

Gateshead SEND Network News

Issue 1 | December 2020

Hello!

We are very excited to welcome you to the first Gateshead SEND Network e-newsletter.

In Gateshead we aim to put children and young people with SEND and their families at the heart of everything we do. With this in mind, the SEND services in Gateshead have decided to publish a regular e-newsletter to help you keep up-to-date and informed about the services we provide. We want this newsletter to be valuable to you so please share any feedback with us to help us improve.

You can get in touch at SENteam@gateshead.gov.uk

Gateshead Council SEND Team

Gateshead Council takes pride in the valuable services it provides for children and young people with SEND and their families. The Gateshead Council SEND service has recently invested significantly in its pool of staff welcoming two new annual review officers, two new caseworkers, a new Involvement worker, and a new assessment and commissioning manager – Danny Meek.

The Gateshead SEND Team are based at the Dryden Centre in Low Fell.
Contact 0191 433 3626, senteam@gateshead.gov.uk or follow on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/Gatesheadlocaloffer

“The investment in the service demonstrates our commitment to Gateshead’s children and young people with SEND and their families”, says Danny.
“We will strive to provide them with the valuable and effective services that they deserve.”

Danny Meek



Students return to learning at the Dryden Centre

There can be no denying that the main challenge which has faced us all this year has been the COVID-19 pandemic. As we adjust to a 'new normal', students at Gateshead's learningSkills SoTA site at the Dryden Centre have returned to their learning programmes.

LearningSkills Employability Manager Melanie Crosby: "Covid has had a dramatic effect on our learners, so we have been very careful to try and make things as safe, but also as normal as we can. Staff are wearing masks and visors where necessary, but we have introduced new clear masks that are particularly good for those learners who use Makaton or who rely on facial expressions to aid communication. Learners wear masks where they are able to and they have all be taught the hands, face, space rules. We've kept class sizes as small as possible to ensure social distancing and put in additional measures to co-ordinate lunch times safely."

Learners have responded well to the changes and are happy to be back.

"I was sad being off for so long, I missed my friends", said Louise Christian, a student at the Dryden Centre's SoTA building. Fellow student Ben Nichols is also pleased to be back: "The best thing about coming back is seeing friends and staff again and using the new computers."



Chair of Governors Councillor John Adams is delighted to welcome the learners back:

"The Council's learningSkills team is here to support all learners, whether face to face or online, and it is good to hear so much positive feedback from our students and to see how happy they were to return to their learning centres."



Louise Christian – Learner at Dryden Centre

Thinking about learning something new or improving your skills? For more information go to www.mylearningskills.co.uk or email learningskills@gateshead.gov.uk

Gateshead Parent and Carer Forum

The SEND service is working in partnership with Gateshead's Parent and Carer Forum and Contact - a delivery partner for the Department for Education for Parent Participation - to help develop the forum and attract new members.

The Gateshead Parent Carer Forum is an independent organisation formed by parent carers in 2019 in order to represent the views and aspirations of families of children with SEND by working in partnership with the local authority, health and other providers to ensure that services are providing the best possible resources for children and young people. The forum feels passionately about ensuring that all children have the best chance in life and receive the correct support and services in order to achieve their full potential.

For more information about the organisation and to get involved please contact bevwrightfh@gmail.com

Gateshead Early Years SEND Provision

Gateshead Early Years SEND services would like your feedback.

In Gateshead, we want to make sure that children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities get the best possible support and help when they need it.

To help develop our Early Years provisions, we want to ensure that the views and experiences of parents and carers are used to improve the services that we offer. We have created a short survey to help us with this.

Please click this [LINK](#) to complete the survey.

Gateshead Autism Information Hub

The Autism Information Hub is a volunteer-run initiative supported by Gateshead Council. The service offers information, advice, support and signposting for anyone affected by autism including parents, carers and family members, autistic individuals, and professionals.

Under normal circumstances the Autism Hub operates out of the Elgin Children's Centre in Deckham. Monthly drop-in sessions are held for visitors to meet up, browse our extensive information files, or chat informally. However, in March 2020 the Elgin Centre closed due to the Covid pandemic lockdown and unfortunately face to face drop-ins and meetings had to cease. Karen Thirlaway, the Hub's main coordinator, explains how the group has adapted to the current pandemic:

'In April I introduced weekly online meetings for the support group. We don't keep contact details for those who've attended the Hub drop-ins, but I maintain a mailing list for parents and carers who have shown an interest in the support group, and this formed the basis of the online meetings. I also continue to take email enquiries, generally from parents and practitioners, which I answer to the best of my ability. It should be noted though that I'm not an autism professional but the parent of a young adult – my knowledge has been developed by twenty years of lived experience and by



listening to and learning from other parents' stories, and my links to professionals, practitioners and agencies.'

Gateshead Autism Hub will continue to operate a virtual service until we are able to safely reintroduce our face-to-face clinics. For general enquiries email karen.thirlaway@blueyonder.co.uk

Parents and carers can also contact me to be added to the support group mailing list, and to receive joining details of the online meetings.

Useful links and resources:

[Gateshead Local offer website](#)

[Gateshead Local Offer Facebook page](#)

[General information about the Autism Hub](#), and for meeting dates when the service returns to normal

[Gateshead Central Library](#) - The Autism Collection of autism-themed books

Contact us

Special Educational Needs and Disability Team,
Gateshead Council

senteam@gateshead.gov.uk

0191 433 3626

 [Follow us on Facebook](#)

