



# SEND newsletter

Special Educational Needs  
and Disability

## Welcome from Marie Denny Assistant Director Education, Learning & Inclusion



On Friday 8 March, the Milton Keynes Local Area SEND inspection came to its conclusion after three weeks of activity.

We were all surprised that the initial call came during half term and want to reflect our gratitude for your responsiveness to the surveys during your school break. For those parents, carers and young people involved, we really appreciate you taking the time to speak with inspectors and for sharing your thoughts on how things work for children and young people in Milton Keynes.

The formal outcome is confidential until the report is received (likely 6 – 8 weeks). We'll share it as soon as we can.

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## Short break update

### Free Easter Activities

We are working to improve our Short Breaks Service by introducing a new online booking system which will be coming soon. This will enable our children and young people to access a greater range of leisure activities.

For Easter, we are providing a range of FREE activities for children and young people with an EHCP in Milton Keynes. This offer is available to all eligible families to access over the school holidays. For most activities, places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis but given the likely interest, all those interested in Gulliver's Land and Thomley will be entered into an independent draw.

Bookings for these events are available via the button below.

When you look at the activities please take note of the information around whether parents/carers need to attend as this may make a difference to you. Please also note that we are unable to provide transport.

We hope you enjoy the range of free activities we have on offer for you this Easter holiday and wish you a restful break with family and friends.

[Click here to book Short break activities](#)



**Sportworks**



As you may know, the short breaks service providers are changing from Barnardos to Sportworks. Following our initial meeting, we're thrilled to welcome Sportworks to the short breaks program. Sportworks will launch their services during the May half term and will spend the next half term familiarising themselves with the families who will benefit from their service.

We would like to thank Barnardos for their support to the children, young people, and families over the years, and we wish them all the best for the future.

Please find further information on the Sportworks short breaks offer [here](#).



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## Children with Disability Team is changing

As of 01 April, the children with disability service will be changing the way in which we support families.

The team is splitting into three. There will be two teams that will support families who need social work support, and the third team will be supporting the families who access a short break only.

If you are a part of the Short Break Team it will mean that we will work in a different way with your family. Children will not have an allocated worker, but the small team will share the responsibility of liaising with you and assessing needs, alongside relevant colleagues/agencies and these may result in a bigger presence at the EHCP meetings, so that we can condense the several meetings you currently have to one a year.

The Team Manager is Mandy Fell. Many of you know Mandy as she has been working for the Milton Keynes Children with Disability Team for over 20 years. Mandy will be working alongside our experienced team, Karen Brammer, Tracey Collet, Chanee Randall, and Sophia Natale.

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## Meet the team Lai Law

Hi, I'm Lai Law. I have been working with the EHC Review and Placement Team since August 2021 as a Review Officer for the SEND Team. I have been with Milton Keynes City Council for over 10 years previously having a position in Exams department for Community Learning MK. I was originally seconded over from Exams to SEND Team during the Covid period from 2020, as not many exams going ahead during that time! I had enjoyed my role so much that I applied for a position that came up and here I am.....! I am passionate about helping the children and their families in getting the best support.



One of my responsibilities is processing the Phased transitioning for the EHCP children who move on to primary or secondary schools liaising with SEN leads, schools and parents. Another is supporting with the administration of the paperwork for the Special school panels, enabling all the Special schools to receive in time for the meetings. I also attend Review meetings and update the annual review paperwork for the East quadrant schools that I look after.

In my spare time, I enjoy travelling and seeing the world and spend most of it planning the itineraries for my next trip, and also enjoy spending as much time as I can with my family and friends.

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## Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS)

Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) is a national programme funded by the Shared Outcomes Fund and delivered between the Department for Education (DfE), NHS England (NHSE) and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC). The aims and progress of this project is overseen by the MK Deal CYP Steering Group and the SEND strategy workstream area: Autism and Co-occurring Differences.

This new initiative is being offered free to 40 Milton Keynes primary schools to ensure better outcomes for neuro diverse children. PINS works with the aim of bringing health and education specialists and expert parent carers into mainstream primary settings to:

- help shape whole school SEND provision
- provide early interventions at a school level
- upskill school staff
- support and strengthen partnerships between schools and parent carers
- support and strengthen partnerships between PCFS and ICBs

The aim is that the programme will leave a sustainable impact, building a legacy of closer collaboration between schools, parent carers, education and health. This project will be co-delivered with health and education colleagues in the local area. It has the opportunity to draw on specialist knowledge and skills from across our local area to deliver whole school approaches that support the needs of neuro diverse children and offer environments for children to thrive.

This week the final list of 40 primary schools have signed up and we are about to start a self-audit process ahead of support being delivered to the schools between September 2024 – March 2025.

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## HAF - Spring offer

**FREE activities and food from 8 to 11 April for children, young people and their families who are in receipt of benefit related Free School Meals**

### What is the HAF Spring Activities and Food programme?

A range of free activities and food for children, young people and their families who are in **receipt of benefit related Free School Meals (FSM)** to access from 8 to 11 April.

From fun activities to theatre clubs, film making, music, gymnastics, arts, and crafts, multi sports clubs, and more, we hope there is something for everyone.

Across Milton Keynes, we have **8,200 individual sessions** planned for the Spring Holidays. To book your activities, simply browse our programme and contact your chosen providers through the [online booking system](#).

Children and Family Centres servicing all of Milton Keynes will be delivering all-inclusive family HAF trips for children in receipt of **benefit related Free School Meals (FSM)** to their reach areas and can be found on our booking system [HAF Milton Keynes - Eegu](#). Please book with the centre that covers the area where you live, further information on Children and Family Centre services and each centres reach areas can be found [here](#).

[For more information and booking please visit the HAF webpage.](#)



## School Travel Support – March 2024 Update

In December 2023 we told you we were supporting over 1500 children each day with school travel support and that number is now 1620 and this is 80 more children per day than the same time last year. So far this academic year the team have received 307 applications for transport support. Each application is reviewed by the panel individually to firstly agree if the child is entitled or not and if they are, to consider which transport option could be suitable for their needs. The December update included information about eligibility criteria and this can be found [here](#).

In January we attended a Parent and Carer Q&A session produced in partnership with [PACA MK](#), which gave families an opportunity to meet the team and ask specific questions around transport arrangements. The session was beneficial for those who attended and families gave some ideas for situations when agreeing and managing pick up/drop off times for those on shared vehicles where one party is really late/really early. A fact sheet is currently being devised and will be shared with families and providers for September 2024 transport to detail our expectations in this types of situations to give those involved more information and confidence to follow the process.

### **Spotlight On – September 2024 Transport**

In January the team restarted our annual project to plan for September transport and have a project group of colleagues from across Children's Services to share data and relevant information to arrange transport for September 2024. There is lots of work to do between now and then so the group is hard at work currently identifying who needs/might need transport in September to then review applications and create draft transport plans to share with families and schools for further comments and advice.

**Group A** - What does this mean for families who are new to transport or moving schools? Depending on your current transport arrangement, there could be different processes to follow. These are listed below –

- Brand new to any transport support from Milton Keynes City Council, think you meet the eligibility criteria and a public bus pass is suitable – [Bus Pass application form](#)
- Brand new to any transport support from Milton Keynes City Council, think you meet the eligibility criteria and a public bus pass is unsuitable – [Alternative/SEN application form](#)
- Currently receiving transport, other than a bus pass, and am moving to another school (which is your nearest qualifying school) – [Alternative/SEN application form](#)

**Group B** - What does this mean for families who are not moving schools? We do not expect or request for all families to re-apply for transport every year but we will need to periodically check in with families to ensure the support you receive is still suitable. This is usually 2 or 3 years for most children. Please refer to your original offer letter as that will include a review date or contact the team if you are unsure.

If it is the time for us to complete our review, we have created a 'renewal agreement' and this is a very short Microsoft Form that takes under 5 minutes to complete. This form is emailed to families and completion of the document is our way of having confirmation from each family that the form of transport you are currently receiving is suitable. Please check email folders for these forms and complete them in a timely

manner so we can arrange our transport efficiently. If you think the email address we have on file has since changed or you need support completing the form, please contact the team on [sts@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:sts@milton-keynes.gov.uk). We will also be following up via telephone, post and contact via others such as SEN caseworkers or schools to ensure we have all the response. If the transport option currently offered is not appropriate, you will need to complete a new [Alternative/SEN application form](#).

For both Group A and B, if any families have not completed the appropriate form for their needs then we cannot guarantee transport will be in place for September, even for those currently receiving transport so please complete the forms or contact the team for further advice.

### ***What else is coming up?***

Following a number of focus sessions in schools, we are currently reviewing our options for independent travel to schools that includes training for public buses, 'buddy' schemes on MK Connect and a brand new Bike Scheme. The team have been busy investigating some of the approaches other Local Authorities have used successfully for similar schemes and we hope to provide more details very soon. We always appreciate receiving feedback that can support our families and we would like to say a big thank you to colleagues from SEND and Youth Participation for arranging the sessions and more importantly to all the students that contributed!



## **PACA MK**

Here at PACA it's been a busy few weeks from Neurodiversity week, BSL week and World Downs Syndrome day to our own local events, EBSA and secondary schools listening event and the Yoga relaxation course. A big thank you to our families who have attended our events and joined us at our recent steering group meeting, it's been great

to see so many new faces and we look forward to welcoming more Parent Representatives onboard.

We are getting excited with the imminent launch of PACAs '*Supporting your Neurodiverse Child*' resource written by parents for parents, and want to say another thank you to BLMK ICB for giving us the opportunity to provide this invaluable resource for Families in Milton Keynes....watch this space.

Don't forget we have a prize for the 1000th member and are currently at 995 could it be you?!...*If you are a parent and would like to join PACA MK, or would like to know more about us, please visit [PACA MK](#)*

## Occupational Therapy Workshop

SAVE THE DATE!

We are pleased to confirm that we shall be offering a workshop with a private Occupational Therapist (OT) about Sensory Integration.

On: Tues 23rd April 11.30am - 1pm

At: The Discovery Room, John Lewis

Places must be pre booked.

Further details will be shared after the EASTER break.

If you have any questions, please email [pacamk@gmail.com](mailto:pacamk@gmail.com)

For further information on events, please visit [PACA MK website.](#)





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## Mytime

Mytime connects carers who could benefit from a break from their demanding caring roles, with businesses and organisations who work with us to kindly offer complimentary opportunities to enable the carer to have that vital break. These breaks include overnight hotel stays, afternoon tea, spa sessions, theatre and concert tickets.

Mytime evolved from carers who told us that they felt what would benefit them most would be a... break If you want to know more about [Mytime Milton Keynes](#) either how to make a referral or you or someone you know could offer a break/activity the team would love to hear from you.

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## School holiday activities

We are continuing to update our SEND Calendar of events, please do check the calendar at the bottom of the home page on the [SEND Local Offer](#). Please see below some of the activities and providers that are available over the half term.

**Climb Quest** Wed 10am, Sat 9am, Sun 10am

### **MK Gallery**

- [Relaxed Screening: Kung Fu Panda 4 \(PG\) - MK Gallery](#)
- [Toddle Exhibition Tour: Saul Leiter: An Unfinished World - MK Gallery](#)
- [SEND Exhibition Tour: Saul Leiter: An Unfinished World - MK Gallery](#)

**SEN Story Time – Kingston Library** – 8 April

**Willen Lake Splash 'n' Play (SEN session)** 03.04 and 10/04 [SEN Sessions](#)  
([willenlake.org.uk](http://willenlake.org.uk))

**Willen Lake** - Free Easter trail - Children can come down to the main reception, collect a question sheet, and then follow the trail to get the answers. 10 – 4pm each day.

Once all have been done, they come back to reception to collect a little prize.

### **Thomley**

[Thomley](#) have a variety of activities available over the Easter period from 29.03.24 - 13.04.24, please see their [calendar of events](#) for further information and booking.

**Xtra Special Families Easter Fun Day** Friday 12 April 2024 1.30pm to 3.30pm

Venue: Broughton Fields Primary School

*By sharing this information, we are not endorsing or quality checking any events or activities, and parent/carer/families remain responsible for their own research. We recommend contacting providers directly.*

