

Welcome to the Ninth edition of the Dudley Parent Carer Newsletter

It has been a busy few months for the forum! Parent carers have been involved in helping relaunch the local offer, shaping the new Whole Life Disability Service. The Transition task and finish group has evolved and widened into the Preparing for Adulthood group and one of the forums parents who sits on the SEND Reform Board is now the sponsor for the borough wide SEND improvement plan.

We are more committed than ever to ensure that parent carers understand the work of the forum and how they can get involved. The forums ethos has always been one of creating change through building meaningful relationships, understanding and coproduction, which is working really well.

Extra Mile
Award

Whole Life
Disability
Service

The Local
Offer

Spotlight on
Care and
Share

The Extra Mile Award

Parent carers have been telling us what makes a big difference to their lives. They told us that one of the things that makes a difference is when professionals take the time to understand their children and families and what is important to them, this can include taking time to listen, making them feel welcome in the community or doing things that show their child is valued as an individual.

We know that while there are many challenges for parent carers, there are also times when they receive good support and other individuals make a positive difference to their lives. The Dudley Parent Carer 'The Extra Mile' award recognises this and provides an opportunity for parent carers to say a big 'thank you'.

Award Winners in 2017 are -

Elizabeth Wilkins – Direct Payments Officer with Dudley MBC's Children's Disability Team

Liz is thanked for her positive impact on the lives of parent carers and their children. Parents said; "It feels like through all the upheaval over the last 2 years Liz has helped keep the team together. She's been there for me and my family from day one, she's been wonderful with providing support for me and my son with direct payments."

Helen Ellis – Head of Family Solutions

"She goes above and beyond. She sets the standard for others to follow, and she is just nice and genuine and actually gets it."

If you would like to say thank you to somebody who has made a difference to your family let us know. Just email us with the name of the person you are nominating, their contact details and a short summary of how they made a positive difference to your life and send it to info@dudleyparentcarerforum.com.



Whole Life Disability Service

As many of you will know there are plans to develop a whole life disability service (WLDS) here in Dudley. 2 years ago and right at the very beginning of the process members of Working Together for Change gave their time at a visioning event, setting out early what parent carers across Dudley expect from this service. The development of the WLDS was delayed a number of times as the Local Authority struggled to recruit a head of service that would be able to work with others to successfully achieve these ambitious plans intended to meet the needs of children, young people and adults with additional needs and disabilities living and studying in Dudley. Plans are now well underway and parent carers from the forum and more widely are involved and will continue to be involved in many ways. We will post ways to get involved on our website and via twitter and facebook so look out for further information soon.



There has been some confusion about what will be in the service and what will not. This is a council initiative so at this time only council services are definitely part of the plans. On April 1st 2018, the beginning of the service, staff from Adult Social Care, Children's Disability Team (CDT) and the SEN team will all be co-located in one building. These teams and their managers are working hard to improve communication and processes between these teams, plus there are talks with health commissioners who buy therapy, community and hospital services such as CAMHS, SALT, OT and Physio to see if any of these teams will be co-located or how new pathways can be developed to link everyone up virtually to make sure you only have to tell your story once and receive a seamless service from anyone involved in the care of your child(ren) now and into and through their adulthood.

If you are a family that has not had contact with anyone previously you can call 0300 555 0050 the single point of access (SPA) for advice or to request help and support. If you are already receiving services then schools and other practitioners can still contact services directly.

There is still a lot to do and there will be uncertainty as this is such a big and innovative project. It is recognised that you have not received a particularly good service in the past and all efforts are now to remedy this. Finally a plea that you continue to be tolerant and fair through the transition process, keep an eye out for ways to work with others in solution focused ways so that your thoughts and feelings are included in the co-production of this exciting new service.



Santokh Dulai, Head of Service - Whole Life Disability at Dudley MBC has said how committed he is to working with families in the development of this service.

Santokh will be meeting with the forum in the New Year.

The Local Offer



Parents carers were invited to take part in Dudley's Local Offer relaunch recently. Joanne Tasker and the team have been so committed and worked so hard to ensure parent carers from the forum were involved in the development right from the very beginning so that they could provide a local offer that was meaningful to all parents across the borough. Young people, parents and carers have been involved in the development of the new website. They have reviewed content, driven the development and ensured that it is meeting people's needs and is a great one stop shop.

Before the work on the relaunch had been started parents told the forum that they didn't really understand what the Local Offer was for, didn't really use it, and those that did use it found it hard to navigate and not very engaging. Jo and the team have worked incredibly hard to change all this!

What is Dudley's Local Offer?

The Local Offer provides information and resources about all the services and support available for children and young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) with or without an education, health and care plan (EHCP) from birth to 25.

At the heart of Dudley's Local Offer is a new one stop shop website. This contains a wealth of up to date information on areas including education, training and work, health, leisure and fun, care and preparing for adulthood. The website aims to help children, young people, parents and carers to make informed, positive choices and decisions.

To make it more user friendly they have introduced Dudley the guide dog and his pals who will help you find your way around the Local Offer. Dudley's friends represent four different age ranges, simply click on the age range relevant to you or your child to find information specifically for that age group. Information that is useful to all age groups can be found on the sidebar tabs, as well as on the header tabs. For more information visit:

https://fis.dudley.gov.uk/LocalOffer/PublicEnquiry_Live/SynergyHomepage.aspx

The screenshot shows the Dudley's Local Offer website interface. At the top, there is a "Welcome to Dudley's Local Offer" section with a brief description. Below this, there is a video player showing a child at a table. The main content area is divided into four age range panels: "0-5 Years" (green background), "6-11 Years" (yellow background), "11-16 Years" (orange background), and "16-25 Years" (pink background). Each panel features a cartoon character and four navigation buttons: "EDUCATION", "CARE", "HEALTH", and "LEISURE AND FUN". The "16-25 Years" panel also includes a "Preparing for Adulthood" section.

Transition is changing!

The transition task and finish group has been one of the forums major successes with really tangible outcomes which include increased drop off points, more parent friendly websites, autism champions and increased SEND training within colleges.

Parents and professionals did feel however that the group needed more strategic direction if it is to have a real impact to improve pathways through transition and preparation for adulthood, to which the SEND Reform Board have agreed. Members of the transition group will be involved in the coproduction of a preparation for adulthood strategy which will set out how children and young people will be supported in their preparation for adulthood from the earliest possible age. It will include clear pathways, effective support and advice to help them access appropriate education and training providers, achieving success and moving forward to independent or supportive living and employment.

It felt really appropriate that the transition task and finish group evolve and widen its remit to address and implement some of the actions included in the borough wide improvement plan.

The forum welcomes Martin Timmins SEND Co-ordinator at Dudley College as the new chair of this group. The forum also wanted to say a massive thanks to Hellen Ellis for all her hard work, support and commitment to this group from inception.

What's happening?

ADHD, ADD & ASD Parent Support Group

For all parent/carers of children with ADHD, ASD and related diagnosis's (Asperger, ADD etc). A chance for a coffee and chat with friendly like-minded parents and an opportunity for passing on any relevant information or get help with any issues that you may have. A great support network and a place to make new friends. The group meets every month from 10am till 12pm.

For more information contact Anne Davis at anne@welovecarers.org or call 07763 875654

We  Carers 



Chaos! Toy Library

A specialist Toy Library for children with disabilities or special needs and their siblings. You don't need a diagnosis just come and join in. A variety of toys are available including specialist sensory that help with OT, SALT and sensory issues, musical, traditional wooden and educational toys. Come play and find out what's going on around the borough and borrow some toys!

All sessions are free and take place between 10am and 12pm at Queens Cross Network Dudley.

For more information contact Anne Davis at anne@welovecarers.org or call 07763 875654

We  Carers 



What's happening?



Autism friendly cinema screenings

Showcase are proud to present the launch of our Autism Friendly screenings in partnership with not-for-profit support provider, Dimensions. Our innovative autism friendly screenings provide opportunities for people with autism or sensory sensitivity to enjoy a trip to the cinema.

Visit for more information: <http://www.showcasecinemas.co.uk/events/autism-friendly-screenings>

On Sunday mornings throughout the month, films suitable for all audiences are screened in a sensory friendly and inclusive environment. Adjustments at the cinema reduce over-stimulation and create a welcoming place for people with autism to enjoy films with their families, friends or carers.

Visit for more information: <https://www.dimensions-uk.org/families/autism-friendly-screenings/>

ODEON autism friendly cinema screenings

ODEON hosts autism friendly cinema screenings every month. Listed below are the participating sites for our autism friendly cinema screenings with ODEON. Tickets for the latest releases may come with a small Blockbuster charge of £1.

Visit for more information: <http://www.odeon.co.uk/accessibility/autism-friendly-cinema-screenings/>

Chaos

Little Chaos is an all disability support group, you don't have to have children under 5 to attend.

Every Wednesday 1pm - 2.30pm at Scallywags Brierley Hill.

Free session. No need to book contact anne@welovecarers.org for more information.

Total Chaos Created to provide parent/carers with a couple of hour's respite. Siblings welcome.

Every Saturday 10-12pm for kids aged 5 – 14. £5 per session.

Please contact Rachael@welovecarers.org for more information.

Chaos Sports Sports group for older kids aged 14+ to help promote social interaction through team work.

Every Thursday evening 7.30pm - 9pm. £5 per session.

Contact Steve Bull for more details on 07795159806.

Carers amble through Saltwells Nature Reserve

Second Thursday of every month at Saltwells Lane car park DY5 1AX - No booking necessary.

Join us for a gentle amble through accessible woodland trails, take some time out for yourself or bring along the person who you care for to enjoy the beautiful surroundings and sculpture trail. The route is not demanding, is generally flat and everyone is welcome. You will get the chance to meet and chat with other carers and people will be on hand from local services to discuss help available in Dudley borough.

For more information contact Alan Preece, Senior Warden on 01384 812795 or email

alan.preece@dudley.gov.uk

Dudley Zoo & Castle Free Admission

If your child is on the Children's Disability Network Register, you are able to access the Dudley Zoo & Castle Pass. This is free admission for a family of 5 (2 adults & 3 children from 3yrs to 17yrs).

If you would like to enquire about the Children's Disability Network Register or your child is already on the Register, and would like to book the Dudley Zoo Pass please contact Children's Disability Team on 01384 815813 or email your request to CDT.Cs@dudley.gov.uk

What's happening?

Future Stars!

Future Stars are a drama group for children and young people who have a disability or additional need. The group is for children and young people aged 10 - 25 years. The group runs term time on Saturdays at Quarry Bank Community Centre from 2pm - 5pm.

Children and young people can come along to develop performance skills to include expression, improvisation, body language etc. that will help with confidence and all aspects of performing. They will also meet new friends and build on their social skills. They do 2 performances at Quarry Bank which is to showcase what the children and young people have learnt in lessons where parents/carers and other family members come along to watch.

For more information email letsdancefuturestars@gmail.com

Carers Tea and Chat!

Do you support a relative, friend or a loved one with everyday tasks?

You might be cooking, shopping or helping with taking medication, washing and dressing...

...people who give this kind of support often need more information or help.



Carers Tea & Chat is an informal drop-in for carers to meet each other and find support from local organisations.

Refreshments start from just £1 – all welcome!

First and third Friday every month 9:30am-12noon

Lunch on the Run Cafe @DY1, Stafford Street, Dudley, DY1 1RT



Let's Dance

Let's Dance is a dance group for children and young people who have a disability or additional needs. The group is for children and young people aged 5-25 years, under 8's have to be accompanied by a parent/carer.

The group runs term time on Saturdays at Quarry Bank Community Centre. Sheffield Street, Quarry Bank, Brierley Hill, West Midlands, DY5 1EA.

Current lessons are:

Ballet - 3:30pm to 4pm

Musical theatre – 4pm-5pm

Street/freestyle/rock and roll/slow dance (the style changes each term) – 5pm-6pm

Tap - 6pm-6:30pm

Children and young people can come along to learn new styles of dance that will help with balance, tone, coordination etc. They will also meet new friends, grow in confidence and build on their social skills. They do two performances which showcase what the children and young people have learnt in lessons where parents/carers and other family members can come along to watch. They also do performances for the local community events such as the Dudley Performing Arts Dance Festival, school fetes, fundraising events etc. These are optional, some children and young people love to perform, but you don't have to do the performances if it's not for you!

For more information email letsdancefuturestars@gmail.com or visit the Facebook page 'let's dance'.

dancing with the feet
is one thing
dancing with the heart
is another

Working together for change – your parent carer forum

“Being a parent carer of a special needs child can be lonely, you can feel isolated, scared and misunderstood. Let’s work together to change this.”

Sally—Steering Group Member

Working Together for Change - Dudley Parent Carer Forum aims to empower parent carers to have their voices heard in a way that influences change and service design through working together with professionals. You are the experts by experience and we need you to come together to share your ideas, views and experiences.

We are a friendly, welcoming bunch with a can do attitude who share the hard times and the happy times together. Any parent/carer of a child under 25 living in Dudley with a disability or additional need can join the forum and it’s free!

There are a number of ways you can get involved:

Receive Information - join our mailing list and receive regular updates.

Come to a coffee morning – we will be holding regular coffee mornings where people can drop in, meet other parent carers and find out more about the forum. Check out the website for dates.

Be consulted - from time to time parents views are sought to influence decisions, you can play a part in this.

Join a task and finish group - if collectively there is an issue parents would like to discuss and jointly find positive solutions to we seek the right professionals to influence and work together with. We currently have two areas of interest around the Education Health and Care Plan process and the Transition process.

Communications Team - if you are a wiz at social media or a natural host join our communication group and help spread the word and raise the profile of the forum!

Join the Steering Group - if you want to get more involved and steer the direction of the forum then come and sit on our steering group.

If you would like to know more, have an informal chat, or meet up for a coffee and a bit of cake then get in touch! Email Donna@dudleycvs.org.uk or call 01384 573381

We wanted to share some of the reasons why we think the forum is a success!

We are an active forum that builds relationships with professionals based on respect and honesty. We have created a safe environment where people can share openly.

We create opportunities for people to come together and connect both face to face and virtually. Everyone is welcomed, valued, involved and included.

Email: info@dudleyparentcarerforum.com

Website: www.dudleyparentcarerforum.com

Twitter: @DWTFC

Facebook: www.facebook.com/dudleyparentcarerforum





Care and Share

is an online community website and platform that supports children with SEND and their families.

The front facing exciting website is packed full of useful information and resources whilst behind the scenes lies a bespoke system that has been designed and created solely on the views and experiences of parent carers within Dudley borough.

This system allows families, carers and professionals to document, track and celebrate the progress of the child in need of support by ways of video sharing, picture uploading and text posting.

Parent carers shared the need for a way to tell their story and celebrate all the great things their children and young people could do, their achievements and aspirations, rather than always focusing on what they couldn't do.

This secured network allows more connectivity with professionals and a way to regularly be updated on their child's progress as well as being able to provide and share updates from home.

If you would like to be part of an exciting new pilot to test out the system please email donna@dudleycvs.org.uk

For more information visit: <http://careandshare.uk/>



The aims of your forum

Members of the forum will work together as individuals, organisations and partners with the aim of ensuring that the voices of parents and carers are heard. They will ensure that all parents and carers in our borough are equipped with the knowledge and skills to influence change working within a framework of agreed values and principles. Collaboration is the name of our game, working together in a positive, solution focused way that leads to the best possible outcomes for children with SEND and their families.

This group aims to:

- Offer support and provide friendship
- Listen with empathy
- Influence policy development
- Provide signposting and share information in ways that is easily understandable and accessible
- Be democratic, transparent and represent the view of parent carers
- Be realistic in what we and partners together can achieve in the current austerity climate

New in 2018

In 2018 we have a band of parents setting up outreach forum sessions within a range of special and mainstream schools, so that parents who don't want to attend formal meetings have the information they need and the opportunities to share their experiences and ideas. The first three schools to kick off are Old Park Special School, Bromley Hills Primary School and Holly Hall Secondary School.

We look forward to reporting on the success of this initiative in our next edition of this newsletter.