your teacher.

The event is for families whose children and young people are supported directly by our Service. Do come along - we hope it will be informative and also give us feedback on areas we need to develop or get better at.

I look forward to seeing you many of you there.

Best wishes
Jane
Jane Peters -Head of BSCS



W: berkshiresensoryconsortium.co.uk T: 01628 796786 E: sensory.consortium@achievingforchildren.org.uk



Surviving or Thriving?

Developing Social, Emotional, Mental Health and Wellbeing
Parents, Carers and Professionals Day

Date:
Wednesday 20th March
2024

Time:
9.15 am – 3.30 pm

Venue:
Sindlesham Court
Mole Road
Wokingham
RG41 5EA

Cost: (lunch and refreshments provided)
Professionals: £25 Parents: Free

To book: Please [click here](#) to complete the google form
Further information: please email
sensory.consortium@achievingforchildren.org.uk or call on 01628 796786

The event will be open to professionals as well as parents of children and young people who are on the BSCS caseload supported by our staff. Numbers are limited.

As parents and professionals we are aware of the importance of social and emotional mental health. For children and young people with sensory impairment research highlights that they may be at greater risk of poor mental health.

This day aims to explore how we can support our young people to be resilient, have a positive identity and good self esteem both as parents and professionals.



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Coffee Morning

An opportunity for parents/families/carers of children/young people who have a multisensory impairment (impairments in both hearing and vision) to meet other parents and family members in an informal setting. There will be the chance to share information, discuss challenges and success and begin to make connections with other families who understand the unique needs and challenges faced by these children/young people.

Date:
Thursday 14th March

Time:
10am to 12 pm

Venue:
Online -
Google
meet invite
will be sent.

Who: This is aimed at the parent/carers and families of children/young people with multi sensory impairment who are supported by our Teacher of the Multi Sensory Impaired . . .

Cost:
Free

How to book or who to contact: For more information and details of how to join the session contact Tim Kehoe
timothy.kehoe@achievingforchildren.org.uk or
M: 07543 303366



W: berkshiresensoryconsortium.co.uk T: 01628 796786 E: sensory.consortium@achievingforchildren.org.uk





Save the dates

BSCS are running a series of events in collaboration with Guide Dogs & Berkshire Vision during 2024 for children and young people with a vision impairment. More information coming soon

Upcoming Events

13th Feb 2024 Try a Train organised by Berkshire Vision

11th April 2024 Cooking Easter themed event. Year 6 upwards.

30th May 2024 Try a bus. Reading depot.

30th July 2024 Skill UP

29th Oct 2024 Cane & Games day for cane users










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Wishing you all a fantastic Christmas break! See you in the new year 2024!



The Six Authorities

www.rbwm.gov.uk



Royal Borough
of Windsor &
Maidenhead

www.slough.gov.uk
Slough
Borough Council



w: www.berkshiresensoryconsortium.co.uk

f: www.facebook.com/berksscs
