

FORCES ADDITIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITY FORUM (FANDF) NEWSLETTER EVERYONE MATTERS



**2018 CONFERENCE ISSUE -
REFLECTING THE WORK OF
THE FANDF 2016-2018.**

CHAIR'S WELCOME

We are delighted to welcome you to the 2018 FANDF Conference and would like to wish you a productive and enjoyable day.

As you may know, the FANDF hold this Conference for our members every other year. We are enormously grateful for the MOD's support for FANDF - both in affirming us as an MOD group with a DIN and TORs, but also in hosting us at Main Building in Whitehall and, in so doing, recognising the importance of giving Forces families with disabilities or additional needs a voice and enabling us to put our concerns to those who write the policy which affects our lives.

This "Conference Issue" of our regular e-Newsletter celebrates the activities and achievements of the FANDF in the past two years, since the last Conference. You can read about our regional events and involvement in setting up Additional Needs Support Groups.

We have an enthusiastic and invaluable Committee, who work hard and give up a great deal of their precious free time and whose profiles you can see in this issue. We may have space for more Committee members so, if you are inspired by today's Conference and would like to get involved, we would love to hear from you.

You will find a printed copy of the newly-updated version of "Additional Needs and Disability: A Guide for Service Families" which the Committee put together to help steer anyone with additional needs



through the processes and policies relevant to them.

We are very happy that so many families have joined us today and that many professionals and representatives from the Chain of Command have also given up their time to be here.

We would also like to thank SSAFA for funding transport and accommodation for delegates for today's event.

Please enjoy the day and spread the word about FANDF to anyone you know who may be affected and could benefit from knowing that they are not alone and that everyone who is a FANDF member is in a similar situation.

Iza Gill
FANDF Chair

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Any articles or items of interest can be sent to:

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***Please Note: The Newsletter can be photo copied and passed on. Views printed in this newsletter are NOT necessarily those of the Editor or SSAFA.**

HISTORY OF THE FANDF

The FANDF was formed in 1989 and was originally known as the Queen Elizabeth Group, chaired by Lady Anne Cowan. Its mission was to make people aware of the unique challenges facing Service families in having a child with additional needs or disability within the service environment. It soon became apparent that adults with disabilities should be included too.

In 1999 the FANDF were instrumental in the introduction of the Army's policy on the care of Service personnel with a family member with additional needs or disability. The RAF and Royal Navy policies followed shortly after. Housing is an area where the FANDF have been very proactive and have helped to shape housing policy regarding adaptations.

The first FANDF seminar took place in the summer of 1999 at Westminster Central Hall, London. It was

a great success and a biennial conference is now held at MOD's main building.

The first Additional Need and Disability Guide was produced in 2003 and is regularly updated in-line with policy changes.



HOW THE COMMITTEE WORKS

The FANDF Committee is an elected group of up to thirteen individuals, who are voted in by the Committee. It consists of serving persons and family members - all with personal experience of Forces life and additional needs. Any member of FANDF is eligible to stand for election to the Committee, and we always welcome new faces as long as there is space available. Owing to the nature of our mobile

lives, Committee members often stand down due to personal circumstances and logistics issues so our membership can be quite fluid.

The Committee is formally made up of the Chair and Vice-Chair and eleven other members. The Chair and Vice-Chair generally serve for a two-year term to coincide with the biennial FANDF Conference.

For the past two years, as Chair and Vice Chair, Michelle and I have had the extremely rewarding task of maintaining the momentum of the Group, producing and updating the Guide, holding events and spreading the word about the work of the FANDF, as well as holding quarterly meetings with representatives of the Chain of Command and subject matter experts to address specific issues and changes in process and policy. We are going to continue in the same roles after today, until the next Conference in 2020.

We would like to introduce the current Committee below and thank them for the time and effort they have put into their roles as Committee members, as we could not do without their input and support.



MEET THE FANDF COMMITTEE



IZA GILL

is an Army wife and mother to two children; her son has a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome. She has been a FANDF Committee Member for several years and Chair since the 2014 Conference.



MICHELLE EARNSHAW

is an Army wife, a veteran and mother to two boys, Matthew and Alexander. Alexander was diagnosed with Dyslexia and Dysgraphia in 2013 and was also diagnosed with high-functioning Autism the following year. She joined the Committee after attending the Conference in 2014 and became Vice-Chair in 2016.



KAREN ROSS

is an Army wife, a veteran and the longest-serving Committee member, having joined in November 1999, when she became paraplegic after a virus attacked her spinal cord. Karen is also a previous Vice-Chair of FANDF.



ALAN & ALISON BOWIE

are the Committee's only couple and "share a seat". Alan is a doctor in the Royal Navy. They have two boys and their son, Tommy, was diagnosed with Autism at the age of four.



ROBERT HALL

is serving in the Royal Air Force. He has a son with a diagnosis of high-functioning Autism as well as a close family member who suffers from acute mental health issues.



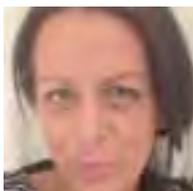
HELEN MERRICK

is an Army wife and the mother of a daughter with Autism. She started her own support group for families in her area to help with the isolation which families with additional needs experience.



WESLEY UPTON

is serving in the Royal Navy. He and his wife, Joanne, have two sons: Zachery and Finlay. At four months of age, Finlay was diagnosed with a rare form of complex epilepsy called West's Syndrome. He also has severe learning difficulties and Autism.



EMMA HUGHES

is a serving mum of two boys, the younger of whom was born with Cystic Fibrosis which is classed as a life-limiting illness and involves a rigid physiotherapy regime and medication programme to keep him well.



MATTHEW COOGAN

is serving in the Army and is married to Nicole. Nicole was diagnosed with ME/CFS and Fibromyalgia in 2014. Their eldest daughter, Mayella, was born very prematurely and has Cerebral Palsy affecting all four limbs and uses a powered wheelchair. Their younger daughter, Breanna, was diagnosed with Autism in 2014.



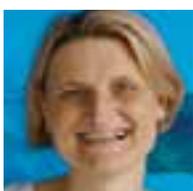
NOREEN HAMNETT

is an MOD Civil Servant and an Army wife. She has three children and two grandchildren! Her 15-year old son, Jack, has been diagnosed with ASD and Dyslexia. Recently, the family made the decision to move into their own home in order to give Jack stability to finish his education without the added pressure of applying to retain a quarter every twelve months. Noreen joined the Committee in 2017.



NICK HOLMAN

is serving in the Army and is the father of a severely disabled child and is keen to promote adequate support for families in similar situations. Nick joined the Committee in 2017.



HANNAH ILLINGWORTH

is the newest member of the Committee, joining at the end of 2017. She is an Army wife, a Reservist and mother to three children. Her middle child, Adam, has Autism.

FANDF REGIONAL EVENTS 2017

FANDF SPRING EVENT (ALDERSHOT) 2017

After scrutinising our database of FANDF members, we noted that a significant number of families live in Hampshire, so we thought it would be a suitable area for the first event in 2017.

We held the event at the Connaught Centre in Aldershot on Thursday 16th March and started the event with tea and coffee at 10am.

23 family members attended and there were also representatives from professional bodies working locally, meaning we had a total of 46 attendees.

There were stalls manned by very friendly and helpful troupe of people: the Families Federations, SSAFA, CEAS, NAS, the Zone and SOS!SEN who had useful information about the various services and support they offer.

We took this opportunity to “launch” the newly-updated “Additional Needs and Disability – A Guide for Service Families”, which is produced by the FANDF Committee and provides information about

processes and accessing help if you have a family member with an additional need. Copies of the Guide were distributed to those present but are available to request from the SSAFA ANDA and the pdf copy is also available on the FANDF area on the SSAFA website.

Two speakers came to address our event: The first was Jenny Frank (once an Army wife herself), who has led a project funded by NHS England and carried out by The Children’s Society over the last 6 months to identify the needs of any young carers in Armed Forces Families. Many of our families will have children who act as carers and it is very interesting and positive that efforts are being made to identify them and support them.

Gavin Morris gave a talk about SENTAS (Special Educational Needs Transport Advisory Service), a non-profit Community Interest Company which was formed to provide parents and young adults with information, advice and advocacy around issues with SEN home to school and college transport. Again, we asked Gavin to come to the Spring Event in response to replies to a recent survey, asking what topics FANDF members would like to see addressed at local events.

AUTUMN EVENT

In November 2017 the FANDF held their Autumn event at the Garrison Community Centre in Colchester.

After tea and coffee and introductions, we began with general housekeeping and an overview of the plan for the day. Our first speaker was Michelle Claridge, a member of the FANDF Committee and Vice-Chair of FANDF. Michelle has a wealth of experience from her time serving in the Army as well as her training work since she left, and gave us a very entertaining and insightful talk entitled: “Take Time to Make Time”. You can find a summary of her talk within the newsletter.

Michelle’s talk was followed by a relaxed “pub quiz”-style presentation by Sue Smyth and Pam Perry, who work for Children’s Education Advisory Service (CEAS). They divided the room into teams and asked questions, prompting discussion about what was true and false and what people perceived CEAS were able to do and are responsible for. It was a really interesting way to learn about the service and made everyone in the room interact.

Our last talk was an update on MOD policy relating to additional needs and disability which was presented by Karen Ross, (FANDF Committee member and AFF

Health & Additional Needs Specialist). Karen provided handouts and explained the various processes involved in different scenarios, supported by Major Dave Coward from Pers Cap.

There were information stalls in the Community Centre where we held the event, representing local organisations, DIO, Army Families Federation, CEAS and InterAct, a local Essex based charity.

Our aim in holding these events is to provide a relaxed atmosphere where families meet others in similar situations as well as gain information and network with others present. We hope to hold many more of these in the future.



NOREEN'S STORY

By Noreen Hamnett, FANDF committee member

Noreen is a civil servant who is married to Paul who serves in the Army. They have three children and their youngest Jack (15) was diagnosed with dyslexia on 2010 and with high functioning Autism in 2014.

Service life required the family to be mobile, which undoubtedly has had a detrimental effect on Jack's education. The continuous relocation of the family meant a change in regions and consequently, local authorities. All of which meant a delay in Jack receiving a correct diagnosis, and thus access to the healthcare and educational support needed for Jack to succeed and fulfil his potential.

When Jack was seven years old and in attendance at his third school, he was diagnosed with ADHD (incorrectly), and moderate to severe dyslexia, and by this time was already falling behind his peers in the majority of subjects. Noreen and Paul thought it would be best for Jack to be placed within an educational provision which could support Jack, and believed a boarding school could offer this. After a hectic few months travelling the length and breadth of the country they finally settled on one in Wiltshire. Initially the placement was proving to be a success but an increase in the year group meant a different teaching structure which Jack couldn't adapt to and had difficulty coping with, expressed by negative behaviour. As a consequence this meant removal from the boarding school setting and back into the local primary school.



A similar pattern then continued throughout the years, with regular liaison with the local authority, school heads, consultant paediatricians, educational psychologist, behaviour therapists and familiarity with court orders and education tribunals all in order for Jack to have access to an education. After eight schools, the correct diagnosis and an Education, Health and Care Plan, Noreen and Paul identified a suitable school placement for Jack, where he has been for 15 months.

As a result of all the lessons learnt over the years, and the difficulties experienced. Noreen wished to join the FANDF committee in order to help other service families who have children with additional needs, get the educational support needed for their children to flourish, whether in a specialist or mainstream provision at the earliest opportunity.

SUPPORT GROUPS

As someone who has endured the isolation that can sometimes go hand-in-hand with having a child with "issues", I was delighted to be involved with setting up some special needs support groups for families who face similar problems. I was approached by the Salisbury Plain Army Welfare Service (AWS) in my capacity as Chair of FANDF while I was living in the area. The AWS do a fantastic job of identifying families who need support and helping them find it, and had noted that there were several families around the Plain area who had dependents, usually children, with additional needs. In collaboration with the Army Families Federation (AFF) and FANDF, AWS organised a Friday morning group at Ordnance House in Tidworth, and are now running these monthly, alternating between Tidworth and other venues on Salisbury Plain so that more families are able to access the group. It has been very rewarding to see families come and compare notes, hear about

support and, above all, to realise that they are not the only ones out there! Attendance varies but the group provides a safe environment where your child, if you bring them, is not judged by their appearance or behaviour, as they might be at mainstream group.

Almost concurrently, a Group was also set up to serve the Aldershot area, and is a collaboration between AFF, FANDF and the local SSAFA branch. The meetings are held at Maurice Toye House in a lovely bright room, and are well attended by families who can support each other and compare notes.

The groups are widely advertised and information about them is sent to all FANDF members. If you think you would like to set up a group in your area, please get in touch with FANDF and we can help you arrange a venue, promote the meetings and even organise a special event to launch the group!

AN EVENING AT DANS LE NOIR

By Alan Bowie, FANDF Committee member

My wife and I recently had a very interesting dining experience that gave us a real insight into what it is like living with a disability. Actually, “insight” is not really the right word, as it was the absence of vision that was the most striking aspect of the experience.

Those of you who have seen the 2013 Richard Curtis film “About Time” may be familiar with the London restaurant “Dans Le Noir”. The restaurant’s unique selling point is that the dining room is pitch dark, forcing customers to focus on the textures, smells and taste of the food rather than the visual appearance, and showing them, for a couple of hours, what it is like to function with a key sense removed.

Our visually impaired waitress led us from the light of the bar area through layers of blackout curtains into the dining area. While she walked confidently into the darkness we shuffled along like a badly coordinated conga line, right hands on the shoulder of the person in front and our feet testing out the floor nervously for the obstructions and deadly precipices that our brains, unused to the loss of visual cues, were telling us must be just ahead. Once in our seats the waitress guided our hands to our cutlery and glasses then left us, warning as she went that we should under no circumstances try to get up and leave the table without calling for her assistance. Sitting there in the absolute darkness knowing that we were totally reliant on other people to

do something as simple as leaving the room to go to the toilet was unsettlingly disempowering.

The Dutch philosopher Erasmus is credited with originating the phrase “In the land of the blind the one-eyed man is King”. At Dans Le Noir it is the blind or partially sighted waiting staff who are the Kings (and Queens) and the able-bodied patrons who are in need to assistance and understanding.

As the meal progressed we grew in confidence but found we had to adapt how we did things. Rather than reaching blindly for our glasses or the water carafe, we found ourselves identifying the layout of the table and “walking in” from the table edge or other landmarks to find where things were. Proper cutlery use during the starter changed to fork-only use for the main course and by pudding we had reverted to a nursery-style spoon and fingers combination. It left me wondering whether people with disabilities feel just as infantilised by the able-bodied world, and made me realise that adaptive equipment and technology is not just a “nice to have” but actually gives people the independence that the rest of us take for granted.

This was a fascinating experience and I hope that the insight I have gained through the temporary loss of sight will change the way I relate to people with disabilities in the future.

<http://london.dansle noir.com/en/home/>

EMMA'S STORY

By Emma Hughes, FANDF Committee member

When my son Chester was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis in 2015, I really struggled with the diagnosis and found it incredibly hard to talk about how it made me feel and because he was admitted to Birmingham Children’s hospital for a long period of time from birth I felt I had to remain strong not only for my husband but also for my older son Oakley. Our life was completely uprooted to Birmingham where we were lucky enough to be given accommodation in the Ronald McDonald house so Oakley had to adjust to life as a big brother and also spend a lot of time confined to Chester’s hospital room.

I struggled with the overwhelming guilt that I had passed it on to him and the feeling of helplessness of not being able to make him better was so hard to cope with. It took a few months of talking to a counsellor and also talking to other CF parents before I started to feel a little more positive and optimistic about things.

I also started to see newly diagnosed parents going through what I went through in the early days and I felt I needed to let them know, that as hard as it is post diagnosis, life does go back to normal, just a different kind of normal. This led to me starting my own blog, my blog name came quite quickly, as a serving parent I often hear the phrase “Embrace the Suck” meaning to get on with something not particularly pleasant despite not wanting to, and given CF is a lung condition it seemed perfect.

I think being given a diagnosis for your child, no matter what the condition is tough for any parent and although my blog centres mainly around Cystic Fibrosis and our journey, I would imagine any parent facing a diagnosis will feel some if not all of the same emotions as me. Not only has this helped me and given me something to keep me occupied it’s been nice to share my journey with others and I hope it has helped others to cope with their diagnosis. I still to this day cannot physically talk about my feelings of being a newly diagnosed parent, but I am working on it.

OUR KETOGENIC DIET JOURNEY

By Wesley Upton, FANDF Committee member

Our son Finlay was born in April 2013. He was a healthy young boy and the world was his oyster. Later that year he became subdued and was making strange movements, which we thought was colic. After two days of tests he was diagnosed with West Syndrome/Infantile Spasms. This is a catastrophic form of childhood epilepsy, typified by infantile spasms, abnormal brain wave patterns (hypsarrhythmia), and intellectual disability. He was treated with high dose steroids and it appeared that the seizures had been brought under control. However, as the dose was reduced, the seizures returned. We continued to trial different combinations of drugs while Finn had tests to discern the cause of his Epilepsy. We were referred to Childhood Epilepsy Surgery Service (CESS) and Finn was admitted to Bristol Childrens' Hospital where we were hoping to find a focal point for his Epilepsy. After many tests and visits to the neurologist we were told that unfortunately they could not find a focal point as the brain activity was so bad and generalised across his brain. We were offered a Corpus Callosotomy but at this point Finlay was still only 18 months old and although this surgery is quite common we decided that it was not right for him at this moment in time. We were also offered the opportunity to start the Ketogenic diet.

WHAT IS THE KETOGENIC DIET?

The ketogenic diet is a rigid, mathematically calculated, doctor-supervised diet, which alters the body's chemistry by simulating the metabolism of a fasting body. It is a diet high in fat and low in protein and carbohydrate and is formulated to sustain the state of ketosis within the body.

Ketosis occurs when the body principally burns fat instead of the more common energy source, carbohydrate. Ketones (the ash or residue left after the fat is burned) are concentrated in the blood and inhibit seizures, although exactly how is unknown.

When a child starts the diet the ratio of fat to protein and carbohydrate combined are usually set at 4:1. Approximately 90% of total calories are derived from fat, usually in the form of butter, oil or cream.

The diet is usually started in hospital, under the supervision of a neurologist, and is devised individually by a trained dietitian to fit the age, height, weight and metabolism of each child. Calculating the ketogenic diet is three parts science and one part art. The art part is a combination of common sense, empathy, and intuition. There is no promise that the diet will be easy initially, but if it works - if it works - it becomes not only tolerable, but absolutely amazing.

After twelve months we were invited to come into hospital for Finn to meet our Ketogenic dietician and for Finn to undergo the various tests that are required before you start the diet. It is important to note that the Ketogenic diet is not funded by the NHS but by a fabulous charity - The Daisy Garland Trust. After Finn had had his tests and we had discussed what ratios we would start Finn on we were putting him on the Modified Atkins Diet which is less rigid but if we were unable to get Finn into ketosis we could put him onto the more rigid 4:1 ratio. The day we were due to start his diet we received a huge parcel in the post from the Daisy Garland Trust which included various ingredients which would help us to cook great meals for Finn. It was decided by the dietician that each of Finn's meal should contain 30grams of fats and 4 grams of Carbohydrate. We started with his first breakfast of sausage, scrambled eggs and tomatoes (40 grams double cream, 12 grams butter, 2 x eggs, 1 x sausage (Black farmers) and 66 grams tinned tomatoes). We took his Ketones and blood glucose which we have to do twice day. He had lunch and when we took his ketones that evening it was clear that he had gone into Ketosis. We were astounded that by day two his seizures had almost completely stopped, we were used to Finn having hundreds of seizures everyday from 4 months of age, but after a day on the diet his seizures had reduced by more than 95% and the intensity of his Tonic seizures had reduced massively. From day two it was like a fog was lifted and Finn came alive and much more interactive and happier. After 9 months on the diet I took Finn to hospital to have an EEG to look at his brain activity, the Electrophysiologist could not believe what he saw and neither could I, Finn's brainwaves were normal for the 30 minutes he was on the machine. Finn still has seizures may be 3 a month and he has a profound learning disability and many other associated conditions, but the diet has given us our boy back and without the support and the Ketogenic dietician funded by Daisy Garland I cannot imagine what our life would be like.



SHORT BREAKS NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

This year SSAFA piloted its new Family Break weekend at Calvert Trust Exmoor in-line with SSAFA's strategic review published last year. The break offered families who have a child between the ages of 3-18 years with an additional need and/or disability the opportunity to enjoy an activity weekend together. This gave them the opportunity to try activities that they may not have the chance to do at home and meet others in similar situations.

Thankfully the snow held off and 11 families booked onto the weekend enjoying activities such as abseiling, horse riding, rock climbing and crate stacking. One family said, "it enabled our son to be himself and not

judged by others as well as our older son having the opportunity to have time away from the family home where we feel he has the stress around his brother."

SSAFA will be running another weekend family break in November 2018. Advertising will come out over the summer so please keep an eye out.

Please note, families are expected to make a payment per person however, if cost is an issue we strongly encourage all families to please contact Frances Robinson, Additional Needs and Disability Advisor on frances.robinson@ssafa.org.uk as there are opportunities to explore support and funding streams.





FRANCES ROBINSON ADDITIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY ADVISOR

In line with the Ministry of Defence's commitment to supporting tri-Service families who have a child or adult dependent with additional needs and/or disabilities, SSAFA was approached to provide expertise and support to this group and has been doing so through the role of the Additional Needs and Disability Advisor (ANDA).

I am fully qualified Social Worker who facilitates the FANDF and works closely with the Full Members Committee to create forums for discussion and consultation between Service personnel, their families, relevant organisations and the MOD. Together we actively work towards promoting awareness and anti-discriminatory practice relating to additional needs and disability in order to ensure that Serving personnel and their families' rights are being considered when making policy change.

Over the past few years I have had the luxury of working with a dedicated group of Committee members who are able to share their own 'lived experience' in order to support the wider FANDF members. I am looking forward to working with them in order to grow the wider network and work on new endeavours.

I am available Monday-Friday, 9 - 5pm to deal with enquiries and will endeavour to provide relevant information and signpost you were relevant.

You can contact me on:
ANDA@ssafa.org.uk or
0207 463 9315

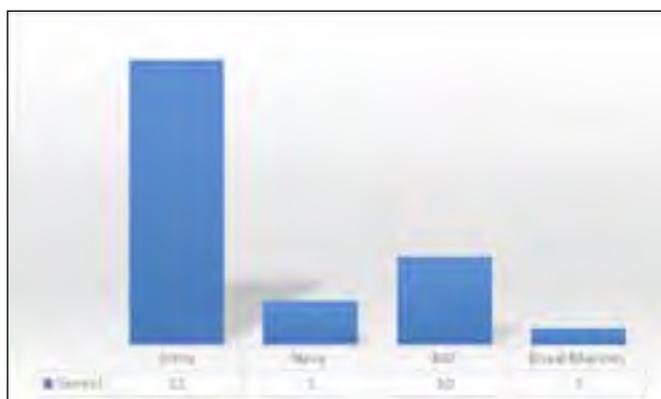


FANDF EVALUATION SURVEY RESULTS

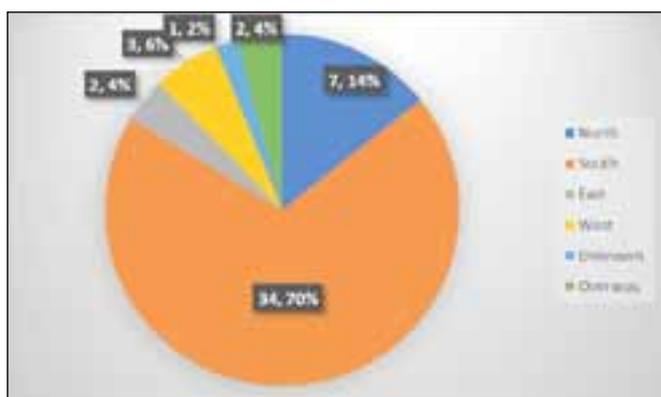
Early this year a survey was sent to all current FANDF members asking them to evaluate the service. We asked them to share their opinion of what they feel they get from being a FANDF member in order for us ensure that we are providing a service that meets the needs of members and what we can improve on.

In total we had 49 responses, here's what you had to say!

The majority of those who took the survey are serving in the Army or the dependent of someone in the Army.

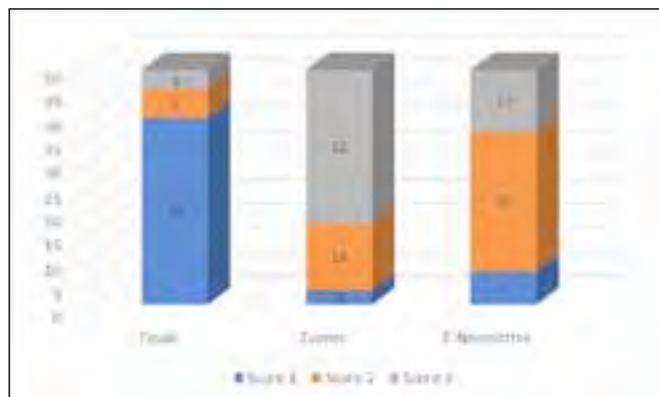


A significant number of those that completed the survey are based South.



How do you like to receive information from FANDF? Please put these in order of preference. (1 being the most preferred and 3 being the least preferred).

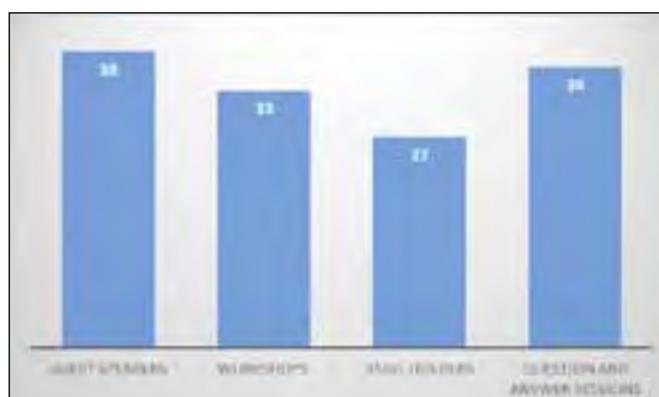
Receiving information via email was the most popular platform.



What format would you like to receive information when attending FANDF events?

77% of you liked receiving information from guest speakers during our events. Question and answer sessions were the second most popular format of receiving information.

We are always keen to receive feedback from our events to make them as beneficial and accessible as possible.



What benefit do you feel you get from being a FANDF member?

30% of you said that you benefited from access to information and advice.

31% of you said that you benefitted from the peer support offered and meeting others in similar situations.

A number of you mentioned that past events and meetings have been based further South and in Aldershot, making them difficult to access.

During the year that the Conference does not run the FANDF have hold regional events. Last year these were held in Aldershot and Colchester, the FANDF hope to hold events further North in 2019 and are keen to locate specific areas in the country where there is a need.

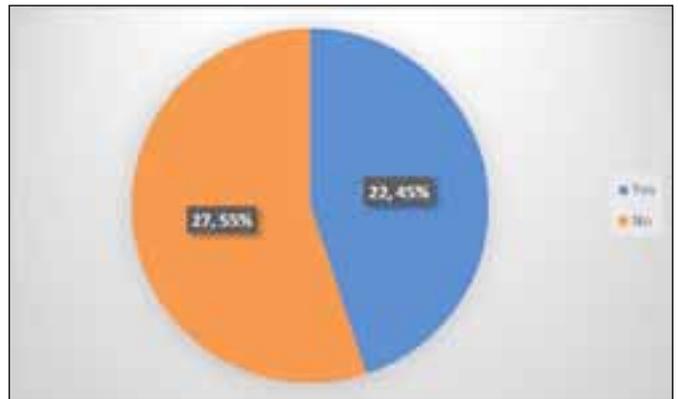
Is there anything the FANDF isn't offering which you think you would benefit from?

47% said there was nothing else they could think of suggesting.

Some of you suggested,

- 'meetings in different areas'
- 'more regular events'
- 'local groups'
- 'More training opportunities for parents with children with SEND and adults members with disabilities'
- 'Young carers event and something for older disabled young people'

Did you know that there's a full time MOD-funded Additional Needs and Disability Advisor available to provide information and advice to you and your family?



It is clear from the result that a significant number of you are not aware that there is a full time Additional Needs and Disability Advisor available to provide information and advice to you and your family?

We endeavour to change this and hope to make it clear that you can use this resource whenever you feel you need it.

The Additional Needs and Disability Advisor, Frances Robinson works 5 days a week and can be contacted via email on:

ANDA@ssafa.org.uk / 0207 463 9315

TIME MANAGEMENT TOP TIPS

By Michelle Earnshaw - FANDF Vice chair

Struggling to manage all the demands of busy family life? I'm not an expert, but have learnt a few tips that have helped me to juggle Service life, work, family and a child with additional needs. I hope that you will find them useful.

DON'T FALL INTO THE MULTITASKING TRAP

Realise that there's only so much interruption you can control, you can't exactly push the mute button on a toddler for example, but as much as you can, try to minimise distractions. Turn off your e-mail, silence your phone, close Facebook and Twitter, and focus on the task at hand, you'll be much more efficient.

KEEP A 'TO DO' LIST

As much as we love technology, my favourite tool is the traditional pen and paper to do list. I have a notebook that I use for this. At the start of each week, I will write myself a list of activities that need completing. I include on this all activities that are known big and small.

Before I go to bed each night I look at my book 'to do' list and identify 3 things that I want to achieve the following day. I jot these down on a bright post-it note which I can keep that with me. By identifying just three things to focus on, I don't become overwhelmed by everything I need to do. I often find that I achieve more than my 3 targets and can give myself a virtual pat on the back for being so productive!

TACKLE YOUR HARDEST THING FIRST

We all have those nagging to-do items ... some require focused time (e.g. managing family finances) whereas others come with emotional weight (e.g. a difficult phone call you need to make). Either way, procrastinating saps your energy — every time your eyes hit that to-do list item and you don't address it, it slows your momentum.

Try starting with the most onerous item on your to-do list. Often, you'll find that the task did not actually take that long, and you're immediately feeling freer and ready to rock the rest of your day because that burden is lifted.

PRIORITISE AND GROUP TASKS

Prioritise what is important to you. I would love to have an immaculately clean kitchen, but with teenagers that love football, running, cycling and rugby, as well as a dog that loves muddy puddles that just isn't realistic! As I don't have several hours a day to keep Hoovering or washing the kitchen floor, my

priority is to keep my kitchen surfaces tidy and clean ready to prepare meals each day. The floor can be swept and washed a couple of times a week.

Using a 'to do' list also allows you to be more efficient with your time. You can group activities that can be done together. For example, if you need to buy cards or gifts for the children's friends parties, drop off the dry cleaning and buy groceries then you could group these tasks. Try to make one trip to a shopping centre near the library so you can complete them all in one trip.

ASSIGN A TIME LIMIT TO EVERYTHING YOU DO.

You can apply this rule to both work and home life, whether wrapping Christmas presents (one of my biggest time stealing activities!) or preparing a presentation for work. Once you reach the time limit you have assigned to task, stop. Don't keep extending your time limit. This takes some practice ... and a willingness to let go of perfectionism! But, it can also be a learning opportunity, running out of time before all the gifts are wrapped, for example, means that you need to schedule a larger block of time, or find another solution to get the job done — like using gift bags and tissue paper next time.

KEEP A CALENDAR

Family calendars are the road map to everyone in your house's commitments. One look and you know one of your children has Cubs on Monday, the other has football on Tuesday and all of your kids have swimming on Wednesday.

The whole family should be involved in creating the one document that keeps all of you on track. There are lots of great calendars available to buy which allow you to have a column for each family member, or you could always make your own! Make it a family art activity so that everyone can learn who has what commitments on which days. Colour code your calendar so that every person has their own colour for their schedule. This simple activity helps children see days at a time in one place so they can begin to understand what goes into keeping your family on schedule. Another bonus is you can use your planning activity to make the most of family time together.

MAKE USE OF YOUR 'IN-BETWEEN' TIME

The more you use your calendar, the more you'll notice little snatches of time throughout your day that are too short for anything substantial, but are perfect for one- to five-minute tasks. The secret is to have those little tasks queued up in your 'to-do' list so you can take advantage of the in-between minutes. Good "in-between" tasks include:

- Making phone calls
- Checking social media
- Responding to emails
- Doing self-care tasks that fall by the wayside (e.g., nail filing, stretching)
- Tidying up, even a single drawer or surface
- Sorting the mail
- Filing papers (or, better, shredding and recycling them)
- Looking ahead in your calendar and to-do list to see where you could benefit from a little planning (for example, noting a birthday the following week so you remember to put a card on your shopping list)

DELEGATE / SHARE TASKS – SPEND TIME TEACHING CHILDREN TASKS

It can often seem easier to do things yourself, but in the long term this is not going to give you any more time. By spending time teaching children to do simple tasks for themselves, not only will you increase their self-confidence as you build their independence, but will eventually free up some time for yourself as you will not have to do this task for them.

Starting with small things like making their beds, putting laundry in the basket, litter in the bin and placing shoes on the rack are good places to start. As children get older you can expand the tasks they can be involved in for example putting the washing machine on, helping to make lunch or Hoover the floor.

If you are like me, there is only one way to stack the dishwasher, my way! No matter how many times I explain to the children (and my husband) how it should be done in order to clean most effectively, I seem to be the only one concerned with getting it right. But does it really matter if the forks are all grouped together and the bowls go at the back instead of the front of the rack? Rather than spending time rearranging the crockery & cutlery, I have learnt to only insist that the dinner plates go in a certain place, because otherwise they are chipped by the rotating arm. Sometimes delegation takes some practice!

CREATE A SYSTEM FOR MANAGING PAPERWORK

Paper shuffling and procrastinating over paperwork can suck up a huge amount of time. Set yourself up a process for how you will deal with the incoming paperwork and then stick to it. After missing a few

key deadlines I realised that I needed to set up a processes for managing school paperwork and family finances as well as those I had in place for my work activities. I have found that it saves me time and makes sure I complete the relevant forms on time.

PAUSE BEFORE YOU SAY “YES”

Don't say yes to things you and your family don't want to do. Obligation is a difficult beast to battle, but really, what's worse: declining an invite or task, or gritting your teeth and muddling through with "I don't want to do this" mojo? Beyond the basic things you must do, reserve your energy for the things that make you feel happy and excited. No excuses necessary. Simply respond with "Thank you for asking/inviting us, but we're unable to do it/attend."

COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR PARTNER

This sounds quite obvious, but I often have a very clear idea of what I am doing and assume my husband does as well. Chatting about what is in our diaries and on our to do lists, we can then work out cross overs and how we can help each other out. My husband works opposite a large supermarket so if I run out of essentials such as bread or milk he can pop in on the way home to collect what is needed.

HELP CHILDREN LEARN HOW TO MEASURE TIME

Hurry up. Do you know what time it is? Let's go. What's taking you so long? Do you sometimes feel like you're raising a bunch of dawdlers with no concept of time? This can be even more challenging if your child with additional needs has no concept of time, or even what day of the week it is! Even children who know how to tell time don't necessarily know how to measure time. Think about how you can show your children how to measure time. Perhaps you could set a timer during a block of time when they're supposed to be completing a task. Keep a clock close by and give them a verbal countdown as the minutes tick by so they can begin getting an internal feel for these time segments. I found sand timer that has different segments for 5, 10 and 15 minutes which has been really useful.

Your goal isn't to teach them to live by the clock but simply to help them understand what an hour, 15 minutes or even five minutes feels like. The next time you say, "We leave in five minutes," they'll know that doesn't mean they have time to play with their toys, watch TV or make a snack first.

USEFUL CONTACTS

FANDF

www.ssafa.org.uk/fandf / Tel: 0207 463 9315

National Autistic Society

www.autism.org.uk / Tel: 0808 8004104

Carers UK

www.carersuk.org / Tel: 0808 808 7777

Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS)

DCYP-CEAS-Enquiries@mod.gov.uk / Tel: 01980 618 244

Disability Matters - e-learning to inform and inspire

A free e-learning resource for the UK workforce

www.disabilitymatters.org.uk/

"Entitled To"

Free and anonymous benefit checker

www.entitledto.co.uk

Forcesline

Force Line is completely independent of the military chain of command, free and totally confidential; it offers listening, information and signposting.

- From the UK: 0800 731 4880
- From Germany: 0800 1827 395
- From Cyprus: 800 91065
- From the Falkland Islands: #6111
- From anywhere in the world (call back): (0)1980 630854

Domestic abuse: guidance and support for the Armed Forces community

This webpage can be found on the gov.uk website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/domestic-abuse-guidance-and-support-for-the-armed-forces-community>. It offers information and guidance for those affected by or dealing with cases of domestic abuse in the Armed Forces community. This site is for male or female victims, perpetrators who are looking to change their behaviour, military or civilian practitioners, chain of command or concerned family and friends.

LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS, OTHER INFORMATION & RESOURCES

RAF Benson, Oxfordshire

Support Group for spouses or dependants with an additional need or disability, contact joannahoskin@hotmail.co.uk for more information

HMS Neptune

Special Needs Support Group – Families Centre, Churchill Square, Churchill Estate. Tel: 01436 679526

East Berkshire

Support and advice for physically disabled children and additional needs education. Tel: 01753 830346

RMAS Additional Needs Support Group

A support group for parents who have a family member with additional needs and/or disability has been set up on the Royal Military academy Sandhurst (RMAS.) the group meeting every first Monday of the Month from 1-2.30pm at the Wishstream Community Centre, RMAS. For more information call Karen Ross on 07552 861 983

Aldershot Additional Needs Support Group

An AFF/SSAFA/FANDF-run support group for parents who have a family member with additional needs/disability in the Aldershot area, which meets on the second Tuesday of the month in term-time at Maurice Toye House, Aldershot GU11 1PL from 1-2.30pm. Please contact Karen Ross on 07552 861 983 or on additionalneeds@aff.org.uk for more information.

Salisbury Plain Additional Needs Support Group

A group set up by AFF/AWS and FANDF to support any parents who have a family member with additional needs/disability in the Salisbury Plain area. Meetings are held on a Friday from 10.00am to 12.00pm at Ordnance House, Tidworth SP9 7LE, and other venues in the area.

Please contact Karen Ross on 07552 861 983 or on additionalneeds@aff.org.uk for more information.

If you also have a group please let us know so we can add it to our list. If you want a group 'on camp' why not get in touch with your local SSAFA Social Worker, Army Welfare Service Worker or NPFS Representative, or why not start one yourself? If any group requires help with setting up then please get in contact with us.

The directory is managed and maintained by the FANDF committee, facilitated by SSAFA however, it is your responsibility to check the information and to find out if the club, activity or service is of a high standard and able to safely meet your needs.

Inclusion in this directory is not an endorsement and we can take no responsibility for the quality of service provided by the organisation listed. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of information, SSAFA or the FANDF cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.

CONTACT US

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Tel: 020 7463 9315 / Email: ANDA@ssafa.org.uk