

Signpost News

Issue 50
January 2010

Welcome

Happy New Year to you all. We hope you all had a lovely Christmas and New Year despite the cold weather! Let's hope the new decade is kind to us all.

This is a special newsletter from Signpost – our 'golden' newsletter, the 50th since Signpost began in 2001 (see our feature 'a little bit of history' later on). And what better way to celebrate than with a 'Golden Ticket' from Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh, which will enable our members to visit them for free throughout 2010. We are thrilled to have been chosen once again, and to be able to offer this opportunity to our families. If you have not already enjoyed a visit to this top Edinburgh tourist attraction, why not give us a call to book a trip? Entry is free, and ticket holders can also enjoy discounts in the café and shop.

As always, we hope that you will find the information in our newsletter useful and interesting, and don't forget we're always keen to hear from you about items to include in the next edition, including any personal experiences you'd like to share with other families.

FREE Dynamic Earth Golden Ticket 2010

Signpost has been lucky enough to win a Golden Ticket for 2010. Last year's ticket has already given lots of Signpost families a great day out – we've had great feedback from members about their experiences. If you and your family would like to use Signpost's FREE GOLDEN TICKET to visit Dynamic Earth, it is available for members to book from the Signpost Office on 01506 431 123 (conditions apply).



Thanks to all the families who have shared their experiences with us – keep sending in your photos and letters, we love to hear about your adventures!

Fancy Making a Splash?!

Calling all Children and Young People with additional support needs

Livingston & District Dolphins & No Limits Sports Club are welcoming any new members who would be interested in joining the swimming club which is held at St Margaret's Academy, Livingston. All sessions are coached by disability trained coaches and have beginners and improvers level. Fun sessions are available for younger/less experienced swimmers, and the opportunity to take part in galas and competitions is also offered. Sessions take place on a Saturday. If you would like more information then call Lesley on 0779 150 6602 or Mark on 0788 240 6204.



Maintaining your Relationship

One Plus One, the relationships research organisation, has launched a new series of articles on their website, thecoupleconnection.net to help parents of disabled children strengthen their relationship.

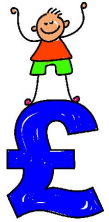
These new articles have been written to help couples strengthen their relationship while facing the challenges and delights of having a child with additional support needs. They have been taken from a new book, 'Special Needs Child: Maintaining Your Relationship – Staying connected through the highs and lows', by Victoria Dawson and Antonia Chitty.



The book is packed with advice from parents whose children have additional support needs, to give the reader insight into how to maintain a relationship whilst recognising the importance of celebrating their child. For more information go to thecoupleconnection.net

Saving scheme for parents of disabled children

The government has included families with disabled children in their plans for a savings scheme called the 'Savings Gateway'. From 2010 the savings scheme will be open to people of working age on low incomes and in receipt of specified benefits, including Carer's Allowance. For every pound saved the government will give a contribution of 50p. Savers will be able to pay up to £25 a month into their account for two years, which means a potential contribution from the government of £300 after the two year period. For more details visit the directgov website – www.directgov.uk



Benefits Calculator – Contact A Family

Contact a Family has launched a new area of its website with money tips for families which include disabled children. An online benefits calculator is available along with tips on coping in the current financial climate. Details can be found at www.cafamily.org.uk/cashcounts

The Green Gym

The Green Gym is a new approach to creating healthier communities and a healthier environment by offering people an alternative to improving their physical fitness by involvement in practical conservation activities such as woodland management, horticulture, tree planting and improving footpaths. Benefits to quality of life also arise from the social contact and support that comes from working with others. Spending time in green spaces and learning new skills have also been shown to make a positive contribution to people's health.

Sessions will run every Thursday. If you or someone you know would like to do something practical and meet new people at the same time please contact Susan Scott on 01506 775626 or email susan.scott@westlothian.gov.uk, sessions will run every Thursday from 12th November from 1-4pm.

'The Buzz'

We mentioned this soft-play/activity centre in our last newsletter, and have since received many phone calls from parents recommending it, particularly for young people with autism who enjoy the sensory rooms. Families have advised us that the staff are very welcoming and helpful, and the sensory rooms can be booked flexibly (booking ahead is recommended!). One parent told us that her young adult also enjoyed using the sensory rooms and Laserquest, as they were able to book the room for exclusive use, make some noise, and generally let off steam! The Buzz can be contacted on 01324 613 002



Families as Learning Partners Conference, 9 March 2010, Hamilton

This conference, organised by Enquire, will consider issues and provide advice and good practice on a range of topics including parental rights, how parental involvement links with additional support for learning, parents getting involved in school, how school staff can help parents get involved and much more. The full price of the conference is £160, but there is a subsidised rate of £10 for parents of children with additional support needs. For more details or to register go to www.enquire.org.uk/conference

DIR (Developmental, Individual differences, Relationship based model) – Floor time Introductory Course 29 & 30 March 2010, Extended clinical workshop 31 March 2010 Edinburgh Training and Conference Venue, St Mary's Street, Edinburgh

The DIR model was developed by Dr Stanley Greenspan MD and Serena Wider PhD as a framework to assist parents and professionals in constructing a comprehensive intervention program that focuses on improving the child's functioning in all the development capacities where there are challenges. This introductory training will focus on use of the DIR model with children with communication and learning difficulties, regulatory disorders, and children with behaviours that place them on the autistic spectrum.

DIR uses emotional and motivating experienced based learning to improve social skills, language, independence and to support higher level thinking. The course will highlight the interdisciplinary nature of this model. There will be a focus on supporting and coaching parents. This training is designed for Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Health and Educational professionals,

parents, mental health professionals, medical professionals, nurses, play therapists, psychologists, teachers and special needs assistants – all are welcome. Costs for day 1 and 2 are £315 and for day 3, £135. More information can be found at www.trainingways.com

Managing Very Challenging Behaviour Workshop, 20 May 2010, Glasgow

Challenging behaviour is not a new problem, nor one which will go away, but it can be made easier by having the skills and confidence to minimize the impact of the difficulties, change disruptive behaviour and maintain control. This one day workshop, aimed at professionals working with young people, offers two interrelated approaches to getting ahead of the challenge and managing challenging behaviour and is suitable for all professionals who work with children and young people. The cost of the workshop is £145, however special discounts may apply. For more information call Children in Scotland on 0131 228 8484

‘Just Ask’ for additional help

On 2 November the Scottish Government launched the ‘Just Ask’ campaign. Running until March 2010, the campaign aims to raise parent’s awareness about additional support for learning and encourage them to ‘Just Ask’ for help at school if they are worried about their child’s learning. For more information about additional support for learning (or the campaign) visit the website on <http://campaigns.stv.tv/just-ask/>



Living and Dying Well in Lothian – Lothians Draft Palliative Care Strategy 2010-2015

This strategy includes a section on improving palliative care for children and adolescents, which may be of interest to some of our families. Palliative care group are now consulting on the strategy and would welcome your response to the consultation. Responses on the consultation should be given by 5 February 2010. The Signpost office has a copy of the consultation document, which we can copy for you, or it can be seen on the website www.nhslotthian.scot.nhs.uk/ladwinlothian. You can also request the consultation documents direct from NHS Lothian by emailing: ladwinlothian@nhslotthian.scot.nhs.uk, or by phoning Thomas McCarthy on 0131 536 9057.

Special Scotland Parent Support Meetings 30th January 2010 and 27th March 2010

These sessions are designed for parents and carers of children with autism to meet each other and offer and receive advice based on their own and other people's experiences, and hopefully make new friends. Special Scotland staff are also on hand to give information about our grants and to take notes on any ideas that they may be able to help with in the future. Meetings are at Howden Park Centre 11.30-1pm on 30th January, and Regal Theatre, Bathgate 11.30-1pm on 27th March.

INVITATION TO PARENTS:- Lothian Autistic Society and Signpost Joint Open Day Wednesday 10th February 10.30-12.30pm – Howden Park Centre

We would like to give parents a chance to discuss relevant topics to your families. Ask your questions and find out more about local services and about how we can help.

It would be helpful when booking refreshments to know how many to cater for, please call **01506 431123** to let us know you are coming. We look forward to seeing you then.

Dates for your Diary

<i>every Thursday</i>	<i>Green Gym</i>	<i>Livingston</i>
<i>30 January</i>	<i>Special Parents meeting</i>	<i>Livingston</i>
<i>8 February</i>	<i>Consultation closing date for Palliative care strategy</i>	
<i>10 February</i>	<i>Joint Open Day LAS/Signpost – parents meeting</i>	<i>Livingston</i>
<i>9 March</i>	<i>Families as learning partners – Conference</i>	<i>Hamilton</i>
<i>27 March</i>	<i>Special Parents meeting</i>	<i>Bathgate</i>
<i>29-31 Mar</i>	<i>DIR – Floor time course</i>	<i>Edinburgh</i>
<i>20 May</i>	<i>Managing Very Challenging Behaviour</i>	<i>Glasgow</i>

A little bit of history...in fifty newsletters

Issue 1 - March 2002 The first Signpost newsletter was published, looking back at our first year, when Signpost was still run by a hardy band of parent volunteers who managed the part-time helpline from home.



Issue 6 - November 2003 We took our 'information road-show to Fauldhouse, where we received a very warm welcome. Four other organisations joined us, along with Stacey, who entertained the children with balloon swords and facepainting.



Issue 9 - March 2004 Bryan Paterson from Education visited us to launch our booklets 'My Brother or Sister has Special Needs' and 'Leisure Opportunities'.

Issue 15 - October 2004 We welcomed our new admin assistant Elizabeth to Signpost, taking the total staff to three part-timers.

Issue 19 - May 2005 We reported on the results of our first formal survey of people's feelings about Signpost – fortunately, they were mostly complimentary. "The right people with the right attitude in the right place" was our favourite comment.

Issue 23 – December 2005 A transition fair organised by Signpost was held at Strathbrock, and the first-ever edition of our 'transition guide was published (this guide for carers of teens preparing to move on from school is about to enter its fifth edition!) It later won an award.



Issue 25 – April 2006 We said a fond farewell to Lindy Ling, one of the two original staff members. Amanda joined our team as Information Officer, with Cheryl following shortly afterwards. The first 'Dream night at the Zoo' was held in Edinburgh, and several Signpost families participated (in the rain).



Issue 28 - October 2006 Our first fun day was a great success, with families enjoying judo demonstrations, bikes, music and the very popular fire engine!

Issue 32 – May 2007 The Signpost 'bike bonanza' resulted in a number of children receiving 'recycled' bikes to enjoy during the summer holidays – which turned out to be the wettest anyone could remember!

Issue 37 – January 2008 Members of the dads' group celebrated their first year together by going go-karting, and pictures of the winners appeared in our newsletter.

Issue 40 – June 2008 We reported on the Big Plan, our pilot initiative to help teens and their families plan for life after school, in collaboration with Edinburgh Development Group.

Issue 47 – June 2009 Members continued to tell us about their adventures at Dynamic Earth, and the first Dream Night at Blair Drummond was a huge hit with families - despite the pouring rain!

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to our newsletter over the years, and we're looking forward to writing the next 50 newsletters (which may feature better weather!)



Signpost - support for families of young people with additional needs in West Lothian

Telephone: 01506 431 123 (helpline), 01506 431133 (office)

E-mail: enquiries@signpost-online.co.uk

Write to: Signpost, FREEPOST NAT9123, Livingston, EH54 0BR

Visit our website: www.signpost-online.co.uk

Come in and see us! Office open 9.30-3.30pm, Mon-Thurs, 9-1pm Friday,
Beatlie School Campus, Craigshill, Livingston, EH54 5EJ

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