Joint Authority Support for Children, Families and Schools

Sensory Support Service Newsletter

www.bristol.gov.uk/sensory-support-service

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

November 2026

Welcome to the Sensory Support Service Newsletter

We hope you are all well and keeping warm.

As you are probably aware there are SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) reforms underway. There is no plan to change current provision for your children from the Sensory Support Service but there are developments that may change some processes, e.g. use of EHCPs and Individual Support Plans. The government announced that more information would be available early in 2027 and we will keep you informed of key changes once we know more. See below for news, events etc. Thank you.

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**: sensorysupportservice@bristol.gov.uk

Parent representatives for our steering group

Thank you to all the parents who offered to be part of this group. We would still welcome a few more parents particularly those with older children (secondary and post 16).
This is a group that meets 3 times per year online.
The Steering Group meets to:

- Provide strategic direction to the running of the service

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- Discuss updates and developments with the service
- Share information across services and partner organisations
- Make decisions about changes to the service
- Review the performance of the service

See what parents thought of their experience below and please let us know if you are interested in joining the group by emailing: sensorysupportservice@bristol.gov.uk

Parent: "I have held a place as a parent/carer rep for several years which has been very enlightening. You get the chance to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by children and families, as well as the support they need and can put things into perspective from a family point of view. It's been quite rewarding to have some input on things that the service is aiming to achieve. I would encourage anyone that is thinking of applying, to do it! It is a small-time commitment that has some real impact and can help you to have a great understanding of the services that our children rely on."

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 **Friday 27 November 2026.** We run sessions on Fridays from 10.30am to Midday, at:

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

Call 0117 9038442 for further details.

Upcoming session dates:

- Friday 04 December 2026
- Friday 11 December 2026

2. Guide Dogs News:

Get set for the Guide Dogs family event **Saturday 6th December 2026** at **We The Curious**, Bristol. To find out more information and to apply for a space, please visit: www.guidedogs.org.uk/getting-support/help-for-children-and-families/living-well/family-events/

There will be a Key Stage 2 pupils independent living skills group in Bristol starting at the end of January 2027 - details to follow soon (6-8 sessions)

There will be a post 16 Habilitation group (4 weekly sessions) taking place in North Somerset towards the end of February 2027. Further details to follow soon.

3. VICTA Ticket Offer: Book-Related Days Out

VICTA is offering young people aged 12 to 18 the chance to claim up to **£30 towards the cost of a book-related activity or event** between now and **31 March 2027**.

Activities could include:

- seeing a play or show based on a book
- attending a library reading event
- visiting an author museum or literary attraction
- taking part in a book-themed escape room

Participants can apply for reimbursement for **one activity per month**, with applications reviewed monthly. VICTA will only reimburse the cost of a vision impaired attendee's ticket, and they must be a member of Beyond the Book. Families will need to provide proof of attendance to claim the reimbursement.

If your child enjoys reading and would like to explore books in new and exciting ways, click here to find out more and apply

4. Parents Virtual Hub

Parents and carers of children and young people with a vision impairment are invited to join the monthly **Parents Virtual Hub**, a friendly online support group run by **Sight Support West of England**. The Parents Virtual Hub is hosted by Becky, a parent with lived experience, who creates a warm and welcoming space for conversation and support.

Sessions take place on the **third Thursday of each month**, **7.30pm to 8.30pm.** To find out more or register, contact Sight Support West of England.

Next session date:

Thursday 17 December 2026

Then every month thereafter

How to Join

If you're interested in joining this monthly virtual hub, simply get in touch and register. You can:

- Use contact form
- Call on 0117 322 4885
- Email info@sightsupportwest.org.uk

5. British Blind Sport Survey

Survey closing date extended to 29 November

British Blind Sport has extended the closing date for its Sport & Physical Activity Preference Survey, giving more people the opportunity to take part.

The survey is open to blind and partially sighted people of any age across the UK, whether you're very active, occasionally active, or not currently involved in sport, British Blind Sport wants to hear from you. Parents and carers can take part too.

The results will help guide future activities, events and partnerships. If you haven't yet completed the survey, we encourage you to take a few minutes to share your views.

Click the link to complete the online survey before 29 November and help shape the future of sport and physical activity for people with sight loss.

6. Inclusive cricket opportunity

Children and young people with vision impairment are invited to attend free inclusive cricket taster sessions, hosted by the Gloucestershire Cricket Foundation. Sessions will take place in Cheltenham and Bristol, offering a fun opportunity to try cricket in a supportive and accessible environment. The remaining 2 session dates will take place on the **5 December 2026** at:

- **John Cabot Academy, Bristol, BS15 8BD, 11am to midday**
- **Bourneside School, Cheltenham, GL51 3EF at 1pm to 2pm**

Please see details in the Events section of our website.

7. Research Participants Wanted

University of Glasgow researchers are looking for blind and partially sighted adults aged between 16 to 25, to test a smartphone app designed to help users find building entrances. Testing can take place locally, and participants will receive a £10 shopping voucher. Contact Ning Li for more information. Please follow below link for further details regarding participation.

Interested in Taking Part in Our Research Study?

8. 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 **November 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

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 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