



Newsletter

For parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs in Sheffield

Published by the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum

Spring 2012 Issue 5

Greetings and welcome the Spring edition of our newsletter!

We are delighted to report that we have now become a charity and this will certainly help with our future funding applications.

Of course, the news is full of funding cuts and services being slashed, and undoubtedly very difficult decisions are having to be made. It is more important than ever that managers carefully assess the impact cuts will have on the most vulnerable disabled children and families in the city. In this issue, we have a report about the cuts to the CAMHS service in Sheffield resulting in families having to wait a very long time to access community mental health services. We are meeting with key personnel to discuss these changes to ensure the voices of families are being heard, and work to influence service delivery in the future.

Being the parent and carer of a disabled child can be very isolating and we would rank some of our greatest successes as our family events and fun days. We all loved the Panto at Christmas and would love to do this again. We are about to set up a "Friends of the Forum" group.

This will be primarily to set up fundraising activities but also contribute to the work we are already doing of going out into the community to meet new families and put on family events. If you have any ideas for activities that your family and children might want to do, or if you wish to come along and help put on these events, you would be most welcome indeed. We always need volunteers and we would love to hear from you with your comments and ideas.

Best wishes
Jayne Woodward, Co-Chair



About us

The Sheffield Parent Carer Forum is an independent group of parents and carers of children with disabilities and/or special educational needs.

Our aim is to make sure the needs of our children are met. We understand the challenges you face on a day-to-day basis, because we are parents and carers too. We organise regular events where parents can meet each other. We can tell you about the most up-to-date sources of information for your children.

We are here to give parent carers a voice. By joining the Parent Carer Forum, we can work together to improve services for our children.

Membership is free, join us today!

Fill in the membership form at the back of this newsletter to join.

Get in touch

By Post:

Sheffield Parent Carer Forum,
c/o Sheffield Carers Centre,
7 Bells Court, Bells Square,
Sheffield S1 2FY

By phone: 0114 252 1913

By e-mail:

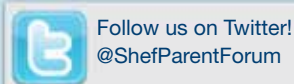
enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Website:

www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Drop-in:

Currently by appointment only;
please contact us to arrange a time.



Your advert here?

Would you like to advertise your products or services in our next newsletter? For a small fee, you could reach around 4,000 families in Sheffield. Our rates are:

- Full page £100
- ½ page £50
- ¼ page £25

Please call us on **0114 252 1913** to discuss your requirements.

This newsletter has been funded by Sheffield City Council and the National Lottery through Awards for All. Printed by Expert Print. Views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of Sheffield Parent Carer Forum. Sheffield Parent Carer Forum does not endorse any organisations, products or services mentioned in this newsletter. Please contact us before reproducing any material contained in this newsletter. We welcome articles from parents, professionals and practitioners. Please contact us to discuss possible contributions. Sheffield Parent Carer Forum is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Company number: 7226540. Charity number: 1145913

FORUM UPDATE

Panto treat for Forum members

They had a lovely time – oh yes they did!

Children with additional needs and their families enjoyed a special performance of “Dick Whittington” at Ponds Forge as a pre-Christmas treat, organised by the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum.

The play was staged by the University of Sheffield Light Entertainment Society (USLES).

Excited children cheered, booed and hissed as they watched Dick and his cat battle to save London from the evil King Rat. With plenty of songs and slapstick, sign language interpretation and no loud bangs, the show was a hit with children who can find regular performances difficult to access.

Feedback from parents was very positive, with 88% giving the event a rating of five out of five.



“We have never organised a panto before and it was a real treat. The children definitely enjoyed it and everyone really got into the festive spirit! We’d love to do it again next Christmas.”

Jayne Woodward, Forum co-chair.



Forum funding boost

We are delighted to announce that we have won a £10,000 Awards for All grant from the Big Lottery Fund.

We would also like to thank local charities the Church Burgesses Trust and the Freemasons of South Yorkshire for their generous donations of £1,000 and £250 respectively.

The funding will go towards printing and distribution of our newsletter, a series of training and networking events for parents, and office costs.



Representing the parent perspective

One of the main aims of the Forum is to enable parents of disabled children to influence local decision making. We do this in many different ways – for example, by holding meetings where parents can talk to officers, or by running consultations. An important, but not very visible, part of this work is our representation on various local authority groups. These include groups on childcare, post-16 provision, and the Inclusive Learning Strategy.

We know how frustrating it is to have someone “represent” you without knowing what that person is saying on your behalf. This is why we publish notes from the meetings that we attend in the “Resources” section of our website: <http://www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/page/resources>

Calling all fundraisers!

Do you have any ideas how we could raise funds for the Forum? Would you (or a friend or family member) be willing to organise a fundraising event? This could be anything, from a sponsored bike ride to selling home-made buns! Please get in touch and share your ideas with us - we'd love to hear from you.

Just click on a topic you are interested in, and scroll down to the section “Meeting notes”. If you haven't got internet access, please contact us for a hardcopy.

We are working hard to ensure that our membership is representative of Sheffield's population as a whole, in terms of children's disabilities, ages, ethnic groups and postcodes. We are committed to listening to the views of all parent carers, not just those who shout the loudest. This is why, in addition to all the usual communication channels like email, Facebook, website, and meetings, we also run an outreach programme where our volunteers go out into different communities to talk to parents there (see the page opposite).

Charity registration successful



In February 2012, the Charity Commission formally approved our application to become a registered charity. This is an important step for us as it adds credibility to our organisation, provides some tax benefits, and enables us to bid for a much wider range of grants.

Extending our reach

By Joanne Ferguson
(volunteer outreach co-ordinator)

It was just over a year ago that the Forum set up its outreach programme. We wanted to meet families of children who have disabilities or special educational needs: to find out the issues that are important to them; to pass on information; and to offer the opportunity to become Forum members.

Since then we have attended 16 events across Sheffield, including mainstream, special, primary and secondary schools, nurseries and Children's Centres. We have visited existing parent and carer groups, been guests at newly set-up groups, held one-off coffee mornings and attended open days and evenings.

Although the Forum has a wide spread of members across the city, we want to increase our representation in certain geographical areas, faith and ethnic communities and disabilities. We can do this by arranging outreach visits to particular groups.

We are currently working with the Ready Steady Go groups at the Children's Centres in Tinsley, Darnall and Sharrow as well as Watoto Pre-School in Burngreave, organising visits to local soft play centres. Everyone enjoyed the first visit, both families and Forum volunteers.

We are also working with the Sheffield and District Afro-Caribbean Community Association (SADACCA) on an event in the Spring - please see page 22 for details.

The outreach coffee mornings are very informal, Forum volunteers talk about

the work of the Forum, and parents and carers talk to us and each other about their experiences. We bring chocolate biscuits, the latest newsletters and Forum events listings, and goodies such as bags, pens, balloons and frisbees.

In mainstream schools parents and carers often say how good it is to talk to other parents and carers of children with disabilities, like themselves.

If you would like us to visit your school please ask your SENCO to contact us by telephone or email (details on page 2) and we will be happy to arrange a visit.

We look forward to seeing you soon.



Coming soon: Disability Awareness Training

In April 2012, the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum will be launching a unique disability awareness training course



Who is it for?

Our training is suitable for anyone who may or will come into contact with children or young people with additional needs or disabilities, such as:

- Childcare providers
- School staff
- Healthcare professionals
- Youth workers
- Sports and leisure staff
- Short breaks providers
- Customer service staff

What is it about?

Developed in consultation with parents of children with additional needs, our training is informal, hands-on, and based on personal experience. Our trainers are parents of disabled children and bring a unique and practical insight to the sessions.

The training covers:

- How to include our children in mainstream activities
- Looking at needs not labels
- The importance of good communication
- Different types of disabilities
- An overview of current disability legislation

Duration and cost

Our training sessions run for 3 hours and can be delivered as open courses or as tailored courses at your premises, at a time to suit you. Please visit our website for open course dates.

£50 per person for open courses. Tailored in-house courses (max. 16 delegates) available, please contact us to discuss your requirements.

Membership

- Increased from 339 to 546 members
- Good spread across all city wards
- Over 20 disabilities represented

Information activities

- Two issues of newsletter (circulation 4,000)
- Re-launch of Forum website
- New Facebook group
- Bi-weekly email bulletins
- Signposting service by telephone/email

Events

- Childcare information event (May 2011)
- Information day on school transitions (October 2011)
- Panto "Dick Whittington" (December 2011)

Training activities

- Disability Awareness Training project set up
- Informal training provided by parents to Speech and Language Therapy students, junior doctors, childminders and SENCOs
- Six parent workshops organised with Speech and Language Therapy service, to enable parents to support their children's SLT programmes at home

Consultation activities

- Short breaks consultation workshops
- Questionnaire to inform childcare information booklet

- Response to national consultation on SEN Green Paper
- Focus groups on SEN transport, statements, school transitions, SNIPS
- Parental feedback on Graves Park playground, transitions form, Escort handbook, Early Years review, SIGN disability information pack, etc.

Outreach activities

- Visits to 16 schools, children's centres and nurseries
- Information stalls at 3rd party events
- Start of project to increase diversity of membership: events for families from Sharrow, Burngreave, Darnall and Tinsley

Representation activities

Parental representation at local authority groups, including:

- Direct Payments
- Achievement for All
- Inclusive Learning Strategy
- DCATCH/Childcare
- Progress and Achieve (Post-16 provision)
- LDD Strategic Partnership Board
- Third Sector Assembly



Woolley Wood relocation project nears completion

Woolley Wood special school is due to move into a new building adjacent to Mansel primary school, which is being refurbished. It is expected that the move will be completed after Easter 2012.

Woolley Wood School has been a special school in Shiregreen for over thirty years. The current building was never designed for the current intake of children, many of whom have physical difficulties. The new school building boasts a hydrotherapy pool, an interactive sensory room and specially designed bathroom areas all with continuous ceiling hoists from the classroom.

Woolley Wood currently caters for 59 pupils aged 2-11 years with severe and complex learning difficulties and disabilities. The new building will enable the school to increase the number of places it offers to a maximum of 80 pupils.

Pupils in the special school will be educated in specialist classrooms, but there will be



opportunities for pupils from both schools to work and play together. Woolley Wood will continue to act as a specialist resource for, and have links with, all the primary schools in the area.

New debt advice service

National charity Contact a Family has entered into a pilot project with the Citizen's Advice Bureau to improve the supply of face-to-face debt advice to families with disabled children.

Sheffield and Rotherham are two of the pilot areas in which the new service has started. It offers home visits for families.

Call 0808 808 3555 to make an appointment.

Exceptional Needs pilot launched

September 2011 saw the launch of a two-year pilot aimed at developing inclusive practice in Sheffield's mainstream schools.

The project will provide extra support and funding (approx. £1m per year) to linked clusters or "families" of schools. Each family consists of a secondary school and its feeder primary schools and nurseries. The families of schools taking part in the pilot are: Birley, Fir Vale, Hinde House, Newfield, Parkwood Academy, Silverdale, Stocksbridge, and Westfield (53 schools in total).

Schools in each family have worked together to agree a list of pupils with the most exceptional needs. These are not necessarily pupils with statements of SEN, but those youngsters with exceptional needs who are most at risk of being excluded or moving into specialist provision. A total of 240 pupils have been identified. Parental confidence is key to the success

of the pilot, and schools are encouraged to include parents in their discussions about how to support their child within the context of the pilot. Participating schools will continue to have access to specialist support services and can seek outreach support from special schools and Integrated Resources (IRs). In addition, two temporary Assistant Educational Psychologist posts have been established to support the schools in the pilot.

The success of the project will be measured using the following criteria: parental confidence (as reflected in feedback from parents, no increase in demand for statements of SEN or appeals to the SEND tribunal), views of children and young people, progress and good school attendance, and more children being successfully included in local mainstream schools. The pilot will be independently evaluated and if evidence of success is clearly demonstrated, the approach will be developed more widely across the city.



Changes to SIGN information service

SIGN, the specialist information service for disabled children and their families, has moved out of its base at Ryegate Children's Centre. Following a successful bid for the revised SIGN contract, local charity Sheffield Information Link will continue to run the service, with the same range of information but without a drop-in facility. Instead the SIGN service workers



will meet parents face to face through outreach sessions. Parents can contact the service using the existing telephone number **0114 266 9476**, (Mon-Fri 10am-3pm) and email address sign@sheffinfoolink.org.uk, or arrange a face-to-face meeting if needed. You can view and request some of the information held at SIGN on their new website at www.signdisability.org.uk.

Concerns over CAMHS waiting times

Parents have raised concerns about long waits to access Sheffield's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

A report by Sheffield City Council and NHS Sheffield states that there has been an increase both in numbers of people waiting and in waiting times for generic community CAMHS. In February 2012, over 260 youngsters had been waiting for more than 18 weeks, with some facing waits of up to 44 weeks.

This appears to be the consequence of a re-organisation of the service and re-prioritisation of funding in a challenging financial climate. Whilst overall investment in CAMHS increased by £1.3m (15%) between 2010/11 and

2011/12, most of this money went to a new inpatient facility for those with the most serious problems - the Becton Centre. At the same time, funding for community mental health services (tiers 2 and 3) was cut by £700,000. Reasons cited include in-year cuts to a grant paid to local authorities by central government, the end of a fixed-term funding stream, and NHS efficiencies.

A number of steps have been taken to bring down waiting times. These include offering families on the waiting list advice or brief interventions, and re-prioritising any cases which have become more severe. From April 2012, MAST (Multi-Agency Support Team) workers will receive training to provide early intervention and support for children and young people with less complex mental health needs.

STOP PRESS: On 29 February 2012, the government announced an additional investment of £22m over 3 years to expand child mental health services. Some of the money will be spent on extra training for NHS staff and those who work with children and young people to provide earlier, focused intervention.



Inclusion Kitemark for Sheffield schools

Sheffield City Council is developing a self-evaluation tool which will enable schools to assess and improve their inclusive practice.

The tool is being developed with input from the Parent Carer Forum, head teachers, the Parent Partnership Service and officers of the local authority, and will be implemented from September 2012.

Participation in the scheme will be voluntary. The kitemark will cover three key areas: leadership and management, learning and teaching, and partnership with parents/carers, governors and community groups. Schools will be required to provide evidence to support their self-evaluation, and will be graded using a 3-point scale.

There will be further opportunities to add to the kitemark where schools can demonstrate specific strengths like dyslexia-friendly or autism-friendly approaches.

Would you like to contribute to this piece of work?

Please come along to our Education subgroup (see page 22 for meeting dates), or contact our office to find out how you could get involved (see page 2 for contact details).



Schools and childcare providers get the 'TripAdvisor' treatment

Two new websites have been launched which enable parents to rate their children's schools and nurseries.

Parent View www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk is run by Ofsted. Parents can rate their child's school by indicating to what extent they agree or disagree with 12 statements, such as "My child is happy at this school" or "The school deals effectively with bullying". It is not possible to rate a school's inclusiveness or special educational needs provision, and there is no facility to leave freetext responses.

The Good Care Guide www.goodcareguide.co.uk has been developed by two not-for-profit social enterprises, My Family Care and United for All Ages, with help from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. The website carries details of thousands of nurseries, out of school clubs and nanny agencies, as well as care homes and home care agencies for the elderly. Users can rate providers in three categories – quality of care and staff, facilities and cleanliness, and value for money – and leave short comments. The website does not cover specialist services for disabled children.

We will write to the owners of both websites to request a sharper focus on children with disabilities and special educational needs.

As more and more schools are converting to academy status, we thought we'd try to find out how this will affect the rights of children with special educational needs (SEN). Unfortunately, it is difficult to give information that applies to all academies. This is because each academy has a contract, often called a funding agreement, with the Secretary of State for Education. The terms of these contracts vary from one academy to the next (and particularly between academies established before and after the Academies Act 2010 took effect). Therefore the legal rights of parents and pupils can vary too.



Access to SEN support services

Academies are state-funded schools which operate outside of local authority control. The funding they receive from central government includes a share of the funding normally held by local authorities for providing central services.

Initially, the government had planned to remove a share of the funding for SEN support services (e.g. for children with hearing impairments, autism or dyslexia) from local authorities and pass it directly to academies. Critics warned that local authorities would no longer be able to buy these services in bulk if large numbers of schools in their area converted to academy status.

In February 2012, the government decided that for 2012/13 at least, funding for SEN support

services would be paid to local authorities and not delegated to academies. Therefore, local authorities will have to provide these services to children in maintained schools and academies.

Statements of SEN

Duties in relation to statements of SEN, such as statutory assessments, statementing, monitoring arrangements and conducting annual reviews, do not become the responsibility of academies, but continue to rest with the local authority.

However, unlike in the case of maintained schools, there is no absolute legal obligation on local authorities to make the provision described in part 3 of the statement if the child attends an academy.

In the newer academies, the funding agreement will usually state that the obligation to make the provision rests with the academy.

Most older funding agreements only place an obligation on governors to use "best endeavours" to secure that special educational provision is made. Neither parents nor the local authority can force the academy to make that provision.

Admissions

For children with statements, it is still the local authority who decides which school should be named in part 4 of the statement. Once a school is named in a pupil's statement, then that school must admit the pupil – this applies equally to academies and maintained schools.

The local authority must consult with an academy before it can name it in a child's statement. Most of the newer funding agreements require an academy to consent to being named in a statement of SEN, unless this would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for other children, and where no reasonable steps can be taken to secure compatibility. This is essentially the same as for maintained mainstream schools.

For pupils with SEN but without statements, the academy's own admissions criteria apply. Selective schools (such as faith schools and grammar schools) which convert to academies can continue with their selective arrangements. All other academies must be non-selective. It would be illegal for them to discriminate against pupils on the basis of their SEN.

Special academies

Admission to a special academy is by way of a statement of SEN. When a maintained special school converts to academy status, the school will not be able to change the number of pupil places and the types of special educational needs it provides for, as part of the conversion

process. However, these characteristics can be changed later on, in response to local need and parental choice. The case for change would be considered by the Young People's Learning Agency (the body responsible for academy funding), with the final decision resting with the Secretary of State. It is unclear how this will affect the ability of local authorities to develop coherent provision.

SEN Code of Practice

The SEN Code of Practice is guidance for schools and local authorities about how to put SEN law into practice. Schools (including academies) and local authorities must "have regard" for it, but it is not law itself.

The local picture

Sheffield currently has four academies. Sheffield Springs, Sheffield Park and Parkwood were set up under the old system, and Yewlands converted in 2011 under the new system. Several other schools are either in the process of converting, or planning to convert to, academy status. Two of these host Integrated Resources (IRs): King Ecgbert has an IR for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, and Tapton has an IR for visually impaired pupils. Sheffield City Council says that it is working with these schools to ensure the IRs continue to operate as now but through a commissioning process. We hope to provide more details in our next newsletter.

Disclaimer: The information in this article has been provided in good faith. It should not be relied upon as legal or professional advice, or as a substitute for it. Sheffield Parent Carer Forum cannot be held responsible for the accuracy, completeness or currentness of the information presented.

Recommended further reading

Department for Education website
www.education.gov.uk

Blog by SEN lawyer David Wolfe
<http://davidwolfe.org.uk/wordpress>

Swimming for disabled children

The Sheffield Parent Carer Forum has worked with local sports charity Within Reach to successfully apply for a Kellogg's Swim Active Grant to fund swimming lessons for children with disabilities.

The weekly 30-minute, one-to-one lessons have now started at Chapeltown Baths on Sunday mornings between 8.30am and 10am. Lessons cost £4.80 for 30 minutes. For more information, contact Duncan Walker at Chapeltown Baths on **0114 257 0354** or email duncan@chapeltownleisure.org.uk

SCWIDS is a swimming club for children with disabilities and special needs, their families and friends. SCWIDS can provide swimming lessons for children who might struggle in mainstream classes as well as "Splash Swim" for fun and making friends.



SCWIDS sessions are on Fridays (term-time only) between 6.30pm and 8pm at Westfield Sports College. Lessons cost £5 per child (including Splash Swim) or £3 for Splash Swim only. For more information, contact **Frank Smith** on **0114 2461414**.

Sheffield Family Support Group organises private swimming sessions at Hillsborough Leisure Centre for children with special needs and learning difficulties, their families and friends. The monthly session alternate between Saturday and Sunday evenings with an hour's swimming in the leisure pool from 6.15pm to 7.15pm, followed by party food. Cost is £5 per child for swimming or £6 with food. Parents/carers swim for free. For more information and dates, please contact **Tana Holmes** on **0114 2305057** or email swimming.supportgroup@googlemail.com

Are you aware of any disability-friendly swimming lessons for children not mentioned in this article?

Please get in touch with our office (see page 2 for contact details) and let us know!

Direct Payments Q&A

We asked Amanda Hill, Team Manager at the Council's *Children Young People and Families Service*, a few questions about Direct Payments. You can read her answers below.



Who can get Direct Payments?

You can receive Direct Payments (DPs) if you are a parent or carer looking after a child with a disability, and you have been assessed as eligible for support from children's social care.

If you are entitled to a short break service from SNIPS (Special Needs Inclusion Playcare Service), such as a holiday playscheme, an after-school or Saturday club, or a befriending or sitting service, you can also ask for this to be converted into a DP.

Young people aged 16 years or over can receive a DP in their own right.

DPs are made in lieu of services provided by the local authority. When you accept a DP you enter into an agreement with the local authority to use your DPs solely for the purpose of achieving the agreed outcomes for your child as set out in their support plan.

I've heard that you can also get Direct Payments for childcare – how does this work?

If both you and your partner are in full-time work or training and have not been assessed

by a social worker as being "in need" of support, you can ask the local authority to consider making a contribution towards the cost of childcare for your disabled child to enable you to work.

The child must be aged between 5 and 18 years of age, and require additional support to be able to access childcare provision. The payments do not cover transport costs to the provision, or the cost of food or activities whilst at the placement. The payments are not made when parents/carers take annual leave or when the child is ill.

There is no duty on the local authority to provide direct payments in this way. If the local authority makes a "contribution" towards these costs, it is with the expectation that you will arrange the childcare directly, and that you will also contribute to these costs. At the moment, parents are expected to pay £3.25 per hour, and the local authority contributes £3.75 per hour (although this can be higher depending on the care needs of the child). There is no financial contribution if you have been assessed as being "in need" of support.

Please contact SNIPS (see below for details) if you would like more information about DPs for childcare.

Can I be forced to accept Direct Payments in lieu of service?

NO! The choice is yours. The local authority has a duty to offer DPs but you and your child or young person decide if it is what you want.

Will I need an assessment to get Direct Payments?

This depends on whether there is an assessment for the service that the DP is replacing:

- The standard SNIPS service of one session per week during term time or during the school holidays can be accessed by any child or young person with a medical diagnosis of disability, without the need for an assessment. The service provided by SNIPS can be converted into a more personalised support package using DPs.
- If the DP is to replace a higher-level service (such as befriending, day care in your home, foster care or overnight respite) you will need either a CAF (a short form which can be completed by any professional who knows your child), or a social worker will need to do an assessment to identify the eligibility for social care support.

How do you calculate how much money I get?

If you are choosing to use a Personal Assistant (PA): The Council has a pre-determined PA rate of £7.20 per hour. It then works out an additional amount on top of this to cover employer's liability insurance, employer's National Insurance, paid holiday and bank holiday enhancements. If using an agency, the rate is £12.45 per hour.

This rate will have an additional amount added to cover eight days' bank holidays, at double time. The Council calculates how many hours of support you require and uses the hourly rate to calculate the amount you receive. You will need to ensure the payments to a PA are paid through a payroll service, and you need to pay tax for your employee. You will need to seek advice regarding paying someone who is self-employed as there are restrictions around self-employment. The Council also has a rate for overnight support rather than calculating this on an hourly basis.

Sheffield City Council requires all PAs to have a current CRB check. These need to be updated annually. The PA will need to contact the Direct Payments Team (details below) who co-ordinate the CRB checks.

If you wish to use your direct payment to cover the costs of an activity, then the cost of the activity will be considered in full.



Direct Payments Q&A cont.

What can Direct Payments be used for?

Many things, providing it is meeting a need and a clear outcome for the child or young person and their family. The DP will need to keep a child or young person safe, healthy and well. It must be legal and must not be for something another statutory body (like the NHS) should be providing. The DP support plan identifies how the DPs will be used, and notes the outcome for the child or young person. The DPs will be affected if you don't continue to work to the outcomes agreed in the support plan.

Who can help me recruit a carer for my child?

The Local Authority has held a contract with [Sheffield-based training company] A4e for several years. This is coming to an end in March 2012. This will mean that the support, advice and guidance offered by this agency will now be offered by a worker based within the Council's Children, Young People and Families Service. They can assist with recruitment and give information about agencies that can provide payroll services and, if required, managed accounts.



Sheffield's disability information service **SIGN** (see below for details) can give you contact details of other organisations which can help you, or you can search the **Sheffield Help Yourself Directory** www.sheffieldhelpyourself.org.uk. SIGN also holds profiles of specialist childminders and student practitioners who have undergone a training programme to care for disabled children.

I don't want to become an employer. Does this mean Direct Payments are not for me?

DPs are not just employing for PAs, they can pay for other things like equipment or activities. If you want to recruit a PA but don't want to be an employer, there are companies who will employ the PA on your behalf.

Where can I get more information?

SIGN information service
Telephone: 0114 266 9476
Email: sign@sheffinfolink.org.uk
Website: www.signdisability.org.uk

SNIPS (DPs for childcare only)
Telephone: 0114 273 4017
Email: CYPDsnips@sheffield.gov.uk

Sheffield City Council
Direct Payments Team
Telephone: 0114 273 5985

Sheffield City Council
Children, Young people
and Families Service
Telephone: 0114 2735368

The Sheffield Parent Carer Forum is organising an information evening on DPs on the 18th of April – please see our events calendar on page 22 for details.

Practical, Therapeutic Education

Brantwood Specialist School is a new provision located in Sheffield, offering day, residential and respite placements for boys and girls 7-19 with complex learning and behavioural difficulties.



Here at Brantwood we offer a unique curriculum, which is grounded in a thorough understanding of the normal stages and milestones of child development, combining craft based activities with the national curriculum, to provide work related learning, vocational qualifications, social and cultural programmes and living skills, all of which are distinguishing features of the Trust's Practical Skills Therapeutic Education. Through building meaningful relationships and undertaking real-life purposeful activities, young people can gain skills and confidence both in school and the wider community, whilst achieving a wide range of qualifications according to their interests and aptitude.

We also offer a diverse range of fun and enjoyable activities that will be available to enhance students' fitness, stamina and strength through exercise, sport and team projects. In addition, all students have access to a wide range of therapeutic activities, including speech and language therapy, art, massage and movement therapies.

The Brantwood admissions process is designed to ensure that the needs and difficulties of each young person are assessed appropriately. During assessment, your child will be included within the normal school day alongside other students, participating in art, craft, music, drama and practical activities supported by Brantwood teaching and support staff.

Currently the assessment process for day placements, including a comprehensive speech and language therapy assessment and report, is offered completely free of charge.

Admissions to Brantwood Specialist School are ongoing throughout the year. We hold open evenings, craft workshops and school tours every Thursday during term time and are happy to welcome all interested parties.

For more details call the school office on 01142 589 062 or visit www.rmt.org

Support group news

Sheffield Down Syndrome Support Group

Sheffield Down Syndrome Support Group consists of a small group of parents of children with Down Syndrome. There are no professional or employed staff, so our activities are moulded by the energy levels and resources of the parents involved.

As parents we meet a few times each year to chat, share experiences and offer advice. We can pass on hints about how to find help or access support.

We try and organise a couple of events each year for families to come together and enjoy activities such as streetdance, sports, cheerleading and baby yoga. We always try to include siblings at these events, so nobody feels left out.

This year we are very pleased that the National Down Syndrome Association are

holding one of their conferences on primary and secondary education here in Sheffield (on the 16th of May 2012). Anybody interested would be very welcome to come along. More details can be found at: <http://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/training/training-and-learning-opportunities-2011/education.html>

Over the last couple of years we have made sure that the Jessops hospital have up-to-date information leaflets for the Down Syndrome Association for newly diagnosed families. In addition, we are available to meet with new parents or talk on the phone if required.

Our next evening meeting is at the Red Deer, Pitt Street, on Thursday evening, 15th March. Grab a drink and come up, we'll be in the upstairs room from about 8pm for a couple of hours.

For more information, please contact **Clare and Rob** on **0114 2301853**, or email clareandrob@hotmail.com.



ST VINCENT'S SCHOOL

A Specialist School for Sensory Impairment and Other Needs



St Vincent's is a non-maintained school offering day, full and part time residential placements on a weekly basis. The school caters for pupils with a sensory impairment and other needs from the age of 4 to 19 years. Children are funded by their Local Authorities from across the country. We aim to enable each young person to achieve their full potential and a level of effective communication, social competence and personal independence. To achieve this all our students receive an individually modified and appropriate approach to their learning needs.

If you would like to know more about St Vincent's then please contact Julie Bradshaw, Family Liaison Officer.

Yew Tree Lane, West Derby, Liverpool L12 9HN. Tel: 0151 228 9968

Email: julieb@stvin.com, office@stvin.com, Website: www.stvin.com



Dates for your diary

March

Thursday 29 March, 10am-12.30pm,
Venue TBC

Workshop on personalisation

Run by officers from Sheffield City Council. Parents and carers are invited to find out what personalisation means, how using personalised budgets could make a difference to them, and how parents and officers can work together to make this happen.

April

Wednesday 18th April, 7.30-9pm,
Quaker Meeting House, 10 St James St.

Information evening about Direct Payments

Aimed at parents who are considering Direct Payments and want to find out more. An officer from the Council will be available to answer your questions.

Friday 20th April, 10am-12pm,
Quaker Meeting House, 10 St James St.

Health subgroup

This is a new group of parents who want to work with local health services (e.g. GPs, Children's Hospital, CAMHS, Speech and Language Therapy etc.) to ensure they meet the needs of disabled children and their families. All parents welcome, not just those of children with medical needs!

To ensure that we've got a big enough room, it would really help us if you could let us know in advance if you're planning to come along to any of these meetings.

May

Saturday 5th May, 12-4pm, 48 The Wicker
SADACCA Information day

We've teamed up with S.A.D.A.C.C.A (Sheffield and District Afro-Caribbean Community Association) to organise an information day about support for children with disabilities and additional needs and their families. Please visit our website for more information.

Friday 18th May, 10am-12pm,
Quaker Meeting House, 10 St James St.

Education subgroup

Please come along to our Education subgroup to talk to other parents about special educational needs (SEN), and help us influence education policy in Sheffield. This is a friendly and informal group, and new members are very welcome!

June

Friday 15th June, 10am-12pm,
Quaker Meeting House, 10 St James St.

Health subgroup

Information as before.

Friday 29th June, 10am-12pm,
Quaker Meeting House, 10 St James St.

Meeting about SEN transport

This is an opportunity for parents to meet with officers from the SEN Transport Service and influence how home-to-school transport is planned and delivered in Sheffield.

July

Friday 6th July, 10am -12pm,
Quaker Meeting House, 10 St James St.

Education subgroup

Information as before.

Sheffield Parent Carer Forum Application for Full Membership

Full membership is FREE and open to all parents and carers of disabled children and young people (0 - 19) who live in Sheffield or access services in Sheffield.

About you

First name Surname

Street and house number

Town/city Postcode

Email address (please print)

Home phone Mobile

Your ethnic group (optional)

About your disabled child/children

Child 1

Date of birth

Main disability

Other disabilities

School (name)

Child 2

Date of birth

Main disability

Other disabilities

School (name)

Child 3

Date of birth

Main disability

Other disabilities

School (name)

Please tick as appropriate :

Please add me to your email list.

Please add me to your text messaging list.

Please add me to your postal mailing list.

I am happy to take part in consultations:

by phone by email by post

I am interested in volunteering with the Parent Carer Forum.

Signature

Date

Please note: By signing this form you consent to the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum storing your information. We will not pass any of your details on to any third parties. Members of our postal mailing list will receive a regular newsletter. Members of our email list and text messaging list will receive news updates and events information. You are free to opt out of this service at any time.

Tear along here

Please glue here or seal with sellotape and fold along the dotted line

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Freepost RSLJ-ULCE-ECSU
Sheffield Parent Carer Forum
7 Bells Square
Sheffield
S1 2FY

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**Positive Change for our Children and Young People
with Disabilities and Special Educational Needs**