Hello everyone!

This is our third newsletter from the Sensory Support Team in the South Eastern HSC Trust. The aim is to keep you up-to-date with what is going on in your local area and with the team. It will be sent out to adults on our database who experience sight and or hearing loss.

Our focus is on people who live in the Lisburn, Downpatrick and North Down and Ards area. We remain keen to have your involvement in developing this newsletter in the future! If anyone would like to contribute articles of interest, recent achievements, poems, or share thoughts on any activities etc. we would welcome your involvement.

Alternatively, you may have an opinion on the service which is offered to you by the team that you would like to share.

We also aim to regularly update the Sensory Support section on the South Eastern HSC Trust website. Again, we would welcome any comments on how to improve it further.

Please email Petra Fulton at the email address at the end of the newsletter with any contributions.

In relation to staff, Clare McStay continues to act up on a temporary basis as Community Services Manager, based in Lisburn. Gail McClintock, social worker, remains as acting team leader for the Sensory Support Team over the three sites.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter! Wishing you all a good summer.

Gail McClintock
Acting Team Leader
Sensory Support Team
What we have been up to

Deafblind Studies Course
In September 2015, Nicky Boyes and Brigid Rogers of the Downpatrick team started this 2 year course. The course is a result of co-operative partnership working between different agencies, which have a shared interest in deafblindness.

On completion, they will have built on their skills, to provide an improved method of assessment to deafblind service users and develop an individual programme of care. Learning can be shared with other Team members or other programmes, in order to raise awareness of the needs of deafblind service users.

P.A.N.D.A. (Parents at North Down and Ards)
This support group is for parents of deaf children in the North Down and Ards area and a social worker from the team is on the Committee. It now has Charitable status.

The group continues to meet on a regular basis, providing coffee mornings for parents and/or carers and activities for the children.

The photo is of Michael Devine, Junior Vice Captain at Carnalea Golf Club, helping one of the group improve their golfing skills! Michael chose the group as his ‘Charity of the Year’ and hopes to fundraise.

Emotional Support and Tinnitus Course
Two social workers from the Newtownards office have begun this interesting regional course, which is being run for the first time for social workers and audiologists.

When finished, the team will be able to offer one to one support or group support to people who experience tinnitus, to use relaxation methods to help manage the condition. Equipment that may help alleviate the symptoms of tinnitus, such as a sleep therapy sound system, will be available to borrow.

Please contact Barbara Gracey or Petra Fulton if you want to discuss this further.
**Lipreading Courses**
For many people with hearing loss, lipreading is a vital communication skill.

Frances Martin, social worker, and Karen Uprichard, rehabilitation assistant within the Sensory Support Team are newly qualified teachers of lipreading to adults and each of them recently held an 8 week programme ‘An Introduction to Lipreading’ in Lisburn and Newtownards from February - April 2016.

Hard of hearing clients from the local areas were invited to attend and places on these programmes were allocated on a first come first served basis.

Between 11 and 15 people were successful in obtaining a place on each programme.

The aim of these programmes was to teach people to recognise the different shapes that sounds make on the lips so that they can identify them.

Feedback from the participants on completion of the 8 week programme was very positive and most people felt it had improved their communication skills, improved their self confidence and made them more able to participate in a group situation.

A lot of interest has been shown in lipreading classes by hard of hearing people and Frances and Karen are planning to run further programmes in the future.

If anyone is interested in attending please contact Frances in Downpatrick or Karen in Newtownards.

In March, Richard Hirstwood visited Northern Ireland and completed regional sensory stimuli training to Trust rehabilitation workers. He discussed sensory learning, how to use a multi-sensory room effectively, using IPads and apps and how to complete sensory assessments and develop target setting.

The Trust have built on this training by purchasing some equipment which could be useful in assessments of children with sensory loss or with adults with dementia or learning disability. Please contact your local rehabilitation worker if you would like to discuss this further.
Ongoing or planned events

The Bangor Apple Group
The Bangor Apple Group meet monthly, to learn from each other, share apps and experiences.

Among the members there are ipads, mini ipads, iphones, an apple watch and an itouch. It is a great opportunity to get together and learn!

The group has grown from strength to strength and is facilitated by rehabilitation workers from the team. One service user commented: “This is an absolutely super group and I look forward to it every month”.

Down Lisburn Deaf Group
Down Lisburn Deaf Group meet on the third Tuesday of every month. We now have new committee’s involved in helping run the group and plan programmes.

The photo was taken when a representative from the PSNI was talking about the new system for the Emergency SMS Service (contact 999 by SMS text). Eighteen people attended the meeting and some of them registered with the service.

In-Touch Group
The In-Touch Group continue to meet on a monthly basis at St Mark’s Church in Newtownards. It allows local women of the deaf community to meet up, to socialize and it prevents isolation.

Kathy McCann, of Action on Hearing Loss, continues to support the group. The group photo shows members enjoying Christmas lunch. For the last meeting in June the group have decided to go out for lunch to a local restaurant. Please contact Karen Uprichard in the Newtownards office if you are interested in joining the group.

Lisburn Hard of Hearing Ladies Group
The Lisburn Hard of Hearing Ladies Group continues to meet on the first Wednesday of every month and enjoys a wide range of activities.

The fifteenth birthday celebrations will be in Autumn of this year. Further details will follow regarding this. Any ex or founder members who would like to take part in the celebrations please contact Christine Houston, social worker who is on the Committee.
Visual Impairment Men’s Group North Down and Ards
The Visual Impairment Men’s Group, North Down and Ards continues to meet every 2 months. They either invite a guest speaker along to talk to the group, enjoy an outing to a place of interest or simply meet up socially for a bite to eat and a chat.

In December the group had their Christmas outing and met for Christmas Lunch in SERC which everyone enjoyed. In February, Noelle Robinson, a local independent councillor, attended a lively question and answer session. In April the group met for lunch in the Bryansburn Inn in Bangor.

Anyone interested in attending the group can contact Kieran Bryce at the Downpatrick office or Karen Uprichard in the Newtownards office.

Downpatrick Visual Impairment Group
The Downpatrick Visual Impairment Group continues to meet regularly. They were lucky to be awarded a grant for £2,800 from the Big Lottery to help cover activity costs in 2015/16. Activities have included aromatherapy, craft skills, outings to the Tayto Factory, Coca Cola factory and the Ulster Orchestra. The group also did a bag pack in October.

On 11 May they held a drumming session with a bongo drummer! In June they will be doing a three session pottery class.

Slieve Donard Visual Impairment Group
The Slieve Donard Visual Impairment Group were pleased to recently receive a grant for £350 from the Lloyds Foundation NI. This will help group members organise yoga sessions, aromatherapy and other activities.

Lisburn Walking Group
The Lisburn Walking Group is supported by the Sensory Support Team once a month, when they provide walk leaders for the group. Anyone interested in the above three groups please contact Kieran Bryce.

Deaf User Group, North Down
This Deaf User Group continues to meet once every three months. At the users’ request, we have had a member of the interpreting service to remind people how to use it to their advantage.

There is a visit planned to the Subtitling Department in the BBC and in June a local MLA will discuss the Europe vote and a member of the Deaf Coalition will be providing an update on developments of the past year.
Rathgill Sign Language Club
Rathgill Sign Language Club will meet again on Friday 12 August at Crawfordsburn Scout Centre from 6.30pm - 8.30pm for archery and wall climbing. This fun event will be finished off with a BBQ and is £3.00 for adults and free for children.

The club will then meet on 21 October for KUBB game fun night, at Alderman George Green Community Centre, Bangor, from 7.30pm to 9.30pm.

The last event of the year will be the Grand Opera House Pantomime on 21 December at 7.00pm and is £20 per person.

North Down Walking Group
This group meets once a month and is for those who have sight loss, are known to the Sensory Support Team in Newtownards and whose ability has been assessed for the group.

There is a varied programme and it requires members to be fit and active. If you would like more information on this group please contact Laura Cromie, rehabilitation worker in the Newtownards office.

Downpatrick Deaf Men’s Group
The Downpatrick Deaf Men’s Group are continuing to meet every month (last Tuesday), to go for coffee around the Down area, meet their peers and relax and chat.

Who we work with
RNIB
May 2016 saw the launch of the new Family Insight Project, run in conjunction with RNIB and Angel Eyes. It is a 5 year project to support and empower families with children aged under 12.

It will look at confidence and skills building workshops, including:

- One to one tuition
- Family events such as fun days and residential weekends
- Can offer support with education, by providing support and guidance to parents as to how best to access help through the education system.

Please contact RNIB for further details.
Tel: (028) 9032 9373
Action on Hearing Loss have been running the ‘Hear to Help’ project for the past 2 years, in partnership with Audiology and the Sensory Support Team.

The project continues to focus on supporting people who are hearing aid users, giving information on hearing aids, communication tips, equipment and practical support with hearing aids.

Hearing aid maintenance and information sessions are run monthly in Newtownards, Lisburn, Newcastle and the Ards Peninsula.

The ‘Hear to Help’ project also supports vulnerable and isolated hearing aid users in their own homes by providing practical support and information regarding their hearing aids, in the same way as at our hearing aid sessions.

For further information regarding dates and times of the sessions around the South Eastern HSC Trust please contact:

Sue Benham
sue.benham@hearingloss.org.uk
Tel: 07342 994 453 (text only)

For your information

Belfast Deaf Badminton Club

Sandra Canning, a local member of this club would like to remind everyone of its sessions.

The club has been running over 47 years, providing great fun and games and keeping members fit and young! It is a great way to meet old friends and make new ones. The club encourage players to play many games and are happy to coach people for those who want to improve.

The badminton season will begin again on 6 September 2016, from 7.00pm to 10.00pm at RBIA, College Square East, Belfast, in the Sports Hall at the back of the school.

They look forward to welcoming you!
A Northern Ireland Mental Health Service for Deaf Children and Young People

The College of Psychiatrists in Northern Ireland are establishing a working group to establish this local service. Dr Holly Greer will be the Consultant for this exciting new team.

Members of the working group at present are from education, audiology, mental health, social work and deaf organizations. Petra Fulton from the team will be the representative on this group.

Please contact Petra Fulton for further details.

And finally..

Joan Smyth, a service user of the team, who is supported by Laura Cromie, rehabilitation worker, would like to share her skydiving photo, taken recently of herself when she was visiting family in Australia.

As Joan said via email:

“Sight loss is not the end of the world, precious as it is. The general public find it difficult, yes, but they don’t realize there is so much help out there, especially with Sensory Support Services and RNIB…I’ll be forever grateful to you and all those who have since encouraged me to use the Services, which I trust will keep going, helping others like me”.

A big thanks to Joan for sharing her inspirational message and photo!

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Lisburn area: (028) 9260 7746: fax (028) 9262 8646: minicom: (028) 9260 3120: mobile: 07739 879 554

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