



# SEND MATTERS

*Christmas Holidays Edition*



**The official newsletter  
of SEND related issues  
in Bedford Borough**

*Inside this issue:*

***Festive Activities***

***Communication Champion Training***

***Support for Wellbeing over the Holidays***

***Supported Internship Programme***

***'My Journey so far' by Sophie Plummer***

***Feel Good this January...***

***Wellbeing Week is Coming!***

***Bedford Borough Parent Carer Forum***

***SSG SEND Clubs and Activities***

***Wellbeing Week***

***Spectrum Gaming***

## WELCOME

from Chris Morris, Service Director – Education, SEND & School Infrastructure

Welcome to this festive edition of SEND Matters.

As we head towards the Christmas break, I am reflecting on what has been another full-on year; I wanted to say a big thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the Parent Carer Outcomes survey. We really do value what you tell us – it's your experiences and feedback that shape what we focus on and improve over the coming year, so we're looking forward to seeing the results in January.

In this edition, we've got some information about our Supported Internship Programme, which continues to create some brilliant opportunities for young people.

There are also some ideas for activities over the Christmas holidays (always useful for filling those long winter days!), and an exciting update on the Wellbeing Week activity timetable that's coming in January – definitely something to look forward to as we start the new year.

I hope you all get some time to rest and recharge over the festive period, and I look forward to seeing many of you in the new year!

Best wishes, Chris



**BEDFORD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



**Bedfordshire, Luton  
and Milton Keynes**  
Integrated Care Board



## FESTIVE ACTIVITIES

Please see details on the Local Offer for information, Advice, Resources and Festive Activities for over the holiday season or go to: <https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk/kb5/bedford/directory/advice.page?id=mRKPX9XX5b0&localofferchannel=0>.



### Festive activities to try at home...

#### Lollypop Christmas Tree Decorations

This is a crafty activity that the whole family can enjoy when it goes up on your Christmas tree!

##### You will need:

- Lollypop sticks
- Glitter/sparkles
- Colouring pens
- Strong glue
- Piece of string
- Scissors



##### Instructions:

1. Take 5 lollypop sticks and cut them to be 5 different sizes, starting with the largest stick, and getting smaller with each stick.
2. Next stick each of these 5 sticks onto another lollypop stick, with the largest stick being on the bottom, and getting smaller in size to form a tree shape.
3. Decorate the sticks, colouring them in and covering them with Christmas sparkle!
5. Finally, form a loop with a piece of string and attach it to the top of the tree decoration.  
It is now ready to hang!



#### Christmas Baking

Have some festive fun and make some Christmas treats!



You could try making snowman biscuits or Elf & Santa cupcakes or gingerbread men.

There are lots of ideas [here](#).

#### Make a Christmas Treat for the Birds



Why not treat some of your local birds to a little Christmas treat of their own?

##### You will need:

- Dry ingredients for the birds to eat: you could try a mix of bird seed, cooked rice, grated cheese, dried fruit, breadcrumbs or chopped nuts
- Hard cooking fat (lard or suet)
- A pine cone, coconut shell or yoghurt pot (use an old yoghurt pot that has been rinsed out and recycle it after you've finished with it)
- String

##### What to do:

1. Mix all the dry ingredients together in a bowl.
2. Add the fat and give it a good mix around until combined (if you need to melt the fat, ask an adult for help).
3. If you have chosen a pine cone, smother the mixture all over it; or if using a coconut shell or yoghurt pot fill the inside with the mixture.
4. Hang your feeders with string, or if using a yoghurt pot as a mould, pop it out and leave on a bird table.



They then have a certain amount of time each to feel the stocking and guess what is inside. The winner is the person who has guessed the most objects correctly in the given time.

#### DIY Christmas Sensory Bottles

Create calming sensory bottles with glitter, water, and a few drops of food colouring. Shake them up for a soothing experience that can help your child relax and enjoy the lights and colours.

#### Kim's Game - What's Missing?

On a tray put a selection of objects. These objects can be adapted to what your child needs to practice e.g. numbers, objects beginning with 'S', household objects etc. Look and talk about the objects on the tray. Ask your child to cover their eyes. Cover the tray and take away one object. Uncover the tray and ask the child to look – which object is missing? Increase the difficulty by increasing the number of objects and the number of objects taken away.

#### Santa went to the Workshop

Santa went to the workshop and chose (speaker chooses an item) a bike'. The next person says 'Santa went to the workshop and chose a bike (choose an item) and a doll'. The next person says 'Santa went to the workshop and chose a bike, a doll (choose an item) and a pair of socks' ...and so on.

#### Christmas Stocking Challenge

Get an oversized stocking and lots of Christmas objects (about 25). Tie it shut at the top and pass it around the players.





## COMMUNICATION CHAMPION TRAINING

*Congratulations to our most recent Communication Champions who completed the 5 day course this term.*



18 staff from the following schools were the first to complete the newly accredited training, meaning they each are awarded 29 accredited CPD hours from The CPD Certification Service, huge congratulations!

- Cauldwell Primary
- Riseley Primary
- Eileen Wade Primary
- Shackleton Primary
- King's Oak Primary
- Springfield Primary
- Milton Ernest Primary
- St Francis of Assisi Primary
- Ravensden Primary
- Ursula Taylor Primary
- Renhold Primary
- Wixams Tree Primary

If you are interested in becoming a Communication Champion or growing your existing team, please register your interest for future courses on our website at [www.bedslutonchildrenshealth.nhs.uk/champions-bedford](http://www.bedslutonchildrenshealth.nhs.uk/champions-bedford).

### New workshop available to book now

Check out our new workshop 'Expressive Language: Using Sentences and Stories'.

This workshop aims to help you:

- Be familiar with how children develop their ability to use sentences and stories.
- Understand the importance of these skills in everyday life.
- Recognise the impact of difficulties with using sentences and stories.
- Be familiar with how support the development of sentences and stories.

Access all our workshops by scanning this QR code, or go to [www.bedslutonchildrenshealth.nhs.uk/SLT-training](http://www.bedslutonchildrenshealth.nhs.uk/SLT-training).



### We have branched out on social media!

Following on from the success of our Facebook page, we are now live on Instagram too!

We use social media to provide information, advice and strategies to parents and professionals alike, and each week is based around a theme, from supporting pre-verbal communicators and signing, to developmental milestones and speech sounds.

We have almost 30,000 followers on Facebook, and we are still in the early days on Instagram – so come join us!



**@sltbedfordshireluton**





## SUPPORT FOR WELLBEING OVER THE HOLIDAYS

Holidays can be a busy and overwhelming part of the season, so please see the links below to where you can get support throughout this period:

<https://www.kirbyroadsurgery.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/766/2022/12/Christmas-Resource-List.pdf>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/christmas-and-mental-health/christmas-and-mental-health/>

<https://mentalhealth-uk.org/blog/why-christmas-isnt-easy-for-everyone-and-how-to-cope/>

<https://mentalhealth-uk.org/blog/coping-with-anxiety-during-the-holiday-period/>

<https://www.activeme360.com/a-guide-to-supporting-childrens-mental-health-in-the-holiday-season/>

<https://changemh.org/resources/christmas-and-mental-health/>

[Bedford Borough Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub | Bedford Local Offer](#)



### A SEND Friendly Christmas



*Christmas is a magical time but it can also be quite overwhelming for children and young people with SEND, here are a few tips that might help, the most important thing is to do what is right for you and your family*

#### Leading up to Christmas and over Christmas

- If you think that your young person may struggle with changes over the festive period, talk to schools or clubs about what reasonable adjustments they can put in place to support your young person, e.g. notification if things are going to be different
- Only decorate one area of the house or room so that it isn't too overwhelming
- Introduce decorations gradually, use soft calming lights rather than flashing ones
- Have a calm 'quiet area'
- Consider sensory needs and how to help your child or young person keep regulated, examples of things that can have a sensory impact
  - **Smells** – candles, perfumes, food & drink, log fires, Christmas dinner
  - **Sounds** – parties, Christmas music, new toys
  - **Sight** – decorations, lights, cards, displays, costumes
  - **Touch** – clothes, Christmas jumpers, costumes, wrapping paper, decorations, snow
  - **Tastes** – Christmas dinner, mince pies, chocolate, different eating times and patterns, suggestions
- You don't have to wear a Christmas jumper!
- Big Gatherings can be overwhelming, it is ok to
  - take breaks, say no, leave early, have an exit strategy
  - use ear defenders, noise-cancelling headphones, sunglasses and fidget toys
- Take quiet time when you need it
- You can agree on what the presents are before Christmas if the surprise causes anxiety, presents don't have to be wrapped if this causes anxiety or is a trigger
- Keep wrapped presents under the tree for the shortest period of time, as the anticipation of what might be in them can cause anxiety



#### Christmas Day

- Open presents throughout the day, or on your own, so that it isn't too overwhelming
- Foods that your child and young person likes and can eat are fine for Christmas dinner, e.g. 'Chicken nuggets and chips', rather than something they cannot cope with, which causes stress
- You know your child and young person best, so make your own Christmas; it is fine for it to be different
- Talk to family and friends about what they can do to help
- Stagger the number of people visiting so that it isn't too overwhelming
- If you have visitors, have a schedule with timescales
- Use visual timetables or communicate changes – plan ahead
- Keep a routine



#### After Christmas

- It's ok to take the decorations down early
  - it is about what is right for your family
- Having quiet time to relax and recover after Christmas





## SUPPORTED INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

### 'MY JOURNEY SO FAR' BY SOPHIE PLUMMER

*I joined the Bedford Borough Supported Internship programme because I wanted to gain experience in different work placements and to think about my future goals.*

I currently work at the John Bunyan Sports and Fitness Centre as a Customer Service Assistant. My daily tasks include cleaning, setting up equipment for classes, assisting in classes and reception duties. I enjoy being there and have grown a lot in confidence.

During my internship, I have learned many new skills, such as using a computer for work, writing professional emails, booking meetings, and using Microsoft Teams. I have enjoyed getting to know my fellow classmates who have now become my friends.

I have also enjoyed going on trips and visits. I especially like going to the Community Garden once a month to volunteer with my class and to meet new people. I like going to the garden because it is calm and therapeutic, and it helps me to get involved with the community while learning new skills.

One memorable trip to the Green Man Community Garden was when they asked us to put the recycled poppies on the fence for Remembrance Day and to help plant bulbs for spring.

After my internship, I hope to get a job and live a happy and healthy life. This experience has helped me to prepare for my future and explore different career paths. Looking back, I felt nervous and sad to leave my previous college, but now that I have started the Supported Internship, I am excited about this new chapter of my life.

Please click [here](#) to find out more about the Bedford Borough Supported Internship Programme.



# design & print

> HIGH QUALITY  
> FAST TURNAROUND  
> COMPETITIVE RATES

**WE CAN DESIGN & PRINT LITERALLY ANYTHING YOU WANT...**

- Posters & Flyers
- Booklets
- Vinyl Banners
- Large Posters (up to A0 size)
- Pop-Up Displays ... & much more!
- Leaflets
- Brochures
- Plan Prints

**TO FIND OUT MORE OR GET A QUOTE...**

Call **01234 228154**, email us at **print@bedford.gov.uk** or visit **bedford.gov.uk/designandprint**



**BEDFORD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Design & Print is a department  
of Bedford Borough Council

*Join us for Wellbeing Week, a celebration of physical and mental wellbeing for children and young people with SEND and their families. From Monday 19th to Sunday 25th January 2026, we've planned a fantastic mix of activities to help you feel good, stay active, and connect with others.*



## Highlights of the Week

- **Family Hub Drop-in Sessions** – Start your day with friendly support at hubs across Bedford.
- **Free Sensory Room Sessions** – Available daily at the John Bunyan Sports and Fitness.
- **SEND Soft Play & Swimming** – Fun, inclusive activities for children and young people.
- **Family SEND Yoga & Table Tennis** – Move, stretch, and play together.
- **Parent Workshops** – Including a Self-Esteem session with CHUMS.
- **Multi-Activity Clubs** – Sports and games for different age groups to get everyone moving.
- **Special Events** – “Let’s Talk” SEND and Health & Wellbeing with the Bedford Borough Parent Carer Forum at the Addison Centre with tea and cake.

Please click [here](#) to find out more information about Wellbeing Week and what is on offer, and keep an eye on our Facebook page for regular updates.

**Save the Date now!**  
**19<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> January 2026**



Bedford Borough  
Parent Carer  
Forum



**BEDFORD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Kempston, Addison Howard Park, Bedford

What we'll look at:

- Discover wellbeing services, groups & resources in Bedford
- Understand what the local offer includes for Parent Carer health & support
  - Explore practical ways to nurture your own wellbeing
  - Connect with other Parent Carers in an open, supportive space
- Share experiences and discuss what's working—and what needs to improve



Visit our website: [www.bbpcf.co.uk/upcoming-events](http://www.bbpcf.co.uk/upcoming-events)



### Face to face 'Drop-in session'

Child Development Centre, Hill Rise, Kempston, Bedford MK42 7EB

This session aims to signpost families that are just starting in the complex world of SEND or those who have some concerns about their child's development





## BEDFORD BOROUGH PARENT CARER FORUM CONTINUED



### Heads of Service Bookable Slots



12 January 2026, 09:30 – 11:30

CDC, Hill Rise, Kempston, Bedford, MK42 7EB



### Let's Talk Social Care Have Your Say – Your Voice Matters



28 January 2026, 09:30 – 12:00  
Kempston, Addison Howard Park, Bedford

Join us for a relaxed tabletop conversation exploring local social care themes raised by Bedford families.

What we'll look at:

- Experiences engaging with social care
- Building positive relationships
- Improving communication between families & professionals
- Where to find information
- Where to get support in Bedford

This session is designed so everyone can speak, listen, and be heard. BBPCF will guide discussions with forward-focused questions.



Visit our website: [www.bbpcf.co.uk/upcoming-events](http://www.bbpcf.co.uk/upcoming-events)



### Healthy Parent Carer Programme - starting 6<sup>th</sup> February



The Healthy Parent Carer Programme is designed to improve the health and wellbeing of parent carers by promoting emotional balance through understanding, empowerment, confidence, and resilience.

Delivered by BBPCF, this programme is free for parent carers in Bedford Borough. It provides a supportive space to connect with others, gain practical self-care strategies, and learn ways to manage stress and wellbeing.

What you'll gain from the programme:

- Connect with other parent carers for support and shared experiences
- Learn new self-care techniques and stress management strategies
- Active participation in activities that boost well-being
- Notice and be mindful of your own needs and emotions
- Give back to yourself by making time for your own well-being
- Eat well and build healthier habits
- Relax and find moments of calm in your busy life
- Sleep better with improved routines and strategies

Take this time for yourself - because looking after you is just as important as looking after your family

Interested in joining?

Email us to register:  
[communications@bbpcf.org.uk](mailto:communications@bbpcf.org.uk)

Visit our website:  
[www.bbpcf.co.uk/upcoming-events](http://www.bbpcf.co.uk/upcoming-events)





## SSG SEND CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES

# SSG SEND Clubs & Activities



**BEDFORD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Proudly working in partnership with Bedford Borough Council who provide full or part funding for some of our provisions



### How to Book

-  Enquire via [info@ssgservices.co.uk](mailto:info@ssgservices.co.uk)
-  Complete an application form for your chosen programme
-  You may be invited for a visit depending on the programme you choose
-  Subject to suitability and availability, your child will then be offered a space on your chosen programme



f | [SSGactivities](#)  
t | [SSG\\_Activities](#)



For more information email us at :

[info@ssgservices.co.uk](mailto:info@ssgservices.co.uk) or call us on : **01234 340782**



## WELLBEING WEEK



# *Feel Good this January...*

## **Wellbeing Week is Coming!**

19<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> January 2026



*Join us this January  
for a week of wellbeing  
activities for the whole  
family to help you  
feel good, stay active,  
and connect with others*



**SCAN ME**

To find out more and download the calendar of events, please scan the QR code or go to: <https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk/kb5/bedford/directory/site.page?id=3bEkuooEVyA&localofferchannel=0>



## SPECTRUM GAMING NOW AVAILABLE FACE-TO-FACE

You can now not only join in the fun with Spectrum Gaming online but also face-to-face at their new FREE sessions in Bedford.

It's not just about gaming!  
It's about communicating, making connections, and having fun, and now you get to do it both online and in person.



You can still join online, but you can also meet face-to-face now!

If you want to know more contact SSG [info@ssgservices.co.uk](mailto:info@ssgservices.co.uk) and come along to a session in person and have a look, or contact Spectrum gaming [www.spectrumgaming.net/](http://www.spectrumgaming.net/) about all the free, safe activities that you can access online, such as gaming competitions, crafts, and even cookery!

# SPECTRUM GAMING @

## SSG YOUTH CLUB

Spectrum Gaming is a community for autistic young people. It's a place where you can connect with others and develop friendships in a safe space – it's now online AND in person!

**When:** Friday evenings from 5.30pm-7.30pm  
**Ages:** for 10-17 year olds  
**Venue:** The Raleigh Centre, Ampthill Road, Bedford MK42 9HE

*"Spectrum Gaming has been a much needed positive thing for my son. It's such a welcoming, inclusive group and has helped him to feel a part of something at a time when he was feeling quite lost."*

Call us on: 01234 340782

Book online: [SSGservices.co.uk](http://SSGservices.co.uk)

f | SSGactivities  
@ | SSGactivities  
t | SSG\_Activities

## KEEPING IN TOUCH

If you would like to receive emails directly into your inbox relating to SEND and general Children's Services updates in Bedford Borough, we would love for you to sign up to our Gov Delivery System.

Visit the Gov Delivery website by [clicking here](#), enter your email address and then select 'Your Child and You' to subscribe.

If you have any suggestions as to what content you would like to see in future editions of SEND Matters then please email your ideas to [local.offer@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:local.offer@bedford.gov.uk).

