

Sensory Inclusion Service

Visual Impairment Newsletter

Issue
33
Spring 2025

Sensory Inclusion Service, Floor 6, Darby House, Lawn Central, Telford, TF3 4JA

Easter Cover

There is a QTVI on duty every week of the Easter holidays.

Contact SENDandInclusion@telford.gov.uk or 01952 385269 for support.



Sarah Hovington

Meet Sarah, our new QTVI

I am the newly appointed QTVI working for Telford and Wrekin five days a week. A big thank you to you all for the lovely warm welcome.

I started teaching in 1992 and have taught overseas including in Japan and America. It was as an Early Years Leader in Sandwell; I worked with an inspirational QTVI from the local Sensory Team to support children who were visually impaired. And so, I developed a passion for this role. It is a privilege to work with such children and young people and their families.

In 2019, I started my QTVI studies at Liverpool John Moores University and St. Vincent's School. In 2020, I moved south to join the Sensory Team in the London Borough of Newham as I wanted a more varied case list. I finished my QTVI studies in 2021 and graduated a year later in 2022 because of the pandemic. I was keen to teach a brailist and so moved to Surrey and was part of a larger Sensory Team.

In November 2023, I won a Churchill Fellowship and went to learn more about Cortical / Cerebral Vision Impairment at the CVI Center at The Perkins School for the Blind. The Perkins Globe started as a teaching tool for students like Helen Keller. One hundred and eighty years later, people still want to touch it! Helen Keller poignantly wrote, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."



A pupil at The Perkins School for the Blind exploring the large globe in the library.

BLIND IN BUSINESS

helping blind & partially sighted people into work

After the successful launch of Blind in Business's partnership in 2024, they were delighted to share with us that Tesco have committed extending their work experience collaboration into 2025.

Tesco, being the UK's largest grocery retailer, has the bold ambition of providing 200,000 work experience and employer encounters especially for Special Educational Needs (SEND) students. They share BiBs commitment to building young people's employability skills and providing experiences that grow confidence.

This 5-day opportunity was open to any of our blind or partially sighted students aged between 14 - 18 years old who are in full-time education. The work experience will take place within their larger stores and every effort will be made to secure work experience at the store closest to the participant's home. Incredibly, Tesco has offered flexibility around when the student works, so dates across the year will be considered.

Louise Kitson (QTVI) felt that many children from her caseload could successfully take advantage of this fabulous opportunity. By sharing this opportunity with parents and pupils, she is proud to announce that Aamna, a year 10 student that Louise supports, has successfully been offered a place in her local Tesco Superstore. We wish her lots of luck with her placement and hope she enjoys the experience. We cannot wait to hear all about it!

To find out about the fantastic work that Blind in Business does, head over to their website

<https://blindinbusiness.org.uk/>



Royal Society for Blind Children

RSBC offer a wide range of activities for blind and partially sighted children and young people on a regular basis throughout the year. They also run special events like their annual AQA Awards ceremony, special celebrations and fun occasions - and much, much more!

It's so easy to sign up for events and activities - all you need to do is fill in the online booking form on the page for the event you'd like to attend.

Visit www.rsbc.org.uk for more information

For those using voice-over features, they have also created a tutorial video to help you navigate the calendar and book activities with ease.

Visit <https://youtu.be/66rIoLAM7mg>



Jibran who is smiling as he shows off his golden leaf award that is pinned to his jumper.

Jibran has started back at school after a long break due to a serious health condition.

He has embraced the school experience, socialising with peers and joining in with class activities. He has been enjoying English and maths lessons in the mornings and has been staying for lunch. This was a big step for Jibran after having a whole year off because of his health issues and he still has hospital appointments and is undergoing treatment, he doesn't let this faze him and takes it all in his stride. Jibran lost his sight when he was under 5 and is supported in school by a QTVI and a QHS from Guide Dogs.

His QTVI visited him in school on the day that he received the Golden Leaf award which he was awarded for his 'Magnificent manners, determination and kindness' his teacher also wrote that 'He makes us smile every day. Keep being amazing!'

We want to wish Jibran all the best through his medical journey and hope to see him at SIS events in future. Keep up the great work Jibran.

Contact details



Gentle reminder to all parents and carers that if you change anything like your child's name or address, please can we ask that you let SIS know. Additionally you should advise the main hospital—ophthalmology—of this change too. SIS cannot make changes on your hospital files/ notes so you need to do this. The hospital has seen quite a lot of children not turning up for appointments because letters have gone to old addresses.

If you have changed your email or phone number, please let us know at

SENDandInclusion@telford.gov.uk



Maya is making great progress with learning braille and nearly knows all of the letter symbols. However she does enjoy a little break to do craft activities too. She is not very keen on getting her hands cold, so she was very pleased to make a snowman from newspaper and cotton wool!

Maya holding her snowman

Multi-sensory Workshop

Back in March we held a multi-sensory music workshop at Stepping Stones.



Families taking part in the workshop

Circus Starr

We were delighted to be offered tickets for the Circus Starr Tour 2025. Everyone had a great time being entertained by Mariska Gandey, Fingers Crossed, Dan, Harry, Thais with the sensory hoops, roller skating duo, Cheer Ko, The London Show Girls and not forgetting Lukinha, the hilarious Clown.

We have been fortunate to secure tickets for the Circus Starr Spring Tour on Friday 30th May 2025.

To apply for tickets, contact Nichola Clark on

nichola.clark@telford.gov.uk



A clown balancing a bucket of water on a pole.

Animal Encounters

We were fortunate to receive some funding from The Powell Family Foundation to book an Animal Encounters experience.

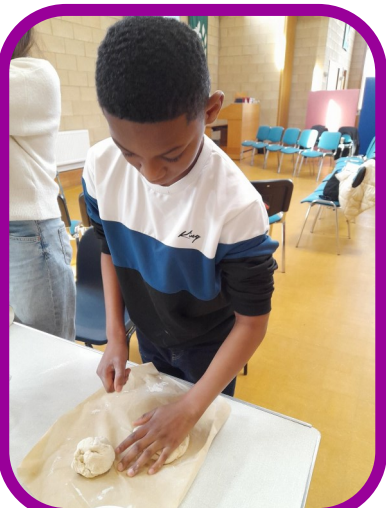
We saw snakes, tortoises, rabbits, hedgehogs, and much more!



Children holding the animals

Skills day

In February half term, we held our first ever skills day. The event was a huge success. There was planting, bread making, games, weaving, a BSL workshop, and much more! We were really grateful for PCSO Stansfield visiting us to discuss Internet Safety, he even arranged for colleagues to bring a police car for our families to experience.



Families enjoying the activities.

Safer Internet day 2025

Safer Internet Day is celebrated globally in February each year to promote the safe and positive use of digital technology for children and young people and to inspire a national conversation about using technology responsibly, respectfully, critically and creatively.

WhatsApp

Users should be at least 13 years old to use WhatsApp. We frequently receive reports of children not using WhatsApp appropriately, such as sharing images to embarrass others, sending hurtful messages, spreading rumours, or excluding people from group chats to make them feel left out.

Since WhatsApp lacks parental controls, it is important to think about whether it is really the right platform for your child. For example, you should consider if your child has the critical thinking skills to recognise bullying. Furthermore, do they understand how to manage peer pressure and refrain from joining in on harmful behaviour?

If your child is using WhatsApp, it is crucial to have regular conversations with them. Talk about who they are chatting with, encourage them to think carefully about the messages they send and how they might be perceived by others. Finally, make sure to model good digital behaviour yourself, as children often learn by observing the adults around them.

What should I be aware of if my child is using WhatsApp?

- Group chats: Everyone within a group, even if they are not one of your child's contacts, will be able to see all messages within that group. If your child is added to a group with someone that they have previously blocked, that person can still see their messages and send them messages within the group chat. If your child is using WhatsApp, check their group privacy settings to see who can add them to groups. Ensure your child understands that they can leave a chat at any time, and they know how to report users. Find out more here: <https://faq.whatsapp.com/424124173736394>
- Inappropriate content: users can be exposed to content that is not suitable for their age.
- Location sharing: talk to your child about when this would be appropriate to use and the potential danger of sharing their location.
- Chat lock/secret code: users can lock chats as well as apply a secret code setting so a chat does not appear in the main chat.
- Blocking/Reporting: Show your child how to block and report other users. Find out how here: <https://faq.whatsapp.com/1142481766359885/>

Further information

Internet Matters have produced a how to guide available here: <https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/apps-and-platforms/social-media/whatsapp/>

You Tube

YouTube is intended for users over the age of 13, however, younger children can still access YouTube with consent from a parent/legal guardian. When giving your child access to YouTube, there are different options you could choose depending on your child's age

YouTube Kids - this is a separate app that includes a smaller selection of videos based on the age category you select: Preschool (ages 4 and under), Younger (ages 5-8) or Older (ages 9-12).

- Supervised accounts - this is a parent-managed version of YouTube that allows you to control the content your child can access. You can select one of the following options:

- Explore - Generally for viewers aged 9+.

- Explore more - Generally for viewers aged 13+

- Most of YouTube - This setting includes almost everything on YouTube except for videos marked as 18+ and other videos that may not be appropriate for viewers using supervised experiences.

Google have created a guide to show the differences between YouTube Kids and a Supervised account to help in your decision: <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/10315420>

My child wants to be a YouTuber

Many children want to start their own YouTube channel, but it is important to be aware of the potential risks and ensure that your child understands what information they should keep private and what to do if they receive negative comments. YouTube have produced these safety tips for teens when posting content: <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2802244>

You should be aware that there are different settings available when posting videos:

1. Public: anyone can view the video.
2. Private: video can only be viewed by users that you select.
3. Unlisted: only people who have the link to the video can view it.

What are the benefits and negatives of a YouTube channel?

Before allowing your child to start a YouTube channel, review the benefits and risks. This article discusses the pros and cons as well as provides recommendations to help minimise any risks: <https://www.brightcanary.io/should-your-kid-become-a-youtuber-weighing-the-pros-and-cons/>

Further information:

<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2802272?hl=en-GB>

<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/youtube>

Among Us

This game has been rated as PEGI 7, meaning it is not suitable for those under the age of 7. However, whilst the gameplay may be suitable, there are communication features available, where issues such as inappropriate language and bullying may arise.

Additionally, it is important to note that Among Us does have the option for in app purchases so please ensure that a password (that your child does not know) is required for all purchases.

Further Information:

<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/among-us>

Band Runner Game

Band Runner is a fun interactive game created by CEOP to help 8-10 year olds learn how to stay safer online.

Your child can play it here:

<https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/parents/articles/band-runner/>

Screen time and your family

Vodafone discuss screentime and what you should consider when setting your own rules in this useful article:

<https://www.vodafone.co.uk/newscentre/smart-living/digital-parenting/screen-time-and-your-family-a-guide-to-what-works-and-what-doesnt/>

How can I find age- appropriate games?

Do you need suggestions on age- appropriate games? You could use either of the following websites to search suitable games.

Remember, PEGI rates the gameplay so whilst it is important to review age ratings, you must also check if it has a communication feature as this might mean you decide a game is not suitable for your child.

<https://www.askaboutgames.com/find-the-right-game>

<https://www.familygamingdatabase.com/home>

Other websites you may find useful

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk>

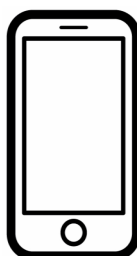
<https://www.themix.org.uk>

<https://www.thatnotcool.com>

SMART rules when going online

S	SAFE: Stay safe by not giving out your personal information or photographs online.
M	MEETING: Never meet up with anyone you have been in touch with on the internet.
A	ACCEPTING: Accepting e-mails, messages & photos from people you don't know can cause problems. They may contain viruses or nasty messages.
R	RELIABLE: Information on the internet may not be true, sometimes people tell lies online.
T	TELL: Tell your parent, carer or an adult if you see something that makes you uncomfortable or worried.

Claire's ICT Top Tip



Phone and Tablet Safety for Under 16s

Set up a Google or Apple account in the name of your under 16. This gives you more parental controls once logged in.

Android smartphones have parental controls for the Play store but not on the device itself. These allow you to set the maturity level of apps and set a PIN code for purchases.

Apple devices allow you to use Content & Privacy Restrictions, to set up specific parental controls. To make sure your parental control settings are synced across the devices in your Family Group, make sure your IOS is up to date.

This is just a few things you can do to help stay safe online, explore and see what else you can do!



Arthog



A huge thank you to the rotary club for funding our climbing event at Arthog Outreach in Wellington. The children had a fabulous time, made new friends and conquered the wall!



The children enjoying the climbing session.

A Magical and Accessible Day at the Theatre

Over Christmas, Nancy and her family joined other Guide Dogs-supported families for a special audio-described and BSL-interpreted performance of *Beauty and the Beast* at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre. Nancy has retinitis pigmentosa, impacting her peripheral vision, as well as learning disabilities. She is supported by the Sensory Inclusion Service and has a 'Buddy Dog' through Guide Dogs, as well as accessing some of their Family Day activities.

Whole-family theatre trips can be a challenge for Nancy's family. They're expensive, high-stakes and unpredictable - especially as Nancy can suddenly decide she's had enough and loudly indicate that she's ready to leave. To add to the anxieties, an Amber Weather Warning threatened their journey, and they'd been invited to bring Nancy's 'Buddy Dog', Shani, to guest-star at a Guide Dogs 'Meet and Greet' in the foyer, almost guaranteeing chaos!

But thanks to the careful planning of the Guide Dogs Family Events team, and the support of Natalie, their Buddy Dog Partnership Specialist, the day turned out to be one the family will never forget. Not only did Shani enjoy her star moment meeting families in the foyer, but she was even invited into the auditorium to watch the panto with everyone!

A highlight of the day was the pre-performance 'Touch Tour'. This gave Nancy and the other Guide Dog families a chance to explore the stage, handle props and costumes - including the Beast's mask and Belle's dress - and truly experience the magic of theatre in a hands-on way. The theatre staff were fantastic, making sure every child felt included and welcomed.

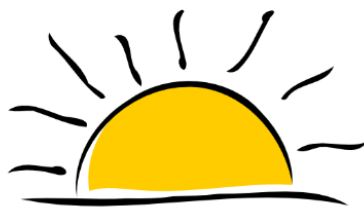
Shani has had a life-changing impact on Nancy and her family's lives. If you'd like to find out more about Buddy Dogs and how you can apply to be matched with these furry heroes, click here - [Buddy Dogs for Children | Guide Dogs UK](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/buddy-dogs-for-children).

For more information about how Wolverhampton Grand Theatre helps to make everyone feel included, click here - <https://www.grandtheatre.co.uk/access/>



A black Labrador wearing a blue 'Buddy Dogs - Guide Dogs' vest, sitting in a busy theatre auditorium. The dog is looking directly at the camera, surrounded by rows of red cushioned seats on a patterned red carpet.

A girl wearing glasses and a red coat, alongside a supportive man. The girl is examining an elaborate yellow ball dress being shown to her by a smiling woman.



Sensory Inclusion Service VI Family Group

Family Group takes place every Tuesday during term time for visually impaired pre-school children and their families.

Families can arrive anytime between 9.30 am – 11.30 am.

Summer 2025

April

29th - Sunflowers

May

6th - Guide Dogs session

13th - Transport crafts

20th - Guide Dogs session

27th - Half Term

June

3rd - No Group

10th - Guide Dogs session

17th - Picnic/ sports

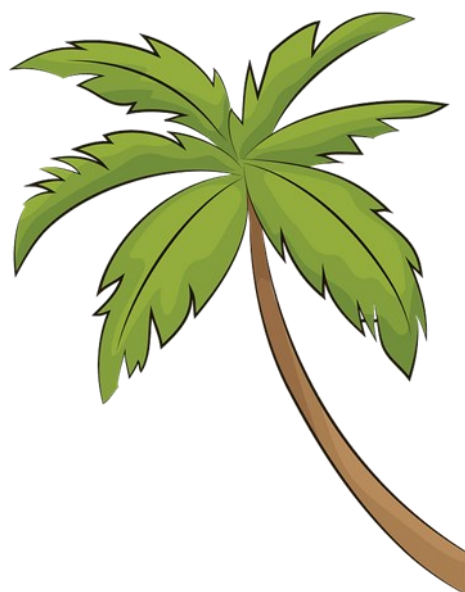
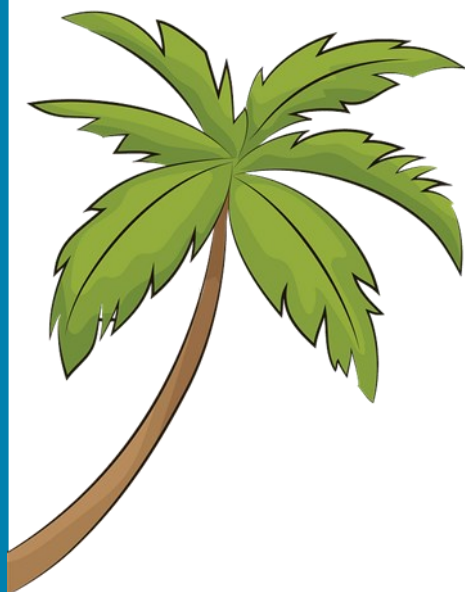
24th - Guide Dogs session

July

1st - Summer crafts

8th - Guide Dogs session

15th - Party



The Stepping Stones Centre, Brunel Road, Malinslee, TF3 2BF

Sat Nav TF3 2HZ

Sensory Inclusion Service, Floor 6, Darby House, Lawn Central, Telford. TF3 4JA

Custom Eyes Books



CustomEyes Books service have over 6,000 large print books available. Each one is custom-made, with font size, spacing, colour and more all tailored to your child's personal needs.

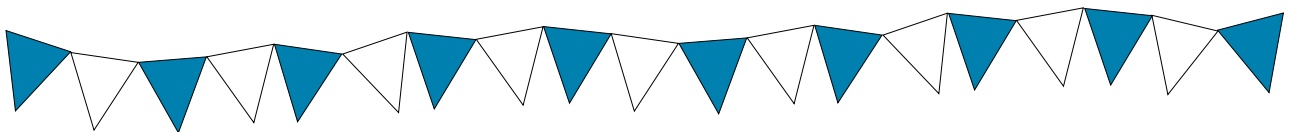
You can become an individual member of CustomEyes Books service if you're aged 18 - 25 with a visual impairment or if you are the parent/guardian or carer of a child or young person aged 25 or under with a visual impairment. It is easy and completely free and thanks to a generous Guide Dogs subsidy, all large print books are available at the recommended retail price, regardless of format.

Why order CustomEyes Books?

CustomEyes Books for a child with sight loss means children and young people can have exactly the same books as their friends and classmates. This not only helps them keep up at school, but they can share books with friends too.

If your child is not comfortable using a magnifier or gets tired using a screen, they can pick up a physical book and still enjoy reading and learning.

Visit www.guidedogs.org.uk/getting-support/help-for-children-and-families/living-independently/customeyes-books/ for more information



Upcoming Events



Circus Starr

30th May 2025

Attingham

5th July 2025



Working Together Parent Participation

Purpose of the Communications group

This group has been formed to unite Parent Carer groups that coproduce within the local area. The group aims to develop and deliver a communication system that will support productive discussion, development, and coproduction between Telford and Wrekin Council, Education; Social Care, Health partners and Parent Carers in the community. This initiative aims to ensure a consistent approach to communications and coproduction across the services.

Working with Parent Groups

We are collaborating with our parent carer groups who have experience with our services. Our aim is to incorporate their voice in structuring and guiding services moving forward. By working together with other parent carers in similar situations, we believe we can bring about positive change.

The next meeting is 10th April, 12:00—13:00 via Teams.

If you would like to join, please contact gwen.nutting@telford.gov.uk

Local Offer for Special Educational Needs and Disability

Discover everything you need to know about education, health and care services in your local area for children and young people with SEND 0-25yrs at...

www.telfordsend.org.uk



Key features...

- Search for clear and accessible information, advice and sources of support.
- Explore leisure, fun and short breaks activities.
- Find out about specialist services and education health and care plans.
- Learn how schools support special educational needs.
- Use the interactive map showing what is available near to where you live.
- Have your say through our online feedback form.



www.telfordsend.org.uk

Need this in large print or Braille?

If you would like to receive this newsletter in Large Print or Braille, please email

**sendandinclusion
@telford.gov.uk**



[Shropshire's SEND Local Offer](#) is a single place for information and services for children and young people with special education needs and/or disabilities, their families and the practitioners who support them.

Take a look at the [SEND Family directory](#) for local events, groups and things to do. For news and updates please like and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Email: Local.Offer@shropshire.gov.uk Telephone: 0345 678 9063