

Somerset Parent Carer Forum CIC



Welcome

We're delighted to share our latest newsletter with you, bringing together updates on our work, important SEND information, and useful resources for families across Somerset.

We hope you find the information helpful. If you know someone who may benefit from receiving these updates, please feel free to share this newsletter with them. They can also sign up to receive future news, events and updates from Somerset Parent Carer Forum [on our website](#).

Missed one of our Listening Events?

We know it's not always possible to join our Listening Events live, so we've made it easier to catch up. Following feedback from parent carers, we've created a new Listening Events Recordings page on our website.

You can now watch or listen to recordings of previous sessions at a time that suits you, helping you stay informed about the topics and discussions that matter most to Somerset families.

Whether you couldn't attend on the day or would like to revisit a session, you can access the recordings whenever it's convenient.

Visit our Listening Events Recordings page to catch up and stay connected with the work of Somerset Parent Carer Forum.

Current videos include:

- Right to Choose
- Somerset Virtual School

In this newsletter you can expect:

Listening events

10 Years of SPCF

SEND Reform Plan

Short breaks
survey update

SEND Survey

Ways to have
your voice heard

Events and
workshops



SEND Reform Plan update

Somerset's SEND Reform Plan has now been submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) as part of the national SEND reform programme.

The plan is currently being reviewed by the DfE, with approval expected by mid-September 2026. As the review progresses, the plan may be updated to reflect feedback.

The plan can be read on Somerset's SEND Local Offer - <https://shorturl.at/SzQAO>

Over the autumn term there will be a range of events where you will be able to discuss on how the plan will be delivered and how you can help to monitor the plans impact for our families. More details will follow in September.



Short breaks survey update

Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their experiences of accessing short breaks, respite support and community activities.

Your feedback is invaluable and helps ensure the voices of Somerset families are at the heart of the conversations we have with local and national decision-makers. This week, we raised important concerns about the challenges families are facing when trying to access suitable short breaks. We know that limited availability, a lack of choice, and ensuring the right support for children and young people with more complex needs remain key issues for many families.

We also discussed the recent changes to holiday provision at Brookside Academy. Somerset Council has shared that it is actively exploring alternative options to support families who have been affected and families impacted have been contacted individually to discuss options.

We're also pleased to see these important issues being recognised in the national media. We will continue to ensure that the lived experiences of Somerset families help shape local and national discussions about improving SEND services and support. Every survey completed, conversation shared and experience raised helps strengthen our voice and influence positive change. Thank you for helping us make sure Somerset families are heard.

You can read our recent contribution to the BBC News article at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c7vg3gnzn6mo>

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NEWS

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England | Local News

'We feel the pressure juggling holiday logistics'

AMY NELSON

Amy Nelson (r) is self-employed, and can't take time off work to juggle childcare for her three children

Jonathan Holmes & Tess De La Mare
West of England

25 July 2026



CIAT/SPCF Family Fun Days Bring Smiles All Round

A huge thank you to everyone who joined us for our CIAT/SPCF Family Fun Days at Mendip School and Polden Bower School.

Despite the soaring temperatures, the days were filled with fun, laughter and plenty of smiles as children and young people with SEND enjoyed a wide range of inclusive activities in a welcoming and supportive environment. It was wonderful to see so many families coming together, trying new experiences, making memories and, of course, keeping cool with plenty of ice cream! 🍦

Events like these are a fantastic reminder of how important it is to create opportunities where every child and young person feels included, valued and able to take part at their own pace. Seeing families relax, connect with one another and simply enjoy spending time together made the days truly special.

A heartfelt thank you to all the families who attended, our amazing volunteers, dedicated staff and the activity providers who helped make these events such a success. Your enthusiasm, kindness and support made all the difference, and we hope everyone went home with happy memories and is already looking forward to the next one!



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|----------------------------|---------------|
| • Friday 25th September 26 | 17:30 - 19:00 |
| • Friday 23rd October 26 | 17:30 - 19:00 |
| • Friday 27th November 26 | 17:30 - 19:00 |
| • Friday 18th December 26 | 17:30 - 19:00 |
| • Friday 22nd January 27 | 17:30 - 19:00 |
| • Friday 26th February 27 | 17:30 - 19:00 |
| • Friday 19th March 27 | 17:30 - 19:00 |
| • Friday 23rd April 27 | 17:30 - 19:00 |
| • Friday 28th May 27 | 17:30 - 19:00 |
| • Friday 25th June 27 | 17:30 - 19:00 |
| • Friday 23rd July 27 | 17:30 - 19:00 |

Join us for our monthly Youth Group for 12 to 18 year olds with additional needs. There will be a craft activity, games and tuck shop so please bring some small change. The first session is free to attend. £3 thereafter, we ask for parents to stay for the first session.



@ Unit 2, 32 Goldcroft,
Yeovil, BA21 4DH



Youth Group update

We're delighted to share some fantastic news: We have been awarded funding from the Community Inclusion and Activities Team, which means our Youth Group will continue to run for another year!

Over the past year, we've seen young people build friendships, grow in confidence, try new activities, and find a place where they feel welcome and understood.

Our monthly Youth Group for 12 to 18-year-olds with additional needs will continue to offer a range of inclusive activities, including crafts, games, social opportunities, themed events, and much more.

We look forward to welcoming both familiar and new faces over the coming year and continuing to make the Youth Group a safe, friendly, and enjoyable space for everyone.

≡ HAVE YOUR SAY! ≡

Somerset's Special Educational Needs and/or Disability annual satisfaction survey (2026)

Parent carer and practitioner survey

If you are a parent carer or professional involved with SEND services, we'd really value your feedback.

Your responses will help us monitor the progress of the SEND Improvement and Reform Plan, ensuring we understand what's working well and where improvements are still needed. The findings will be shared with the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England (NHSE) as part of our ongoing monitoring and reporting.

Your feedback is also especially important as the Somerset Area Partnership is expected to have its OFSTED SEND Inspection within the next 6–9 months. Survey responses will help demonstrate the experiences of families and professionals, providing valuable evidence to support the inspection process.

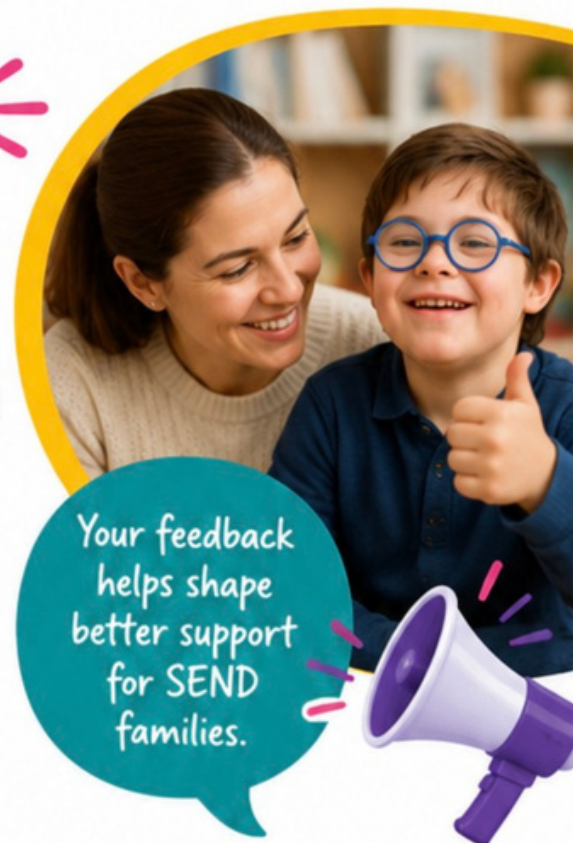
As a thank you for taking part, everyone who completes the survey will have the chance to be entered into a prize draw to win an Amazon voucher!

Every response counts and helps shape better services and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Please complete the survey today and make your voice heard. Together, we can help improve SEND services across Somerset.

Please check the survey for prize draw terms and conditions, including eligibility and entry details.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2026SENDsurvey>



Scan the QR code to take part or use the survey links provided.



Parent Carers

Scan the QR code to take part or use the survey links provided.



Practitioners

Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS) consultation



The Department for Education has launched a consultation on the future of Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS) as part of its wider SEND reforms.

The consultation is seeking views on how children and young people with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans who are educated outside of a school or college setting can be better supported, while improving the quality, oversight and consistency of provision.

If your child currently receives EOTAS, or you have an interest in SEND provision, this is an important opportunity to help shape future policy.

The consultation is open until 18 September 2026, and you can find more information, including a parent and carer guide and details on how to respond, on the GOV.UK website at <https://shorturl.at/BBJdy>.

Help us shape our response

 Date: Monday 14th September
 Online (via Microsoft)
 Time: 7:00pm

We are pleased to invite you to a Parent Information Event focused on the SEND Reform Education: Other Than At School (EOTAS) Consultation.

This session has been designed to provide a clear overview of the Government's EOTAS consultation while creating a supportive space for parent carers to share their experiences, views, and feedback.

Your insights are incredibly important and will help shape our collective Parent Carer response, ensuring that the voices of Somerset families are represented and heard throughout the consultation process.

What to expect

- A clear, simple overview of the (EOTAS) Consultation
- What the proposed changes could mean for your child and family
- Opportunities to share your feedback

What is EOTAS?

Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS) is support arranged by the local authority when your child's needs cannot be met in a school or college. Instead, their education may take place at home or through a combination of different settings and services.

EOTAS is written into a child's Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.

EOTAS is different from alternative provision. Alternative provision is usually arranged when a child is unable to attend school because of illness, exclusion or other circumstances. EOTAS is specifically for children whose special educational needs mean that a school or college is not the right setting for them.

National Consultations



Upfront funding for mainstream schools: creating a 'local SEND inclusion formula'

The Government is asking for views on a proposal to give mainstream schools more SEND funding upfront, so they can provide support earlier instead of waiting for extra funding to be agreed. The aim is to help children get the right support sooner and improve inclusion in mainstream schools.

The consultation is open until 18 September 2026. Parents, carers and professionals can find out more and share their views via the Department for Education consultation page - <https://shorturl.at/bci9l>



Early years funding: proposed changes to the entitlements funding system

The Government is also consulting on proposed changes to how early years education and childcare funding is distributed, including funding that supports children with SEND and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The aim is to make the funding system fairer and ensure support reaches the children who need it most.

The consultation is open until 18 September 2026. Parents, carers and professionals can find out more and share their views through the Department for Education consultation - <https://shorturl.at/X03Z6>



Tips for Completing Consultations

- **Read the information carefully** – Take time to understand what is being proposed and why.
 - **Note your questions** – Write down anything you're unsure about so you can get clarification.
 - **Focus on your child's needs** – Share your experiences and how the changes might affect your child's learning and wellbeing.
 - **Be clear and specific** – Use examples where possible to explain your views.
 - **Meet deadlines** – Make sure your responses are submitted before the consultation closes.
 - **Use support networks** – Talk with other parent carers, school staff, or local support groups for advice or to discuss your views.
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Planning a day out this summer?

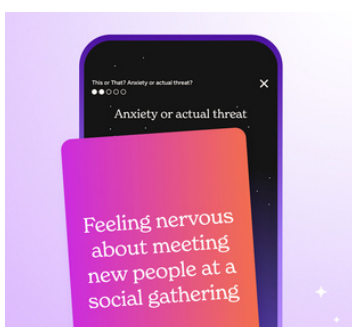
If you or your child needs access to an accessible toilet, a RADAR Key could make your day out a little easier.

The National Key Scheme (NKS), commonly known as the RADAR Key Scheme, gives disabled people independent access to thousands of locked accessible toilets across the UK.

Many venues keep these facilities locked to ensure they remain available for those who need them most, and a RADAR Key allows you to access participating toilets without needing to find a member of staff.

Before you travel, it's also worth checking whether your destination has a Changing Places toilet if you need extra space or specialist equipment. As not all accessible toilets are part of the RADAR Key Scheme, it's always a good idea to check ahead.

RADAR Keys are available from a range of retailers. You can purchase one through [Fledglings](#), Amazon or find out more about how the scheme works on the Motability Scheme website.



Kooth is changing

If your child or young person uses Kooth for online mental health and wellbeing support, you'll soon start to see a new name – Soluna by Kooth.

While the name and look of the platform are changing, the free, safe and confidential support will stay the same. Young people will still be able to access professional mental health support, self-help tools and wellbeing resources, with a new, more engaging app and website experience.

There's nothing families need to do at the moment – Kooth will continue to be available as normal until the change takes place. Find out more at: <https://shorturl.at/yxE9Z>

Looking for things to do this summer?

If you're looking for inclusive activities for your child or young person, Somerset's Local Offer has lots of ideas to help you make the most of the holidays. You'll find information on accessible sports, youth groups, arts and creative activities, family days out, holiday clubs, short breaks and much more.

We'll also be sharing activities, events and family-friendly opportunities from across Somerset on our social media channels throughout the summer, so make sure you're following us to keep up to date with what's happening.

Take a look at the Leisure section on the Somerset Local Offer to explore what's available near you and to access the calendar from the Community Inclusion and Activity Team (CIAT) available at: www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/the-local-offer

Groups will restart in September following the Summer Break

Finding Your Way

A support group for Parent Carers
of Children with Additional Needs
and Disabilities



≡ *Groups Across Somerset* ≡

1st
Week



Henstridge

1st Tuesday
10 – 12



Bridgwater

1st Wednesday
10 – 12



Wells

1st Thursday
7pm – 9pm

2nd
Week



Minehead

2nd Monday
11 – 1



Crewkerne

2nd Wednesday
9 – 11



Taunton

2nd Thursday
10 – 12

3rd
Week



Yeovil

3rd Tuesday
10 – 12



Ilminster

3rd Thursday
10 – 12



Street –
Glastonbury

3rd Friday
10 – 12

4th
Week



Langport

4th Wednesday
10 – 12



Shepton Mallet

4th Wednesday
10 – 12



Highbridge

4th Friday
10 – 12



Meet Other
Parent Carers



Share
Experiences



Gain Practical
Advice &
Resources



Regular
Meetings



Friendly
Safe Space

Scan here for
more information



Locations of groups can be found on our website



Working Together to Support Parent Carers Across Somerset

Finding the right support can make all the difference when you're caring for a child or young person with additional needs. That's why we're delighted to be building stronger partnerships with local parent support groups and community organisations across Somerset, making it easier for families to access trusted information and support closer to home.

Our SEND Navigators, Tasha and Ellen, now hold regular monthly drop-in sessions alongside several fantastic local groups:

- Chard – Hive Haven Support Group at The Hive Young People's Centre
- Wincanton – Balsam Centre Open Mental Health
- Frome – JAMM POD
- Cheddar – The SPACE Parent Club

These welcoming sessions offer parent carers the opportunity to meet others who understand the challenges of raising a child with SEND, ask questions, access reliable information, and discover what support is available within their local community.

Funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, our SEND Navigator service is here to help families feel more informed and confident. SEND Navigators can support parent carers to find the right services, prepare for meetings and appointments, understand available support, complete forms such as DLA, PIP and grant applications, and identify positive next steps for their family.

It's important to know that SEND Navigators don't replace services such as SENDIAS or the Family Intervention Service. They don't attend school meetings, advocate on behalf of families, or support EHCP applications. Instead, they focus on empowering parent carers with the knowledge, information and confidence they need to make informed decisions and navigate their SEND journey.

If you'd like to find out more about our SEND Navigator service or discover your nearest drop-in session, please see our website, or scan the QR code.



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 can be difficult to know where to find the right information, advice and support.

That's why we created WISE (Workshops for Information, Support and Education), a friendly and welcoming space where parent carers can learn, connect with others, share experiences and gain practical information to help navigate their journey.

Our workshops are shaped by what parent carers tell us they need and cover a wide range of topics, from understanding SEND processes and accessing support to wellbeing and practical advice.



WISE UP WORKSHOPS
Empowering Parent
Carers to succeed

Upcoming workshops

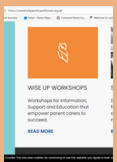
- Smooth Starts: Supporting your child's transitions to a new school
- Understanding Autism & Related Needs
- Empowering Parent: Building Strong SEN Partnerships with Schools
- Social Communication Strategies
- How to Talk to your Young Person about Neurodiversity
- Understanding Masking
- Decoding Dyslexia: What we all should know
- Sleep Differences in Neurodivergent Young People

All workshops are free to attend, and we continue to offer a mix of online and face-to-face sessions to make them as accessible as possible.

We are currently finalising our new WISE workshop offer for 2026/27, taking into account parent carer feedback and emerging needs. Details of the updated programme, including new topics and dates, will be shared soon.

In the meantime, keep an eye on our website and social media channels for the latest updates and opportunities to take part.

HOW TO REGISTER FOR WISE UP WORKSHOPS



Step 1:

- Visit the Somerset Parent Carer Forum Website
- Go to our homepage and scroll down
- Near the bottom of the page, you'll find a tab labeled "Wise Up Workshops"
- Click "Read More"

Step 2: Choose Your Registration Path

There are two ways to register, depending on whether you're already on our database:

✓ If You Are Already Signed Up

(You receive newsletters or have attended events like previous workshops, the circus or pantomime)

- Simply tick "Register" for each workshop you'd like to attend.
- Scroll to the bottom of the page fill out your email address and click the blue "Register" button



✗ If You Are NOT Signed Up

- On the Wise Up page, halfway down, you'll see a paragraph titled "How to Register."
- Look for the sentence: "Individuals not on our database will need to register first by clicking here."
- Click the link and complete the sign-up form. Please note that when filling out the postcode part of the form it requires capital letters and a space in between postcode.
- Once you've signed up, return to the workshops page and follow the steps above to register for your chosen sessions.

Let' Talk SEND & Inclusion



Thursday 19th November



The GateWay, Yeovil



12:00 AM – 5:00 PM

We're delighted to be bringing **Let's Talk SEND to Yeovil**. A relaxed and welcoming event where parent carers and local services can come together to share information, build connections, and have meaningful conversations about SEND and inclusion.

The event will include:

- **Discussion tables**, on current SEND topics, offering opportunities to share experiences, ask questions, and learn from others.
- **Local Offer Live**, featuring information stalls from a wide range of local services and providers.

This free event is open to all parent carers, and no diagnosis is needed to attend. Children are very welcome to come along with their parents, with activities available to keep them engaged. We'll also be providing snacks and after-school activities, making it easier for families to attend together.

Whether you're just starting your SEND journey or have years of experience, you'll be warmly welcomed.



**SEND Somerset's
Local Offer**

Summer Opening Hours

As the summer holidays begin, Somerset Parent Carer Forum will be closed from 3 August to 24 August to give our staff and wonderful volunteers the opportunity to enjoy some well-deserved time with their families.

As parent carers ourselves, we understand that the summer holidays can be both rewarding and challenging. Please remember to take care of yourselves as well as those around you, and don't forget that it's okay to take a moment for yourself whenever you can.

Thank you for your continued support. We look forward to welcoming you back when we reopen on 24 August. Wishing you all a safe, happy and enjoyable summer.