



**EMPOWERING  
FAMILIES WITH  
DISABLED CHILDREN!**

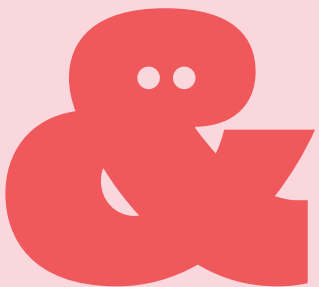
**FRIENDS &  
FAMILIES**

**Friends and Families was established to support and empower families with disabled children. We offer practical advice, support, and fun activities to children with special educational needs or disabilities and their families in and around Plymouth.**

**Our services include:**

- Free and confidential information, advice, emotional support and advocacy for parents and carers.
- Social and leisure events for the whole family as well as specific groups aimed at children, young people, or their siblings.
- Educational workshops for parents and carers to develop knowledge and skills relevant to their child and their special educational needs or disability.

**This booklet details the support we provide and how we can help you and your family reach their full potential.**



# ADVENTURE CLUB

The Adventure Club provides a range of activities for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities. Previous activities have included water sports, boat trips, arts and crafts, immersive dome experiences, music workshops and so much more. We aim to create a wide range to meet the needs of every child.

It also provides a chance to socialise with other children in a safe environment and boost their confidence and self-esteem.

Our dedicated team of Sessional Staff will provide extra support to ensure each child feels safe and happy.

Parents and carers must attend Adventure Club activities with their children. This is a fantastic opportunity to meet each other and gain valuable information and advice.

Adventure Club typically runs throughout the year including school holidays at a subsidised cost. We only ask for you to pay for your child, meaning you come along for free!



# MAKING SENSE

**Our Making Sense group is aimed at children and young people with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD) and/or profound physical disabilities. Parents and carers are required to attend activities with their children.**

Children and young adults with PMLD have more than one disability, including a profound learning disability, communication difficulties, and very often physical and sensory disabilities and complex health needs. A combination of these additional needs will result in requiring a high level of support with most aspects of daily life.

Making Sense activities offer a wide range of activities to provide fun and fully inclusive experiences!

Activities have included; power boating, inclusive water sports, immersive dome experiences, theatre trips and music workshops.

Activities run throughout the year including weekends and school holidays. The cost is subsidised and we only ask you to pay for your child meaning you come along for free!



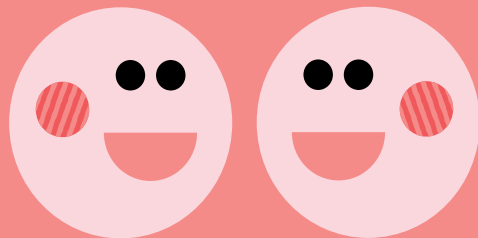


# YOUTH ADVENTURES

**Youth Adventures are for young people aged 13+, with a special educational needs or disability. The group provides the opportunity to socialise and have fun in a safe space.**

We run social groups on a monthly basis at Virginia House Centre and various activities such as Escape Rooms, Go Karting, Adventure Segway and much more.

The group is small and friendly and facilitated by our team and sessional workers. For this group you can come independently, however if you would like to bring a parent or carer for extra support we can accommodate where appropriate. Just get in touch with us for more information.



# DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD SCHEME

We now have a licence to operate the full DofE award at Friends and Families, this means we can register anyone from year 9+, in education or out of education to 24, with or without disabilities. There is an enrolment fee but we are fundraising for equipment.



Our plan is to offer sessions monthly to enrol, find your mentor, choose your areas of interest within the sectional divisions and take part in both volunteering with us and some mini expeditions with like minded young people, leading to a bronze award.

Our ambition is that we will be as bold as you are, and work with your strengths, in planning some life changing experiences.

Please check the link to the award [dofe.org](http://dofe.org)

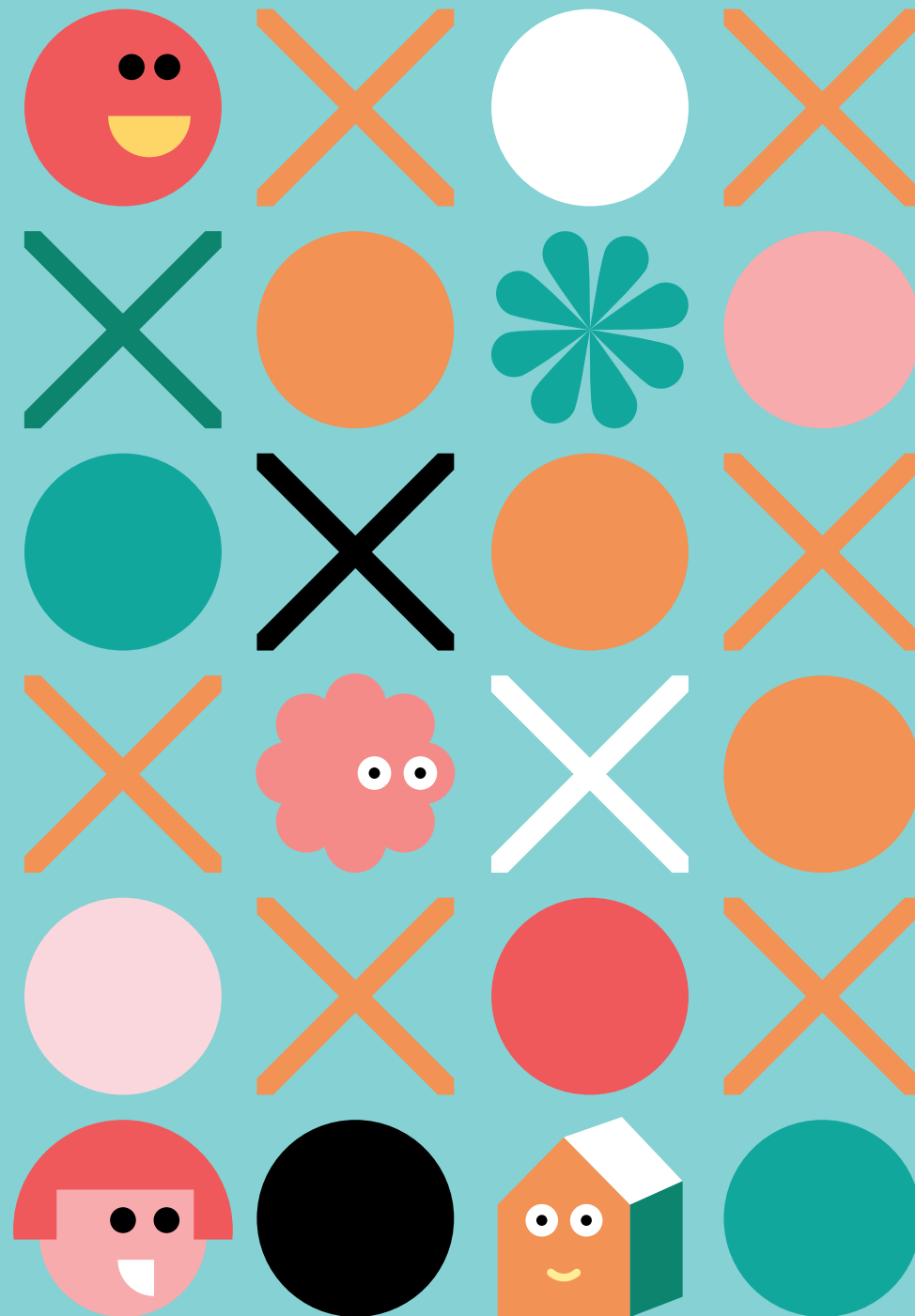


# LITTLE STEPS TOGETHER

We run Playgroups and activities for those under the age of five with special educational needs or disabilities, not reaching or have concerns about their development.

The playgroups have various activities set up to help development and encourage interaction. Previously we have done: waterplay, messy play, sensory stimulation, arts and crafts, and so much more. Alongside these activities, we have our Sensory Room open for children to explore during the session.

Playgroups run three times throughout the month and are a fantastic way not only for your child to have fun but also to meet other parents and carers.

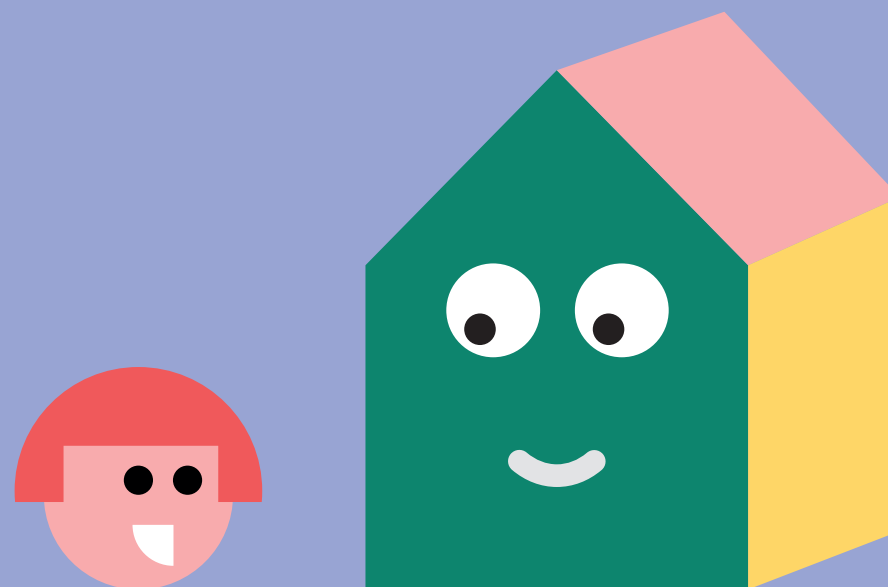


# FUN AND FREEDOM

Young Carers do a lot to help someone in their family. This can be helping a parent with personal needs, doing a lot of household chores such as cooking and cleaning, looking after younger siblings. You also may have a sibling with a disability and you do a lot to help and support them. It may be hard to enjoy activities, family outings, or find time to have fun.

Fun and Freedom is designed to provide respite and fun for young carers and siblings with age appropriate activities, for example on trips to the zoo, tree surfing, watersports, arts and crafts and much more.

These activities are facilitated by our team and sessional staff and run throughout the year including school holidays at a subsidised cost. For these activities, children attend without their parents or carer to provide respite.









# FAMILY

**Our Family activities are designed for the whole family to bring everyone together and make happy memories. Our dedicated team and sessional staff are on hand to help and ensure everyone has fun.**

Previously we have run activities such as private hires of the cinema, swimming, Boccia sessions and theatre trips. We have also done beach days and zoo trips.

Every year we put together a Summer Party full of entertainers and a Christmas Party with Santa to celebrate the festive period with our families.



# PARENT/CARER

For our parents and carers, we run activities and workshops throughout the year with the aim to provide respite, support, and information and advice.

Previously we have run:

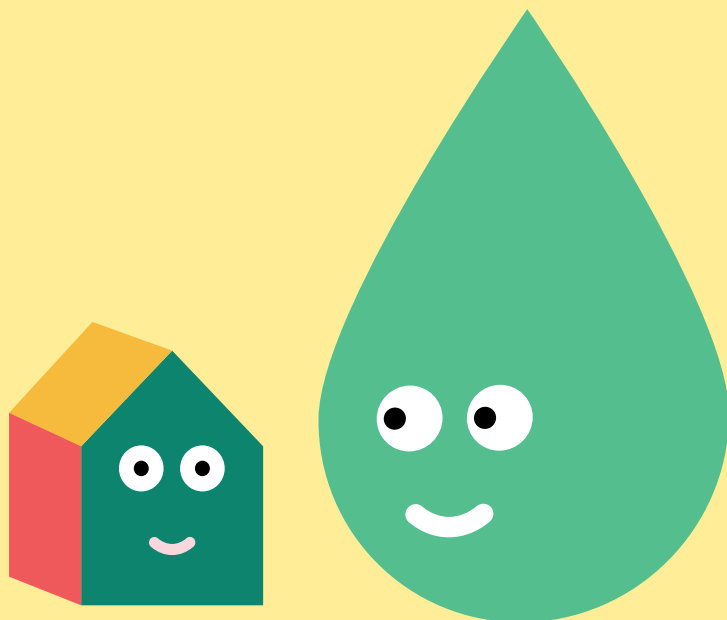
- Makaton Workshops
- Sleep and Autism Workshops
- Coffee Mornings with professionals such as PIAS, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapist, Solicitors
- Wreath Making
- Arts and Craft Sessions.

We welcome all suggestions of what we can facilitate in the future.



# INFORMATION & ADVICE

Our dedicated team are on hand to help with any queries you may have and provide a wealth of information and resources.

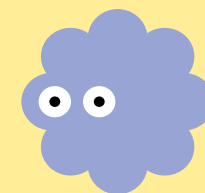


DLA and PIP applications can be a long and daunting process and our team are here to help you complete the forms. We will sit with you and go through the form bit by bit and ensure you have all the evidence needed. From this we can discuss further financial aid you may be entitled to and guide you through the process.

We can also help with grant applications and suggest a number of appropriate grants. Please see our Grants and Funding Booklet for more information.

We can advocate on your behalf with regards to benefits, education and health care packages. If we have supported your DLA or PIP Application, we can support you with the appeal process. For any EHCP, EHAT or TAM Meetings, we can come along with you and advocate to provide further support.

Furthermore we run regular Coffee Mornings with other agencies to provide further information and advice. Previously we have had PIAS, CAMHS, Speech and Language Therapists, and Solicitors.



# LENDING LIBRARY

**Our toy and equipment Lending Library creates opportunities for families to play and interact together as well as providing access to expensive specialist equipment.**



Toys by their nature are often short-lived items with a limited lifespan of interest. Our Lending Library will enable your child to have access to a greater variety of play and practical resources, consequently allowing more stimulation opportunities.

We can give you access to a wide range of sensory, play and therapy equipment, encouraging all areas of development.

Our Lending Library includes items such as MacLaren Major Buggy, Beach Wheelchair, Weighted Blankets, Sensory Toys and much more. All our items are available to borrow for up to four weeks at a subsidised cost.



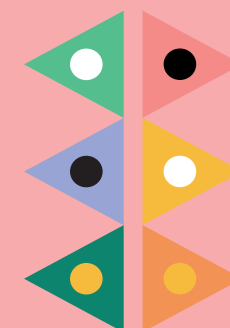
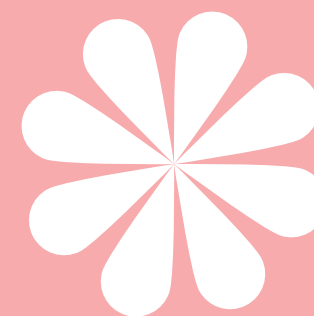
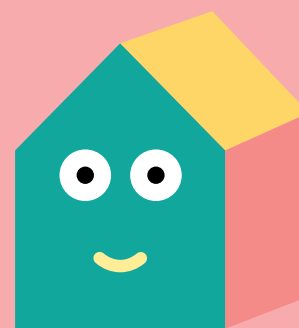
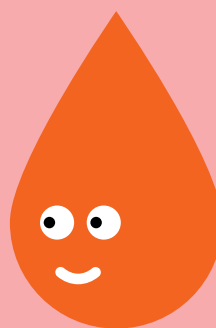


# SENSORY ROOM

At Virginia House Centre, we have a Sensory Room which our families can book for themselves. The Sensory Room consists of a range of Stimuli such as; a Bubble Tube, Fibre Optic Lights, Interactive Boards, a Black Out Tunnel and Projector Lights.

The Sensory Room is designed for children and young people to explore their sensory needs and encourage sensory stimulation and regulation.

This is available Monday-Friday, even in school holidays. To book our Sensory Room, please contact our office where one of the team will be happy to discuss availability with you.



# PEER SUPPORT

Peer Support is about walking alongside young people who need an extra bit of support rather than leading them. It has been set up to fill in a gap that's often missing within health services. It's designed and led by those who have personal life experience with mental health, disabilities and/or additional needs.

Each pathway for every individual who engages with peer support is different and this is the best part about it! It's about building a relationship and getting to know each other. Those who have been through diagnoses and clinical avenues have gained valuable knowledge about what is and isn't always helpful.

Our peer support workers will support you to fulfil your full potential through highlighting your strengths and promoting a sense of independence. This can include; developing an understanding of your diagnosis and what this means for you, building your confidence to use a bus, seeking new hobbies, developing new friendships and so much more. It is individualised to you.



# VOLUNTEERING

As an organisation, we recognise the important role volunteers play; often being the glue that holds a community together. Volunteering allows people to connect to their community and make it a better place. Even helping out with the smallest tasks can make a real difference to the lives of the families we support.

Volunteering is a two-way street: It can benefit those choosing to volunteer, as much as the cause they choose to help. Dedicating time as a volunteer helps people make new friends, expand their network, and boost their social skills.

We aim to offer volunteering opportunities across all of our services, with something that is of interest to our wider community. If you feel you have the interest and time to join us in supporting other families, we would love to meet you.

Please visit our website for further information – [friendsandfamilies.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering](https://friendsandfamilies.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering)



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