



Joint Authority Support for Children, Families and Schools

# Sensory Support Service Newsletter

[www.sensorysupportservice.org.uk](http://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.

May 2026

## Welcome to the Sensory Support Service Newsletter

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### Special Educational Needs and Disabilities consultation

As you probably know there is a SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) consultation going on now, which is proposing significant changes to SEND and which will shape the future of support for children with SEND. This consultation is open until **18 May 2026**.

We want to reassure you that nothing has changed yet and there are several organisations and professionals engaged in the process of consultation. We would like to encourage as many people as possible to respond to this consultation. We are giving you the opportunity to learn more about this – we are running the following online sessions where we will do a brief presentation about key changes and then discuss the main issues for Sensory Impairment.

### **Online session 1**

- 6 May 2026 at 7pm
- [Join session 1](#)
- Meeting ID: 341 732 128 281 58
- Passcode: 7ix2HR7K

### **Online session 2**

- 7 May 2026 at 9.30am
- [Join session 2](#)
- Meeting ID: 356 454 709 578 105
- Passcode: kf9B4Rb3

### **Online session 3**

- 7 May 2026 at 7pm
- [Join session 3](#)
- Meeting ID: 390 254 724 343 098
- Passcode: uh7Lu6ke

You can:

- find out more about the [changes to the SEND system on the Education Hub](#)
- access the [SEND consultation and other documents](#)

The consultation closes on 18 May 2026.

### **Service helpline**

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 email our **service helpline** on [sensorysupportservice@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:sensorysupportservice@bristol.gov.uk)

## **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.

Session dates:

- Tuesday 12 May 2026 from 10.30am to midday
- Friday 22 May 2026 from 10.30am to midday

Venue: Elmfield House, Greystoke Avenue, Westbury on Trym, BS10 6AY

Call 0117 9038442 for further details.

## **VICTA: VI Watersports Festival**

Enjoy a two-day Watersports Festival in Bristol for ages 8 to 29, run **by VICTA Sport and All-Aboard Watersports on Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 June.**

Try sailing, paddling, rowing and open water swimming, with more activities being added. No experience needed, all equipment provided. Attend one day or the full weekend for £8. Applications close **Friday 8 May 2026.**

More activities are continually added to this event, so [apply for your place](#) now to get the latest updates, including details of a powerboat session.

## **Guide Dogs My Time to Play session**

Guide Dogs are currently running Guide Dogs My Time (under 5s group).

Venue: Radstock Children's Centre, Hope House Centre, 10 Waterloo Road, BA3 3EP

When: fortnightly on Friday mornings, 10am to 11.30am.

Next session dates are **1 May, 8 May, 15 May and 22 May 2026.**

Please email [martyn.arthur@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:martyn.arthur@guidedogs.org.uk) for further information.

Please visit [Early Years Development and Habilitation | Guide Dogs](#) for further information.

## **Guide Dogs: Travel training event**

Guide Dogs will be running an event on **Monday 6 July** for young people aged 14 and over introducing using technology (Google Maps and First Bus app) to help with orientation and navigation.

This event will be divided into 2 parts on the day: a classroom session learning how to set up and use the apps and a practical session where the young people get to practice the skills they have learned with a bus journey to a café.

Young people wishing to take part in this event must be familiar with their mobile phone and competent in using it. For example, navigating menus and inputting text (either verbally or physically).

Further information about this event will be circulated nearer the time.

## **Train familiarisation event**

Is your young person working towards more independent train travel? This event will give your young person experience of:

- familiarising with the features of stations and platforms
- learning how to access and use passenger assist
- learning how to buy train tickets
- boarding and alighting a train
- train travel between Bristol Temple Meads and Bath

Who: Young people aged 14 and over who have a vision impairment

Where: This event will begin and end at Temple Meads Railway Station

When: Monday 13 July 2026 from 10:45am until approximately 4pm

For this event, your young person will also need to bring a packed lunch and some money to get themselves a drink in a cafe in Bath. The train travel will be free of charge, courtesy of First Great Western.

Places for the experience are limited so please email [martyn.arthur@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:martyn.arthur@guidedogs.org.uk) as soon as possible to request a booking form.

If you would prefer a call to find out more, say this in your email and include your phone number. A member of the team will contact you. Places will be prioritised for those finishing GCSEs or A Levels and are for those who want to develop independent travel skills.

## **Bath and North East Somerset Phab family open day**

Families are invited to a free [Phab](#) family open day at the Hive in Peasedown St John on **Saturday 6 June 2026, from 10am to 3pm**. There will be a quiet hour from **10am to 11am**.

There will be games and activities, plus a chance to find out about local Phab Clubs, which bring disabled and non-disabled people together to build friendships and have fun.

Open to all ages.

For more information, email [banesphab@gmail.com](mailto:banesphab@gmail.com) or visit the [Phab website](#). Parents and carers interested in helping develop the club are also welcome to get in touch.

## **VICTA Green Space Ticket Offer**

To celebrate **National Children's Gardening Week**, VICTA is offering to **reimburse ticket costs of up to £20** for children and young people with a visual impairment to visit a **public garden or green space** during May half term.

- When: Saturday 23 May to Sunday 31 May 2026
- Who: vision impaired children and young people up to 17 years old
- Eligibility: Must be registered or registerable as blind or partially sighted
- Closing date: Monday 1 June 2026

This is a **limited offer**, so early registration is encouraged. A list of suggested gardens is available for inspiration.

[Find out more and apply.](#)

## **VICTA: VI Tech Workshops**

There is still time for you to sign up for a tech workshop designed for parents and carers of VI children.

VICTA has teamed up with the Technology Association of Visually Impaired People to host three webinars to mark Global Accessibility Awareness Day on **21 May 2026**.

The workshop will:

- provide guidance on keeping your children and young people safe online
- discuss some of the most common assistive technology devices, software and apps
- look at issues around transitions and equipping young people with the technology skills they will need in later life

### **The workshops**

#### **Online Harms and AI Awareness**

Tuesday 12 May, 7pm to 8pm, National Youth Agency

#### **Tech for Fun**

Monday 18 May, 7pm to 8.30pm, RSBC

#### **Primary to Secondary Tech Transitioning**

Thursday 21 May, 7pm to 8.30pm, Thomas Pocklington Trust

The workshops are free to attend but you must pre-apply for your place before the **closing date on Tuesday 5 May 2026**.

Find out more and [apply for your place on a workshop](#).

## **RSBC: Family Support Newsletter for Professionals and Families**

RSBC have a new Family Support Newsletter for Professionals and Families where you can find out about exciting updates and upcoming events during **May 2026**.

[Sign up to receive the RSBC Family Support Newsletter](#).

**Royal Society for Blind Children** also offer family support, information, online sessions, fun days, connect families and more. Visit the [RSBC website](#).

## **VICTA: Family Wilderness Challenge Residential**

VICTA is hosting a brand-new **Wilderness Challenge Residential**, a fun-filled outdoor weekend for young people aged **10 to 17 years and their parents and carers**.

Date: Saturday 26 to Sunday 27 September 2026

Venue: Scout Adventures, Gilwell Park, London, E4 7QW.

The event will offer shared outdoor challenges, teamwork and opportunities for families to connect with others in a supportive environment. Families will stay in **dormitory-style accommodation**, with exclusive use by VICTA.

The cost is **£20 per person**. Applications close on **Friday 24 July 2026**.

[Find out more and apply](#).

## **Deafblind UK**

Deafblind UK's Children and Young People's Service supports young people with any level of multi-sensory impairment, along with their families and support networks. It offers an online peer group for young people to connect, share tips, and reduce isolation, and a virtual Parents Support Group for shared support and guest speakers.

The service also includes:

- emotional support for individuals aged 16 and over
- an accessible holiday home in Norfolk
- a year-round helpline
- an accessible places map on their website

All services are free, and anyone with a sight and hearing loss, plus their support network, is welcome to join.

The service helpline is available all year round to answer questions and provide advice or signpost people to the right place where a query is more in-depth.

Call 0800 132320 or email [info@deafblind.org.uk](mailto:info@deafblind.org.uk)

## **Buckley Court Supported Living Accommodation**

Buckley Court is a supported living accommodation for Deaf and Deafblind adults based in Henbury, Bristol. Our aim is to support adults to develop their daily living skills so they can move on to live independently.

To be eligible for a placement at Buckley Court, you will need to be between 18 and 64 years old and have a connection to Bristol. This connection could be:

- your birthplace
- the area where you grew up or lived
- where you received education
- where you or your family currently lives

You will also need to have an ongoing support need to develop daily living skills to move on independently. This may include learning how to manage your finances, maintain a tenancy, cook, or develop other essential life skills, as well as being committed to meeting with support workers every week.

If you are unsure whether you meet the criteria, you can:

- email [buckley.court@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:buckley.court@bristol.gov.uk)
- call 0117 3533322 or text on 07584 270086
- video-call us or send a video message on 07584 270086

Visit the [Buckley Court Facebook page](#).

## **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](#)

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](mailto:sensorysupportservice@bristol.gov.uk)

### **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 [Bristol City Council's privacy webpage](#).

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