

Newsletter ~ March/April 2014

Edition 14 /2014



Bexley Voice for Special Needs Children

Welcome to our Bexley Voice spring newsletter. Please keep your fingers crossed for some sunshine for this year's Christchurch Fun Run in Sidcup on the 29th of March. The Bexley Voice team will be raising funds for Bexley Voice from sponsorship and CHYPS from entry fees. Come and join in the fun! See the article below for details on how you can enter or sponsor Bexley Voice.

We would like to welcome Amanda to the team who has volunteered to be our new minute-taker and will also be supporting with the important secretarial role. Thank you Amanda from all the management committee, it is great to have you on board! Congratulations to BV volunteer Nikki who had a beautiful baby girl last month, we are looking forward to having cuddles very soon.

If you are a parent or carer of a child or young person living in Bexley, you can become a member, gain support, information and join our 'voice'. With so much to pass onto our members, please visit our website at www.bexleyvoice.org.uk and Facebook page for more information. Don't forget, membership is free! If you have any relevant information, ideas to share or articles you would like to include in the next BV newsletter, please contact rachel.bexleyvoice@hotmail.co.uk.

★ We Need You! Treasurer Required Urgently! ★

Bexley Voice would like to thank Tracey for doing an amazing job as our treasurer. We are sad to see you go but wish you lots of luck in studying for your masters degree.

We are now urgently looking for a new treasurer to take over Tracey's role. This is a very important role and also involves becoming a trustee of Bexley Voice

The role of the Treasurer is to maintain an overview of Bexley Voice's financial affairs, ensuring the financial viability and that proper financial records and procedures are maintained. Skills required are;

- ◆ Good knowledge, understanding and use of Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets – input, sort and analyse financial data.
- ◆ Ability to use a Word processing system to produce & develop invoices, policies and procedures.
- ◆ Be confidently able to carry out bank reconciliations.
- ◆ Experience/knowledge of charity funding applications, reporting and monitoring.

If you are considering the role of treasurer for Bexley Voice, you do **not** need to have a child with special needs but must have a genuine interest in helping to support the aims of our charity. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

Please sponsor our volunteers, members and their children who will be doing a 3 mile sponsored walk around Sidcup on Saturday 29th of March at 2.00pm, to raise funds for Bexley Voice. It is a fun event, organised and supported by Sidcup Christ Church, with many entrants running or walking in costumes. Let's hope this year's event takes place in beautiful sunshine, as we will be shaking our bucket for donations too! If you are unable to take part in the Fun Run, please start getting sponsors for the BV Team, bring your children and come along to support us.

For those who would like to RUN (it's approx 3 miles), there will be a prize for the first male and female individual and team (3 or more) over the finishing line. For those who are more interested in the FUN, there will be a prize for the best 'Easter' fancy dress to complete the distance. Please contact Juli Atkinson on 0208 300 1350 or Juli.atkinson@live.com for more info. Entry forms are available on the Bexley Voice website or the Sidcup Christchurch website www.christchurchsidcup.org.uk. See you there!

PARENT/CARER 'DROP IN' SESSIONS



Bexley Voice 'Drop In' sessions are an informal opportunity to chat with a BV member. We can offer support and information about many issues - no need to book to see a BV member, just turn up! The next session for any parent or carer of a child with special or additional needs is;

Monday 31st March 2014
9.30am—12noon

**Goals Football Centre,
Bexleyheath (behind Asda).**

This forms part of the Bexley SNAP assessment morning. You will need to pre-book via Bexley Snap if you wish to see a professional advisor on 0208 320 1488.



**Please Sponsor
Bexley Voice
for the Sidcup
Christchurch
Fun Run!**

THANK YOU AND GOOD LUCK! From all the team at Bexley Voice, we would like to say a very big THANK YOU to our volunteers - Tracey, Kate, Denise and Mel for all their hard work and support that they have given in helping with the running of our charity. We wish you all good luck in your new jobs or areas of study.

"GREAT DAYS OUT" By BV member Wendy

We took a short break to the New Forest and while we were there we took a trip to Paultons Family Theme Park, home of Peppa Pig World and I am so glad we did!

It was a great day out and made more enjoyable and stress free because, in our opinion, Paultons have considered their disabled guests with regards to facilities and accessibility to rides and attractions. Having access to a large, clean changing room with a changing bed made a huge difference (normally have to resort to the boot of the car). The queue assist scheme worked well and had that not been in place, our visit would have been cut very short. The fact that the queue assist scheme is limited to one use per ride did not cause a problem, as there is so much to do such as discover the land of the dinosaurs, adventure golf, tropical birds, meercats, wallabies, flamingos, water kingdom, 4D Cinema, Peppa pig indoor play zone and lots more. We will definitely be visiting again!

- ♦ Free wheelchair hire and nearly all paths are flat.
- ♦ All shops/restaurants are accessible to guests in wheelchairs.
- ♦ Queue assist policy (does not apply to catering or retail queues). Must provide some form of identification relating to disability. Scheme limited to one use per ride unless wheelchair access is required.
- ♦ Ample toilet facilities for guests with disabilities.
- ♦ Changing disabled facility available with height adjustable changing bed and sink. You can only gain access via key pad door entry system.

As the vast majority of ride and attractions including Peppa Pig World, are designed to be fully accessible to disabled guests, Paultons do not offer a discounted disabled rate for guests or their carers. Wheelchair/mobility scooter dependent guests are admitted free of charge. Children under 1 meter are admitted free of charge.

For information, visit their website: www.paultonspark.co.uk

Would you like to share your 'Great Day Out' with other members? Please email rachel.bexleyvoice@hotmail.co.uk with a short write up on places that you have been, so we can share them with our members in our newsletter and on our website. (Please note we are unable to endorse any venue as venues/facilities may change without notice.)



ANIMAL DAYS OUT

Animal Days Out CIC run popular Nature and Outdoor Activity Clubs in the Bexley area and will soon be starting a new club for those children with Additional Needs who need a quieter, more supported environment but would like to come along and have some fun outdoors, learn about nature and meet some of our many animals and reptiles. To find out more about Easter activities, animal therapy, birthday parties and after school clubs, please visit www.animaldaysout.com.



Autism Spectrum Disorders ~ A personal Perspective by Steve Vincent



Bexley NAS invite you to our speaker evening for families and those working with children on the Autistic Spectrum.

DATE: Friday 9th May 2014.

TIME: 8.00pm – 10.00pm ~ doors open from 7.30pm.

VENUE: Hurst Community Centre, Hurst Road, Bexley.

Steve will give a talk on "understanding and supporting Children with ASD – My perspective" there will be opportunity for questions and answers afterwards. Parents, carers and professionals are invited to this talk and as space is limited we suggest that you book your place as soon as possible. (Please note, there is a small charge.)

For more information on how to book your place, visit the Bexley NAS page on our website or call 07826 950496.

Dyslexia Association of Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich & Lewisham



An Explanation of the New Special Educational Needs Legislation" By Brian Lamb, OBE

DATE: Thursday 27th March 2014.

TIME: 7.30pm – 10.00pm ~ doors open from 7.00pm.

VENUE: Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar School, Hurst Road, Sidcup.

We are delighted to give you the opportunity to hear all about the radical changes in Special Educational Needs Education in 2014, from Brian Lamb who is one of the Country's foremost specialist consultants on Special Educational Needs and Disability. If you would like to book, please contact: Amanda Sutton by email info@dyslexiawise.co.uk or call 020 8315 2526.

EMERGENCY CARER'S CARD ~

Juli and Wendy from Bexley Voice has been working with the Disabled Children's Service to develop a card that can be carried by those with a caring responsibilities. If you should be incapacitated, it will give details to the emergency services of who to call. We are pleased to announce the new emergency carers card is now ready! Please visit our website for more information on how to obtain your card.

Carer's Emergency Contact Card

ATTENTION! My name is:

I look after a child, with additional needs, who depends on me for care, in the event of accident or illness please follow the instructions inside

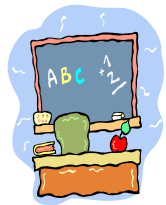


Is your child's school or nursery having an Easter, Spring or Summer Fair? Please let us know as we may be able to arrange BV members to come along and offer information to parents and carers of children with special needs. We look forward to seeing you there!



SCHOOL VISIT PROGRAMME

We would like to hear from parents and carers who have a child/children in a primary school, secondary school or a pre-school setting and would like us to visit their school. Please contact Janet (School Visit Coordinator for Bexley Voice) at janetpearl.bexleyvoice@hotmail.co.uk or complete the on-line school visit request form on our website. Remember... "Together we can make a difference."



Our school visits can be arranged any morning (they last about 1-2 hours, 9.30-11.30am), Monday to Friday. It is an informal visit to meet the SENCO's and parents/carers of children with special needs and let them know what Bexley Voice can offer them. We also:

- ~ Introduce Bexley Voice and how we can help you.
- ~ Explain the aims of our charity and what we do.
- ~ Tell you about what we have done (consultations, fundraising etc).
- ~ Membership - how to join, how you can help, our website and Facebook group.
- ~ Pathfinder Project - including personal budgets and the EHC plan,
- ~ Other contacts and local/national groups that offer support and information.

Latest school visits arranged;

Christchurch Primary School, Erith - Monday 3rd March.

Oakwood Secondary EBD School, Bexleyheath - Friday 7th March.

Mellow Monday Group, Hillsgrove Children's Centre, Welling - Monday 24th March.



VALUED PARENT PROGRAMME by Julie O'Neil (The Parent Empowerment Association)

A number of Bexley Voice parents have been taking part in the Valued Parent 12 week Parent Empowerment programme, during which we have been working through various topics on how to take care of yourself as a parent.

This has kindly been hosted by Bexley Voices's Juli Atkinson at the Hurst Community College on a Tuesday evening and has been very well attended. We are currently half way through the programme and everyone is enjoying the various topics such as:

- ◆ Our parenting styles and how to give positive praise.
- ◆ Promoting self esteem.
- ◆ Being a good enough parent.
- ◆ Do you feel that behaviour is your fault.



We have been looking after ourselves by setting ourselves a weekly focus of the week to ensure we have time out to recharge our batteries and concentrate on looking after ourselves. Which has been particularly hard to achieve, but we are making some progress. Overall, we are enjoying each other's company not to forget to mention the tasty homemade cakes lovingly made by our Pam. It is a pleasure to support the Bexley Voice parents. I hope we can continue to work together in the future.

PARENT FEEDBACK BY JENNY PALMER ~ The Parent Empowerment Course has helped me and my family immensely. It has helped me see the importance of putting some time towards myself and my own needs in order to become more effective and able to deal with the challenges of family life. I often feel quite overwhelmed with all the tasks I need to complete in the next few months and this course has shown me ways of prioritising and putting more order into my problems.

Having a 4 year old who has just been diagnosed with ASD means I feel very new to the world of SEN. It's been so lovely to meet other parents who know so much and understand how each of us feels. It's a safe place to talk about our lives and feels very non-judgemental. I am so pleased I am doing the course and look forward to the weeks ahead as I finally feel like I can gain control of some of the issues that have held me back or have caused upset. I thank Bexley Voice for making this course available and feel very privileged to have taken part.

For more information on Parent Empowerment courses please contact Julie O'Neil on 07727 662977, email phoenixparentoutreach@live.co.uk or visit www.phoenixparentoutreach.co.uk



MEET THE BEXLEY VOICE TEAM! Here are a few of our active volunteers working hard behind the scenes too make sure our charity follows its aims. We are all volunteers and have children with special needs so understand the issues involved. If you would like to be part of our team, even just a few hours each month, we would love to hear from you soon! The BV team and our information is on our website, so that our members can get to know us all a little better. Let us add your picture here to!



SENDirect ~ Parent and Carer Website User Testing ~ YOUR VOICE IS NEEDED NOW!

SENDirect is a website for parent/carers of children with special educational needs or disabilities. It will help parents find, compare and purchase appropriate services for their children. SENDirect will help parents to shape the services available to them. By providing more ways for parents to feedback on the services available to them, service providers and Local Authorities can respond and adapt to better cater to their needs.

To help us achieve this we want to involve parents at every stage of developing the website. By listening to parents throughout the process we can ensure we concentrate on what is important for you, making it work in a way that is most convenient and helpful. We call this user testing.

We want to involve you in several different ways. At some points it will be useful to have group discussions with other parents. At other points it may be more useful to have a one-to-one conversation or ask you to complete an online survey. We will also need to ask parents to test the site, seeing how well it works for them, suggesting improvements and changes. These activities could be done in a number of ways. Some of them could be done in the comfort of your own home, on the internet or over the phone. Others might require you to travel.

Please let us know if you'd like to get involved in our user testing and help make SENDirect a great website for parents. You can register your interest by emailing our web project manager at stephen.cohen@sendirect.org.uk. We will then contact you more information on how you can become involved. Looking forward to hearing from you,



ADVOCACY FOR ALL have provided free independent support from April 2013 to Bexley residents who want to complain about NHS services including hospitals and/or NHS staff, doctors' surgeries, pharmacies opticians, dentists and the ambulance service.



We provide information to help clients decide if they want to proceed with a complaint and discuss what other options they might have. We give people the opportunity to speak confidentially to someone who is independent of the NHS. If they decide to make a complaint we help them through the process. This can include helping them to write letters, attending meetings and talking over what to do at each stage.

We can support clients with the local complaints procedures through to complaining to the Health Service Ombudsman. We do not give legal or medical advice but we can signpost people to find advice if appropriate.

As the service is only for Bexley residents, we aim to reach a wide cross section of the borough's residents including those who find it most difficult to get their voices heard. Our main aim is to ensure that complaints are used positively to improve NHS services for the whole community.

For more information please call 0845 832 0034 or visit www.advocacyforall.org.uk

SAFE PLACE SCHEME IN BEXLEY FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

What is the Safe Place scheme?

This is to provide a temporary safe place for someone with a learning disability who is distressed or in danger till help and support arrive.

Why do we need it?

People with learning disabilities can be very vulnerable; the scheme is about keeping people safe in the community. This means that if people are out and about and are being threatened or bullied they can go into a shop with a safe place sticker and ask for help.

What will organisations need to do if they join the scheme?

You will be asked to put a safe place sticker in your window. This shows that your shop or organisation is a safe place for someone with a learning disability to come and get help. Shops and organisations are not expected to make many calls but to provide a temporary safe place for people with a learning disability until help and support arrive.

You will be given training about the safe place scheme by Bexley Mencap so that you would know what to do if someone came in with a learning disability and needed help. Parents who wish to find out more information about the scheme should contact



CONTACT US

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FACEBOOK: Bexley Voice for Special Needs Children

Registered Charity Number: 1142306



Bexley Voice for Special Needs Children

contact a family
for families with disabled children

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National Network of Parent Carer Forums
'Our Strength Is Our Shared Experience'