

## SWINDON SEND FAMILIES VOICE ONLINE SUPPORT GROUP

### What are we making better?

The 4<sup>th</sup> Priority in Swindon's Vision, Priorities and Pledges, is to 'Help people to help themselves while always protecting our most vulnerable children and adults'. There are some support groups in Swindon for families where there are children and young people with SEND (both online and face to face) but they are diagnosis specific.

There weren't any groups that were pan-disability, so after consulting with local parents and carers to ask if they felt there was a need, we set up The SEND Room Facebook group, with an aim to provide a vital tool for parents and carers of children with any special needs within the local area, to offer peer to peer support. Many special needs parents struggle in their day to day lives to find like-minded support or encouragement when they are struggling, because unless you have a child with special needs, and live that life day in day out, you will never know the myriad of feelings that parents of SEND children/young people feel, such as isolation, fear, sadness and frustration.

### What are we doing?

In November 2018 we launched The SEND Room and less than 2 years on it has over 900 members. We aim to help parents/carers of children with special needs feel like they have a safe space, allowing them to converse with other parents/carers in a similar position to themselves. This forum allows them to seek support and guidance amongst people who understand where they are coming from, who bring no judgement!

Parents/carers find it helpful to talk to others who have shared experiences, and ask for advice, or tips for dealing with a particular situation, or ask questions that they maybe wouldn't feel able or comfortable asking elsewhere. It is a haven where you can submit a post explaining how you are having a really bad day, and the people around you will pick you up and send love, encouragement and positivity. It's a community, not just providing emotional support but also providing practical support.

The difference that The SEND Room is making to the families and carers of children with special needs is clear to see if you sign into the page. Sometimes members have been lost, confused and felt alone for months, unable to get the answers that they seek, with no one seeming to know, or want to answer their questions. This in turn leads to improved mental health and less isolation to the members.

For example during the Covid-19 lockdown period when the children were off school, there were continuous posts highlighting amazing resources for continuing education at home. We also helped each other find supermarket delivery slots when they were scarce during the lockdown.

### What difference is this making?

### What will we do next?

We will continue to promote the SEND Room, so we can reach even more parents and carers of special needs children and young people.

We will continue providing a place where families can come together to share the difficult times that they are facing, along with all the amazing things that come with parenting or caring for a child/young person with special needs.

We want to reach as many families of SEND children/young people and make a difference.

**The SEND Room**

**S**upport **E**ncourage **N**urture **D**iscuss

The SEND Room is an online Facebook support group for parents and carers of children and young people aged 0-25 in Swindon who have any Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

- A place to support one another
- A place to meet others who understand
- A place to share information

Find us on Facebook

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OUR VOICES ARE BETTER TOGETHER