



## **Downright Special Termly Update**

### **Edition 3 – December 2020**

**Welcome to our third Termly Update.** The aim of these updates is to keep Downright Special families up to date with what is going on in Friday Group Sessions, term dates, training courses, social and fundraising events, health and education news, and any particularly good hints, tips, and contacts that we come across.

#### **Friday Group**

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We have continued to deliver our Friday teaching sessions on-line for school-age children. In September we did manage to restart some face-to-face teaching for our youngest children which was very successful but sadly had to be stopped for Lockdown 2 and then whilst we are in Tier 3. We have moved these sessions online or via phone support and hopefully we will get back to some face-to-face as soon as restrictions allow. We will let you know as soon as we can.

As always, for those children who cannot attend a zoom lesson or find it difficult to cope with working this way, then we are more than happy for them to just get the resources sent home or to school to work on.

#### **Term Dates**

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Our last day of term for most of our Friday lessons is Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December. Friday Term dates for next term are:

8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> January  
5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> Feb

19<sup>th</sup> Feb – Half-Term (no sessions)

26<sup>th</sup> Feb

5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> March

For those of you whose lessons are fortnightly or monthly, your teacher will be in touch with your lesson dates & times.

## Children supported in schools/nurseries

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Our teachers Laura, Katie and Nicola are continuing to support children in nurseries, pre-schools, primary and secondary schools. They have been:

- visiting schools and observing children
- giving advice on differentiating the curriculum
- sending resources
- attending annual reviews (usually on-line)
- writing reports for EHC Plans.
- providing training to school staff

## Health

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### Staff Announcement

We are really pleased to let you know that Sam Findlay has taken up a new part-time role with the charity as DS Health lead. The aim is to give the same focus to health as we do to education, supporting families with navigating the health issues our children can face and working to embed the local Down Syndrome Care Pathway in our ways of working. Sam will continue to teach her Friday group as well as having this focus on health. Check your email inbox for more details of the role and an introduction from Sam.

### Covid-19

- The Down's Syndrome Association have been holding free, 30-minute update webinars every Friday morning on Covid-19 and Down's Syndrome. These sessions give participants the opportunity to ask questions and for the DSA team to share the latest news, resources and responses from government. For details of the latest session, visit the DSA Online Training page: <https://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/product-category/online-training/>

- The Government announced in November, that adults (18+) who have Down's syndrome have been added to the list of people who are classed as 'clinically extremely vulnerable' (CEV) and as such have been added to the priority list for vaccination. More recently it has been announced that the published vaccination priority list also includes **people who have Down's syndrome who are over 16**, at a higher level than previously. They will now be included within the sixth priority group. Details of the priority groups can be found here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-2-december-2020/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-2-december-2020>

## Training Courses

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Since the last newsletter we have moved our training offer online and have delivered nine different training courses for school staff plus several bespoke training courses for individual schools, reaching well over 100 different people. We have a full programme of training courses planned for the New Year including:

- Colourful Semantics
- Teaching Vocabulary
- Introduction to working with children with Down Syndrome
- Working Memory
- Growing, changing and keeping safe
- Coordination difficulties
- Toilet Training

For more info have a look on our website: <https://www.downrightspecial.co.uk/training>

Bookings can be made on: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/downrightspecial>

As parents, please do let us know if there is any other training that you would like us to deliver that you would find helpful and we will see what we can do! Email [training@downrightspecial.co.uk](mailto:training@downrightspecial.co.uk) with your suggestions.

## Social Events

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Sadly we are still unable to offer face-to-face social events but we are continually reviewing the situation as we know how much these are valued by everyone. In the meantime we have tried our best to make up for the lack of a Christmas party with our Christmas Present drop-off and Zoom parties for children.

We've got two more events planned for the festive season:

- **Christmas Magic Bag Live on Facebook on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> December 11am**
  - Join Sam, Erin and Anya in our closed Facebook group for your children to sing and sign some of their favourite Christmas tunes.
  - No need to book. Just join the session live by logging in to the parents group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/DownRightSpecialNetwork>
  - Can't make it at that time? Don't worry - the session will be available in the timeline for you to watch later at your leisure!
  
- **'Wine and Sign' Zoom event for parents on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 730pm.**
  - We don't want parents to feel left out of all the fun so if you like alcohol, friendship and Makaton (or just one of these things!) then please come along.
  - We will sing and sign a few old favourites (don't worry we will try to teach you any signs you don't know) and then have time to catch up, chat and put the world to rights!
  - Places must be booked by 730pm on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> December. To book a place or find out more click here: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/downrightspecial/t-gopazm>

## Fundraising

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### **New Volunteers!**

We are really pleased that Emma Cater (mum to Ada-Grace) and Lisa Bloomer (mum to Charlie) have volunteered to help with our fundraising. They've got off to a good start with setting up a **Downright Special Facebook Virtual Christmas Market**. You can head to the market place here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/923254944870984>

In January they will be starting to help us plan our Down Syndrome Awareness Week activities for this very special week in March, so watch this space!

### **Ways you can help**

- Shop online via <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/downrightspecial/> Most of the high street shops and other organisations are on there and donate a % of the purchase price to charity.
- Go via Amazon Smile for your Amazon shopping. <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/>. On each site a percentage of the purchase price comes direct to our charity.
- Send e-cards using Don't Send Me a Card. You can send birthday cards, thank you cards or special occasion cards and support a charity of your choice.  
<https://www.dontsendmeacard.com/>

## Benefits

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Just a reminder that Louise Smith is our resident DLA guru so if you need some help with applying for Disability Living Allowance or want to appeal against a decision then she can help you. Contact Louise on [louise@downrightspecial.co.uk](mailto:louise@downrightspecial.co.uk) or call 01482 420160.

## Parent/Carer Survey

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Thank you to everyone who responded to our parents' survey back in July. We had 24 responses in total which really helped us plan for this term and the coming year. We will send out a separate email with a summary of the results and what we have done or plan to do in response to what you said.

## Suggestions and Ideas

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**If you wish to chat about anything in this update, have suggestions or ideas for events, training or support you would like, or you'd like to pass on any tips, please do get in touch.**

**In the meantime, please stay safe, take care and don't forget we are here to help you in any way we possibly can. Merry Christmas everyone!**