

Somerset Parent Carer Forum CIC



Welcome to the first edition of our new style newsletter.

Welcome to the first edition of our new style newsletter. We hope that this new format will be easier for you to find the information you need. We will give details of upcoming events and also be providing updates on some of the work we have been doing.

Somerset Council Restructuring

Thank you to everyone who attended one of the sessions about the restructure before Christmas. The council have taken the new structure to full council who made the final decision on the plans. You can find more details on the councils website under democracy.

The council have asked central government for additional support including the ability to raise council tax above the 5% which has been granted and we know this is going to impact on families. If you are worried please contact us and we can signpost you to people who can help.

We know things are very unsettled at the moment and we are working with the council to get clarity about what the new children's services will look like after April. More details will follow as we have more information.

To look at some of the proposed changes, our April discussion event will focus on what the changes will look like. This event will be online on Wednesday 2nd April. Please see our website for more details of how to book.

Enjoy this month's newsletter!

In this newsletter you can expect:

Welcome

Let's Talk SEND & Inclusion Event

Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) update

Meeting with DFE and NHS England

Wise workshops

Events

Chill & Chat Groups



Lets Talk SEND and Inclusion Tuesday 18th March 10:00-14:00

A reminder that our third Let's Talk SEND event is on Tuesday. The event is open to all parent carers, and your child or young person doesn't need a diagnosis to attend.

You will be able to visit a range of information stalls and talk to people providing services locally.

Chat about important SEND topics at our discussion tables including:

- Local Offer
- Personal Budgets
- Disability language
- Accessible playgrounds
- Using digital platforms to support the EHCP process

Lets Talk SEND & Inclusion

Tuesday 18th March
Memorial Hall, Wincanton
10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

We are delighted to announce the third of our Let's Talk SEND events for this year. The event will include:

- A range of discussion tables cover hot SEND topics
- Local Offer live – information stalls from a range of providers

This free event is open to all parent carers, and no diagnosis is needed to attend. It's a great chance to learn, ask questions, and access resources that can support children and young people both in and out of school.



We can't wait to see you there!

Wincanton Memorial Hall	Tuesday 18th March 2025
10:00-14:00	Memorial Hall High Street, Wincanton BA9 9JF



**Partnership for
Inclusion of
Neurodiversity in
Schools**

SAVE THE DATE

Somerset Neurodiversity conference

Tuesday 24th June

Taunton Racecourse

Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS)

We are now coming to the end of year one of the pilot for PINS and wanted to give you a quick update. We have run coffee mornings in all of the schools as part of the project and had over 317 parents attend.

Main areas which have been raised by parents include masking, sensory, sleep difficulties and communication with schools.

Some of the things that have changed as part of the project that have been shared with us include:

- Improvements to the environment, which means more supportive to neurodiverse children
- Changes to home to school books, which means its clearer for parents and easier for staff to complete
- Changes to lunchtime provision including restarting wellbeing clubs

Lots of schools have reported seeing the benefit of regular coffee mornings with parents and are planning to continue this. We are looking at how we can create a lead for each group and a way to bring them all together so they can be kept up to date with information and any changes.

We have now been notified that PINS will continue into year 2 and this will provide an opportunity to continue to work with the schools currently involved. In addition space will be available for 30 new schools to join and we will be sharing more information as it becomes available.

You can find out more on our website:

www.somersetparentcarerforum.org.uk

Meeting with the Department for Education and NHS England

Last month, we met with representatives from the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England as part of their ongoing monitoring of SEND services following the revisit in November 2022.

The focus of the discussion was on exclusions, and while there has been a decrease in the total number of permanent exclusions, we raised significant concerns about some exclusion practices still being used by certain schools. While data can be useful, it doesn't always reflect the real-life experiences of families.

Based on feedback from parents, we highlighted concerns regarding:

- The use of 'wellbeing days' to prevent children from attending school.
- Schools requesting parents to collect their child due to difficulties in coping, which can amount to an illegal exclusion.
- A lack of reasonable adjustments being made, particularly within two multi-academy trusts.

We were pleased to hear that the DfE will be escalating these concerns to the relevant oversight team within the department.

We will continue to monitor the situation closely and keep you updated on any developments.



Your Voice Matters

Your feedback and experiences are incredibly important to us, as they help ensure that your voices are truly heard.

By sharing your thoughts, you help us advocate for meaningful change and improvements. We always appreciate hearing from you, so please do keep reaching out.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement.



Volunteering

We are delighted to have been joined by several new parent carer volunteers.

If you are interested in volunteering with us then please do get in touch. We have a range of different areas you can get involved in but are always open to discussing any ideas you may have.

Please contact us at getinvolved@somersetparentcarerforum.org.uk or call 01458 259384.

Workshops for Information, Support, and Education (WISE)



We know that being a parent carer of a child or young person with additional needs can bring unique challenges, and sometimes it's hard to know where to turn for guidance and support.

That's why we've created Workshops for Information, Support, and Education (WISE)—a friendly, welcoming space where you can learn, connect with others, and gain practical advice to help navigate these challenges.

Our workshops cover a wide range of topics based on what parent carers have told us would be most helpful. Best of all, all of our workshops are completely free to attend.

To make it as easy as possible for you to take part, we have updated many of our workshops to include an online option. We also continue to run around six face-to-face sessions each month across Somerset in locations including Taunton, Bridgwater, Chard, Minehead, Yeovil, Cheddar, and Wincanton. Workshops take place on different days and at various times to fit around busy schedules.

Each month, we offer different workshop themes, so it's always worth checking our website to see what's available near you.



How to Book a Workshop

All our workshops are free, but you will need to be registered on the Somerset Parent Carer Forum database to book a place. This helps us keep in touch with you and send you any important workshop details. Once registered, you'll be able to sign up for any workshop using your registered email. Our database also ensures that your information is stored securely. If you have any questions or need support with booking, please don't hesitate to call us, we're happy to help

We look forward to welcoming you to one of our workshops soon.



Upcoming workshops

- Neurodiversity and growing up
- ADHD & Executive Functioning
- Help your Neurodivergent Child manage their Anxiety
- How to talk to your child about Neurodiversity
- Supporting your child through transitions
- Understanding and supporting behaviour



Just Act Natural *be in nature, be yourself*

For families who are members of Somerset Parent Carer Forum.

For families with children and young people who have additional needs and or disabilities.

Come along for a fantastic camping weekend, packed with activities and exciting opportunities to explore the great outdoors. A welcoming and supported space for families to come together and make friends



Inclusive Camping Weekend Fun for the Whole Family



TAKE PART IN ALL INCLUSIVE, FUN ACTIVITIES:

Some of the activities you may get the opportunity to take part in:

- animal care
- gardening
- cookery
- being creative and exploring nature
- Treasure hunt
- den building
- fun games
- sensory calm down area

**FRIDAY 1ST - SUNDAY
3RD AUGUST**

You will need a code from
Somerset Parent Carer Forum
to book this event

MEALS WILL BE PROVIDED

£53 per person

For more information visit:

<https://somersteparentcarerforum.org.uk/home/events/family-events/>

This unique weekend offers a welcoming and supportive environment where families can connect, relax, and enjoy exciting outdoor activities together.

What to Expect:

- 👥 A safe and inclusive space to meet new friends 🍌
- 🧘 A sensory calm-down area for relaxation 🌿
- 🎨 Fun activities like animal care, gardening, cookery, and creative nature exploration! 🦋🔍
- 🌱 A chance to learn about the environment and make amazing memories.

What's Included:

- 🍴 All meals provided throughout the weekend
- 🚿 Camping pitch with access to showers
- 🦋 All activities – no extra costs.

Online Chill & Chat – A Supportive Space for Parents

This month's Online Chill & Chat was led by our amazing SEND Navigator, Tasha, and we were delighted to be joined by Laura from Spinning World of Autism.

Laura shared her lived experience of raising her non-verbal autistic son and the incredible impact that AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) has had on their lives.

Our online group provides a friendly, informal, and safe space where parents can connect. We often have guests so check our website to find out more information.



Chill & Chat Dads Group – A Great Start in a New Home!

Dad's Group

Group Details:

-  **Date: Thursday, 27th March**
Thursday, 24th April
Thursday, 22nd May
Thursday, 26th June
Thursday, 24th July
-  **Time: 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM**
-  **Location: Royal Marine Inn, Yeovil, BA215AA**

Are you a dad of a child with additional needs or disabilities? We'd love to invite you to join our new dads' group, where you can connect with other fathers who understand the joys and challenges you face.

This is a safe, welcoming space for sharing experiences, gaining support, and building friendships. We look forward to meeting you!



Our new Chill & Chat Dads Group, led by our fantastic reps Richard and Chris, is off to a brilliant start! The first session was a hit, with all the dads enjoying great company, drinks, and pizza.

We faced an unexpected challenge when our office was flooded, forcing us to find a new venue at short notice. Thankfully, the Royal Marines Inn in Yeovil welcomed us with open arms.

The group felt it was the perfect place to meet, and with the Royal Marines Inn happy to have us back, we're delighted to announce that this will be our regular meeting spot moving forward.

This group is open to all dads who have a child with additional needs. There's no need to book—just come along, relax, and connect with other dads who understand the journey.

