

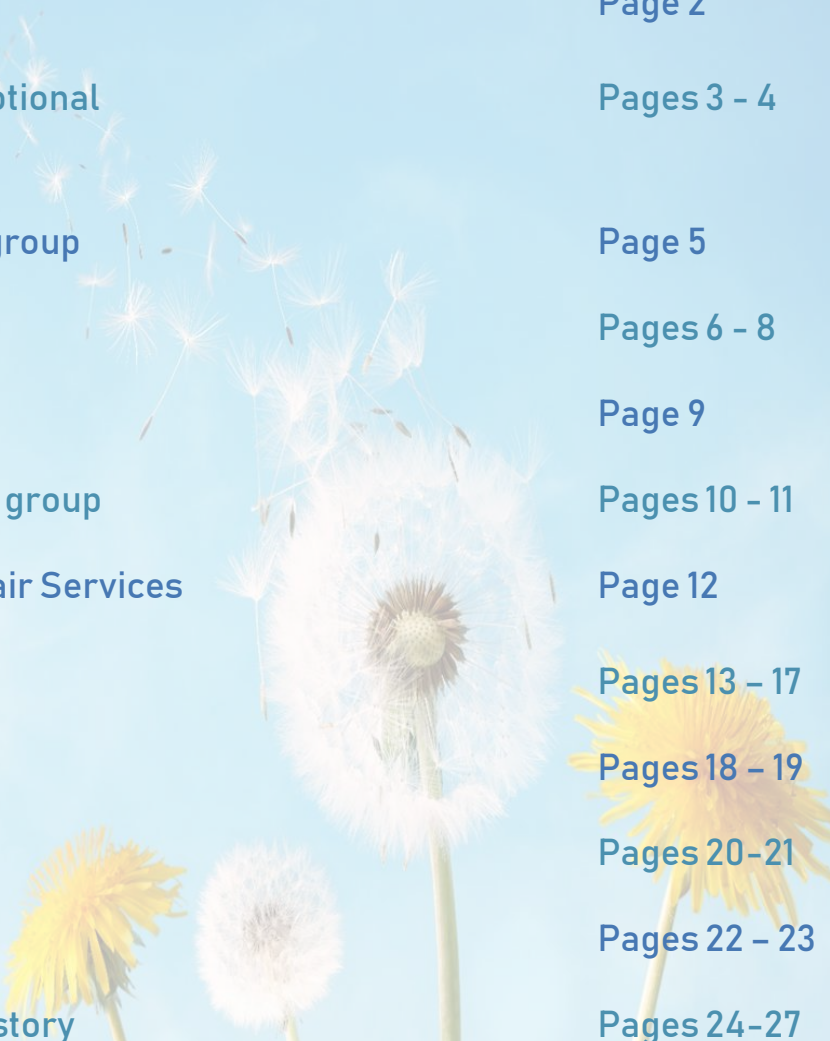
# ALL TOGETHER

Welcome to the Spring 2020 edition of the SEND Newsletter and to the start of a new year.

There are some important updates in this edition, particularly in regards to the improvement journey for SEND in Kirklees. We hope you find this information useful.

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# A new vision for SEND

I am pleased to confirm that Ronnie Hartley has joined the council as Head of Educational Safeguarding and Inclusion following the retirement of Mandy Cameron. We wish Mandy well in her retirement and we extend a warm welcome to Ronnie.

Ronnie has held a number of roles in Children's Services for more than 20 years, including more recently managing a range of Specialist Teaching and Support Services for children and young people 0-25 years with Social Emotional Mental Health Needs (SEMH); Communication and Interaction Needs including Autism; Cognition and Learning Services and Early Years.

Ronnie is joining us at a key time in relation to developments in Children's Services and we are delighted that she is working with us on our improvement journey.

Regards

Jo-anne Sanders

Service Director, Learning and Early Support

## **Message from Ronnie Hartley**

"I am really excited to be joining Kirklees at this time. I am not from Kirklees (originally from Stoke-On-Trent) and don't know the area well, but am gradually finding my way around by getting very lost!

I am passionate about improving outcomes and life opportunities for all children and young people but particularly for the most vulnerable. I have already been out and about visiting Specialist Provision and have seen some outstanding practice. It has been a real pleasure and privilege to meet some inspirational young people and staff in these schools so thanks to everyone for making me so welcome.

I have also had a chance to meet some parents and carers through a couple of PCAN events, which again has helped me to get a sense of what's happening in Kirklees and what the challenges are. I look forward to meeting many more Kirklees parents over the coming weeks.

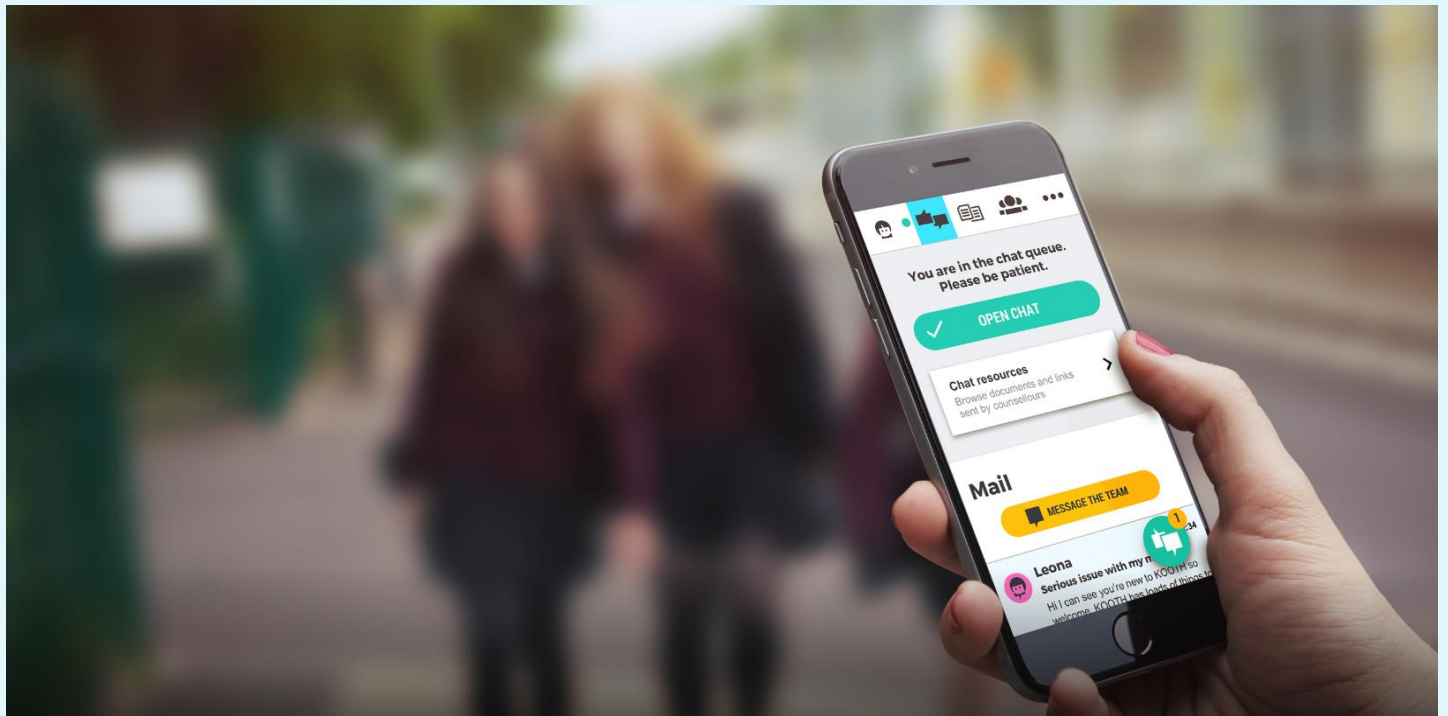
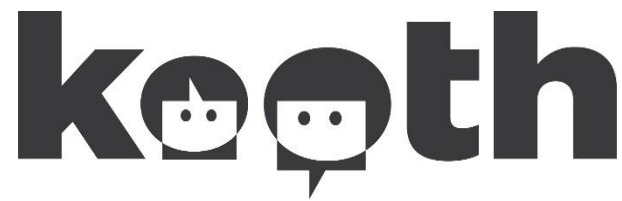
We have also been working on a 'SEND Improvement Journey 10 Point Plan' which will be the main focus of work over the rest of this academic year. This is not an exhaustive list of what needs to change but will give you a sense of the direction of travel.

In summary, the key areas in the plan are:

1. To develop clear performance information and data to inform effective service improvement, planning and delivery
2. Clear accountability and governance of SEND
3. The development of a sustainable financial strategy for SEND
4. Effective systems management across SEND services
5. Ensuring sufficiency of specialist educational placements, short breaks and associated therapies and equipment
6. Post 16 offer which is high quality and prepares young people for adulthood
7. Improving the quality of the Local Offer.
8. High quality, clear outcomes evident in all Education, Health and Care Plans.
9. Improve the number of EHCPs that are issued within the 20 week timescale.
10. Develop a system-wide SEND workforce development strategy.

Regular updates as to how the developments are progressing will be provided via the SEND newsletter.

# Tools to help support children and young people's emotional wellbeing



Kirklees Council have been piloting **Kooth**, an online counselling and emotional well-being service for children and young people aged between 10 and 19 years old. Early reports have been positive.

Young people can visit [kooth.com](https://www.kooth.com) and get support for anything that's on their mind.

On **Kooth** young people can:

- Chat to friendly counsellors
- Share and talk with the **Kooth** community
- Set personal goals
- Keep a journal

From exam stress to bullying, children face many challenges which might affect their wellbeing - **Kooth** offers them a safe place to get support when they want it, from the comfort of their own home.

Accredited by the BACP, and as a trusted delivery partner of the NHS, **Kooth** has supported over 250,000 children and young people across the UK since 2004.

Below are just a few quotes from anonymous **Kooth** users who have used the website during that time.

**Kooth** is accessible through any connected device; where **Kooth** is commissioned, young people can log on wherever they are to access live counselling between 12pm-10pm (weekdays), 6pm-10pm (weekends) and 4pm-8pm (bank holidays).

Find out more at:

[www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)



*"Thank you so much!  
Whenever there is a  
problem I will come to  
Kooth. You make me  
happier by the minute"*

*"It's just great to be  
able to talk to  
someone  
anonymously and  
not be judged"*

*"Thank you for all your help,  
none of this would have  
happened without you. You  
have made my life so much  
happier and easier, I can't  
thank you enough"*

**Feedback on Kooth from  
children and young people**

# Parenting Mental Health support group

Are you the parent of a child with depression, anxiety or other mental health issue?

Feeling alone?  
Looking for support?

**You're in the right place.**



In September 2016, Suzanne Alderson set up the **Parenting Mental Health** group on Facebook based upon her personal experience of supporting her 14-year-old daughter through mental health crisis.

The group's aim was to bring together and provide support to parents assisting their child to make 'resilient recoveries' from mental illness.

The group now has almost 10,000 members and continues to grow.

*'Parenting Mental Health is a community built to empower, educate and support parents with children who have a mental illness or mental health condition'.*

**If you would like to find out more, please visit:**

[www.parentingmentalhealth.com](http://www.parentingmentalhealth.com)



[www.facebook.com/parentingmentalhealth](https://www.facebook.com/parentingmentalhealth)



[www.instagram.com/parentingmentalhealth](https://www.instagram.com/parentingmentalhealth)



# Carers services in Kirklees

In the summer, work was undertaken to unite existing local services for carers. The aim was to improve access to these services and make navigating what they have to offer easier.

It also helps these services to learn more about what the other groups have to offer, share knowledge and good practice and sign post carers more efficiently.

Part of this work was creating #KirkleesThinkCarers, with a social media presence where Kirkwood, Barnardo's, Carers Trust and Carers Count come together to share their information in one place.

[www.facebook.com/kirkleesthinkcarers](http://www.facebook.com/kirkleesthinkcarers)

Or search out the Twitter feed #KirkleesThinkCarers

Overleaf, you can find a brief description of each local support service and their contact details.

If you are caring for a child with additional needs in Kirklees and need some guidance and support please do get in touch with the relevant agency.



# #KirkleesThinkCarers



#KirkleesThinkCarers

**Do you support someone who has a life limiting condition? At Kirkwood, we don't only support people living with cancer. We are here for you if you help someone living with any life limiting illness, such as: Dementia, Heart Failure, Cancer, COPD, Liver Disease and Neurological Conditions.**

Do you want to meet people in similar situations?

Could you benefit from different professional support and advice?

Social Workers, Nurses, Occupational Therapist, Physios & Counsellors?

Do you want to learn new skills to help you support your loved one?

Do you want to talk?

The Share & Care Service at Kirkwood offers a range of specialist carer information and training for you...

Services we offer include:

Educational courses: Fatigue Management, Moving & Handling, Coping Skills, Looking After Vulnerable Skin and Mindfulness  
Peer and Emotional Support Group  
Carers Retreat – Social Drop In  
Complementary therapy  
Social activities such as Film Afternoons and a special Summer Afternoon Tea party

Do you feel anxious about coming to the Hospice?

Drop into the Support & Therapy department or give us a call on 01484 557900 and we can meet you here and introduce you to the team.

**Believe in children**



#KirkleesThinkCarers

**While Barnardo's wholeheartedly recognises the enormous contribution that carers of all ages make, KYC specifically supports Young Carers aged 8-18 across Kirklees.**

The service provides assessed support through 1:1 sessions in and targeted group work. We also run holiday activities and trips to give young carers a break from caring. We use a 'whole family' approach and believe in the strength of multi-agency and partnership working. Barnardo's in partnership with Carers Count and others

also provide a 'transition' support service to young adult carers aged 17-24.

If you know a young person caring for someone with a physical or mental health condition or disability, please contact us for more information on 01484 426100 or check out our website: [www.barnardos.org.uk/kirklees-yics.htm](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/kirklees-yics.htm)



Looking after someone can be a positive experience but it can be challenging and exhausting both physically and emotionally. Doing this with little or no support can be isolating and have a real impact on your health and other areas of your life, Carers Count can work with you to look after your own wellbeing before they become too much for you to cope with, or get in the way of your ability to carry out your caring role.

Carers Count.....

- Provides Information about support available locally
- Supports carers having a voice and being heard by professional
- Advice on what you are entitled too including benefits
- Provides support and helps carers support each other
- Helps raise awareness of carers rights and issues

Please give us a call on 0300 012 0231 or email [Info @carerscount.org.uk](mailto:Info@carerscount.org.uk).  
Check out our website at [www.carercount.org.uk](http://www.carercount.org.uk)



**Who are we? – Carers Trust Mid Yorkshire is a local charity working in partnership with Kirklees Council to support unpaid family carers at no cost to themselves in an emergency or to access a regular week break where needed. As a charity we care for people not for profit. No-one cares more than Carers Trust.**

Carers Trust Mid Yorkshire respects the individuality of Carers and people with care needs and seeks to promote choice, independence, dignity and safety. We believe that Carers must have access to high quality services. We are registered as 'Good' with CQC and our staff are trained to a high level to be able to support people with complex needs and health conditions including providing support with medication and personal care where needed.

#### **Support Services:**

- Weekly breaks / Support in the home
- Group support sessions
- Bathing Service
- Emergency Carer Support

Tel: 01484 537036 (office)

Email: [info@CTMY.org.uk](mailto:info@CTMY.org.uk)

[www.carerstrustmidyorkshire.org.uk](http://www.carerstrustmidyorkshire.org.uk)

Milford House, Unit 9 Shaw Park, Silver Street, Aspley, Huddersfield, HD59AF



# INDEPENDENT TRAVEL TRAINING

For students who currently access home to school or post 16 travel assistance.



“I can now get to go places by myself.” – Student

“Training helped me to know where I am going, it also helps me that other students are there to support me.” – Student

“I feel safe that other students are travelling with me, the training was very good.” – Student

“ITT gives me independence and helps me with my confidence.” – Student

“My son completed the Travel Training Programme during the holidays, ready for joining Southgate School in September 2018. The training gave him confidence of all eventualities that might occur. When he started at School in September there were 4 other students on the public bus. There are now 15 students travelling independent from as far as Meltham, transferring to buses in Huddersfield Town Centre. The students all support and give each other confidence. The students are not signed off if there is any doubt they are unable to cope. This training has been life changing and has raised his self-esteem, confidence and is now very capable of using public transport. Thank you.” – Parent

## What is Independent Travel Training?

Independent Travel Training is an exciting and potentially life changing service. The training gives students the skills to plan and undertake a journey from their home to school or college independently.

## Benefits of Independent Travel Training

- ★ Builds confidence
- ★ Ability to plan a journey
- ★ Access to social activities
- ★ Transferable life skills
- ★ Builds self-esteem
- ★ Builds independence

## Who is Independent Travel Training for?

Students who are currently eligible for home to school or post 16 travel assistance can access this service.

## Find out more:

If you'd like to find out more about Independent Travel Training, one of the team will be happy to discuss the service in more detail with you.

T: **01484 221000 ext 71309**

E: **[independenttraveltraining@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:independenttraveltraining@kirklees.gov.uk)**

W: **[www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/preparing-for-adulthood/independent-travel-training.aspx](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/preparing-for-adulthood/independent-travel-training.aspx)**

# Supporting communication and interaction needs

## New **Intensive Interaction** support group and cafe in Kirklees

If you have a child with communication and interaction needs and you've never heard of Intensive Interaction please click the link to view a short introductory video on YouTube:

### [What is intensive interaction?](#)

(If you receive a paper copy of the newsletter, the video can be found on YouTube by searching '*So what is Intensive Interaction?*')

One of the II Support Group members said that they first became aware of Intensive Interaction when it was mentioned in a discussion with a Kirklees SALT. They did some basic research and decided to experiment with it.

In their words, *"the initial reaction I saw was amazing – it was the first time I could remember him making eye-contact with me and it happened almost immediately!"* Soon after they went on an Intensive Interaction Course in Huddersfield given by Dave Hewett of the II Institute and II has become part of their everyday life.

In summary they added, *"My son was a lively, smiling bundle of joy until at about 2 years old he became withdrawn and disinterested in anything or anyone – II has given us our happy little man back and with patience and persistence I'm sure there's more to come!"*

Intensive Interaction is a teaching and learning approach which aims to teach the Fundamentals of Communication, namely:

- **enjoying** being with **another person**
- developing the ability to attend to that person
- **concentration** and attention span
- learning to do **sequences** of activity with the other person
- **taking turns** in exchanges of behaviour
- **sharing personal space**
- using and understanding **eye contacts**
- using and understanding **facial expressions**
- using and understanding **physical contacts**
- using and understanding **non-verbal communication**
- **vocalisations**, extending the range of vocalisations and using vocalisations **meaningfully** (including speech)
- complicated **emotional learning** – bonding, empathy, understanding other people

The approach is very practical, lively, and play-based where the main teaching resource is the "teacher person", i.e. YOU, your face, voice, body language. The learning process takes place during free flowing, fun-filled, dynamic interactions where the "learner person" learns how to interact by interacting with someone who's already good at it!

Our **[Kirklees Intensive Interaction Regional Support Group](#)** is intended to provide interested parties with a regular forum for support with anything related to II.

Our **[Intensive Interaction Cafes](#)** are “drop-in” events, intended to enable people to see Intensive Interaction in action, and to discuss any aspect of II with experienced practitioners.

Both the **[Support Group](#)** and the **[Cafes](#)** are scheduled on an ad hoc basis, as and when venues and members are available. Agenda/Invitations are emailed to interested parties when dates/venues are known and if you would like to be added to the circulation list then please email [pete.elwick@sky.com](mailto:pete.elwick@sky.com) or [aileen.hosty@southgateschool.co.uk](mailto:aileen.hosty@southgateschool.co.uk)

#### **Other useful links:**

YouTube: [www.youtube.com/user/III209](https://www.youtube.com/user/III209)

Website: <https://www.intensiveinteraction.org/>

Facebook Group: **[‘Kirklees Intensive Interaction Regional Support Group’](#)**

## New Wheelchair service in Kirklees

Following extensive engagement with wheelchair users, their families and carers, as well as clinicians and professionals, a new wheelchair service has been commissioned across Kirklees and Calderdale. The contract was awarded to Rosscare in partnership with Blatchford and commenced 1st October 2019. Blatchford will provide the clinical assessment and Rosscare supply the wheelchairs and provide the repair and maintenance service.

The new service will aim to provide a more holistic service and includes the option of taking up a Personal Wheelchair Budget which provides the opportunity to pool different funding sources to meet individual needs more flexibly.

The service continues to operate from the same premises at Elland as the previous service and has maintained the same telephone number. People can be referred into the service by a therapist or GP, or can self-refer directly to the service for an assessment.

There will be further opportunities for people to get involved with the wheelchair service and have their say on the future development, as well as share their experiences.

Visit: <https://www.rosscare.co.uk/calderdale-kirklees-wheelchair-service>

Tel: 01422 312729

Email: [ellandwcs@rosscare.co.uk](mailto:ellandwcs@rosscare.co.uk)



## Hand Washing and Bathing Working Towards Independence

Children typically learn to wash and dry their own hands by about the ages of 24 to 30 months. To achieve independence with any hand washing or bathing tasks children must have some mobility, stability in sitting and standing and be able to move and reach with their arms and hands.

For children whose motor skills are limited due to their disability, it's important to remember to break the task down into small functional steps. Some children may not achieve any independence in this area and may be reliant on their carers for this part of the daily routine. However washing can be made a fun learning experience, many children have difficulties with their body awareness for many reasons, so using touch and affirmation of body parts during bathing can improve the child's own perception of sense of self, this can help cut down on distress during bath times.

It may also help improve tactile defensiveness, it may help make the child less stiff and more relaxed and it may improve their communication.



## Handwashing

- Start teaching them to wash their and dry their hands in sitting, if they can't reach the sink
  - Use a bowl of water on a table in front of them
  - Or a bowl of water on the tray of their specialist seating
  - Or a bowl on the tray of their standing frame
  - Place a waterproof mat on the floor. It could get messy
- Use automatic soap dispensers, so that they only have to place their hand under it to get the soap, or you can position their hand easily under it
- As they get bigger and if they have standing balance use a small block step with a non-slip bottom so that they can reach the sink
  - Prefill the sink with warm water so that they don't have to turn the taps on and off.
    - Taps with lever type handles are easier to use than taps that need turning
    - Automatic taps are a godsend!
- Drying hands, they may need help to do this, think about the material that the towel is made of, using a range of drying materials can help with sensory issues.
  - Some children may be afraid of hand dryers so working on desensitizing activities can help, for example using small handheld fans, hairdryers, blowing on the hands etc.

## **Bathing**

Bathing can create a lot of physical hard work for the carers of children with additional needs. There is a lot of equipment available to make bathing safer, depending on your child's needs an assessment may be needed from an Occupational Therapist (OT). If your child has a significant physical need then moving and handling also needs to be considered, advice should be sought from an OT, moving and handling adviser, housing adaptations OT and a specialist equipment provider.

Bath time can place a lot of postural strain on carers due to the low level of the bath, lifting in and out of the bath, supporting and washing your child in the bath can all take its toll on the back, hips and knees. Bath time can be exhausting for carers and can be stressful for the child if they don't feel safe.

### **Getting in and out of the Bath**

- Using a small step for the child to stand and step into the bath may decrease the need for them to be lifted in and out.
- A small step and a bath board may also help if your child's standing ability is limited
- A height adjustable bath seat to lower them into the water is another alternative

### **Support in the Bath**

- Using a prescribed specialist bath seat (assessed by an OT)
- Using a powered reclining bath lifter when the child hasn't got the ability to sit (assessed by an OT)
- For the smaller child some interim home-made devices can help give your child security when in the bath, for example using 2 rubber rings placed on a non-slip bath mat, or using a plastic weave laundry basket on a non-slip bath mat (advice from Nancie Finnie's book *Handling the Young Child with Cerebral Palsy at Home*)
- For the smaller child using a child bath insert that fits over the bath, such as the eco bambino
- A bath bagel may also be a suitable alternative

## Postural Considerations and Moving and Handling

- Using hoisting equipment to get the child in and out of the bath, a ceiling track hoist is easier than a mobile hoist. Mobile hoists need to be able to fit under the bath.
- A height adjustable bath with an integral shower/changing stretcher allows for an improved carer posture
- Using a powered bath lift to get them in and out of the bath
- Kneeling at the side of the bath instead of bending over, use a gardeners kneeling pad to save your knees
- Sitting on a small wheeled stool or chair instead of bending over will help improve your posture
- Using long handled sponges and loofahs, decreases the need to overreach to wash your child.
- If you are manually lifting your child in and out of the bath, lifting and lowering them in is easier as they are dry, lifting them up and out when they are wet is harder, it is always a good idea to let the water out of the bath and wrap them in a towel before lifting them up and out. A large towel with a hole for the head cut into it is an easy way to quickly wrap up and dry your child.







## **Benefits of Bathing Treatment ideas**

Children should enjoy bath time and it's a good opportunity to incorporate communication activities, sensory activities and motor skill activities.

- Children who have limited mobility find it difficult to move toys on dry land, but in the water smaller movements are needed to cause interaction with the toy.
- Using small watering cans, squeezable drinks bottles, shower attachments to spray/pour water on different parts of the body and naming them improves body awareness
- Filling and emptying small plastic pots, encourages hand/eye coordination
- Splashing and kicking legs are good for strengthening muscles....be prepared for a wet bathroom
- Communication, bath time can be used as a learning experience of wet/dry, on/off, cold/hot
- Baths are also a great place for singing
- Drying the child with a soft towel/rough towel can improve proprioception (body awareness)

These are just a few ideas and tips and I am sure that you will develop and already have many more of your own. Remember to ask an OT, physiotherapist or moving and handling adviser for advice on equipment.

**Penny Townsend MCSP HCPC NBE advanced member**

# DFN Project | SEARCH



Project Search provides young people with a learning disability and/or autism the opportunity to gain the skills needed in a real work environment and achieve paid employment.

In September 2019 our first Project Search programme in Kirklees started. Kirklees Council has partnered with Kirklees College, REAL employment, C&K Careers, Job Centre Plus and The Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust to run our first programme based at Dewsbury & District Hospital.

Project Search is aimed at young people aged 18-24, with an Education Health and Care Plan, in their last year of education. These are young people whose talents may be overlooked in the job market, but Project Search matches their skills to roles within a business. *(CONTINUED OVERLEAF)*



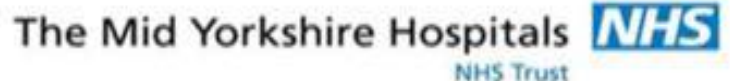
# DFN Project | SEARCH



*(Continued)* Throughout the year, young people on Project Search have three work site rotations (unless they find a job before the end of the programme!) to help them to build the skills required for the type of work that they are interested in. The onsite tutor and job coach work with the young people every day to support them to learn employability skills and the tasks in their work sites, as well as job searches for full time employment. At the end of the programme, if they haven't found a job, young people will receive continued support from REAL employment (learning disability) or Richmond Fellowship (autism) to find work.

We have 7 young people on the programme who are now in their first job rotations, including working in: linen, post room, medical physics, domestic, housekeeping, IT and reception.

For more information visit [www.kirklees.gov.uk/projectsearch](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/projectsearch).



## Exploring greater use of Assistive Technology for children and young people

*“Assistive devices and technologies are those whose primary purpose is to maintain or improve an individual’s functioning and independence to facilitate participation and to enhance overall well-being. They can also help prevent impairments and secondary health conditions.”* (WHO 2018 World Report on Disability).

Following work undertaken last year by external consultants, Red Quadrant a review of the Assistive Technology services is currently taking place within Kirklees Council. In their report Red Quadrant highlighted that, whilst there was a lot of good practice taking place, there were additional opportunities to utilise alternative creative and preventative solutions that help to build children’s wellbeing and independence and give them increased control over how they lived their lives.

This work has already started to embed a consistent approach across services traditionally offering forms of Assistive Technology, such as the community equipment service (KICES), the Accessible Homes team, Care Phones and Children’s services.

*(CONTINUED OVERLEAF)*

The aim is to increase the awareness and use of devices which will contribute towards enhancing child development, offering them the potential to exercise increased choice in how they live their lives and enable them to participate more fully in their family, social and wider community settings.

We recognise that each child has differing needs and, therefore, any solutions considered need to meet these whilst remaining suitable for the environment in which they are to be used. With this in mind the intent is not to produce a pick list of standard solutions on offer but rather through a personalised assessment professionals will work with the child and their family to find devices or technologies that will enable them to achieve agreed outcomes.

Some examples, though, may include the use of smart phone applications to enable independence and encourage emotional expression, communication aids, supportive seating, GPS navigation systems or environmental control systems.

As the redesign of the service takes place we will be able to share further information on the developments in future newsletters.

**Anita Mottram**

**Principal Occupational Therapist**

# 50

things to do

before you're  
**five**

Download  
the app  
**NOW!**

Available on the  
App Store

It's here!

Say Hello to...

50 fantastic things for you and your child to experience together.

'50 Things To Do Before You're Five' gives you 50 activities that parents and carers can support their children to try out and repeat.



[kirklees.50thingstodo.org](http://kirklees.50thingstodo.org)



## #5

Squidgy Sand



## #20

Mini Artists



## #33

Home from Home



## #40

Happy History



## #44

Climb a Hill



## #47

Cooking



**50 Things to do before you're 5** is an initiative offering a framework of low cost or no cost activities that families can experience together.

**50 Things** is a downloadable interactive App displaying each activity and includes information to support children and their parents / carers to experience and complete them.

Each activity can be 'ticked off' as they are completed and photographs can be stored as memories on the phone.

There are suggestions about how, where and when these activities can take place, age appropriate key words to use with children, top tips and books that link to the activity plus much more.

Each activity contains a section with ideas and adaptations to support children with additional needs.

## Preparing for Adulthood: Reece's story

Reece is 17. He has been living in a successful long term foster placement since the age of 4.

He has had some additional social, emotional and cognitive needs which made his early life a challenge but through a combination of good support from his foster family and his own aspiration to succeed, the future is now looking bright for Reece. I met Reece and his foster carers, sisters Carole and Jackie, to share their experiences.

### A different way to learn

Reece explained that the most important goals in his life were to make good friends, have a healthy social life and to get a job he enjoys doing.

He went to a mainstream secondary school but told me that he found the traditional classroom environment a challenge and was prone to distraction by his peers which in turn affected his behaviour. He found it difficult to make friendships and was subjected to bullying which had a significant effect on his emotional wellbeing.

Throughout any child's life there are a number of 'transition' points, for example moving from primary school up to secondary school. We know that these points are a time of uncertainty and upheaval for most families. For many children with additional needs there are added difficulties as the child may also be making a 'transition' between services, such as moving to Adult services from Children's services.

Reece had mixed experiences with transition. His move from primary to middle school was well planned and co-ordinated, with time to allow Reece to settle in to the new environment. He was encouraged to mentor other children, developing his confidence and making him feel valued. However the move from middle to high school felt less well planned and his family feel this contributed to Reece disengaging from the school environment.

His family began to explore the options for Reece as he approached 16. They found the range of choices was limited. With support and guidance of his family, he undertook an animal care course at a local college. Many of his peers here had additional needs. The 'classroom' element soon became frustrating for him and he began to help the on-site handy man. He learned a lot from him and it soon became clear that Reece flourished in a 'hands on' learning environment.





## **‘It takes a village to raise a child’**

Carole was keen to support Reece to get involved in his local community in order to develop his independent living skills and help to prepare him for adult life.

Reece is well connected and well liked in his community, often helping with mowing, planting and bird feeding on the housing estate. This means that the community in turn also look out for Reece.

His love of animals led him to volunteer at ‘Pigs in the Wood’, a local, not-for-profit organisation that relies on volunteers to manage 20 pigs in a local woodland reserve. He has become a valued, regular helper at the scheme. He undertakes a range of duties including feeding and grooming the pigs, has responsibility for cleaning the pig’s enclosures and managing their medications. He also undertakes public tours of the site.



*Reece at Pigs in the Wood*

Carole encouraged Reece to get involved with the Denby Dale Lions, a local charitable organisation who were actively looking at ways to be more inclusive. Soon he was assisting with organising community festivals and social events, helping with fundraising activities, building his independence skills as he moved towards adulthood. He built a stage for a fundraising gig. Reece said it “*made me feel good and proud*”.

Carole and Jackie struggled to find appropriate activities for teenagers, most clubs catered for younger children. The six week holidays were particularly challenging as clubs stopped running. Carole was determined to find suitable schemes to build his confidence and skills. Reece enrolled in the National Citizen Service, a government funded scheme open to all 16 and 17 year olds aimed at building skills for life and making new friendships. He undertook a 4 week programme including 1 weeks residential in Wales and work on a community project. He excelled and his confidence was boosted further.

To find out more about the National Citizen Service visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/get-involved/take-part/national-citizen-service>

## Encouraging independence

Children and young people with additional needs can be vulnerable in many ways and this can, understandably, make the idea of 'independence' more worrying for the families of these children. It can be tricky to find the balance between keeping children safe and enabling them to live as independent a life as possible.

In Reece's case, Carole and Jackie understood the importance of developing his independent living skills in order to equip him for adulthood and stressed the importance of setting clear boundaries.

In order for Reece to feel confident about travelling on his own on the train, Carole and Jackie took a staggered approach; first accompanying him on the route, then driving to the destination and waiting for him to arrive independently, until Reece and his carers were reassured he could manage independently.

In the early days there were a couple of minor mishaps with Reece finding himself in the wrong location. Carole and Jackie understood that this was to be expected and that by being aware of the risks and putting measures in place to minimise them, the benefits to Reece outweighed these.

## What's next for Reece?

Reece's love of practical learning, in particular woodwork, has led him to enrol in a joinery course at Barnsley College. Initially, Carole and Jackie were tentative as the course was not specifically for young people with additional needs and they had concerns that Reece may find this challenging. He's a couple of months in to the course and is thriving. He has been working on a number of projects including a scale model of a roof and continues to enjoy the 'hands on' nature of his learning. In Reece's words: "*I'm more relaxed now I'm not in the classroom*".

With a week packed with college work and volunteering in between you'd be forgiven for thinking he could do with a rest but Reece has taken on a different type of challenge and will soon be starting his silver Duke of Edinburgh award.



*Reece outside his campus at Barnsley College*

As Reece approaches his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday there are new challenges to face as he prepares to 'leave care'. The family are looking at the options available for Reece to maximise the good work they have done in making Reece an independent young man.

Reece hopes to become a joiner in the future and with such a good foundation and a good support network around him, it's hard to see him not achieving his goals.



I asked Reece, Carole and Jackie to share some positives and negatives to help us learn and improve the experience for families of children and young people with SEND in Kirklees.

### **What would have helped you?**

- Less jargon – more transparent communication from services
- Addressing bullying in school earlier to make sure children feel safe and want to attend school
- More longer term therapeutic intervention for children coming in to care
- Getting the right assessment at the right time
- Access to friendship groups earlier on in schools for those children who struggle to make and develop friendships
- Better planning and more time spent on 'transition' points. Dependent on need, consider more bespoke, individual visits to new schools with the opportunity to make multiple visits, developing positive relationships with peers and tutors

### **What has worked well – other honourable mentions!**

- Musica Kirklees – great at working with children with additional needs
- Dial Wood – horse carriage riding
- Kirklees fostering network – hosts a teen group for foster families
- Various courses for parents and carers at Northorpe Hall to help support children with social or emotional needs

Please note: Kirklees Council does not endorse any product or service. The details shared are for information only.

If you would like to be removed from the SEND newsletter mailing list or have any suggestions for the type of information which you would like to see featured please email:

[additionalneedsregister@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:additionalneedsregister@kirklees.gov.uk)