

Making a Difference...



contact *For families
with disabled children*

Our Voice sponsored by the Department of Education via Contact

Welcome... to our Autumn 2019 Newsletter

Over the last six months, we've continued to be busy on your behalf representing parents/carers and families with children and young people with additional needs and disabilities. We've done this at a wide range of different meetings on a local level, as well as joining discussions regionally and nationally, whether this has been about lack of funding in schools, challenges with transport, quality/timing of our children's Education Health and Care Plans or the amount of Speech and Language support our children receive. We'll continue to work hard to support all our children but continue to need your help. Please see page 3 if you're interested in volunteering with us.

Our team have been busy organising events for our families to get together and we're pleased to have a growing number of families coming along to our fun days and parties, including increasing numbers of regular attendees and many new members.

We're now planning our fourth Parents' Conference which has moved forward from our usual Spring date to the 28th November 2019. This will be our most important event of the 2019–2020 year and represents an exceptional opportunity for us to make sure that the Local Authority hears your views. Listening to your feedback, we are removing the initial presentations and instead providing more opportunity to ask the Heads of Service the questions you want to find out about. See page two for more information.



Some of the Our Voice Management Committee (from left to right) Fazilla Amide, Rupali Bhullar, Niki Michael, Seema Islam, Jackie Pummell, Liz Willis, Khilna Gudhka and Natalie Sherman.

As funding cuts are biting hard and impacting on our families in this challenging time, we are continuing our vital work of influencing the Local Authority and Health to ensure that the views of parents and carers are heard. Please continue to get in touch with us to let us know what you think. When we all work and stand together, we can be persuasive and powerful!

Family fun

Our annual summer party provided an afternoon of games and entertainment, bringing fun and laughter to all our children. The wonderful afternoon included an entertainer, face painting, an indoor car racetrack, bouncy castle and outdoor playground. Around 140



people came along to Russet House School to celebrate with us and we were delighted to welcome so many new families, as well as many of our regulars.

Everyone enjoyed the food and the children's party bags were a big hit. One mum said 'The activities on hand were great, it was a friendly and safe space for my son to enjoy activities and I felt a sense of togetherness and support with the other parents.'

Thank you to sponsors A & R Design for funding the event, Free Cakes for Kids Enfield for providing many of the delicious cakes, Katie's Kastles for the bouncy castle and racetrack, Ann-Marie from Time for Change for the



entertainment, Kasia for taking the photos, Sandeep for her face-painting and all the volunteers from the Our Voice team for their hard work.

A reminder that our next family event will be our Christmas Party on Sunday 8th December 2019, at Russet House School. Details will follow soon.

As well as putting on our family fun days, Our Voice is organising its fourth Parents' Conference, in addition to working hard to ensure parents'/carers' voices are represented and heard by the Local Authority to ensure services in Enfield are meeting statutory obligations. For example, we've been involved with content and re-design for the new Local Offer website and have been reviewing the LA's Travel Assistance policy ensuring the parent/carer and young person's view is fully represented via our feedback and comments. The LA has, to its credit, listened and taken on board much of our feedback and in many instances has ensured it's a fairer policy, as a result.

Passionate bakers

Our award for this issue goes to the volunteers at Free Cakes for Kids Enfield.

The team of volunteers bake cakes for families who find it difficult to provide birthday cakes for their children either because of a lack of funds, health issues or living in temporary accommodation without a kitchen. They also make



cakes for families whose children have a disability and parents are full-time carers so don't have time to bake homemade cakes.

The Enfield team have baked delicious and amazing cakes for many of the Our Voice parties during which we celebrate all our wonderful children, we've even had gluten-free, dairy-free and egg-free bakes.



Deputy Mayor Kate Anolue (left) and Councillor Joanne Laban (right) at an Our Voice party

Families can refer themselves or more usually referrals are through partner organisations such as children's centres, schools or the local food bank. For details visit the website freecakesforkidsenfield.com.

Diary Date – The OV Parents' Conference

Following on from our very successful Parents' Conference in February, our next one is on Thursday 28th November 2019, at the Dugdale Centre, Enfield.

Previous events have been a big success with parents as they provide an unrivalled opportunity to talk directly

to the Heads of the Departments responsible for SEND Services.

We've listened carefully to feedback from previous attendees and our surveys, and have made some changes including:

- ▶ Replacing the updates from each Head of Service with a longer Q&A panel session, so parents get the chance to ask the Heads of Services questions about areas that concern them.

- ▶ There will be a choice of workshops – topics to be announced shortly.
- ▶ An option to pre-book one-to-one sessions with professionals from across the services.

Members on our mailing list will get priority booking for places and one-to-one slots, so make sure you're signed up. Joining details are on page four.



New team members

We're delighted to welcome three new recruits to the Our Voice management team.



'I'm thrilled to be on board with Our Voice and hope to get stuck in straight away,' says new member Sonja Ibrahim. 'I live in Southgate with my 10 year old twins, Leyla and Ben. Leyla is neurotypical and attends Palmers Green High School, Ben has Fragile X syndrome and ASD and goes to Kestrel House School in Crouch End.'



'I'm Tee Richards, mum and full-time carer to two energetic boys, Kailen, 9 and Jamari, 7, who both have autism.

I believe, in order to thrive in life whatever the circumstances, families should have access to the right support system to help guide, inform and encourage them. Our Voice is one such channel that helps to provide information and is a supportive network for parents of children and young people with SEND.

Our Voice events and parents' conferences have had a positive impact on my family. I've joined the OV management team to help support parents in any way that I can.'



'I have joined the Our Voice team because of the support my family has received from them and to help them continue to give such warm support to others who need it most,' says Akosua Osei. 'My daughter Dionne, also known as Nana, is 10 years old and very special to

us. We live in Enfield with my husband and two other children.

Nana was born at full term with no sign of abnormalities but at around six months she was unable to sit unaided. Later tests revealed she has delayed development, which means as parents we never know what Nana's capable of. Currently, she can walk but has lots of imbalance but she has no speech. However, there really is light at the end of the tunnel as a very happy Nana is interested in Makaton.'

Volunteer with us

Our work is growing and we're looking for new volunteers to get involved and help us make a difference to the lives of Enfield families who have children with a disability or Special Educational Needs.

You don't need a lot of time to make a difference, just a couple of hours a week, so if you're interested Our Voice would love to hear from you! For more information please see the contact page on our website ourvoiceenfield.org.uk

Full steam ahead

During the Easter holidays, Our Voice and ENAS put on an exclusive Track Play session. Children enjoyed 90-minutes on an amazing layout of giant super-charged train tracks with tunnels, spirals and stations and favourite character motorised trains.

Track Play run play sessions throughout the country (trackplay.co.uk), but our exclusive event

made it a far more comfortable and fun experience for our kids. One mum who had previously taken her teenage son to a public Track Play session commented that 'he was more relaxed and didn't feel awkward about being the only big one here!' Her son was excited saying, 'Wow mum, I didn't realise that other teenagers still enjoyed playing with trains like me!'



Pantomime trip

Our annual theatre trip for our members and their families is to see Mother Goose at the Millfield Theatre. Join us on Friday 3rd January 2020 at 3pm for a relaxed performance, specifically designed for those with an Autistic Spectrum Condition, learning disability or sensory and communication disorder. Bookings will open shortly and details will be via the Our Voice mailing list so make sure you have signed up.



GP checks

Unless children receive a diagnosis at birth, GP practices have no way of identifying if they have a disability and are often unaware of autism and/or learning disabilities. Our Voice encourages parents/carers to register their child's additional needs and ask GP surgeries to add the information to medical records.

The learning disabilities health check scheme is designed to encourage practices to identify all patients aged 14 and over with learning disabilities. Designed to improve quality

of life and produce a health action plan, take-up has been low so if your child has a diagnosed Learning Disability and is over the age of 14, ask your GP about the annual health check, if they're not receiving one.

Some surgeries are making adjustments to improve GP visits and reduce stress for patients with disabilities. For example, parents can wait in their car with their child or take them for a short walk, and the receptionist will text when the doctor is ready to see them.

Becoming a member of your GP Patient Participation Group means you can help raise the issues and encourage your surgery to implement changes.



Join Our Voice

Members of our mailing list get regular weekly updates with information useful for families supporting children and young people with SEND. Benefits include:

- ▶ Updates on changes to services from the Local Authority and Health
- ▶ Opportunities to have your say on changes that affect SEND services locally and nationally
- ▶ The chance to book events including our Parents Conference and parties before they are open to others and access to Our Voice trips as part of a supportive group and at discounted prices

To join call 07516 662315, email: info@ourvoiceenfield.org.uk or go to the Join Us page online at ourvoiceenfield.org.uk/contact_us

Party time

Our Spring party in March had something for everyone. For the kids Marvella's Magical Fun Show included Punch and Judy, magic rabbits and a disco with snow machine. There was PS4 gaming for the teenagers alongside face painting provided by volunteer Sandeep, a bouncy castle and food for all. Mums and carers had the chance to enjoy a free Deep Relaxation Energy Therapy session, courtesy of Deepa, and there was a flower and cake for each of them to take home.



Sue Roberts, the new Head of the Joint Service for Disabled Children introduces herself and updates us on what's been happening in the borough.



We continue to work with the Our Voice Parent Forum and other organisations such as ENAS to improve and develop services for children and young people with SEND. They provide invaluable insight and expertise into the lives of children with disabilities and their families and we're proud of the work we are progressing together.

New role

'I'm delighted to be appointed as the Head of the Joint Service,' says Sue Roberts. 'As many of you know I've worked in Enfield for many years, developing services and support for families, and I am looking forward to continuing this work in partnership with parents.'

I started my career as a volunteer on a summer play scheme for disabled children and started work at Cheviots when it was a residential unit in 1979. I qualified as a social worker in 1985 and was part of the management team that transformed Cheviots from a residential service to a service

offering a range of short breaks and family support.

I'm proud of all we have achieved together so far, my passion for supporting disabled children and their families remains as strong as ever and I'm looking forward to working with you to continue to develop services in Enfield.'

The Local Offer

As you may be aware, a review of the content and layout of the Local Offer website <https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/children-and-education/local-offer/> is underway to make it more engaging and easier to navigate for parents, carers and professionals.

It's a fantastic resource providing an online hub about SEND provision in the Borough of Enfield. We're making the layout clearer and more streamlined to make it easier to find information, using more images to make pages appealing

and adding a new Spotlight section to highlight the latest news and upcoming events. The 'Moving On' Twitter feed, providing updates about transition to adulthood, will be on the homepage.

A focus group, attended by the Our Voice team, helped clarify how changes could be implemented. Ideas were shared on how to promote the Local Offer and ensure greater awareness and since then, The Joint Service for Disabled Children is sharing weekly alerts with its social workers and Our Voice. We hope to consult with parents in the Autumn to agree the final re-design.

Enfield's Local Offer for SEND



A work in progress, a visual representation of what the new Local Offer homepage will contain

Travel Assistance update

Enfield Council's current Travel Assistance Policy has been reviewed and updated. It sets out how the Council identifies and supports children and young people who need travel assistance to their school or other educational setting.

The review was to improve the efficiency of the service in the context of rising demand, to promote opportunities for young people with SEND to achieve independence through independent travel training, ensure the policy is compliant with statutory guidance and to ensure the service is cost-effective.

A 12-week public consultation on proposed changes took place, including an online survey and discussion with Our Voice and the Head Teachers' Forum. We received 102 responses to our online consultation, and extensive written feedback from Our Voice on the policy document.

The final version will be signed off soon and by implementing the policy, we will promote a safe, active and sustainable approach to travel assistance to and from schools or other educational settings, promote the most independent



approach to travel assistance, ensure a partnership with children, young people and their parents and use the most cost-effective and eco-friendly travel options.

Shaping future healthcare

The NHS is developing services for the next 10 years with one area of priority being care for people with learning disabilities, Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and other disabilities.

The focus will be on specific annual health checks and staff training to support people with a learning disability and/or autism. There will be action to tackle over medication, an aim to reduce waiting times for specialist services to facilitate speedier diagnosis and to bring hearing, sight and dental checks into special residential schools.



Over the spring Healthwatch encouraged families of people with learning disabilities to share their thoughts and experiences. We heard from 165 people and it's clear that there's room for improvement. We also heard about challenges around Continuing Care and Personal Health Budgets. A report will be published on our website in the autumn. It will be shared

widely and we'll meet with the CCG and other providers to discuss how we can continue to make improvements.

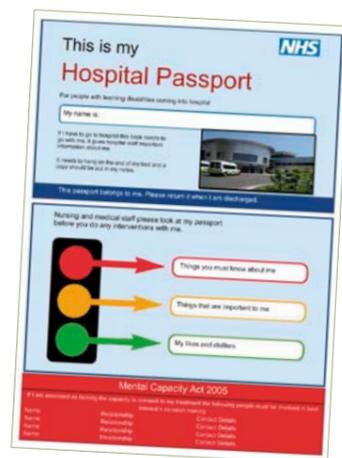
The local NHS still need to hear your views on what services should look like in your community within Enfield. Complete one of our online surveys or visit one of our pop-up events. Visit healthwatchenfield.co.uk, call **020 8373 6283** or share your feedback through social media [@healthwatchenf](https://www.facebook.com/healthwatchenfield) or [facebook.com/healthwatchenfield](https://www.facebook.com/healthwatchenfield).



get a better understanding of the patient, and you can use it whenever you have any kind of hospital visit with your child, to help ensure that hospital staff can support you and your child effectively throughout your visit. Print out and complete the passport so it's ready prepared if and when you need to go to hospital. Also check if the hospital has a specialist learning disability liaison nurse ahead of your visit. Find a copy of the passport at mylife.enfield.gov.uk/media/24734/hospital-passport.pdf

Passport to health

The Hospital Passport scheme is helping improve hospital treatment for people with learning disabilities and their families. It contains information about the person, including health, likes and dislikes and things that are important to them such as how to they like to communicate, what to do if they are worried or upset and how they sleep. Because it includes a wide range of information about the individual, not just their ill health, health workers



Positive change

Over the Spring term, Gail Weir, Head Teacher of Waverley School, commissioned the Educational Psychology Service to work collaboratively with families at the school. Claire Collins shares their journey

The aim of the Tree of Life workshop was for parents to take a step aside from their busy, hectic lives and provide space and time for reflection in their parenting/family journeys.

Myself, Family Support Worker Tina Rey and a group of five parents attended the weekly sessions. We spent the time rediscovering our strengths, histories, roots and memories and reflecting on important people, places, playgrounds and foods made these memories present and accessible.

Challenges faced by the group in having to adapt and take a different

path to what had been expected in life, managing the expectations of professionals and the public in response to disability, losses at different levels and reconfiguring identity were acknowledged. Knowing that they were not alone in the challenges faced with regards to their child/young person's needs, made it feel better for the group.

Be assertive, get support from others, practice exercise, share a positive mindset, have a sense of humour, meditate and connect with others, were a few of the strategies and resources shared and drawn upon by the group. Mottos and mindsets were established and shared and stories of hope going forward emerged, for example, noticing that we're all different in life, have highs and lows at different times and in different ways, avoiding hazards such as 'comparing and despairing' our lives with those of others and accepting what we can and can't change.



Educational Psychologist, Claire Collins, worked with Parents from Waverley School.

The intervention offered hope and encourages a move away from negative problem-focused thinking to give a new space to think, talk about and listen to stories about strengths and preferred ways of being.

Parents felt that sharing this with Our Voice readers may be helpful and a way of reaching other parents.

Working together

Speech and language therapists at Russet House School gave an informative presentation to School Governors about how speech and language therapy is delivered. A productive discussion followed,

resulting in new ideas on how therapists can further build on communication and support for parents.

A follow on session for parents was well attended and sharing their own

experiences was useful. They found out about the building blocks for successful communication, systems that the school uses and about total communication, which is about ways of communicating other than speech.

Young Carers' Festival

This year's festival took place in Southampton at the end of June and was attended by young carers from all around the country. Here, Aayushi Gudhka, age 12, from Enfield Young Carers Project tells of her experience

'This outdoor camping festival was a weekend-long event that was fun and gave me a break from my caring role. It was packed with activities including live music, arts and crafts, outdoor activities and a silent disco. I met and talked to several enthusiastic young people who told me their stories, and understood mine. Hearing other people's stories was really inspiring. The best part for me was The Voice Zone where companies, universities or different projects that

were set up for the Festival asked for our opinion or how we felt about issues, including our health and fitness, friendships, emotions, wellbeing and finances. This was important to me because it meant that our views were heard and we could speak to people in The Voice Zone about any problems.

The Young Carers' radio station, YCFM, was broadcasting throughout and you could win amazing prizes such as a Nintendo Switch or a guitar!

I'm grateful and happy to have attended the festival as I met incredible people, thoroughly enjoyed myself and knew that my voice mattered. Thanks to Happy Days for funding it and Enfield Young Carers Project for taking us to such a great event.'



Going out just got easier

AccessAble is a website and app that provides detailed information on the accessibility of venues throughout Enfield and the rest of the UK, so that disabled people and carers can find out if a place will be right for them.

It's a valuable resource for parents taking their children out and for young people developing their independence.

Access Guides take you on your journey throughout a venue including detailed information about doors, level access, lifts, toilets, staff training, lighting levels, background music and Safe Places to name a few. The information is based on user feedback and because someone with a disability has suggested it would be useful to know about it before they go somewhere. Go to accessible.co.uk or download the app.



Football Champions

Enfield Town Disability Football Club in association with ECYPS, became League Champions in their first season participating in the Hertfordshire Inclusive League

The team wanted to up their game with more regular competition to enhance their skills and further develop their cohesion as a squad, so entered into a new league, as well as their existing one in the Middlesex PAN Disability League.

A presentation evening was held at the QEII Stadium in Donkey Lane in recognition of the team's amazing achievements and to reflect just how proud the club are of their efforts. Coach Alfie Russell says 'I'm really proud of you all and I think all the players deserve Player of the Year.'

Come along and join in football training on the all-weather pitch on Saturday (term time only) 10 am-12 noon at Enfield Playing Fields, Donkey Lane.



WHAT'S ON?

Get out and about this Autumn and visit these shows and events

Apple day

Celebrate apples, orchards and this year's harvest at Forty Hall Farm in Enfield on Sunday 13th October 2019, between 11am–4pm. There are apple-themed activities including apple bobbing, tasting, arts and crafts stalls and juice pressing. The one acre orchard is a community project run by volunteers. Visit fortyhallfarm.org.uk for more information.



Farm fun

A special weekend of fun and games is happening at Lee Valley Park Farms on 20–21 September 2019. Farm Fest includes live music, face painting, children's entertainment and stalls, in addition to all the usual activities including meeting farmyard animals, the tractor ride and indoor and outdoor play areas. For tickets and information call 01992 892781 or visit lvfarms.co.uk.

Christmas Panto

Join us in Puddle upon the Marsh, where we meet the very poor Goose Family and follow their adventure, including true love, an evil baddie and of course fairy magic. Hilarious comedy, fantastic music and a great pantomime dame! For information and tickets visit millfieldtheatre.co.uk.

Our Voice is planning a trip to see the show on Friday 3rd January 2020 at 3pm. We'd love you to join us - see page 3 for details.



Animal extravaganza

Ensyclopedia of Animals, a madcap menagerie of twenty-six animal songs, one for each letter of the alphabet, comes to the Arts Depot, North Finchley on 22nd October 2019. John Hinton, a passionate and creative entertainer, gets to grips with fascinating facts about extraordinary crazy corals, batty birds and amazing arachnids. For more information and tickets visit artsdepot.co.uk

Modern fairy tale

A magical new musical version of Snow White will be performed at the Chickenshed, 23 November 2019–11 January 2020. The familiar tale set in a colourful 1960s world where traditional roles are changing fast includes original music and a huge cast of all ages. For tickets and information go to chickenshed.org.uk.



Contact

The Contact free phone helpline offers help and support to the families of disabled children. The confidential service can be contacted on **0808 808 3555** or at helpline@contact.org.uk. The service is staffed by experienced advisers and is intended as a one-stop-shop for parents and family members. For more information visit contact.org.uk

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