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BEXLEY VOICE WELCOME

Another school year has flown by, our children are growing up fast and the summer holidays are almost here once again. If your child is moving to a new school or college, we wish them lots of luck in their new adventure. Don't forget to update your membership information by dropping us an email.

To reduce our postage costs, we are asking parent/carers who receive this newsletter by post, to contact us if they have an email address. We send paper copies to every school in Bexley, ask your child's head teacher or Senco for a copy!

Bexley Voice has been busy informing parents about the new SEND reforms that will be coming into force this September. Do you know how the changes may affect your child? Are you ready for them? Read the article inside for more information and parent workshops coming soon.

Contact A Family have issued a new guide on claiming Disability Living Allowance for your child. Please visit our website under national organisations pages to download your free copy.

12 Bexley Voice members have recently completed a free 'Person Centred Planning' course with Yvonne Linton from Family Footings. Our next issue will feature an article about the course with a guide on how to create a 'one page profile' for your child.

If you are a parent/carer of a child/young person or a professional working with SEND in Bexley, you can become a member, gain support, information and join our 'voice'. Don't forget, membership is free!

If you have any ideas to share or articles you would like to include in the next BV newsletter, please contact rachel.bexleyvoice@hotmail.co.uk.

Bexley Voice AGM

**Thursday 11th September
1.45-3.00pm**

**(Tea/coffee & cakes
from 1.15pm)**

**Hurst Community Centre
Hurst Road,
Bexley, DA5 3HL**

The AGM will be an opportunity for BV to share and celebrate our achievements and outline our future plans.

We hope there will be some new faces coming forward to join us. If you are interested in being part of our management committee/trustee, please contact us prior to the AGM.

If you would like to attend our AGM, would like to nominate/require a voting slip or want more information about the role of a committee member/trustee, please contact us by **Friday 29th August 2014**.

BEXLEY VOICE SCHOOL VISIT PROGRAMME

BV are working with secondary schools following our request to reach parent/carers of older children and young people. The general response was that coffee mornings are not as popular, mainly due to so many working parents. However, many secondary schools will now be emailing our newsletters out, adding it to their websites and inviting us in to parent evenings.

If you have a child at secondary school and are not receiving our

newsletter or information direct from them, please drop us an email so that we can contact them. They are a vital link for us to reach parents! We can support parent/carers by:

- Updating them on the SEND reforms coming into force this September.
- Offer information about the new EHC plans.
- Signpost to local and national support organisations.

If you would like us to visit your child's school, complete the school visit request form on our website or ask your school to contact us. We can offer a full school visit (Monday to Friday, each visit last for 1-2 hours) or come along for 15 minutes at a PTA meeting.

For further information please visit our website or contact Janet (School Visit Coordinator for Bexley Voice) at janetpeart.bexleyvoice@hotmail.co.uk.

contact a family
for families with disabled children



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

Coming Soon! ~ In conjunction with Bexley Snap, Bexley Mencap and Bexley NAS, we are currently organising a parent/carer workshop for the application and use of Personal Independence Payments. Visit our website for more details!

Parent/Provider Short Breaks Workshop

On Thursday the 12th of June, 35 parents and local providers met at Danson Youth Centre to work together to help shape future provisions. The very interactive day focused on how local providers could best meet the varying needs of parents who have a Direct Payment or other funds to buy services and activities for their children.

Through group work, we identified the strengths and weaknesses of the current situation, what parents felt they needed going forward and how providers might meet those needs.

This was followed by 'Speed Dating' – to enable each group to get more detailed feedback on the areas that were of particular importance to them. Those who attended found it useful, informative and empowering.

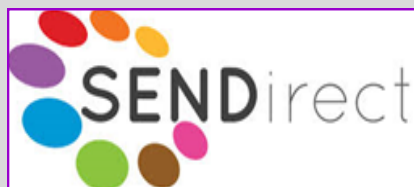
Actions and next steps were agreed and you will be hearing more about those in the coming months –some examples were:

- To set up opportunities and structures for communication
- The need for clarification on the use of Direct Payments
- The need for some support and activities for siblings.

Attendees were also able to input their thoughts into the development of parent review systems for SENDirect, a national project. SENDirect are a Consortium of national charities working together on finding practical solutions to ensure that families of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities can access their communities fully.

You can find out more about the 'Local Offer' work SENDirect are doing and get involved at www.sendirect.org.uk

Bexley Voice hope there will be an opportunity to run future events of this kind with a focused piece of work to be carried out.



SEN Reforms and the new SEN Code of Practice

September will start to see all the new changes under the Children and Families Act. If your child has a statement of educational needs, then over the next 3 years it will be changed to a EHC plan, bringing together Education, Health and Social Care.

It is important that all parent/carers of children with SEND are informed of the changes. Please visit our website for more information on:

- EHC Plans
- The Local Offer
- Individual Budgets

The new and long awaited SEND Code of Practice from the Department for Education and the Department of Health, was published on the 11th of June 2014.

This statutory code is for:

- SEN coordinators
- early education providers
- health and social services staff
- local authorities
- headteachers/school staff

To download your free copy, please visit the 'National Issues/SEND code of practice section' on our website.

Contact a Family is a national charity that exists to support the families of disabled children whatever their condition or disability. With over 30 years of experience, their vision is that families are empowered to live the lives they want and achieve their full potential. They offer support, information and advice to over 340,000 families each year and campaign for families to receive a better deal. Call them on 0808 808 3555 today!

contact a family
for families with disabled children

Coming Soon! ~ Consultation on Educational Psychologist Reports. If you have a child with an educational statement of needs and have received an EP report, then BV will be asking for your feedback about how to improve them.

Down's Syndrome Conference

Bexley's first 'Supporting Children with Down's Syndrome' Conference was a great success!

On 30th April, Bexley Voice, Bexley SNAP and the Joint Communication Team along with the Down's Syndrome Association, held their first conference at Royal Park School in Sidcup, for professionals, school staff and parents. This was initiated by Lisa Randell, an enthusiastic parent wanting to share her experiences of previous conferences, she felt there was a need to organise a similar event within the Bexley Borough.

Gillian Bird of the Down's Syndrome Association, with experience in Training and Support for Schools & Parents all over the UK, was the guest speaker. Also speaking from her own experience of having Down's Syndrome, was Ellen, her experiences

were an inspiration to the audience. Claire of Bexley Voice spoke about the new EHC Plans and SENCO's from some of the Bexley Schools also shared their experiences.

The subject matter was foremost concerned with inclusion for the children and highlighted the 'Learning profile and accessing the curriculum', 'language and communication' and 'social development and behaviour'.

The conference was an exceptional success, with very positive feedback from all those who attended. Lunch and refreshments were provided courtesy of Morrison's, Erith, with fund raising organised by Lisa. One of the parents donated homemade cupcakes which went down a storm (so good that they were mentioned on the DSA Facebook page).

It is hoped that this can become an annual event, so we can continue to provide much needed information and support for parent, carers and professionals.



News and Updates

Thank you Asda!

Bexley Voice recently had the pleasure of receiving a £50 cheque as part of the Community Life/Chosen By You at Asda Belvedere vote! Thank you to Zoe at Asda in Belvedere and to everyone who dropped their green token into our voting box.

A big thank you goes to Claire Watts, Bexley Voice's chairwoman, who worked hard to make this happen and was delighted to accept the cheque. She stated that the money will come in useful for the parent/carer workshops to be held later this year.



Carers Event

Bexley Voice Volunteers Claire and Amanda attended the Carers Event which took place on 9th June at Hall Place in Bexley. It was organised by Oxleas NHS Trust and was attended by over 30 local service providers.

The day was productive and informative for parents and the Bexley Voice team. Much was gained from speaking with other community groups and providers, sharing and gathering information to pass on to families with special needs children.

We also gained some new members. Overall it was a very useful and thought provoking.



Summer Fair & Market

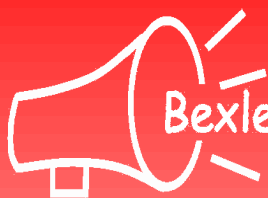
Come along and join in the fun at the summer fair and market to raise funds for Bexley Snap and Bexley NAS.

- Market Stalls
- Inflatables & Pony Rides
- Animal Days Out
- Pamper & Chill Zone
- Food & Drink
- Games & Karts

Sunday 27th July
12noon ~ 3pm
Sidcup Youth Centre
Burnt Oak Lane, Sidcup.
Entry: Adult 50p
Children ~ Free

Contact Info:
beverlybassom@ntlworld.com





Bexley Voice for Special Needs Children



Next Issue:

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT NEEDED URGENTLY!

Parent/Carer Drop In Dates

P.I.P. workshop

Future BV workshops

School Visit 'Best Practice'

SEND Reforms information

Bexley Voice AGM

PCP for EHC Plans course

BV is run by volunteer parent/carers of children with special/additional needs and disabilities living in Bexley. We always need and appreciate any support you are able to offer. At Bexley Voice, as with most charities, there are roles for volunteers and roles for trustees. (Please see our website for more detailed information).

Volunteering is:

- Rewarding
- Confidence building and enables you to learn new skills
- An opportunity to support families in similar situations
- Make new friends and join the BV red-t-shirt team!

We have many support roles available depending on the skills and time you have to offer. Just an hour a month can really make a difference! Some roles are based from home and can be done at a time to suit you.

- Helping with mailshots and promotions
- Delivering newsletters to schools and children's centre's
- Contacting schools to arrange dates and assisting on school visits
- Proof reading newsletters, documents, consultations and our website
- Fundraising activities and many more!

Many thanks to all our volunteers who support us and help with the running of our charity. However big or small, all the job roles are vital and will make a difference. Without this support Bexley Voice cannot reach the families in Bexley who need us.

Together we can all make a difference...

CONTACT US

VOLUNTEER HELPLINE:

075 12 409936

EMAIL:

bexleyvoice@hotmail.co.uk

WEBSITE:

www.bexleyvoice.org.uk

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1142306

BV Facebook Group

Why not join our parent/carer only Facebook group today! We have over 200 members sharing information, ideas and offering support on issues such as:

- How to cope with transition
- Where to buy equipment
- Summer activities
- EHC Plans

We have recently changed to a 'secret group' to protect the identity of our members. Every Facebook member is registered on our Bexley Voice membership database. If you are an existing member of Bexley Voice and would like to join the group, send us an email request or complete the FB group request form on our website.



Bexley Voice Website

With so much information to pass onto our members, the Bexley Voice website has become a very useful tool in sharing information. We now receive between 100-200 hits every day! We have added new 'specific special needs' and updated our Short Breaks information pages.

If you have any suggestions for information or links to be added to our website, please email rachel.bexleyvoice@hotmail.co.uk.

