

**Office Address**

Unit H  
Creech Business Park  
Mill Lane  
Creech St Michael  
Taunton  
Somerset  
TA3 5PX

**Telephone Number**

01823 442160

**Mobile No.**

07982 712608

(This number can also be used **during school holidays** if you **urgently** need to contact someone (for example, to inform us that you are unable to make a trip that day so won't be at the coach stop).

**Website**

[www.escapesupportgroup.com](http://www.escapesupportgroup.com)

**Facebook**

escapesupportgroup



MEMBER  
HANDBOOK



Every Somerset Child's Ability Positively Encouraged

Registered Charity No. 1081446

[www.escapesupportgroup.com](http://www.escapesupportgroup.com)



## Keeping in touch

**Webpage** [www.escapesupportgroup.com](http://www.escapesupportgroup.com).-

Our webpage is being continually updated with the latest news, keeping you up to date, giving you details of forthcoming trips and ensuring you know the date when to book your trips by. You can also book all trips on the webpage using the links. As well as information from various sources that we feel may be of interest to you.

We try to send out as much of our communications by **email** now in order to keep you informed of any news plus possible last minute opportunities. Links for trips will also be sent by email.

**Facebook** - [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) search 'ESCAPE Support Group' and like us !

We keep you updated with various news, upcoming trips and activities, as well as being an area for members to share photos and comments.

You can also message us via Messenger.



## Welcome to ESCAPE Support Group

This Handbook has been devised to introduce you to ESCAPE and everything that we do. We hope to answer all of your questions and provide you with a reference source. If you do have any questions then please do not hesitate to give us a call or an email.

Having a child with a disability can often be isolating, and stressful. Not only are families trying to cope with the day to day (sometimes 24/7) care of their children, they are often having to deal with the 'system' to ensure the best outcomes for them. Siblings, too, miss out on things and are often classified as young carers, but, through joining Escape, members are surrounded by like minded families who know, and can empathise with, what it is like to have a child with specific needs within the family, and can feel relaxed in company where they don't feel they have to justify themselves or their children. They can just be themselves and have fun, which is what Escape is all about.



An email received from one of our members....

*"People might not vocalise it often but Escape really, really is that ray of sunshine for many families, I'm sure, in between those battles for recognition and support of disabled child's needs in school/health etc. As my child gets older I realise it is just so wearing fighting for everything, that to have a charity and place when we come together, where you don't have to explain things, you're just accepted and know someone is battling for your family and your children to have positive experiences together is amazing."*

# Office Opening Hours

<b>TERM TIME</b>	MONDAY	CLOSED
	TUESDAY	09.30 - 14.30
	WEDNESDAY	09.30 - 14.30
	THURSDAY	09.30 - 14.30
	FRIDAY	CLOSED

## Visitors-

Visitors are welcome at any time, but due to circumstances beyond our control there may be days where the office is un-manned. If you want to check before making a special journey, do give us a call first.

## Term Time-

As a general rule the office is manned Tuesday to Thursday from 9.30am-2.30pm Term Time. If you call out of these hours please leave a message and we will always get back to you as soon as possible.

## School Holidays-

During the school holidays, should you urgently need to contact someone (for example, to inform us that you are unable to make a trip that day so won't be at the coach stop) please text or call the mobile on 07982 712608 - please leave a message if no one replies.

For non-urgent enquiries, if the office is not manned leave a message on 01823 442160 or email the appropriate person, and someone will be in contact with you as soon as possible.

# Payments

Although everything that we do is subsidised most activities still incur a small charge. Payment can be made via:

- ◆ **Direct through webpage**—using the 'click here' button on the booking page.
- ◆ **Direct Bank Transfer** - Sort Code - 09 01 27 Account No. - 72716791 Please quote your surname as a reference and email bookings@escapesupportgroup.com to let us know payment has been made.
- ◆ **Cheque** - payable to ESCAPE Support Group. Brought into the office or posted to; Unit H, Creech Business Park, Creech St Michael, Taunton, Somerset, TA3 5PX.
- ◆ **Cash payment** - brought into the office. Sending cash through the post is at your own risk.
- ◆ **PAYPAL** - using teamleader@escapesupportgroup.com as the payment email address/over the telephone/in person using chip and pin. **Unfortunately we do incur a charge for using PayPal so we have to ask for your payment to include an additional 2.5% surcharge to cover these extra costs.** Please call us if you aren't sure how much to pay. As with Bank Transfers, please email us to let us know exactly what you are booking, and how you are paying . Thank you.

Payment should be made in full with booking unless we ask for a deposit. This occurs when booking is required several months in advance. In this instance a **non-refundable** deposit is required with booking and then the remainder must be paid by the final payment date of which you will be advised of nearer the trip date.

For our more expensive trips, like our Annual Special, you will be asked to make interim payments and a final payment date will be advised. Please note that once you have paid your deposit you will be liable for the remainder unless we are able to re-allocate your place.

If making payments by our advertised dates causes you problems, please talk to us. We can usually come up with a mutually agreeable arrangement.

Should you need to cancel at the last minute, it is unlikely we will be able to refund you.





### Are you using Easy fundraising yet???

It's the easiest way to help raise money for us!

If you already shop online with retailers such as Amazon, Argos, John Lewis, iTunes, eBay or HMV, then we need you to sign up for free to raise money while you shop!

You shop directly with the retailer as you would normally, but if you sign up to:

<http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/escape>

and use the links on the site to take you to the retailer, then a percentage of whatever you spend comes directly to us at no extra cost to yourself.

DEBENHAMS



## What do we do

- \* Weekly day trips during the school holidays (at least one trip every week).
- \* Weekly swimming sessions (Term Time & in School Holidays).
- \* Monthly Coffee & Chat for Parent/Carers.
- \* Monthly Hub Club for the whole family.
- \* Monthly Young Carer/Sibling Bowling
- \* 100 Club
- \* Special events during the Christmas period.
- \* Occasional carer specific activities.
- \* An annual special (usually involves an overnight stay somewhere very special).

[See our Website or Facebook page for more details.](#)





## Hub Club

An opportunity for the whole family to attend and enjoy a whole host of fun and exciting activities, which regularly includes Arts & Crafts, Games, Table Football, Pool, Air Hockey, Lego Table, Parachute Games, plus each month we bring you a very special activity to enjoy. Tea, Coffee, Squash and biscuits are available along with a mini tuck shop for your children to spend their pocket money.

**The club runs once a month -**

**Saturday afternoon 1.30—3.30pm**

**See Website or Facebook page for dates**

**Cost - Free**

**It is held at -**

**Brittons Ash Community Hall,**

**Bridgwater Road, Bathpool, Taunton, TA2 8FT. (On the grounds of the new West Monkton School site).**



## Fundraising

As a charity and to enable us to continue the service that we do, it is vital that we all participate in fundraising opportunities, such as:

- \* Quiz Nights, Bingo & Raffles.
- \* Supermarket Collecting, Coffee Mornings & Lunches.
- \* Participation in locally organised events such as Marathons, Family Fun Runs & Festivals.
- \* We have penny jars available for all your loose change as well as collection tins to place on pub/shop counters or anywhere else you feel people may be willing to make a donation.

Taking part in our fundraising events, of course, isn't mandatory, but we do hope that you will be able to support us in some way, no matter how big or small. We have a lot of ideas and are always after new fundraising suggestions, so do let us know if you have any.

**You can also raise funds when you search the Web - with [easysearch](#), a search engine with a difference!**

**SEARCH ONLINE** : with [easysearch](#) instead of Google or any other search engine, you'll raise funds for us with every search you make! Just like [easyfundraising](#) it's completely free to use and if you make just 10 searches a day, you could raise £20 a year - or more - for us, just by switching to [easysearch](#).

What's more, [easysearch](#) is a 'super' search engine that combines the strengths of several search providers together - Yahoo!, MSN Windows Live Search, Ask.com and many more. [easysearch](#) tracks down the most relevant and accurate results from across the Web, which means you'll find what you're looking for quickly and easily every time - all in one 'easy' search.

Check out our unique [easysearch](#) page at : <http://escape.easysearch.org.uk>

and use it every time you search the Web.

**easysearch**  
.org.uk

# Coach Travel & Etiquette

**Coach Leaders** - For every trip and on every coach there is an allocated Coach Leader. Please identify yourselves to your coach leader before boarding.

Your Coach Leader may request that you do not board the coach immediately or that you do not choose certain seats. Please be patient with your Coach Leader as they have everyone's best interests at heart. They will be trying very hard to accommodate everyone's needs to ensure that all have a pleasant day out.

On longer journeys seats will generally be allocated, to ensure your family is seated together. On shorter trips, please use your common sense and use up remaining seats, ensuring everyone on the coach is seated near their families, and not split up.

It is a legal requirement that all passengers use the seatbelts provided.

**Please take your rubbish home with you, or use the rubbish bags if provided and treat the vehicles with respect. It is parents responsibility to ensure seat belts are worn and that everyone remains seated at all times through out the journey . All children must be accompanied to the toilet, if there is one on board.**

## Our Reputation -

In order to ensure that we are welcomed everywhere, each individual parent/carer must be responsible for the care and behaviour of all persons within your family group (children or otherwise) whilst attending any activity or event organised by Escape. You must respect each other, children and adults at all times. To date we maintain a high reputation for being a courteous and polite group and it is most important that we continue to uphold this reputation.



# Drop in Coffee & Chat

Drop in for a drink & a chat with us, and other parents who **understand** what it is like living with the day to day highs and lows that having a child/children with a disability/additional needs brings.

We usually meet up once month at different venues from 10am-12pm. We also have special visits from other outside organisations.

**Please see Website or Facebook page for upcoming dates.**



## Swimming

We have fortnightly swimming at Taunton Pool, Station Road throughout the year. Having exclusive use of the pool, members are able to enjoy the pool to themselves. Parking is Pay and Display @ £1.20 per hour. There will be floats, dive sticks, inflatables and various toys available.

**Swimming available-**

**Saturday 4—5pm**

**School Holidays times will vary.**

**Please see Website or Facebook page for more information**

**Cost - £1.02 per person.**

**Venue— Taunton Pool, Station Road, Taunton TA1 1NN.**



## ESCAPE STAFF

We currently have 4 part time members of staff who work a total of 46 hours per week between them.

When you call the office you will speak to one of the following :-

**Team Leader - Sarah Phippen**

[teamleader@escapesupportgroup.com](mailto:teamleader@escapesupportgroup.com)



Sarah joined the team back in April 2016. She has worked within social care for 11 years, firstly as a family support worker, and went on to managing the Somerset Supporters scheme, who were members of Escape at the time, both within the children with disabilities team.

Having taken a few years out to be a stay at home mum to her four children, Sarah returned to put her experience to good use within Escape.

**Finance Administrator - Angela Farrow**

[bookings@escapesupportgroup.com](mailto:bookings@escapesupportgroup.com)



Angela joined the staff team in November 2009, having been a member since Escape was formed. She has 2 children, who are now young adults. Her daughter has a disability, so she understands the many joys and challenges that parents/carers face. She has worked previously in a pre-school, a mainstream primary school and a special school.

She is responsible for taking your bookings and recording your payments, trip research, and keeping the accounts up to date.

## Travelling with us

Transport is provided for all non-local day trips. There are some points to consider when using the transport provided:

- \* **Collection points** - We currently collect from Bridgwater & Taunton as standard pick up points, and will continue to do so. We have offered pick ups from Burnham & Wellington occasionally. As this adds to the time families are on the coach we have decided that any extra pick ups will be subject to the length of the trip, and the number of families booking from those areas, and will be decided on an individual basis, once we have received the booking forms.
- \* **Pick up times** - are advertised on our Facebook book page and webpage or in subsequent information that maybe emailed out. It is your responsibility to get yourselves to the collection point. Please be prompt.
- \* **Departure times** - Once on the coach you will be informed when to return for departure. PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU ARE AWARE OF THIS TIME BEFORE DEPARTING THE COACH, AND ENSURE YOU ARE BACK WHEN REQUESTED. If you are unsure of, or forget, the time, please call the Escape mobile for clarification
- \* **In order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all our members, please adhere to the strict departure times and be at the coach in plenty of time. Lateness can impact on other members and cause undue stress and anxiety for others.**
- \* **Wheelchair accessibility** - accessible coaches are available but will only be booked if actually required. Please let us know any specific requirements e.g. wheelchair place needed, can transfer to a coach seat, wheelchair ramp required, cannot go up stairs etc. this can be accommodated as long as we are aware at the time of booking.
- \* **Car Seats** - Unfortunately coaches only have lap belts which are often unsuitable for baby car seats. Regulations state that under 2's must sit on the lap of parent/carer
- \* **High Back Booster Seats** - If your child is of an age where a seat is necessary (over 2 years) please bring it with you.
- \* **Taking your own car** - Some families prefer this, and if you are one of them, that's fine, just let us know.

# How to book activities

Many families join us for everything, some join us just once or twice a year.

We aim to produce a save the date calendar at the beginning of the year so that you can plan your holidays early **BUT** it is important to keep your eye on our Facebook page, website and our regular email updates, because sometimes due to circumstances beyond our control we have to alter our plans.

You can book online using our website, simply click on the 'Book Online' dropdown tab which will take you to a list of all the upcoming activities, choose 'Organised events' and chose the activity and follow the payment and booking instructions shown.

We rarely find ourselves unable to fulfil bookings, however if this occurs we will inform you as soon as possible. You can assume that if you have made your booking in advance of the closing date that your place is secure. Closing dates for bookings are highlighted and should be noted, as late bookings may not be taken.

Where places are limited, i.e. theatre trips, places are allocated on a first come, first served basis. We will always make you aware of such instances.



**Deputy Team Leader—FLSO - Kirsty Rayner**

[help@escapesupportgroup.com](mailto:help@escapesupportgroup.com)

[hubclub@escapesupportgroup.com](mailto:hubclub@escapesupportgroup.com)

Kirsty has worked primarily with children and families in early childhood. She has over 11 years experience and a degree in Childhood Studies. Kirsty has 1 child of her own and joined escape In December 2018 as our Family Liaison and Support Officer.

Kirsty's role is to ensure you are kept up to date with what's going on and to ensure you feel supported in accessing everything ESCAPE has to offer. She is here to assist and encourage new families, as well as to offer pastoral care for all of our members. In addition Kirsty organises and delivers the monthly Hub Club.

ESCAPE is a network for families, and professionals and whilst we may not be able to offer immediate advice, we generally know someone who can help.

**Office Administrator - Debbie Dyer**

[fundraising@escapesupportgroup.com](mailto:fundraising@escapesupportgroup.com)



Debbie is our Hub Club Co-ordinator and Administration Support. She has 3 children and 1 step child.

Debbie was a childminder for many years and then administration support for a preschool. She has also been part of her school PTA for many years.

Debbie's role is to Co-ordinate Hub Club activities, help out on trips and general admin.

## COMMITTEE

We are run by a committee of volunteers who each give up their own time to ensure that we run as smoothly as possible. The committee are responsible for overseeing activity planning, membership consultation, staff and office related issues, accounts, fundraising as well as upholding the charity's constitution.

It has three executive officers, the Chair Person, Treasurer and Secretary as well as a number of members. Each committee member is DBS checked and we also have a nominated child protection officer.

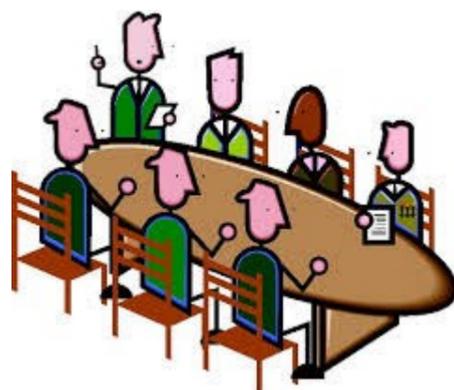
Committee meetings are held once a month and we hold our Annual General Meeting in June, to which all members are invited.

We always welcome new committee members so if during your time with ESCAPE you feel that you would like to become involved with the ESCAPE committee, then do have a chat with one of us.

Please see website for committee contact information.

Escape is committed to promoting and protecting the well being of all of the children and young people within the membership. Staff and volunteers are carefully recruited and trained but if you have any complaints about their behaviour, please contact the Office Manager or Officer of the committee. Similarly, if a staff member or volunteer has any concerns about the welfare of a child or young person in Escape, action will be taken according to our Child Protection policy.

A copy of this along with all our other policies are available to view at any time, at the office or upon request.



## ESCAPE trips....who can come?

Increasingly in this modern age, families come in all shapes and sizes. Similarly, our children are very different, with some needing a lot of adult support. However you can understand how tight the budget is, so we have to have some guidelines in place.

ESCAPE defines a family as 2 parents (or appointed carers) and children who are of course entitled to the subsidised trip rates.

- In addition you may have 2 more people (e.g. family members, children's friends, extra carers) who are also entitled to the subsidy.
- If you want anyone else to come, you must first **ASK**. We may not have the space to accommodate them, particularly when transport costs are so high.
- Additional people must pay the **full cost** of the trip.
- Additional people also risk having their booking cancelled if a space is needed for a member for example, but this happens rarely.

As there are so many possible family set ups, where we are uncertain how to proceed, we will refer it to members of the committee whose decision will be final.

### **Carers Events**

These activities are targeted at carers and in this circumstance, we are assuming 2 adults.

- If Mum and Dad book, then they of course are entitled to the subsidised rate.
- If it is just Mum or Dad and they invite a friend to go with them, the friend still gets the subsidy.
- If either wanted to invite additional friends or family along, this would be subject to availability at the full cost of the trip.