



Joint Authority Support for Children, Families and Schools

Sensory Support Service Newsletter

www.sensorysupportservice.org.uk

Supporting children and young people with hearing loss, vision or multisensory impairment to have the best opportunities to learn, develop and grow.

September 2025

Welcome to the new Academic year!

We hope everyone had a good summer and that all children and young people are doing well. Particularly for those on transition into a new setting, we hope this new phase in their education journey is going well. We have all been working hard to ensure everything is in place. You can discuss any issues or concerns with your support teacher for Vision Impairment, (QTVI) Teacher of Deaf (ToD) or teacher for Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI). You can also contact us via our **Service helpline** sensorysupportservice@bristol.gov.uk

We wish everyone a happy school year!

Facebook page:

Would any parents be interested in running a Friends of Sensory Support Service, Facebook page? This would be run by parents and only used to provide information about events, grants etc that you would find useful. Some parents have said that they would welcome this. Let us know if you are interested in doing this, by emailing sensorysupportservice@bristol.gov.uk or by phone on 0117 9038441/2.

1. Explorers – Sensory Support Service Early Years’ group

If you have a young child with vision impairment, join us at Explorers for lots of play in a safe environment, sensory stories, tasting activities, singing and lots of fun. Siblings welcome. Our next session is on **Tuesday 16 September 2025** from 10.30am to midday, at:

Elmfield House

Greystoke Avenue
Westbury on Trym
BS10 6AY

Call 0117 9038442 for further details.

After consulting with parents, we are trialling some Friday sessions, alongside the Tuesday sessions.

Further session dates up to December 2025 are:

- Tuesday 14 October
- Friday 7 November
- Tuesday 18 November
- Friday 28 November
- Tuesday 9 December

2. VICTA: Grant Scheme for Children and Young adults who are severely sight impaired

The VICTA Grant Scheme has now reopened to help young people build or maintain their independence and retain control of their lives and leisure time. In 2025 applications will only be considered for children and young people who are **registered or are registerable as blind or severely sight impaired (SSI)** from the age of 8, up to and including the age of 29 years and who are permanent residents in the UK.

Items covered under the VICTA Grant Scheme:

- a VICTA assigned laptop
- assigned software
- a VICTA assigned laptop + assigned software
- items for independent living e.g. white canes, talking measuring jugs, talking induction hobs

Please note, equipment supplied through the grant scheme is for home use only (not for school, college or work).

Successful applicants will be asked for a minimum 20% contribution towards the grant. Please note, the next deadline for applications for review is Friday 19 September 2025.

For the full grant application criteria, information on the items covered within the scheme, and to make an application, please visit the VICTA website via the link below. If you have any questions, please get in touch at grants@victa.org.uk or call 01908 240 831. [Find out more and apply for a grant.](#)

3. Bristol Beacon: Pulse Kids project

Bristol Beacon is running a music and movement group for children aged 7 to 11 years old, with additional needs.

Three musicians will lead the space where group members will play music and movement games, explore instruments, sounds and rhythms, create and record own songs and feel supported in the space.

When: Wednesdays 4.15pm to 5.15pm in term time, starting on **24 September 2025**.

Where: Beacon Music Centre, 35 Stanton Road, BS10 5SJ

Why: To improve wellbeing, learn skills, make friends and have fun!

Plenty of parking onsite. Parents welcome to stay onsite or leave depending on needs of child. Free snack included.

Please [register your child](#) before attending a session.

4. News from Guide Dogs:

Guide Dogs My Time To Play:

We are currently running Guide Dogs My Time (Under 5's group) in Radstock fortnightly on Friday mornings until **Friday 17 October 2025** (limited number of spaces still available). The next group will start on **Friday 19 December 2025** and continue in the New Year. Please email martyn.arthur@guidedogs.org.uk for further information.

You can also access Guide Dogs My Time to Play Virtually, for further information please visit the following Guide Dogs website page: [Early years development and habilitation | Guide Dogs](#)

Habtastic course:

A 6 week course is going to be running in the Bath area for upper KS2 children on Friday afternoons during the school day starting in November 2025.

If your child attends a mainstream school in Bath and North East Somerset or you are interested in them attending from out of the area, please get in touch.

The course will teach pouring, chopping, spreading, measuring, using technology and dressing skills.

The final session will be on a Saturday with parents asked to attend to learn about the skills and techniques and celebrate the learning of the children in a Habtastic Fete.

To register your interest please email martyn.arthur@guidedogs.org.uk

5. Blind in Business

Are delighted to let you know that their flagship **Building Prospects** programme is back this year with a refreshed and improved line-up!

About Building Prospects

This fun, peer-led series of interactive one hour workshops has been redesigned to give young people even more opportunities to:

- Build confidence and independence
- Develop employability and life skills
- Explore exciting career pathways
- Learn from peers' experiences and make new friends

These workshops are perfect for curious, motivated young people aged 13 to 18, who want to start shaping their future.

Programme details:

- **Dates:** Monday 15 September to Wednesday 15 October 2025
- **Time:** 5pm to 6pm
- **Format:** Online via Zoom (students can choose to attend either Monday or Wednesday evenings to fit around school and family life)
- **Apply using the** [Application form](#)

6. Eye Can Exhibition

You're invited to Eye Can Bath 2025, hosted by Sight Support West of England, to a free exhibition for anyone living with sight loss. National and local organisations will be offering information, advice, and practical solutions for people who are blind or partially sighted.

Where: The Pavilion, North Parade, Bath, BA2 4EU

When: Thursday 16 October 2025, from 10am to 3pm (last entry 2.30pm)

You can find more information about this event and book your free tickets via Eventbrite at [Eye Can Bath 2025 Exhibition Tickets, Thu 16 Oct 2025 at 10:00 | Eventbrite](#)

6. Parents Virtual Hub – Sight Support West

Our Parents Virtual Hub takes place on the third **Thursday** of every month from **7.30pm to 8.30pm** and is specifically for parents of visually impaired children and young people up to the age of 25. It provides a supportive environment where parents can share experiences, exchange tips, and connect with others who understand the unique challenges and joys of raising a child with a visual impairment.

The group is open to parents who live in our three areas of responsibility, namely Bristol, BANES and South Glos, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Swindon.

Led by Volunteers

Our hubs are run by dedicated volunteers who ensure you feel right at home. Meet your host of this virtual hub, Becky, who will guide the sessions and create a friendly and inclusive atmosphere.



“Hi, I’m Becky, Mum to two boys. My eldest was first diagnosed with a vision impairment (VI) 8 years ago and we are in the early stages of having another VI confirmed! I’m very excited to be supporting the three partner charities in hosting the parent forum. I am looking forward to (virtually) meeting other parents and carers of children with a VI to share knowledge and experiences.”

Upcoming dates (all from 7.30pm to 8.30pm):

Thursdays:

- 18 September
- 16 October
- 13 November

Then every month thereafter.

How to join:

If you’re interested in joining this fortnightly virtual hub, simply get in touch with us to register. You can:

- Use our [contact form](#)
- Call us on [0117 322 4885](tel:01173224885)
- Email info@sightsupportwest.org.uk

Once you’ve registered, we’ll send you all the details you need to join the sessions via Teams. If you’re unfamiliar with Teams, don’t worry, we’re happy to help you get set up and confident in using it. There’s no need to book each time, and you’re welcome to attend as often or as little as you like, there’s no pressure or obligation.

Royal Society for Blind Children: Upcoming Events

The monthly Connecting Families group has been busy planning September and October sessions that could be beneficial for families.

Tuesday 16 September 7pm to 8pm

[Connecting Families Online: 'Balancing Priorities and Self-Care for Parents and Carers' · Luma](#)

The start of a new academic year can bring up a range of feelings and mixed responses when your child has a visual impairment and additional needs. Families with SEND often experience additional challenges during these transitions.

In this online session, you'll explore practical tips and strategies to help you build resilience, empathy, and self-esteem while strengthening positive family relationships. Look at ways to support your child's big emotions and help you respond with care and compassion.

Join for a supportive discussion focused on balancing your child's needs with your own wellbeing.

Tuesday 14 October 7pm to 8pm

[Connecting Families Online: Personal Care for Young People with a vision impairment · Luma](#)

From washing and dressing to toileting, periods & shaving to home adaptations and life hacks.

Join a session with Rosie, a Habilitation Specialist to discuss how small wins around the home can empower your children and boost their wellbeing and confidence. This is a relaxed, judgment-free space where you can ask questions – big or small! The group understands the unique challenges you're facing.

If you have young people interested in any of our other groups, including Sisterhood, Boys' Crew, Audio Book Club and more, head over to the [RSBC website](#) to find out more.

Royal Society for Blind Children also offer family support, connect families, information, online sessions, fun days, etc. Please find attached a joining form for support from family practitioners if you are interested. For more details see, www.rsbc.org.uk

If you do not want to receive information, please let us know by emailing our generic email and telling us the name of your child sensorysupportservice@bristol.gov.uk

Want more information on special educational needs and disability for the under 25s?

Find a link to the Local Offer for your area by following the link below

- [Bristol](#)
- [South Gloucestershire](#)
- [Bath and North East Somerset](#)
- [North Somerset](#)

General Data Protection Regulations as of 25/05/2018

The Local Authority (LA) uses data to carry out specific functions for which it is responsible, such as the assessment of special educational needs and/ or disabilities, home to school transport requirements, admissions, children/ young people's welfare, children looked after, exclusions and early years support. Anonymised information is used to derive statistics, to inform decisions on (for example) the funding of education settings, to assess educational performance and track Service provision.

The Sensory Support Service keeps information about your child so that we can provide services and to keep a record of these services. This information may include information that supports your child's development, monitor progress, specialist assessments and advice/support given to settings to enable them to meet your child's needs. This information will also include contact details, attendance information, characteristics such as ethnicity, special educational needs and any relevant medical information.

We will only request and share data with people already involved you're your child, people relevant to statutory duties and individual circumstances.

For information regarding data sharing, including retention periods, please visit is www.bristol.gov.uk/council-and-mayor/about-our-website/privacy

If you wish to access the personal data held about you or a young person you are responsible for, please contact Bristol City Council in writing:

Data Protection Officer
Bristol City Council
PO Box 3176
Bristol
BS3 9FS