

WEST LIMERICK CHILDREN'S SERVICES NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2026



Children's
Disability
Network
Team

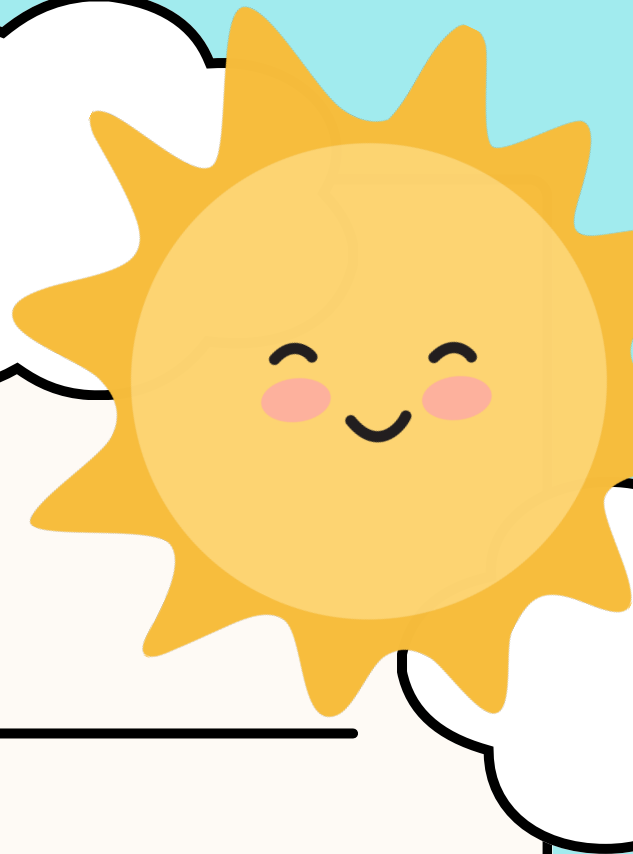
GREETINGS FROM WLCS

Welcome Back!

As the summer holidays draw to a close, we hope you and your family had an enjoyable and restful break. With a new season beginning, we're pleased to share the latest tips, updates and activities from across our CDNT community.

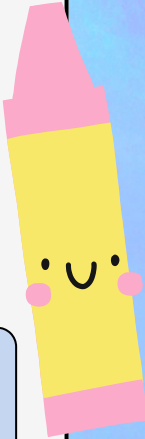
We wish all our children, young people and families a smooth return to school and daily routines.

*Hope you
had a great
summer!*





TIPS FOR PREPARING FOR THE RETURN TO SCHOOL



Returning to school after the summer holidays can be a significant change. The following ideas may help make the transition feel more predictable and manageable:

- Reintroduce routines gradually. Begin adjusting bedtime, waking, dressing and mealtimes several days before school starts.
- Make the return visible. Use a calendar, countdown, visual timetable or simple social story to show when school begins and what the day may look like.
- Build familiarity. Look at photographs of the school, classroom, staff or transport. If possible, visit the school grounds or practise the journey beforehand.
- Prepare sensory supports. Pack any helpful items, such as ear defenders, a fidget, sunglasses or a familiar comfort item. Make sure the school knows about your child's sensory preferences.
- Share important information. Let school staff know about your child's communication style, strengths, interests, sensory needs and the supports that help them feel safe and regulated.
- Involve your child. Offer manageable choices, such as selecting a lunch item, organising their school bag or choosing between two suitable outfits.
- Plan time to decompress. Your child may need quiet time, movement or fewer demands after school, especially during the first few weeks.
- Acknowledge their feelings. Excitement, worry and uncertainty are all understandable. Reassure your child that they can ask for help and that it may take time to settle back into routine.



Every child's transition will look different. Focus on what works for your child, and celebrate small steps!!



HIDDEN DISABILITIES SUNFLOWER



What is it?

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower is a globally recognised symbol that helps people discreetly indicate that they have a non-visible disability or condition and may need additional support, understanding, or time.

The symbol is most commonly seen as a green lanyard decorated with sunflowers (see picture on the right). Wearing a Sunflower lanyard is completely voluntary and does not require proof of a disability. It simply lets trained staff know that the wearer may benefit from extra assistance.



For more information on Airports, retail services, busses, ferrys, theme parks and other businesses that recognise the Sunflower network, please visit the following website:
<https://hdsunflower.com/uk/about-hidden-disabilities-sunflower>

How can it help?

Staff who are trained in the Sunflower programme understand that the wearer may:

- Need more time to process information
- Benefit from clearer instructions
- Need additional patience and understanding
- Experience sensory overload in busy environments
- Require support navigating the shop/airport etc.

Travelling and Airport Tips



For many children and young people, travelling can be exciting but also overwhelming. New environments, long waits, crowds, and changes to routine can stress and create anxiety. Planning ahead can help make the journey smoother and more enjoyable.

Prepare in Advance

- Talk about the trip beforehand and explain what to expect.
- Use photos, videos, maps, or social stories to familiarise your child with the airport and travel process.
- Count down to the trip using a calendar if your child finds this helpful.

Create a Travel Schedule

Use a simple visual timetable showing key stages of the journey (e.g., leave home → airport → security → boarding → flight → arrival).

Tick off each step as you go to help your child understand what comes next.

Pack a Comfort Bag

Consider bringing:

- Favourite toys, books, or comfort items
- Headphones or ear defenders
- Sensory or fidget toys
- Snacks and drinks (where permitted)
- A tablet or activities for waiting times
- A change of clothes and any essential medications

Travelling and Airport Tips



Prepare for Sensory Experiences

Airports can be busy, noisy, and bright. If your child is sensitive to sensory input:

- Bring ear defenders or noise-cancelling headphones.
- Identify quieter areas in the airport if available.
- Allow extra time so there is less pressure if breaks are needed.

Build in Movement Breaks

Waiting can be difficult for many children. Encourage opportunities to walk, stretch, or move around before boarding where possible.

During the Flight

Explain what take-off, landing, and turbulence may feel like.

Encourage activities your child enjoys, such as colouring, puzzles, music, or watching a favourite programme.

Chewing gum (if age-appropriate), drinking water, or sucking on sweets during take-off and landing may help with ear pressure.

Remember Disability Supports

Many airports and airlines offer assistance services for passengers with additional needs. These may include:

- Assistance through security
- Quiet spaces or sensory rooms (at some airports)
- Additional support during the journey
- Contact your airline or airport before travelling to find out what supports are available. Please also see the next few pages for some information.

Dublin Airport

Scan below to access Airport websites with information on supports for people with needs while in an airport. Please note, each Airport offers different services.

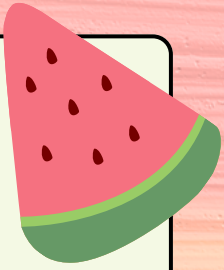


Dublin Airport



In Dublin Airport, all Autistic passengers can request a lanyard or wristband. These can be shown to airport staff at security, passport control, or in long queues if you need assistance. They have also provided visual guides and social stories to help Autistic children and their families know what to expect. You can find out more details and make an application for a lanyard or wristband on the airport website. Please scan above or visit their website for more information on other supports available: <https://www.dublinairport.com/accessibility>

Dublin airport also offers a sensory room which is free to book for 60 minute sessions ahead of your flight. For more information on other supports available: <https://www.dublinairport.com/accessibility>



Shannon Airport

Scan below to access Airport websites with information on supports for people with needs while in an airport. Please note, each Airport offers different services.

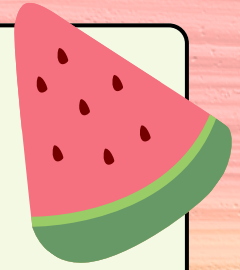


Shannon Airport

Shannon Airport: If you are Autistic or are travelling with someone who is, you will need to contact the airport in advance if you would like support. A staff member can meet you at the arrivals hall and guide you to the departure gate. There is also an option to wear an orange hat to signal to staff that assistance might be needed. The details are available on the airport website: <https://www.shannonairport.ie/passengers/at-the-airport/flying-in/passenger-assistance/>.

To make the airport familiarisation easier, Shannon Airport have produced a series of videos on the airport experience at Shannon. You can watch the full video or find more on specific elements of your journey on their website: <https://www.shannonairport.ie/passengers/at-the-airport/flying-in/passenger-assistance/>.





Cork and Kerry Airports

Scan below to access Airport websites with information on supports for people with needs while in an airport. Please note, each Airport offers different services.



Cork Airport

Cork Airport provides a series of books designed to help children cope with new situations, free of charge. Visual guides and social stories are also available. You can access these resources on their website: <https://www.corkairport.com/at-the-airport/help-support/autism-asd>

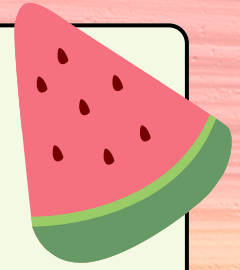
They also offer a sensory pod which needs to be pre-booked ahead of your flight. For more information please visit their website: <https://www.corkairport.com/at-the-airport/help-support/autism-asd>



Kerry Airport

Kerry Airport offers services for people with reduced mobility. For further information, please visit their website: <https://kerryairport.ie/the-airport/kerry-airport-special-assistance/>





Belfast Airport

Scan below to access Airport websites with information on supports for people with needs while in an airport. Please note, each Airport offers different services.



Belfast Airport

Belfast Airport: An Autism Awareness lanyard is available for all Autistic passengers and can be shown to staff at any stage of your journey if you need support. There are also visual guides and social stories available. Applications for lanyards and downloadable guides can be found on the airport website: <https://www.belfastairport.com/special-assistance/autism-awareness>





Awareness days Summer 2026!

August 2026

Some celebrations happening in August:

- International cat day (8th August)
- International Youth day (12th August)

September 2026

Some celebrations happening in September:

- World suicide prevention day (10th of September)

October 2026

Some celebrations happening in October:

- World Teacher's Day (5th of October)
- World Mental Health Day (10th of October)
- Halloween (31st of October)