

Welcome to the Early Childhood Service Newsletter for the Autumn term. This has been one of the most difficult years we have seen in the childcare sector, hopefully, there will be an end in sight soon. Once again, our amazing practitioners have risen to the challenge and continue to work tirelessly, to ensure that good quality childcare can be accessed by all who need it. We thank you all for your dedication, compassion, professionalism and stoicism in these ever-changing circumstances – you are amazing!!

## TEAM UPDATES

### NEW RECRUITS TO THE TEAM



**Laurissah Ramsey** is our new Early Years Administrator. Her job role involves manning the Family Information Service (FIS)

phone line and guiding you through any queries, two year old funding support and providing general administrative support to all the Early Years Team. She also manages the DFE Registers that come in every week.



**Sarah Saxton** is new to the role of Early Years SEND Officer. She is a qualified Early Years and specialist dyslexia teacher and assessor. She has also worked as a child minder.

Most recently she has been training early years workers and teaching assistants and worked for educational site Twinkl creating SEND resources. Sarah is looking forward to meeting and working with new colleagues and partners in Wirral LA.



## Goodbye Sue!

**SUE LAMEY, one of the longest standing members of the team, is to retire at Christmas.**

Sue has worked for the Local Authority for fourteen years in a variety of roles, the most recent being as an Early Years SEND Officer. We know those of you that have been supported by Sue over the years will wish her well in her retirement – do give her a wave if you see her out and about in a soon to be purchased camper van!! The following is a message from Sue:

*As you may know, I shall be retiring at*

*the end of this term. I just wanted to say a big 'thank you' to all the settings that I have worked with over the last 14 years.*

*I have built up some good relationships with managers, SENCo's and practitioners and I know that I will miss the role.*

*It has been a very strange year and my only regret is that I have not been able to visit settings and meet children 'face to face'.*

*Lizi Williams will be replacing me and will start in January.*

*Some of you may remember Lizi from her time in the Autism Social Communication*

*Team. We have already had several information sharing meetings, so that the transition can be as seamless as possible.*

*Lizi is keen to start and will make contact with you in January.*

*My final day of work will be December 18th and then I will be looking forward to Christmas, which will hopefully be spent with my first grandchild, due on December 19th.*

*I would just like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!*

**Sue Lamey**

# Early Years Conference

**EARLY CHILDHOOD Services held their first virtual conference on the October 2nd.**

The name of this year's conference was My Child Can... Be Emotionally Secure and involved exploring creative opportunities to ensure wellbeing for all.

We had a range of well-known speakers including Debbie Garvey and Claire Warden. The conference was a resounding success, despite there being one or two technical difficulties. There was some very positive feedback with remarks such as:

*"These talks were vital and I only wish I had insisted on all of my staff participating in this conference."*

*"This was a great conference, relevant and fits into my focus of barriers to learning. It was easily accessible without the need to panic over travel and parking so time was used effectively."*

*"As a result of your conference I have ordered musical sound bowls and am going to be doing some mediation with our children. I think being present at a time like this is very important & it was lovely to see so many other professionals who have a passion for early years! Look forward to the next one."*



All agreed that the workshops were relevant and appropriate for the current times.

## Do you want to 'Health Check' your business?



**AFTER THE events of 2020 it is more important than ever that your business is robust, to make it sustainable for the future.**

We have created a 'health check' tool, to enable settings to ascertain the areas of their business they are strong in, and if there are any areas where development could be implemented to build on the strength of the business.

The tool will ask settings about things like business planning, management, financial planning etc, to help ensure settings are doing everything they can for the success of their business.

It will also ask you to consider things like communications, and recovery from covid, to see if there are any areas you could develop to improve uptake of places, ensure financial

continuity and whether to review delivery models etc to meet the changing needs of parents further to covid.

Once completed the tool will provide you with a summary of your responses in a graph, so you can easily see the areas that may need some work, and to help you to prioritise those areas. You can also send this graph back to us to enable us to look for any trends between providers where development may be needed, this will help us to plan our future training to you, focusing on the areas most settings need support in.

If this is something that you think will benefit you, keep an eye out for it in the new year, it will be shared in the weekly 'Keeping up with early years and childcare' emails.



## Wirral Childminding Association (WCMA)

Nikki Griffiths (Chair)

**THE WCMA WANTS to thank all those childminders that have stayed open through the pandemic.**

Those who continued to provide care for families during lockdown periods, and to acknowledge how difficult it has been through these changing times.

Acknowledgement is also given to those childminders that had to make the difficult decision to close, and there were many reasons for this. It can take time to recover from both the emotional and financial impact of this.

The WCMA is always there to support any Wirral Childminder and you can contact Nikki Griffiths (Chair) on 07925685360, if you would like to be added to the WCMA WhatsApp group or to the Facebook page.



## Safeguarding

**THE SAFEGUARDING Children Partnership have a number of training courses available including:**

Designated safeguarding lead (refresher and full), safer recruitment training, managing allegations, whole staff safeguarding and Prevent.

If you would prefer to host a bespoke session on-site, or would like to know more about a ½ day safeguarding 'health check' audit, then please do not hesitate to contact Amanda Waterfall by email at [amandawaterfall@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:amandawaterfall@wirral.gov.uk).

To access training you will have to register on the WSCP website, the registration page can be accessed here: [www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/training-registration](http://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/training-registration)

# Local Offer Update

Sally Tittle



**HI EVERYONE, I hope you and your families are all safe and well. Here at the Local Offer we continue to be kept very busy supporting our SEND families, schools and nurseries.**

Engagement via the website and social media is up by 40%. Soon after lockdown, we added a COVID 19 support section to the Local Offer website. [localofferwirral.org/category/covid-19-support](https://localofferwirral.org/category/covid-19-support)

We found that we were getting sent lots of fantastic resources and wanted to make sure everyone got to benefit from them.

We also wanted to keep Parent/Carers informed of the adjustments having to be made to the range of SEND services and so we have been publishing regular editions of a SEND Snapshot (Newsletter) with contributions from many different services and organisations. The latest edition can be found on the Local Offer website or by clicking this link: [localofferwirral.org/send-](https://localofferwirral.org/send-)

[snapshot-parent-carer-edition-november](#)

We are continuing to add information as and when it becomes available. The Early Years section has some great new content and well worth a look. How are you finding the refreshed Early Years section on the website? Maybe take a look and let us know what you think? We listen and we learn and welcome all your feedback. [localofferwirral.org](https://localofferwirral.org)

We have also been using social media to keep Parent/Carers informed so if you're interested and not following us already, our twitter account is @lowirral and our Facebook page is The Local Offer Wirral. To further support our SEND families, we now have a dedicated e mail address to enable people to send us their feedback, views, suggestions or to ask for signposting to a service. Email us at: [localofferwirral@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:localofferwirral@wirral.gov.uk)

**Keep warm and safe!**

## Wirral National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) network



Karen Lane (Chair)

**WHAT A BUSY term it has been for us all grappling with (among other things):**

- Keeping up to date with government guidelines. Thankfully the NDNA and LA put out letters/bulletins to ensure we do not miss anything.
- Working out how Tier 3 or lockdown impacts our businesses.
- Ensuring the number of children on roll is at a level which keeps us sustainable. How do we do this when visitors to settings are strictly limited and we need to keep to lower numbers for bubbles?
- Working on questions like 'What happens if we have to close a bubble'?

We had our first NDNA network meeting by Zoom, which was very successful. It gave us opportunities to discuss some of the above items and see what is working for us in our settings and what challenges we are facing. Sharing ideas is a great



way to support each other.

The NDNA Chairs now meet every two months. I feed back about local issues (not only COVID). Topics have included sustainability and looking at next year's budget for funded children.

As Regional Chair of the NDNA, I am working closely with the Local Authority to ensure that Member's points of views are fed back at meetings.

**Take care and keep safe,  
Karen Lane.**

# SEND Update

Penny Bishop (Early Years SEND Manager)

**WELL CHRISTMAS is almost here but it certainly is strange times. What has happened in the EY SEND world since the summer.**

CONGRATULATIONS to cohort 2 and 3 of the Accredited SENCo Award who had a virtual celebration. Paul Boyce and Elizabeth Hartley were impressed by the commitment of the SENCos and the work that they did. Thank you to the managers who released their staff and we hope that you can see your SENCos have new skills. We are proud of their work ethic and they are now AGENTS OF CHANGE for children with SEND on Wirral.

On the 1st November we welcomed Sarah Saxton to the team, she will cover part of West Wirral. Joanne France will continue to cover Wallasey but will need to support some West Wirral settings to even up numbers. Karen Burke (0.5) continues to cover South Wirral but she will be taking on settings that are close to South but in Birkenhead. Again, we are looking at numbers of settings to be covered. It is with great sadness to EY SEND that Sue Lamey is retiring at Christmas (but will be kept busy by the birth of her new grandchild). We as a team will miss her knowledge and wit. However, we have managed to have Lizi Williams in post from January and she and Sue are planning a handover of files etc before Sue leaves. Lizi will have an induction period before she fully picks up cases so any Birkenhead settings who need support



please address your queries to [eysend@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:eysend@wirral.gov.uk) and we will sort out someone who can support you. Currently the SEND officers are contacting all settings and having online discussions about children with SEND in your settings. We are hearing double or triple the number of cases from this period last year and so it is taking longer than expected.

Portage workers have continued to give parents excellent support via phone calls or Teams and parents really appreciate this. We have recently started some Portage home visiting. 1 a day then home to change, clean and quarantine the toys. This takes more time, but families and Portage workers are enjoying the face to face time even if it is every 3 to 4 weeks.

## Plans

We are about to launch the Wirral Early Years Autism Education Trust Hub so look out for dates. We want ALL early years staff to complete the 1 ½ hour course then we will be offering the next level up to SENCos in the first instance. This is really exciting as you were asking for more info on autism.

We will be supporting all settings to carry out a SEND Review and we will then find out more areas for training needs and we will support you to develop your provision.

Sadly, we will need to postpone the next SENCo Award until September 2021 – it will allow setting to settle back into more normal staffing routines.

## Brand new online training platform



**WE ARE PROUD to announce that we are developing an online training platform for the Quality Improvement and Training team.**

This webpage will be for YOU as an early years provider on the Wirral.

It will act as a single point of access for all early year's providers. It will support in keeping providers up to date with the latest information, both local and national, there will be downloadable templates, access to resources, and an interactive training calendar with opportunities for eLearning – all at the click of a button!

You will be able to see your own personal account and then make plans to access CPD to meet your requirements.

The plan is to launch the platform hopefully in the Spring term and so watch this space!!

## Children's Centres

**CHILDREN'S CENTRES are currently offering families targeted virtual groups, such as baby massage, baby babble and also SEND sensory and Rainbows.**

There is also some 1-1 work taking place in the centre, such as baby massage and outdoor play.

Families/settings can refer into these services via the ECS referral form emailed out to settings via the weekly provider email.

Health clinics for children can also be booked via the central health team, calling the number [0151 514 0219](tel:01515140219) or families can contact their health visitor.

# Good News & Celebrations

## Panda Cubs Run!

On Saturday the 5th December One of our childminders Bev Parry will be running 7K around her local area dressed as a giant panda.

This is something she does every year to raise money for Claire House. It is usually a huge event with a raffle and a children's entertainer etc but obviously this year has changed everything.

Bev ran 17K as the panda during the first lockdown to cheer up the local children and her childminding children. Bev likes to think seeing a giant panda run cheers everyone up, especially in today's world!



## Pumpkin Parade

Leasowe Nursery School and Family Centre celebrated Halloween with their very own Pumpkin Parade! Children within the local community were invited to join in by showcasing their decorated pumpkins. Over 30 pumpkin entries were received thanks to the community, the Centre were able to help make Halloween special and a little bit more exciting for their children.



## Useful links

- Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus outbreak
- Safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities
- Covid-19 Winter Plan
- Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do
- Interim visits: registered early years providers