

# Keeping in Touch

## Children with Multiple Needs



### The festive season is here again!

Welcome to the seventh edition of the Keeping in Touch newsletter. Where has 2011 gone? Time seems to have flown by and Christmas is only a few weeks away. Why not take a few minutes, to relax and have a look through this edition of Keeping in Touch.

Looking back over the year there has been a lot happening in Milton Keynes for children and young people with special needs. There's been fun with Inter-Action MK and the LOL projects, Creative:Space workshops at the Stables and new activities at the Caldecotte Xperience. There has also been new inclusive play equipment at 360 Play, fun and activities with Oasis and Make a Difference as well as the new and exciting inclusive play area at Emberton Country Park. If you haven't heard about any of these projects or places then contact the Families Information Service and we can tell you all about them. Our contact details are on the back of this newsletter.

In this edition, we have a short breaks update including the latest information about where you can use your vouchers. There are also updates from a few of the venues where you can use your vouchers including The Caldecotte Xperience and Oasis Saturday scheme.

We also have the spotlight on Keech in this edition of Keeping in Touch; a hospice for children in Milton Keynes with life limiting conditions. Other topics include useful information about an energy supplier rebate you may be entitled to and details about autism friendly cinema screenings in Milton Keynes.

Whatever you are doing this Christmas, all of us in the Families Information Service and Short Breaks teams hope you have a fun time with your family and the New Year brings you health and happiness. See you in 2012.



**Pinocchio at  
The Stables**

Page 3

**Short breaks at  
the Caldecotte  
Xperience**



Page 4



**Spotlight on  
Keech Hospice  
Care**

Page 5

### February half term activities

It may seem like a long way off now but February half term will be here soon. Remember that the Families Information Service has information about activities for children and young people running in the school holidays. Check out our website regularly to find out more.

For further details contact the Families Information Service:

T: 0800 035 0335

E: [childcare@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:childcare@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

W: [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/childcare)

## Jargon buster

### What is the Families Information Service?

The Families Information Service provides free, up to date and impartial information for parents and carers of children and young people in Milton Keynes. They can help by providing information about Ofsted registered childcare, leisure activities, parent support and financial support. The service has a dedicated disabilities officer who ensures that the most up to date information about support, childcare and activities is available to parents and carers of children with disabilities. They can also tailor make an approach to meet your requirements. Find out more by contacting the Families Information Service on 0800 035 0335.

### What is a short break?

Short breaks are an opportunity for children and young people with disabilities to spend time away from their parents and carers. They allow children and young people to experience new things and develop relationships with other people. Short breaks also provide the opportunity for the carers to have some time out.

A short break can be anything from an after school activity or a trip at the weekend, to an evening out or an overnight stay. Sometimes they are an opportunity for the whole family to go on an outing together, where disabled children and their siblings can enjoy the same activities.

## Short breaks in Milton Keynes for children with disabilities and additional needs 2011 – 13

*Brought to you by Val Chambers,  
Senior Commissioning Manager*

We recently distributed information about the 2011-2013 short breaks offer. This leaflet has prompted some parents to make contact and ask for further information regarding the levels.

Many of the children and young people who receive Level 1 short breaks vouchers are able to access any activity suitable for a child or young person without the need for special arrangements.

Level 2 short breaks provision is aimed at ensuring there is access to a range of places that are able to provide regular activities for children and young people with higher levels of need. These will be activities and places that will have made some changes and/or adjustments to make sure they can be enjoyed by children and young people with more complex disabilities.

Level 2 aims to ensure activities are available for children in special schools or who are in a mainstream school and meet one of the criteria listed in the leaflet. In some instances these activity providers will have received some subsidy as a contribution to any additional costs incurred. For most of these activities there is a charge but this will be no more than that paid by non-disabled children and young people. If further support is required, for instance an additional staff member to meet the needs of a particular child or group, the provider of the activity can discuss this with the Short Breaks Commissioning Team, to be provided at no extra cost to the service user.

Level 3 is available through assessment and additional breaks provided at this level are not charged.

## Short breaks voucher scheme – latest news

*Brought to you by Jill Wagstaffe, Business Support Assistant*

The short breaks voucher scheme has been well received and has given opportunities for children and young people to enjoy both new and old experiences.

We are continuing to work hard to develop a comprehensive list of activities and sessions for which short breaks vouchers can be exchanged. We intend to grow the number of recreational and sporting activities and are pleased to tell you that short breaks vouchers can now be exchanged at the following places as well as those on the reverse of the information leaflet sent out with the vouchers.

### Disability Snowsport UK

Disability Snowsport UK can be found in Xscape, Central Milton Keynes at SNO!zone and is open seven days a week. Facilities are available from the age of three years old. Information on times, costs and equipment can be found out by speaking with the lead instructor Charlie Laine. She will be able to help with any questions you may have about this activity and any additional information you need, to be able to decide if this is an experience which you would like to try. There is a viewing gallery for family and friends, where a cold or hot drink can be purchased.

### For further information:

**T: 01908 680827 (enquiries)**

**T: 0845 521 9338 (bookings)**

**E: [lessons@disabilitysnowsport.org.uk](mailto:lessons@disabilitysnowsport.org.uk)**

**W: [www.disabilitysnowsport.org.uk](http://www.disabilitysnowsport.org.uk)**





## Thomley Activity Centre

Thomley Activity Centre is a unique recreation and education facility for disabled children from birth to 16 years, their families and friends. The centre is situated in Wormingham, Buckinghamshire and is set in nine secure acres of countryside. Thomley offers a safe and

supportive environment for disabled and non-disabled children to play together, have fun and grow in confidence.

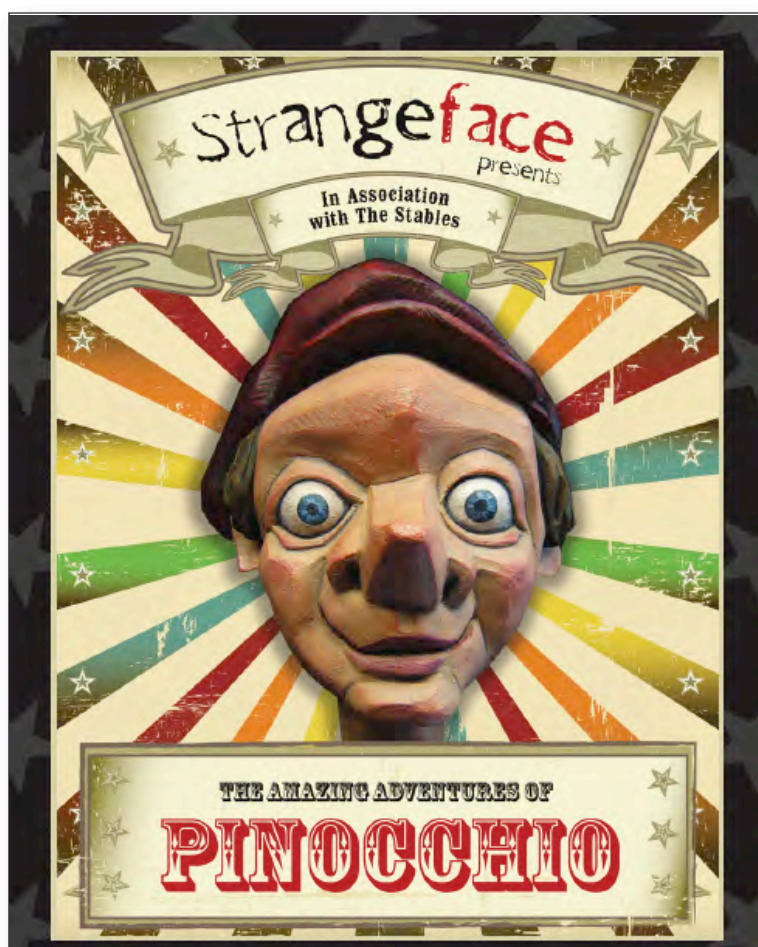
### For further information:

T: 01844 338380 (enquiries and bookings)

E: [bookings@thomleyhall.org](mailto:bookings@thomleyhall.org)

W: [www.thomleyhall.org](http://www.thomleyhall.org)

Thank you for the details of organisations you wish us to contact with regard to the short breaks voucher scheme. Please keep the ideas and information coming and we will continue to update you with new organisations where you can exchange the vouchers for recreational and / or sporting activities. Contact us via the details on the back on this newsletter.



## The Stables

The Stables in Wavendon are now taking bookings for performances of:

### "The Amazing Adventures of Pinocchio"

Suitable for children aged five and over.

### Performance dates:

20 to 24 December, 26 to 31 December 2011, 4 to 7 January 2012

Short breaks vouchers will be accepted for full or part payment for any of the shows (subject to availability of seats at time of booking). Ticket reservations can be held for up to 3 days, payment and collection of the tickets must be made by visiting the box office within this time period. Prices start from £15.50 for a child.

For further information about performance times, ticket prices, groups, discounts and availability, contact:

T: 01908 280800 (box office)

W: [www.stables.org](http://www.stables.org)

**Disclaimer:** Milton Keynes Council accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of the information given by providers in the short breaks voucher scheme. It is recommended that you always check details with providers to ensure their service meets your requirements. In no event shall Milton Keynes Council be liable for any damage, howsoever caused, arising out of or in connection with the use or performance of this information. Milton Keynes Council cannot recommend or endorse any of the providers listed in the information provided. Parents and carers should check the suitability of any activity for the child or young person, with a medical professional, if necessary, before booking or participating in any activity.

Keeping  
in  
Touch



## Short breaks at the Caldecotte Xperience

*Brought to you by Ann Smith, Administrator*

The Caldecotte Xperience has worked with short breaks this year to provide children and young people who have additional needs with a variety of adventurous activities.

Sixteen activity sessions were laid on, covering land and water based activities, the most popular being sailing. Over 150 people attended sessions, with many users coming to several sessions to try out something new or have another go.

It was great to see the smiles on everyone's face, from the young people to the instructors and parents. Parents had the opportunity to relax for a couple of hours and make some new friends. Children had the rare opportunity to try something really challenging and the instructors loved every minute.

Our specialist equipment which we have thanks to Aiming High funding, really came into its own. Our rowing sessions were supported by senior members of the Milton Keynes Junior Rowing Club who came along for the day to provide their expertise and rowing skills. Canoeing was great fun and journeys across the lakes were given the thumbs up by all those who paddled. Sailing was extremely popular and extra sailing sessions were put on to accommodate all those who wanted to sail. We also put on fencing and archery sessions as well as climbing. Every session was booked to capacity, which was fantastic and it was great to see so many parents using their short breaks vouchers.

Everyone involved in these outdoor adventurous activities have given great feedback and we hope to be involved in future activities with short breaks.

Don't forget that your short breaks vouchers can be used at any sessions at the Caldecotte Xperience. Get in touch or see our website for more details.

**For further information or to book an activity, please contact:**

**T: 01908 232042**

**E: [caldecotte@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:caldecotte@milton-keynes.gov.uk)**

**W: [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/outdoor-education](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/outdoor-education)**



## Receive Keeping in Touch via email!



Thank you to everyone who gave us their email addresses so we could send this newsletter to you electronically. We had a good response following our requests for details but we would like to send it to more of you in this way.

Not only will this help save money, paper and postage, it means we can also email you every time we have a new activity willing to accept the short breaks vouchers.

If you are happy to provide your email details, please send it to [childcare@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:childcare@milton-keynes.gov.uk) with your name and address putting 'Keeping in Touch newsletter' in the subject line.

Thank you for your help.

## Update from Oasis

*Brought to you by Vickie Taylor, Oasis Playscheme Deputy Play Care Coordinator*

Oasis have had two busy but very successful Summer and October schemes. We averaged over 40 children per day with 90% of those children having an additional need. We had lots of fun activities, trips and outings lined up and the children really enjoyed having the Police, Ambulance and Fire services visit over the summer.

Oasis Saturday club is looking forward to another successful year, operating one Saturday per month from 9.00am to 1.00pm at Stacey Bushes Meeting Place. We offer spaces for up to sixteen children each Saturday and cater for ages between

six and 16 years. It's a great place to use your short breaks vouchers at only £12 per session.

Oasis Saturday club offers parents and carers a well earned short break while offering the children a place to interact, socialise and enjoy fun activities. We offer a range of activities to suit all ages and abilities including:

- cooking – anything from icing biscuits to making bread and cakes
- craft activities – painting, collage, mask making, junk modelling and lots more....
- free play including drawing,

puzzles, books, cars, dolls and action figures to name a few.

We are very flexible and aim to please the children, so if there is anything a child wants to change or do, we try to accommodate their wishes. We also have a medium sized outside area, which the children have free access to all day and through all weathers, where we have bikes, scooters, balls, bats, skittles and large outdoor games.

**For more information or to book places contact Roni Castle:**

**T: 07968 344453**

**E: oasisplayscheme@tiscali.co.uk**

## Autism friendly cinema screenings in Milton Keynes

*Brought to you by Sian Contell, Families Information Service*

Milton Keynes Odeon cinema at The Point has been showing some autism friendly cinema screenings since October.



What makes the screenings autism friendly?

- The lights will be on low.
- The volume will be turned down.
- There will be no trailers at the beginning of the film.
- You'll be able to take your own food and drinks.
- You'll be able to move around the cinema if you like.

For more information please go to [www.dimensions-uk.org](http://www.dimensions-uk.org).

You can get information about the next available film by calling Odeon's Accessibility Helpline on 0800 138 3315 between 11.00am and 8.00pm or by visiting the Odeon in Milton Keynes.

Remember that with a Cinema Exhibitor's Association (CEA) card, a child's carer can accompany them for free as well. CEA cards cost £5.50 for the year; you need to be in receipt of disability living allowance or your child needs to be registered as blind.

An application form can be obtained from the Odeon in Milton Keynes or online at [www.ceacard.co.uk](http://www.ceacard.co.uk)



### Services Spotlight

To give you more information about some of the services you may come into contact with we are spotlighting Keech Hospice Care in this edition of Keeping in Touch. See pages 7 and 8.



## Make a Difference youth groups

*Brought to you by Natasha Davidson, Inclusion Co-ordinator*

### Transitions Youth Group

The Transitions Youth Group is a youth led project where young people get to choose and plan activities to enjoy and take part in. What a great few months we have had! We've been sailing, orienteering, pine cone collecting at Stowe, to the cinema, done graffiti, cooked on the fire pit, done yoga style story-telling and more!

Here's what's new:

#### Street dance

For older teens age 17 and over we have a Thursday evening street dance session at the Buszy from 5:00pm to 6:00pm, costing £1. Come along, meet friends and practise your dance moves.

### Out and about project

A brand new opportunity for teenagers to take part in leisure activities. This is a weekly social group who meet and plan what activities they would like to do. At the moment they are enjoying a weekly bowling session. We are looking to expand the group in the New Year.

### New inclusive youth programme

In January MaD will be launching a new inclusive youth programme. This will include after school sessions for eight to 12 years, evening youth projects for 13 to 19 years and Saturday morning activities.

We welcome all young people and to ensure that everyone has a good, fun

experience, we are happy to discuss and consider any steps to be taken so that activities are suitable and there are opportunities for young people to do the things they wish to be part of.

Please call us to talk through the programmes we have on offer or arrange a time to visit us and find out more.

**For further information contact  
Natasha Davidson or Jo Povey:**

**T: 01908 231312**

**E: [Natasha.davidson@mad-uk.org](mailto:Natasha.davidson@mad-uk.org)**

**W: [www.mad-uk.org](http://www.mad-uk.org)**

## Warm Home discount scheme

*Brought to you by Sian Contell, Families Information Service*



The Warm Home discount scheme is a four year scheme that runs from April 2011 to March 2015 to help low income and vulnerable households with energy costs. It has been set up by government to ensure that energy companies offer discounted rates to vulnerable, low income groups.

The main groups who benefit are pensioners however some of the energy companies have included families, with disabled children, on a low income.

Who qualifies and how much the discount or rebate offered will vary from company to

company. Most also have limited money for the scheme so it will be offered on a first come first served basis.

British Gas are the only energy company not limiting the number of claimants and have guaranteed that all who are eligible and who claim before January 2012 will receive the rebate.

For more information, contact your energy supplier to find out if they are part of the scheme and if you qualify. Alternatively visit the department of energy and climate change website: [www.decc.gov.uk](http://www.decc.gov.uk) and search for 'Warm home discount scheme'.

## Let us know your thoughts

It would be great to hear what you think of this newsletter. We can use this feedback to make sure we are telling you what you want to know.

We would also love to know how you have been using your short breaks vouchers. Has your child been able to do something new and different? Did they like it? How could any services be improved? We would like to hear your comments and thoughts.

Please use the contact details on the back of this newsletter to email or write to us.



## Carers Milton Keynes

*Brought to you by Anne Matthews, Carer support worker*

Our annual drumming party was a huge success and in spite of the weather (windy and cold but at least no rain) great fun was had by all who attended. Watch out for the date for next year!

Carers Milton Keynes continues to support parent carers in several ways. When you are initially referred or make contact yourself with the service we will listen to your situation and try to help and support you whether this is by advice, information or emotional support. If you wish you can attend either or both of the groups that we run.



The coffee morning meets at Greenleys Family Centre from 10.30am to 12.30pm on the following dates:

Friday 9 December  
 Friday 6 January  
 Friday 3 February  
 Friday 2 March  
 Friday 30 March

You are very welcome to bring your children to these sessions.

The other monthly group meets on a Monday at our offices (The David Baxter Centre, Central Milton Keynes) from 11.00am to 1.00pm. At this meeting we spend part of the time listening to a speaker from a service that is relevant to parent carers. The next few meetings are:

Monday 16 January  
 Monday 20 February  
 Monday 19 March  
 Monday 16 April

One of the new initiatives from Carers MK is online support. We are aware that not all carers are able to attend a daytime or evening group due to their caring role. We are developing an online group via our website, funded by Milton Keynes Council for a trial period. It is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year and enables local carers to share experiences and support each other in a safe and confidential environment. Please log on to our website for details on how to join.

**For further information please contact Anne Matthews at Carers MK:**

**T: 01908 231703**

**E: [anne.matthews@carersmiltonkeynes.org](mailto:anne.matthews@carersmiltonkeynes.org)**

**W: [www.carersmiltonkeynes.org](http://www.carersmiltonkeynes.org)**

## Keech Hospice is a special part of family life for families in Milton Keynes

*Brought to you by Stevie Pattison-Dick, Head of Marketing and Communications*



Keech Hospice Care is the local children's hospice for Milton Keynes. It offers specialist care to children and young people who live in the Milton Keynes area and who have life limiting conditions.

The hospice cares for young people from birth up to the age of 18, as well as supporting parents and



siblings. It provides a vast array of services to children and their families and all care is tailored to meet the individual needs of each family.

We have a purpose built in patient unit where children and their families receive care and support in a

*Continued overleaf...*

variety of ways. They may come to the hospice for the day to benefit from a treatment or therapy or they can have overnight stays for more complex treatment and symptom management, if the family needs a break or for special requests.

Facilities at the hospice include a multi sensory room, music room, hydrotherapy pool and spa, soft play area and an adapted outdoor play area.



Every day we run our day care service which provides specialist play, educational activities, swimming, trips out, music and complementary therapies.

There are also facilities for children who are unable to attend school or pre-school. On Thursdays we have tots and toys which is our playgroup for children under five. This is a great opportunity for families to meet up and share experiences and support each other.

Our in-house unit is based in Luton and we recognise that for many families it is a distance to travel and so the hospice provides a

community service with a team made up of experienced children's nurses and palliative care support workers. Support is offered in a variety of settings such as the home, school or hospital and is dependant on the families needs. Support includes symptom management, emotional support, liaising with other professionals, support when attending hospital appointments, giving advice and support around the child's condition, sibling support and bereavement support.

Families are very much at the forefront of our thinking at the end of a life. We have provision for families to stay over and we offer emotional support for families, especially siblings, at this time, if the families want it.

Our families stay with us long after the loss of a child. Most choose to stay in touch and to get involved in fundraising as a way of saying "thank you", helping the charity to raise the £5m it needs to run services at the hospice. Over 75% of funds come from the community.

One of our families said: "Words cannot express the value Keech has for my family. I am so grateful for my daughter and, although her life was short, I have met so many wonderful people because of her."

Anyone can refer a child to Keech including the children themselves. The only restriction is that the



person making the referral must have the permission of the parents or carers. Referrals can be made by completing a referral form and sending this to the Children's Community Service Manager at Keech or you could call them if you would like to discuss the case first. For a referral form please telephone 01582 497871.

We will then ask families for permission to obtain further information from professionals working with the family and the referral panel will base their decision on the information received.

In exceptional circumstances, such as when a child is in the terminal stage, a referral decision can be made more quickly to allow an immediate service to be offered to the family.

**For more information about Keech and the services they can offer please contact us:**

**T: 01582 492339**

**E: [info@keech.org.uk](mailto:info@keech.org.uk)**

**W: [www.keech.org.uk](http://www.keech.org.uk)**

[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/childcare)



**Milton Keynes Council**  
Families Information Service  
Galley Hill Education Centre  
Galley Hill  
Milton Keynes, MK11 1PA

T 0800 035 0335

E [childcare@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:childcare@milton-keynes.gov.uk)