

SPRING 2011

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Parents' pages

Get Support Early

*Help for parents of 0-5s
with complex needs or
multiple disabilities*

The facts

*Is free early years
education ever free?*



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Health check

*Measles - is your
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Parents' pages

2011 is the National Year of Communication and the Makaton symbols on the front cover highlight a particular form of communication.

Makaton is used with a variety of children with communication difficulties. Find out more on page 10 in our cover story about Surrey Early Support Service. And on page 14 meet Zoe, mum of two year old Charlie, who talks about how she managed to get onto a Makaton course with the help of her Surrey Early Support Coordinator.

You've given us very positive feedback about *Parents' Pages* but you also say that you'd like to get more timely information. We aim to please so we've set up a *Parents' Pages* e-bulletin which we send straight to your inbox, see opposite for details on how to subscribe.

Whether you're reading this sat at your computer or relaxing in a bath we hope you'll find something to grab your interest.

Bye for now

Parents' Pages
 Editorial Team



News

2011 National Year of Communication

Surrey's Every Child a Talker (ECAT) campaign is spreading the word to parents about everyday activities which can help a child's language develop.

To download the ECAT parent leaflet and 38 Top Tips for communicating with your child, visit www.surreycc.gov.uk/ecat

Every Child a Talker supports the year long national Hello campaign to make children and young people's communication development a priority in homes, nurseries and schools across the country. Hello is run by the Communication Trust in partnership with Jean Gross, the Government's Communication Champion and backed by the Department for Education.

Wendy Lee, Professional Director for The Communication Trust, said: "We are delighted to hear about Surrey Early Years and Childcare Services work to make Hello a success in Surrey. Communication is the core skill for life; it underpins everything else. In Surrey it is estimated that two to three children in

every classroom have some form of long term communication difficulty. This can affect them early, severely and for life. The Surrey Early Years and Childcare Services work to raise awareness of this vital issue is applauded and we thank them for going the extra mile for Hello."

Find out more about the Hello campaign at www.hello.org.uk



Are you affected by Tax Credit changes?

April 2011 will see several changes including the following:

- A drop in the amount families using registered or approved childcare that qualify for help with childcare costs will be able to claim. Falling from up to 80% to up to 70% of their eligible childcare costs.
- Families with household income above £40,000 will start to have their family element of £545 a year tapered away from 6 April 2011 at a rate of 41%.
- An end to the baby element.

- An increase in the child element by £150 above inflation.
- A change to the way that Childcare Vouchers work for higher rate tax payers joining the system from 6 April 2011.

Find out more at www.surreycc.gov.uk/fis

Planned reform of the welfare system - 2013

The White Paper 'Universal Credit: welfare that works', published on 11 November 2010, sets out the Coalition Government's plans to bring in new laws that will reform the welfare system by creating a new Universal Credit.

From 2013 people asking for help will get Universal Credit and the government will move those already on benefits onto Universal Credit.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have an Easy read - Universal Credit: welfare that works leaflet, which explains how Universal Credit will work. To download a copy go to www.dwp.gov.uk/universal-credit

To get copies in other formats, contact:

tel 020 7449 7688 (answer machine)
 email benefit.reform@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Family Fund gets £27 million

In 2011 The Family Fund will get £27 million in government funding. This is to help families with severely disabled or seriously ill children and young people aged 17 and under to have choices and the opportunity to enjoy ordinary life. The Family Fund gives grants for things that make life easier such as washing machines, driving lessons, computers and holidays.

Find out more at www.familyfund.org.uk



As *Parents' Pages* only comes out once a term, it doesn't always tie in with breaking news. So now you can sign up to our *Parents' Pages* e-bulletin. You'll not only get the magazine sent straight to your inbox, we'll also keep you up to date with snippets of news and links to useful websites.

To subscribe, email us at parentspages@surreycc.gov.uk

Produced by Surrey Family Information Service, Surrey County Council

Production
 • We print *Parents' Pages* three times a year, one per term.
 • Each copy costs around 27p

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 Think you have a good suggestion for a story? Email us at parentspages@surreycc.gov.uk or tweet [@SurreyFIS](https://twitter.com/SurreyFIS)



Our Eco credentials
 The paper used for *Parents' Pages* is from sustainable forests grown for the production of paper and has the Forest Stewardship Council mark. The magazine is printed, using vegetable-based inks, by an ISO 14001 accredited printer.

Health Check

Information from NHS Surrey

Measles – is your child protected?



Measles is highly infectious and spreads quickly among children who haven't been immunised, but it is preventable. The most effective way to protect your child against measles – and mumps and rubella, is to have them immunised with two doses of the MMR vaccine.

Tricia Spedding, NHS Surrey Public Health Immunisation Lead, explains:

“As parents we all try to do what we can to keep our children safe and by having them immunised against measles, mumps and rubella we can protect them from infections that can lead to serious complications.

It's a myth that measles is just a run of the mill, relatively mild childhood illness that's easily treated. Measles can be very serious and even fatal. 1 in every 15 children who catch measles will develop serious complications including chest infections, swelling of the brain and even brain damage so having the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) jab is vital.”

Unfortunately in recent years there have been stories in the media wrongly linking the MMR jab with autism. The research it was based on has been discredited and there is no credible evidence to support a link between the MMR jab and autism. In recent years, records show the highest number of measles cases, since monitoring started in 1995. Since 2006 we have seen measles outbreaks across the country, mostly in school children, and the picture in Surrey is just as worrying. Last summer, Surrey again saw measles outbreaks and one boy who was hospitalised because of measles has encouraged others to get protected.

“It's not worth going through the pain I went through, so get immunised.”

Is it worth the risk?

If your child has not had the MMR vaccine and comes into contact with a child who has measles, there's around a 90% chance they will catch it.

It's important to have a complete course of two doses of vaccine to make sure full protection against measles, mumps and rubella.

If your child hasn't been immunised, it's not too late - you just need to make an appointment with their GP practice. If you're not sure how many doses of the vaccine they have had, you can check their personal health record (their 'Red Book') or ask your GP practice.

Children and young people up to age 18, who haven't had the jab, can also still get immunised at their GP practice.

For more information on measles and the MMR vaccine visit NHS Choices www.nhs.uk/conditions/mmr

Healthy Start vouchers for free vitamins



Healthy start provides vouchers that can be swapped for milk, fresh fruit and vegetables and infant formula milk, but did you know that pregnant women, women with a child under the age of one and children from six months to four years who receive healthy start vouchers can also get healthy start vitamins. Look out for the green coupon on every second voucher letter, you need this to collect your free vitamins.

Why do I need to take vitamins?

Even though you can get lots of vitamins from a healthy balanced diet, you still might not get everything you need at certain times in your life.

For example, all pregnant and breastfeeding women, particularly teenagers, young women and young children are at risk of vitamin D deficiency. The main source of vitamin D is sunlight and people

of Asian, African-Caribbean or Middle Eastern origin living in a mild climate and those who spend lots of time indoors or who cover up for cultural reasons, are also at risk.

Healthy Start vitamins contain the recommended daily allowance of vitamins for pregnant and breastfeeding women and children from six months old.

Where can I use my voucher to get the vitamins?

Healthy Start vitamins are available at the following Sure Start Children's Centres: Riverview, Groveland's, Epsom Downs, Red Oak, Pine Ridge, Guildford, Woking, Sythwood, The Haven and Stanwell.

Contact details of Sure Start Children's Centres are at www.surreycc.gov.uk/childrenscentres

If you don't get Healthy Start vouchers you can buy Healthy Start vitamins from the children's centres listed above and most health clinics.

To find out more about Healthy Start visit www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Breastfeeding peer support



Breastfeeding brings significant benefits for babies and their mothers. It protects babies against a wide range of illnesses and improves their long-term health. The World Health Organisation recommends that mothers exclusively breastfeed for at least six months. Despite this, UK breastfeeding rates are among the lowest in Europe.

Surrey NHS and Surrey County Council are committed to supporting women to breastfeed, working with Surrey Nurturing Links to provide a breastfeeding 'peer support' service. Peer support services at hospitals and Sure Start Children's Centres in Surrey are helping mothers to breastfeed by giving friendly advice and information.

To find out if there is a service near you, check our website www.surreyhealth.nhs.uk

For information about the peer support service, contact Julie Kenward at Surrey Nurturing Links email jkenward@surreynurturinglinks.org.uk tel 01483 225596 / 07850 708069.



Weighty issues

Almost one in five children starting school in Surrey is overweight or obese. And as you go up the school years this figure increases which is why a number of schemes have been set up to help:

HENRY (Health Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young)

If your child is under five you may be able to attend a HENRY group at your Sure Start Children's Centre. HENRY is about helping families with practical tips and positive ways of guiding children's behaviour, eating habits and activity levels.

For more information go to www.henry.org.uk  To find your local Sure Start Children's Centre visit www.surreycc.gov.uk/childrenscentres

MEND (Mind Exercise Nutrition and Do it!)

If your child is aged 7 to 13 years and overweight MEND might be able to help. With MEND your child will get the opportunity to take part in fun physical activity sessions and you'll all learn how to eat more healthily, understand food labels and how to make your weekly shop healthier and easier. To find out more, visit www.mendprogramme.org •



Find out more

Visit Surrey health for more information about these and other health issues at www.surreyhealth.nhs.uk



Is free early years education ever free?

As a general rule, from the term after your child's third birthday, they can spend 15 hours a week in early years education for free.



Those 15 hours are known as Early Years Free Entitlement (EYFE) and can be spent at any provider who is registered on the Surrey County Council Directory of Providers. For example, a nursery, an accredited network childminder, or a nursery class at a local authority maintained school. You can also choose to split the 15 hours between two providers.

EYFE provides all children with the opportunity to take part in planned learning activities. The idea is simple but as mum Emma told us "There seems to be a huge variation in the way it is offered." And not all parents want to use the free hours in the same way.

Emma's story

Emma has just started sending her three year old son Tommy to River Mole Pre-school in Esher for three days a week for a total of 11 and a 1/4 hours.

"I found out about the EYFE by looking on the Directgov and Surrey Family Information Service (FIS) websites. I didn't need to put Tommy into childcare but I thought he would benefit from going to a pre-school for a few hours a week. It wouldn't have made financial sense for me to send him for more than the free 15 hours a week but when I started to talk to local nurseries that offered the EYFE, there seemed to be a huge variation in the way it was offered.

One of them said they requested a daily donation of £5 and another was full daycare and could not offer only the free hours. I was lucky that I found River Mole Pre-school. Tommy attends for three sessions and all I pay is £3 a week for a mid-morning snack for him."

The entitlement to 15 hours a week for up to 38 weeks a year is free. So your child can experience a few hours a week in an early years setting and you don't have to pay anything. All sessions in nursery classes at local authority maintained schools are completely free but if they are full or there isn't one near you, contact Surrey Family Information Service. They have a list of other providers that do not charge anything extra.

Shirley's story

Shirley is a mum of three from Surrey Heath. She has used her free entitlement for both her daughters with Ceri – a network childminder.

"When I moved to Surrey Heath there were no EYFE places available in the local nurseries. I asked my childminder if she would be willing to claim the money and luckily she was willing and able to apply (see childminder information box opposite).

When I was on maternity leave I didn't need my older daughter Paige to be looked after but I sent her to Ceri's for two days a week anyway. It was completely free, it gave me special time with my other daughter Skye and my new baby Jay, and Paige felt special doing pre-school activities.

Now Skye is eligible for the free hours I'm back at work full time and she goes to Ceri for 10 hours a day, five days a week. It's worked out really well, Skye gets all the same experiences as she would at a nursery and I get 15 hours a week for free."

The entitlement is to a free part-time early years place and not a guarantee of a place with a particular early years provider or within a certain distance of your child's home. So if, like Shirley, you cannot find an EYFE place near to where you live then you can contact Surrey Family Information Service who will try and help you find a suitable place. If there is nothing available then you could do what Shirley did and ask local childminders if they would be willing to apply (see childminder information opposite). However, if there are no available places in your area and you can't or don't want to travel then unfortunately you may not be able to claim the free hours. →



Childminder information

Not all registered childminders can claim the EYFE. They have to be part of an accredited childminding network. And not all childminders can apply to join the Surrey Childminding Network, they have to meet the following criteria:

- hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification or above
- agree to become accredited and offer Early Years Free Entitlement
- maintain a good or outstanding Ofsted grade
- have been working as a childminder for at least a year.

If your childminder meets the criteria and they would like to find out more they can email cmnetworks@surreycc.gov.uk call 01372 833833 or talk to their childminding adviser.



Early Years Free Entitlement - the facts

- As a general rule, children can get free part-time early years provision from the term after their third birthday, for two years until they reach compulsory school age.

Child born between	Can have a free place from
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1 April - 31 August 2007	September 2010
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1 September - 31 December 2007	January 2011
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1 January - 31 March 2008	April 2011
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1 April - 31 August 2008	September 2011
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- You cannot claim for:
 - more than 10 hours in one day
 - less than 2½ hours in one day
 - more than 12½ hours in two days
 - any time before 8am or after 6pm.
- The full 15 hours must be taken over a minimum of three days.
- The entitlement only lasts until your child starts in a reception class at a local authority maintained school or reaches compulsory school age, which is the school term after their fifth birthday.
- You can only claim for 38 weeks a year and funded places are only available during school term time so if your child goes to a setting during any school holiday (including half term) you will have to pay. If your chosen early years provider does not offer 38 weeks you will not be able to take the balance somewhere else.
- Unless there are exceptional circumstances you cannot move your child to a different early years provider half way through a term and still get the EYFE. You can either move your child and lose your free entitlement or wait till the end of the term to move them.
- You can choose to take the free entitlement with up to, but no more than, two early years providers. So, for example, your child could have nine hours in a nursery class and six hours with a pre-school.



Why does everyone have a different policy?

All early years providers (apart from nursery classes at local authority maintained schools) can set their own admission policy and EYFE session times. Some providers are open for three and a half hours a day but their EYFE session is set at three hours. In this example, if your child goes to the nursery for two days a week they will be there for seven hours. You will be entitled to six hours for free but will have to pay for the other hour. This extra time is known as additional services.

Do I have to pay for additional services ?

Yes, but extra time and food are the only things that count as additional services. If your nursery offers dance lessons during your child's session or often goes on trips that cost extra money then you can decide that you do not want your child to take part and you do not have to pay.

What can I do if I think I am being charged for things that should be free?

Talk to your provider and ask them to explain your invoice to you. If your provider is charging you for additional services then you should have been told in advance and it should be clear on your termly invoice what they are asking you to pay for.

If you are still unhappy, you can contact the Surrey Family Information Service who can talk to the EYFE Team at Surrey Early Years and Childcare Service to make sure that your provider is operating within the rules. If they are not breaking any rules then your only option is to look for a place with another provider.

Find out more

For more information about Early Years Free Entitlement contact Surrey Family Information Service (FIS)
 visit www.surreycc.gov.uk/fis
 email surrey.fis@surreycc.gov.uk
 call 0300 200 1004

You can also follow SurreyFIS on Twitter



My child turns three in 2012, will anything be different then?

All early years providers who offer EYFE have to follow a code of practice. As we were going to print this was being reviewed. If the code of practice changes then that may affect the way EYFE is offered after September 2011.

How can I keep up to date with any changes to the EYFE?

You can sign up for the Parents' Pages e-bulletin - (see page 3 for details of how to do this), updates will also appear on the FIS web pages or as tweet alerts on Surrey FIS Twitter. ●



Get Support early

Help is on hand for parents of 0-5s with complex needs or multiple disabilities

Dolly Walker, Surrey Early Support Service Coordinator for north east Surrey, tells us how Surrey Early Support Service helps parents.

What does the Surrey Early Support Service do?

When a child has complex needs or multiple disabilities there may be a large number of people providing services for them. From birth to five Surrey Early Support Service brings together parents/carers, health, education, social care and the voluntary sector. They coordinate services and make sure everyone involved is aware of the overall needs of the child and the family. The more services a family uses and the greater the number of people who are involved, the more likely it is that we can help.

Who is Surrey Early Support Service for?

The service is for any family needing extra help to raise a young child with disabilities and special needs and anyone who works regularly with these children and their families. Some disabled children are in touch with targeted, specialist support services from very early on, others will be looking for extra help as time goes on. There is a wide range of families using early support including families with:

- Young babies leaving hospital with medical and other support needs, where parents need practical help to care for their child at home.
- Older children, where the need for extra help becomes clear in the second or third year of life.
- Children who have obvious, multiple, and significant factors affecting development and learning.

How do you help parents/carers?

We try to reduce the need for parents/carers to explain their situation more than once. We do this by making sure that parents/carers, statutory and voluntary agencies work together from the beginning to produce a Family Service Plan. This plan improves the coordination of services across the agencies, makes sure need is identified earlier, interventions happen sooner, and support is continuous, especially when the family have a named key worker. Parents say that they feel more confident and empowered when they are involved in the decision making process.

How do you support parents in your role as a Surrey Early Support Service coordinator?

According to the level of support offered I make sure that the family get:

- Information about the child's particular disability.
- A Family Service Plan, to help coordinate support for the family.
- Details of what to expect from the professionals involved.
- An explanation of the role of the non designated key worker.

Who is the non designated key worker and what do they do?

A non designated key worker is a professional that the family have regular contact with and a good working relationship. The role is defined and agreed by the family, the professionals around the family and all the agencies involved. The agency the key worker comes from changes in line with the needs of the child.

The key worker will:

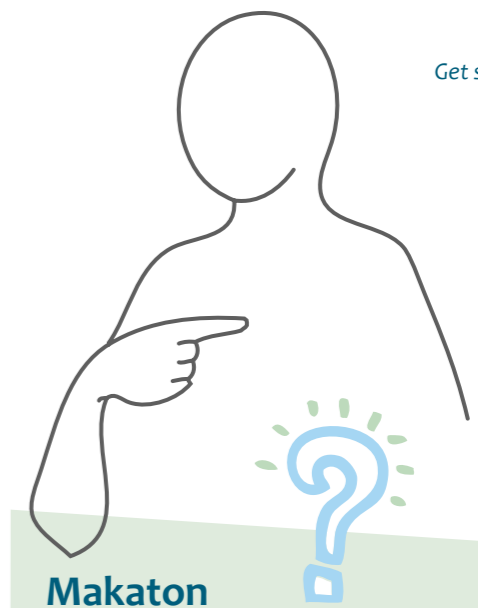
- Oversee the progress of the Family Service Plan and make sure plans are followed through.
- Offer information and advice to the family.
- Work with the family to help them find their own ways of making family life better.
- Offer an open, supportive relationship and emotional support, preferably home based, with a family centred approach.
- Act as a bridge to bring relevant people together.
- Work across agencies where needed.
- Liaise with the Surrey Early Support Service coordinator.



Parents say that they feel more confident and empowered when they are involved in the decision making process.

How are children referred to Surrey Early Support Service?

We accept children aged from birth to five years, who live in Surrey and who meet the eligibility criteria. Referrals can be made by health professionals, early years services, education and parents/carers may also refer themselves. Referral has to be made using the Surrey Early Support Service referral form. •



Makaton

Makaton uses signs, symbols and speech as a means of communication to encourage the development of language. The flexibility of Makaton means that it can be used and adapted for differing levels of need.

Children with a broad range of communication needs, including severe physical disability, autistic spectrum disorders and specific language disabilities, can use Makaton.

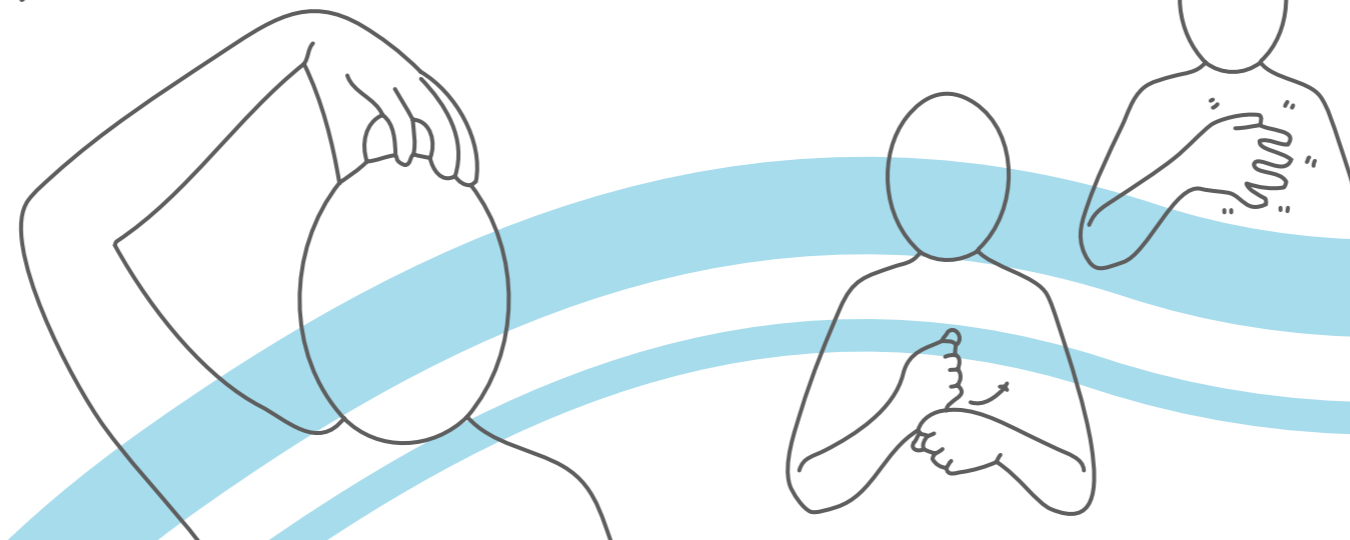
www.makaton.org has a free and confidential family advisory service to support families who use, or are thinking about using, Makaton.

Cbeebies - Something Special Makaton signing and symbols with Mr Tumble
www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/somethingspecial

The language used in the video clips is supported by Makaton signs and symbols. Signs are always used together with speech and children are encouraged to use speech sounds or words when they sign to their teachers, parents or friends.

Find out more

To get support from Surrey Early Support Service your child should be receiving a number of multi agency services. To find out more and get a referral form: visit www.surreycc.gov.uk/earllysupport email earllysupport@surreycc.gov.uk call 0300 200 1004



a parent's view

Two parents tell us their experiences of the Surrey Early Support Service

Sam, mum of three year old Ewan

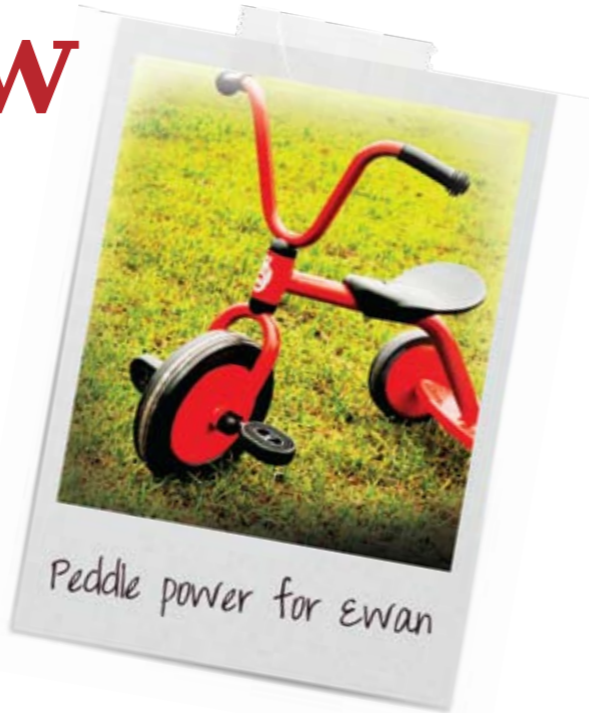
At just three weeks old during a routine ultra sound scan, given to all premature infants, Ewan was diagnosed with periventricular leukomalacia. Life would never be the same again.

Now just turned three years old, Ewan has to endure between three and seven medical appointments every week. Appointments with the: physiotherapist, consultant, orthopedic consultant, eye department, Social Services, speech and language therapist and all the schools liaison people.

The endless patience, physical strength, learning, determination and commitment needed is exhausting and still there is the rest of life to contend with.

“It is very rewarding when Ewan does the tiniest thing. I have cried many tears of happiness since I had him”

I could do with more physical support, as Ewan is getting heavy now and some moral support to show me more about what a positive thing it can be to have a disabled child; appointments just deal with



the negative. It is very rewarding when Ewan does the tiniest thing. I have cried many tears of happiness since I had him. I don't suppose many people can say that they cried when their son got his first bike.

I sort of referred myself to Surrey Early Support Service as Sue, a Surrey Early Support Service Coordinator, was at the Joint Opportunities Group (JOG) one week. JOG involves speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists coming together to offer a morning of therapies each week for appropriate children. So instead of parents having to attend three different appointments, they happen at the same place and time. Sue's our non designated, key worker now. We don't really meet but on the occasions that I have met Sue she has delivered everything I have asked and is very supportive and open.

What we find really useful is the Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings. We've had one meeting so

“Sue would have been a great help in those awful first weeks-at diagnosis, you should get given a Sue”

far, which went really well and we were pleased with the write up. It was brilliant to get a bit more of a holistic feel to Ewan's care rather than certain people working on certain bits. TAC has been a real help to get everybody talking together with the family at the centre, as it should be.

Although the service offers a single point of contact, I haven't really used the offer. I have got a couple of contact details quickly from Sue when I haven't had them but as paramedics, my husband and I both work shifts and our calendar is pretty complicated. In reality I find it easier to phone the relevant health care professional myself to arrange or rearrange appointments.

I wish I had been in contact at week three as Sue would have been a great help in those awful first weeks - at diagnosis, you should get given a Sue! Unfortunately by the time she came over we had found out a load of stuff already through hard work and determination. →



“The endless patience, physical strength, learning, determination and commitment needed is exhausting and still there is the rest of life to contend with”

“ Having someone who comes to you and says “I can help you manage this process” helps a great deal ”

Zoe, mum of two year old Charlie

Charlie turns three this March. On his second birthday he was diagnosed with Fragile X syndrome.

I need support coordinating Charlie's appointments and bringing his team together. Support with specific problems associated with his condition, such as sleep patterns and behaviour difficulties and help understanding how he perceives the world around him. We need to have more of a routine than other families, as every situation needs to be carefully planned.

Charlie's paediatrician at the Royal Surrey County Hospital referred us to the Surrey Early Support Service. Our Surrey Early Support Service coordinator and key worker is Fiona. She's visited us at home and we have met at my son's nursery but I usually email Fiona now, as this seems to be easiest for us, although I know that I can always phone her if I need to.

Surrey Early Support Service have a Family Service Plan which lists the actions required from each of his agencies and the steps that we plan to take. It notes support of decisions by the team and gives information on how to help him make the best progress possible. When you have lots of input it can become confusing so it is useful to have one document that keeps all this information together. It helps to know that we are all taking the same journey as a team rather than each of his specialists planning their own journey for him in isolation, that way we are more coordinated and there is less confusion.

The Surrey Early Support Service coordinator has helped as a single point of contact. Charlie is involved with 12 agencies. We tend to be able to



“ It would be very daunting as a parent to try to co-ordinate the diaries of so many specialists without Fiona's support ”



keep on top of his appointments once the referrals have been processed but it was useful when Fiona was able to chase up referrals and find out what was happening when we didn't know who to contact. It was very useful at the start of the process when we were feeling overwhelmed and didn't know what to do.

Fiona keeps in regular email contact about services and events. She remembers to ask how his appointments have gone, which has made us feel like someone other than our family is interested in how Charlie is doing.

Fiona always makes the appointments for the meetings when the team is gathered to ensure maximum attendance and keep everyone involved. It would be very daunting as a parent to try to coordinate the diaries of so many specialists without Fiona's support.

Fiona is very supportive and open and I feel I can ask her anything, even if it sounds silly or trivial, and is outside the medical/health aspects

“ It helps to know that we are all taking the same journey as a team rather than each of his specialists planning their own journey for him in isolation ”

of his condition and more to do with his general development. Like when she found out where I could take Charlie swimming and who the special educational needs coordinator at the leisure centre was so I didn't have to explain our circumstances lots of times.

Fiona has also sent me lots of information about schools that may suit Charlie so that I have a list of options and can arrange to go and see some even though he is not due to start until September 2012. She also chased up a Makaton course that we had been waiting for and some other referrals that were taking a long time.

I think that having the support of the Surrey Early Support Service from the very beginning was hugely reassuring. Getting a diagnosis that will change your lives is a big thing and you feel very alone. Having someone who comes to you and says “I can help you manage this process” helps a great deal. It is much easier to call a friendly person who can find information out for you than to have to try to explain your situation to lots of different receptionists and departments to find out what you need, and where you should go. I think all families should have information and access to this service as soon as a diagnosis is made or they start to have multiple referrals for undiagnosed difficulties. ●

Find out more

To get support from Surrey Early Support Service your child should be receiving a number of multi agency services. To find out more about Surrey Early Support Service and the eligibility criteria:

visit www.surreycc.gov.uk/earlysupport
email surrey.fis@surreycc.gov.uk
call 0300 200 1004



A day in the LIFE

Surrey County Council Contact Centre

Sue Grant
Information Officer

Surrey Family Information Service (FIS) provides information, advice and assistance for families with children and young people aged up to 19 years old (up to 25 years old for young people with special needs).

But what happens when you call FIS?

Dialling 0300 200 1004 will put you through to the team at Surrey County Council's Contact Centre who are trained to deal with parent's questions. On average they deal with 1,500 calls a day on a huge range of different subjects.

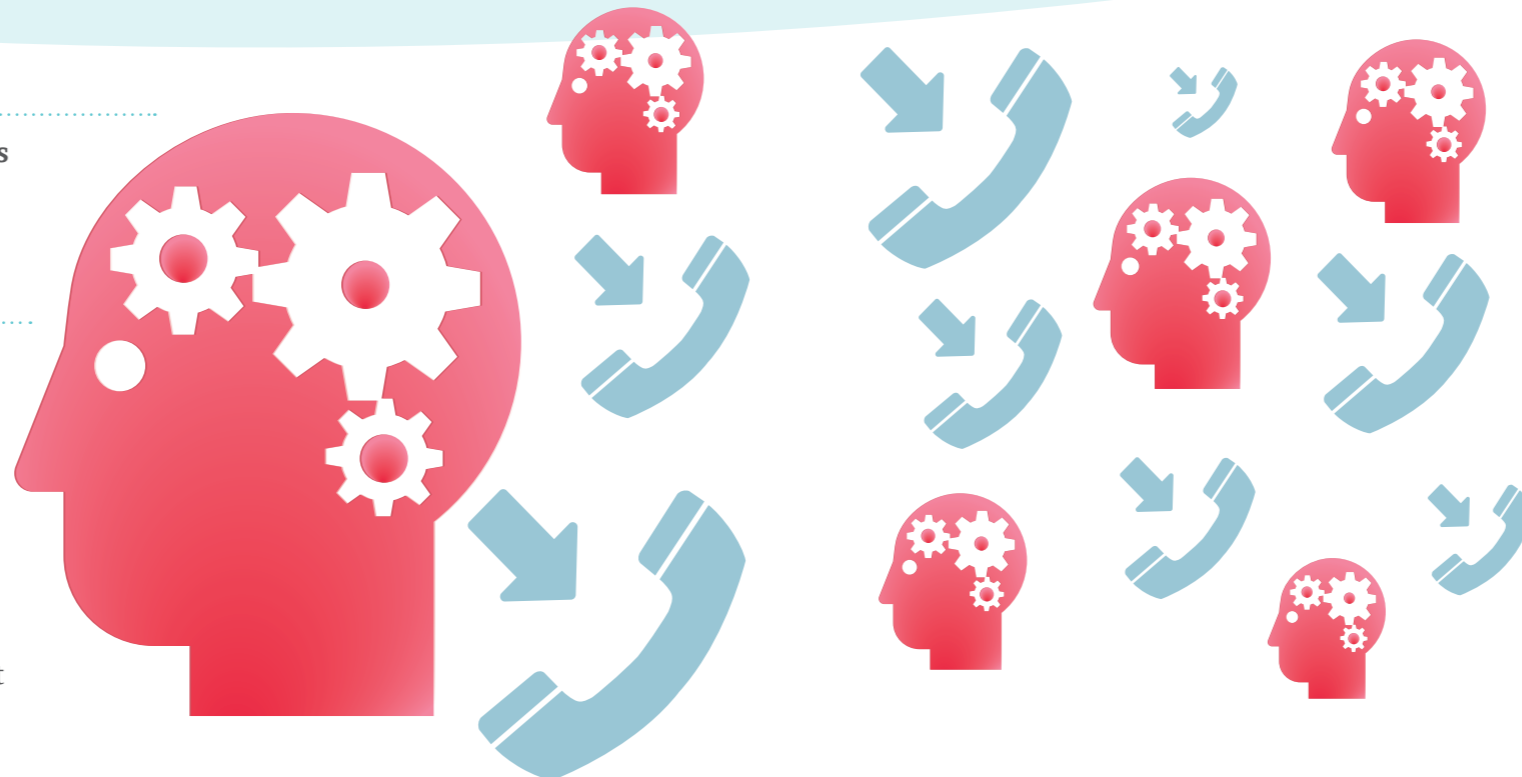
Sue Grant is an Information Officer and one of the team who answers your calls. Here she tells us how she deals with questions that can range from, "What are the school term dates?" to "My daughter is being bullied, what can I do?"

When is the contact centre open?

The contact centre is open from 8am until 6pm Monday to Friday and we also have a 24 hour answer phone. This week I'm doing the early shift so I arrive at 7.45am.

Will you answer my questions or just put me through to another department?

We are not a switchboard, we have a lot of specialist knowledge and answer the majority of enquiries ourselves. We only pass callers on to other teams when the question requires very specific expertise.



What kind of enquiries do you deal with?

As soon as the line opens at 8am I get a call from a dad who is worried about his 15 year old daughter. She is being bullied at school and he doesn't think the school is doing enough to help. I advise him to talk to the headteacher, ask to see the school's bullying policy to make sure they are following their own procedures and if he's still not happy then to put his concerns in writing to the school governors. I also direct him to the Family Information Directory, www.surreycc.gov.uk/directory which has links to bullying websites that can offer practical support.

How many enquiries do you answer a day?

On an average day I deal with around 60 enquiries and today I speak to 28 people before lunch. One mum wants to apply for a school place and a grandma wants to know what is happening at her local library so she can take her grandchildren. I tell the grandma about her local children's centre as well because most of them run suitable sessions. She thought children's centres were only for parents so was pleased to hear she could use them too.

What kind of enquiries do you pass onto another team?

When I get back from lunch I talk to a mum from Guildford who is worried about finding childcare for her three year old son who is disabled. She has called before and we have given her the details of all the childcare in her area but we always tell callers to get in touch again if they need more help. The mum is still struggling to find a suitable place and this is one occasion where I will pass her onto another team. The FIS team can offer a brokerage service to help parents of disabled children who are really struggling with finding childcare. This means that they work with the parent or carer and the childcare providers in the area to try and find the best childcare options.

What happens next?

I put everything the mum tells me into an enquiry form, this is an electronic form that we use to note down information, and tell her that someone will get back to her as soon as possible. An FIS adviser will call her back to discuss her, and her son's needs in more detail. They can then send information, or in certain circumstances may arrange for an FIS outreach officer to meet with the mum at her local children's centre.

It's only 1.25pm and I answer another 22 calls before home time at 4pm. I look up contact details for an after school club, advise a dad who wants to appeal for a school place and help a mum who wants to clarify some details about the contract she has with her childminder. All this information is available on our website so I always tell callers where they can find the information if they want to look it up themselves in the future.

There is never a dull moment at the contact centre and I know that tomorrow I will get a completely different set of questions. ●

Get in touch with FIS

visit www.surreycc.gov.uk/fis
call 0300 200 1004
email surrey.fis@surreycc.gov.uk

You can also follow SurreyFIS on [Twitter](#)





Early Years Free Entitlement (EYFE) is a hot topic in the Surrey Family Information Service inbox. Here are their answers to some of your questions.

Parent 1 I've spoken to Surrey Family Information Service, the Free Entitlement team and my nursery but still feel that I am being overcharged. I want to take this further, who can I appeal to?

If the Free Entitlement team have looked into this and found that the nursery are operating within the rules set out by the code of practice then your only option would be to look for a place at another nursery, pre school or network childminder.

Parent 2 Can I use my EYFE with any nursery, pre school or childminder?

No, only if the nursery, pre school or network childminder is registered for EYFE, so check that they are first.

Parent 3 I don't drive so I want a free entitlement place in a local nursery. Do they have to offer me a place?

No, although the entitlement applies to every child, the government's code of practice does not say that this has to be offered within a certain distance of the child's home.

Parent 4 My nursery can offer me a free entitlement place next term. Will I have to pay for the term in advance to guarantee a place?

You might have to, because as a private business the nursery will have its own admissions policy. Check with your nursery.

Parent 5 If I move my child to their friends' nursery will I still get the free entitlement?

You can change nurseries after the end of the term but unless there are exceptional circumstances, the free entitlement cannot be moved part way through a term.

Parent 6 Why has my bill has gone up even though the free entitlement hours increased?

This could be because your pre school has changed their rates or the free entitlement sessions could now be at different times. Talk to your pre school and ask them to explain your bill.

Parent 7 My child goes to a maintained nursery three mornings a week for nine hours. Can I still get 15 hours at a day nursery?

No, the hours your child attends the maintained nursery will be deducted from the 15 hours free entitlement. In this case you could use your remaining six hours at a nursery registered for free entitlement.

Find out more

For up to date information and a parent leaflet about free entitlement look at the popular pages section at www.surreycc.gov.uk/fis
tel 0300 200 1004
email surrey.fis@surreycc.gov.uk

Tweet @SurreyFIS



You ask the questions

Maternity rights

Surrey Family Information Service Outreach Officer Denise, answers your questions.

I would like to return to work part-time after my maternity leave. Do I have any rights?

Yes you do, as long as you have worked for your employer for 26 weeks continuously before applying to work part time and have parental responsibility for a child aged under 17 (from April 2011 a child aged under 18) or a disabled child under 18 who receives Disability Living Allowance. You then have the statutory right to request a flexible working pattern.

I understand I can go into work to catch up on key issues. How many days am I entitled to?

You can work under your contract of service for the employer paying you Statutory Maternity Pay for up to 10 days during your Maternity Pay Period without losing any Statutory Maternity Pay. These special days are known as Keeping in Touch days and are intended to help you keep in touch with your workplace.

I am returning to work after six months Ordinary Maternity Leave. My employer intends to change my job role on my return. I thought I could have my old job back.

You are right. If you have taken 26 weeks Ordinary Maternity Leave, you have the right

to return to the same job as the one you had before you went on leave. However, if you have taken Additional Maternity Leave as well as Ordinary Maternity Leave, you are entitled to return to the same job unless your employer says this is not reasonable. In this case, you should be offered another suitable job with the same pay and conditions as you had before maternity leave.

'I am on maternity, do I have to let my employer know that I'm going back to work?'

Your employer will assume that you will take all 52 weeks of your Statutory Maternity Leave. If you take the full 52 weeks, you don't need to give notice that you are coming back. However, it can be a good idea to do so. If you wish to return earlier, for example, when your Statutory Maternity Pay ends, you must give at least eight weeks' notice. If you don't, your employer can insist that you don't return until the eight weeks have passed. You must tell your employer that you want to change the date of your return.

I am on maternity leave but have decided to hand in my notice. How do I do this?

If you decide not to return to work at all, you must give your employer notice in the normal way. ●

Find out more

Search for **Statutory Maternity Leave: returning to work** or **Flexible working** on the Direct gov website www.direct.gov.uk

Visit Department of Work and Pensions www.dwp.gov.uk

For a fact sheet on **Maternity Rights at Work** visit Citizens Advice Bureau Advice Guide www.adviceguide.org.uk

Want to ask Surrey Family Information Service a question? email the team at surrey.fis@surreycc.gov.uk telephone 0300 200 1004

Or search for services for families on the Surrey Family Information Directory www.surreycc.gov.uk/directory





Use it, **don't waste it**

8.3 million tonnes of food and drink
goes to waste in the UK every year

For tips on cutting the cost of your food bill and making
the most of your leftovers visit www.lovefoodsurrey.com

