



matters

Sharing news of SNAP's important work



"It's a lifeline -
a reminder we aren't alone"

SNAP cultivates a safe space to allow families to shine

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Local business, Service Certainty, support SNAP as their chosen charity

About Us



Partnering with Parents

SNAP is an Essex charity that helps families with children and young people who have any additional need or disability, and live under Essex County Council, Thurrock or Southend local authorities.

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 are available to families of children and young people aged 0 to 25.

At SNAP, we have a wide range of services - at the Centre, remotely and hybrid - to meet the needs of our 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
- Parent and Pre-School Children Sessions
- After-School and Holiday Sessions for Children and Young People
- Sibling Support

Scan me to find out more
information about SNAP!



SNAP contact information:

Helpline - 01277 211300 Fundraising - 01277 245345

Email - info@snapcharity.org
or familyteam@snapcharity.org

Website - www.snapcharity.org

The SNAP Centre, Pastoral Way, Warley,
Brentwood CM14 5WF

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Wales No. 03805837

Welcome

Welcome to our latest edition!

We've had an incredibly busy term here at SNAP. September saw the return of our annual Golf Day as well as the Fun Walk. Locally based company, Service Certainty, smashed SNAP Fun Walk records with their 20k walk, which you can read more about on page 7, and the lovely Louise Simpson and her team helped organise The SNAP Centre's cupboards – a small change that made a big difference.

In November, we participated in the Festival of Business with the Essex Chamber of Commerce, connecting us with Essex businesses, launched the Essex Disability Alliance which you can read more about on the next page, and we hosted the Essex Local Offer's SEND Roadshow at SNAP. We were also delighted to have Natalie Fernando, who delivers our Emotional Resilience course, work with the team. Her insight and encouragement are always so valuable – read more about what Natalie does on page 5.

Over the spring term, we have some new and exciting specialist parent talks including Preparing for Adulthood: Employment pathways for young people with SEND and a new Creative workshop with Create Yourself Calm. All the details are on page 6.

We are continuing to recruit volunteers. If you are interested in giving back to the local community, we would be delighted to hear from you. We have lots of flexible options, including regular volunteering as well as ad hoc opportunities. Finally, we have new events which will be announced soon, but in the meantime, why not join us at the annual Quiz or Beat the Wine Bluffs? See page 8 for more information about all the ways you can get involved.

Thank you again for being part of the SNAP community and please remember that SNAP is here for you and your family.

Warm regards

Karen

Karen Boath, CEO

SNAP in numbers

(End of 2025)

5,046

Families supported

487

New families
registered

3,427

Helpline calls

5,019

Helpline emails

7,225

Hours of children
services

943

Participants in
specialist talks &
workshops

Highlights

Essex Disability Alliance

We have joined forces with BOSP and Hamelin to create a new Essex-wide Disability Alliance.

The alliance has been established to strengthen support for people who are neurodivergent, have learning or physical disabilities, or live with life-limiting illnesses. By working together, we hope to provide a stronger network of care, ensuring people receive the right support when they need it and giving disabled people and their families clearer guidance through what can often be a complex system.



Find out more at snapcharity.org/essex-disability-alliance

Pictured above: Jodie Connelly (CEO of BOSP), Ru Watkins (CEO of Hamelin) and Karen Boath (CEO of SNAP).

A spotted friend

Mavis the therapy dog from Spotty Paws Company joined us in a Marvellous Me session in November. She brought joy, calm, and comfort to the group. Many of our young people who attend suffer with anxiety or other mental health conditions so having a furry friend present brought solace and peace and an experience they could all share together.

Huge thanks to Howe Chartered Surveyors for funding Mavis and to Natasha for coming along to the session.



Ain't no mountain high enough

Four students from Anglo European — Till, Ben, Herbie and George — took on the exhilarating challenge of climbing Mount Snowdon. They tackled Wales' highest peak standing at 3,560 ft, to raise money for SNAP, the school's chosen charity.

At just 15 years old, they were determined to push themselves physically and mentally while supporting a cause close to their hearts.

They raised an incredible £2,485 - well done boys!



Roadshow success

In November, we had the privilege of hosting Essex Local Offer's South Essex SEND Roadshow at The SNAP Centre.

Seventeen organisations joined us from across the county to offer support and advice to parents and carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Be your-elf!

In December 2024, supporter, Kay, dressed as an elf every day from 1st to 25th December to raise funds for SNAP. This Christmas, she formed The Ministry of Elf to raise even more money, and awareness, of SNAP. She also got the team at Brentwood's Chicken & Frog Bookshop involved along with family, friends and colleagues. The SNAP Team also joined in at our preschool Festive Fun session alongside Brentwood Rotary Club's Father Christmas. Thank you so much to everyone who got involved!



Family Support Advisers Natalie & Rachel with Father Christmas and Head Elf Kay

Christmas Extravaganza

We ended the year with our festive showcase back at Brentwood Theatre with our Parent Choir, Junior Choir and Drama Club.

It was such a heartwarming evening with many tears shed over the courage and talent of our performers and how far many of our young people have come from first joining the afterschool clubs.

A massive thank you to our incredible sponsors - Blue Serif, Lady Penelope Wines, Tees and Baker Labels. This event could not have happened without you and your love for SNAP.

A huge thank you to Brentwood Theatre for hosting us again. We are already excited for the next show!



Members of SNAP's Junior Choir in action

Follow us on social media:



@snapcharity



@snap_charity

Adapting and using visual supports

Visuals are often an essential part of our lives as adults, but rarely do we consider them as “visual supports”. If you have ever used a calendar, written a shopping list, or stuck up a Post-it note, then you have used visuals!

Using visuals with your child, and then potentially progressing to teaching your child or young person how to create and use their own visual supports, is a brilliant life skill that can be started at any age. However you will need to first think about how to adapt them for your child’s specific needs by considering how the visuals are presented and what their purpose is.

What can we use visual supports for?

Communication

- Requesting wants & needs
- Expressing feelings
- Making choices

Preparation

- Timetables
- Transitions
- For new places or experiences

Independence

- Routines
- Instructions
- Checklists
- Making choices

For visuals to work successfully, the person using the visuals must first fully understand the context behind what they represent. Next we need to use the visuals repeatedly in context. For example showing a bath visual before bath time to prepare the child, then again when getting into the bath to reinforce the context and making sure to use this for every bath time, not just every so often. Having consistent visuals between different environments can be very beneficial such as at home and at school.

Level of Abstractness

For visuals to be really effective we need to make sure they are something that the child or young person is able to engage with and understand the visual’s connection to what it represents. Some children will need visuals to be very literal and concrete whereas others will be able to connect more abstract visuals, such as symbols, to their real world counterpart.

Visual Supports at SNAP

Using visuals has always been a key part of our sessions at The SNAP Centre. We regularly use visuals to help with transitions, such as timers to show when the session or activity is ending. We can also send visuals of The SNAP Centre to families upon request to help them prepare their child before they attend.



Example: Visuals for brushing teeth



Level 1



Level 2



Level 3

Below is a list of different ways to present a visual support that increase in abstractness.

Level 1

Physical objects or literal context photos

- Use a literal physical object – e.g. showing a toothbrush to prepare for brushing their teeth.
- Use a connected physical object – e.g. show a pencil to represent going to school
- Use miniatures or small toys – you can buy many items that are “doll house miniatures” or toy items. e.g. a toy car to represent driving somewhere
- Use photographs or videos of the real-life object or place – e.g. a photo of their bed to represent going to sleep
- Use a timer to show the passing of time for transitions

Level 2

Use images that symbolise a real life object/place/feeling photos

- Use stock photos of real life objects/places/people but that aren’t of the physical one they are used to. e.g. a stock photograph of a playground that represents going to the park
- Use clipart, drawings, cartoons
- Use literal symbols/line drawings e.g. stick figures or a music note to represent listening to music

Level 3

Abstract visuals

- Written words
- Abstract symbols such as shapes
- Colour coding

If you would like some advice or suggestions on how you could put together or introduce visuals for your child please contact our Family Team on 01277 211300 or email familyteam@snapcharity.org

Speaking up with Confidence

Natalie Fernando is a Therapeutic Coach and a qualified family mediator with over 20 years of experience. She is also a SEND mum and blogger of Better to be Different.

Natalie facilitates our four-week Emotional Resilience course and recently hosted her workshop, 'The Art of Assertiveness: Speaking Up with Confidence'. This is part of our Specialist Talks calendar for SNAP parents, carers and professionals. Find out about upcoming talks and webinars on page 6.



We asked Natalie to share some tips from her assertiveness workshop.

Back in October, I hosted my 'Speaking Up with Confidence' workshop designed to help parents find their voice in the chaos.

Never did I truly understand the importance of speaking up with confidence and clarity until I had my son who has SEND.

I'd considered myself a good communicator, but nothing prepared me for the emotional weight of navigating endless professionals, underfunded services, and the constant need to advocate for my child. It was only then that I realised the power of practising what I've long preached: assertive, confident, emotionally aware communication.

Whether an EHCP review, a paediatric appointment, school meeting or the dreaded transport

conversation, the ability to assert yourself directly, and honestly, respectfully while respecting the rights of others is not a luxury, it's a lifeline.

"This isn't about who shouts loudest gets heard. It's about speaking more clearly, from a place of self-respect, emotional regulation, and purpose."

This workshop is not just about helping individuals gain an awareness of how to talk and act assertively, it's also about understanding how they may be showing up in meetings during moments of vulnerability. It is not uncommon to resort to behaviours that protect us but learning to shift

from these typical unconscious reactive patterns to grounded adult responses is key.

Understanding we are likely to be vulnerable, we are after all, dealing with one of the most important aspects of our lives, it's natural to feel overwhelmed and either shut down or speak in ways we may later regret. This workshop helps parents recognise those patterns and replace them with tools that support clarity, calm, and confidence.

If you've ever left a meeting wishing you'd said more, or perhaps less, you are not alone, your voice matters. Assertiveness may not be a skill we were ever taught, but it's never too late to learn how to advocate not just for your young people, but for yourself.

Natalie's Top 3 Tips for Speaking up with Confidence:

1. Remember your why

Don't get lost in the battle to win. Stay focused on your goal. Assertive communication is open to compromise, sometimes giving a little helps you gain a lot.

2. Ask for a pause

It's okay to say, "Can we take a moment?" or "Would it be okay to pause while I gather my thoughts?" You're allowed space to process. Don't be afraid to ask.

3. Write things down

Our memories are shaped by emotion and bias from the moment we take in information. That's why we often remember things differently from one another. Taking notes helps you stay grounded, accurate, and reflective.



Find more SNAP resources on our website:
www.snapcharity.org/informing-you-online



January to April 2026

SNAP organises a unique and diverse calendar of Specialist Talks, Courses, Webinars and Coffee Mornings for parents and professionals.

For more information, visit the SNAP website - www.snapcharity.org/training.

Please email info@snapcharity.org to book or register your interest for our Spring Term talks.

We are extremely grateful to the Essex County Council Carers Community Fund for funding our Brighter Futures and Emotional Resilience courses.



Essex County Council

BRIGHTER FUTURES

SOLD OUT
Look out for future dates

Course

Starts Wednesday 7th January
For 6 sessions - list of dates on our website
The SNAP Centre - 10am to 12noon
£60 per SNAP registered parent

Led by Kathryn Miller of Clouds and Rainbows, this course is for parents of primary-aged neurodivergent (ADHD/Autistic) children.

She will cover topics such as understanding neurodiversity, sensory processing, emotional regulation and behaviour as communication.

Preparing for Adulthood: Employment pathways for young people with SEND

Wednesday 14th January
Online via Zoom - 7.00pm to 9.00pm
Free of charge

This webinar is designed to empower parents and carers with practical knowledge and strategies to help their young person build confidence, skills, and independence as they move toward the world of work. This will be hosted by Essex County Council's Preparing for Adulthood Targeted Employment team.

Look and Feel Your Best Self

Tuesday 27th January at The SNAP Centre
10.00am to 2.00pm - please bring lunch

Do you feel like having a change this New Year? The Look and Feel Your Best Self workshops will aim to help you rediscover your personal style and give you confidence in skincare routines, simple and quick makeup looks and knowing what colours suit you best when putting together outfits.

Creative workshop with Create Yourself Calm

Wednesday 28th January
The SNAP Centre - 10.00am to 12noon
Free of charge

Create Yourself Calm is hosting a workshop combining art and creativity with wellbeing, mindfulness and self-care tips.

Coffee mornings with Occupational Therapists

Wednesday 28th January & Wednesday 25th March
The SNAP Centre - 10.30am to 12noon
£5 per SNAP registered parent

Join Occupational Therapists Aaron and Jenne of The Great Little OT Practice, Maldon, who will be on hand to answer any questions, give some informal advice and help wherever they can with anything OT-related.

Moving To Secondary School

Wednesday 4th March & Wednesday 11th March
The SNAP Centre - 9.30am to 12noon
£20 per SNAP registered parent

SNAP's Information Manager, Kate, will be hosting this two-session in-person workshop. It will give parents lots of practical ideas to help with the transition and changes associated with the move into secondary school for children with additional needs. It is suitable for parents who have children with additional needs in years 4 to 6 in a mainstream school.

Chat & Share Session for Neurodivergent parents

Wednesday 18th March
The SNAP Centre - 10.00am to 12noon
£5 per SNAP registered parent

This session is specifically for parents who are (or think they may be) neurodivergent themselves. No formal diagnosis is required to attend. It will be an opportunity to ask questions, share experiences and meet other neurodivergent parents in a relaxed environment. We will also be joined by Jenefer from Your ADHD Home.

EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE

For Parents of Children with SEND

A four week course with Natalie Fernando

Course ONLINE

Starts Wednesday 4th March
Every Wednesday for 4 weeks
Online via Zoom - 10.00am to 12noon
£40 per SNAP registered parent

Led by therapeutic coach, Natalie Fernando, this course aims to help parents' resilience in navigating life with children with SEND.

She will cover topics such as understanding your emotions, building your resilience, effective communication with others and self-care.

Teamwork, triumphs, and tireless effort

Local company, Service Certainty, have been working extremely hard over the past year to raise funds and awareness for SNAP as their chosen charity.

We chatted to Business Development Manager, Connor, about why they chose SNAP and the challenges they took on as a team, raising over £4,000 and they aren't finished yet.

Connor shares, "We wanted to support a local charity where we could make a meaningful difference and feel really connected to the cause. Fundraising Manager, Sara, met the team, explained what SNAP does and the impact the charity has on families who need their support. The visit left a lasting impression on the whole office and made the decision an absolute no brainer for us. Also, getting to see the SNAP facilities and exactly where the money would be going to further solidified the decision for us too."

"It was actually after we'd made the decision that I found out that my parents attended some SNAP events through some of their friends, and my aunt had called SNAP's helpline in the past for advice!"

Prepare to be challenged

Connor and Managing Director, Richard, led the charge on the first challenge, a triathlon.

"It was actually something that we had been talking about doing for a while, so when the opportunity came up to link it to fundraising for SNAP, it was a pretty easy decision. It was great fun, and definitely a challenge! We wanted to do something that would really push us out of our comfort zones. The training was pretty intense and even a bit competitive at times. We were comparing swim times, run paces, and bike distances every



Triathlon team (left to right): Richard, Liam, Justina and Connor

week. It was a great motivator and we all actually lost a bit of weight in the training process! It ended up being such a brilliant day; we all did better than expected and loved the atmosphere."

"The 20km walk was a completely different kind of challenge, and one that involved the whole team. We wanted to choose something that everyone could get involved in, but that would still be a genuine challenge people would want to sponsor. The walk took place just two weeks after the triathlon, so those of us who did both used the triathlon training to also prepare for the walk. For those who focused on the walk alone, the preparation was brilliant. Lots of evening and weekend walks squeezed in around busy work and family lives. It was tough going at points, but we trained together, supported each other throughout, and had a real sense of camaraderie on the day. It was really nice seeing everyone commit to it in their own way and give 100%."

"I honestly loved both events, and I think I can safely say the whole team feels the same. The sense of satisfaction at the end of each challenge was immense, and seeing how much we managed to raise for SNAP gave us all a real sense of pride. The effort, the teamwork, and the end result all came together to make it something genuinely rewarding for everyone involved."

Community impact

"I'm very lucky to have a great network of friends and family who were all really supportive from the start. I shared both events on social media to raise awareness, but most of my donations came



Walkers (left to right): Connor, Richard, Syed, Liam and Natasha

from people close to me who saw the effort going in and wanted to contribute. A big factor for me was that, being largely Brentwood based, many of them already knew about SNAP and the great work you do locally, which made it easier to explain why the charity mattered to us."

"If I had one tip for anyone fundraising, it would be to make it personal. Let people see the effort, the training, and the reason behind it."

Future thinking

"Nothing's confirmed just yet, but we're already talking about what comes next! I think it's likely we'll stick with a similar format, one challenge that leans towards the athletic side of things, and one that takes the whole team a step beyond the 20km walk (pardon the pun). Whatever we choose, we're committed to keeping up the momentum and continuing to support SNAP as best we can."

If your company or business is interested in supporting SNAP, please contact our Fundraising Team on fundraising@snapcharity.org or 01277 245345.

Found out more about Service Certainty here: www.servicecertainty.co.uk

Fundraising

Dates for your diary

Friday 30 January
7pm for a
7:30pm start
£10 per person

Quiz Night

The Nightingale
Centre
Pastoral Way,
Warley,
CM14 5GB

From SNAP
with love
£80
per
person

2026 SNAP Charity Ball

Saturday 7 March 2026
Stock Brook Manor, Billericay

ROTARY CLUB OF BRENTWOOD À BECKET

QUIZ NIGHT

SATURDAY 7 MARCH
AT ANGLO EUROPEAN SCHOOL, INGATESTONE, CM4 0DJ
YOU CAN ENTER BY PHONING THE ROTARY ON 07739 277 998

Beat The
Wine Bluffers

Friday 24 April 2026
Shenfield Parish Hall
60 Hutton Road, CM15 8LB

From 8.00am

TRY A TRI

BRENTWOOD
Sunday 28 June

Headline sponsor
Bakers
LABELS

Raising funds for

More information and booking can be found at snapcharity.org/events.
Scan the QR code to the left to go straight to the Events webpage.

Get all the latest updates by
subscribing to supporter emails
snapcharity.org/subscribe.

or scan this QR code with your
phone camera.

VOLUNTEER WITH US!

Get in touch if you are:

- * Enthusiastic *
- * Reliable *
- * Committed *

Support
regularly
or on an
ad-hoc
basis



SUPPORT WITH:

- > SERVICES
- > COMMUNITY EVENTS
- > COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

Scan the
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to find
out more



For more information and to register your
interest, please visit:
www.snapcharity.org/volunteer

200+
Club
Lottery

£25
per year
by standing
order

Could you be our
next winner?

Make a difference to the families
we support and your good deed
could reward you too...

SNAP's next draw year begins in April
with draws taking place in...

May // August // **November** // February

BUMPER DRAW

Find out more by visiting
www.snapcharity.org/zoo-club

or scan the QR code with your phone camera