



Wakefield Parent Carer Forum

The Official Newsletter

Welcome!

to the fourth edition of our newsletter. We hope that you enjoyed reading the last issue and that we can continue to bring you information which is helpful and supportive of your families needs.

Should you have a request for us to cover a specific topic please email us info@wakefieldparentcarers.co.uk with your request.

We would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year
Alexis, Janine & Heather

xxx

ONLINE EVENTS

We have been holding online events over the last few weeks including Adult Craft Sessions, Children's Christmas Crafting & Meditation. Thank you to everyone that joined us on the sessions, it has been great to see you all. We hope to be able to release details of more online events after Christmas so make sure you check our website.



Cuppa & Chat
Join us Sunday's 7pm

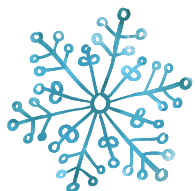


Email
info@wakefieldparentcarers.co.uk
to request an invitation to join us

COVID-19 UPDATES

Some of you may already be aware that we are COVID-19 Community Champions for Wakefield. Part of our commitment to this is that we share accurate COVID-19 related information on our Facebook pages and website, where you will find a page dedicated to COVID-19 news & updates. If you want to read up to date, accurate information please refer to either.





Who we are

Wakefield Parent Carer Forum is an independent parent led forum who work with families of children with special educational needs and/or disability, aged 0-25 years old, living in the Wakefield area.

The forum is led by a small group of local parents who are looking forward to listening to, and representing the views of parents, young people and children in the future.

These parents all have a wide experience of what it is like to be a parent of a child with an additional need or disability in the Wakefield area.

We want to work together with you to make a positive difference and improve the quality of life for all children and families in Wakefield.

What we can offer you

- Reduce isolation for families
- Support services to enable families to cope better with the challenges resulting from interaction with various services
- Peer support for all SEND families in the Wakefield Area
- Support completing EHCP applications & other SEND paperwork
- Provision of family activities, sibling support groups
- Working with other services in the Wakefield area to make a positive impact for SEND families (LA, CCG, WESAIL, KIDS & local support groups)



Working together to make a positive difference and improve the quality of life for all SEND children and families in Wakefield.



Wakefield Parent Carer Forum



www.wakefieldparentcarers.co.uk



Wakefield Parent Carer Forum Chat Group



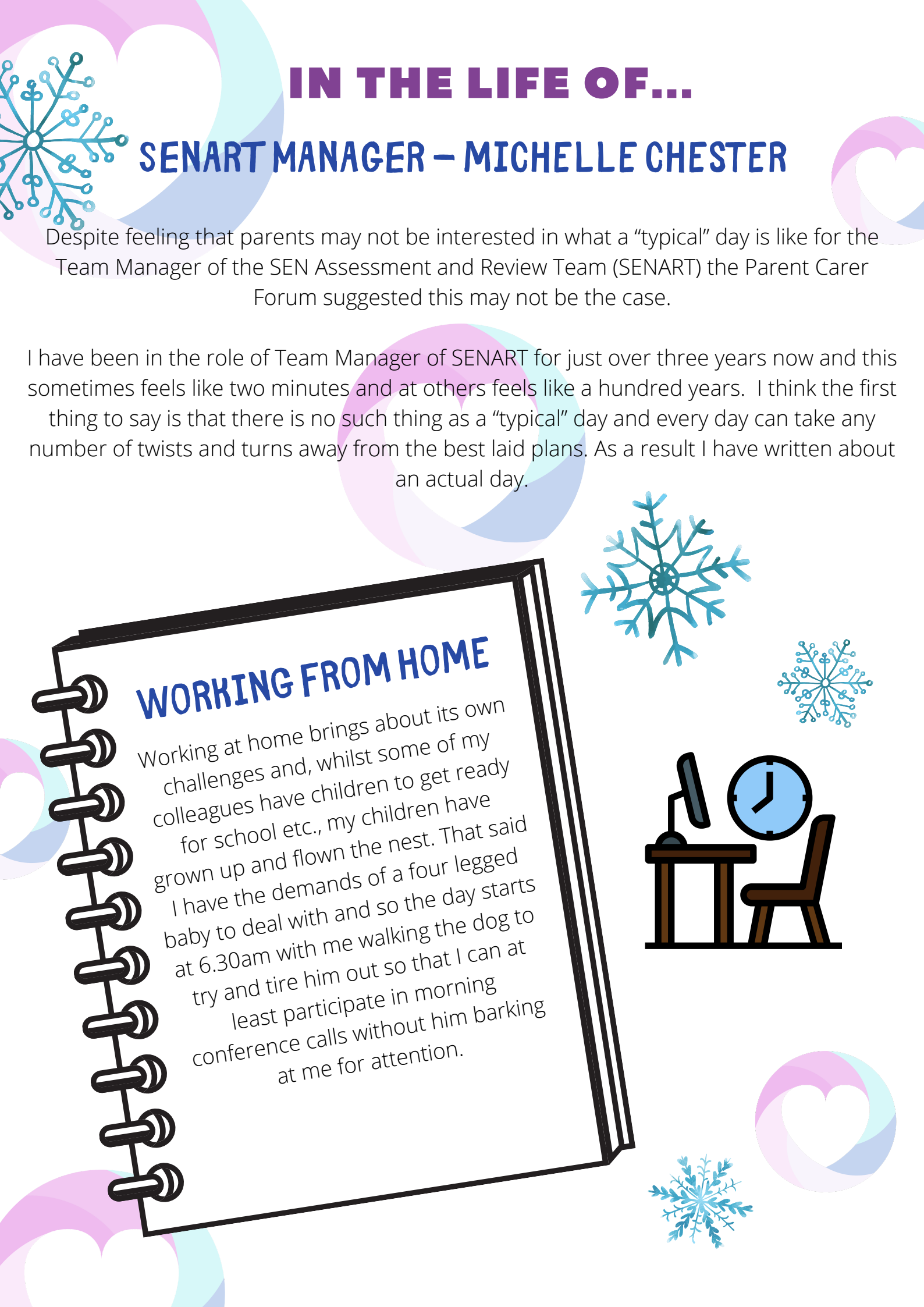
@carer_forum



info@wakefieldparentcarers.co.uk



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/wakefield-parent-carer-forum-8776891b8>



IN THE LIFE OF...

SENART MANAGER – MICHELLE CHESTER

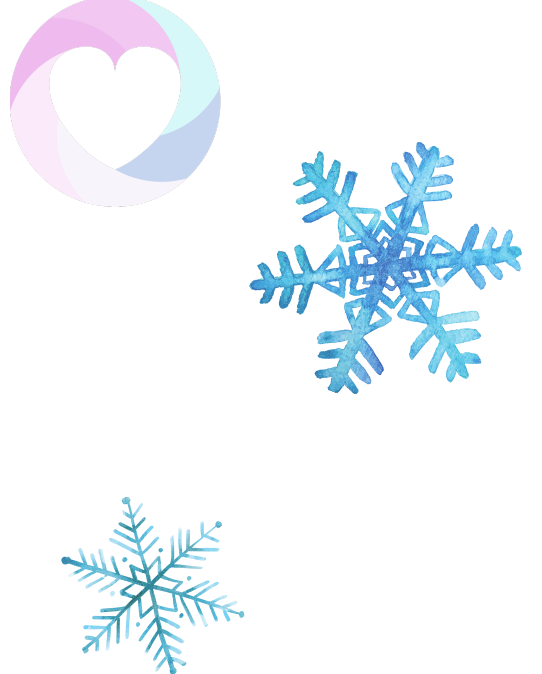
Despite feeling that parents may not be interested in what a “typical” day is like for the Team Manager of the SEN Assessment and Review Team (SENART) the Parent Carer Forum suggested this may not be the case.

I have been in the role of Team Manager of SENART for just over three years now and this sometimes feels like two minutes and at others feels like a hundred years. I think the first thing to say is that there is no such thing as a “typical” day and every day can take any number of twists and turns away from the best laid plans. As a result I have written about an actual day.

WORKING FROM HOME

Working at home brings about its own challenges and, whilst some of my colleagues have children to get ready for school etc., my children have grown up and flown the nest. That said I have the demands of a four legged baby to deal with and so the day starts at 6.30am with me walking the dog to try and tire him out so that I can at least participate in morning conference calls without him barking at me for attention.



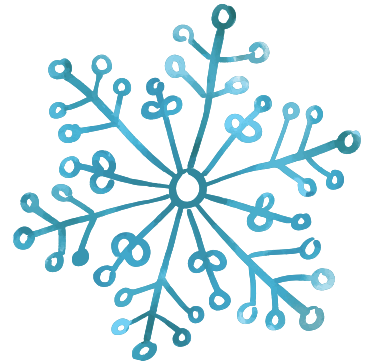
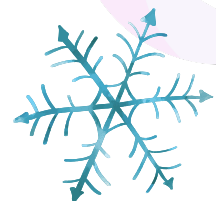


7.30AM

I log onto the computer at 7.30am today and start to look at the Agenda for the Home to School Transport Panel. This consists of me checking our systems to determine whether the pupils have an EHCP and, if so, what their needs are to ensure that this can be fed into the decision-making process. Before the decision that Local Authority employees should work from home wherever possible these Panels would take place fortnightly in person but the views of individual Panel members are now collated by the Home to School Transport Team and this negates the need to travel all the way to Wakefield thus saving me some precious time. Once the transport team have all member's views these are shared again with panel members if there are any differences of opinion.

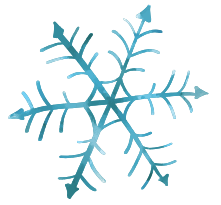
8.30AM

I wish I could say that I do one job at a time but the continuous "bing-bong" that indicates new emails means this never happens and by 8.30am I am already multi-tasking and am answering emails from social workers, schools, my team members and my Service Manager. The emails from my team are check-in emails that I have to receive daily in order to make sure they are healthy, well, logged on and ready to work. This is a collation of a total of 20 plus staff a day with today being the day that one of them is having to take time out of their day to take their child for a Covid-19 test having shown symptoms – we all have our fingers crossed that this is negative.



9.00AM

At 9.00am I have my first conference call of the day. This is a catch up call with the two newly recruited SEN Casework Officers and their mentors to gain feedback and to determine whether they are in a position to take responsibility for cases and schools of their own. Thankfully this is the case and means that the team now consists of seven fulltime Casework Officers to share the 2300+ Education, Health and Care Plans. I type up the notes of this discussion as per HR requirements and file these with five minutes to spare before the next meeting so make a quick cup of tea.



1.30PM

The Parent Carer Forum fortnightly discussion is next on the day's agenda. These meetings are an opportunity to for any parental queries or concerns to be raised and feedback given but also for sharing of updates and information from the Local Authority and health colleagues. These have proved really useful for all concerned particularly during the Covid-19 restrictions when what feels like daily changes were being made to the guidance – let's hope we don't go back to these anytime soon!



Working from home does have its advantages as a sandwich and a cup of tea appear on the dining room table before the hubby leaves for work and I move onto the next virtual meeting

2.30PM

Supervision for one of the SEN Officers which includes personal well-being and a full caseload discussion. These Officers manage some of the most complex cases within the team including those pupils who are children in care and living outside of the Wakefield area. I provide direct Supervision to six members of the team with full Supervision provided on a monthly basis.

3.30PM

The final meeting of the day is a difficult one as it is a Care, Education and Treatment Review for a young person who has been subject to a hospital stay under the Mental Health Act and where plans are being made for discharge. The discussion centres around changes required to the EHCP and appropriate school consultations.

5.00PM

When 5pm comes around it could be expected that this is the end to the day but, unfortunately, this is the time to check that email inbox (34 unread today despite dipping in and out all day). These include a request from a new SENCO for some training on the Wakefield processes, a parent asking for some advice on the rules around Alternative Provision, two requests for statistics and data, a request from another Local Authority for approval of funding for a school place out of the area. Those that remain unanswered at 6pm can be added to the "to do" list that actually didn't have anything crossed off today.

Oh well
here's to tomorrow!!

Michelle Chester

WELLBEING BAGS UPDATE

As many of you will be aware we have been popping up across the Wakefield district handing out Wellbeing Bags to our forum members. We were very grateful to receive funding from Wakefield Council & Wakefield CCG to help us make this project happen. The feedback we have received has been amazing & we have loved seeing some of your photos showing what you have made/enjoyed. If you haven't collected your bag yet, keep an eye on our Facebook Chat Group for details of when you will be able to collect your bag - you don't want to miss out!



FORUM NEWS

We mentioned in our last newsletter that we had found a new home for the forum, and now we can officially let you all know a little more about it!

We have signed the lease & now have the keys, so we have been busy clearing out rubbish, cleaning, decorating and making the space how we want it to be. We have been very grateful to a few local businesses who not only have shown support for the work that we do, but have also gone over and above with helping to make our dream for the forum come to life.

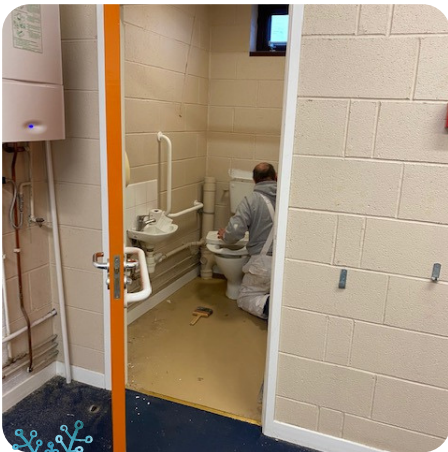
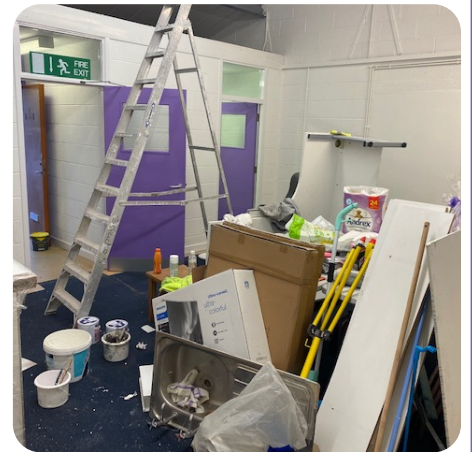
Our long term plan for the unit is to have a friendly space that we can invite parents/carers & their families to offer help, support, run activities & provide 1:1 & group peer support. We are restricted by COVID-19 at the moment but we have plans for lots of face to face work as soon as it is safe to do so. In the meantime it gives us a great office space & storage which we also really need. Take a look at the photo's below for a sneak peek at how the unit has been transformed.

UNIT 2 – BEFORE

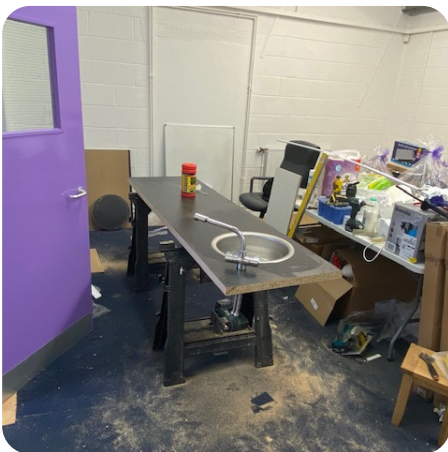
Here is the unit looking a little tired, scruffy & very dirty before we got to work. The photo's dont show quite how bad it was.



During the work - thing's always get worse before they get better right?? It was nice to see the back of that orange and some purple start appearing!

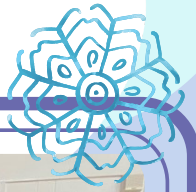


This was 1 weeks work - it was very hard going, long days & at times felt like it would never come to an end! It didn't help that we set the fire alarms off too - oops!





UNIT 2 – AFTER



As you can see from the photo's there has been a huge amount of time and effort put into transforming the unit. This will enable us to have a safe, clean & welcoming space where we can invite our members to take part in Peer to Peer support both 1:1 and in small groups, training sessions, workshops & fun activities. We have baby changing facilities, disabled toilet facilities and our flooring is wheelchair friendly too. We can't wait to have you join us in person - the kettle will definitely be on!



UNIT 2 – THANK YOU'S

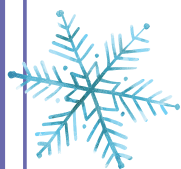
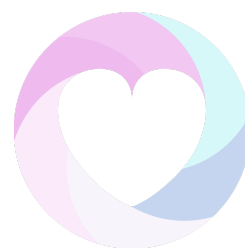


We would like to say thank you to the following local businesses who have kindly helped with donations and discounts on supplies for our makeover. Definitely recommended if you have work to do at home.



A BIG thank you goes to Lee from Shades Decorators in Castleford, for donating paint, materials & the help of their decorators to completely transform our unit, and for organising additional help from plumber Paul at Plumbtec & joiner Dale at DP Joinery, who helped put the unit back together just how we wanted it.

They were all great to work with & we would happily recommend them if you need work doing at home. We could not have achieved what has been done in such a short space of time without their help & expertise, we are extremely thankful for all of their support.



Plumbing &
Joinery work
donated by
Plumbtec &
DP Joinery





Wakefield
Parent Carer Forum

WINTER SURVIVAL GUIDE

Top tips for surviving Christmas & New Year

- **Try and remember that Christmas only lasts a few days. If a situation becomes too much, remove yourself & take a few minutes to gather your thoughts before reacting.**
- Ask for help. If you are struggling you could join an online support group that you can access anytime if you need help over the Christmas break. It is also nice to know you are not alone, and that others may be going through the same as you. Our Facebook Chat Page will remain open.
- **Something that can really help over the Christmas holidays is making time to relax. There are so many different activities and demands going on, it is easy to agree to everything and become overwhelmed. Not to mention the expense of it all. It is okay to say no if things are becoming too much.**
- Take out the element of surprise. Consider if it would be a good idea to not wrap presents as the stress of the unknown can really add to children's anxiety. Or maybe just wrap a few.
- **The same may apply to the decorations. Allow children to be involved if they wish, give them plenty of warning as to when they are going up, and also when they are being put away stop worrying about what other people are doing over Christmas and focus on what is best for your family.**
- Introduce things gradually. Letting your children do things when they are ready can work much better as it makes Christmas less overwhelming for them. For example leaving their presents under the tree and let them go to them when they are ready.
- **Keep things as normal as possible, use a visual timetable to show what is happening & when things will go back to normal.**
- Christmas may not always be quite the way you want it to be, you may do things different to others, and that that is okay.
- **If you are visiting family make sure you prepare your child well, things to consider...**
Seating for Christmas Dinner - will they sit with everyone else?, **Choice of food** - don't expect them to suddenly like something they wouldn't normally eat, **Sensory issues** - you know your child's triggers/sensitivities, take an essentials bag of your child's favourite toys/items, **Quite Space** - Is there a quite space they can go if things get too loud or overwhelming? **Time** - if your child struggles with spending Christmas Day at a different house, let them know what time you are going to be leaving and stick to it. If they know exactly what time they will be going back home again, this might minimise their anxieties during the day.

USEFUL CONTACTS:



Wakefield
Parent Carer Forum

WAKEFIELD PARENT CARER FORUM

info@wakefieldparentcarers.co.uk
www.wakefieldparentcarers.co.uk

SENART

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senart@wakefield.gov.uk
Manager - mchester@wakefield.gov.uk
SENART, Block C, Normanton Town Hall,
High Street, Normanton, WF6 2DZ

WESAIL/BARNARDO'S

07961 897036 OR 01924 304152
wesail@barnardos.org.uk

LOCAL OFFER

wakefield.mylocaloffer.org

INFORMATION NETWORK

wakefield.mylocaloffer.org/information-
network

SHORT BREAKS TEAM CARERS WAKEFIELD

01924 305544

PORTAGE

01924 307403
eps@wakefield.gov.uk

CAMHS SPA 01977 735865

CAMHS AIREDALE 01977 735900

CONTINENCE TEAM

01924 541009
01977 747066

PONTEFRACCT OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Pontefract - 01977 747180
Pinderfields - 01924 541411

TRANSPORT TEAM

hst@wakefield.gov.uk

EDUCATION, INCLUSION & ASSESSMENT SERVICE

eps@wakefield.gov.uk
01924 307403

SOCIAL CARE DIRECT

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IPSEA

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office@ipsea.net

PINDERFIELDS & PONTEFRACCT CHILDRENS CENTRE

01924 541009 and 01924 541982