



matters

Sharing news of SNAP's (Special Needs And Parents) important work

**Calling all SNAP's
friends to join
our special year**



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Making a difference

Special Needs And Parents is an Essex charity which helps families with children and young people who have any special need or disability

From its Brentwood base, SNAP offers a helping hand to thousands of families who need support in a variety of ways.

No formal diagnosis or professional referral is necessary to access SNAP services, available to families of children and young people aged 0 to 25. Facilities at the centre include a training room, a multi-purpose activity hall, multi-sensory room and specialist IT suite.

“Our SNAP approach in supporting the whole family unit means we are a reliable constant in their lives and our experienced team of Family Support Advisers offers an engaging, needs-led, comprehensive service for families,” says Karen Boath, Director (Family Services).

SNAP Services

- Helpline and Face to Face Parent Support
- Specialist Talks and Training Courses
- Online Directory and Information Network
- Library of Specialist Books and DVDs
- Parent and Pre-School Children Sessions
- After-school and Holiday Sessions for Children and Young People
- Sibling Support



SNAP contact information:

Call - 01277 211300 Email - info@snapcharity.org
Website - www.snapcharity.org

If this is your first introduction to SNAP then please join our mailing list via our website homepage - www.snapcharity.org

welcome

We want families to know that they are not alone - they can always rely on SNAP

SNAP's Directors Karen Boath (Family Services) and Christina Stubbs (Finance and Fundraising) talk to SNAP Matters about the charity's vision and special Anniversary.

How does SNAP meet the demands of families?

Christina SNAP families inform the support and services we provide. We are always looking to improve what we're offering families and we work hard to ensure that their feedback is reflected in our planning for the future.

Karen SNAP's support also evolves over time, alongside each family. Often this is simply because as children grow up, the challenges that they and their parents face change. We work closely with families to ensure that the advice and information we provide is helping them to address these issues and enables them to confidently make choices for and with their child or young person.

What is the impact of SNAP?

Christina Our ultimate aim is to help families help themselves. All of the support we provide, be that an activity session for their child, a helpline telephone call during a low moment, or just borrowing a book from the library; SNAP is there to support parents and carers find the tools and knowledge they need to ensure they can give the best possible help to their whole family.

Karen We make sure that anyone coming to The SNAP Centre feels welcome and that by the time they leave, they feel more positive about their circumstances and able to cope.

How can members of the local community help SNAP?

Karen Volunteering is a great way to help and our volunteers are truly the life blood of SNAP. We wouldn't be able to cope without them.

Christina We cannot continue to support so many Essex families without the help of our volunteers and supporters. Thank you to everyone who has supported us in the past - we could not have made it to 25 years without you.

How proud are you of the difference SNAP makes?

Karen I am so proud of the difference SNAP has made. It has been a privilege to be able to work with all our SNAP families and watch their children learn and grow over the years. It's hard to believe how quickly SNAP has grown too. It's very exciting to hit this milestone and take a moment to look back at everything we have done. It's a reminder of the progress we've made and will give us the momentum to see us into our next chapter.

What are the future goals?

Christina We want SNAP to continue to be here for families who have a child or young person with an additional need or disability and for them to know that they are not alone.



If you have any views on this issue or future stories, please contact SNAP Matters editor, Michelle Andrews - m.andrews@snapcharity.org

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The SNAP Centre • Pastoral Way • Warley • Brentwood • Essex • CM14 5WF

highlights

► Events kick-start fundraising year

More than 200 supporters attended SNAP's Quiz and Curry Night held in the first two months of 2019. The two popular events fabulously raised almost £5,000, with attendees enjoying a great social evening with family and friends.

“Great night, varied questions, great pace, enjoyable marathon rounds and fun games; we will be back next year,” said one quiz goer.

Guests at the Curry Night meanwhile, enjoyed authentic food and were entertained by the restaurant's resident magician.



Workshop wows 'new you' parents

The SNAP Centre was alive with a myriad of colours and confident smiles during our 'New Year, New You' event.

Make-up artist Leanne Perilly and style coach Elaine Smith delivered interactive workshops to help parents enhance their look and feel their best.

Parent, Alison, found the session very enjoyable: “It was nice to have something completely mummy focussed,” said Alison. While fellow attendee Paula thought the session were “very useful for everyone, and particularly the discussions around confidence.”

Elaine was pleased with the day: “Leanne and myself very much enjoyed the day and it was a privilege to meet so many enthusiastic women.”



► A marathon effort

SNAP supporters were once again pounding the streets to raise funds and awareness for the charity in March taking part in the Brentwood Half Marathon. Junior and adult SNAP family members joined hundreds who took on the half marathon or three mile fun run.

Emily and Steve Webster were running the 13.1 miles for the first time and were elated to finish in two hours and 22 minutes. They were inspired to raise funds for SNAP because the charity has supported their family since one of their three boys, Kieran, was diagnosed with a brain tumour seven years ago. “Everything at SNAP is accessible for Kieran and the team have always been at the end of the phone for us to off-load.” “On the morning of the run we were both a little nervous - having had so much sponsorship there was no backing out now. “We had mile dedications, the numbers chosen by children who we have met through our son Kieran's time at Great



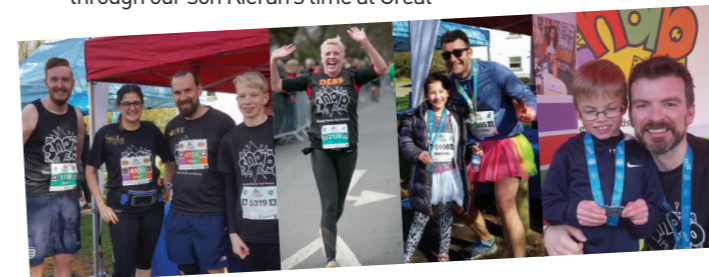
Ormond Street Hospital. The last couple of miles were tough, it helped to think that these children never give up... so neither should we (even though our legs wanted to!) “The boost we got from the crowds was incredible. We had our friends at various points during the latter stages of the course - thank you to

everyone who supported us.

“Did we enjoy it... YES (mostly). Would we do it again...DEFINITELY!”

SNAP's Community Fundraising Manager, Rob Dennis, is thankful of the fundraising opportunity the Brentwood Half Marathon brings for charities.

“This is the largest charity event in Brentwood and more than £130,000 has been raised over the years for SNAP. There is a great spirit to the day, it is so fantastic to see big crowds cheering on all the runners that are challenging themselves to help make a difference for others.”



If you are interested in taking part on behalf of SNAP in 2020 please email fundraising@snapcharity.org

▼ Secrets of sleep

“A consistent routine is the key” was the underlying message at the Sleep Success for Children with Autism workshop held at The SNAP Centre.

Helen, an experienced SEN sleep practitioner from The Children's Sleep Charity, led a full day workshop on strategies to help a child with ASD get quality sleep.

The morning began with understanding the importance of sleep and the impact lack of sleep can have on the whole family. The session moved onto how to keep a sleep diary to try and unpick what might be causing the restless nights. The discussion involved looking at sensory needs that are possibly not being met, reducing screen time in the hour before bed, and behaviours/objects that have become embedded as 'sleep association'.

The afternoon focused on creating an effective bedtime routine. Helen cautioned families that they may not see any improvement for at least two weeks; however with determination, perseverance and consistency she has seen families have amazing results using these techniques.

“Absolutely brilliant. Lovely to understand possible reasons for my child's difficulties and how to help.”

A helping hand for everyone

SNAP supports children from birth up to young people aged 25-years-old



Drama Club

Ages 8 years and above

things will go well for Roman or not, as I do if I attend other clubs outside of The SNAP Centre. It is so fantastic to see he has genuine friends here that are happy to see him each week."

SNAP's Drama Club has even inspired Roman to want to become an actor.

"Roman recently brought home a book from school and gave all the family different characters to play and we all acted out the story!" said Jaime.

SNAP would like to thank Essex County Council's Short Breaks and Global's Make Some Noise for their support of the Drama Club at SNAP.



SNAP Disco

Ages 12 years and above

Held three times a year, the SNAP Discos are eagerly anticipated. They offer a chance for everyone to express themselves in a safe and caring environment while upstairs parents are treated to buffet food and drinks.

SNAP Parent Tracey and son, Adam, have been attending the discos for the last nine years and they are a special highlight on their family calendar.

"Adam loves music and when the mood takes him he will dance all night. He enjoys being with his friends, he now has some really good friends at SNAP having attended for so many years.

These friends are now so important to Adam they are invited to his parties and he to theirs," says Tracey.

"Adam gets the chance to have fun and socialise with his friends like other young people do but in safe and controlled surroundings. He must get a lot out of it. Before we have even left the car park he asks me when the next one is and if he can go!"

"I think I look forward as much as Adam does to the disco. It's a great evening and we get looked after so well with the SNAP team meeting our every need. I like Adam also enjoy the company of like-minded people. If not myself, one of us always leaves with a bit of information they did not know."

Fellow parent, Claire, says her son, George, loves coming to the discos too

Music Therapy

For Pre-school Children

Music is used to help support the development of interaction and life skills. The sessions encourage concentration, listening, turn-taking, memory and co-ordination, as well as self-awareness and self-confidence. The small group sessions are led by Nordoff Robbins trained Music Therapist Emily Grimes. Here Emily tells us more...

Music Therapy is a process where trained, qualified professionals use music and musical techniques to support people, from children to adults with any special need or difficulty. Music Therapists have an understanding of the challenges people face and encourage clients to participate in musical activity to help make a positive impact.

There isn't a 'one size fits all' approach to Music Therapy and it will be very different from person to person depending on their needs; the therapist will look at particular aims for each client, and will work either through individual or group sessions depending on these aims.

Music Therapy can help support people in a number of different areas, such as developing functional skills, for example



holding a drum stick and playing the drum or picking up a shaker and playing it.

Music Therapy can also build on communication and social skills such as waiting and listening, or creating awareness of themselves and other people. Being in a session gives the opportunity for people to be heard and listened to, for themselves and their music to be celebrated, building confidence and self-esteem, but overall music therapy provides an enjoyable experience to have with another person.

I completed a two year Masters course in Music Therapy at Nordoff Robbins, the largest Music Therapy charity in the UK



and was trained in their approach – to be music centred and person focussed.

I love the variety of work Music Therapy offers and I love meeting new people, working together to reach their potential through music.

SNAP would like to thank the Paul and Rachel Jeffreys Charitable Trust for their support in funding this project.

"My son really opens up during these sessions, actively joining in and showing his enjoyment very outwardly."



Volunteer Charles, with SNAP's resident DJ, Skittleman, who always guarantees a great party experience for all attendees!

and they are a highlight of his year.

"George talks about it so much leading up to the event, and afterwards with so much happiness. The discos give George some independence away from me and encourage him to socialise and make new friends in an environment

he is familiar with," she said.

"I also benefit from chatting to other parents who are in a similar position to me. I have been able to give advice to others as well as receive lots of great information and some much needed advice."



"My daughter had such a lovely time - the happiest I've seen her in over a year. That is due to the wonderful people at SNAP."

Where there's a Will there's a clear path

SNAP recently held a Specialist Talk to help parents make informed choices about their children's future delivered by an expert in the field, Sam, from Mullis & Peake LLP Solicitors.

A Will is an essential way of planning for the future for your dependants, especially those with a special need or disability, but it can be very daunting.

Without a Will it becomes much more difficult for your family and friends to deal with your estate, be sure of your wishes and could even lead to your accounts being frozen.

Making a Will ensures your wishes about who should receive benefit from your estate are carried out. Without a Will you are hoping the state will make suitable choices and these may not be in line with your own thoughts. You also choose who will be in charge of your affairs after you have gone.

A trust is the best way to provide for your child or young person as they are not



directly responsible for the management and investment of the funds you have left them. They can be set up while you are alive with just £1 and once established provide a means into which inheritances can be placed any time later i.e. a grandparent wanting to leave their grandchild a gift can leave the money to the trust.

You will need to appoint at least one trustee to manage this trust. As the name suggests they must be someone you trust to carry out the wishes and make the right decisions. Typically they are a family

"Lots of useful advice that will help set our minds at rest."

"We are clear now on how to best ensure our child gets the most secure financial future as they move into adulthood."

"This talk has really given me an insight into what we need to put in place."

member or close friend who knows your dependants well. They can also be a Professional Advisor such as your solicitor.

The main type of trust is called a Discretionary Trust. This is flexible and it is left open for your trustees to exercise their discretion in making any decisions about who should receive what, when and how they receive it. These trustees can also use their powers to make payments to third parties which has a direct benefit to your child for items that statutory funding cannot purchase.

Remember to store your Will safely and review it every few years to ensure your wishes still remain the same.

Specialist Talks for May - August 2019

Moving to Secondary School £15 per parent 12.15pm to 2.30pm
Wednesday 24th April,
Wednesday 1st May and
Wednesday 8th May

This three session course will give practical ideas to help with the transition and changes associated with the move from primary into secondary school. It is suitable for parents who have children with special needs in Year 4 to Year 6 in mainstream schools.

Tony Attwood £30 per parent per session
Holiday Inn, Basildon SS14 3DG
£60 per professional per session
Friday 17th May – am and pm sessions

Internationally renowned clinical psychologist, Professor Tony Attwood, has been working with individuals on the spectrum for over thirty years. Through his experience he has developed a fascination in Special Interests. "I've learned a lot about drain covers, dinosaurs, Thomas the Tank Engine... But I've also learnt how to use these Special Interest constructively, as a measure of ability and thinking as well as a means of coping

with anxiety. They give energy when depleted and provide a wow factor of appreciation from others."

9.30am-12.30pm Special Interests:
 The developmental sequence and the reasons why specific interests occur as part of the overall profile of high functioning autism.

1.30pm-4.30pm Adolescent issues for teenagers with high functioning autism
 Focus ranges on puberty, friendships, sexuality, academic expectations, emotion management, self-esteem, and preparation for college and employment.



Supporting your young person with learning disabilities through their challenging adolescent years £10 per parent
Wednesday 12th June - 9.30am to 11.00am

Learning disability nurse, Shoenagh, will be covering issues such as puberty, health and staying safe. Opportunity to talk on an individual basis afterwards.

Parent Time £5 per parent
Wednesday 26th June – 11.15am to 1.30pm

Parent Time sessions give parents whose children are in the first few years of primary school a chance to meet other families in a similar situation and share experiences.

Boys on the Autism Spectrum Coffee Morning £5 per parent
Wednesday 3rd July – 11.15am to 1.30pm

An opportunity for parents who have a son on the spectrum to share experiences and advice with each other. You will also be able to ask questions and explore the specific resources in SNAP's library.

COMING SOON!

SNAP's Summer Survival Guide will be available in June and is packed full of tips and ideas!
 As the summer holidays at home can be both long and stressful, our guide brings together information from organisations across Essex that can offer activities, short breaks and events to keep everyone in the family busy. It also includes useful information for trips abroad, with strategies on how to make air travel less stressful.

Fundraising is a piece of cake for Julie

Julie Kelly has been supporting SNAP for almost as many years as the charity has been operating. She first heard of the charity when her son, Tommy, was diagnosed with autism at the age of two.

"At the time SNAP was also two and was becoming known for its great support for families. SNAP has helped me and my family in so many ways that I know by fundraising for them they can continue to help other families in the same way," says Julie.

Julie's fundraising idea came out of a family tradition.

"The females in my family regularly go to London to sample all the wonderful Afternoon Teas on offer so it wasn't a big jump to put one of our own on in aid of SNAP."

Julie's family members were quick to offer support.

"I have a friend that hires out vintage tea sets and she supplied the china for free. I was also lucky enough to have some good homebakers and sandwich makers!"

Julie had 30 ladies attend on the day which was full of laughter.

"Everyone commented on how delicious the food was and how pretty the china looked. I had a charity box for cash donations of people's



Julie (bottom row, 5th from left) and her afternoon tea ladies!

choice, and I added a raffle to boost funds that was donated by one of the guests. A fantastic £360 was raised from the event," said Julie.

Julie would highly recommend holding an Afternoon Tea as a way to raise money.

"It is something that everyone can get involved with and who can resist a nice cup of tea and a piece of cake!"

Inspired to raise funds? SNAP's new Awareness Week is taking place between 22nd June and 29th June and it would be fantastic if you were able to get involved with supporting us. Contact the Fundraising Team on 01277 245345, or email fundraising@snapcharity.org

And Jacqui has a ball raising money!

Jacqui Carver is also a long-term supporter of SNAP who has led a team of dedicated volunteers to raise a phenomenal £150,000 over the last two decades by organising Charity Ball's.

"I was involved with local fundraising by organising a Charity Ball to raise funds for Shenfield Parish Hall in 2000, and the event was such a success that we were approached by a SNAP supporter, Gemma, to see if we could run a similar event and raise money for the charity.

"I met the people at SNAP and thought it was a very worthy charity and offered unique support to families. I also had friends who had benefited a lot from help given. It felt like one big happy family and a very personal charity," said Jacqui.

"We have raised money for the Endeavour School, Little Haven's Children's Hospice and Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital too. The team all had young children so supporting children's charities meant a lot.

Jacqui and the rest of the Shenfield Ball Committee enjoy working together and have a lot of fun during the organising.

"We work well as a team. We meet up every couple of months to run ideas past each other. Each person in the team brings something different to the event, whether it's arranging auction prizes, selling tables, helping with the administration or even just picking up prizes and assisting selling raffle tickets on the night."

"You start to see everyone arrive, looking glamorous and look forward to a great evening. At first it's a bit like having your own party and you worry about people turning up, there's always a sense of anticipation and equally you always feel a bit nervous about whether the evening will be a success. Later on in the evening when everyone is dancing and having fun there is a great sense of achievement,

especially when you know that you have raised so much money for such a wonderful cause."

And with the £15,000 raised at their most recent Ball held in March, Jacqui is over the moon that the total throughout the years has topped the £150,000 mark.

"It's amazing, we are very lucky we get a lot of help from SNAP supporters and many of them are very kind and generous, some of whom have attended the Ball since the start. It means a lot and great too to have had so many new families joining us in recent years. When we visit The SNAP Centre and see where our fundraising efforts go and hear the stories of some of the families, it makes you feel really proud and you feel you are really giving something back to a very special charity.

"As an Ambassador I have heard first hand the heart-warming stories about how it has helped families and how much the support means to them."

● A huge thanks to The Shenfield Ball Committee through the years: Jacqui, Gemma, Elaine, Sue, Carole, Lorraine and Helen. And in 2019 also to: Julie, Gill and Alison.



The 2019 gang (l-r): Alison, Gill, Helen, Jacqui, Carole and Julie.



Come and help us to celebrate 25 years

OPEN DAY

22nd May 2019 11.15am - 2.30pm
The SNAP Centre, Warley, CM14 5WF

Calling familiar and new faces!

Twenty five years after a group of parents who have children with special needs first got together around a kitchen table, SNAP, the charity they formed is celebrating its Silver Anniversary. All supporters are invited to drop in and mark this special milestone with the SNAP team.

#GetInvolved

PLEASE RSVP - events@snapcharity.org or <https://snap25thanniversaryopenday.eventbrite.co.uk>

Calling all businesses!

22nd May 2019
8.00am-9.30am
The SNAP Centre,
Warley, CM14 5WF

As a local charity awarded the Best Not-For-Profit Organisation of the Year at the Brentwood Business Awards 2018, SNAP would like to invite you to an informal early morning session to meet new business contacts and take a closer look at the valuable work we do.

#GetInvolved

PLEASE RSVP - events@snapcharity.org or <https://snapbusinessbreakfast.eventbrite.co.uk>



Brew-tiful way to relax

SNAP has once again teamed up with De Rougemont Manor in Warley to bring you a traditional Afternoon Tea in lovely surroundings. A brew-tiful way to relax with your family and friends whilst supporting SNAP. You can even add some extra sparkle with a glass of prosecco. Tables of 2 up to 10 guests.

#GetInvolved

events@snapcharity.org
<https://snapafternoontea.eventbrite.co.uk>

Anniversary AFTERNOON TEA PARTY

3rd June 2019 From 12 noon
De Rougemont Manor, CM13 3JP
£25.00 per person

'Step out for SNAP' this summer

Help SNAP take a step in the right direction by taking plenty of your own!

That's the challenge SNAP is throwing out to supporters this Summer - to take as many sponsored steps as you can over the coming weeks and months.

And not just steps - choose a distance, choose any active method of getting there and record your progress along the way.

How far you want to go and for how long is up to you; it's a personal target that's right for you and your circumstances.

Whether you want to walk to school or work each day or make

it to a friend's house miles away under your own steam, it doesn't matter. Just get sponsored for your valiant efforts!

And while you're at it, why not invite friends and family to join the fun.

Interested? We can send you a Step Challenge pack with instructions (including useful apps), a sponsorship form and Just Giving page details.

We'll be there to support you and when you reach your target we'll give you a 'well done' certificate.

Go the distance to help SNAP in the long run!

#GetInvolved
fundraising@snapcharity.org



FUNMUDRUN

Get messy for SNAP with our 5K challenge

June 29th 2019 at 9.00am
Kelvedon Hatch, CM15 0LA
Ages 13-16 £35 / Over 16s £45

Team up with your family, friends or work mates and take on a fun challenge at an exclusive event for SNAP!

Held at the world renowned Nuclear Races at Kelvedon Hatch, Brentwood, this 5K Fun Mud Run will feature some of their well-known obstacles including the Deathslide and Ziplines over water.

Members of the SNAP team will also be getting muddy!

#GetInvolved

fundraising@snapcharity.org
<https://snapfunmudrun.eventbrite.co.uk>



Barleylands Sponsored Fun Walk

8th September 2019 12:00 noon - 3:00 pm
Barleylands, Billericay, CM11 2UD

A great family afternoon with either a three or one mile walk. Bring a picnic for our party afterwards with the SNAP team. There will be stalls and a BBQ too. Participating children will receive a certificate. Last year for every £100 raised through individual sponsorship from the walk local donors added a further £55!

#GetInvolved

fundraising@snapcharity.org
www.snapcharity.org/get-involved/snap-events

"Early intervention is key and SNAP has been a major part in that."



"It has made a huge difference having specialist contacts and advice from SNAP. As a family we wouldn't have achieved so much without this support."



"Our family would be lost without SNAP."



"I feel like the burden has lifted now I have been to SNAP. You have helped me see what I need to do and have shown me how to go about it."



"I feel like the burden has lifted now I have been to SNAP. You have helped me see what I need to do and have shown me how to go about it."





Special Anniversary Issue matters

Celebrating 25 years of SNAP Charity making a difference for families

"The centre facilities are excellent and the staff go above and beyond to help."



"SNAP is the thing that has held my little family together."



"There is no where else like The SNAP Centre. It is wonderful to be able to come here and feel the whole family is supported."



A 25 year success story

SNAP charity's unique service for the community

2011

SNAP partners with local organisations to provide **Education Surgeries** for families

2010

The SNAP Drama Club present their first production

1994

A group of 8 parents who have children with special needs get together round a kitchen table and form their own support group called SNAP starting with a parent and toddler group

1995

SNAP builds a **Library of educational resources** for families to access information

1996

Specialist Talks programme develops to help inform and empower parents

1998

SNAP Helpline is established

"I'm so glad we spoke today. I feel more positive now and not as worried about where to go from here."

1999

Face to Face appointments offer parents a one-to-one opportunity to talk to a Family Support Adviser

"It was great to meet people who understand what I go through daily. This has helped me so much."

2000

The first **SNAP Directory** pulls together a huge volume of useful contacts for families to access

2001

SNAP website launches giving online support for those unable to access the charity's Brentwood base. Counselling services also begin

2002

IT Club equipped with adapted computers offering access for all to learn IT skills

2003

SNAP scoops a Queen's Golden Jubilee Award

Music Therapy begins

2005

£30,000 Sensory Room is planned for SNAP's new bespoke centre

2004

Summer Survival Guide packed full of ideas and top tips is launched

2006

WORK BEGINS AND THE SNAP CENTRE TAKES SHAPE

2007

SNAP moves into a new purpose built building officially opened by HRH The Countess of Wessex

2008

Out of school activities start - **Drama Club, SNAPtastic and School Holiday sessions**

2009

Twenty-six Young People attend the first **SNAPtacular Disco**

"My daughter had such a lovely time at the disco - it's the happiest I've seen her in a year."

2012

Hilary Needham founder member and manager since 1999 receives an **MBE**

2013

Sensorise is launched offering stimulating sessions for more complex needs children

2014

High Sheriffs' Award in recognition of SNAP's valuable work with volunteers in Essex

2015

A record **72** runners take on the Brentwood Half Marathon and Fun Run for SNAP

SNAP creates a calendar of **fundraising social events** as part of the legacy from the charity's 20th Anniversary Year ... 619 supporters attend events

2016

SIBS4FUN Celebrating a decade of SNAP's activity week for siblings

"My children have had the most incredible time - and are old enough to appreciate the opportunity."

2018

Best Not-For-Profit Organisation of the Year 2018

SNAP creates a vibrant sensory wall

Brentwood Business Awards

SNAP website is relaunched with over 1,300 contacts now on the **SNAP Directory** and enhanced **Information Network** that highlights a variety of opportunities

2019

More than **5000** families have now been supported since the charity was formed in 1994

"SNAP is like a warm snuggly blanket on a cold, unforgiving day."

SNAP's humble beginnings have now supported 5,000 families!

Founding members Hilary Needham and Paula Hills explain their drive to start a support group

What was the prompt to get SNAP started?

Hilary We were a group of friends at the Keys Hall Parent and Toddler Group and we were concerned about the lack of provision for families such as mine who had children with special needs - we teamed up with the toddler group to share their toys. We had to formalise the group so the first meeting was held on 7th July 1994 at 8.00pm round my kitchen table.

How tough were the early days of the charity?

Paula With no internet in 1994 there was lots of putting flyers up in doctors surgeries, schools, and playgroups!

Hilary As SNAP started to grow there were more and more boxes of toys and information that were stored in my dining room. It was physically demanding to carry them in and out of my car to the hall each week.

My home phone number was at the bottom of the leaflets and I would often have distressed families and also professionals who wanted more information, calling day and night.

When did you realise you were making a difference?

Hilary In the early days we had a meeting at NCH Family Centre in Ingatestone and asked parents what they wanted for the future. At that meeting we realised what a lifeline we were to families and how high their expectations were for the future.

They wanted SNAP to have its own purpose built centre so the support services could develop and be offered all year round!

Paula I think I began to realise this as the

“We actively seek the views of our families to help measure the impact of services and to assist in the development of future provision.”

Hilary

TOP RIGHT: The BBC visit to film at SNAP.

RIGHT: Hilary receives her MBE in 2012. BELOW: Paula receives a Borough of Brentwood Civic Award in 2018.



number of families grew. SNAP has always been a 'needs led' organisation and the more families we had the more the needs grew so from starting with a toddler group providing information and books we quickly started providing more activities for our families. We began

working in partnership with The Brentwood Centre to provide training about our children and how to help them so they would be happy to include them in their sports activities and we haven't stopped.

The high points along the way?

Hilary There have been so many high points but some of the most significant for me must be

- ★ The First office
- ★ The SNAP Directory
- ★ Family Partnership training
- ★ Sibling activity weeks
- ★ The bespoke SNAP Centre
- ★ Multi Disciplinary Assessment Clinic that I had the honour of attending for many years
- ★ My Civic Award, my Dad was so proud and I am so pleased he knew about this just before he passed away
- ★ My MBE received from Her Majesty the Queen
- ★ The 20th Anniversary legacy where we introduced SNAP Events amongst other things raising the awareness of SNAP
- ★ Business awards - it is so good to be recognised as a strong capable well run organisation with robust plans for the future.

Paula Getting funding from the National Lottery in 1998 to refurbish and open our first office in Keys Hall which was previously the caretakers office. This gave us credibility, we were serious about SNAP and our desire to improve the lives of our



“A continuous highpoint for me is to be able to witness parents, faced with life changing difficulties, flourish once given the right knowledge and support.”

Paula

families. This allowed us to move ourselves and our paper away from our homes and certainly felt like SNAP was on the map.

What were the biggest challenges?

Hilary In the early days it was certainly the environment - the leaking roof above a desk and the counselling in the shower room with coats on! SNAP's growth is phenomenal and has to be very carefully managed to balance the needs of our families with the resources and funds available.

Paula The biggest challenge for me was to make sure I kept the balance in my life. I didn't want my son and family to miss out in anyway so I learnt to juggle SNAP and family.

Can you describe the journey?

Hilary My son Jack, who still challenges me on a daily basis is the inspiration and drive that changed the direction of my life dramatically. He was of course the start of my journey into special needs.

Paula I have often described SNAP as a huge snowball going down a mountain - it just got bigger and bigger and as long as we dug a route for the snowball we could keep it on track!

Did you ever envisage SNAP would be as big as it is today?

Paula We have always consulted with our families on what they needed and when in early 2000s the answer came back as our own building - my goodness was that a leap into the unknown. Once we secured the funding and found the ideal building we knew SNAP would be growing.

Hilary To think that SNAP has helped over 5,000 families over the 25 years and is currently supporting over 2,600 families is unbelievable.

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Visit - www.snapcharity.org/snapshumblebeginningstonow/ - to read the full article from Hilary and Paula

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