

Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service Autumn 2025



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Welcome to the Autumn Edition of our Newsletter



1 - This is a photo of Jane Peters, our head of service. She is shown smiling warmly and is wearing a blue scarf and dangling earrings.

Hello and welcome to our Autumn edition of the Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service (BSCS) newsletter. For those that don't know me my name is Jane Peters and I am the Head of Service for BSCS working with the six Berkshire Local Authorities. I am also a Teacher of Children and Young People who are deaf -often referred to as a TOD.

It really hasn't seemed very long ago that I was introducing the summer newsletter! The term has as always been a busy one with staff supporting children and young people as they transitioned into new settings and also to new teachers. Training the workforce is a huge part of our work - did you know that every setting is offered at least one whole school or key stage training every year as well as ongoing support

on a visit by visit basis including peer training, subject advice and practical management of the technology our young people use. We also run events for young people and a number of workshops for families and other professionals across the year. Do head over to our website to see what's on including all the dates for our Chatty Monkeys and Preschool groups.

I loved hearing from our young people in this edition as they tell their stories and share with us some of the things they have been involved in. Their voice is such a powerful reminder of listening to young people as we tailor support to meet their needs. We would of course also love to hear from parents too!

Looking ahead, we have our Parents and Professionals Day on the 18th March 2026 which is focusing on 'Building Strong Foundations, Investing in the early years' which is open to all the stakeholders we work with and is free to parents who we support and who have preschool children.

In the Spring term we also have a number of family workshops happening online. .

The Service are also planning some exciting opportunities to engage our schools and young people in Deaf Awareness week 4th - 10th of May 2026 so watch out for more details on the website and in our emails to you next term.

As we approach the end of the term I would like to take the opportunity to wish you a Happy Christmas and seasonal greetings from all the team. I think the staff and the young people are all ready for a welcome break over the festive period as I am sure our parents are too.

With best wishes Jane

Our Stories and achievements

Divij - 'I fancy becoming a lawyer'

My name is Divij and I'm a 19-year-old boy living in Windsor. My journey has been full of ups and downs; the credits for my ups go to Berkshire Sensory Consortium. I'm from India and moved to the UK in 2023 with

my family. I love reading books and news articles, learning about technology and studying my subjects. As of now, I'm almost blind with no useful vision, but I wasn't born with this condition. I was born with a weak retina in both of my eyes due to genetic factors, but knowing this fact didn't really matter to me as my vision was near to perfect... until I turned 14. I was in an examination hall taking my exam, out of nowhere; I saw a black curtain cascading in front of my eye; I went to the toilet leaving my exam and splashed my eyes with water, tried to rub them, but nothing changed. I completed my exam; went straight home and tried to ignore it as the black curtain had only covered a tiny bit of my peripheral vision and I didn't want to scare my parents either; until the next day... I was riding my bike and noticed that black curtain was getting larger, and now it was also restricting my navigation, that's when I told my parents. I was diagnosed with retinal detachment and doctors had assured my eye would be back to normal. I can't blame them; my first surgery was successful!

Life was going perfect after the surgery and things were going absolutely fine... until my second surgery, which was a massive failure. Without being able to see, I saw the hopelessness in the doctors' eyes. The doctors did their best, they were able to restore most of the vision in my third surgery. But this traumatic experience was enough to break me down for quite a long time. I was stuck somewhere in the middle, with being partially sighted; it was a devastating experience for me. I took a long break from my education, hoping that one day the things would start getting better and then I would resume my education as a normally abled child; I used to hate this disability label. I was severely depressed and traumatised with my vision loss experience; completely hopeless, isolated and just living my life without actually living.

Finally, I had my fourth surgery last year; actually, it was on 31st of Dec so technically it was this year! This surgery was also a failure, but this time I emotionally sensed something else. From being fully sighted; I was almost blind now, but I didn't really care about it?! I know this sounds so wrong but honestly this is how I felt! I decided to get my life back to normal, resuming my education from where I had paused it and just accepting my blindness and owning it! My parents supported me a

lot and motivated me; I can't thank them enough! I still don't know how my mother got in touch with Jean from Berkshire Sensory Consortium.

All the credit goes to Jean for making my life better, putting my education in place and connecting me with the right people. She was the one who streamlined my EHCP application and process, she introduced me to braille, to various screen readers and numerous other kinds of technology and devices which are available out there. I've finished learning Grade 2 braille and now I'm able to access technology with screen readers; I can't thank Jean enough! She truly goes out of her way to help and support me. She's more like a guide and mentor for which I feel grateful to her. Some people that Jean has connected with me are absolutely amazing and always exceed expectations!

One of them is Lizzie, she is my Habilitation specialist. Lizzie works on my mobility and navigation, teaches me how to use a white cane and other necessary skills which help me get more independent. She works tirelessly for me and keeps me motivated whenever I feel frustrated or distressed whilst learning something new. I've got Angela and Jas as my QTVIs who are always there to sort out my problems and understand my needs and requirements. They both always put in 100% whilst working for me, I'm endlessly grateful to them! For a short period of time, I had no tutors for my chosen subjects; that was when Angela and Jas came in and taught me English and Maths; really going out of their way to support me! They both still do other things besides their job role to help me succeed and progress. There are so many things they do for me; which I can't recall at the moment so please do forgive me for that! To be precise, the effort they put in for me really makes a difference in my life! Sheree from BSCS teaches me important life skills and makes the reading and study material accessible for me along with my QTVIs. I'm so thankful to her for what she does for me.

In the future, I fancy becoming a lawyer. I know that's feasible only because of the supportive people I've got behind my back from BSCS. My only goal is to work and live independently, selflessly working and supporting those who've always stood besides me, and giving back to the community. Finally, I would like to sincerely thank all the people from the BSCS who tirelessly work for me, and I'd like to address it directly to

them; the things you do for me really matter and make so much difference in my life! Thank you so much!



2 - The picture shows Divij who wrote the article. He is shown dressed in a black hoody, tracksuit bottoms and trainers and is standing outside smiling at the camera.

“You shouldn’t let being deaf stop you from studying subjects that make you happy” by Ella

When my Mum was pregnant, she contracted CMV (Cytomegalovirus) which resulted in me being born with profound hearing loss in my right ear, and a deteriorating loss in my left ear. I also suffer from tinnitus, especially when I am tired or run down.

When I tell people that I am deaf and I study two languages at A Level, they often look at me with surprise! However, I am a firm believer that you shouldn’t let being deaf stop you from studying subjects that make you happy. I have just applied to University to study Spanish and History.

In addition to being busy with my studies, I also run the school newspaper. Recently, I interviewed Hattie Taylor (an Olympic Bronze

Medalist in Rowing), Martha Collison (contestant on the Great British Bake Off) and Eve Humphrey (who starred in Starlight Express). I am Chair of the Community Committee (the Prefect Team). This gives me an opportunity to engage with individuals across our whole school community.

Both of these roles require me to communicate with people with a wide range of backgrounds and ages, be honest and, most of all, stick up for what I believe in. This is another example of how I don't let being deaf hold me back.

Having something that makes you "different" to anyone else, doesn't mean you can't do something that everyone else has done. It might just mean you have to do things slightly differently, and there is nothing wrong with that! I want people to look at me, knowing that I am deaf, and see that I don't let it stop me from pursuing my passions.



3 - The picture shows a drawing of an open book with the word "español" above it - which means Spanish. It seems to be a dictionary as other words in Spanish and pictures float above the book.

Jake - making a positive contribution

We are extremely proud of Jake for making a positive contribution to Reading College. Not only is he able to show his ToD around and explain where he keeps his radio aid but he is also able to explain his deafness to a friend and tell them how his hearing aids help him.

In addition to this, Jake took part in a brilliant sing and sign version of a 'Million Dreams' from the Greatest Showman (which brought a tear to many eyes in the audience) to commemorate remembrance day.

A brilliant start to your academic year. Very well done to you Jake!



4 - The photo shows Jake holding up both hands to use sign language during the performance that is described in the article. He is smiling broadly. He has short cropped hair and is wearing glasses. Other students in the background are signing too.

My transition to college by Lily



5 - The photo shows Lily sitting at a desk in a classroom with her braille note touch and screen in front of her. She has her hands on the braille keyboard and is wearing

headphones. Lily is dressed in a green jumper and her hair is in pigtails. She appears to be concentrating intently!

I started Reading College on the 1st of September 2025. It is going really well so far and I am loving it. It is different to my previous school because there are more adults and there is more moving around the college for lessons. I use my cane to move around the college independently. It is getting easier and easier. My lessons are now much longer than my lessons in my old school. I have two TAs who support me in lessons. My favourite lesson will have to be music! I play the piano for my one-to-one on a Monday morning.

I use my BrailleNote Touch Plus to do my work. My teacher sends me the work over to my BNT+ and I can access it in my email. I download it, edit it and send it back. I can access the internet on my BNT+. I sometimes use my laptop in lessons.

At the moment I am really enjoying Project which is a lesson where you can get creative. Currently we are using Modroc to make masks.

Jonah - Expert in Stories with deaf characters



6 - The picture shows a young boy, Jonah, who looks like he is 7 or so years old, proudly holding up 2 books titled "Jake and Jasmine to the Rescue" and "Dacy's Deaf". He is quietly smiling. The picture books have bright covers and Jonah is wearing a black t-shirt with a picture of flames on it.

Jonah has just joined Year 3 in Thameside. We would like to congratulate him on the adjustment into the juniors and his maturity in taking on this 'mini novel study'. We compared and contrasted two different texts with deaf characters and compared the similarities and differences. We used words like 'protagonist' and looked at different types of personal amplification like cochlear implants and hearing aids.

We are very proud of how articulate and confident Jonah is, becoming an expert in stories with deaf characters.

Anya - My CVI and school



7 - The photo shows Anya sitting at a desk in her wheelchair. She is wearing glasses and smiling and has an ipad on a stand in front of her.

Accessing PowerPoint is difficult for me because some of the text is not large enough and clear enough. Diagrams of 3-D shapes are hard for me to imagine in a different format so I need a tangible option.

Complex graphs and cluttered images can give me a visually induced headache and interfere with the rest of my day

When moving around school, I struggle to see the people from the left and the right side of me and can only see people in front of me. And I often struggle with steering and navigation.

Sometimes when teachers make a big batch of one particular worksheet, they forget that I need modified versions. Which means I struggle to access the lesson in the typical manner that other students do.

Matty - Stateside success



8 - The picture shows a tennis racket lying on the ground with a tennis ball lying on it

We wish Matty all the best in his new opportunity in the US. Matty has always been a dedicated tennis player which has led to him earning a scholarship stateside. He has already won a tournament with his new academy, with more competitions upcoming. Having supported Matty for many years, we would like to wish Matty all the best with his future tennis career.

Getting creative for Christmas!

It's always so lovely to see our students using their skills to make a difference beyond the classroom. Recently I visited Diya who is on placement in a Slough school as part of her level 2 childcare course. It was great to see that she had got stuck in and produced an amazing, creative decorated door for the staff Christmas door competition. Diya has been working hard during her placement, organising a slime making activity, reading stories and helping out at forest school. Well done Diya!



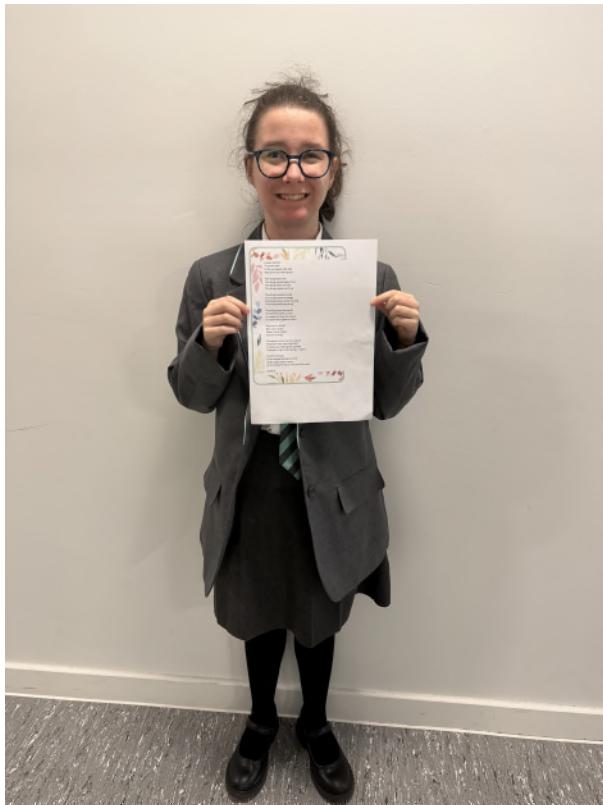
9 - The images show an open classroom door which has been decorated with fairy lights and a blue background with snowflakes on it. Diya has created a snowglobe on the background which has a snowman inside it and pictures of some of the children in the class.

Silva - Brilliant Poet

This is Silva who is a brilliant poet and she is seen by a Qualified Teacher of the Vision Impaired and Teacher of the Deaf.

She was inspired by a positive start at her new secondary school in September.

We are all very proud of this budding writer!



10 - The photo shows Silva, smartly dressed in a grey school uniform. She is holding up a copy of her poem.

'Joy'

Leaves will fall

Time will stall

In the universe's little ball

Would live something tall:

This thing was kind

This thing would never mind

This thing never whines

This thing makes us shine

This thing's name is long

This thing listens to songs

This thing knows what's wrong

This thing loves ping pong

This thing loves the world

The world around, it curls

It makes our heart do a swirl

It makes the angels do a twirl

What is this thing?

Why can it sing?

Does it have wings?

And will it cling?

This thing is not what you expect;

It leaves a very warming effect

It'll leave you feeling very pecked

That peck might make you go inspect

And this thing is:

All the happy feelings around

All the joyful kids in town

All the freedom that's now out of bounds.

By Silva

Preschool Groups

Busy Bees - Festive fun and developmental work



11 - The photos show some preschool children engaged in some of the activities described in the article such as scooping out pumpkins and exploring sensory items. In all of the photos the preschoolers look like they are having lots of creative fun!



The Autumn term at Busy Bees has been very successful, providing a nice blend of festive fun and developmental work for our children with Vision impairment (VI).

As the only dedicated VI preschool group in the area, our activities are uniquely designed to bridge the gap between typical development and the specific learning needs of our pupils, who require structured, repetitive, and multi-sensory experiences to gain information that sighted peers acquire visually.

The term began on September 12th with a 'back to basics' approach, welcoming our little ones in the ball pit and soft play area, promoting gross motor skills and early orientation. The dark sensory room was used to practice visual efficiency as well as light localisation.

As autumn progressed, our activities became more tactile and specific. The Halloween session on October 25th provided a rich, messy sensory experience through pumpkin carving. Children practiced tactile discrimination by exploring the slimy insides and slippery seeds and they used their imagination to create scary pumpkins.

In November, we intensified focus on fine motor control. The session on the 14th used scented playdough to strengthen hand muscles and develop the pincer grip and for great smell exploration. This was followed by a leaf collage activity, where sorting the leaves improved visual discrimination (identifying differences in size/shape) and the sticking process enhanced crucial eye-hand coordination.

The term continued with a pre-Christmas session on November 28th, where we decorated mini Christmas trees, which required continuous eye-hand coordination and localisation as the children placed decorations on the branches, strengthening their emerging spatial awareness.

Across all sessions, singing time—using visual, tactile, and auditory props—and the sensory room remained consistent features, ensuring every child had a chance to engage their senses fully. Thank you to all our supportive families for making this such a productive term.



Chatty Monkeys West preschool group



12- The photo shows parents and preschoolers having craft activity in Chatty Monkeys



13 – The photo shows Lockie and Noah enjoying firework chocolate sparklers.

It's been another busy term at the preschool group where we have focused on the language and listening opportunities around the theme of Autumn. We did lots of exploring the colours, shapes and sounds of autumnal leaves as well as the sounds they make when we crunch them or stamp on them on our woodland walks. We discovered a new book by Steve Metzger called 'We're all going on a Leaf Hunt' based on the more well known one. Instead of finding a bear the children found a skunk which they found hilarious as the skunk made a horrible smell when he lifted his tail!!!! There were so many language opportunities with lots of important repetition as well as such fun together. Around Halloween we

explored different textures with our pumpkin scooping and for firework's night we pretended to be all the different fireworks making the sounds they make as well as making firework pictures and of course chocolate sparklers out of breadsticks, chocolate spread and hundreds and thousands - lots of chocolaty faces and hands.

This term we have had a number of visitors to the group - audiologists and a paediatrician in training as well as support from our new National Deaf Children's Society Connector Rania.



14 – This photo shows Emily using scissors



15 – This photo shows Holly and Amelia building blocks together



16 – This photo shows Freya, Lockie, Amelia and Noah explore pumpkins.



17 – This photo shows Grace, Amelia and Lockie making snow angels

A highlight of the year is always our Christmas parties. Thank you Father Christmas for coming to join us and bringing some fantastic books from the local Berkshire Deaf Children's Society. Thank you to the BDCS for supporting our promotion of reading and enjoying stories with our children who attend the groups.



18 - This photo shows Emily meeting Father Christmas



19-This photo shows Alison our Deaf instructor teaching Father Christmas British sign Language



20 - This photo shows everyone sitting at a table and saying Happy Christmas from everyone at Chatty Monkeys

Chatty Monkeys at Swings and Smiles



21 – This photo shows a child enjoying the ball pond with Jody, Teacher of the Deaf

This term we have had more families attend our group at Swings & Smiles and the children love it! We enjoy song time and exploring the different areas in the sensory room at the centre. We are looking forward to the Spring so that we can use the outside area with the bikes and play area again.

If you would like to join us, please find our dates on the consortium website or [CM dates Flyer](#)



22 - The photos show preschoolers at play in a carpeted room, playing with toys whilst one preschooler explores inside a sensory blackout tent.



Chatty Monkeys East Preschool Group

The Chatty Monkeys East group has continued to enjoy our new facilities at Romsey Close Children's centre. In September 2025, we changed our session timing to 9.30-11.30am to accommodate families who were already out on the school run, or who need to be home for that all important afternoon nap! We have been very lucky to have a visit from our Educational Audiologist, as well as members of the Audiology Team from King Edwards Hospital. This has been a great opportunity for families to have ear impressions taken, as well as to get their questions answered. A specialist rehabilitation from the cochlear implant team at St Guys and St Thomas' also visited a family at the session, to support them on their assessment journey.

This term we have been inspired by the book "The Three Little Pigs". Children have enjoyed creating masks with different tones of pink paper and sticky glue. Every week, we have access to role play toys, such as the kitchen. Our Teacher of the Deaf Heather also brings her playdoh along for the children to develop their fine motor skills. Over the next few terms, we look forward to more arts and crafts, singing and signing and, of course, getting to know lots of new families and their children.



23 - The photo shows Romsey children's centre from the outside. The building has an open door and two lit windows.

Events

Dinton Indoor Climbing Event – 12th October 2025

What a day to remember! On Sunday 12th October, the Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service hosted an adrenaline-pumping indoor climbing event at the fantastic Dinton Activity Centre in Hurst — exclusively for our incredible young adventurers in Years 4 to 7 with hearing loss and vision impairment. From the moment they clipped in,

our pupils showed unstoppable courage and determination. They scaled walls with confidence, tackled the speed challenge with lightning-fast moves, and one superstar even earned a spot on the Dinton Activity Centre's official records board!

With two phenomenal instructors leading the way, the session was not only empowering but also a brilliant opportunity for our young people to connect, laugh, and bond with others who share similar experiences. After conquering the climbs, everyone tucked into delicious food and enjoyed some well-deserved social time.

We couldn't be prouder of their achievements. Well done to all those that took part.

Here are some comments from the attendees about what was their favourite thing about the event:

When I made it to the top.

The timing climb.

Trying to climb as high as I can.

Getting to the top.

The speed wall.

I really liked it. It was great.

I liked the big high walls.

The speed challenge.



24 - Here we can see various photos of the children taking part in the climbing wall activity. The wall is very high and brightly coloured with lots of different shaped handholds for the children to use to climb up using harnesses and ropes. All the children are having a go at climbing, listening to the instructor and some children are pictured enjoying the party food!





Cane and Games Event

Berkshire Vision and the Berkshire Sensory Consortium's Habilitation Team recently collaborated on a Cane and Games event. The day celebrated the long cane as a crucial tool for independent mobility for people with a Vision Impairment. We were fortunate to have two of our older pupils share how the cane has positively impacted their lives.

We were delighted to host 10 young people and 9 parents, all of whom engaged enthusiastically in discussions and demonstrations highlighting the benefits and techniques of long cane use. It was a wonderful opportunity to share experiences, build confidence, and reinforce the importance of independent navigation.

The afternoon was an introduction to Goalball. Goalball is a unique and fully inclusive sport, specifically designed for individuals with vision impairment. It allows participants to develop spatial awareness, teamwork, and communication skills in a dynamic and supportive environment.



25 - *The image shows eleven young people with a visual impairment holding their long canes aloft in the air and smiling.*

Teaching Assistant (TA) Network West November 2025

Huge thanks to Highdown School who hosted our West TA Network meeting for Teaching Assistants working with our pupils with vision impairments on 11th November.

The aim of these events is to build networking connections between professionals in order to share good practice to enhance teaching methods and improve student outcomes across the Local Authorities and they are held twice yearly in the East and West of the county.

November's West meeting was led by QTVI Aimee Warren and QESTA Chihiro Gee and was well supported; with 10 attendees from a range of Wokingham, Reading and West Berkshire schools.

We discussed the roles and responsibilities of the professionals involved in the education of CYP with a vision impairment, sharing the challenges we each face working with limited time and resources.

Attendees appreciated this opportunity to be released from their schools for professional development and left with a renewed vigor for their role and a couple of new technology tips and tricks!



26 - *The photo shows ten colleagues sitting around a large desk ready to work together. A screen on the wall displays a picture. The people are looking at the camera and smiling.*

Signed Book - We're Going on a Bear Hunt

Please go to our website to find a BSL signed story, We're Going on a Bear Hunt, PowerPoint produced and story signed by Alison Hayes, our Deaf instructor.

Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service - Newsletters

We're Going on a Bear Hunt

Michael Rosen Helen Oxenbury



27 - The image shows the front cover of the "We're going on a Bearhunt" book. A family are walking, the dad has a baby on his shoulders and a young boy and girl are also pictured.

Meet the BSCS Team - Chi



28 – A photograph of Chi, a Qualified Educational Specialist Teaching Assistant.

I'm Chi, and I'm a QUESTA (Qualified Educational Specialist Teaching Assistant) for our VI team. I work with children and young people in schools and colleges in the Bracknell, Wokingham and Reading Areas.

This is my second year being a QUESTA but previously, I worked in a secondary school supporting students with VI for 8 years. I enjoy the variety of this job, from delivering intervention sessions on braille skills in Mathematics to teenagers, to creating multisensory storybooks for children who are learning to read.

At home, I am a busy mum with 3 children, but I have recently found a passion for playing football. I can be found getting muddy most Sundays, playing for Arborfield FC and Bracknell Walking Football Club.



29- Chi is pictured wearing her yellow and blue football strip and running towards the camera looking determined!

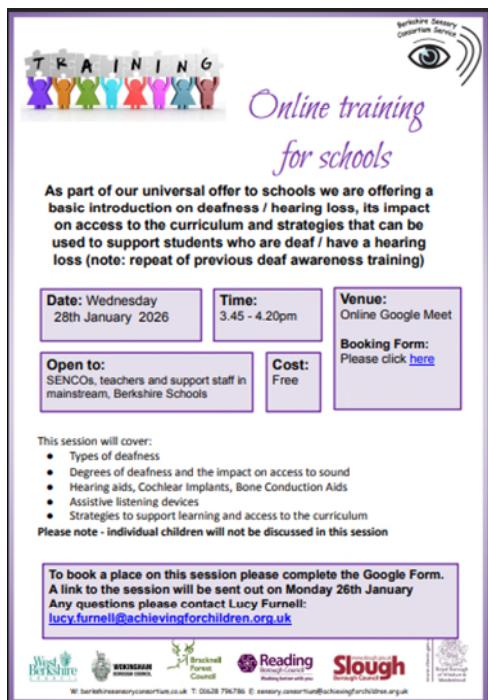
Upcoming Events

Parent Online Workshop - Developing Early Language through stories, Maths and basic Theory of Mind 15th January 2026

A poster for a Parent Workshop. The title is "BSCS Parent Workshop" and the subtitle is "Developing Early Language Through Stories, Maths, Basic Theory Of Mind". The poster features illustrations of children reading and interacting. Text on the poster includes: "Join us to share ideas about how best to support your child's hearing loss in everyday situations.", "Date: Thursday 15th January 2026", "Time: 8.00 to 9.00 pm", "Venue: Online", "The event is free and open to families of pre-school children who are supported by one of our Teachers of the Deaf", and "If you would like to attend please complete a [booking form](#) by 8th January. A link to the online workshop will be sent out Wednesday 14th January. For more information call or email Jody Lewington-Long: jody.lewington-long@achievingforchildren.org.uk or m: 07823 535055". Logos for West Berkshire, Reading, Slough, and Bracknell Forest Councils are at the bottom.

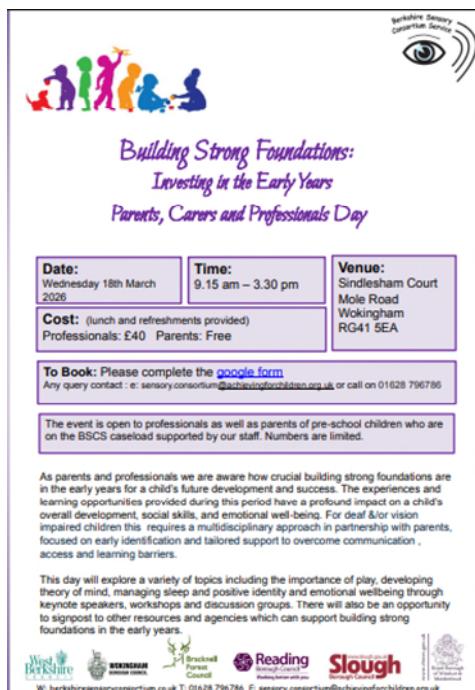
30 - Picture of a invitation to a workshop for families of pre school children being supported by one of our Teachers of the Deaf on Thursday 15th January from 8 pm to 9 pm

Online Training for Schools - Deaf Awareness 28th January 2026



31 – Picture of a invitation to Online training for schools giving an introduction on deafness and hearing loss. This is being held on Wednesday 28th January at 3.45 online

Parents and Professionals Day - 18th March 2026



32 – Picture of an invitation to a Parent and Professional Day on Wednesday 18th March open to parents of pre school children who are supported by one of our Teacher and professionals.

Speech and Language Therapy Service - Online Workshops

Reminder - All parents and carers of pre school children are welcome to attend CYPIT Speech and Language Therapy's online parent training sessions. Each webinar is a one hour event. There are a range of times/days available and no referral is needed- log on and join in, it is fine to have camera off and just listen in/watch, but there is also a Question and Answer function in the chat.

Register on the Berkshire Healthcare website [Children's speech and language therapy workshops](#)

The Topics covered include:

- Communication Foundations
- Communication Building Blocks

- Scaffolding Communication
- Helping with unclear Speech
- Autism and Communication

These sessions are for parents and carers of all children, not specifically for Deaf children, and do not replace specific advice that has already been given to support communication for your child.

A sensory processing workshop is also run by our Occupational Therapists online.

These sessions are designed for parents, carers and those working with children and young people. Our aim is to help you understand the sensory needs that a child or young person may be experiencing. It offers strategies, practical advice and tips on how you can enable a child or young person to manage their sensory needs on a daily basis.

[Sensory Processing online workshops | Children Young People and Families Online Resource](#)

We look forward to welcoming you,
Speech and Language Therapy Team

Wishing you all a lovely festive holiday!



33 - Photo of the Berkshire Sensory Consortium team all dressed in Christmas outfits.

The Six Authorities





w: [Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service - Home](#)

f: [www.facebook.com/berksscs](#)