

SEND World Autism Awareness Week special

Weekly Newsletter

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Issue 34

We're all different - advice for children with autism

It's World Autism Awareness Week and we're marking it with the help of Chris Bonello, an international speaker and writer on autism issues. He has kindly allowed us to use some of his '50 pieces of advice from an autistic adult, written for autistic children'. We chose 15 - but you can read them all by following [this link](#). You can follow him on [YouTube](#) too. My name's Chris and I'm autistic. Some of this advice is what helped me when I was your age. Everyone is different, so maybe read this with a parent or teacher and decide which bits suit you best...



1. First things first—the world's a better place because you're part of it.
2. Just because you're different to other people doesn't mean you're wrong. The human race needs people who are different.
3. Learn what you're good at and find chances to do what you're good at. It's called playing to your strengths and as you grow up it will help you a lot.
4. I don't call my challenges 'weaknesses'. I call them 'targets for improvement'. If you struggle with something it doesn't mean that will last forever - you can still get better at it.
5. You're allowed to make mistakes—it's part of learning.
7. Go at your own pace. If you need to slow down to understand something, then slow down
8. If you're struggling at school don't worry. It doesn't last forever.
9. If you tell an adult something's wrong and they don't listen, tell a better adult.
10. Learn how other people work. How they talk, what they like/don't like. Knowing about people is very helpful.
11. If someone demands eye contact, stare at their nose.
12. When you're angry or upset, take a few extra seconds to think before doing something you regret.
13. Have your own safe spaces for when you're feeling exhausted, upset, angry or if you just need time to yourself for a bit. Stay in those spaces for as long as you need and come out once you're better.
14. Everybody feels anxious. Some people are better at hiding it.
15. When you're happy make a list of things you love about life. Read it when you're sad.



Happy Easter - we're back on 24 April

Tell us what you think about health needs

A group of staff from Adults' and Children's Services is working across health and social care to improve services.

The aim is to improve the complicated journey young people with health needs and their families take, as they prepare to move from children's to adult health services.

This journey is often difficult to navigate and the team – known as the Somerset Transition Collaboration really wants to find out what

young people, their families and the professionals supporting them want it to look like. The team also wants to signpost existing resources within Somerset.

So come and meet the team at some drop-in events called "Let's talk transition!" on April 23 -26 12.00pm to 2pm in the Concourse at Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton. There are other events planned throughout the year too so if you want to know more please contact Lucy.duncombe@tst.nhs.uk

Book it for Easter

There's still time to book your Easter Holidays activities - make sure you've had a look at the [Short Breaks Easter Holidays Activity Calendar](#).

There are still plenty of activities with spaces available, but please don't leave it to the last minute and make sure you book directly with the activity provider.

If you're not being sent the calendar and newsletter and wish to please email—

ShortbreaksTeam@somerset.gov.uk

SEND staff team changes will improve EHCP process

The Statutory SEND Team is changing, with new staff being recruited to support with the increasing number of assessments and Education Health and Care Plans being maintained.

The recruitment is well underway with new members of the team joining over the coming weeks.

However it has become clear through this process due to feedback received by the team, that the responses to families and schools have not been meeting the standards that should be expected. In order to address this and to ensure the team can deliver what's expected, it will be divided into two groups.

One group will cover assessments and the other will carry out annual reviews:

1. Statutory Assessment (20-week EHC statutory assessment process)

2. Reviews (Annual reviews/amendments and phased transfers)

Each of these will have equal resources with a Manager, Senior Assessment/Reviewing Officers, Assessment/Reviewing Officers and administrative support.

This means you'll be able to speak to anyone in the team for case information and receive a timely response.

Cases under assessment will have a link officer but once the outcome for the EHC plan is finalised, the case will move to the annual review team and not to an allocated officer.

It's important to remember if parent and carers require advice/support or guidance regarding the EHCP then your School SENCO is the expert on the ground who can support with school processes/procedures and is able to provide you with clear guidance.

*Alternatively, you are able to seek free independent support from SENDIAS, who can be contacted on 01823 355 578 or email: SomersetSENDIAS@somerset.gov.uk



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