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Waltham Forest aScEND December Newsletter



Welcome to the aScEND Newsletter!

We're excited to bring you the latest news, opportunities and resources for children, young people and families in Waltham Forest. This edition is packed with creative competitions, fun activities, helpful guides and ways to get involved in shaping services.

Take a few minutes to explore and don't forget to share with friends and family! If someone has shared this newsletter with you, [you can sign up directly](#) to receive it once per half-term.

We are aware that the Council has had a number of changes in staff, and we are delighted to welcome Ana Gioia (above left), joining us as the permanent Head of Statutory SEND, and Clare Potter (above right), our new permanent Assistant Director for SEND. We also say a heartfelt goodbye and thank you to Dorothy Hadleigh for her incredible contribution to SEND in Waltham Forest. She will be greatly missed.

Finally, as we reach the end of term, we want to say a big thank you to: Waltham Forest Parent Carer Forum who do such an amazing job of supporting SEND families in the borough; our SENDIASS colleagues who are always on hand for independent SEND advice and support; and our colleagues in health, schools and education settings who work tirelessly to support young people with SEND. Season's greetings to all!

Calling all artists! Help design our newsletter banner!

We are running a competition for children and young people to create a bright, fun banner for the aScEND newsletter.

Two age categories:

- Under 12 years
- 12 years and over

Prizes:

- Each category winner gets a £30 voucher
- One overall winner gets an extra £20 voucher

Artwork size: Wide and not too tall, about 16 cm by 4-5 cm. You can draw on A4 paper, and we'll crop it later.

How to enter: Take a clear photo of your artwork and email it by **Monday 12 January 2025** with your name, age, and the subject line: **“aScEND artwork competition”**

[Email your artwork](#)

Spectrum Gaming for young people



Love Minecraft? Want to make friends who get you? Spectrum Gaming is a fun, safe online community for autistic young people aged 10 to 17 in Waltham Forest.

Here's what you can do:

- Play on our Minecraft server (open 10am to 10pm every day!)

- Join gaming and non-gaming events
- Chat on Discord with friends through text, voice, or video
- Learn about autistic understanding and wellbeing

It's all about joy, laughter, and connection! We're delighted to announce that Waltham Forest will be working with Spectrum Gaming over the next two years. Once they're familiar with local families and services, we hope to involve them in shaping policy and practice that fully includes neurodiverse needs.

To join: fill in our form, verify your identity, and start exploring.

[Find more info on the Spectrum Gaming flyer](#)

[Sign up to Spectrum Gaming](#)

Football for health: free sessions for young people

Free weekly football sessions for young people aged 11–17 in Waltham Forest who are experiencing emotional or wellbeing challenges, including ASD or ADHD. No football experience needed, just come along, have fun, and make friends!

Sessions:

- Tuesday: Douglas Eyre, 148 Coppermill Lane, Waltham Forest E17 7HE (4pm–5.30pm)

All abilities and genders welcome.

To join: Contact Sonia Smith for a referral form:

 07538 101450 |  copingthroughfootball@nelft.nhs.uk

Your SEND officer can then refer you and the coordinator will contact you and arrange a session the following week.

Join us and kick-start confidence!

Explaining the Phase Transfer Process

If your child has a finalised Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and is moving to a new stage of education, there is a specific process called a phase transfer. We are here to explain what phased transfers are, who they apply to, key deadlines, and

what to do if you disagree with the placement named in your child's plan. Please see below for the key stages:

- Early years → Primary (Reception)
- Infant (Year 2) → Junior (Year 3)
- Primary → Secondary (Year 7)
- Secondary → Post-16 (college, traineeship, apprenticeship, supported internship)

This process is separate from mainstream admissions, so you do not need to apply through the general school admissions service.

Thank you to everyone who met the SEND admissions deadline on 2 October. If you haven't yet submitted, please contact senteam@walthamforest.gov.uk.

You can expect to hear by:

- **15 February** – Transfers up to secondary school
- **31 March** – Post-16 transfers

If you disagree with the school named in the final EHCP (Section I), you have the right to appeal to the SEND Tribunal. Details, including mediation, will be provided with the final plan.

If your child does not have an EHCP but has special educational needs, apply via general admissions through the [eAdmissions website](#) by 15 January.

For more information:

✉ senteam@walthamforest.gov.uk | ✉ admissions@walthamforest.gov.uk

[Visit our Website for more information on Phased Transfers](#)

Post-16 Prospectus 2026

We are delighted to launch the Waltham Forest post-16 prospectus 2026.

The prospectus highlights the full range of post-16 opportunities in Waltham Forest for the 2026-27 academic year:

- Where to get career information and guidance
- The range of pathways and qualifications available
- Where young people can study, and how they can apply

- Subjects offered by sixth forms and colleges
- Details of individual sixth forms, individual colleges and special schools
- Financial support

[Post 16 Prospectus](#)

Waltham Forest Holiday Activity and Food Programme



Waltham Forest Holiday Activity and Food Programme

This Winter, Waltham Forest Holiday Activity Programme will be running free activities from Saturday 20 December 2025 to Friday 2 January 2026 for school-aged children who are in receipt of benefit-related Free School Meals (FSM) and a small number of places for vulnerable children who do not receive benefit-related FSM.

Specialised SEND provision available:

- [Endorphins](#)
Mon 22 Dec, 10am–2pm, 1a Alders Ave, Walthamstow
- [Resources for autism](#)
Mon 29 Dec, 10.30am–2.30pm, The Together Space, 7 Blackhorse Lane

Booking:

- Bookings open on 24 November 2025. Booking is essential for all activities.

Many clubs offer inclusive provision. Please contact providers directly to discuss your child's needs.

For more information please visit our website.

Events at The Together Space

Local CIC The Together Space offers a range of services for children with and without disabilities, including family play events, a youth club, a fitness programme and inclusive stay-and-play sessions at Gnome House, E17 6DS.

- [Family Play Event](#) – 14 Dec, 10am–12.30pm, with winter-themed activities and accessible fun (£10+, free tickets available).
- [Vibe Club](#) – 19 Dec, 5–7pm, a youth club for disabled young people aged 11–14 (£5, carers free).
- [Strength & Fitness Classes](#) – weekly for children aged 11–14 with low muscle tone/reduced mobility (£10).
- [Together Mornings](#) – Thurs/Fri stay-and-play for babies and preschoolers (£12).

[The Together Space website](#)

Help us warn families about the dangers of buying cheap toys online



Many parents assume that if they can buy a toy online, it must be safe, but that's not always true. Increasing numbers of unsafe toys are being sold online, and they can seriously injure or even kill children.

This Christmas, lots of families want to save money. Cheap toys might look appealing, but they can be very dangerous.

You can help! Download the **Child Accident Prevention Trust's free Toy Safety Guide**. It includes simple tips for buying safe toys and avoiding major risks like:

- Button batteries
- Magnets

- Water beads
- Unsafe baby products

[Free Guide](#)

Waltham Forest Parent Carer Forum



If you're a parent or carer of a child or young person (0–25) with SEND in Waltham Forest and want better services and support for your family, join the Waltham Forest Parent Carer Forum! Your views and experiences matter.

What the Forum has been up to recently

The Waltham Forest Parent Carer Forum is currently tracking parent-carer compliments and issues to spot patterns, improve services, and celebrate what's working.

Got feedback or something positive to share? Submit via this [form](#)!

Upcoming Events & Training:

- **Restorative Yoga** with Eliza (Yoga Me Happy)
 - Dates: 17 Jan, 31 Jan, 21 Feb, 6 Mar, 20 Mar at 10.30am
 - Location: William Morris, Acanthus Room
 - Book via [shop page](#)
- **Your Child is Not Broken** with Heidi Mavir
 - 24 Jan, 7pm–9pm
- **Looking After Yourself** with Dr Abigail Fisher
 - 1 Feb, 1pm–2pm ([Zoom](#))
- **Understanding Emotionally Based School Avoidance** with Ange McMillan

- 8 Feb, 7pm–9pm

[Join the Parent Carer Forum](#)

SENDIASS

SENDIASS stands for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service. We provide free, confidential, and impartial advice to children, young people, parents, and carers in the Waltham Forest area.

How to contact us:

- **Website:** Find helpful resources and request an appointment with one of our skilled caseworkers.
- **Advice Line:** 07494 280073
- **Email:** sendiasswalthamf@centre404.org.uk

We're here to support you all year round (excluding Bank Holidays).

[Visit the Website](#)

Voices Day 2026: Shaping SEND Together

On **24 February 2026**, Waltham Forest will host Voices Day at Waltham Forest College, a collaborative event bringing together families, practitioners, and partners to focus on gathering experiences of co-production. Guided by Genuine Partnerships' Four Cornerstones model, the day will build on insights from January focus groups and focus on co-creating practical solutions.

If you have thoughts or ideas to share ahead of the event, please use our Microsoft Forms link to share your experiences of co-production in Waltham Forest, we'd love to hear from you!

[Share your Thoughts!](#)

Family Hubs: Support for SEND Families



Family Hubs are inclusive spaces for children and families with SEND. They offer parenting programmes, play sessions, and support from SEND Parent Navigators, plus drop-ins with Speech and Language Therapists and Educational Psychologists.

The Waltham Forest SEND Team also runs monthly drop-in sessions for parents/carers of children and young people (0–25) with Education, Health and Care Plans. These sessions provide a chance to discuss concerns and find solutions together.

Drop-in details:

All sessions run from: 9.30am–12pm

- **1st (& 5th) Friday of the Month:** Queens Road Family Hub, 215 Queens Road, Walthamstow E17 8PJ
- **2nd Friday of the Month:** Chingford Family Hub, 5 Oaks Grove E4 6EY
- **3rd Friday of the Month:** The Curve Room, Leytonstone Library, Church Lane, E11 1H
- **4th Friday of the Month:** Walthamstow Family Hub, 313 Billet Road, E17 5PX

Please bring proof of address, ID, and child's ID.

Find more information and events by clicking the link below and visiting your local Family Hub.

[Find your local Family Hub](#)

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