

Sensory Inclusion Service

Visual Impairment Newsletter

Issue
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Sensory Inclusion Service, Floor 7, Darby House, Lawn Central, Telford, TF3 4JA

Meet Nancy and Shani

My name is Nancy. I am 11 years old and I have a form of Retinal Dystrophy, meaning that my peripheral vision is reduced. I also have a learning disability, so my mum is writing this for me. This photo is of me with my best friend: Shani. Shani is a Buddy Dog: we got her very recently through Guide Dogs UK.

I have always loved animals – particularly stroking and grooming them, and watching them do funny things! However, with my particular disabilities, mum and dad had been reluctant to get a family pet of our own, until my Habilitation Officer from Guide Dogs UK (who comes to advise on how I can get around safely) told mum about the Buddy Dog Scheme. Buddy Dogs are companions and family pets for children with a visual impairment. They are dogs who have started life in Guide Dog training (so they will typically be Labrador/Retriever/German Shepherds) but who have been given a career change because life as a Guide Dog wasn't quite right for them. This can happen at different points on their Guide Dog training journey. Only suitable dogs for children with VI make it as a Buddy Dog – Guide Dogs UK are very careful about ensuring that families and pets are a suitable match, and so the Buddy Dogs are all well-behaved pets. They are not Guide Dogs, though, so mustn't be used as a mobility aid.

The process to get a Buddy Dog was rigorous. We were allocated a Canine Assisted Partnership Specialist whose job it is to match the dogs to the right family. As a family, we had to do lots of assessments to check we were suitable to have a Buddy Dog. We had Zoom training with other families on the scheme on how to look after a dog. They also wanted to see our home and garden; talk to us about our expectations about having a Buddy Dog, and then to meet us for the day – we went to the National Guide Dog Training Centre in Leamington Spa for this, which was one of the most exciting days I've ever had! The process of assessments and matching took about a year. It can take less or more, depending on how particular the child's needs are, and how many families are on the scheme at the same time.

Having Shani has been life-changing for me and my family. She is my best friend and I really trust her – I often lie on the floor with her for a cuddle. I love caring for her, and my favourite thing to do is to give her a "night-night biscuit" when I go to bed – and Shani loves that too!



For more information about Buddy Dogs , visit- <https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/getting-support/help-for-children-and-families/buddy-dogs-for-children/>

Transition to secondary school by Ryan Burgess

1. **When did you move up into secondary education?**

I moved up in September 2020, I am currently in Yr 7.

2. **Can you remember your thoughts/feelings about starting secondary school?**

I think I was nervous about the work being harder but I was also excited about starting a new school and trying new lessons

3. **How did your thoughts/feelings change once you had started secondary school?**

They didn't change very much to start with but my nerves soon went once I had started and made new friends.

4. **What do you most like about secondary school?**

I am enjoying everything about secondary school and I have made some good friends.

5. **Is there anything you would change or you would do differently?**

No I don't think so.

6. **How has the school supported you to make sure you have everything you need in terms of your visual impairment?**

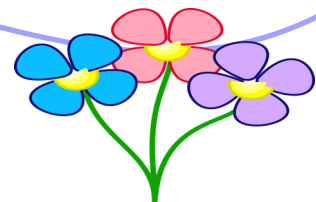
Before I started at the school, while we were in Lockdown, the school arranged for me to have virtual tours. I also came into the school for a visit over the summer before I started. Now I am here, the school make sure that all my work is enlarged for me and I have a laptop to use. I sit at the front of the class so that I can see the whiteboard and I am able to leave lessons 5 minutes early to go to my next lesson to avoid the rush of the other pupils moving around.



Budding gardener Amy



Amy has been helping out in the garden during the heatwave. She has been watering the flowers, weeding and looking after her plants



College life by Faith Pugh

1. **When did you move up from secondary school to college?**

About 3 years ago but it seems like forever ago, time has gone so quickly.

2. **Can you remember your thoughts/feelings about starting college?**

I was a bit nervous but mostly excited. I was excited about being able to wear my own clothes, about meeting new people and about the experience and starting the next chapter of my life.



3. **How did your thoughts/feelings change once you had started college?**

My nerves went away. In the first year I really made a lot of friends and settled into a nice community. At first I felt really grown up and mature, the college treat me like a young adult and not like a child.

4. **What do you most like about college?**

The people. Everyone is so friendly, you are never alone here as we all look out for each other. I also like to learn about life skills and things that I will need in the future. The canteen has lots of variety of food and there is a Starbucks coffee shop which is really nice. As there is more space at college, I feel I have a bit more freedom to move around.

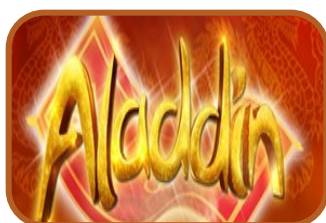
5. **Is there anything you would change or you would do differently?**

I would tell my former self not to get so worried about losing friends that I have made at secondary school as I soon made new friends.

6. **How has the college supported you to make sure you have everything you need in terms of your visual impairment?**

I have an ipad and I sit close to the front of most classes. My work is modified so that it is clear for me to see and the staff read off the whiteboard so I know what it says. There are Teaching Assistants in the class who can support me if I need the work explaining.

Save the date



Now that restrictions are starting to be lifted, we will once again be able to look ahead and start arranging activities and events. Look out for information on upcoming activities including a family bowling night in the autumn term and save the date for the annual pantomime trip which is booked for Saturday 18th December 2021.

Further details will be sent out over the coming weeks.



Registered charity no: 1043696

We are a small run charity with the aim to support children and young people with visual impairment and their families.

We are all parents/grandparents/guardians of children and young people with visual impairment ourselves so we understand their needs and the support they may require.

We offer funding for assistive technology and equipment and organise trips and events that improve confidence, wellbeing and socialisation.

We need to raise as much money to benefit as many children as possible.

We need to make Shropshire families aware that we are here to help and support them in anyway we can.

Please contact; Sandra

Email; socean456@aol.com

Or look us up on Facebook or Twitter

oneVISION
Shropshire

Free iPads or iPhones for children with a vision impairment, aged 3-18

Guide Dogs is launching a new service, Tech for All.

The aim of the service is to help children with a vision impairment to have access to their own devices at home – to support learning, or simply to have fun and explore the interests and activities they enjoy. In this way, it is hoped that the service will complement the wide range of support provided across the sight loss sector to help children and young people build their independence.

Tech for All will provide iPads to visually impaired children aged 3-18 across the UK, while secondary school-age children (age 11-18) may choose an iPhone instead. The devices have excellent accessibility features built-in, and online guides and tutorials will be provided to help them get started and to ensure that they know how to stay safe online. The devices will be completely free of charge, with the only requirement being proof of vision impairment.

In the 6-month pilot 3,500 free devices will be distributed, though if successful it is hoped that the service will be rolled out further in 2022.

For further information and to apply please visit www.guidedogs.org.uk/techforall.

Applications open on Thursday 22nd July.

Some useful links;

<https://www.victa.org.uk/> - Victa has a sports activity weekend for teenagers and a variety of day activities

<https://www.look-uk.org> - Look has a holiday flat in Scarborough

Please note while we are signposting you to these sights as areas of interest, we are unable to endorse or recommend.

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Independent Living Centre (ILC) Telford

The Independent living centre yesterday in Telford is now open and members of the public are welcome to go and have a look. The ILC is for use by the whole community:

- To access ideas and equipment that can be used by those with physical or sensory needs,
- To offer advice and support about what care may mean for you or a family member now or in the future,
- To give access to advice and support regarding community support,
- To enable you to book appointments for Occupational Therapy Assessments.

Wednesdays between 10-4pm will be focussed on sensory impairment with an aim to give people the opportunity to visit the virtual house which is set up with assistive devices such as vibrating alarm clocks and phones. We also provide ideas of all sorts of equipment and gadgets that can help at home.

For more information please visit <https://www.telford.gov.uk/virtualhouse> or contact:

Telephone: 01952 475181

Email: wip@tandwcvs.org.uk



Climbing Out runs 5 day outdoor activity programmes aimed at rebuilding confidence and self-esteem in people who've been through a life changing injury, illness or trauma. The programmes give participants the opportunity to take part in challenging yet fun activities whilst meeting others who've been through shared experiences. The activities are run hand in hand with personal development and life coaching sessions to enable participants to accept what they've been through and to start to see a new way forwards. The team of instructors will support individuals to work around any physical or mental limitations they may be facing, keeping everything achievable whilst stretching people's boundaries too.

This year Climbing Out are holding a programme for visually impaired young people 16—30 years between 2nd-6th August in the Peak District.

For more information please look at the Climbing out website <https://climbingout.org.uk/>

Welcome to our new QTVI, Emma Jeffries

Hi, my name is Emma. I joined the Visually Impaired team in April. I qualified as a teacher in 2002 and for the past 8 years I have worked as a SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) across 3 schools . I have 2 children aged 13 and 9. In my spare time I like to go walking, cycling, watching films and spending time with my family. I have been made to feel very welcome by the team and I am looking forward to meeting you all in person soon.

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Sensory Inclusion Service update

Well, what a year it has been! It has been a difficult time for all children and families. The pandemic has presented particular challenges for all sensory impaired children. There is no doubt the children and their families have risen to the challenge. We wish all the children and young people a well - deserved summer break and send particular good wishes to all those going on to pastures new at new schools, colleges, jobs or universities! Fingers tightly crossed for those of you eagerly awaiting exam results this summer.

We would also like to thank our whole team for their work over this academic year. They have managed to continue to deliver an effective and consistent service to children, families and schools. It has also led us to discover new ways of doing things that may support our work in the future. At the moment, we do not know what September will bring but we hope we will be back to 'as normal as possible' across all areas of our work.

Over the summer break, we will have the usual 'cover' duty with at least one of the team available each week. Some of our newly diagnosed families will also receive some specific support over the break. If you do have concerns or questions then please contact our office on 01952 385399. Contact details can also be found on the Local Offer on <https://www.telfordsend.org.uk/>



Local Offer for Special Educational Needs and Disability

Discover everything you need to know about education, health and care services in your local area for children and young people with SEND 0-25yrs at...

www.telfordsend.org.uk



Key features...

- Search for clear and accessible information, advice and sources of support.
- Explore leisure, fun and short breaks activities.
- Find out about specialist services and education health and care plans.
- Learn how schools support special educational needs.
- Use the interactive map showing what is available near to where you live.
- Have your say through our online feedback form.



www.telfordsend.org.uk

Need this in large print or Braille?

If you would like to receive this newsletter in Large Print or Braille, please email

**sendandinclusion
@telford.gov.uk**



Shropshire's SEND Local Offer is a single place for information and services for children and young people with special education needs and/or disabilities, their families and the practitioners who support them.

Take a look at the [SEND Family directory](#) for local events, groups and things to do. For news and updates please like and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Email: Local.Offer@shropshire.gov.uk Telephone: 0345 678 9063

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