



SOUTH WEST CANN COMMUNICATION
September 2025

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INTRODUCTION

Hello and welcome to the latest South West CANN Update.

South West Children's Additional Needs Network shares information and helps to increase the reach of your services for children and young people in the region.

Regarding updates and information, if you have material or information that you would like forwarded to the members of the Network, or any updates, please ensure that you email it to Miriam on **southwest@cann-network.org**, before the end of the month.

Thanks to everyone who shared the information below for our latest update, which contains information and sessions for children and young people with additional needs and their parent carers.

You can find these Communications on the SWCANN Website at:
<https://www.cann-network.org/blog/>

SOUTH WEST CANN MEETING DATES

Future dates:
TBC

CHAIR COMMENTS

As co-chair of the Southwest CANN (Child with Additional Need Network), I am deeply committed to championing the rights of families and their children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). My passion stems from a strong belief in equity and inclusion, ensuring that every child, regardless of ability has access to opportunities, support, and respect. Through this role, I strive to amplify the voices of families, break down barriers to access, and collaborate with community partners to create a supportive environment where every child can thrive. My dedication is driven by first-hand experience as a parent carer to children with conditions such as Downs Syndrome, ADHD, Autism and Epilepsy. Through my lived experience and in my day to day job supporting social care, I advocate for dignity, empowerment, and long-term positive change for SEND families.

Kind regards

Sarah Okoro CMgr FCMl
Managing Director | Coach and Trainer | Expert by Experience

Co-Chairs: Sarah Okoro and Chereka Carty
South West CANN

ADMIN COMMENTS

Exciting News from The CANN Network!

As we continue to grow, we're moving from regional websites to a single national hub:
www.cann-network.org which is now live!

This means you now have a dedicated area on the website and a new email

- southwest@cann-network.org
- admin@cann-network.org

We're currently transferring all the information, so all sites will run side by side for a while. But it's a great time to update your mailing lists and contact details now. We'll send reminders as updates come through.

All social media links will remain the same as regional. You now have a BlueSky Account as well:
<https://bsky.app/profile/cannsouthwest.bsky.social>

Thanks for being part of our journey—here's to expansion and better connection across the UK!

Miriam Watson-Pratt
Administrator
admin@cann-network.org

NEW MEMBERS

If you know of any groups that may be interested, please get them in touch!

Please only use contact details that are for public use

RESEARCH

No new research this month

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY - NATIONAL/ONLINE

H.I.E. Conference - Thursday 14th May 2026

Tickets are on sale for our first H.I.E. Conference, taking place on Thursday 14th May 2026 at The Lowry, Manchester.



The theme is “Hear, Inform, Empower.”

Our first announced speakers are Nicholas Hamilton & Paula Abramson.

"Nicolas is a disability ambassador and hugely inspiring speaker. Born with Cerebral Palsy, following an H.I.E. event at birth, Nicolas and his parents were told that he would never walk, or talk, but this did not stop him for achieving his dream of becoming a successful racing driver."

Paula Abramson will be joining us on the 14th May 2026, and we hope you will too. Paula is a psychotherapist and training facilitator, specialising in providing bereavement support to families and training for professionals, following the death of a baby or child.

Conference tickets here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/hie-conference-tickets-1434277846649>

Bringing Us Together Upcoming Online Courses

Bringing Us Together

Workshops for Individual Employers and those receiving Direct Payments

We welcome you to our new series of FREE online sessions on Zoom delivered by Bringing Us Together and Adult Social Care Warriors with Guest Speakers. Funded by Skills for Care.



**Wednesday 3rd September 2025
at 1.30pm to 3.30pm**

**Welfare Reform – Managed
Migration and Universal Credit**

Guest Speaker : Gail Ward

Gail Ward is a disabled activist with many years of experience in campaigning for a fairer system for disabled people and their families.

In this session, Gail will be providing an overview of :

- The process of Managed Migration to Universal Credit.
- Transitional Protection
- An update on recent changes to the Universal Credit Bill.

Attend this workshop to make sure you're clear how the changes may affect you and what you need to do about it.

Learn together, share ideas, and meet other like-minded people who employ Personal Assistants/Carers. Resources will be provided.

for info and booking email: karen@bringingustogether.org.uk



**ADULT SOCIAL
CARE WARRIORS**



Doing it Solo



A Bringing Us Together lone parents project for parents of disabled children, young people and adults

Transition to term time workshop



Date:

Monday 8th September 2025

Time:

7.00pm - 9:00pm

Our next workshop will be a relaxed conversation all about the transition back to term time.

Led by Steering group member Noreen, this will be your chance to share the highs and lows of the first week back, what's worked well and any challenges you'd like help with. Our team will share their top tips and we'd love to hear yours so we can all learn from each other.



For more info and booking, email tony@bringingustogether.org.uk

Doing it Solo



*A Bringing Us Together lone parents project for
parents of disabled children, young people and adults*

Summer 'Drop-in' session

A Conversation with The Doing It Solo team.

*Sharing our journeys and our learning
so far*



Date:

Friday 29th August 2025

Time:

10.30am - 12 midday



Our next drop-in session will be an opportunity
for everyone to share our tips for keeping going.
How do we find real support that works for us?

Chat to our team about some of the challenges
we all face and how we can avoid burnout by
coming together.



*For more info and booking, email
tony@bringingustogether.org.uk*

Signposting Network of Inclusive Support

We would like to build an inclusive network of support for the families and patients with congenital heart defects, whilst delivering our family support service we have identified that often there is so much more that our families need support with and this is something we can help with on our own and want to call on the other fabulous services across our region to build a safe and reassuring network of support and guidance

Would you be happy to share our “ASK” project flyer with your contacts please, those who are interested can be as active as they are able all we ask is that we can share their service logo along with website and contact details on our website, this would illustrate and inform our families of the partnerships we have to ensure they have a safety net of support and services they can contact to meet their individual needs

We may also ask those services to attend events share resources and support us to identify ways we can be more inclusive as a service, but this is not a requirement

All professionals need to do is email me at – sarah.cherry@chsf.org.uk with their logo, names contact and service contact details

I am more than happy to chat about this further

Very best wishes

Sarah



Sarah Cherry
Head of Family Support
sarah.cherry@chsf.org.uk
07929 509227

Film project for deaf/hearing impaired child

We are casting a beautiful film set in present-day Scotland, where far-right vigilantes patrol rural communities and enforce their ideology with violence, a 10-year-old deaf girl is torn from her protective older brother during a brutal raid. Escaping into the wilderness, she must navigate an unforgiving, dystopian landscape — relying on her senses, her wits, and the memories of their shared games — to find her way back to him. But when she finally reaches their secret meeting place, the reunion she’s fought so hard for will shatter her heart forever.

We are trying to find a young deaf actor / hard of hearing for the role of

Amna - ethnicity would be Asian/Mediterranean or mixed ethnicity.

Below I have some more details about the character:

Amna

Female

Playing age of 10-12 years old (actual age must also be above 10)

Must be deaf / hard-of-hearing

Fluent in BSL (Basic or Intermediate considered)

Please email hello@thedramamob.com

Let me know if you need any further information.

Shoot dates: SEP 29th - 3rd Oct.

Helpful resource for autistic children's oral health

A new useful resource regarding autistic children's oral health toothPASTE which is now live:
autismtoothcare.com.

toothPASTE is a free, online resource developed with parents and professionals to support autistic children's oral health and also relevant to many children with additional needs.

It includes small, practical steps to help with toothbrushing, reducing sugary foods and drinks, and attending dental appointments.

The resources are autism-informed, non-judgemental, and easy to use.

(Just to clarify, toothPASTE and autismtoothcare.com are the same project. The website name was chosen based on likely search terms and input from the research).

Sarah Firth

Communications and Insight Manager (SEND)

Healthy Children and Families

Email: sarah.firth@bradford.nhs.uk

LinkedIn: [Sarah Firth | LinkedIn](#)

Website: www.bdcpartnership.co.uk

Keep Connected: Understanding & living with an acquired brain injury (ABI) in children

This online support event is for parents and carers who suspect their child has an acquired brain injury (ABI) following meningitis.

Date: 16 September 2025

Time: 10.30 am - 12 pm

What topics will the course cover?

Does your child have long-term after-effects from meningitis, such as fatigue, memory problems, changes in behaviour, or sensory issues?

Do you think they have an acquired brain injury (ABI), but you are struggling to get this recognised? Do you need support to get a diagnosis?

What strategies can you give your child to help with their after-effects? And how can you get the support your child deserves in school?

We are delighted to have Dalia Chowdhury, Educational Service Manager at the Child Brain Injury Trust, join us for this online event, to talk us through the journey of getting an acquired brain injury (ABI) diagnosis and the issues your child might be experiencing.

Dalia will also discuss accessing support for your child in school and ways you can support them. Find out more about Dalia [here](#).

This online event, presented over Zoom, will be hosted by Community Support Officer, Paul Blackburn and a member of Meningitis Now staff as tech support.

Interested?

Please book [here](https://www.meningitisnow.org/get-support/support-events/online-support-events/keep-connected-understanding-living-with-an-acquired-brain-injury-abi-in-children/) and we'll be in touch after registrations close on 1 September 2025 to confirm your place.

<https://www.meningitisnow.org/get-support/support-events/online-support-events/keep-connected-understanding-living-with-an-acquired-brain-injury-abi-in-children/>

Any questions?

Email Community Support Officer and event lead Paul Blackburn at paulb@meningitisnow.org

Forever Weekend – Northampton

Join us for our Forever Weekend, a bereavement event for adults aged 18+ who have lost a loved one to meningitis, at Sedgebrook Hall, Northampton.

Event information

Date: Friday 10 October 2025 - Saturday 11 October 2025

Location: Sedgebrook Hall, Pitsford Rd, Chapel Brampton, Northampton NN6 8BD

Key Information

Date: Friday 10 to Saturday 11 October 2025

Time: 10am on Friday to Saturday afternoon

Location: Sedgebrook Hall, Pitsford Rd, Chapel Brampton, Northampton NN6 8BD

We are pleased to announce that our next Forever Weekend will take place at [Sedgebrook Hall](#).

Sedgebrook Hall is located in the picturesque village of Chapel Brampton, in the heart of the beautiful Northampton countryside. Set in idyllic country gardens, Sedgebrook Hall seamlessly mixes Victorian heritage with modern comforts. The hotel has a Gym and Pool which you can use and a beauty Spa which you can book.

Whether your loss happened recently or some time ago, by attending this event you will have the opportunity to:

- Have time away in safe and supportive surroundings
- Talk about your loved one
- Understand grief, bereavement and its impact
- Share experiences with others who understand
- Find comfort, hope and reassurance that you are not alone
- Access support from our Meningitis Now support team

Throughout the weekend you can join in the suggested programme of supportive discussion groups and creative activities – but also take time to relax and reflect with others who understand. Please join us for this warm and supportive weekend

What's included?

Attendance; including your accommodation, full board and attendance to all sessions.

If you would also like to stay at the hotel on Thursday 9 October please let us know and we will provide your room and breakfast on the Friday morning. Please arrange your own dinner for Thursday evening.

If you are unsure about attending or have any aspects you would like to talk over, please contact the event lead Esme Lee (Community Support Officer) on esmel@meningitisnow.org or call 07468476068.

Travel is not included but if the cost of travel is a barrier to you attending, please contact us.

To register, please follow the link below

Please find terms and conditions [here](#).

<https://www.meningitisnow.org/get-support/support-events/forever-events/forever-weekend-norhampton/>

[Contact our meningitis Helpline | Meningitis Now](#)

[Meningitis support in the community | Meningitis Now](#)

Communication Matters International AAC Conference



7-9 September 2025 at the University of Leeds

Registration is now open for the UK's only in-person event that brings together AAC users, their families, carers, researchers, professionals, and suppliers for four days of learning, networking, socialising, and celebrating Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). The conference is expected to welcome 500+ attendees from the UK and beyond.

Here's a glimpse of what you can expect:

Hear from keynote speaker Professor Bronwyn Hemsley, Head of Speech Pathology, University of Technology Sydney, speaking on "Identity and Connections: AAC, AI & Authorship"

80+ presentations and workshops covering research, clinical practice, and personal stories

Visit the exhibition featuring leading AAC and AT suppliers

Attend the biennial AAC Awards including dinner and dancing
Join the Research Study Day with parallel sessions on "The Future of AI in AAC" and "Becoming an Aided Communicator"

To learn more visit <https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/conference/>

Changing Faces Workshop for Children and Families - Supporting your child

Our Supporting Your Child online workshop is full of advice and top practical tips to support parents and carers of children and young people, who have a scar, mark or condition on their face or body that makes them look different.

Read on for more details about the workshop and to find out how to register.

Key details

- Date: Tuesday 21st October 2025
- Time: 7.15pm – 9:00pm
- Location: Zoom
- Who is it aimed at? Parents and carers

About the day

The workshop will include:

- How to handle staring and awkward social situations
- Building confidence for you and your child
- The opportunity to listen to guest speakers talking about their own experiences of living with a visible difference

To make sure everyone feels comfortable, we will be capping attendance at around 22 parents or carers. Partners and co-parents are also welcome to attend together.

Once a participant has registered for the workshop, a member of our Wellbeing Team will get in touch to arrange a short, informal pre-workshop call on Zoom to meet you.

Register Here:

<https://www.changingfaces.org.uk/services-support/workshops-for-children-families>

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY - REGIONAL

SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS AND CONTACT DETAILS:

Website: <https://www.cann-network.org>
Email: southwest@cann-network.org
Bluesky: <https://bsky.app/profile/cannsouthwest.bsky.social>
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/south-west-cann>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/southwestcann>

Please share South West CANN links with your followers and encourage them to follow too.
Please add **southwest@cann-network.org** to your Contact list to stop it going into junk.