

THE ACORN



Staffordshire Children's Trust
Working together to improve the lives of children and young people

Edition 18
November 2010

**Welcome to the quarterly newsletter for Staffordshire Children's Trust.
Read on to find out more.....**

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YouFind.me@Facebook...

www.youfind.me.uk now has a facebook page! www.youfind.me.uk is Staffordshire County Council's one-stop shop for young people seeking information on positive activities and related facilities.

Once Facebook users 'like' the YouFind page they will be notified of the YouFind status updates via the primary news feed on the homepage. Status updates will include information about forthcoming activities. The page will also link to the YouFind website and other facebook pages which may be of interest to young people.

Go to www.youfind.me.uk to link to the Facebook page.



facebook

Fridays 4 U meets Hollyoaks...

Two members of East Staffordshire Children's Centre's teenage mums group, Fridays 4 U, took part in an exciting new campaign designed to investigate teenagers' attitude towards sex and question their experience of sex education.

Fridays 4 U is a weekly drop-in support group which meets at East Staffordshire Children's Centre every Friday between 11am and 1 pm and is open to all parents under 21 years of age along with their children. Support and a wide variety of activities are provided for the young parents covering topics from dental health to jewellery making workshops and a cooked lunch is also provided.

The Fridays 4 U young mums, Nicky Bannister and Aimee Cox, travelled to Liverpool to the Hollyoaks set to record a DVD which will be distributed nationally as part of teenagers' sex education; they were filmed on the set taking part in a forum where they were asked to talk about their own experiences of being a teenage parent and then they were taken on a tour of the Hollyoaks set and met many of the actors who are involved in the series. Nicky and another of the Fridays 4 U young mums, Vicky Massa, also took part in the launch of the campaign at Rosliston Forestry Centre near Burton-on-Trent.

The Battlefront campaign, which is an online/on-telly Channel 4 project starring a crew of 14-21 year-olds, looks at giving teenagers the choice about being sexually active and "bringing the love back in to sex". Battlefront is also receiving publicity and exposure via the Channel 4 TV series Hollyoaks which has a storyline regarding teenage sex and its implications set to be shown in the near future.

A member of Battlefront, Abbie Louise Davies, also travelled to Liverpool; she is fronting 'Where is the Love?' which is a campaign to encourage young teenagers to wait before rushing in to sexual relationships. The aim is to give teens the confidence to say no to sex until they're ready, and in turn reduce the number of teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

More information about the campaign can be found on the website www.battlefront.co.uk.

Fridays 4 U meets at East Staffordshire Children's Centre every Friday between 11am and 1pm and is open to all parents under 21 years of age along with their children.

For further information contact Sue Ramsay or Pam Bale at the Children's Centre on 01283 233400 or email: admin.escc@staffordshire.gov.uk



Free Activities for Disabled Children

A range of free activities continues to take place across Staffordshire for disabled children and their families, funded by Aiming High. Feedback from the activities is excellent. The activities available include football, cricket, arts and dance, wheelchair football, activity days at outdoor education centres, youth clubs, day trips out.

A number of new activities have just been funded by Aiming High increasing the range and variety of short breaks available across Staffordshire. The new activities include music workshops, storytelling, angling, farm trips, activity days for children with a visual impairment, workshops for children with autistic spectrum disorder.

For more details on all activities go to www.staffordshire.gov.uk/disabledchildren and click on aiming high or email: aiminghigh@staffordshire.gov.uk

Participation and Engagement Working with Disabled Children

Aiming High has recently appointed a Participation Worker role at the Staffordshire County Councils Children's Voice Project based in Stafford, but covering the whole of the county. Amy Duddy came into post in November 2010.

Amy's role is to ensure children are able to voice their feelings, comments and views on the services they receive and access through Aiming High funding. Amy will be consulting with disabled children and young people to gather their views on current services and future service needs. She will also be developing a mystery shopping scheme for disabled children and young people to assess Aiming High funded services.

Amy is keen to work with other professionals involved in participation and engagement with disabled children and young people.

Amy can be contacted on 01785 253878 or email cvp@staffordshire.gov.uk.



Parent Participation and Engagement Service

The Parent Participation Service is a free service for parents and carers of a disabled child, up to age 18, who live in Staffordshire. They have an active Parent and Carer Shadow Board and e-forum. Parent and Carer representatives are now beginning to voice the views of parents and carers to those who provide children's services. Representatives also sit on a number of groups that are looking to shape and monitor services.

If your service would like to consult with parents and carers of disabled children or you would like to find out more about the service please email us at spps@staffordshire.gov.uk, or telephone 01785 356919 or visit www.aiminghighforumstaffs.co.uk.



Have you ever wondered why your child stands out from others?

Often problems of high energy levels, impulsiveness and inattention are eventually diagnosed as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Unsurprisingly education can be severely affected and, due to related behavioural problems, children with ADHD may end up excluded from school. The intensity of difficulties caused by this frequently misunderstood condition can inflict tremendous pressure on those caring for the youngster and their siblings, sometimes even ripping families apart. It is not surprising that parents/carers end up not knowing which way to turn for sympathetic guidance on how best to cope.

However, help is at hand!

The Lighthouse Group, a support group run by parents of children with ADHD, have been meeting to provide each other with support since 2004. They recognise first-hand the need of struggling families for a friendly listening ear and the value of sharing information gained through their own experiences. The invitation is warmly extended to others to join them, both for those whose child is already diagnosed with ADHD and for those who think they may possibly have this condition.

Often youngsters with ADHD are perceived as 'naughty' by the ill-informed. A key aim is to raise awareness of this condition and create a greater understanding within the wider community of the complex issues surrounding it. The group provides a useful platform to do this. If you are tired of battling alone to have your child's needs recognised you can join other like-minded families. Having common goals helps to strengthen the voice of parents; helping to ensure, for example, that teachers and clinicians are working together on behalf of each affected youngster.

The group has:

- Regular informal meetings in Stafford to discuss joint problems and concerns, usually at the Barley Mow Pub at Milford. Also the group are happy to meet up at other venues for a coffee and a chat.
- Fun days out for all the family.
- Access to specialised information and resources, for reference and to borrow.
- Occasional meetings with speakers on themes suggested by the parents.
- Their own website www.lighthousegroup.org.uk which not only has a wealth of information about ADHD and related conditions, but also links to other helpful organisations.

Anyone interested in coming along to one of the meetings or just wishing to chat about concerns can speak to a Lighthouse member on 07754 822288.

If parents or carers find it too daunting to join a group where they know no-one else, members will try to put them in touch with another family beforehand – there are several parents across the region who are more than happy to link up. Families who live nearer to North Staffs, Lichfield or Wolverhampton can be put in touch with similar groups of parents in the region.

If you prefer, you can contact the group by email at: contact@lighthousegroup.org.uk

Or write to them:
c/o Stafford Parent Partnership Service,
13 Lichfield Road,
Stafford,
ST17 4JX



E-safety for Professionals and Parents...

Do you know how to support children and young people being safe on line?

Do you know where to go to for support?

Do you know where to go to for advice?

Do you know how to keep up to date?

NO!!



Then try out this new FREE on line training for professional and parents just complete the online booking form <http://www.staffsscb.org.uk/professionals/Inter-Agencytraining/e-learning/Booking>.

For more e-safety information check out our webpage www.staffsscb.org.uk/professionals/esafety

Staffordshire Family Information Service (FIS)...

New number and longer opening hours for Staffordshire Family Information Service (FIS).

Contacting Staffordshire FIS for childcare, free child care places and any other family enquiry is now easier and more convenient than ever, thanks to a brand new number and extended opening hours.

The new number - **0300 111 8007**, is charged at a standard landline rate – even if you call from your mobile, and in some cases, may even be included as part of your free minutes - you will need to check this with your telephone provider.

The good news doesn't stop there though. We have also extended our opening hours, meaning that it's now even more convenient for you to call us at a time that fits in with your lifestyle. We listened when parents and childcare providers told us that normal 'office opening hours' weren't always convenient times to call. So, we are happy to announce that our new opening hours are:

Monday to Thursday: 8am-8pm

Fridays: 8am-6pm

Saturdays: 9am-1pm

Jag Singh, Early Years Quality Support Planning and Strategy Manager, said "It is essential that services respond to feedback from customers, and these improvements to the FIS are in response to comments I have had from parents. More and more parents have been telling us that ringing the FIS was costly because they relied solely on a mobile phone and did not have a landline. The new 0300 number overcomes this with calls from mobiles charged at local rate and may even be free for some. Introducing the new number at the same time as increasing the opening hours means that contacting the FIS will be much more convenient."

Calls may be monitored or recorded for training purposes.

Phone: 0300 111 8007

Web: www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fis

Email: fis@staffordshire.gov.uk



The Family Services Directory is designed to help families search for family and child-friendly activities and events, sports clubs, local and national support groups, healthcare information, parenting groups and much more.

The directory forms part of the Department for Education's Family Information Directory that provides information on family services through a variety of different ways:

- On the web <http://staffs.fsd.org.uk>.
- By telephone through the Family Information Service (FIS) 0845 650 9876.
- Via printed lists or timetables (available from the FIS).

Other websites such as www.direct.gov.uk and www.parentlineplus.org.uk.

The directory will be continually updated as more services add their details.

Examples of information to be found on the directory include:

- OfSTED registered childcare.
- YouFind.me.uk (activities for the over 8s).
- Details of Children's Centres and Schools.
- Details of useful publications and websites.
- Advice and support information.



Get Britain working...

On the 4th October, Employment Minister Chris Grayling announced plans for **Work Clubs** to be run in partnership with businesses and local communities to help people find jobs, and **Work Together** which encourages volunteering opportunities.

Work Clubs will provide unemployed people with a place to meet and exchange skills, find opportunities, make contacts, share experiences and receive support to help them in their return to work. It is anticipated that no two **Work Clubs** will be the same as they will reflect the needs of the members and their community.

Setting up a Work Club

If you are interested in setting up a **Work Club** or think you could help support one, then you can find practical help and advice in the product below.

Work Together

Jobcentre Plus encourages people to look at volunteering as a way of building up their experience and skills to improve their chances of getting a job. **Work Together** is a Great Britain wide initiative that aims to activate all unemployed benefit recipients by encouraging and promoting the take up of volunteering opportunities in their local communities.

More information

If you would like more information about setting up a **Work Club** or providing volunteering opportunities, as part of **Work Together**, you can contact Annette Summerscales at Staffordshire Jobcentre Plus on 07920 783286.



Lifestyle Triple P is a **free** Positive Parenting Program for parents who want to help their children (aged 3-12 years) achieve a healthy weight.

What does Lifestyle Triple P offer?

- Lifestyle Triple P aims to improve children's nutritional intake and levels of physical activity.
- The program will increase parents' skills and their confidence in managing their children's weight related behavior.
- Parents can help their children learn about healthy food choices and enjoyable physical activities.

What are the groups like?

- Lifestyle Triple P is a 14 week program delivered to small groups of parents.
- The group consists of 11 weekly group sessions plus 3 individual telephone sessions.
- Each week you'll be given free resources to take home to help you to make use of the program.
- The group will be friendly and you'll be encouraged to join in as much or as little as you want.
- You won't be judged or told what to do. You'll have the chance to choose ideas which suit your family and then try them out at home.
- Often parents who go to groups develop friendships and continue to meet to support each other after the group is finished.

What sort of questions will be answered in the group sessions?

- What portion sizes are suitable for my child?
- What can I do when my child pesters for food?
- How can I encourage my child to watch less T.V.?
- How can I increase my child's level of physical activity?
- How can I make small changes to family meals to help my child?
- How can I make sense of food labels?
- How can I increase my child's confidence and self esteem?

What have other parents said about Lifestyle Triple P?

- "All the freebies like the Frisbees, the skipping rope, they're all brilliant...and they are free!"
- "All the family has definitely benefited from Lifestyle Triple P."
- "Personally I couldn't fault Lifestyle Triple P at all, there is nothing that I would change about the group and I would certainly recommend the group to other parents."

We offer groups in friendly locations throughout Newcastle and Staffordshire Moorlands.

If you would like to join a group or refer a parent, please contact Sarah Lunt at

CONNECT CAMHS & First Steps

Eaton House,

Buxton Road,

Leek,

Staffordshire ,

ST13 6EG

Tel: No. 01782 652769



We take the development of communication for granted but it is actually the best achievement of our lifetime.

There, is however, a very alarming national decline in speech, language and communication skills which means that at least 40,000 children started school in September without adequate spoken language ability (Wright, J., 2009) and a Government report in 2008 showed that this can be as high as 50% of children in some areas (Bercow, J.).

The Government's Communication Tsar Jean Gross reported that 'at least' 1 in every 6 three year olds has a recognised difficulty while many, many more were undetected. An ICAN survey feels that many of these difficulties are transient i.e. if given stimulation they will catch up with their peers. Today's demands of the reception class teacher are tremendous yet the children are starting school without the necessary pre-requisite skills. Spoken language skills are the building blocks for written language and almost every educational task pre-supposes a certain level of ability. Therefore, if a child has delayed spoken language, he will struggle to learn to read and write and with all the other requirements of the national curriculum.

This is why the Small Talkers groups from Smart Talkers pre-school communication groups are so useful. They work on all the required communication skills to help prepare a child for school. They are in several of the Staffordshire Children's' Centres including Bony Hay, The Willows, Springhill, Charnwood, Shenstone, Stapenhill, Hixon, Stone, Barton-under-Needwood, and St Marys Uttoxeter. These sessions are funded by the local Community & Learning Partnerships as they are very aware of the national trend and the growing concern surrounding this.

They work on attention, active listening, turn-taking, auditory memory, vocabulary, expressive skills and social interaction skills. They use a variety of games, sings, stories and puppets to make the sessions fun. Parents are encouraged to take part and sit in the circle with their little ones so they can see what's being done and take some of the ideas on board. Mrs Warner, mum to Fran aged 3 says, "We love going as its fun but I can see her confidence and ability coming on really well. I'm not worried about her starting school now."

The 40 minute sessions are planned and written by Libby Hill who is a qualified speech and language therapist but she stresses that "The groups are for all children as we can all be better communicators, even me!" The groups are run by Libby and her team: Franky, Nicky, Helen and Laura. They were nominated for best group in the 'what's on 4 little ones' 2010 awards are being franchised across the country.

For more information
please see www.smarttalkers.org.uk
or telephone: 0844 704 5888 or 07970 202561



Two year olds benefit from Early Education and Care in Staffordshire

Families with children aged 3 and 4 years of age have benefited from free early education for a number of years in Staffordshire. However, despite every family's free entitlement some do not take up this opportunity, a figure between 3 to 4% in this county. Back in 2006, government research indicated that it was often the most economically disadvantaged children who were not experiencing free childcare. A number of local authorities took part in initial pilot schemes which identified disadvantaged families and offered 10 hours of childcare at 2 years of age, together with a package of family support. The initial pilots proved successful and the government extended the scheme to all local authorities in the UK.

Staffordshire's Early Learning Pilot began in autumn of 2009 and is proving to show excellent results in terms of early intervention. Funding was granted for 10 hours of childcare plus family support for the 15% most economically disadvantaged 2 year olds in the county. Criteria was also imposed that families needed to be in receipt of a means tested benefit, including: income support, housing benefit, income based on Jobseekers allowance or council tax paid. It also included asylum seeking families receiving support from National Asylum Support Service. Census data and population estimates were applied to local authority information showing the indices of deprivation within super output areas. This produced an estimated calculation of 2 year olds in specific areas across the county. Early Years then worked closely with the Primary Care Trusts to identify local health clinics and health visitors who were working with families and who could therefore check eligibility. Families who met the criteria were then invited to choose a day care setting or childminder with the only stipulation being that the provider had a good or outstanding OFSTED inspection.

The project is currently operating across specific areas of Cannock, Tamworth, East Staffs, Newcastle and Stafford with 33 day care settings involved. Family Support is offered by Children's Centres with PEEP (Peers Early Education Partnership) being used as an evidenced based approach to provide early learning support to families. This particular element of the project is currently under development across the county but it has so far been particularly successful in the Cannock area with 74% of families taking up the offer. PEEP has been delivered in the home and in groups and evaluations show the programme has been positively received by families. Evaluations from the project as a whole have been collected from settings, PEEP practitioners, health visitors and families and all report positively on the impact it has had. Feedback suggests that children have improved in terms of speech and language development, play skills and social interaction with peers. Parents and carers have said that they have had been able to undertake training, get back into work or have benefitted from valuable time to themselves.

The pilot has been reliant on support from statutory and non-statutory partners across the county to deliver this package. Good links have been developed with private day care settings, North and South Staffs PCT and children's centres. By the end of the summer term 2010, the project had funded 230 free places for 2 years olds with 119 children turning 3 in the duration of the project and transferring straight into nursery education funding.

The recent spending review indicates that the government intends to extend the pilot further, offering 15 hours of free childcare from 2012-13. This will provide the opportunity to re-visit data and assess areas of the county to ensure the most disadvantaged children benefit from this project.

For more details please contact Matt Biggs – Project Manager
01785 854 554

Did you know one bacterium can multiply to up to six million in just eight hours? Washing hands can help stop the spread of germs that cause colds and flu. NHS North Staffordshire, has three hand hygiene tips that may help you in your work with children, young people, and their families.

Catch it	Make sure children have tissues with them. This will help them avoid sneezing onto their hands, their sleeves or anywhere else.
Bin it	Teach children to dispose of a tissue after it has been used. Germs can live on soft surfaces, so you don't want them living in the pockets of the children you work with and then going on to infect someone else later on.
Kill it	Don't let germs get away. If a child sneezes or coughs, encourage them to wash their hands as soon as possible to prevent them spreading germs to every surface they touch.

To help you encourage younger children to wash their hands correctly, we have put a variety of fun resources on our website www.northstaffordshire.nhs.uk.

These resources include a video with Donna Air, a comic starring Dirty Birtie, a sing along song and lyrics, and an easy to follow guide with step by step hand washing instructions. Washing your hands and encouraging the children you work with to wash theirs is just one way to stay healthy this winter. However, if you do get ill remember A&E isn't always the best place to go.

Be prepared and know your GP and out of hours number.
Remember, NHS Direct is there 24 hours a day if you have any health queries.
Please see our website for more information.

How can YOU Save Energy?...

As fuel prices rise, the affordability of heating family homes is getting more and more difficult, especially for young families. It can be a tricky business reducing your bills but keeping your family warm over the winter period. Fortunately help is at hand as Tamworth Council has a dedicated energy advice hotline called HEAT (Home Energy Advice Tamworth) set up for the residents of Tamworth.

The advisors at HEAT are friendly, experienced and ready to provide you with advice on how you can lower your fuel bills with little or no cost to yourself. They can also advise on grants available for both insulation and heating. So whether you would like to arrange a survey to see if your home could benefit from insulation or you would just like some general energy saving tips please feel free to call on 0800 043 2815.

Energy Saving Top Tips for Families - next page



HEAT
Home Energy Advice Tamworth

Some Energy Saving Top Tips for Families

In the kitchen

- Boil a kettle with only as much water as you need.
- Put a lid on pots and pans when cooking.
- Let hot food cool before putting it in the fridge or freezer.
- Close the fridge door, as it takes energy to cool down again.

Washing clothes

- Run your washing machine or dishwasher with full loads.
- Avoid tumble drying – dry clothes outdoors or on indoor dryers when possible to save money and energy.

Heating and hot water

- Turning down your room thermostat by 1°C will save up to £55 a year off your heating bill.
- Set your immersion heater or hot water tank to 60 degrees Celsius.

Lighting and appliances

- Switch the lights off every time you leave a room.
- Replacing traditional light bulbs in your home with energy saving ones could save you around £3 per bulb a year.
- Try not to leave computers and televisions on standby.

THE ACORN...

The articles contained within this publication are the responsibility of the original author; due to their nature the Staffordshire Children's Trust Board and its partner organisations accepts no responsibility for their accuracy or content.

If you need further information about a particular article, then please contact staffordshirechildrenstrust@staffordshire.gov.uk

Where other material/information is accessed by links to other web sites, the Staffordshire Children's Trust Board and its partner organisations do not endorse the accuracy or quality of the material contained on those websites.

If you have any comments or feedback we are currently encouraging people to take part in The Acorn Questionnaire this is to help streamline and improve how the newsletter communicates to its partners. The questionnaire can be found at:

www.staffordshirechildrenstrust.org.uk/acornnewsletter/

or would like to submit an article for the next edition of the Acorn please contact:

www.staffordshirechildrenstrust.org.uk

or call 01785 277116.

If you need a copy of this information in large print, Braille, another language, on cassette or disk, please contact www.staffordshirechildrenstrust.org.uk or call 01785 277116.