

A Year in the Life of the DCF 2023/24



April 2023

Fundraising

The month kicked off with a brilliant fundraiser from supporters Georgie and Oscar who completed a 'Dino-Dash' 100 mile hike along the Jurassic coast line, wearing inflatable dinosaur costumes! The trek took 9 days and the pair gave lots of local media interviews along the way raising awareness for The DCF and a fantastic £1358! Our Easter Egg campaign was a success with hundreds of Easter Eggs being donated by local businesses including David Lloyd Leisure, Reed Recruitment and Heart and Soul Studio.



Accessible for All

We had a busy programme of activities over the 2 week easter break with all of our groups holding Easter parties. Something Special, Little Stars and The Saturday Club all had visits from the Easter Bunny and 50 children attended a special Easter themed party in Burton, Christchurch. Another 2 groups of children were able to attend adapted cycling sessions at Pedall New Forest, these sessions are becoming more and more popular and are a wonderful addition to our programme.



Our private skate session at Prevail Jnr was our largest yet with 40 children attending. Ex-competitive BMX rider Steff Cooke came along to volunteer and brought along a special BMX for children to try.

Once the holidays were over the team had a big equipment sort out and transferred all the Accessible for All equipment from our store at Pokesdown to a storage shed in Christchurch.



Parent/Carer Wellbeing

As part of our drive to support the mental health of our parents and carers we launched our 'coffee and craft' sessions at the Boscombe Engagement Hub. Parents were encouraged to come along and take part in a planned craft activity and mix with other parents for an informal chat with hot drinks and cake provided. Our first session was really well attended, and parents were able to make sensory cushion covers for their children. These sessions will be held once a month.

Our Yoga sessions are continuing this year with one of our parents organising these weekly sessions that parents can attend for a small donation.

Our trustee Avril is also running our weekly sewing club from her home in Ferndown, where parents can bring along their own projects to work on together.

Our aim with all of these sessions is to encourage parents to take a little time while their children are at school to do something for themselves. We find that a lot of parent/carers feel isolated and lack in confidence so by providing activities for them during school hours, they are coming together, sharing experiences and supporting each other while hopefully having some fun.



Other News

We were extremely grateful to be included in The Bournemouth Writing Festival this year with a special reading of 'We're going on a bear hunt' performed by award-winning children's author Ali Sparks and included a star appearance of our very own Dorsey Bear. The event raised awareness and funds for us, and our families were given complimentary tickets to attend.



We were thrilled to be able to invite the lovely Kitty Johnston to be a Youth Ambassador for the charity. Kitty is 14yrs old and has been supported by us for many years as she has not one but two, rare syndromes that affect her health and mobility. Kitty is always giving back through various fundraisers for us; most recently being sponsored to have her long hair cut short. She is such a positive role model, and we were so happy to welcome her on board.

We were happy to be able to come to the aid of one of our families on their wedding day this month as parents Danni and Sam Stevenson tied the knot. Unfortunately, the wedding venue had no suitable, accessible changing facilities that their son Noah could use on the big day, so we were asked to provide a solution. We were able to come to the rescue and set up our changing bench and mobile hoist so that carers were able to care for Noah properly throughout the day, taking away some of the stress for the family who were free to enjoy the day.



May 2023

Fundraising

At the end of April, local man Daniel Pearson ran a whopping 106k Ultramarathon. He managed to raise an amazing £1,400 for Louis, the little boy we have been supporting who's Mum sadly passed away at Christmas.

Carolyn Best opened up her lovely garden to the public, taking donations she raised £300.

One of our lovely mum's made an amazing celebration cake and donated it to us. We held a prize draw and raised several hundred pounds.

Our Accessible for All coordinator, Gemma, took to the microphone for her first ever solo gig at the Thomas Tripp in Christchurch. The gig was a great success, and with ticket sales and donations, raised over £800.

We have a great relationship with several local supermarkets including Tesco Fleetsbridge who donated £500 to our Little Stars stay and play group for the purchase of new sensory equipment.



May saw another half term break so we had lots going on this month. We held our first Wet Wheels trips exclusively for the PMLD families that attend our Saturday Club. 6 boat trips left Lymington Harbour over the bank holiday weekend, accommodating 3 wheelchair users and their families on each trip.

It was the Kings coronation this month and all of our groups held their own celebrations, the biggest of those was the 'Big Lunch' held by our Little Stars stay and play group. Children all came along dressed in red white and blue, and had a lot of fun. The food for this event was donated by Fleetsbridge Tesco.

As the weather warmed up we held our first Pedall cycling session for this year. These sessions are growing in popularity as word spreads and we are delighted to be able to give so many children and their parents this opportunity to cycle round such a beautiful part of the new forest.

Mad 4 Animals put on a show for us with over 40 children attending and getting 'up close and personal' with several creepy crawlies.

May saw the re-launch of our monthly soft play sessions at new venue – Ringwood Leisure Centre. Soft play has always been one of our most popular activities so we were thrilled to finally find a cost effective venue, since our last venue closed it's doors in December last year.



Parent/Carer Wellbeing

Our weekly paddle boarding sessions started at the beginning of May and several parents took to the rivers around Christchurch on stand-up boards and kayaks. We have a great relationship with The Sup Store in Christchurch who give us a reduced rate on equipment hire making the sessions more accessible for our families. Weekly yoga and sewing sessions continued as well as our new coffee and craft morning.



Other News

The founders and organisers of our PMLD Saturday Club, trustee Avril Jackson and Paula Strange were recognised for all their hard work and presented with a BCP Council Chairmans award. We are so proud of them and so thankful for all they do for our most vulnerable children.



June 2023

Fundraising

Local Freemason's from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole invited us to attend a special charity evening where we were presented with a cheque for £200.

Our friends at Asda, Bournemouth popped into The Treehouse to deliver a cheque for £400.

Our Little Stars stay and play group held a fundraiser with all the children taking part in jumping, walking, bouncing, skipping, sliding activities that raised £700 for supplies.



Accessible for All

June was a month of planning and preparation for our team with so much coming up in July and August. Our monthly Prevail Skate and Soft play sessions took place as usual as well as our Co-Motion dance class. Our Saturday club and Stay and Play groups all hosted weekly sessions throughout the month. Our under 5's groups continued to provide great group sessions with both Little Stars and something special hosting forest school sessions alongside their regular stay and play groups.



Other News

Little Tommy has been an absolute star recently attending several events, meeting our supporters and taking their money! He's been doing such a good job that we decided to make him an ambassador.



July 2023

Fundraising

July was a big month for us with two big festival events to prepare for and attend. Our first was Bournefree Pride festival. It was a very hot weekend with quite a bit of rain but the team had fun and we had an army of volunteers manning our stall throughout the weekend.

Then at the end of July we were out again at the new Christchurch Music Festival. We had the same set-up at both events, our sensory bell tent and tombola stall. The weather was not on our side at the Christchurch event, with Saturday being a complete disaster for the festival organisers but the sun came out for the final day and we walked away with over £1300 from both events combined, which covered the cost of at least 2 x special needs buggies for our families.

Events like these are really good for us as they raise awareness of the charity, they're a great fundraising opportunity and we get to provide a fun sensory zone for lots of local children while having some fun, lets do it all again next year!



Accessible for All

July was a great month for our Accessible for All team who organised our second residential activity weekend at Avon Tyrell outdoor activity centre. 10 disabled children and their families were able to attend the weekend with 7 staying overnight in the accessible lodge. Activities provided this year were archery, high ropes and canoeing and everyone that attended had an amazing time.



As the summer holidays kicked off, we started with a splash with Wet Wheels boat trips. We organised 9 trips in total over 4 days. Unfortunately, the weather wasn't on our side and high winds meant that we had to cancel a whole days sailing and shift everyone around onto different boats. At the end of the 4 days, everyone who'd booked a boat trip, had one, and the staff and crew were exhausted!



The Saturday Club were busy throughout July with sessions that included planting flowers, special yoga and they had a visit from The Play Prescription.

Other News

We have been working a lot with The Play Prescription, an amazing service by the wonderful Sue Keenan. Sue has been able to work with our most vulnerable children, those are often too poorly to attend school and those who's medical conditions make accessing play extra difficult. As well as working with individuals, Sue made a special appearance at our Treehouse Store, and brought her bag of tricks in for a special free play session. In between playing, she was on hand to offer advice and guidance in all things 'play'.



August 2023

Fundraising

On August bank holiday we attended the Bournemouth Plane Pull with several teams entering for us raising over £2000.



Accessible for All

The summer holidays were really successful for us and we were able to provide lots of activities that got families outside trying new things. As well as organising 3 separate pedal cycle sessions across the month, we were able to work with an amazing Golf Coach at Ferndown Forest Golf Club, who gave up his time to give 13 children a special introduction to the sport. These special sessions were so well received with children able to use the driving range under his expert guidance.



Another great activity day was held at Southbourne Tennis Club with professional coaches on hand to give everyone the chance to practice their ball skills.

The end of the summer saw another chance for our families to get back onto the water with another wave of Wet Wheels boat trips, this time, we were pirates! Two accessible travelling side by side, firing water cannons across the waves to each other. Pirates is extremely wet and a really fun, unique experience for our families. We ran 8 pirate trips, with 20 people out on the water each time over 2 full days. It's a mission to organise but we love seeing everyone enjoying it.



Parent/Carer Wellbeing

Our team member Rhian Wootten has been training to take part in the New Forest Marathon. To help keep her motivated she has set up a running group, inviting parents and carers to get together on Friday evenings and go for a run. This is a welcome addition to our programme of activities aimed at keeping parents healthy and communicating.



Other News

Our sensory bell tent got another outing at the end of August as we were asked to attend the RNLI lifeboat fun day. We spent the morning at Tuckton Tea Rooms providing a sensory escape from the hot sun while raising awareness.

September 2023

Fundraising

Rhian Wootten Completed the New Forest Marathon in memory of one of our parents, Lucy, who sadly passed away last December. After months of training, she raised an amazing £1120 for DCF Little Stars.

We had the opportunity to set up a book stall at Tesco's, Ferndown so Line went along with some books and was surprised to raise several hundred pounds.



Accessible for All

After the busy school holidays, September was a quieter month for activities, but we saw the return of our monthly Soft Play, Co-Motion and Skate sessions. All of these sessions were really well attended with lots of new families coming along which was great.

It's been a different story behind the scenes though as the team have been busy securing activities and venues in time for the October half term.



Our outreach team have been busy reconnecting with families this month and getting out in the community. Line attended two Bournemouth and Poole college events where she was able to raise awareness of the DCF and try and drum up some volunteers.



The PMLD Saturday club held a special day of activities at Avon Tyrrell. Some families stayed overnight in the lodge with many others joining for a day of adventurous fun!

Parent/Carer Wellbeing

With most of the kids back in school we were able to get back onto the water for some paddle boarding in Christchurch and we had our first Dad out on the water which was great as these sessions are for all parents and carers. He was also the first of our parents to fall in though which was fun!



All our other wellness activities were back too, yoga, coffee & craft and sewing groups all getting together. The sewing group made a start on some bunting that we want to use to decorate our bell tent and kidzone at next year's Christchurch Music Festival.

Other News

We've been celebrating two of our young people this month as our Ambassador Adam Sevenoaks completed his Duke of Edinburgh Award which is a massive achievement and Ethan Burney, one of our young football coaches completed his U16 Fifa Referee course.

A local business, Ultra Energy in Ferndown got in touch as they were having an office refurb. They were able to donate a full set of furniture for Gemma organises all our Accessible for All activities from her shed at home.



October 2023

Fundraising

One of the wonderful children we support, Layton Barker took on the Bournemouth 1k fun run using his race runner and raised £240 for us. Layton attends a lot of our accessible for all activities and the Poole race runner club that we support so wanted to give something back.



We put a 'shout out' on social media asking for sponsorship of our pantomime shows in January and were thrilled when BAE Systems got in touch offered to cover the costs of these for us.

Accessible for All

It's been a busy month for the team with activities throughout half term. We were really grateful to have the opportunity to work with The Flying Seagul Project who performed an interactive circus themed show for an audience of 60.

We hosted one of our increasingly popular, themed parties at Burton Community Centre for Halloween with entertainment by Jamie Jigsaw.



Our sports offering was another great session at Ferndown Forest driving range with professional golf coach, DeeJ. We're really excited to be working with DeeJ as he has a wealth of experience working with disabled children and adults with mobility problems, the children that attend his sessions really love trying something they never thought would be possible.



Saturday club had a musical month with entertainment provided by Debbie a local accordion player. All the children got involved playing instruments and making lots of noise.

The outreach team have been busy this month. Line has recently produced a full inventory of the equipment we have in storage so she can share that with the new families she sees regularly. While sorting through everything, some items were found that we couldn't re-home.

Although they were in perfect order, we couldn't pass them on to another child as we were unable to find the details of the original manufacturer, making it hard to do any maintenance on the equipment. Instead of letting it all go to waste in landfill, we were able to donate a lot of equipment to the local Ukrainian relief charity who have a direct link with an orphanage in Ukraine that houses disabled children. They were thrilled to receive items that are impossible to obtain over there during the conflict.

Parent/Carer Wellbeing

Our coffee and craft morning had everyone thinking about Christmas this month as the parents got together and made Christmas decorations.

Our weekly sewing club and yoga sessions continue to grow as well as Rhian's new evening running club.



Other News

October has been a month of planning and organising future events so not too much to report. Behind the scenes there's been a hive of activity with our annual winter ball coming up at the start of November there's been lots of meetings and running around collecting auction prizes etc... Adrienne has had a busy month meeting various companies and gaining support for the Christmas season.

November 2023

Fundraising

We kicked off the month with our Winter Wonderland ball held at The Marsham Court Hotel. This year we collaborated with Enable My Trip who helped organise the auction. The whole event raised £8,600 that will be divided between the two of us.



We produced a new DCF Wish List document that we have sent to all our supporters and any new businesses thinking of supporting us. The list has been really well received with several organisations offering make monthly donations to cover some of our ongoing Accessible for All costs.

We were thankful to Tesco in Ferndown who presented us with a cheque for £1372 that was raised from their community bookstore.



We launched a justgiving campaign to drum up support and funds for the 8 Christmas parties we are planning for December, this campaign raised over £300 that will go towards food, entertainment, and sensory activities for the children.

Our wonderful ambassador Chris Billham-Smith is supporting our Christmas campaign by sponsoring two of our parties.



Gifts are already arriving for the children this Christmas with Dunelm delivering a van load of new donated toys for our Christmas gift appeal. All the gifts we receive will be distributed throughout our events in December.

Accessible for All

Our outreach team, Line and Rhean have been busy supporting new families this month and both attended the 'Carers Rights Day' in Wimborne to represent The DCF and share a little about what we do while also gathering useful information about other local services that they can pass on to the families they're working with.

There were no school holidays this month but our regular soft play and prevail skate park hire were both well attended.

Lots of planning went on behind the scenes ready for all the parties coming up in December.

It's been another great month for our Saturday Club who welcomed KAD (Kids Around Dogs) who brought a lovely dog along to meet the children.



Parent/Carer Wellbeing

We introduced a new activity to our wellness programme this month – cold water dipping! There is a lot of talk about the mental and physical health benefits of cold-water swimming so we thought this would be a great new addition to our programme. Under the guidance of local open water swimming champion, Millie Shires, who runs Seashore Swimming, we have been able to invite parents and carers to The Cumberland Hotel where we can use their swimming pool. A group of very brave Mum's braved the cold water and all said that despite the discomfort, they loved the personal challenge and the way that everyone supported and encouraged each other.



December 2023

Fundraising

We were thrilled to be the chosen charity to kick start the Christchurch Living Advent Calendar on 1st Dec in Saxon Square. The Rock Choir provided the music and over 100 people joined us to celebrate the start of advent, the event raised a fair amount from donations on the night.

Ludo Lounge in Southbourne went 'all out' to raise funds for us throughout December, holding a name the bear competition and inviting customers to leave donated items for our charity stores with them.

4Com held a week of Christmas theme fundraisers including a quiz, gingerbread house competition and a Christmas fayre. Proceeds from all their activities came to £1219 which they donated to us!

A family we support from Runton Rd decided to light up their house for Christmas, taking donations and raising over £600.



Accessible for All

What a month! With 8 parties across all of our groups, December was certainly a busy one. As well as our monthly skate park and soft play hire, all the teams worked really hard to bring a little bit of Christmas magic to the children.

Saturday Club hosted their own xmas party with a 'Strictly Come Dancing' theme.

Little Stars and Something Special both hosted Xmas parties as well as their regular weekly sessions. Sadly we said goodbye to Nicola who has left Little Stars to concentrate on her teaching career, but has handed over the reigns to Rhian who has been working alongside Nicola during her role as family liaison.

Line and Rhian continue to work with vulnerable families, in particular those that have children under 5. They are actively seeking out other local support and engaging with other services to ensure that these families are accessing all that is available to them.



Parent/Carer Wellbeing

Our new cold-water sessions have really been greatly received. Although it's a small group of around 6 parents that have attended, the feedback has been so positive, with those that come along really enjoying it and grateful for the opportunity. We hope to grow this new activity in the new year.

Our coffee and craft group got together at the start of the month and produced some great watercolour Christmas cards. We have been informed by the Boscombe Hub where we've been hosting this session that they can no longer accommodate us so the search is on for a new venue so we can re-start this lovely group in January.



January 2024

Fundraising

January was all about giving thanks as Adrienne and Gemma both hit the road delivering lovely posters to all those who'd shown their support in 2023. They visited various businesses, including Dunelm, David Lloyd Poole, and Hoburne in Weymouth.

We also received donations from The Bell pub and the Iford Bridge Tavern who both held Christmas fundraising events.



Accessible for All

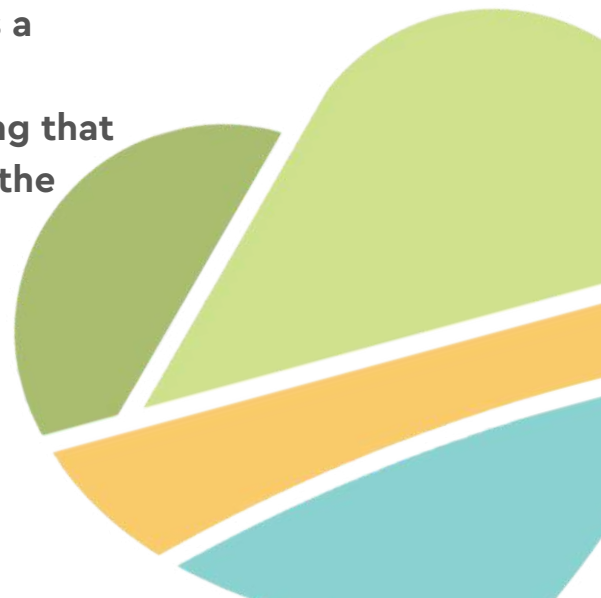
January was a fairly quiet month, but we kicked off the year with not one, but two panto performances from The Treehouse Theatre. Exclusive shows were held back-to-back in both Christchurch and Poole (for our Saturday Club) and our supporters from BAE who sponsored them were on hand to make the teas.



Forest school was open as usual throughout January and Line has teamed up with the local library in Wimborne who want to hold weekly SEN story sessions. Line has adjusted the times of the Forest School Sessions so that families can attend the outdoor play session and then all head to the library together for a story and chat.

Line has been continuing to work with our new families, helping some with their DLA claims and finding equipment for others.

Rhian has been working closely with a family who has a child that refuses to leave the house. The child has developed a real connection with Rhi and she is hoping that with support they can encourage him out to some of the groups.



Parent/Carer Wellbeing

Our regular parent groups were all back up and running as soon as the kids were back to school, the ladies were back in the cold water with Millie, Yoga was back, weekly with Claire and Avril once again opened her home up to our sewing club. With a new venue needed for our coffee and craft group, we were invited to host a session at The Ludo Lounge, Southbourne who provided a complimentary drink to all our Mums that attended.



Other News

We have started working a local psychotherapy provider – Untapped Art Therapy, who are able to provide group art therapy sessions for vulnerable children. Gemma went to Poole Lighthouse to collect meters and meters of handmade bunting from a lovely craft and natter group. The group answered an earlier request from us for bunting to decorate our bell tent and Kidzone at the XChurch Music Festival in July.

February 2024

Fundraising

Our Big Bear Day was held at the start of the month with 6 local schools getting involved, holding bear themed fundraising events. Dorsey bear did the rounds and visited 3 participating schools to show our appreciation and meet some of the children taking part. The day was a great success, raising approximately £2000 for our Accessible for All programme. All schools that took part said they looked forward to doing it again, we hope to make this an annual event.

One of our supporters, Adelaide West, held a birthday bash at Chaplins Bar and asked for donations instead of gifts, raising enough money to cover the cost of 8 Absolute Music Sessions for our PMLD children.



Accessible for All

With half term in February, we provided extra activities for the children including an exclusive 'Get Up and Bounce', bouncy castle event and Train master session. As well as our usual soft play and skate park hire, February was a really busy month with all sessions really well attended.

Our Saturday Club held some fab sessions this month with Keren from Allow Me to Be Me providing a really magical sensory session for the children and young people.

As well as their ongoing work supporting families, all of our Accessible for All team attended a day of paediatric first aid training.



Other News

There has been lots going on behind the scenes this month as we put together an in-depth report of all of the services we are currently providing and started to reflect on the achievements of the past year.

The team were left a little rocked by the news of another local organisations expansion plans so we put our heads together and came up with our own strategy to move the charity forward by finding a venue of our own that we could host all of our small group and parent support services in. The hunt is on for a suitable space!



March 2024

Fundraising

The wonderful team at Steele Raymond LLP took part in a 'Splash for Cash' event, braving the sea in freezing temperatures to raise a fab £696 for us. Charity partners Ferndown Golf Club invited us to attend a special event where they presented us with a cheque for £10,375 to be used for our Accessible for All programme.



Accessible for All

Invitations went out for this years Avon Tyrrell residential. Another 10 children and their families are now lined up to attend the weekend and planning is underway to make it every bit as memorable as the past years.

We were back at the Prevail Jnr's this month for the first of this year's exclusive skate sessions. Over 30 children turned up to ride the ramps on various bikes, scooters, trikes, and wheelchairs.

There has been lots of planning ahead this month with dates confirmed for all our Pedall sessions and Easter events.

Little Stars and Something Special are both running successfully, and word is spreading among the early year's community with lots of new members being referred to us by local health visitors. We've welcomed over 20 new families already this year, taking our membership to over 570.

Line has been busy this month running Forest School and moving equipment around to various families. She also attended Victoria Education Centre with a family who were viewing the special school for the first time and wanted some support.



Parent/Carer Wellbeing

Our swim group were unable to meet this month due to our instructor being unwell, but our sewing group and weekly yoga sessions continue and are well attended.

We were contacted by Pebble Lodge (an in-patient unit for children with severe mental illness) who have asked if their parents would be able to come along to some of our parents' wellbeing sessions. It was agreed that we would welcome them to our yoga, running and swimming sessions and a programme was created that could be displayed in the unit for parents to access.

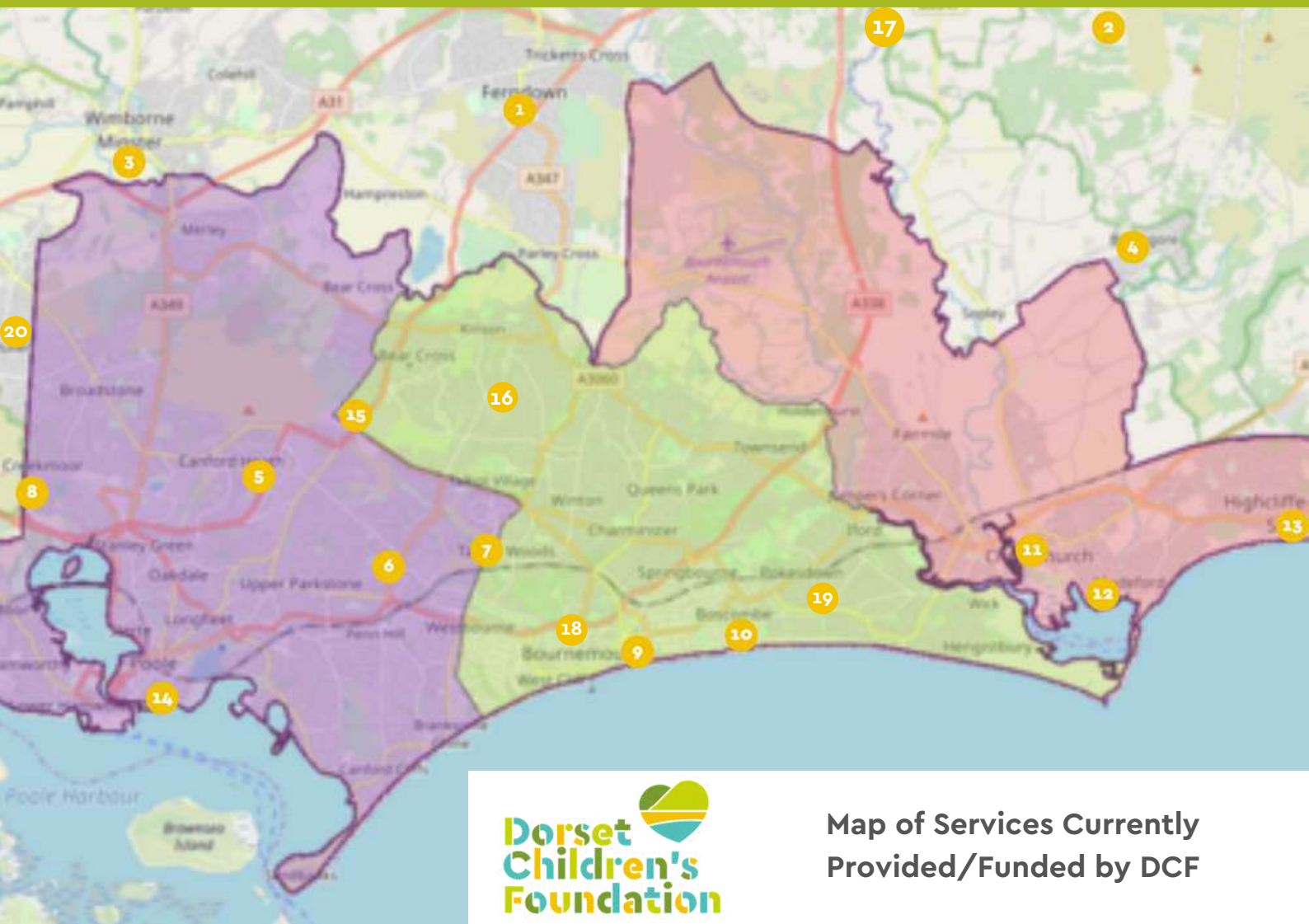
Other News

Paddy's Purpose was back in action this month as Gemma was asked to provide a workshop for a local primary school that's attending by the sibling of one of our PMLD children. Gemma spent the afternoon working with over 30, 4-5yr olds, teaching them all about epilepsy, tube feeding and what life is like for children with profound disabilities.

Policies and procedures were hot topic this month as Carolyn Best was in charge of making sure all of ours were up to date and that the shops all met health and safety regulations.

We started to have a look around for a suitable new retail unit that could be used to host our wellbeing activities and small group sessions. A unit was found within the sovereign centre, almost directly opposite our Treehouse Store. We spent some time producing a proposal document and entered negotiations to agree a suitable rent for the unit that was finally agreed at the end of the month.





Map of Services Currently
Provided/Funded by DCF

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1 Sewing Club | 11 Accessible for All Parties |
| 2 Pedall Cycling | 12 Parent/Carer Paddle Boarding |
| 3 Forest School/Library | 13 Wet Wheels |
| 4 Avon Tyrrell Residentials | 14 Wet Wheels |
| 5 Saturday Club | 15 Absolute Music Sessions |
| 6 SENTurians SEN Support | 16 Parent/Carer Yoga |
| 7 Doors Open SEN Support | 17 Soft Play |
| 8 Little Stars Stay & Play | 18 Indoor Skate Sessions |
| 9 Cold Water/Sea Swimming | 19 Co-Motion Sensory Dance |
| 10 Treehouse | 20 Something Special Stay & Play |