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.

March 2026

Welcome to the Sensory Support Service Newsletter.

Contents

Children and Young People Evaluation Questionnaire 2025/26 1

1. Explorers: Sensory Support Service Early Years' group.....2
2. Paralympics 2026 3
3. Weekly football sessions for blind and partially sighted young people 3
4. VICTA Technology Survey 3
5. News from Guide Dogs.....4
6. STEP: Supporting Transitions, Enriching Progress.....4
7. Royal Society for Blind Children (RSBC): Family Support Newsletter for Professionals and Families 5

Offer.....7

Tell us if you don't want information 7

Want more information on special educational needs and disability for the under 25s?.....7

General Data Protection Regulations as of 25 May 2018 7

Children and Young People Evaluation Questionnaire 2025/26

Our annual **Evaluation Questionnaire** will be open from **Monday 16 March until Thursday 2 April.** You will be sent an email about this, with the relevant questionnaire links, in due course.

This is an opportunity for you to feedback about the support your child or young person has received this academic year from either a Teacher of the Deaf,

OFFICIAL

Qualified Teacher for the Visually Impaired or Teacher for the Multi-Sensory Impaired.

We would really value your support in completing this year's survey.

As well as asking for **parents and carers** to feedback by completing a questionnaire, we would also like to ask your **children and young people aged 8 years and above,** for their views about the support they receive.

Fill in the survey.

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

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 17 March from 10.30am to midday, at:

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

Call 0117 903 8442 for further details.

Further session dates for March to May 2026 are:

- Friday 27 March
- Tuesday 21 April
- Friday 1 May
- Tuesday 12 May
- Friday 22 May

2. Paralympics 2026

We are very excited that an ex-student is competing in the Slalom and Giant Slalom. We are all wishing her well! Check out more at ParalympicsGB | Hester Poole

3. Weekly football sessions for blind and partially sighted young people

McDonald's with British Blind Sport are hosting weekly football sessions for blind and partially sighted young people within Bristol. The focus is to give children the confidence to learn new skills, make new friends and have fun.

Starting on Tuesday 13 January, they will be delivering a 10 week block of McDonald's Fun Football sessions for 5 to 11 year olds, in partnership with British Blind Sport. The key details are below.

Date: 5 weekly sessions from Tuesday 24 February 2026 to Tuesday 24 March 2026.

Time: 5:30pm to 6:30pm

Location: Lockleaze Sport Centre, 17 Bonnington Walk, Lockleaze, Bristol, BS7 9XF

Disabilities: Blind Football, Partially Sighted Football

Sign up to McDonald's Fun Football.

4. VICTA Technology Survey

VICTA Tech Week 2026 will focus on children and young people who have a vision impairment, and their experiences with technology as they transition from primary to secondary school. Ahead of their planned sessions, they'd like to hear from you. **Fill in the VICTA technology survey**.

5. News from Guide Dogs

Guide Dogs My Time to Play session

Guide Dogs My Time to Play (under 5s group) runs in Radstock fortnightly on Friday mornings. Please email martyn.arthur@guidedogs.org.uk for further information.

You can also access Guide Dogs My Time to Play online. For further information please visit the Guide Dogs Early years development and habilitation website page.

6. STEP: Supporting Transitions, Enriching Progress

STEP is providing a free interactive online programme for students with vision impairment preparing for further or higher education. The online sessions commence in late January.

Starting a new course can feel daunting, particularly with a vision impairment. STEP helps students feel more confident, prepared and connected by focusing on:

- Socialising and making friends
- Self-advocacy and independence
- Confidence, wellbeing and accessing support
- Learning from students with lived experience

Sessions are supportive, relaxed and interactive, giving students the chance to ask questions, connect with peers and build practical skills. Students can attend the full series or choose individual sessions.

All sessions take place online via Microsoft Teams, from 6pm to 7pm. Sessions are tailored into two transition groups: STEP into Further Education and STEP into Higher Education, allowing students to access support that is most relevant to them.

A technology focused series of STEP sessions are planned for the summer, with dates to be confirmed.

For more information and how students can register, visit STEP into Further and Higher Education Interactive Online Series.

7. Royal Society for Blind Children (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. Sign up to receive the RSBC Family Support Newsletter.

New Resources for Professionals

RSBC have created a dedicated space, filled with resources for professionals to help you support children, young people, and families navigating their journey with vision impairment. From supporting babies' development to helping young people plan for their futures, you'll find a wide range of resources available whenever you need them. Explore the resources here.

Upcoming events

Because the challenges and questions parents face change as their child grows, we've created **four age-specific Connecting Families groups**:

- Early Years
- Primary Years
- Secondary Years
- Post-16

What's coming up for Connecting Families...

- **Secondary Years: Accessible Tech and Safe Tech Use on 10 March**

This session will explore technology that supports learning and independence during the secondary school years. We'll be joined by RSBC's Senior Accessibility Advisor, who will share expert advice and answer questions.

- **Primary Years: Transitioning to Secondary School on 18 March**

This session is for parents and carers of vision impaired children as they navigate the important transition to secondary school. With councils sending offers of secondary school places to families in March, this is a perfect time to prepare for the next big step.

- **Early Years: Play and Habilitation on 24 March**

This session will focus on practical ways to encourage development through play, toys, and sensory resources. We'll be joined by RSBC's Habilitation Specialist, who will share expert advice and answer questions.

Plus lots more! Browse all upcoming RSBC events.

Sighted Guide Training Session for parents and carers on 18 March 2026

At the RSBC Life Without Limits Centre, London**.**

Hosted by a Habilitation Specialist, this hands-on training session will introduce parents and carers to essential sighted guide techniques and equip parents and carers with the confidence needed to safely guide their child. This is an opportunity to learn how to assist your child with their mobility while prompting independence and safety.

Moving On Up: online group for year 6 children

Are you supporting any year 6 children who are excited, or maybe a bit nervous, about starting secondary school? Please invite them to join Moving On Up!

This supportive online space allows children to talk with peers and get practical advice from our Family Practitioners as they prepare for this big step.

Sessions: Monthly on Wednesdays at 5pm
Next session: 11 March 2026

RSBC Families First: Family Practitioner Support

Providing emotional and practical support for the whole family.

When your child (aged 0 to 25 years) is diagnosed as blind or partially sighted, you, your child and your family might need some extra support to help manage your feelings. Based across England and Wales, RSBC Family Practitioners offer emotional wellbeing and practical support to anyone who might be affected by a blind or partially sighted diagnosis.

For more information about how this service works, please visit the RSBC website.

RSBC also offer family support, information, online sessions, fun days, connect families and more.

Offer

We have had an offer of some story cassette tapes. They range from nursery age materials (Spot the Dog; Rosie and Jim; Enid Blyton's stories for young children) through to school friendly cassettes (sing your times tables; Ronald McDonald's friend Mrs McLetter, Rupert Bear, Dick King Smith The Guard Dog, and classics like The Lion The Witch and The Wardrobe , 101 Dalmatians, The Phantom of the Opera).

If anyone would benefit from any of these, please email sensorysupportservice@bristol.gov.uk by the end of March. We will then let the person offering them know.

Tell us if you don't want information

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 SEND Local Offer website 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 May 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