



Issue 13 // Autumn 2021

matters

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



A welcome
lifeline for the
3,000
families we
are currently
supporting

Happy in play

Family fun returns
to The SNAP Centre

INSIDE
THIS ISSUE

3 Summer joy

Sessions return to
put smiles on the faces
of our families

4 Post pandemic

Learning lessons from
Covid and adapting
for the future

7 First class

Partnering with schools
can inspire future
generations

welcome

New term brings new opportunities

It's the start of the new school year and, as with each term, we are bringing you a host of new opportunities to learn with our virtual Specialist Talks. We're thrilled to announce we have secured funding which will enable us to offer Specialist Talks for FREE to families for a limited time.

AND, in more exciting news... World-renowned Clinical Psychologist Professor Tony Attwood, will be joining SNAP again, from the other side of the world, for an online presentation on 25th November.

September also sees the return of our in-person fundraising social events this year with our Communita and Golf Day. More events are being planned for the coming months and following the success of our virtual nights earlier this year the team are hoping to embrace online opportunities going forward as well!

Plus tickets will be on sale shortly for our SNAP Charity Ball on Friday 11th March 2022 at Greenwoods Hotel in Stock, Billericay.

The SNAP Centre has been full of laughter and smiles over the summer as we have been able to invite larger groups in for our Summer Holiday Activity Sessions, as well as continuing with some of our online sessions too. Plus, our annual SIBS4FUN! gave some of our siblings a week to remember. Read on, for more recent highlights and to learn how adaptations made during the pandemic mean SNAP's future activities will be even more beneficial to our families.

Best Wishes,
Karen and Christina,
SNAP Directors



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

Special Needs And Parents Ltd Registered Charity
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about us



Making a difference

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



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, which is available to families of children and young people aged 0 to 25.

"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 offer an engaging, needs-led, comprehensive service for families," says Karen, SNAP Director (Family Services).

"Wonderful environment with a team of people who care. I know SNAP are going to have such a big impact on our future."

SNAP is currently offering a wide range of services - at the centre, remotely or hybrid - to meet the needs of its families

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

"Without you guys and the support given I'm sure I would've collapsed under the weight of being an autism parent."



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

A welcome return for SNAP's summer sessions

The summer may not have delivered the sunshine but The SNAP Centre has enjoyed a bright and beautiful couple of months. For the first time since March 2020 multiple families were able to attend our Summer Holiday sessions and they were thrilled. With the need to ensure we deliver Covid-safe sessions, the SNAP Team have tried to ensure there were enough opportunities for all families wishing to attend a session.

Centre favourites such as SNAP+, Diddies Stay 'n' Play, Sensorise and Mini-Sensorise all took place alongside newer virtual favourites - Bingo, An Hour with Skittleman and a Disco for young people.

SNAP parent Lisa was delighted to see her son have such a positive time in his visit to The SNAP Centre.

"Thank you again for all you do for us. This session was so special for my son - and me! It brought a tear to my eye seeing him so happy and engaged. It was such a boost for him to be given a starring role in the session and I hope it signifies him maturing and becomes more accommodating, as it will be lovely for him and his independence and also for us as a family."

SNAP's Family Services Team have been thrilled to see the centre buzzing with activity again.

"I love interacting with the children," beams Family Support Adviser, Rachel.

"Seeing how much joy they get from having a nurturing surrounding where they can play with other children and have lots of fun



and just be 'themselves' is fantastic. You can follow each child's personal journey from when they first come to how they have progressed a few sessions on. We have children attend who can find it hard to cope with noisy play places, I feel that we provide the correct balance of calm and fun."

Fellow Family Support Adviser, Alli equally finds helping visiting families rewarding.

"Whether making a child laugh, providing a parent with a listening ear, offering strategies, helping families to form friendships between themselves or just the opportunity to drink a cup of tea without it going cold. It is what the team at SNAP have been doing for years and it feels so special to be a part of it."

"Lockdown has been tough on everyone. SNAP has been able to be there this summer to support those who are starting to venture out again; providing a safe and clean environment for families with potential vulnerabilities. Our families have really needed it!"

SNAP parent, Angie, embraces that safety:

"My son feels that he can be himself without judgement, although his motor-verbal tics

are worse when he attends it is because he is not having to suppress them as he feels safe and comfortable. SNAP builds his confidence."

Individual sessions are also being offered for families on request such as June's family:

"It was lovely to break up the day and be somewhere we can feel comfortable."

While SNAP parent Sophie loved watching her family attend our online disco.

"Wow! What a lovely evening we have had. My children loved it so much and so did I! It was lovely to see so many enjoying themselves and especially for my daughter to socialise in a kind of way with her peers. Before the pandemic it was extremely difficult to get her to social events due to not being able to travel and poor health. It was lovely for her to be part of something like this. We are so grateful to be part of the SNAP community. You have definitely put much needed smiles on all of our faces."



Western theme to SIBS4Fun!

SNAP understands the huge role siblings play in the lives of their brother or sister with special needs and offers a range of activities where all the family can attend together. Here they also have the chance to meet other siblings who may be going through similar experiences.

For the last 15 years SNAP has organised a week long summer scheme for siblings aged 6-13 years called SIBS4Fun!

The theme for this year was Western and from the moment the cowgirls and

cowboys said howdy to the SNAP Team at the start of the week they embarked on an extravaganza of fun activities that included line dancing, inflatables, decorating a horseshoe and a hat, designing a neckerchief, tea-light campfire, a hoe-down, and a silly sports showdown.

"The team were spurred on to give our 52 guests a memorable week, especially given the extra challenges they have faced over the last year," said Pam, SNAP's Family Support Manager.

We would like to thank the following supporters who helped make SIBS4FUN another wonderful event: The Moody Charitable Trust, The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, The Boshier-Hinton Foundation, Find Your Active powered by ActiveEssex, BakerLabels, ProStrike, Jill Busby Art, Brentwood Nando's, and Brentwood Dominos.



Forging ahead in a post pandemic landscape

Since 1994 SNAP Charity has been continually evolving services and activities to support families who have a child or young person with additional needs. In March 2020 the team faced one of the biggest hurdles in those 27 years when life changed for everyone and support had to be adapted virtually overnight. 17 months on and as life begins to open up again the SNAP team is determined that adaptations forced during the pandemic will mean SNAP's future offering surpasses previous sessions.

For some of our SNAP families feeling isolated at home had always been a way of life as SNAP parent, Liz, explains:

"When the pandemic first hit I thought how am I going to get my daughter and all our family through this, with nothing, because there is going to be nothing out there. I know what that looks like from previous experience and I thought how are we going to get through this... I was utterly panicked initially.

"It has always been hugely isolating when you have a child with complex medical needs. We have often spent a lot of time at home and lockdown was therefore not a new thing for us, just unfortunately how we have lived our lives for years. For everything we have planned you have to



prepare yourself for the fact that it might not be able to happen, so don't really get excited about it, don't tell her about it, and then if it happens that we all have a lovely day, and if it doesn't we pretend like it wasn't going to happen. This is the way we have all learnt to survive."

"Our small circle of support and the people we were able to turn to has always been hugely limited. It was only specialised services such as SNAP that saw and accepted our daughter for who she was and were able to provide activities that stimulated her."

"Speaking to SNAP they told me they were going to start online sessions including a weekly Facebook Live hour with their music therapist and I thought that was amazing on multiple levels. And it was! My daughter could engage with it, we were able to see this team of people that support us all the time, and it gave us something to look forward to and focus on. The SNAP Centre isn't just a building, it's the people that are in that building. Those people have now been in our living room and by our hospital beds and it's those people that make all the difference

for us. It's not where you do the session but how you do it.

"It was that light bulb moment of what families like ours needed and SNAP have just delivered it in week 1 of a global pandemic. My daughter is part of something, her friends are there, she doesn't want to miss out. It's been fantastic for both her mental and physical health, she is bouncing back from illness

now. Previously a bad seizure and we would lose the whole day, possibly even two.

"It's just as good for us as parents as it is for the children. We can see each other and these online sessions mean we are not alone. We have our 'family' around us. It's been life-changing for families like

ours to connect so frequently with other people in similar situations. Families of disabled children just don't get out anywhere to see people. It's been incredible to have something every week and we as parents can have a chat within the session."

"The online sessions for the children really kick-started a whole bigger support network for us as parents as well. We

"It was that lightbulb moment of what families like ours needed and SNAP have just delivered it in week 1 of a global pandemic."





realised there are a huge amount of families that are in the same situation and we have been able to connect with them through these online sessions.

"In a ideal world of course we would like to be able to get out to clubs, but we don't live in an ideal world. Our world is unpredictable, things can change drastically from one morning to afternoon. To have the flexibility of thinking 'ok we can't go to that group today, but we can do that online instead then she has not missed out' is amazing. Now we have experienced these life changing sessions they have made 'the playing field' more level for children like ours. It's been magical.

"It seemed impossible, how could my daughter's needs be met if she is sick all the time, but now it's been done and it's phenomenal. I cannot allow myself to allow my mind to go back to how it was before. At a time when everyone felt isolated, we experienced inclusion for the first time."

SNAP parent Sophie agrees with Liz on the impact the sessions have had on her family:

"The sessions are wonderful and we feel part of the SNAP family. We are so grateful to SNAP for continuing to offer this as we live too far away to get to The SNAP Centre."

"Other online services have already been stopped or those available are unaffordable. I've gotten so much out

of SNAP's online webinars as well and hope these will continue as I can listen in during the evening. It has helped me a lot. The team have brought so much laughter to my family over the last year. Well done to you all in making these things so possible. We feel so privileged to be part of the SNAP family there and virtually. My daughter really has cheered up! Amazing! Thank you."

SNAP parent Gemma heard about SNAP when her son was little

from a keyworker linked to the Social Services, Children with Disabilities Team and dropped into the centre adhoc for music sessions. In the last year online activities have meant they were able to access more activities.

"We have been lucky enough to attend Sensorise, Choir, Skittleman Fun Hour, Skittleman Disco, Bingo and all the Facebook Live Music session videos we can find.

"It has meant friendly faces, with different ideas to what we are doing at home, a chance to socialise, joining in with music which is very uplifting and an enjoyable session for others in the household not just for my son.

"We enjoy the online Sensorise sessions almost as much as the in-house ones. We've been able to join in all the music fun with everyone else."

And SNAP's Director of Family Services, Karen, is committed to facilitating

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'hybrid' sessions going forward.

"The support and comfort families have been able to draw on over the past 16 months through our online sessions has been both wonderful and powerful to see.

"As well as our activity sessions we will continue to offer online Face-to-Face and Counselling appointments. Our virtual Specialist Talks are being accessed by a wider audience resulting in us being able to empower more parents and carers to grow in strength and knowledge and become better equipped to give the best possible help to their children. When we re-introduce a live audience for our Talks we will ensure the option to join virtually will be available too."

Turn the page to find out about this term's Specialist Talks, including an upcoming virtual presentation with world renowned Clinical Psychologist Professor Tony Attwood.

family services



Innovation key to continuing to meet our families needs

The resourceful SNAP Team will continue to grow the offering we have for families. Listening to topics that come through from our Helpline and in our Face-to-Face sessions will ensure our high level of support continues to meet the needs of our growing number of families.

"We are researching, developing and trialing new ideas such as our a recent Home Education session," said Kate, SNAP's Information and Admin Manager.

Sept to Dec 2021 opportunities

SNAP is pleased to offer the opportunity to access our Specialist Talks via online webinar. These will take place via the Zoom app. We are thrilled to be able to announce we have secured funding from NHS Charities Together and Mid and South Essex Hospitals Charity which will enable us to offer them **FREE for families for a limited time**. A nominal charge for Professionals to attend still applies.

THE SNAP CENTRE: Parent Time

Wednesday 22nd September, 11.00am to 12.30pm

SNAP is excited to host our first 'in person' parent group in over a year.

Parent Time is a small group informal discussion session for parents whose child with additional needs is in Reception to Year 2 at primary school. It is a great opportunity to meet other families in a similar situation and share experiences.

VIRTUAL: Behaviour as Communication with Kathryn Miller

Wednesday 20th October

11.00am to 1.00pm and 7pm to 9.00pm

Often we refer to behaviour as challenging; it challenges our thinking and can make us feel powerless...until we are able to understand it. Behaviour is often a primary means of communicating when we are feeling overwhelmed, unable to find the words we need or not able to regulate ourselves effectively.

This talk will look at challenging behaviours you may be seeing from your child, helping you to analyse and gain a greater understanding of root causes for behaviours and think about what your child is communicating through their behaviours. We will explore strategies for coping with and addressing challenging behaviours; changing our approaches and thinking in order to help our children feel more understood and have their needs met effectively.

VIRTUAL: The Impact of the Executive Functions on Everyday Life with Kate, SNAP's Information and Admin Manager

Wednesday 3rd November

11.00am to 1.00pm and 7pm to 9.00pm

Our executive functions are the cognitive

processes that allow us to keep organised, carry out and stay on task, think flexibly, and regulate ourselves. Individuals who are neurodiverse (such as those with ADHD, ASD and Dyslexia) may have differences with their executive function processes which can impact on everyday life. This talk will look at the role of the executive functions and strategies to support those who would benefit from trying a different approach to using these skills.

VIRTUAL: Emotional and Sensory Regulation and the Zones with Kathryn Miller

Wednesday 17th November

11.00am to 1.00pm and 7pm to 9.00pm

Understanding our children's levels of alertness – what their 'Zones' look like, is key when it comes to helping them to develop regulation skills. Relevant for parents or professionals who would like to understand more about regulating children's emotional states (and their own!) and how this can be achieved for all children through changing responses and developing a range of effective strategies.

This talk will explore the journey of learning to regulate effectively, thinking about supporting all children to develop their regulation skills through sensory, organising and thinking strategies.

STOP PRESS!

THE SNAP CENTRE AND VIRTUAL: Professor Tony Attwood

Thursday 25th November

Time to be confirmed

World-renowned Clinical Psychologist, Professor Tony Attwood, is returning to give a virtual presentation for SNAP parents, carers and professionals. More details soon...



A session that was welcomed by recently registered SNAP parent, Gemma:

"I attended the play session for home educated children and just wanted to acknowledge what an amazing job you all did. Today's session was a massive win for us...its the longest time my son has ever spent at a group! Usually after a short time he's unhappy but it was the complete opposite today!

"From the moment we walked in I could tell SNAP was different... in a group setting he never engages, usually he won't speak at all. Today he was straight off, chatting to Family Support Adviser, Rachel, listening to her and completely content. It sounds dramatic but this was the first time in my son's life that I felt able to step back and let someone other than myself or close family take the lead with him and that is such a huge thing."



Top tips from the SNAP Team!

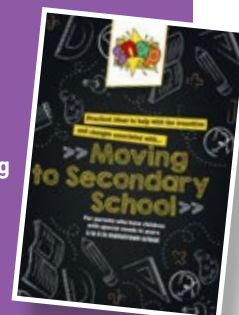
Family Support Adviser, Rachel, is our Sensory Play guru. Here are some of her favourite suggestions for tactile sensations...

- ★ Ziplock bags with hair gel in and sequins or shaving foam - really good for sensory play, calming, fine motor skills.
- ★ Shaving foam under cling film on a table - feels nice for sensory and good for fine motor skills.
- ★ Painting with stampers or paintbrush - very good for hand and eye co-ordination and gross motor skills.
- ★ Shredded paper - good for textures and motor skills.
- ★ Edible sensory play - chocolate custard and plastic pigs, cornflakes, jelly, cooked spaghetti with food colouring.
- ★ Ice play, putting lego inside a jug with water and freeze it.



Moving to Secondary School can be a stressful time for both parents and their children. The SNAP Team have developed our 'Moving to Secondary School' guide for parents who have children with special needs in years 4 to 6 in mainstream school.

Download your copy here -
www.snapcharity.org/need-support/informing-you-online/resources-2/



A first class partnership

SNAP relishes the opportunity to work with schools across Essex both to support families who are not yet aware of the work we do, and to inspire charity fundraising with pupils. Whether needing support or wishing to fundraise for us the SNAP Team is on hand to support and assist teaching staff and pupils. Here's how we can work together...



Family Services

Support school coffee mornings

We can support your families if you are organising a coffee morning for parents and carers who have a child or young person with additional needs. We can supply information about SNAP's services and activities as well as our easily accessible online resources, or a SNAP Family Support Adviser may be able to attend.

Provide learning resources

The SNAP Team annually research and produce 'Survival Guides' to help families cope with those extra challenging times in the year such as Christmas and the School Summer Holidays.

Bespoke training

On request we can design and deliver a tailored training session to assist school staff to give even better help to the children in their care. Professionals are also welcome to attend our Specialist Talks.

Specialist Library access

Our specialist library, based at The SNAP Centre, contains more than 2,000 books, easy reference information sheets and DVDs, that are free for families and professionals to borrow on request.

Contact the Family Team - familyteam@snapcharity.org - for more information.

Fundraising

When it comes to raising money for SNAP, Essex youngsters are already proving they are in a class of their own! Schools can help ensure a bright future for SNAP and the families it supports. Whether it's a school-backed initiative or individual pupils getting involved, the younger generation can make a real difference to their local community. Contact the Fundraising Team - fundraising@snapcharity.org - for more information

Provide awareness resources

Our School Fundraising Pack will be bespoke to your school's requirements. It contains a guide for the teaching team with educational games that help demonstrate the difficulties faced by children with a special need or disability. Plus copy that can be used as part of the school's event awareness letter, posters, activity sheets and fundraising guideline information.

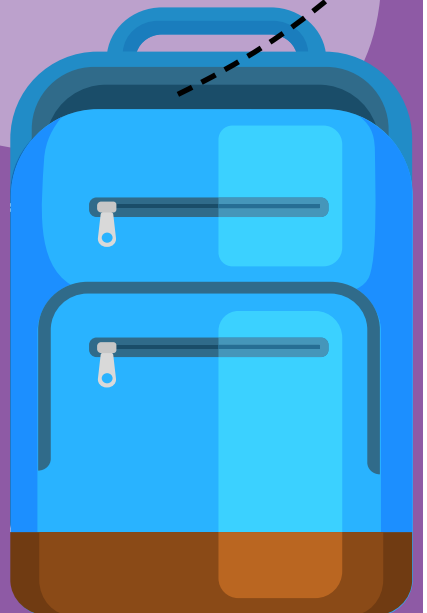
Book a talk or a tour

To help make your event as educational as possible you can arrange for a SNAP speaker to come and talk to your school group about how the money raised will help

families. Or a small group of teacher and pupil representatives would be welcome for a tour of The SNAP Centre where the team can bring to life the work we do and this can be fed back to the larger school group. We can also provide an inspiring film to watch.

Support from our Fundraising Team

From the moment we know about your fundraising intention we will work with you to make our partnership a success and give your pupils a fulfilling and fun experience when it comes to raising money for SNAP. If you are looking for inspiring ideas we have plenty we can share with you!



Dynamic duo on a (hot) wing and a prayer!

Good friends and daredevils Calum and Matt decided on a novel way to fundraise for SNAP that left them hot under the collar! After coming up with a few ideas they settled on a 'extremely hot wings' challenge and set about raising awareness on social media and through Calum's workplace, LV= Brentwood.

"Being local we were aware of the amazing work SNAP does and have already supported other friends with their fundraising ideas such as SNAP's 24-hour disco back in March. Matt has also played in a concert for the children at The SNAP Centre," said Calum.

"On the day itself Matt faired better than me chomping through his hot wings with the odd mouthful of water. I on the other hand was onto the milk barely halfway through the pile. The last couple

made me seriously question why we didn't just do a fun run! We did it, and the day was a great success raising £310 and a few laughs with the videos we took. That last wing was so hot that I'm pretty sure we had smoke coming out of our ears, and it burnt for about an hour afterwards.

And although the pair are not going near anything spicy in the near future, they would certainly recommend taking on a new adventure to help SNAP.

"Be creative," suggests Calum. "Seeing them come to life is a lot of fun!"



Zoe's success in the long run

SNAP parent, Zoe, was inspired to take on a virtual challenge to raise funds and awareness for SNAP and embarked on the famous Land's End to John O'Groats journey. Starting at the beginning of this year Zoe's determination has already seen her conquer most of Scotland with just 155 miles to go of her 874 mile goal...



rewarding and it has helped my overall wellness during lockdown. I am shocked I have reached way over 500 miles since January 1st. I cover 100 miles+ a month, all weathers and often low on energy, finding pockets between being mummy and work. I highly recommend using a virtual challenge app such as LEJOG or My Virtual Mission. You will be surprised who you meet and inspire on this journey and personally activate your inner strength/qualities you never realised you had."

And Zoe is planning to complete her virtual adventure with an extra flourish at the finish and then celebrate with an iconic Scottish song.

"My furthest run so far has been 12km although I am hoping to finish on a half marathon... again never done that before! I am going to celebrate finishing by dancing to The Proclaimers and then at some point booking to finally visit Scotland as a family."

"I was inspired to run for SNAP because I just wanted to help in any way I could," she said.

"Giving back to this uplifting charity as a thank you for all the support they have given my son and family since accessing the service this year.

"Because of SNAP I have been able to connect to other mums. My son is really happy with SNAP, the staff and activities are beyond anything I have experienced before."

Zoe came up with her challenge idea after her family's travel plans had been put on hold during lockdown.

"I came up with the target because I really wanted to visit Scotland with my family. Lockdown pushed that back....and back and back again...so I thought I'm going to virtually run it instead through 2021. A mixture of running or walking (huge relief as I am not a fast runner) although I am keeping my percentage of running higher (60/40) just because I am tough on myself.

And Zoe would 100 per cent recommend taking on a virtual challenge.

"It's great fun, physically hard but really

Visit our Virtual challenge page to view all 18 of our suggested challenges or to find out more about how we can support your idea for a challenge - www.snapcharity.org/get-involved/virtual-challenges/



Just like Zoe, travel the length of the United Kingdom for SNAP! This virtual challenge will cover almost 1,000 miles and will see you pass

some of the idyllic countryside the UK has to offer.



Visit the Eternal City and take in all it has to offer. On this challenge you'll pass the Vatican City, Colosseum, the Trevi Fountain and a number of other historical sites.



From the glamour of Hollywood Boulevard to the bright lights of Las Vegas. See the sights and cross the desert in this virtual challenge.

The Fun Walk Trust are once again encouraging families to take on a virtual walk of their choosing, anytime in September, to raise money for local charities. A bonus pot donated by local businesses adds to any money you raise. Last year we collectively clocked up enough miles to reach Lapland from The SNAP Centre - how far can we get this year with your help?

For further ways to get involved contact SNAP's Fundraising Team 01277 245345 fundraising@snapcharity.org

SNAP Fun Mud Run this October!

Nuclear Events, Kelvedon Hatch, Saturday morning, 23rd October 2021

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, this 5K Fun Mud Run will feature some of their well-known obstacles including the death slide and ziplines over water. Members of the SNAP Team will also be getting muddy.

See our website for more details - www.snapcharity.org/event/snap_mud_

EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENT: A fan of our Friday Facebook Live sessions with music therapist, Emily? Look out on our social media channels and supporter newsletters for details of a live concert... Sign-up to receive our supporter updates at www.snapcharity.org



Join us for a glamorous evening with welcome drink on arrival, three course meal, auction, raffle and entertainment - £70.00 per person. If you are interested in being notified of our tickets sales launch please email your interest to events@snapcharity.org



SNAP EVENTS

Support our fun-draising!



Contact events@snapcharity.org for more details.
www.snapcharity.org/get-involved/snap-events/
Facebook • Twitter • Instagram

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