

October 2020

# Inclusion and SEND Parent Newsletter

Is there anything you would like to see in a future issue? Email [andrew.smith@bury.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.smith@bury.gov.uk)



October is...  
**Selective Mutism**  
 **Awareness Month**

With updates from

The Inclusion Service

The SEN Team

Plus:

An introduction to the Inclusion Leads and the new Children With Disabilities Team Manager

What is selective mutism?

Tips on managing the 'Return to School Anxiety' part 2

# Update from the Service Manager for Inclusion

## Covid 19 update from the Inclusion Service

As half term approaches, we are pleased to report that the Inclusion service reset is well underway and teams are back in action with support for children, young people and schools. It has been an unusual start to the academic year and we are taking a flexible approach with our plans, however we are very happy to be actively flying the flag for Inclusion in our schools once again.

Virtual support is continuing and as teams are still under direction to be working remotely, we are continuing to provide virtual advice and support wherever possible. We have restarted virtual training events for schools such as the Senco network meetings and Inclusion Partnership meetings and are working with schools to focus this year particularly on early identification of needs and early intervention.

The Inclusion service schools' helpline and the Educational Psychology Service helpline for parents and schools both remain open throughout the autumn term and Inclusion team members are on standby to offer advice and support in respect of those pupils who are finding their return to school particularly difficult to manage.

It has been a busy half term but we are maintaining a flexible and responsive approach to support our schools and families into the next half term as the local response to the pandemic develops.

Cath Atherden

Service manager, Inclusion



# Update from the SEN Team

## SEN Team

The SEN Team's staffing capacity is currently being extended to provide more SEN Caseworkers. As a child or young person is referred to the LA for an assessment of their special educational needs, they will be allocated a dedicated SEN caseworker who will support them and their parent/carer/family through the assessment process. For all CYP with an existing Education Health & Care plan (EHCP), the appointed dedicated SEN Caseworker will introduce themselves to families by email in the near future. This will ensure children, young people and their families will know who to contact if they have any queries or concerns.

## Return to School

The beginning of the Autumn 2020 Term has not necessarily been as smooth for all children and young people returning to education as everyone would have hoped – although all schools and colleges opened at the beginning of the new term, ready to welcome pupils and students, not all children and young people are currently able to attend schools/college. This might be because of their own personal circumstances, or it might be because of class bubble or year group temporary closures to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

If a child or young person with an EHCP is unable to attend their school or college as normal because of one of these reasons, it is the school or college's responsibility to ensure they continue to receive the support detailed in their plan. The SEN Team is tracking the attendance of children and young people with an EHCP, working closely with other services, such as Children's Services, Early Years and Health colleagues and identifying if there are any issues with changes in children's and young people's needs, and school or colleges' capacity to meet those needs. Many families will have already been contacted by one of these services if their child is experiencing difficulties accessing education support, and the SEN Team will continue to have conversations with parents and carers and schools and colleges to support access to appropriate support for children and young people not able to attend fully currently.

## Goodbye...

After more than six years in the post, Carol Grunbaum, the SEN Team Manager in Bury is retiring in November. As well as a well deserved rest, Carol intends to take up some voluntary work with children and young people and their families, as well as hopefully getting to spend more time with her own family. She is particularly looking forward to seeing more of her little granddaughter. We all wish Carol the very best for her new direction in life.

In preparation for Carol's retirement, a new Interim SEND Team Manager has been appointed to manage the SEND Team and its statutory functions. Annette Watson-Morse. Annette has an educational background, with many years of experience of teaching children with special educational needs. She is also a qualified SENDCo and has SLE (Specialist leader in Education) status for SEND and Curriculum Design. Annette is very much looking forward to working with families, settings and other stakeholders in order to continue to improve the service for Bury Local Authority.

# Introducing....

## Gurinder Rayat, the new Manager of the Children with Disabilities Team

Hello, I am Gurinder Rayat.

I have joined Bury Council, and taken over from Clive Groves to manage the Children with Disabilities team.

I come with experience of managing Childrens Disability Services and I hope to share my knowledge and skills and make the required improvements to our practice here in Bury. The team has had a number of changes in staffing, and I am aware of how this can be difficult for children, young people and their families. I look forward to working with Lisa Storey, Service manager, in providing a stable team and developing the service. I firmly believe that children and young people are at the heart of our practice. We work want to together with parents / carers and our multi agency colleagues to support children and young people to help them to achieve the best they can.

## Nick Bell, Secondary Inclusion Lead

I am the SEMH Partnership Manager for the twelve Bury Secondary Schools.

My main role is to work collaboratively with the local authority, schools and alternative providers to develop the continuum of provision for SEMH need at Secondary Level and to support schools to develop provision and programmes for students who require additional support.

Having spent most of my career in mainstream secondary schools my main interest is in ensuring that all students have the opportunity and support that they require to be successful in their lives. The Partnerships aim to ensure schools and other agencies work together in order to enable young people to achieve this. I also support young people for whom school placements have broken down in order to ensure that they are able to successfully return to education.

## Gareth Rennie, Primary Inclusion Lead

Gareth is the Primary Inclusion Lead for the north of the Borough, and works with, and supports the development of the Bury North and Ramsbottom Primary Inclusion Partnerships. During this year's period of COVID-19 restrictions, Gareth has continued to support schools, children and young people, and their families. The Inclusion Partnership meetings have continued to run, taking place using secure virtual meeting platforms.

Gareth joined the Bury Inclusion Service at the start of January 2019, moving over from Manchester, where he had been leading SEND and Inclusion at a Federation of primary schools.



## Suzanne Pendleton, Primary Inclusion Lead

I am delighted to have the opportunity to introduce myself via the newsletter. I am the Primary Inclusion Lead for the south of the Borough, and work with, and support the development of the Whitefield, and Prestwich and Radcliffe Primary Inclusion Partnerships. During this year's period of COVID-19 restrictions, I have continued to support schools, children and young people, and their families. The Inclusion Partnership meetings have continued to run, taking place using secure virtual meeting platforms.

I joined the Bury Inclusion Service at the start of January 2019, moving over from Salford, where I had been leading SEND and Inclusion at an inner city mainstream primary school. In addition I have experience of working within the local authority in the Early Years Team. I believe Bury children/young people have the absolute right to excellent provision in their local area and am passionate about working collaboratively with schools, families and agencies to achieve this.



# October is Selective Mutism Awareness Month

Selective mutism has a huge impact on many people's lives, but it is under-recognised and often misunderstood. Here is what you need to know about the condition

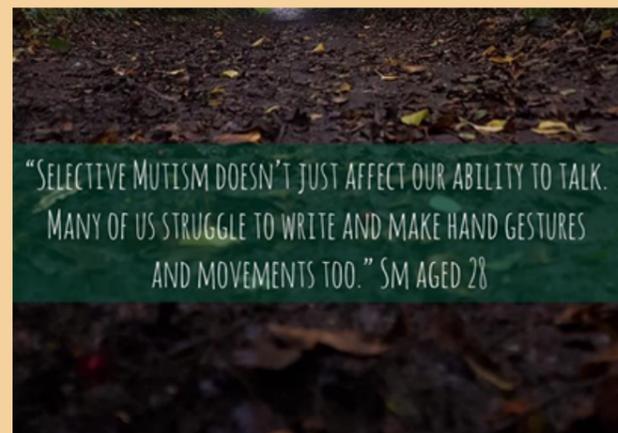
## What is selective mutism?

Selective Mutism (SM), sometimes called Situational Mutism, is a phobia of talking in 'select situations'. People with SM speak comfortably in some situations but remain consistently silent in others. They may have a blank expression, or appear 'frozen' when expected to speak.

People with selective mutism do not choose to do this. They physically find themselves unable to talk, even when they really want to.



"We feel so frozen with anxiety that the words get stuck in our throats so even though we want to talk, we can't"



"SELECTIVE MUTISM DOESN'T JUST AFFECT OUR ABILITY TO TALK. MANY OF US STRUGGLE TO WRITE AND MAKE HAND GESTURES AND MOVEMENTS TOO." SM AGED 28

## Selective mutism is not just about talking

Selective mutism affects more than just talking. People with selective mutism can struggle with:

- Writing
- Making choices
- Sensory issues
- Being the centre of attention
- Going to the toilet
- Eating
- Separation anxiety

And more, depending on how much the phobia affects them

SELECTIVE MUTISM AWARENESS MONTH 2020  
SM SPACE CAFE

A photograph of a cluster of small blue forget-me-not flowers with yellow centers, set against a background of green leaves. A semi-transparent text box is overlaid on the image, containing a quote about selective mutism and a request for patience.

"People see me as rude...I don't reply to questions. I don't say please or thank you. I smile at inappropriate times. I'm not rude...Selective Mutism makes it hard to interact with people.  
Please be patient with me"

## Low profile selective mutism exists too!

Some people can speak in all situations, but they still have selective mutism. How?

People with low profile selective mutism still have a fear of talking, but it is outweighed by the fear of consequences if they do not speak. People with low profile SM may be able to respond to others, but may be unable to initiate vocal interaction, or share their true feelings or emotions.

Low profile selective mutism is one of the reasons why some young people are referred to as 'maskers'. They seem fine at school, but can have meltdowns and display challenging behaviour when they get home. Due to their selective mutism, they may be unable to express how they feel during the day, so cope with their discomfort until they are home and in a safe space.

## Selective mutism is not a lifelong condition, but early intervention is key!

Selective mutism just like any phobia can be overcome, but people do not just grow out of it! Complete remission is noted in only 39-58% of people, so recovery should not be left to chance.

The longer you have it for, the more difficult it is to overcome and the more likely you are to have long term mental health difficulties. Common results of unsupported SM in teens include school refusal, self-harming, Social Anxiety Disorder, social withdrawal, low mood.

It is also important to remember that every extra year with selective mutism represents another year of intense anxiety and frustration for the child. The earlier people with SM are supported, the less they have to suffer.

## How do you help someone with selective mutism?

Overcoming selective mutism is the same three step process of any other phobia. Let's look at fear of the dark as an example that many people are familiar with:

Step 1: Understand that fear of the dark is irrational and it can be overcome

Step 2: Start with the lights on so the phobia isn't being triggered

Step 3: Slowly reduce the amount of light in small steps at the young person's pace (it has to be small steps or the phobia will be triggered and the fear of the dark will increase) – proving to your anxiety that the dark is not to be feared a little bit at a time, until eventually the fear of the dark is overcome.

Overcoming selective mutism works in the exact same way as this:

Step 1: Understand that selective mutism is irrational and it can be overcome

Step 2: Start with no pressure to communicate (not just reducing pressure to talk, as selective mutism affects more than just talking!)

Step 3: Taking small steps to reduce fear of talking at the young person's pace,

## Remember: Strategies to support people with SM have a positive impact on everyone

A crucial part of overcoming selective mutism (and any other phobia) is learning how to accept and challenge anxiety rather than avoid it. This is a perspective shift that is useful not just for people with SM, but all young people. The small steps approach described above is also effective for all types of 'irrational anxiety'. Therefore, understanding how to support someone with selective mutism in the right way also helps with understanding how to support young people:

without triggering the phobia and making the selective mutism worse.

Despite making selective mutism sound so simple here, it is important to understand that it is not because other people make it complex. Every time someone with selective mutism is expected to talk and they are unable to, it triggers their phobia and makes it more difficult to overcome (it is like throwing a spider in the face of someone who has a spider phobia).

Therefore, overcoming selective mutism may need to be an intense intervention in the short term, which includes:

1) Making sure the young person understands exactly what selective mutism is and how to overcome it

2) Educating everyone around the young person about selective mutism about what selective mutism is and how to reduce pressure to communicate (so the phobia isn't triggered), while still giving the young person opportunities to reduce their fear one step at a time

When this is done successfully, the extra support in the short term will result in huge long term benefits.

- who are anxious about going to a new education setting
- in early years who are struggling with separation anxiety
- who are struggling to engage with services
- who have a 'demand avoidant' profile, including Pathological Demand Avoidance

And more.

# IS SELECTIVE MUTISM MORE COMMON THAN YOU THINK?

## Phobias Compared

### Arachnophobia

**1 IN 20**

About 5% people have arachnophobia, which means that their fight/ flight/ fright response is activated when they see a spider. This can include having a panic attack, freezing, or feeling the need to escape

**4 IN 10**

But in fact, 42% of people report having a fear of spiders. This means either they haven't had professional support with this or while they are still scared of spiders, their fear isn't 'big enough' to meet the criteria for arachnophobia

### Acrophobia

**1 IN 30**

About 3.5% of people have for acrophobia, a debilitating fear of heights

**6 IN 10**

But 58% of people report having a fear of heights to varying degrees.

### Selective Mutism

**1 IN 140**

About 1 in 140 people are affected by selective mutism, meaning that they are unable to speak in certain social situations. The expectation to speak triggers a panic/ freeze response.

**?**

There are no formal studies, but in a poll from the Facebook page 'Autistic Life', 63% of people reported having selective mutism to varying degrees at some point in their life (425 responses)

## DESPITE THIS, SELECTIVE MUTISM IS STILL SEEN AS A 'RARE' CONDITION

### Would you like further support or information?

- The Selective Mutism Information and Research Association is the national selective mutism charity. They have lots of resources and online support groups for both parents and professionals: <http://www.selectivemutism.org.uk/>
- The best resource for understanding and knowing how to support someone with selective mutism is The Selective Mutism Resource Manual, Second Edition by Alison Wintgens and Maggie Johnson
- The Bury Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy team offer a service for children with Selective Mutism

Telephone: 0161 724 2106

Email: [Natalie.goggins@nhs.net](mailto:Natalie.goggins@nhs.net) or [Hannah.gibbons@nhs.net](mailto:Hannah.gibbons@nhs.net)

- For any selective mutism training or advocacy for young people with selective mutism, please contact [andrew.smith@bury.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.smith@bury.gov.uk)

October is... **Selective Mutism Awareness Month** 

# Stay Safe, Stay Healthy, Stay Happy part 2

5 more tips for managing the 'return to school anxiety' during COVID 19

## Tip 6: Parents need to look after themselves too!

This has been a very difficult period for everyone, so parents need to also make sure they are getting the support they need.

In Bury there is the Beacon Service which is a self-referral social prescribing service. After referral, a link worker runs a holistic session aimed at getting to know the client and to discuss what support is available within the local community; it is a fantastic way to get access to more support: <https://theburydirectory.co.uk/services/beacon-service-social-prescribing>

Some examples of fantastic organisations whose details can be shared through the Service (or which you can get in touch with directly) are:

- 1) Bury2gether: the forum for parents/ carers of SEND young people who access services in Bury: <https://www.bury2gether.co.uk/>
- 2) The Creative Living Centre: A Mental Health charity that aims to provide positive and creative mental health support: <https://www.creativelivingcentre.org.uk/>
- 3) BIG in Mental Health: <https://www.buryinvolvementgroup.org/about-us/>
- 4) Rammy Men: <https://rammymen.org/>

## Tip 7: Set A Goal

When life seems a struggle, it is really useful to focus on an aim or something to achieve. This can be a great distraction from difficult thoughts and feelings, and it is great when progress towards your goal is made. Some young people we have spoken to this Summer have had goals of:

- a. Programming their first game
- b. Completing a 5km run

c. Getting some work experience

d. Completing a game

e. Trying out some new social groups

It could be something that helps with self-development or is good experience for a future career, or just something enjoyable!

## Tip 8: Try and Improve your Organisation

Adding structure and routine into your day can help to reduce anxiety. Having your timetable, school bag and uniform organised can help to make things feel a bit more secure (don't forget your hand sanitiser and mask if you need them!). Also, try setting a regular time to go to sleep, eat, do your homework and do some exercise. Build in time to keep in contact with others and to work on your goals Too. This includes:

Sleep – Lack of sleep can worsen feelings of anxiety and it can be easy to get trapped into a cycle of having less sleep and then struggling to get to sleep the next day as further anxiety makes it harder to fall or stay asleep. Really working hard to improve your sleep routine can be incredibly useful. We recommend looking at the article containing sleep tips in last month's episode of the newsletter if you would like some ideas on how to improve your sleep routine (if you haven't already!)

Setting a limit on how much news you read and listen to - It's great to keep updated as long as it is factual! The news is often focused on negative stories, so limiting to 30 minutes a day can help you to stay away from the negativity (especially when there are lots of other positive things going on around us). Try and keep your social media positive too. Follow people and posts that make lift your mood and motivate you.



## Tip 9: Practice Self Reflection

There are two main ways that people process their experiences:

1. Cognitive reappraisal: This is about evaluating thoughts and actions. For example, someone may lose a game, get angry and say they now hate the game! But upon reflection when they are calmer and they have had time to process the situation, they may say that despite not being happy with losing, losing is good sometimes as it gives you the opportunity to pick up on your mistakes and learn how to improve. It is the same situation, thought about in a different way.
2. Expressive suppression: this is where people are more likely to stick to cause and effect and dissociate from emotions. This can be a good coping strategy during bad experiences, but too much of it has negative long-term effects. For example, if when losing a game, people may either decide to never play the game again, or may start to feel more anxious the next time you attempt to play the game is played due to fear of losing again.

If people are anxious, their brains will be much more



focused on expressive suppression and not cognitive reappraisal. This means that sometimes people may not fully process situations and information and may take actions and decisions without sound reasoning and judgement.

But cognitive reappraisal is something people can get really good at through practice, so it is incredibly useful to try and schedule time in the day to do this. Here are a few things we recommend trying:

- 1) Write down 3 good things that have happened in the day. Then think about what helped to create those positive experiences. Then try and think of action points; things which can be continued to make sure positive experiences prevail. (There isn't always something that can be done but spend as much time thinking of something as possible!)
- 2) Write down 3 bad things that have happened in the day. Then think about what happened to result in the negative experiences. Next, try and think of 3 action points to stop or reduce the chance of bad things from happening in the future. This could be talking to a teacher about something upsetting that someone did or thinking of something proactive that can be done to prevent reaching crisis point next time. If there is something that someone else could do differently, have a think about the best way to tell them.

As the process is completed, it will reduce negative thoughts and feelings, but also help with work on self-improvement. Speak to someone trusted for support with action points or solutions if need be.



## Tip 10: Use Sensory Strategies

It is important to be at the right state of alertness for the activities to be done throughout the day. If alertness levels are higher than they need to be, this can lead to increased feelings of discomfort, worry and anxiety. Therefore, it is useful to incorporate sensory strategies into the day that create feelings of regulation and comfort. A 10 to 15-minute sensory break can have a positive impact for hours afterwards! [Here](#) is a link which gives a huge list of 145 recommended sensory calming activities that can be tried.



Leah McCabe

I am a School Nurse working in Bury. My main role is supporting the health and well-being of children and young people age 5-19. The age variant means everyday is different! I teach health promotion lessons in Primary and Secondary Schools which is always good fun! The School Nurses also deliver a school nurse drop in for teenagers covering a variety of health and well-being topics. I also work closely with other agencies in Bury; signposting children and young people to the correct services to optimise their physical health as well as their social and emotional health



Andy Smith

I am the inclusion ambassador/ SEND advocate at Bury Council. My role is focused prioritising the views of SEND children and young people. At the moment, I am particularly interested in helping to increase the amount of social opportunities that are available for SEND young people, and talking with young people to help them to understand their diagnoses.

I am also the person who creates the newsletter. Therefore, I would love to hear any feedback!

## Remember: if you would like more support ask a trusted member or ask if you can speak to a school nurse

The school nurse drop-in is a confidential service where young people can access support or obtain advice about lots of different health and well-being topics. It usually takes place once a week in Bury high schools. In response to the COVID 19 situation all school nurses are carrying out risk assessments with the schools to ensure the service is delivered in a safe way. All public health guidelines will be followed. Schools will be able to help young people or Parents/Carers to contact their named School Nurse and advise the best way to make an appointment.

# Can you support your child to complete the North West SEND priorities survey?

We are running a survey on the priorities of SEND young people (0-25), and the findings will be presented directly to SEND leads across the North West.

Please complete or support your child/ children to complete this survey if they can. There is also a parent version of the survey attached if your child is unable to complete the survey themselves.

Find the survey [here](#)

We hope you enjoyed our October Newsletter!

Do you have any questions to ask us? Email them to [andrew.smith@bury.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.smith@bury.gov.uk) and we can answer them in next month's newsletter!