

Monday 31st July 2023

# VOICE 4 PARENTS

NEWSLETTER



'giving a voice to parents & carers of children with additional needs'

## Our NEW Website

Come and check out our new website and find out more about us, the work we do and sign up to become a member @ [www.voice4parents-wolves.co.uk](http://www.voice4parents-wolves.co.uk) or scan the QR code opposite.

We hope you enjoy it as we are updating it all the time with new information. If you have any queries, comments, suggestions or feedback on the website or if you would like to see something important added, please feel welcome to



## Time to Connect

Our next Autism Café will run on August 19th 2023. As always, everyone is welcome to attend. There are games and complimentary crisps and squash for the children as well as the chance for refreshments and cake treats at subsidised prices for our families. Check out our facebook page or visit our V4P website to learn more.

[Time to Connect - Autism Cafe | Wolverhampton | Facebook](#)

Please e-mail [Emma@voice4parents.co.uk](mailto:Emma@voice4parents.co.uk) if you have any questions, concerns or queries.

## Family Hubs

There are a number of hubs in Wolverhampton.

There is a range of help available for families from the Family Hub's located around the Wolverhampton area. (please see link below)

[Family Hubs | Wolverhampton Information Network](#)

Advice and support is available on all aspects of parenting including pregnancy and early childhood, keeping children safe and healthy, behaviour issues, relationships, domestic violence, drug and alcohol issues, problems at school, bullying etc.

Development and building of these hubs is ongoing so we will keep you updated on the progress across the city.

## Coffee Morning

We are taking a break from Coffee Mornings now until September. Please check out the website under 'coffee morning' tab and keep an eye on your inbox for new dates.



## New School Nurse Bulletins

The 0-19 School Nursing Service has launched a new digital bulletin called 'Building a healthy future', sharing latest news from their service, alongside important healthcare messages. Check them out below:

For SEND parents - <https://bit.ly/3WpYVmR>

For primary school parents - <https://bit.ly/3Wq7uy2>

For secondary school students - <https://bit.ly/42V2t2Y>

## YO!

Wolverhampton Council have sent HAF (holiday activities and food) codes via post for all eligible children.

Any queries or if you haven't received a HAF code and believe you should have received one, please contact the

HAF team at [HAF@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:HAF@wolverhampton.gov.uk)

Yo website—

[About Yo! | Wolverhampton Young Opportunities \(yowolves.co.uk\)](#)

## Feedback from our members

We are very keen to obtain any feedback from our members on anything you feel important. What is working well? What are you finding a struggle? What do you think of our website or about anything in our Newsletter. Compliments are also received with gratitude.

There are a number of ways to feed back to us; using the link below, on our website under the feedback tab or on our facebook pages,

**FEEDBACK TO US:** families can feedback to us on any of the areas mentioned in this Newsletter by using the following link:

<https://forms.office.com/r/bq86NFX8wq>

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### The Way Youth Zone

Voice4parents have met with The Way this month to discuss Information sharing, their SEND sessions and to discuss how this program can be extended in the future. We are looking forward to discussing this further to see what may be offered to the Children and young people of Wolverhampton with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Please check out the poster and feel welcome to attend The Way's Saturday Sensory Sessions 10-12.30pm.

These sessions will be running throughout the summer holidays.

Whilst funding is available, If you provide proof of your Voice4Parents membership number and quote V4P-FREE then membership for The Way is free and will then mean other sessions at The Way is only 50p per child per session.

## Sensory Saturdays

### SEND Families

#### 10am - 12:30pm



Weekly themed activities in a calm, relaxed setting

- Sensory room
- Climbing wall
- Parachute games
- Music
- Arts and crafts
- Board games & lego
- Soft play
- Cafe

50p per person  
All ages welcome, accompanied by an adult





**The Way Youth Zone**  
School Street, Wolverhampton WV3 0NR  
[www.thewayyouthzone.org](http://www.thewayyouthzone.org)  
Registered Charity Number 1151247



### Preparation For Adulthood - Social Care

Social Care are re-evaluating how families access social care assessments and Short Breaks. Voice4Parents have been giving your views at meetings that a referral for an assessment for a disabled child or young person should not go through the Mutli-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) because it is not fair to automatically make disability a safeguarding issue. We tell professionals that this makes families feel scared and that their parenting is being judged. Social Care are also looking at the Short Breaks offer and whether this is suitable for families with a child/young person with special educational needs (SEN). We act as your voice in saying that the criteria is very high and there are not many opportunities for those children/young people who need a little more help to access leisure and community activities.

### Local Offer

The feedback cycle for the Local Offer under the 'You Said, We Did' tagline is being reviewed. It has been agreed that feedback given by Parent Carers and Young People via the Local Offer website would be fed to V4P to see if there are themes emerging. This would be quarterly but it was agreed that any feedback would first go to service managers so that they could attempt to put things right, V4P can then decide whether the solution is appropriate. This information will also go to SEND Board so that services can be held accountable for decisions made.

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## Co-production

Co production is about

- Involving parents and carers in the planning and development of services provided to parents, children and young people.
- This happens when parents and carers are valued in shaping and delivering services they use and need.
- It is not being given information or just taking part in consultation. Participation empowers parents and carers to take an active role in influencing what services do, how they do it and to what standard.
- By working in coproduction with the local authority, education settings, health providers and other providers, Voice4Parents can highlight where local services, processes and commissioners are working well and challenge when changes or improvements need to be made.

"We believe that parents, carers and professionals are stronger and more resourceful when they work together - and when we do this, we achieve good outcomes for all our children and young people and their families."

## Co-production Meeting

The Local Authority are currently looking at ways to improve Co-production with Families/ Young People/children and Parent Carers. This includes holding yearly consultation events, children and young people survey rollout, revising guidance for personal budgets and looking at the Team Around the Child (TAC) process.

Also, the Local Authority would like the "Lived Experience" of a Young Person or Parent Carer/family with SEND to be presented at SEND board meetings - to inform/enlighten board members, who are decision-makers on SEND, what it is like to live as a young person or parent carer of a child with SEND. It is hoped this will then help set the priorities in the City going forward with respect to services and provision regarding

## Joint Commissioning and Autism

The new autism strategy is making early progress, Wolverhampton are adopting the West Midland Autism roadmap strategy and will be working with Royal Wolverhampton Trust and the Black Country Integrated Care Board (Health partners) to ensure parent carer priorities are known and recognised.

Two dedicated roles have been identified within Black Country Healthcare to fully Review Autism Pathways - these roles will be advertised shortly with the hope staff will be recruited to post within the next 1-3 months.

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## Written Statement of Action

Voice4Parents attended the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting with the Department For Education and NHS to monitor progress made within the Written Statement Of Action.

LA and Health Services feedback on what they have done to improve services for families with SEND in Wolverhampton.

A "Position Statement" now needs to be co-produced with all partners showing what impact the changes made over the last couple of years have had for Children and Young People, Parent Carers and families.

Voice4Parents will be using the feedback from Parent Carers in our Annual Survey to ensure that all families viewpoints are considered when completing the Position Statement to develop an ongoing action plan that reflects what families have told us is needed.

## SEN (special educational needs) Decision making Panels

V4P has met with professionals who currently make decisions on whether an application for an EHCP (Educational Health Care Plan) results in an assessment of needs and if it does whether the assessment results in an EHCP being granted or not.

As of September 2023 the process for decisions on whether to assess for an EHCP will change in the following way when an EHCP application is made:

1. The Senstart team will decide at week 6 of the process if they agree to assess for a EHCP or not. This was previously done by a panel of professionals.

If it is agreed to assess then between weeks 10-13 a Decision-making Panel of professionals will meet to decide whether to issue an EHCP or not.

The changes to process will be monitored by the Local Authority and parent feedback will be gathered and if so the process will be amended going forward.

## IASS SEN Support Booklet Review

V4P has attended 2 sessions working with WIASS (Wolverhampton Information, Advice, and Support Service) to work on updating their parent/carer SEN (special educational needs) Support Booklet. This booklet provides parents/carers with information about when SEN support is and the council's Graduated response. It includes information on what to expect from schools when a parent raises a concern regarding their child's Special Educational Needs.

IASS will now draft an updated version to share with the working group of parents and following feedback will finalise this updated booklet that can be available to parents/carers on their website.

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## NEWSLETTER

### Joint Commissioning

Following on from a recent Ofsted progress audit on the Written Statement Of Action, Joint commissioning have agreed to look at other local authorities mode of practise, to improve upon their own current system. This has also been extended to the Short Breaks commissioning, who will be contacting other local authorities to see how they provide short breaks/respite to families and care givers. 3 areas of urgency have been identified, that work groups will be set up around, with each area to be examined, assessed and appropriate funding to be agreed upon. These 3 areas are Short Breaks, Social Prescribing and Speech and Language Therapy.

We are happy to say funding is to continue for Blended feeding for a further 12 months, at Green Park School.

### Autism Work shops with Dudley Voices For Choice

(User led charitable organisation that supports people with Learning Disabilities and Autism to speak up for themselves)

Voice4parents met with Dudley Voices For Choice this month to begin initial work on offering workshops on autism based around lived experience. This is something we will continue to develop over the summer with the aim to offer these to families in late September/early October. The aim is to:

- Hear from people with lived experience.
- Have the opportunity to ask the questions you always wanted to ask.
- Learn new skills.
- Share your skills with your peers.
- Understand different communication techniques.
- An overview of the law and rights for people with a learning disability and autistic people
- An understanding of inequalities faced by people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

Sessions will be run across the Black Country in **Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall, and Wolverhampton** and have been commissioned by Black Country

### Help and Support in our City over the Summer Holidays

- ◆ Food Banks—<https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/benefits/social-security-benefits/food-banks-and-soup-kitchens>
- ◆ Community Shops—<https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support/community-shops>
- ◆ The Good Shepherd—<https://www.gsmwolverhampton.org.uk/>
- ◆ The Well—<https://www.thewellwolverhampton.co.uk/>
- ◆ The Good Night Project— <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support/the-good-night-project>
- ◆ IASS - <https://wolvesiass.org/>
- ◆ Include Me Too—<https://includemetoo.org.uk/contact-us/>
- ◆ Places where kids can eat free or for £1 throughout the 6 weeks holidays 2023—<https://moneysavingcentral.co.uk/kids-eat-free>

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## SEND Partnership Board

Voice4Parents attended SEND Partnership Board. Many areas of improvement were raised in line with the findings from the OFSTED inspection in 2021, leading to the ongoing work on the Written Statement Of Action.

Discussion was held around Autism Diagnosis, Pathways and also Pre and Post Support given to families on the Diagnostic Pathway. There are currently 3 ways of being referred for an Autism Diagnosis, A pathway for under 5's, A pathway for over 5s via Paediatrician referral and thirdly via CAMHS. There are currently 478 Children and Young People on the waiting list for diagnosis across the 3 pathways. The current average waiting time over the pathways is 30 months for a diagnosis.

CAMHS Waiting lists were discussed in general and currently Children and Young People referred are initially contacted in 14 weeks but then on average waiting 52 weeks for a 2<sup>nd</sup> appointment.

Voice4Parents presented a brief summary of our Annual Report findings to everyone at the board. This will be used to help shape future services within Wolverhampton. A full and detailed report is currently being prepared for delivery in September. We will of course post these reports onto our web page for families to look at once finished .

Short breaks was discussed at length - the summer programme co-ordinated and administrated by Voice4Parents is a current pilot programme to see what families would like to access and we are hopeful that more Short break offers will be made - we will you keep updated as we learn more.

In line with this, Public Health and Heads of Service are currently working to provide a universal/general leisure offer that should see an improvement in SEND provision through WV Active starting over the Summer period and ongoing. When we have further details we will share with you all.

## Summer Short Break Leisure Programme

We are thrilled that Wolverhampton City Council have funded a Summer Short Break Leisure Programme.

We hope that you all enjoy your allocated sessions. Please do let us know if you are unable to make it! Children and young people remain the responsibility of their parent / carers at all times.

**Wishing you all a very happy and safe Summer Holiday of 2023**

Don't forget to share your photos and feedback with us.



Website

[WWW.voice4parents-wolves.co.uk](http://WWW.voice4parents-wolves.co.uk)

Follow us on Facebook:

[Voice4Parents-Wolverhampton | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/Voice4Parents-Wolverhampton)

Contact us at:

[Admin@voice4parents.co.uk](mailto:Admin@voice4parents.co.uk)