



**SOUTH WEST CANN COMMUNICATION**  
January 2026

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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

*Please let us know if you need any support accessing the meetings*

**Future dates:**  
TBC

## CHAIR COMMENTS

Happy New Year! We hope you have had a restful festive break and are feeling recharged for the year ahead. As we step into 2026, it is a fantastic time to reflect on the growth of our network and the incredible dedication shown by everyone supporting children and young people with additional needs across the South West.

This year brings fresh opportunities to deepen our collaboration and champion the inclusive practices that make a tangible difference for our families. We are particularly excited to welcome our new members—Activity Alliance, Trees & Tranquility, and Accessible Inclusive Music (AIM)—who bring even more diverse expertise to our community.

**Looking Ahead to 2026:**

- **Building Connections:** Our focus this year remains on strengthening partnerships across the health, education, and voluntary sectors to ensure a more joined-up approach for the families we serve.
- **National Collaboration:** We are also keeping a close eye on national developments, including the upcoming National CANN conference, which we hope to share more news on very soon.
- **Network Expansion:** It is an exciting time for CANN nationally, as we are currently supporting the setup of new networks in the West Midlands. If you have contacts or active links in that region, please do let us know.

We are currently finalising our meeting dates for 2026 and will share these with you as soon as they are confirmed. We are always keen to hear your ideas on how to make our South West network even more impactful, so please don't hesitate to reach out.

Thank you for your continued passion and commitment. Here's to a year of positive change and strong partnership across the South West!

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

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## NEW MEMBERS



### Activity Alliance

Activity Alliance is the leading voice for disabled people in sports and activities. Established in 1998 as a national charity, we were previously known as the English Federation of Disability Sport.

“We all belong in sports and activities. Yet many disabled children and adults don’t feel that they do. At school, in the local park or working out in a nearby gym, we all have the right to welcoming, inclusive, and accessible opportunities. The right

to choose how we want to be active. Be that taking part, spectating, employment or volunteering.” Honorary President, Tanni, Baroness Grey-Thompson

<https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/>



### **Trees & Tranquility**

Forest Therapy Practice offering one-to-one and group forest therapy sessions for mental and physical wellbeing.

To introduce myself, I am a registered nurse and health visitor with a lifelong belief in the wellbeing benefits of nature and the outdoors, which I am passionate about sharing with anybody who is interested.

My experience in nursing has equipped me with the ability to build strong, trusting relationships and effectively address the unique needs of each individual. Whether working one-on-one or with larger groups, my approach is always empathetic and inclusive, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued.

[treesandtranquility@protonmail.com](mailto:treesandtranquility@protonmail.com)



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### **Accessible Inclusive Music (AIM)**

Accessible and inclusive musical opportunities for those with additional needs and disabilities.

[accessible.inclusive.music@gmail.com](mailto:accessible.inclusive.music@gmail.com)  
<https://accessibleinclusivemusic.org.uk/>

*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*

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## **RESEARCH**

### **Take part in research on carers' stress and wellbeing**

Researchers at King's College London are inviting unpaid carers to take part in a study looking at daily mood and stress in family caregivers.

South West CANN  
[www.cann-network.org](http://www.cann-network.org)  
[southwest@cann-network.org](mailto:southwest@cann-network.org)

The study uses short smartphone surveys, sent at different points during the day over a four-week period, to understand how caring affects wellbeing in real time. Participants will also be asked to complete a brief feedback survey at the end, with the option to take part in an interview about their experience.

The aim is to understand whether this kind of approach could be a helpful way to better recognise and respond to carers' stress in future support services.

Taking part is voluntary, and the study is open to people who are currently providing unpaid care.

👉 For more information or to take part, contact the research team: [lifelines@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:lifelines@kcl.ac.uk)

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## EVENTS AND INFORMATION - NATIONAL/ONLINE

### **Breastfeeding a baby with Down syndrome**

Wednesday 28th January | 12.00 pm

In this webinar, our Breastfeeding Coordinator Sarah, talks again, about supporting families who wish to breastfeed their baby with Down syndrome.

The session aims to equip you with the facts and the lived experience of the families supported by DSUK and leave you confident in the support you give.

It talks about some of the challenges that are faced in establishing breastfeeding and what successful support looks like.

Note: To sign up, please ensure you tick the box of the upcoming webinar before completing and submitting your details.

[Register for the January Webinar here](#)

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### **'Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy'.**

Please share with colleagues, allied sectors, partners.

Over the coming months will be opportunities to explore the Strategy, both on line and in person. Do look out for dates.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-ambitious-plan-to-tackle-youth-isolation-crisis-and-deliver-real-life-opportunities>

links to

Youth Strategy Final – summary report

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/693880d1cfacd5e888491cd5/DCMS\\_Youth\\_Strategy\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/693880d1cfacd5e888491cd5/DCMS_Youth_Strategy_FINAL.pdf)

Youth Strategy – full

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-matters-your-national-youth-strategy/youth-matters-your-national-youth-strategy>

An accessible, mobile-friendly version of the summary report for Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/youth-matters-your-national-youth-strategy-summary-report>

To support the NYS there are several report -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-matters-state-of-the-nation>

- Youth Matters: State of the Nation' Annex
- National Youth Strategy Research Project
- National Youth Strategy Young People's Report
- National Youth Strategy Research Project Annex (Data Tables)
- National Youth Strategy Research Project Annex (Methods)
- The Big Ambition Analysis for the National Youth Strategy

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## Time to get quizzical with the CP Teens UK Virtual Quiz Night!

*Please note: the CP Teens UK Virtual Quiz Night is different to the annual CP Teens UK Quiz, which is an in-person event, is open to the public and is a fundraiser. The Virtual Quiz is online and is only open to youngsters 14-25 with Cerebral Palsy/a physical disability.*

A fun and social quiz evening to kick off your weekend.

### Who Can Join?

- Open to participants **aged 14 to 25** with **Cerebral Palsy/physical disabilities**
- Physically based in **England, Wales, or Scotland only** (due to insurance requirements)
- **New to CP Teens UK?** You'll need to complete a one-time **ID check** before joining – this is part of our safeguarding process.

### Accessibility & Participation

- A **chat box** is available for anyone who is non-verbal, has speech difficulties, or prefers written communication.
- Don't feel pressured to speak - you're welcome to just listen and participate in the quiz

- We kindly ask that webcams are kept on where possible so everyone feels connected
- We respectfully ask that you do not Google to get the answers to questions

### **Prizes**

- Prize for 1st, 2nd and 3rd
- League - A league will be kept throughout 2026. Prize at the end of the year for the overall winner (must have entered at least 3 of the quizzes)

Book here: <https://www.cpteensuk.org/events>

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### **Government launches national conversation on SEND Reform**

The Schools White Paper will be published early next year and will set out our proposed reforms to the SEND system. Building on extensive engagement over the past year, the Department for Education has launched a national conversation on SEND reform.

DfE wants to hear views, experiences and insights from as many people as possible in the coming months. The national conversation encourages everyone from parents to those working in schools, colleges and early years to get involved and help build a consensus on what works to help deliver lasting reform. Every voice will help shape the system our children and young people deserve.

This will be followed by a period of formal public consultation and further engagement following publication of the Schools White Paper early next year.

### **How you can get involved**

#### **Online events**

Join one of five sessions and submit your questions on the key principles guiding SEND reform. You can attend as many as you like. [Sign up here](#).

#### **Share your views online**

Contribute ideas and feedback directly online at [www.gov.uk/dfe/SEND-conversation](http://www.gov.uk/dfe/SEND-conversation)

[National conversation on SEND reform Stakeholder toolkit](#)

### **Child Brain Injury and Early Years Education Conference**

Guiding those who support children with birth and brain injuries through the early years' SEN and EHCP process.

Open to parents, families, and professionals. Free to attend.

Date:

Thursday, 29 January 2026

Venue:

Stewarts

5 New Street Square

London, EC4A 3BF

Schedule:

- Lunch: 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM
- Presentations & Questions: 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM
- Drinks & Discussions: 5:00 PM onwards

Additional Info:

- CPD points available
- Opportunity to network and gain expert insights

Speakers include:

- Dr Ruth Kent – Consultant in Neurological Rehabilitation
- Dr Angela Simcox – Consultant Neuropsychologist
- Emily Neal – Special Education Advisor
- Jennifer Wright – Solicitor from Roeb Irwin Sweeney
- Launa Randles – Headteacher, The Children's Trust

Registration:

[https://sites-stewartslaw.vuturevx.com/25/1542/landing-pages/rsvp-\(blank\).asp?sid=blankform](https://sites-stewartslaw.vuturevx.com/25/1542/landing-pages/rsvp-(blank).asp?sid=blankform)



STEWARTS

# Child Brain Injury and Early Years Education Conference

*Guiding those who support children with birth and brain injuries through the early years' SEN and EHCP process. Open to parents, families and professionals.  
Free to attend.*

Thursday 29 January 2026

Stewarts, 5 New Street Square, London, EC4A 3BF

Lunch: 12pm – 1pm

Presentations and questions: 1pm – 5pm

Drinks and discussions: 5pm onwards

CPD points available.



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**Free guide to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for parents and carers of autistic and neurodivergent children.**

Free guide to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for parents and carers of autistic and neurodivergent children. The guide looks in detail at each question to help you effectively identify your child's needs.

South West CANN  
[www.cann-network.org](http://www.cann-network.org)  
[southwest@cann-network.org](mailto:southwest@cann-network.org)

<https://www.theautismpage.com/dla-guide/>

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## **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.

South West CANN  
[www.cann-network.org](http://www.cann-network.org)  
[southwest@cann-network.org](mailto:southwest@cann-network.org)

"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>

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### **InSideWays with Oily Cart: Now booking for 2026!**

We're excited to share that our accessible At Home show, InSideWays, is now available to book.


As the year comes to a close, InSideWays - described by audiences as "exciting and playful" with "a lot of love and care behind it" - is an experience for your whole family to look forward to in 2026.


Open up a SideWays world and fill your home with sensory fun and magic


#### **About InSideWays**


Get ready for a wonderfully wiggly adventure of tasty sounds, toothbrush discos, and stories that won't stay on the page. Where there's no right or wrong way of doing things, just YOUR way. Sounds, music, smells, light, colour, textures and tastes will gradually transform your home, until it's filled with sensory fun and magic! InSideWays reveals the extraordinary in the everyday



 **Who:** Created for and with disabled young people (0 - 25) and their families who experience barriers to attending live performance.

 **Where:** Wandsworth, North East London, Essex, Brighton and Sussex, the West Midlands and Leicestershire / Rutland.

 **How much?:** One £25 ticket covers your whole family having the show for 12 - 14 days. (If price is a barrier, please email us: [oilies@oilycart.org.uk](mailto:oilies@oilycart.org.uk))

 **When:** Touring January - April 2026.

Estimated delivery and pick up dates:

Brighton and Sussex

Monday 16 February & Saturday 28 February

Saturday 28 February and Friday 13 March

#### **Book Now:**

[https://www.tickettailor.com/events/oilycart/1938283?mc\\_cid=9a1478c482&mc\\_eid=a0b52dc6da](https://www.tickettailor.com/events/oilycart/1938283?mc_cid=9a1478c482&mc_eid=a0b52dc6da)

## What actually is an At Home show?

We know it's not every day that a whole show comes to your house! Here are answers to a few frequently asked questions...

What is an At Home show?

Our At Home shows are made for and with families who experience barriers to attending live shows. InSideWays has been made with the same budget and resource as a touring theatre show, so what you'll receive is not a compromised version of 'real' theatre - InSideWays is the real thing, in its best version. From us to you!

InSideWays is a show with no performers, just beautifully-crafted sensory objects and activities, a soundtrack, and instructions, so that your family can bring the magic to life together in the privacy of your home. YOU go on the adventure, and have your own unique and magical journey through the SideWays world.

Read a parent's perspective: The Importance of At Home Shows: Making Theatre Accessible for Everyone

What's included?



Sensory objects and activities that have been carefully created by sensory experts, from an award-winning multi-sensory chef to a tactile craft artist



A Sensory Storybook for your family to keep



Easy-to-follow instructions and support to guide you through the experience



At Home sensory ideas so you can keep the everyday magic going after InSideWays has finished

What do families need to know beforehand?

- Firstly, that this is a fun, sensory show designed with families, for families. You don't need to be 'arty' or into drama or anything other than yourself to enjoy it. There's no right or wrong way for your family to do things – just your way.

- InSideWays is designed to open up all your senses. There will be activities for the adults, children and siblings in your family, some individual and some shared.

- You will be sent all the information you need, including a social story, in advance. All the equipment and clear instructions for the show are provided.

- You do not need a big space.

- No performers will come to your home. You will not be made to act, sing or perform.

Got any other questions? Just reply to this email, we're always happy to help.

There are only a few spaces in each area, so early booking is the best way to secure your spot.

Until next time,  
Flossie and the Oily Cart team

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## EVENTS AND INFORMATION - REGIONAL

### **New Year, New Opportunity: Join Our Walk and Talk Group for Parent Carers of SEND children**

We're excited to start the new year with a new Walk and Talk group for parent carers of SEND children.

This group is a wonderful opportunity to take some time for your wellbeing, enjoy gentle exercise, and connect with other parent carers who truly understand the challenges and rewards of caring.

Our walks will take place for six consecutive weeks in Blaise Castle Estate, one of Bristol's most beautiful green spaces. With its woodland paths, it's the perfect place to unwind, breathe deeply and experience the benefits that nature and a gentle walk can bring to your wellbeing.

Each session will be led by our walk leader, who will guide the group and offer a friendly listening ear along the way. We're pleased to be working in collaboration with Murmuration Community Therapy and Bristol Parent Carers to reach more carers and offer targeted support to those who join this group.

The Walk and Talk group for parent carers of SEND children will start on Thursday 8 January and the sessions will run from 10.00 to 11.30 a.m.

Come and take a moment for yourself: you deserve it!

👉 To get involved email our Walk and Talk team on [walk@carersbsg.org.uk](mailto:walk@carersbsg.org.uk)

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## SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS AND CONTACT DETAILS:

Website:	<a href="https://www.cann-network.org">https://www.cann-network.org</a>
Email:	<a href="mailto:southwest@cann-network.org">southwest@cann-network.org</a>
X:	<a href="https://x.com/CannSouthWest">https://x.com/CannSouthWest</a>
Bluesky:	<a href="https://bsky.app/profile/cannsouthwest.bsky.social">https://bsky.app/profile/cannsouthwest.bsky.social</a>
LinkedIn:	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/company/south-west-cann">https://www.linkedin.com/company/south-west-cann</a>
Facebook:	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/southwestcann">https://www.facebook.com/southwestcann</a>

South West CANN  
[www.cann-network.org](http://www.cann-network.org)  
[southwest@cann-network.org](mailto:southwest@cann-network.org)

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.