



# 'Keeping You in the Know' - Families First.

Edition 1: January 2021

We would firstly like to say Blwyddyn Newydd Dda/Happy New Year from all of us here at Families First! We hope you all had a safe and happy Christmas and made the best out of the very challenging situation we find ourselves in. We know it is a strange time for everybody and that the last few months have been extraordinary.

There does, however, appear to be light at the end of what has been, a very, very long tunnel!

### What's been going on?

There have been some changes in Families First over the last few months but we've been working really hard to try and support everyone the best we can, as we always have. Please keep an eye out on social media for any upcoming events soon!

### December Event's

During December we held virtual events every week, Monday – Friday, from the beginning of December all the way up to Christmas! We used an outside agency called Non-Stop Entertainment - they put on fantastic events, from fun-filled discos to science and magic. It was a great interactive experience and we had some lovely feedback

from the families who joined - please see the next page for the feedback.

### Virtual Coffee Morning's

We held our first virtual coffee morning in December and going forward with it we will be inviting guest speakers along. Please keep a look out on social media (Family Information Service Facebook page) for our next event and to find out what guest speakers will be!

### What have our staff been up to?

We have been working to put on virtual event's and to try and restore some normality to our families lives, albeit virtually! We are in the process of creating our own Facebook page but in the mean time we will use the Family Information Service page. We will let you know as soon as that is up and running!

There is on-going meeting to discuss face to face community event's and when they may possibly resume - we will continue to follow the guidance given to us and aim to be transparent with our families and keep you all updated with the situation as and when we can.

At the end of last summer, we had two new additions to the team – Tom Brain and Maria Perkins - you can see them both on the Family Information Service Facebook page. They have joined us as our Community Engagement Support Workers and will be working to set up the virtual events as well as new community-based initiatives as soon as they are able to.

Before Christmas one of our Family Support Worker's Lewis Hodson left us for a new job – we wish Lewis the very best and hope he has settled well in to his new role. We also said goodbye to our Senior Practitioner and Team Lead, Jessica Joyce – Jessica has left us to join another team where we know she will be absolutely fantastic!

Our losses are definitely other peoples gains, good luck both and please stay in touch!



## December's Virtual Events feedback;

Hi Maria, I just wanted to thank you and your colleague Tom for the events you have arranged, my son did attend the wizard workshop yesterday and really enjoyed it. He was very anxious about it would not have the camera on or interact, but by the end of the session he was trying the magic tricks the gentleman had shown them and smiling and enjoying it.

Could you please let the gentleman who was doing it know he did it really well and that despite him not putting his camera on etc he really enjoyed it and was smiling and trying the tricks at the end, and sorry he would not put his camera on and interact.

*Thank you, Kind regards, LG*

My daughter absolutely loved the hip hop virtual dance class and would be very interested if there were any further events. The teacher / tutor / lady was great. clear to understand, kept the audience engaged and made the event fun and enjoyable. The lady did a great job!!! *Thank you, GB*

## Some words from the team;

All our staff continue to keep up with the fantastic support that they provide for our families and are very much looking forward to resuming to some form of normality as and when the situation allows. Here's some of what our staff do to help reduce any stress or anxieties they may be feeling during this challenging time;

'I have taken up puzzles, so when I start to feel anxious or begin overthinking, I get the puzzle out, I have done about 9 since lockdown in March'. *Maria Perkins, Community Engagement Support Worker.*

'I enjoy binge watching programs on Netflix, talking to my best friends and online home workouts, a few of life's small pleasures, help me reduce stress'. *Kiran Guye, Clinical Psychologist.*

'I usually go for a long dog walk up the mountain, that always helps me to relax'. *Rachel Price, Team Manager.*

'I like to take the dog for a nice long walk up the mountain and sitting down to eat my favorite food always helps me'. *Jess Watkins, Social Worker.*

'I try and stay on top of home workouts, as I know that'll make me feel better when my anxieties heighten'. *Rosie Hudd, Family Support Worker.*

**If any of these sound like something that might help you to combat unwanted stress or anxiety, give it a try and let us know what worked for you, we would love to hear your tips too!**

We hope you enjoyed our very first Newsletter – stay tuned to find out what's going on, any new event's that are coming up, feedback from previous ones and any tips and advice we have to share with you.

Additionally, if there is anything you would like to see within these newsletters, please drop us an email – [thomas.brain@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:thomas.brain@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) or [maria.perkins@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:maria.perkins@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) If you require any information or would like to know more about Families First and the service we provide, please contact Blaina ICC on **01495 355584** where you will be signposted to the appropriate member of the team.

Best Wishes, Families First.

## Welcome back!

Rebecca Kivell, one of our Family Support Workers has come back to work after maternity leave. A very warm welcome back Bec – although we find ourselves in very strange times, one positive is working from home at the moment so you still get to be close to your babies for a little while longer!