

THE ACORN

Edition 19 - February 2011 Parents' & Carers' Version

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

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

If you have a child in year 6 at primary school you will have already applied for their place at secondary school.

You will be notified of the outcome of your application by 2nd class post on 1st March 2011. If you made your application online you will receive an email notification on 1st March 2011. If you are happy with the school your child has been allocated you will need to confirm that you accept the offer within 2 weeks.

If however, you are not happy with the school your child has been offered you have the right to appeal against the decision. The letter telling you that your child has been turned down for a school will tell you that you have the right to make an admission appeal. You can appeal even if you have already accepted another school and you can appeal for more than one school. Send your form back as quickly as possible so that your appeal may be heard during the summer term. You do not need to write out your whole case now: just say you want to appeal and give as many reasons as you can.

Send your completed appeal form to:

- Admissions & Transport, for community and controlled schools (postal address below).
- The school itself, for other types of schools.

Appeals are heard by an independent appeal panel of three to five voluntary members of the public. At least one of the panel members will have an educational background. You may be accompanied or represented at the appeal hearing by a friend, an adviser, your local MP or a legal representative, as long as there is no conflict of interest.

The admission authority will notify you in writing of the date of your appeal hearing and they will also send you a copy of the appeal papers. The hearing must be fair. Put your case as you wish. If you forget something, ask if you can add it. If you do not understand anything that is said, ask for it to be explained.

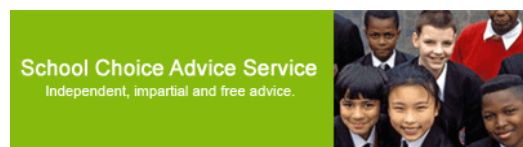
The School Choice Advice Service can provide you with further advice about the appeals process.

Where to find out more about the admissions and appeals process:

School Choice Advice Service

Tel: 01785 278992

www.staffordshire.gov.uk/schoolchoice



School Admissions and Transport Service

School Admissions and Transport Service

Tipping Street

Stafford ST16 2DH

Tel: 01785 278593

Email: admissions@staffordshire.gov.uk

www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/admissions



The Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)

Tel: 0808 8005793

www.ace-ed.org.uk



1: The Quality Standards booklets for practitioners and parents are now available online at <http://www.staffordshirechildrenstrust.org.uk/commissionerparents/linksdocuments/quality/>

Please note, these booklets are only applicable to Non-Statutory Assessment Services. Any practitioners who work with parents can follow the link to get printable e-copies.

2: A variety of consultations have taken place with parents over the last few months, these have included:

- Child Poverty: Parents have been consulted on the new Child Poverty Strategy and were asked for their views on certain topics within the strategy.
- A review of the 2,000 voices (in consultation).
- Teenage Pregnancy: this consultation with Teenage Parents looks at how they access services and their experiences in doing so.
- Safeguarding: The Local Safeguarding Board commissioned us to consult with parents on their behalf regarding current literature.

3: Results of Parenting Week – Parent week activities that were delivered in Staffordshire have been picked up nationally and can be found on the Family & Parenting Institute website. <http://www.familyandparenting.org/>

4: The Housing Family Intervention Project is a partnership between Staffordshire County Council (SCC) and Stafford and Rural Homes (SaRH). This project has been extremely successful and is being used as a model of good practice. A presentation was given by the team, attended by all SaRH Senior Management and the Department for Education to celebrate and show case its success. The Families Ambassador represented SCC at this event and the presentation was presented by SaRH, Staffordshire Police, the Department for Education, Family Intervention Project Specialist and Staffordshire's Parenting Strategy Co-ordinator.

5: Staffordshire's Parenting Strategy Co-ordinator, Parent Experts and Family Information Service (FIS) are working together to design a Single Point of Access for all Evidence Based Parenting Practice. The webpage is in design and training for the contact centre and all FIS staff has been scheduled for February 2011. The launch of this service will be post March 2011.

For further information on any of the 5 updates please contact:

The Children's Trust Team on

Tel: 01785 277116

Email: staffordshirechildrenstrust@staffordshire.gov.uk

Families have a chance to get a taste of the 'Good Life' - by winning their own allotment.

They will also be provided with plants, seeds and the necessary equipment as well as getting regular support to make sure their garden grows – in what is believed to be the first scheme of its type in the country.

The borough council is on the look out for five local families who want to run their own allotment. The five plots in the Coton Fields area have been set aside for use by the community for the 'Family Grow' project.

Work is currently going on to bring the plots in to shape for the lucky winners to look after in the growing season - between April and November.

The council has teamed up with the Stafford District Community and Learning Partnership, Environmental and Health Team and Coton Fields Allotment Association to roll out the project which is being seen as a chance for families to cut food bills and improve diets, as well as learning new skills.

Those who provide the best reason for wanting to have an allotment will be selected by a panel of judges. The families will be mentored by Derek Hill from the Coton Fields Allotment Association.

Councillor Stan Highfield, Cabinet Member for Environment and Health said, "This is a hobby that the whole family can enjoy and comes with so many benefits for a healthier lifestyle.

In the current financial climate I am sure people will not want to let the opportunity pass to have free healthy food with the satisfaction that they have grown it themselves, and be supported throughout this unique project."

The 'Good Life' was a popular 1970s television comedy series and featured a couple trying to create a sustainable, self-sufficient life style and turning their garden in to an allotment where they grow their own fruit and vegetables.



Kate Harrold from the Environmental and Health Team, who is leading on the project.



There is also an opportunity to look around the allotment site – between the town's Prospect Road and Corporation Street - with an open day on Saturday 5 March between 11am and 2pm.

For an application form go to www.staffordhealth.com, email ehadmin@staffordbc.gov.uk or telephone 01785 619752.

All applications must be in by 5pm on Friday 11 March 2011.

New Legislation

The Government has asked Parliament to approve Regulations on Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children. From April 2011, the regulations will place a duty on local authorities to prepare a statement for carers on what services will be available in local areas and what criteria they will be accessed by. Short breaks allow parents of disabled children to carry out day to day tasks that other parents take for granted. Crucially, they also give disabled children and young people opportunities to access positive activities independently of their families. The draft regulations state that local authorities must provide a range of services for disabled children both within and outside the home and in the evenings, at weekends and at school holidays.

Aiming High Parent Survey

Over the last 18 months Aiming High in Staffordshire has funded a wide range of activities for disabled children and their families, including football, cricket, arts and crafts, trips out, G8way Team, Parent Participation Service, outreach and befriending service etc. Aiming High is currently evaluating and reviewing how successful the development of short break and other services has been in Staffordshire. As part of this process a parent survey has been completed gaining the views of parents and carers. Feedback from the survey is currently being collated. The views of disabled children and young people are also been gathered to inform the review.

The Parent Participation Service (soon to be known as SPAN – Staffordshire Parents Action Network) is a free service for parents and carers of a disabled child, up to age 18, who live in Staffordshire.

The service continues to grow and develop. The Parent and Carer Shadow Board have met each month and attended a range of training sessions. They have been involved in various meetings and consultations and attend the Aiming High Strategy Board meetings.

The e-forum has a widening membership. Parents and professionals can register online to provide help and support in a range of areas. Parents can also use the e-forum to read and comment on documentation affecting services in Staffordshire for disabled children.

Please log in and register on www.aiminghighforumstaffs.co.uk. Once registered, professionals can post questions and answer any queries posed by parents.



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Shadow Trust Board

Parents on the Shadow Board recently hosted a Parent Participation Network Lunch which was well attended by representatives from a wide range of services across Staffordshire. At the lunch attendees were able to: learn more about the parent forum; how the parent forum could help them; how service providers could help the forum; celebrate the achievements to date; and to set up a working relationship with the parent forum. Feedback received from the event has been very positive, comments included:

- Very well presented and engaging opportunity
- I have been very impressed by the involvement of the Parent Board, attending Aiming High Board
- Very informative and powerful event

The Board are also planning parent information days around the county to share information and collect views and enquiries from parents and carers.

If you would like to find out more about the service please email us at spps@staffordshire.gov.uk, ring 01785 356919 or visit www.aiminghighforumstaffs.co.uk.

Disabled Children Access to Childcare (DCATCH)

Working with colleagues in Early Years, the Aiming High Team has been developing some work around supporting parents of disabled children to access childcare. This has been funded by a one off DCATCH grant which is aimed at supporting childcare to allow parents to access education, work or training, rather than short breaks. The DCATCH Programme in Staffordshire includes:

- Children Centres – 5 Children Centres have been funded to deliver 6 projects in the County. The projects include extra childcare places for disabled children and workforce development for staff working with disabled children.
- Training and Development Fund – the Training and Development Fund has been targeted at private, independent and voluntary day care providers. Providers can apply to the fund to access training which will enhance their ability to support disabled children. Training funded so far has included Epilepsy and Autism awareness. Providers may also apply in certain circumstances to cover staff costs whilst training takes place. The fund will close 31 March 2011, but there is still currently funding available for training which can be delivered prior to financial year end.
- Research project – Debs Sambor from MRA Research is currently undertaking an in depth piece of research with parents of disabled children regarding their childcare needs and their experiences of formal childcare.
- Grants are being made available to key toy libraries across the County to develop a stock of toys and equipment for disabled children. A pool of toy libraries has been targeted and a bidding round is currently underway. Successful toy libraries will receive up to £5,000 for specialist equipment and toys which be made available to support day care providers.



What's Community Games all about?

The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be the biggest sporting event ever to take place in this country. But it's not just about two weeks of sport in London; it's a four-year cultural celebration right across the UK.

Sport Across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (SASSOT) have been successful in winning the contract to provide support to the West Midlands 2012 legacy trust Community Games programme.

This has placed SASSOT at the forefront of one of the West Midlands' most high profile and potentially community enhancing activities in the run up to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and enable us the opportunity to work with our local partners to ensure that Community Games is targeted at our communities of most need.

Community Games are a way for you to bring your community together to take part in sporting and cultural activities inspired by, and in celebration of, London 2012.

By helping people like you to stage their own events and activities we hope to give thousands of people across the West Midlands their own Olympic moment.

Are we a 'community'?

A community is simply a group of people that come together at some point to share and do things. You could, in fact, form your own new community. What's important is that it's your Community Games event, so you can make it exactly the sort of event that you, as a 'community' all want.

Why should I get involved?

Community Games gives you the chance to be part of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. But it's also about bringing people together to try new sporting and arts activities and having loads of fun at the same time.

What do the Games look like?

A Community Games includes both sporting and cultural activities, and some sort of opening and/or closing ceremony that brings everyone together. The rest is up to you.

Each Community Games will look different – some might happen on only one day at one venue, others over a week at lots of different venues. Some will involve an element of competition; others will focus simply on getting people participating in sports or cultural activities they might never have tried before.

The important thing is that each event will be shaped by those involved and be about what that community wants to do. So it's a pretty blank canvas.

We already have an event that sounds similar. Can an existing event be a Community Games?

Yes if it includes both sporting and cultural events, and some sort of ceremony. If it doesn't then you could perhaps add to it and turn it into a Community Games as you plan for it next time around.



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If I decide to organise a Community Games will I get any help?

The short answer is 'yes, of course'. Here's a few more details of what we can do to help you:

1. First, we've set up a website www.communitygames.org.uk which has lots of resources, as well as great ideas based on what other people are doing as part of their Games.
2. The biggest help to you will probably be our Community Games toolkit, which you'll find on the website. It contains loads of useful information and tips for organising an event. The answers to many of the detailed questions that you'll probably have when you start to think about organising an event can all be found in the toolkit. This will continue to be updated as the programme goes on.
3. Then there's the local members of the West Midlands Community Games Team who will be on hand to advise and help you to bring your ideas to life.
4. We've also got free workshops on how to organise and promote your Games, where you'll be able to meet other people planning their Games and share ideas.
5. We'll be keeping you up-to-date with an e-newsletter every so often with information and news on what's happening across the region.
6. We'll help you promote your Games by giving you a page on the web site.

We're also planning to involve local 'stars' that will help to promote some of the Games in their area and perhaps even turn up on the day. These people could be local sporting champions (past, present and future), or perhaps actors or TV personalities.

Is there any money for our Games?

Unfortunately the programme doesn't have any funds available to help stage individual games, but there is lots of free support. Information about where you might apply to for funding will be added to the website.

Can we use the Olympic or Paralympic logos?

Unfortunately, no one apart from the London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) and their official sponsors can use these logos.

However, LOCOG has created the *Inspire Mark* – recognising projects that are inspired directly by the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and can be used on publicity and promotional material. We hope as many Community Games as possible will carry the *Inspire Mark*.

I'm interested - what do I do next?

Go to www.communitygames.org.uk where you can find out more and register your interest. Then one of the Community Games team will contact you and help you to get started.

I would like you to consider supporting the new Community Games programme in whatever capacity you have available but ideally by;

- Promoting the Community Games through your networks / partners / websites / newsletters / publications etc and signposting interested groups and people to myself or the website www.communitygames.org.uk
- Becoming or identifying a Community Games advocate(s)
- Identifying existing pre-planned events that could be a Community Games in 2011/12

For further information please contact:

Chris Turner, Club Development Manager, Sport Across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent
cturner@staffordbc.gov.uk or call 01785 619681

Families First is a Staffordshire County Council project which aims to deliver the right help at the right time to ensure children, young people and families in Staffordshire achieve positive outcomes.

Over the next few weeks, you'll see the Families First project moving from a series of plans to a reality. The pace of change is quickening and as the period of consultation over the new Families First management structure draws to a close on February 3rd, interviews will be held and the new structure announced by mid-April.

We've reached a further significant milestone in the Families First project this month with the approval of the final boundaries for our Local Support Teams and Specialist Safeguarding Units. Significant changes were made to these areas following your feedback, so thank you for taking the time to send in your comments.

This is an exciting time for the project as we ready ourselves to move to phase two, the appointment of team members and relocation to local premises that will enable us to support Staffordshire's families in a better way.

Timescales for confirmation of Families First Management Structure

Phase one of the Families First project is to put the new management structure in place. Interviews for the management positions will start on March 3rd and we expect to announce the new structure on April 11th.

Once the management structure is in place, we will move to phase two. This will run from April until September and will see the new Local Support Teams and Specialist Safeguarding Units up and running.

Local Support Team and Specialist Safeguarding Unit patches

One of the key features of Families First is local teams of children's service professionals who work together across a small patch to identify and address family needs early.

It's important that on an operational level, we are set up to respond to local need. As such, you'll see that we've given a high priority to school catchment area as the vast majority of cases are referred to us by schools. We have also tried to maintain a good balance between the likely number of clients per team and have tried to ensure manageable drive times for team members.

District managers will be in place to ensure that those of you who work on a district basis will have a key point of contact to assist you with your planning and priorities.

What does this mean for me?

You can now see the areas that our Local Support Teams and Specialist Safeguarding Units will cover and where they are likely to be based.

In each patch we are now looking to secure a main office base. Our teams will also make use of a number of touch down points (small office spaces with internet access) and delivery centres (schools or children's centres for example).

If you have any queries regarding Families First, please get in touch by emailing families.first@staffordshire.gov.uk

Relationships

without

Fear



The Relationships without Fear Project was set up by Arch in 2003. It is a schools prevention and support project that takes a cross curricular approach to Domestic Violence/Abuse.

Our aim is to prevent further domestic abuse in the relationships of our children and young people by giving them the knowledge, skills and information to enable them to recognise an abusive relationship and seek the appropriate help; contributing to the long term overall reduction in domestic violence.

The programme starts in year 4 with a gentle 'friendship' programme and runs through to year 11. Each year group has a different programme covering key Domestic Abuse issues including why victims stay in violent relationships, the different forms of abuse experienced and how to leave a relationship safely.

The project aims to safeguard the welfare of children and young people by identifying, supporting and protecting those that are affected by Domestic Violence/Abuse.

"We learned about situations in relationships & how to act. We know what to do if we get overloaded".

"You can use the ideas yourself and use it to give advice to friends."



RwF Children & Young People's 1:1 Support

Children and young people witnessing Domestic Violence can have many issues that a 1:1 worker can offer support with including challenging behaviour, truanting, exclusion from school and bereavement.

This service encourages them to understand what makes a healthy relationship, and enables them to discuss what they have witnessed. Our support worker will see your child either at school or at a children's centre local to you, which ever seems best for their situation.

Our support worker is someone that understands Domestic Violence and the complex feelings it can leave children with. They can offer a safe space where the child/young person can talk through their thoughts, feelings and experiences of Domestic Violence and a chance to explore them further.

The programme can be delivered in schools across Stoke-on-Trent & Newcastle-under-Lyme

For more information or to make a referral contact the Relationships without Fear Team

Tel: 01782 219100 or 204479 info@archnorthstaffs.org.uk www.archnorthstaffs.org.uk

Heart disease is the biggest cause of death in England, with someone in the UK having a heart attack every two minutes!

Furthermore, there is growing evidence that adult heart disease can start in childhood. Valentine's Day this month was an important reminder to think about our hearts and how to keep them healthy.

As someone who works with children, there are steps you may be able to take to help children have healthy hearts. See below for tips from us at NHS North Staffordshire:

- 1) Help children understand how amazing their heart is. You can teach them interesting facts such as the heart pumps enough blood to fill a large paddling pool every day, yet it's only the same weight as a mango.
- 2) Explain to children their body is like a car with their heart like an engine and it needs to be looked after so we can function properly. This will help them understand the importance of healthy foods and being active.
- 3) Do your part to get kids moving by incorporating activity into their daily routine. Children should get 60 minutes of activity every day, and you may be able to incorporate some of this into your work with them, such as playing games or dancing.
- 4) By encouraging children to eat healthily, you're helping give them good habits for life. Help children maintain regular mealtimes, and do not rush them or encouraging them to eat while doing other things.
- 5) Don't give children too many sweet treats or sugary drinks.

If you know any children who might need help leading the healthiest lives possible including eating healthily and being active, please signpost them to NHS North Staffordshire.

We offer free programmes for overweight children, including Lifestyle Triple P and MEND programmes.

More information is available on our website at www.northstaffordshire.nhs.uk and select 'Your Health' page then the 'Healthy Weight' page.



Become a Family Link Carer

Give a little time and make a BIG difference in the life of a child with a disability and their families. Can you provide a regular break for a disabled child? Helping a child with a disability can be both rewarding and fun. By involving the child in your community or at home will give the child the opportunity to gain new experiences and will also give their family a break.

Contact us NOW to find out

Family Link
Staffordshire County Council
The Old House
Eastern Avenue
Lichfield
WS13 7SQ
Tel No: 01543 510100
Fax No: 01543 510141



Ryan Bishop pictured with Kelly Danks.

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 need a copy of this information in large print, Braille, audio tape/disc, British Sign Language or another language, on cassette or disk, please contact www.staffordshirechildrenstrust.org.uk or call 01785 277116.

If you have any comments or feedback or would like to submit an article for the next edition of the Acorn please contact:

www.staffordshirechildrenstrust.org.uk

or call 01785 277116.

Future deadlines for submitting articles are below.

Edition 20	Friday 13th May 2011 at 3pm
Edition 21	Friday 12th August 2011 at 3pm
Edition 22	Friday 11th November 2011 at 3pm