



DIAS Volunteer Newsletter

Summer 2015

Thank you!

We would like to say a huge thank you to all of our volunteers, in recognition of all the amazing work that has been done during this school year. Each of you makes a huge difference to the work of DIAS as a whole, and we wouldn't be able to function without such a strong team.

We look forward to seeing you all in September, and hope that you have a lovely Summer!

Safeguarding Training: Reminder

We are asking all volunteers to carry out online Level 2 Safeguarding Training. Your DIAS Officer will already have spoken to you about this, but if you have any questions, or are having trouble registering or accessing the links, please get in touch. The session, including registration, should take between 1 and 2 hours.

You may find that some of the content is distressing, or provokes questions that you would like to discuss. There will be opportunities to discuss these at your next team meeting.

Independent Supporter (IS) Training

Additional modules are now available through the CDC website, including 'personal budgets', 'Post 16' and 'Children and Families Act'.

<http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/what-we-do/independent-support/for-service-providers>

Dates for the next round of face to face training have now been released. The South West area training will be on the **24th and 25th of September in Bristol**. Please get in touch or speak to your DIAS Officer if you would like to register for IS training or for more information.

Volunteer Initial Training

This will take place on **Thursday 17th and Tuesday 22nd September** at Larkbeare House in Exeter. If you know anyone who might be interested, or would like some flyers to distribute, please pass on the details. There is also a link on our website:

<http://www.devonias.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2015/07/volunteer-training-flyer-july-15.pdf>

Making Meetings Work

Following the success of our Parent Information Events (PIEs), we will be offering new tailored training aimed at parents, schools and other professionals for 2015 / 16. This will be based around the wonderful videos produced this spring, and starring some of our volunteers! This training will be offered to volunteers, and will hopefully be useful for meeting support. It will also be helpful to get your input on what should be included. More details to follow soon!

DISC PLUS



DISCplus is a point of contact providing information for young people with SEND and their families. They publish a termly newsletter which can be very useful for signposting. Follow the link to their most recent newsletter:

<http://www.devon.gov.uk/disc-plus-newsletter-37-summer-2015.pdf>

New Smart Cards

New rebranded Smart cards and lanyards are now available for pick up from the office. If you are intending to pick up over the summer holidays, it may be worth checking that someone is in the office first.

Miranda's exciting project

Miranda is a third year drama student at Exeter University. She completed her DIAS volunteer training in March, and since then has got started with parent support work. Miranda is about to embark on an exciting final year project. She will be working with schools to explore how to get the young person's voice heard in the SEN assessment process, and will be running work shops for young people, using drama to find out their views and ideas. We will be supporting her with some aspects of her project, and are looking forward to seeing the outcomes, and possibly even using some of her resources on our website! Miranda will be able to explain this in much more detail so do ask next time you see her!



Musings of a Volunteer from Nick Knapman

About 4 years ago, I decided to take the plunge and train as a volunteer with what was then the Devon Parent Partnership Service (now DIAS) .

Since joining the service as a volunteer I have attended meetings with parents, tried to help make sense of paperwork and assisted parents in submitting their views to the Local Authority. I feel privileged to hear each family's story and to try and help them work on the issue that they have requested support with.

I am lucky to have had the chance to do lots of other things too. I have been asked to comment on draft leaflets, represent the service at various events for parents of children with disabilities, contribute to the training of SENCos, help with the development of resource materials, and even be on an interview panel for new members of staff.

So four years on what have been the best things about volunteering with DIAS?

- hearing that a parent has found support helpful is always great! It does feel that we can make a difference.
 - meeting with other volunteers
 - feeling so well supervised and supported
 - the variety of the work
 - the opportunity to keep on learning
 - the freedom to say 'Sorry I can't do that date' (how many other volunteering opportunities offer such flexibility?)
- being part of such a strong and committed team of staff and volunteers.

On the other hand...

- I'm really not keen on writing up meeting notes. For me it's a bit of a chore. But I know parents find it valuable and that makes it worth while.
- staying impartial can sometimes be a challenge! Its sometimes tempting to offer an opinion - but I usually manage to resist and know that I can always vent my frustrations in supervision!

So my experience is that the positives far outweigh anything else. Like most people, I'm still adjusting to the new Code of Practice, but I remain hopeful that it will make a real difference to parents, children and young people, and I look forward to continuing as a member of the DIAS team of volunteers.