Welcome to the tenth edition of the Disabled Children’s Register newsletter

In the three years since setting up the DCR, over 550 children and young people have been registered. We hope you find the information in the newsletter useful. It is certainly helpful to hear your ideas – one of the most useful ones being the suggestion of an ID card to help children with complex needs get out and about more. Over 360 now benefit from having the WAND Card and we hope that, with the help of our Parent Champion initiative being launched this spring, we can reach more families.

With spring in mind, now is the time to start planning a short break and we have several suggestions for sources of funding in this issue. But don’t delay as the earlier the better to get some help with this. A good night’s sleep can also be very restorative and thanks to those of you who have completed our sleep survey. We will publish the findings in the next edition. Meanwhile, turn to pages 6 and 7 for some more information on this crucial topic.

Get ready for summer! See pages 14-15
Benefit Cap and Bedroom Tax

On 20 November 2013 at 6.30pm DCR members were invited to a meeting at the Town Hall, in Committee Room 122, to find out more about the Benefit Cap and Social Size Criteria (or ‘Bedroom Tax’) and how they may affect you.

Laura Hood and Sitta Dayi, Welfare Reform Officers, explained about the changes, and how most DCR members will not be affected.

The Benefit Cap came in on 30 September 2013

A limit has been put on the total amount of benefits that most people aged 16 to 64 can get. This is called a ‘benefit cap’.

What will happen?

If you are affected, your Housing Benefit will go down to make sure that the total amount of benefit you get is not more than the cap level.

Who won’t be affected?

You will not be affected by the benefit cap if anyone in your household qualifies for Working Tax Credit, or gets any of these benefits:

- Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- Attendance Allowance
- Industrial Injuries Benefits (and equivalent payments as part of a war disablement pension or the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme)
- Employment and Support Allowance, if you get the support component
- War Widow’s or War Widower’s Pension
- War pensions

You might be affected by the cap if you have any grown-up children who still live with you and they qualify for one of these benefits. This is because they don’t normally count as part of your household.

If you are not getting Working Tax Credits, DLA or PIP or any of the benefits listed above, what will happen?

If you are already getting benefits and could be affected by the cap you’ll be contacted by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). They’ll let you know what will happen to your benefits.

If you are seeing a Jobcentre Plus adviser, Work Programme or Work Choice provider, they’ll continue to help you look for work and get skills you may need for a job.

If you have access to the internet, you can visit GOV.UK and use the benefit cap calculator to find out if you’ll be affected, and how much your benefits could go down by. http://bit.ly/19oEl0o
What’s included?
The cap will apply to the total amount that the people in your household get from these benefits:
• Bereavement Allowance
• Carer’s Allowance
• Child Benefit
• Child Tax Credit
• Employment and Support Allowance (unless you get the support component)
• Guardian’s Allowance
• Housing Benefit
• Incapacity Benefit
• Income Support
• Jobseeker’s Allowance
• Maternity Allowance
• Severe Disablement Allowance
• Widowed Parent’s Allowance (or Widowed Mother’s Allowance or Widows Pension you started getting before 9 April 2001)

How much is the benefit cap?
The level of the cap will be:
• £500 a week for couples (with or without children living with them)
• £500 a week for single parents whose children live with them
• £350 a week for single adults who don’t have children, or whose children don’t live with them

If you are concerned that you will be affected you can contact the Welfare Reform Service, on 020 8871 7269 / 8593 / 8591

New ASD Base
Resource Base for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder at Tooting Primary School opened in September 2013.
The Base is integrated into the main school building. It can cater for 20 children from Reception to Year 6 across two classrooms and a sensory room.

In addition, pupils have access to ‘The Lodge’, which is on the main school grounds. Here the pupils are able to have their own garden and additional space for group and individual sessions.

We provide:
• Calm and positive class environments
• Access to a broad and balanced curriculum with high quality learning activities and experiences
• A personalised curriculum to suit the learning style and specific needs of each child
• Specialist teaching strategies will be used to support communication and independence skills such as PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) and TEACCH (Treatment and Education of related Communication Handicapped)
• Opportunities to integrate into the mainstream classes with support
• A commitment to work with parents and carers

The ASD Base will follow the same curriculum topics as the mainstream classes. Our aim is for all children to integrate into the mainstream classes with support. This will be dependent on their individual needs and appropriate preparation will be given to support all children. Children will also have the opportunity to complete planned activities within their ASD class. These opportunities will be carefully planned by both the ASD and mainstream teacher.

In addition to these topics, the ASD Base will plan and deliver a social skills curriculum which will have a strong emphasis on PSHE provision. These sessions will focus on family life, themselves, independence skills, their community, friendships and safety. Trained staff will also deliver sessions following set therapy packages, such as speech and language work.

If you have any queries you can please contact: Lisa O’Reilly on 020 8682 5677 or email tps@graveney.wandsworth.sch.uk

by Lisa O’Reilly
Tyga Karate classes at Beatrix Potter School

‘Wandsworth Council’s Short Breaks Small Grant Scheme has allowed Ned to return to karate having found it difficult to take part without additional 1:1 support. He has worked hard to pass his green belt grading in June this year, and is continuing to attend regular sessions, building on this success.

Having worked with children with disabilities and special needs for many years, running ‘all inclusive’ karate sessions in Hackney for children, parents and carers, I have seen the many ways that martial arts can benefit young people. As well as improving focus, basic fitness and co-ordination it helps greatly to build self-esteem and confidence. As an instructor I believe that it is important to work closely with parents to find ways in which to encourage and support children of all abilities to achieve their goals.’

Sarah Sheehan, mother:

"Because his ADHD is so severe it is really difficult for Ned to be part of lots of after school clubs. Having a 1 to 1 to help him stay focused means he can take part in a club with his classmates, and also gets far more out of the experience. Having been excluded from clubs in the past, it's so refreshing to have an activity where he can be included!"

When: Tuesdays and Thursdays
- 3.30-4.15pm (yrs rec, 1 and 2)
- 4.15-5pm (yrs 3 – 6)

www.ty-ga.co.uk/clubs/national/tyga-earlsfield

Instructor: Sensei Sam Haynes, 5th Dan
Telephone: 07951 745577
Email: sam@dazzlehouse.co.uk

Ned Tinkler, aged 7

"It's good that I can go to karate now and can be with my friends and one day be a black belt"
Share a family

Share a Family (SaF) is a local voluntary organisation grant-aided by Wandsworth Council, that provides family based short term care for children and young people who are disabled and live in Wandsworth. SaF recruit, assess, police check and train volunteers to provide this short term care. It can take the form of a sitting service, outings or care in the child’s home.

The family benefits from having a short break whilst knowing that someone they know and trust is caring for their child. The child or young person benefits by enjoying a positive experience of short term care, making new friends and having new experiences.

Short term carers are carefully introduced and then given plenty of time to get to know the child and their family before short term care takes place. They gain experience of working and building a relationship with a child and a family on an individual basis, sharing in the fun, the challenges and the achievements.

We also run three monthly clubs, staffed by SaF workers and our highly committed volunteers. The clubs are Saturday Club (8’s and under); Sunday Club (9 to 13) and Teenage Club (14 to 19).

We have just emerged from the Tendering process and have secured funding for the next two and a half years which is great news. We are currently recruiting new volunteer link carers to match with families on our, sadly quite long, waiting list.

But we are also exploring going back to our roots...when SaF was set up by a group of parents in 1981 they originally “shared the care” by linking up with each other and taking turns having the children for a break. Lately we have had a number of links where we have successfully replicated this. For example we had two single parent families whose sons were good friends and wanted to do activities outside of school. Their Mothers became volunteer link carers with SaF and were able to access training, support and expenses and took turns taking their sons out. This is a model that can be very successful and we would like to encourage more families to get involved. If you and another family would be interested in this as an option for accessing short breaks then please get in touch with Lois or Emma at shareafamily@hotmail.com or on 0208 947 5317. Or if you know someone who would be interested in becoming a volunteer link carer for your family then ask them to get in touch.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss anything to do with SaF then please get in touch.
The issue of sleep or lack of sleep is not a new problem for parents of disabled or seriously ill children. But for many families knowing how to manage these sleep issues and how to access advice and support remains a challenge.

A survey of 2,000 families nationwide by the charity, the Family Fund, showed that 93 per cent of parents with a sick or disabled child are up throughout the night. Almost half the parents identified that they have health issues. Parents expressed their concerns about the impact sleep deprivation has on both their disabled child’s behaviour and their siblings’ general wellbeing.

Wandsworth’s Short Breaks team has been running a survey to find out how Wandsworth families are affected by sleep problems and the stresses and strains it puts on family life.

There is still time to tell us what you think; we have already received a very positive response and feedback from parents. The survey has highlighted a whole range of factors which prevent families from getting a full night’s rest. Many parents are getting up between 5 and 10 times a night, some children will go the whole night not sleeping. Our survey has identified a number of reasons why your child may not be sleeping. The most common are where they are unsettled and needing reassurance, responding to their physical/medical needs such as turning, suctioning and making sure the child who doesn’t sleep, is not putting themselves at risk.

She used to sleep with her sibling, but woke too often so now has her own room. Sibling now sleeps downstairs.

It varies how often I get up in the night but I’m generally up from two to six hours a night.
We are tired all the time, I’m always running late for everything due to exhaustion.

The results of the survey will help to highlight gaps in the services and help the service better meet local families’ needs. The survey has also highlighted many Wandsworth parents either didn’t know what support they might need or where that support is available.

There is still time for you to tell us what you think and be in with a chance to be entered into a prize draw for a £50 high street voucher. The results of the survey will also feed back into the Family Fund to aid its research.

Take the survey online at http://bit.ly/1eCfY9g or email or call me, rpoyser@wandsworth.gov.uk or (020) 8871 7893 for a copy.

If you are looking for advice and support already offered in Wandsworth you can ask your health visitor, school nurse, GP, consultant or other professional working with you for help with sleep. There are some national organisations offering sleep support services:

- Scope http://bit.ly/1aK8OCQ
- Cerebra http://bit.ly/1n1gWip
- The Children’s Sleep Charity http://bit.ly/1idHblj
- Sleep Scotland www.sleepscotland.org

Sleep Seminars in March

On 18 March we are running two sleep seminars for parents and professionals at the Enhanced Children’s Centre, 5 Merton Road, SW18 5ST.

- 9.30am – 12pm Autism specific sleep seminar (aged 0-8 years-old).
- 1 – 3.30pm Sleep seminar for all parents of children with special needs (aged 0-8 years-old).

The sessions will cover the causes and contributing factors of sleep disturbance, stages of sleep and provide practical suggestions which may improve sleep. There will be space within the sessions to talk about useful ideas, strategies and resources which may aid sleep. Spaces for both seminars are limited so if you would like to apply please contact the Enhanced Children’s Centre to book your place:

Telphone: 020 8871 0758
Email: enhancedchildrenscentre@wandsworth.gov.uk

For more information visit: http://bit.ly/1aMiDQO

0-5’s Sleep Clinics

If you would prefer to meet someone face to face why not drop into the Behaviour and Sleep Clinic at Franciscan Children’s Centre? The sessions run every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 1 – 2.30pm and are open to all parents with a child aged 0-5 years old.

http://bit.ly/MzLLjn
Venessa Bobb talks about coming to terms with her son Nathaniel’s diagnosis of Autism and ADHD and how she is making a difference for other parents through A2ndVoice.

I have two daughters and a son, Nathaniel, who is my middle child. Nathaniel was diagnosed with Autism and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) in April 2008, when he was five-years-old. Looking back there were many of the traits that were ignored through his early years.

Having a young family and working fulltime with 13 hour shifts in the broadcasting industry wasn’t working for me so put my career on hold back in 2005. This is when I noticed my Nathaniel’s awkward behaviour and dislike for many things. He must have been between the ages of two and three and I was heavily pregnant with my last child. It seemed that he had so much energy, he wouldn’t sleep and he was a fussy and limited eater. Some people would tell me I spoilt him, but at the day nursery he attended they had the same problem: he wouldn’t eat nursery dinners and his packed lunch would be left untouched. He would block his ears, had no eye contact, tip-toe about or would just run off and not come back (harnesses were useless!).

Getting the diagnosis of Autism and ADHD gave me a better understanding to why he was not achieving many of his milestones. I didn’t use Nathaniel’s autism as an excuse for his behaviour, but understanding his condition helped me and others around Nathaniel to realise that it was his way of communicating, whether it be positive or negative. Inevitably, though, it sometimes seemed as if everything that Nathaniel did, came across as though I was not managing him properly at home. Autism does not discriminate and I noticed an unmet need in the community to have representation for many groups such as the BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) community as cultural difference, language barriers and faith can cause delay in receiving support or diagnosis. Additionally, siblings groups feel left out and resentful and autistic parents of autistic children, can feel misunderstood, as I felt, or that their parenting skills are being questioned.

This led me to set up a local support group for others like myself as I felt that the process for raising a child on the spectrum, focused solely on education environment and did not cater for the day-to-day challenge of living with it, or the impact on other members of the family, especially siblings. Formed in May 2012, A2ndvoice is a parent-led, not-for-profit organisation and is now a registered charity. It helps bridge the gap in meeting the needs of parents and carers from a parent perspective looking after? children and adults on the autistic spectrum and with other, related conditions.

Autism is a complex hidden condition which affects all individuals differently. We need to learn more about autism and not feel that fitting in just works without understanding the condition to the individual who may have more than one condition or illness linked to autism. What I have found from attending many workshops, seminars and exhibitions that are facilitated by specialists and autistic adults is that as parents, carers, and professionals it is essential to take on board these individual differences. Helping other families with these issues is what we are about.

Our support group/drop-in coffee sessions are run by parents/carers with children and/or adults on the autistic spectrum and other related conditions. The atmosphere is

“ I didn’t use Nathaniel’s autism as an excuse for his behaviour, but understanding his condition helped me and others around Nathaniel to realise that it was his way of communicating, whether it be positive or negative. ”
relaxed, informal and welcomes individuals and families from all communities and faith groups. Professionals are also welcome.

Last year, in November 2013, I applied for some funding from the Big Society, which enabled us to run some workshops covering topics such as: Puberty & Relationships; Sensory Processing Influences; Girls & Women on the Spectrum; Challenging Behaviour; Obsession & Anxiety and Working Towards Adulthood. Feedback from these was very positive.

We hope to run more sessions like these but in the meantime, we welcome families along to our drop-in sessions, starting this February.

My own journey has been a rollercoaster and still is at times. I often feel tired, exhausted and uncertain of what will be ahead for my son when he becomes an adult and do feel for his sisters. But an important thing has been finding support within my community from others in the same situation – and doing something positive to help others.

A2ndvoice drop-In Coffee Morning are held at Tooting United Reformed Church every Tuesday from 4 February from 10am to 12.30pm

To find out more about A2ndvoice: http://a2ndvoice.com

Feedback

“A2ndvoice is trying to fill the void which has existed for years, courses are really beneficial... the advice and sharing with parent is invaluable.”

“The puberty workshop was an eye opener. I now have more confidence to talk to my son and answer his question.”
If you have found the Disabled Children’s Register useful for keeping in touch and accessing services, why not make a difference in 2014 by helping to spread the word to other families?

This spring, we are recruiting a small team of Parent Champion volunteers to help promote membership of the Disabled Children’s Register and the WAND card. We want to reach as many parents and carers as possible, especially: young parents, fathers and parents of teenage children who may have missed out previously. We would also like to involve more local shops in supporting the WAND card.

In return for a few hours of your time (flexible to fit with your own family commitments) you will receive training and have the opportunity to be a Parent Champion during our pilot scheme taking place in the summer and autumn terms. Here are some of the benefits of participating:

- Updating your skills from a fresh perspective
- Getting out and about more
- Improving your job or career prospects
- Accessing specialist training
- Enhancing your communications skills
- Being a successful role model for your child/ren
- Using your experience to make a difference to others

To find out more, please contact Lucia Daniels on 020 8871 7899, ldaniels@wandsworth.gov.uk or visit http://bit.ly/1eCT9Ed

Places are limited but we are creating a waiting list, so don’t delay if you are interested in this opportunity.

Wandsworth is developing the Parent Champions scheme, designed by Family and Childcare Trust. (This is the charity created from a merger of the Family and Parenting Institute and Daycare Trust) For more information about this scheme and the work of the Trust, visit their website www.daycaretrust.org.uk
For more information visit www.wandsworth.gov.uk/fis

Wellbeing
Free Wellbeing Parent Information Morning
‘looking after you when you have a child with sensory impairment’

When and Where?
Saturday 8th March 2014
Linden Lodge 9.30am 12.30pm
Harris Centre

9.30am 12.30pm

This Event for Parents will provide
- Information on Wandsworth Family Services (Contact a Family, NEEC, Family Information Service, St Georges Audiology Department, Parent Partnership)
- A talk from Consultant Gina Musa on wellbeing and looking after you when you have a child with SEN. 10.30am 11am
- Free Massage / Therapy / Yoga & Nutritional Information
- A range of activities available for children

Gina Musa is a teacher, counsellor and personal development coach who has worked for over 30 years with families of disabled children in the public and voluntary sectors. She now works independently as a coach and trainer.

Gina believes that as well as looking after our children, it is important that we also take care of ourselves. In this short workshop she will talk about why it is so important to include self care into your daily life and, knowing how hard it is to find time, Gina will give you lots of ideas for self care activities you can do in just 5 minutes!

To book a place or for more info
Please contact Sarah Davis 020 8673 7564 davis@wandsworthhis.org.uk

DEAF Awareness Training

9:30am 3:30pm
Wednesday 19th March 2014

Come and find out more about deafness and how to make sure deaf children and young people are fully included in your setting or service.

Wandsworth Hearing Support Service will be running a course for professionals who work with deaf children and young people. This is a one day introductory course which will help to develop your understanding of the needs of deaf children and young people as well as the opportunity to learn practical ideas and identity strategies to ensure that your setting or service is deaf friendly.

The course will cover:
- understanding deafness and how this impacts on learning, language and communication
- deaf children’s social and emotional development
- using special equipment and technology
- communication strategies
- creating a deaf friendly environment
- training activities available for deaf children.

Cost of Course: £65 per person
At the end of the course, you will receive a certificate of attendance and an Information pack.

For more information and to book your place please contact Sarah Davis by Friday 7th March 2014 at david@wandsworthhis.org.uk or call on 020 8673 7564

Wandsworth Hearing Support Service
The Acorn Family Centre, 101 Nuffield Road, London SW12 8NA
When Cineworld manager, Henock Osei-Kissi heard about the WAND card initiative, he was quick to support it and now carers go free to any screening with a WAND card holder. Adding to its Movies for Juniors Saturday morning sessions (just £1.50 per child) they have also recently introduced Autism friendly, audio described and subtitled screenings of current movies.

Check out the programme on their website for updates on when these are happening.
www.cineworld.co.uk/cinemas/london-wandsworth

Cineworld - Wandsworth’s biggest cinema, gave our teen DCR members a treat over the summer with their own private viewings, in blissfully air conditioned cinemas, of some golden oldies: Back to the Future and The Goonies (well the parents liked them anyway…). Autumn saw Ghostbusters screened for Halloween. And in January they screened a truly golden oldie for us, The Thief of Bagdad, to a large and appreciative audience of all ages.

Thank you Cineworld and we hope we’ll be back in the future with more holiday viewings.

To get DCR alerts about these and other one-off events, make sure we have your up to date mobile phone number or email details and your permission to use them.

Q&A with Henock

How long have you been manager at Wandsworth Cineworld?

I have been the manager here for the past six years

What special screenings do you do for children and young people with disabilities and special needs?

We have an autism screening on the first Sunday of every month. We offer subtitled screening for £1.50 every Saturday and Sunday at 10am. And we offer “Movies for juniors” for £1.50 every Saturday and Sunday.
by Eleanor Thain

The SEN reforms - Part 2
What Wandsworth is doing

These changes to services, ways of working and how decisions are made, are being co-produced with the parents, carers and young people working together with the local authority, NHS and other professionals. They will not come into effect until September 2014.

There are likely to be some “transitional” arrangements as well, which may mean some changes will not affect everyone until April 2015.

The areas of change have been divided in to five "workstreams" each of which has a parent representative co-chairing the meetings with a local authority officer. There is also another parent representative on each workstream. The workstreams are:

• The Local Offer in Wandsworth
• Preparing for Adulthood
• Personalisation and personal budgets
• Joint commissioning
• Assessment and EHCPs (Education, Health and Social Care Plans)

There is now an area on the FIS website about this process. You can find out about overall progress and what each of the workstreams is doing.
http://bit.ly/1dw8lk7

Positive Parent Action (PPA) our local parent forum is managing and supporting the parent representatives. You can find out more on their website
FOCUS ON SUMMER

Be summer holiday-wise

‘The early bird catches the worm’ is the name of the game when it comes to applying for holiday grants for 2014. Here are some useful sources to get you thinking about this summer.

**Contact a Family** have a comprehensive booklet called Parent guide: Holidays, play and leisure, it outlines play and leisure ideas for disabled children, how to get help with funds and where to find more information. There is also information about arranging holidays and organisations which give grants for them. You can download the guide from the CaF website: www.cafamily.org.uk

**The Peace Memorial Fund** is a scheme providing financial assistance to pay towards holidays and school trips for needy children up to and including 16 years of age who live in the Borough of Wandsworth. Holiday grants of between £40 and £75 are available for children up to and including 16-year-olds. Grants, when agreed, are paid to the holiday provider, usually the school or other body organising the activity. Written applications are required. For further details, contact Gareth Jones at Wandsworth Council on 020 8871 7520 or email: garethjones@wandsworth.gov.uk

**The Family Fund** is a registered charity allocating grants for specific requests made by families with a severely disabled child or young person under 18. Requests can be for holidays along with many other items. A representative will visit your family to discuss the best way to help. The Fund considers applications from families in accordance to certain criteria so check the website for more information: www.familyfund.org.uk or tel: 0845 130 4542

**The Disability Grants Website** provides information to help families find grants and other funding to pay for holidays or days out and much more besides. By combining the experience of other families, this website can save families time finding the right source of funding: www.disability-grants.org

**Turn2Us** runs a free and confidential helpline, open 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and can help people find appropriate sources of financial support, based on their particular needs and circumstances. You can also use their website to find out about grants and benefits for yourself. Telephone 0808 802 2000. www.turn2us.org.uk

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### Playcentres

Last summer, at the three local inclusive play centres, Christchurch, Albemarle and Smallwood, a wide range of children and young people enjoyed five weeks of holiday fun. Most children can be included, so if you haven’t tried a holiday playscheme yet, why not contact Matt Hutt on 020 8871 8820 mhutt@wandsworth.gov.uk and talk about your child’s needs? You can arrange a visit and see if your child would like it. Then book them in for a few days in the next school holiday. If they settle in and enjoy it, you can book them in for more sessions.

Activities included a project about “upcycling” old clothes, going out on trips and cooking.

Holiday Playcentres run by Wandsworth Council’s Play services are open 8am to 6pm for 5 weeks in the summer, two weeks at Easter and over the three half terms. They provide Ofsted inspected quality childcare for children 3-13 years old at Christchurch and 3-11 at the other two centres.
Alton Activity Centre

If you are looking for an alternative place for your child to have fun, with experienced staff on hand to help, have you considered the Alton Activity Centre? http://bit.ly/19Nzjq8

During the summer holidays 2013 the centre was open for four weeks, over this period the average attendance was 40 + children and young people each day aged between 5-13 years. The children were able to explore play freely including risky and imaginative play with the support of experienced staff on hand.

Throughout the holiday the children had the chance to take part in den building, competitions & tournaments, team challenges, cooking workshops, gardening, arts & crafts and to have lots of fun & make new friends. We also held a breakfast club where a group of young people could come together, eat a healthy breakfast and had the chance to talk about what they liked and what we could improve at the centre.

As part of the Waitrose Growing Scheme, three young people from the centre took the produce grown in the garden along to the Wimbledon store to sell and raise money for the centre. The day was a great success and rose over £30, both the young people and staff that took part really enjoyed the day and are looking forward to the project continuing.

The Summer ended with a big fun day at the centre, even with the rain this did not dampen spirits with both children and adults enjoying a delicious BBQ, Bouncy castle & fun run, dance competition & penalty shoot out tournament.

The Alton Activity Centre is an open-access centre, which means that children are free to come and go, run by Spurgeons, providing a range of free play activities for children and young people after school and during the school holidays. Children must be registered at the centre to take part. To register, please contact the centre direct. Please note that children aged 5 years old but still in reception class who wish to attend after school must be accompanied by a parent or carer.
Siblings in School project (Sibs)

Siblings in School is a project from Sibs to get extra support in school for the brothers and sisters of children with disabilities and/or special educational needs.

Sibs is the only UK charity representing the needs of siblings of disabled people. Siblings have a lifelong need for information: they often experience social and emotional isolation, and have to cope with difficult situations. Sibs’ website - www.sibs.org.uk has information for siblings, young siblings (www.youngsibs.org.uk) parents/carers and professionals

Their recent campaign which caught our attention is about siblings in school. Sibs recognises that siblings of children who are disabled or have special educational needs or have a serious long-term conditions, come up against barriers to learning and achieving. These barriers can lead to problems with attainment and progress.

Sibs wants schools to identify the pupils in their schools who are siblings so that they can take action to remove or reduce these barriers.

If you think that your disabled child’s siblings could do with more support, have you told their schools about your family recently? Schools want to support all their pupils to do well, so make sure you keep them informed, particularly if your circumstances change, or if your children are facing different challenges.

You could also suggest that they visit the Sibs website, and consider joining the Siblings in School project www.sibs.org.uk/siblings-in-school

“School would have been so much easier if my teachers had known about my sister Katie who is non-verbal and autistic. Growing up we shared the same room so my sleep was disrupted when she had a bad night. That made it hard to concentrate in lessons the next day. My homework – when I had a chance to do it - was regularly scribbled on and when things were difficult at home it was hard to keep my emotions in check. There were so many times I was in need of support or attention at school, but nobody knew.”

Laura, sibling