



Newsletter

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

Published by the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum
Written by parents, for parents!
Autumn 2016 - Issue 14 - FREE!

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About us

We are an independent group of over 1,200 parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities and/or special educational needs in Sheffield.

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:

St Mary's Community Centre
Bramall Lane
Sheffield
S2 4QZ

By phone: 0300 321 4721

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.



St Mary's Community Centre



National Network of Parent Carer Forums
'Our Strength is our Shared Experience'
www.nnpf.org.uk

This newsletter has been funded by the Trusthouse Charitable Foundation.

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- Full page £150
- 1/2 page £75
- 1/4 page £37.50

Charity discounts available. Please call us on **0300 321 4721** to discuss your requirements.

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NEWS

Fun in the sun

The Sheffield Parent Carer Forum's annual fun day attracted a record crowd this summer, with over 300 people enjoying a free day out in glorious sunshine.

Disabled children and their brothers and sisters took part in a wide range of inclusive activities, while their parents had a chance to relax and catch up with friends. The event saw the return of many old favourites from previous years: dance workshops, adapted cycles, the miniature train, and the ever-popular bungee trampolines.

New attractions included a climbing tower, provided free of charge by Activity Sheffield, and a petting zoo with exotic animals. Children jumped at the chance to cuddle a skunk, walk a meerkat, pet a python, and even hold a tarantula! Mia, aged, 10, took a shine to the racoon, which promptly fell asleep on her lap. She was a bit suspicious about the skunk, however: "They said it's had its stink gland removed, but I think it still smells," she reported.

Joel, aged 13, never got much further than the miniature train and the inflatable assault course. "He just loves it," said his mum. "Sitting at the top of the slide just makes him so happy, and here, nobody minds."

Many parents commented how low-key and friendly the event was – just right for children who don't cope well with crowds and noise. "Hillsborough Sports Arena is a great venue," said the Forum's Development Worker Eva Juusola. "Having such a large but enclosed space helps children feel safe and relaxed. You don't really notice how many people there are until lunchtime, when everyone descends on the buffet!"



"It's good to do activities where my son feels "part of it" and not different to other children. It's nice not to have to deal with people who don't get how difficult any activities can be."

She added: "We've been lucky to get a lot of support from local organisations – Gripple and Caremark allowed some of their employees to volunteer on the day, schools lent us their chairs, sports providers ran free activities, a fire crew dropped by ... Sheffielders really are a helpful bunch!"

But those contributions only go part of the way. "Without the funding from Sheffield City Council, this event simply couldn't happen," she advised. "What a brilliant investment this is, though: not only does it give disadvantaged children some wonderful memories, it also helps isolated families feel part of a community."

Would you like to be kept informed about events like these? Just fill in the membership form at the back of this newsletter, and opt into one of our mailing lists – it's completely free!

Forum funding boost

Like many other charities, we never know whether our core funding will continue after the end of the financial year. We are very grateful to Sheffield City Council and the Department for Education for continuing to fund us at the same level as last year – no small feat in this age of austerity!

However, this funding doesn't quite cover all of the activities that our members really value, such as the Christmas film and the printed newsletter.

Thankfully, the newsletter has been saved by a grant from the Trusthouse Charitable Foundation, which enables us to produce two print issues. Without this, you'd be reading this newsletter online, or not at all!

We are also very grateful to local manufacturing firm Gripple Ltd., who are once again sponsoring our popular Christmas film. The screening will take place at the Showroom Cinema – see page 23 for more information.

Do you have a flair for fundraising?

We are looking for a committed individual to help us raise funds for events and activities that our core funding won't cover.

This needn't be a huge time commitment – a couple of hours per week should be enough – and you don't need any previous experience, as full training and support will be provided.

To find out more, email enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk or call us on **0300 321 4721**.

Could you be our next Treasurer?

Our wonderful Treasurer John Vear (right), who has been keeping us on the straight and narrow for over five years, is hoping to retire "properly" in the near future. We are therefore looking for a dependable individual to gradually take over from John. Bookkeeping experience would be useful, but training in our systems will be provided.

Duties of the Treasurer include: keeping up to date with relevant legislation and ensuring that the organisation complies with it; attending meetings with funders; reporting quarterly to the Trustees; organising year-end statements of account with our auditors; supporting the trustees with financial planning, including producing an annual budget; and supporting

our staff with paying bills and recording the information in Quicken.

This is an unpaid role, but expenses (including childcare costs) will be reimbursed. The time commitment is approximately three hours per week, which includes attending two committee meetings per month (currently on Friday mornings and Wednesday afternoons).

If you are interested in this rewarding role, please email enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk or call us on **0300 321 4721**.



Photo competition - Calling all budding photographers!

We are looking for joyful, positive photos of children with any kind of additional needs to feature in our newsletter and other publications.

If you've got a great shot of your child or children, simply email it to us at the address below and be in with a chance of winning one of three £20 shopping vouchers.

You can enter up to four photos, which can be in black and white or colour. Images must be in JPEG format, with a maximum file size of 3MB.

Please note: You may only submit photos of children for whom you have parental responsibility, and you must obtain permission of any adults featured in your photos. By entering this competition, you grant the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum the right to use your photos in any of its publications (e.g. newsletter, website, Facebook, leaflets).

Please email your entries to enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk. The closing date is Friday 25th November 2016.

Forum website re-launched

If you've ever tried to navigate our website on a mobile phone, you've probably had a very frustrating experience – but not anymore! We've given our website a complete make-over, and it now works as well on a mobile or tablet as it does on a desktop computer.

The website still features an event calendar and all the latest news, plus we've updated the content and made it easier to search. So whether



you're looking for information on SEN funding, EHC Plans, MyPlans, support for siblings, help with home adaptations, financial support, support groups, or something else – www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk is the place to go!

New sleep website launched

The Family Fund has been working with partner organisations to create a new website called "Tired Out" - www.tiredout.org.uk. It is aimed at families raising disabled children and the professionals who support them.

The website features listings of sleep workshops across the UK, an information library with sleep tips and resources, and stories written by parents about their experiences.

Calling all parent support groups!

Did you know that there are around 150 parent carer forums in England? All of these forums are linked together through a national network, and collectively reach over 77,000 parents of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. There certainly is strength in numbers, and parent carer forums now play a key role in shaping policy both in their local areas and at a national level.

With over 1,400 members, our forum in Sheffield is one of the largest in the country, and we keep growing at a rate of around 180

new members every year. That may sound like a lot, but there are still many families in Sheffield whom we are not reaching.

That's why we've come up with the idea of an Affiliate Membership scheme – a loose network of parent-led parent support groups in Sheffield, working together to share information and give parent carers a bigger voice.

We will shortly be writing to support groups inviting them to join. In the meantime, if you run a parent support group (even if it's just a small and informal one!) and want more information or would like to express an interest in your group becoming an affiliate member, please contact us on **0300 3214721** or email enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Looking for a Personal Assistant for your child?

Disability Sheffield have recently launched a Personal Assistants (PA) register - go to disabilitysheffield.org.uk/pa-register. The website aims to bring together PAs looking for work, and people looking for

PAs. For a small fee, you can search a database of PA profiles available for work in your area and post your own advert.

Sheffield's Local Offer website also has several PA listings. Go to www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk, click on "Local Offer", and enter "Personal Assistant" into the "Keyword(s)" box.

Personal Budgets explained

If your child has one of the new Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans (which are replacing statements of SEN), then you have the right to request a Personal Budget. A Personal Budget allows you to control some of the money allocated to your child for the support set out in their EHC Plan. A personal budget can be provided as a notional budget held by the local authority or school/college, as a direct payment (cash payment), or a combination of the two.

We have been working with officers in the Council to develop information for parents that explains who can get a Personal Budget, how they work, and what they can be used for. This has now been published on the Local Offer website: <http://tinyurl.com/zl6zcr5>



Schools and toilet training

Eric, a national charity dedicated to helping children and teenagers with continence difficulties, has published a useful article which

explains schools' duties in relation to children who are not toilet trained. Go to: www.eric.org.uk/Schools/Toilet_Training

Short Break Grant programme now open!

Families with disabled children and young people aged 0-19 can now apply to Sheffield City Council for a one-off grant payment of up to £400 per family.

To qualify, parents must be resident in Sheffield and Sheffield City Council must have a responsibility for their child or young person (e.g. education).

The money can be used for anything that gives parents a break from their caring responsibilities. For example, you could use it for a family holiday, a gym membership, for a carer to support your child to access an activity, or for your child to attend a holiday/ weekend playscheme.

The deadline for applications is 31 January 2017, and the money must be spent by 31 March 2017.

You are automatically eligible for the grant if:

- your child receives the high rate care or high rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) OR
- your young person receives the enhanced rate care or enhanced rate mobility component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) OR
- you already receive another form of assessed short break, e.g. residential provision, SNIPS, direct payments



If none of these conditions applies you may still be eligible, but will need to ask a professional who knows your family to fill in an Additional Information Form. If you were awarded the grant in 2015/16 following the submission of additional information, you do not need to resubmit this provided it is less than 12 months old.

If you received the grant last year, you should have been sent an application form through the post. If you didn't receive the grant last year, or you prefer to complete the form on your computer, you can download an application form and guidance notes from the Council website: <http://tinyurl.com/q52he9w>.

If you have any questions about the grant, or you need a hardcopy of the application form, please contact the SEND Information Advice and Support Service (formerly Parent Partnership) on **0114 273 6009** or email disabilityinformationservices@sheffield.gov.uk

Ryegate review - get involved!

Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust has started work on a review of Child Development and Neurodisability services. In recent years there has been a significant increase in demand for these services, and this has had an impact on waiting times and access to appointments and therapy services.

The review aims to improve services for patients and families, so that they can access high-quality care and support when they really need it. It will look at how services are provided now, and different ways they could be provided in the future. This may include alternative ways of offering assessments, running clinics or consultations in different ways or locations, and developing new roles within teams.

It is important that any newly-designed services meet the needs of patients and carers. Working with children and their families will help make the very best use of the resources available. So if you have spent many difficult hours in waiting rooms at Ryegate, thinking that there



must be a better way of doing this, now is your chance!

To get involved, email pndproject@sch.nhs.uk or leave your details at Ryegate reception. Your name and contact details will be added to a distribution list and you will receive information about events to attend, surveys to complete and progress of the review.

Changes to SEN Transport

Over 1,100 pupils in Sheffield travel to and from school by SEN Transport every day. Most of them attend special schools, and many have very complex medical and behavioural needs. As a rule, these kids don't cope well with change!

However, feedback from our members suggests that a large number of children have started the new school year travelling on a different bus or taxi, with an unfamiliar driver and/or

escort. Transport officers have assured us that there has **not** been a large-scale reorganisation of transport arrangements; like every year, the service has had to make adjustments in response to children starting school, moving schools or leaving education.

If you have any concerns about your child's transport, please contact Transport Services on **0114 203 7570** or email transportservices@sheffield.gov.uk.

SEND statistics now available online

Something for you data junkies out there! The Local Government Association runs a website called "LG Inform" (<http://lginform.local.gov.uk>), which lets you view data about the performance of your local authority and compare it to that of other areas.

They've just added lots of data on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). For an overview of the SEND data available, go to <http://tinyurl.com/gllnv16>

Clearing the EHC plan backlog

Education Health and Care (EHC) plans were introduced in 2014 as part of a comprehensive overhaul of the special educational needs system. They replace statements of SEN, and all existing statements must be converted into EHC plans by April 2018.

Many local authorities have been struggling to complete these conversions in a timely fashion, and Sheffield is no exception. While most families received their plans more or less within the 20-week timescale prescribed by the government, others have been waiting for over a year, and there is now a significant backlog.

Karen Halford, who heads up the Council's SEN Assessment and Placement Team, explained how her team is addressing this issue:

"Sheffield is working hard to ensure all new EHC Plans and conversions are completed on time, and we believe we have already made improvements compared to the 2015 figures published earlier this year. Over the summer we have had a major focus on clearing the backlog of plans, and the latest data confirms the positive progress we have made."

"We have also appointed an external Plan Writing organisation who will start writing

a significant number of new plans from September onwards. This along with newly appointed SEND Managers will create further capacity in the team to completely clear any late EHC Plans and to ensure all future EHC Plans – both new and conversions – are completed on time."

But of course, it's not just about the timescales; parents have also raised concerns about the process of getting an EHC plan, and the content and quality of some plans.

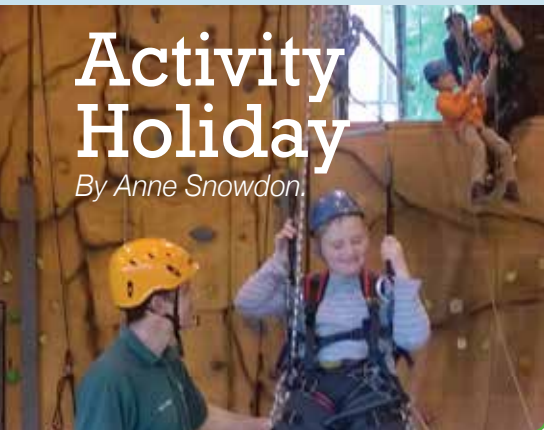
Parent Carer Forum representatives have been talking to parents about their experiences and feeding their views back to the Council. This is now starting to have an impact on staff training, internal processes, and new systems being developed.

Our reps also sit on a newly-established Quality Assurance group, which will carry out regular spot checks of EHC plans and feed any concerns back to the relevant departments.

What has your experience of the EHC process been? We'd love to hear from you!

Activity Holiday

By Anne Snowdon



craft. Normally horse riding would have been available as well, but the stables had a staffing issue. James enjoyed all the activities, but his unexpected favourite was bush craft – collecting wood, building and lighting a fire, toasting marshmallows and making popcorn. The things that he didn't like so much were putting on equipment (climbing harness, helmet and lifejacket) and waiting for some activities. The instructors were all friendly and very competent but probably most importantly they were patient and flexible.

The food was great with plenty of options. Hot and cold drinks and toast were available all day. After dinner in we swam in the pool and socialised with the other families in the large lounge/common room. James even tolerated the Saturday night disco!

Overall it was a very successful weekend and I am already saving up to go again. The Calvert Trust is quite pricey but it is worth keeping an eye on their website for last minute special offers (up to 50% off): www.calvert-trust.org.uk/family-breaks/family-holidays



If you are eligible you could use the Short Break Grant from Sheffield City Council towards the cost (see page 7).

Other organisations that may help with funding a family holiday can be found on the following websites:

www.familyholidayassociation.org.uk/apply-for-a-break/other-holiday-charities/

www.disability-grants.org/holiday-grants.html

At the beginning of the spring half term holiday I took my son James to the Lake District on an activity holiday. James has severe learning difficulties, epilepsy, autism spectrum disorder, balance and coordination problems and a well developed range of demand avoidance strategies! On the plus side he loves being outdoors, doesn't mind the weather and research had informed me that the centre had a fantastic swimming pool, so I was optimistic.

We had booked onto a family activity weekend with the Calvert Trust who specialise in outdoor adventure for people with disabilities. Their Lake District centre is in a beautiful location near Keswick. Accommodation is mostly in twin en-suite bedrooms, with some interconnecting rooms available. The centre has a variety of aids, including height-adjustable beds, cot sides, shower/toilet chairs, portable hoists etc.

We arrived on the Friday afternoon hot and bothered from the long drive in busy traffic and after a mercifully brief introduction from our course leader, we dumped our bags and headed straight for the pool. Luxury! Floating in warm water, with soothing music and fantastic views of lakes and hills.

Over the next two days we took part in: abseiling and indoor rock climbing; canoeing on Derwent Water; assault course and zip wire; and bush

In this section, we celebrate your children's successes – from the small steps that perhaps only you noticed, to the big milestones everyone can see. So, get snapping, get writing, and tell us what your wonderful children have been up to...



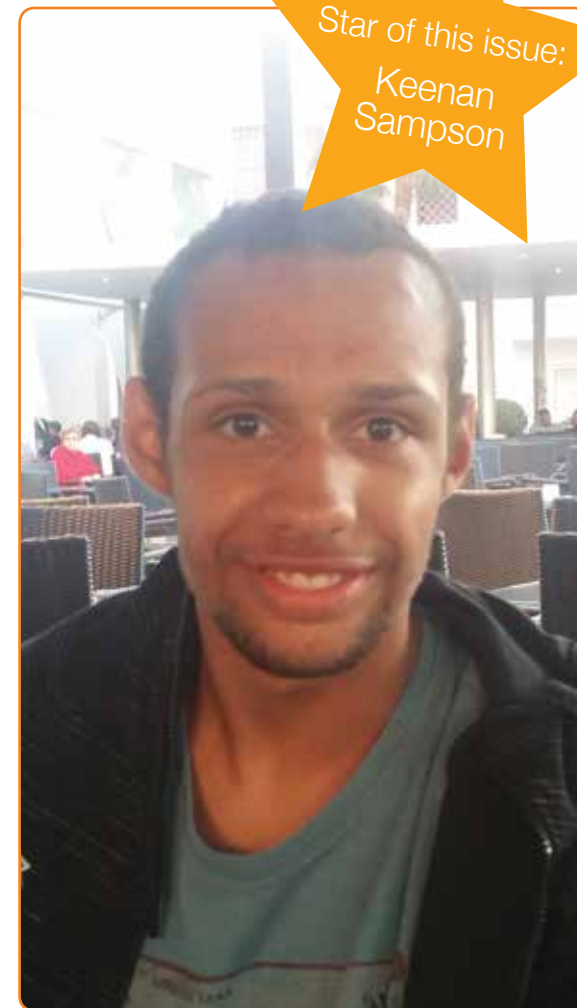
College student Keenan is currently taking part in Sheffield City Council's Independent Travel Training scheme (see <http://tinyurl.com/zuew4jm> for more information). Here's what his mum Jaqueline told us: "I think Keenan is doing a great job in learning this. I know it's taken a while, but he is getting there at his own pace."

"I would have never thought Keenan was able to do this but he has. Going to Peaks College has been great for him and it's not too far. He's had a few hiccups in the past, but he knows what to do now if he gets off at the wrong stop."

"Without his travel trainer Des Reid, Keenan wouldn't be where he is now and I'm so grateful. Keenan says he likes doing this, and I'm so pleased about it. He seems confident and knows what he has to do. I'm so proud of him because this will be the longest route he will be doing and I know he can do it. He just needs to talk to people if he needs help or gets lost. I'm so grateful for all the help Keenan is getting."



Star of this issue:
Keenan Sampson



Free cinema tickets to be won!

By Joanne Ferguson, SPCF trustee

Our children's disabilities can make it hard to access activities that many take for granted, like going to the cinema. Luckily in Sheffield we have a number of cinemas who hold inclusive or autism-friendly screenings on a regular basis (see box).

These are screenings in a relaxed environment, where people understand the needs of children with autism and their families. Lights are left on low, the sound is turned down, and there are no trailers or advertisements. People are free to move around and sit where they like, there is disabled access and there may be a chill-out zone.

I have been talking with Cineworld Sheffield about their autism-friendly screenings and how to raise awareness of them amongst families with children with autism and other disabilities.

The first immediate outcome is that the screenings have been moved to a different screen within Cineworld, with a less distracting entrance for our easily distracted young people.

The second, and very exciting, development is that Cineworld Sheffield are giving the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum four free tickets for each autism-friendly screening to give to parent carers. We are doing this through a monthly draw on the Forum's Facebook page. To be entered into the draw, simply to go www.facebook.com/SheffieldParentCarerForum and "like" the post about the next Cineworld autism-friendly film.

Our first draw winner was Thaeeba who won tickets for her family to see *The Secret Life of Pets* in July. She said it was the first time she had ever won anything, and her family really enjoyed the film. Since then our members Natalie and Mandie have won tickets for August (*The BFG*) and September (*Finding Dory*).

Keep an eye on the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum Facebook page to be in with a chance of winning tickets too. Even if you aren't lucky in the draw, come along to the cinema anyway - we are a very friendly and welcoming audience.

We send a big thank you to Cineworld Sheffield, particularly to Dave the Programme Manager, for their support.

If you have a Cinema Exhibitors Association (CEA) card for your disabled child or young person, then a carer accompanying them can attend the screening free of charge, at most cinemas. The CEA card is available for people who get Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP), and who are eight years old or over. It is valid for one year, there is a £6 processing fee and they

will need to see a copy of the awarding letter of the benefit. A photograph of the holder (the person with the disability) will be required. It can be applied for online, by post, or by a combination of the two methods. See www.ceacard.co.uk or call **023 9224 8545** for more information.

Many of these screenings are funded by the Dimensions group, a not-for-profit provider of services for people with autism. Dimensions also have a very useful social story on their website (<http://tinyurl.com/jsx4699>) about going to the cinema. This can be customised for each particular film and cinema visited, to help your child to know what to expect on a trip to the cinema.

Autism-friendly screenings in Sheffield

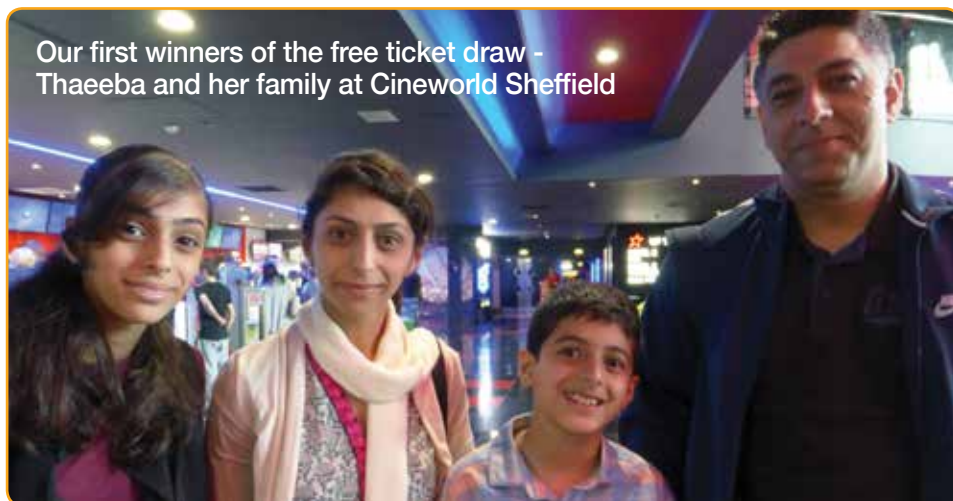
Cineworld Sheffield (www.cineworld.co.uk) has an autism-friendly screening on the first Sunday of each month at 11am.

The Odeon (www.odeon.co.uk) has an autism-friendly screening around the third Sunday of the month, and is currently trialling autism-friendly screenings for older audiences once a month.

The Showroom Cinema (www.showroomworkstation.org.uk) has its Kids Inclusive Cinema, KIC Start, on the third Sunday of the month at 1pm.

Vue Meadowhall (www.myvue.com) hold their autism-friendly performances on the last Sunday of every month at 10am.

Details of these performances, and prices, are on the individual cinema websites, although sometimes it can be a little difficult to find the details - ring the cinema if in doubt. Prices vary, from normal prices to subsidised prices.



Our first winners of the free ticket draw - Thaeeba and her family at Cineworld Sheffield

Sparkle Sheffield

Sparkle was set up in September 2014 by parents of children with autism to support other families going through similar challenges, and over the past two years we have grown and grown!

We are experts living with our own autistic children and we understand the pressures. You're not alone! That is ultimately our message, we're here to give support and guidance to families who are feeling isolated and their voices unheard.

We provide a supportive space for parents to talk freely and receive a caring hand of understanding. We know what it's like dealing with outside agencies and schools and we want the opportunity of sharing our experiences with you and your family.

Find out lots more on our website -

www.sparklesheffield.co.uk or give us a call on 0114 386 3313 or email

info@sparklesheffield.co.uk. We have our own app 'Sparkle Sheffield' and we can also be contacted through Facebook at Sparkle Sheffield. Please get in touch!



Sparkle has had a very busy summer! You may have seen us at Sheffield by the Seaside at The Peace Gardens. As we're the Lord Mayor of Sheffield's chosen charity of 2016/17, we were graciously granted a beach hut where we spoke to many new and familiar faces, spreading the Sparkle word!

Our second annual Autism Fayre was held on 8th and 9th September at Norfolk Heritage Park! Our professional guest speakers gave a range of informative seminars for the lovely families of Sparkle! Our friend Mark Brown – The Autism Whisperer – was just one of our inspiring speakers, discussing puberty, toileting and behaviour techniques, all issues most of us find difficult discussing with our children. We also arranged for one-to-one discussions with Mark so our families could ask their own questions regarding autism. Mark has also kindly led two seminars just for dads and male relatives!

We're holding a charity fundraising ball at Chatsworth House on 29th October to raise awareness of autism and Sparkle. Our lovely sponsors HTC WOLFFKRAN are giving away 2 tickets! Find out how to enter the raffle on our website. You COULD go to the ball!



Do you run a support group that could use some free publicity?

Please contact us if you'd like to be featured in our next newsletter!

Mayfield Alpacas



By Maria Fernandes, SPCF Trustee

If you venture to Mayfield Valley in Sheffield, don't be surprised if you see alpacas roaming the fields! For those who don't know, Mayfield Alpaca Farm was established in 1998 and in 2011, the Mayfield Alpacas Animal Park was opened on the same site.

The park has an outdoor area of fields that house alpacas, reindeer, pigs, goats, ponies, rheas and many other animals. There is an indoor small animal section that houses meerkats and rodents. The indoor section also has a café.

The park has a wide selection of small animals ranging from rabbits and guinea pigs to the more exotic snakes, raccoons and skunks. These small animals can be handled by prior arrangement with the park.

The animal park is committed to making itself as disabled friendly as possible, and I caught up with one of the managers, Keeley, to find out more.

Keeley, who is a qualified college lecturer, explained that they try to be as flexible as possible to meet disabled people's needs. Parents and carers are welcome to contact the animal park before a visit to chat to staff about any particular needs. There is no charge for a carer who accompanies a disabled person.

Keeley explained that as some of the park's outdoor terrain might be difficult for some physically disabled children, the park can bring the alpacas, ponies and small animals to the children.

The building has a separate entrance to the small animals, allowing children who struggle with crowds or sound sensitivities access



to a private room where they can handle the small animals.

The private room is also used for parties, so contacting the alpaca farm in advance, rather than on the day, is advisable.

For children who struggle to wait or queue, food and drinks can be pre-ordered. There is also outdoor seating and tables if children can't cope with noises inside the café.

The animal park runs a volunteering scheme that is open to disabled young people over the age of 16. The volunteers look after the animals or just enjoy the tactile experiences that the animals and farm have to offer. There is also a forest area and volunteers can make crafts and cook on fires. Children younger than 16 can volunteer, if the volunteering is organised through school.

For more information, please contact:
Mayfield Alpacas Animal Park
Fulwood Lane, Sheffield S10 4LH
(when using satnav, enter postcode S11 7TT)
Call: 01142 630033
Email: info@mayfieldanimalpark.co.uk



School Exclusions

National statistics show that pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are nine times more likely to be excluded from school than their peers, and account for 70 per cent of all permanent exclusions.



This seems very unfair. Wouldn't it be reasonable to expect schools to make allowances for the fact that these children are often less able to control their behaviour?

Of course, many schools do that. But even the most inclusive ones struggle to reconcile the conflicting demands placed on them – to include an ever-increasing number of children with SEND on a shrinking budget, whilst driving up attainment and tackling bad behaviour at the same time.

Behind every exclusion, there's a back story. There may be a child whose additional needs went unidentified and unmet for far too long, but also classmates who had their learning disrupted, teachers who feel out of their depth and unsupported, and parents who are struggling to hold down a job because they keep getting called into school to take their child home.

Exclusion rates of pupils with SEND vary enormously between local authorities, and even between neighbouring schools – because they all have slightly different behaviour policies. In Sheffield, pupils in special schools are much less

likely to be excluded than pupils with SEND in mainstream schools.

Types of exclusions

There are two types of formal exclusions: **fixed-term exclusions** (suspensions), where a pupil is not allowed in school for a specific period of time, and **permanent exclusions** (expulsions), where a pupil is removed from the school roll and has to be educated elsewhere, usually in a Pupil Referral Unit. Only the head teacher has the power to exclude a pupil. Any exclusion, even for a short period of time, must be formally recorded and follow the correct procedure.

"Informal" or **"unofficial"** exclusions, such as sending pupils home to "cool off" after an incident, are unlawful, regardless of whether they occur with the agreement of parents. If you believe that your child has been unlawfully excluded, you may want to make a complaint to the school's governing body.

The use of **part-time timetables** is not illegal, but should only be used as a temporary measure in exceptional circumstances to meet a pupil's needs (i.e. NOT as a disciplinary measure, or because the school doesn't have enough support staff). There should be an action plan with

timescales for supporting the pupil back into full-time education.

"Internal exclusions", where a pupil is removed from class for disciplinary reasons and sent to an alternative location on the school site (e.g. another classroom or a "removal room"), do not count as formal exclusions, and the legislation and guidance on exclusions do not apply. Schools don't have to report these exclusions to the local authority, so they don't appear in the statistics, and there is little external scrutiny. If your child is given frequent internal exclusions, it may be advisable to meet with the SENCO to review the support your child is getting in the classroom.

What the law says

The Government has published guidance on exclusions (www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion) which all maintained schools and pupil referral units must follow, unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so. Academies must also have regard to this guidance and should not depart from it without good reason.

The Equality Act 2010 requires schools to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities. This might mean disregarding behaviour that is a direct consequence of a pupil's disability, making reasonable adjustments to manage such behaviour, or considering alternative, more appropriate punishments. For example, if a child only understands a punishment if it immediately follows the behaviour, then an exclusion would not be an effective sanction.

Schools should not be applying their behaviour policy rigidly to ALL pupils. Excluding a disabled pupil for behaviour which arises as a consequence of his or her disability may amount to disability discrimination.

What happens when a pupil is excluded?

If the exclusion is **fixed term**, your child's school remains responsible for educating them. The school should set and mark work for the first five days, to make sure your child doesn't fall behind. If the exclusion is longer than five school days, the school must arrange suitable full-time education from the sixth day, e.g. at a pupil referral unit. You must make sure that your child is not present in a public place during school hours for the first five days of the exclusion, or you could be fined. At the end of the exclusion, the school and family have a reintegration meeting and a plan is discussed to support the pupil in being successfully reintegrated back into school. This could involve many of the options listed below.

If the exclusion is **permanent**, the school remains responsible for the child's education for the first five days after they've been excluded. On the sixth day, the responsibility passes to the local authority and a place will be offered at the Sheffield Inclusion Centre (Pupil Referral Unit).

Preventing exclusions

Government guidance states that, if a school has concerns about the behaviour, or risk of exclusion, of a child with additional needs, then it should consider what additional support or alternative placement may be required. This could mean:

- Involving a specialist, e.g. requesting help from the Autism Team, from a special school or from an Educational Psychologist;
- Completing a MyPlan, or requesting a statutory assessment for an EHC Plan (see www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk for more information);
- Involving the Community Youth Teams;
- Involving the Multi-Agency Support Teams (MAST);
- If the pupil has a statement or an EHC Plan, requesting an early annual review or interim/emergency review;

- Educating the pupil off-site to help improve their behaviour, e.g. by spending one day per week with a specialist provider. In such cases parents must be given clear information about the placement (why, when, where and how it will be reviewed). Reviews must allow all parties to establish if the placement is achieving its objectives and the pupil is benefiting from it;
- A “managed move”, where the pupil makes a fresh start at another school with the agreement of all parties.

In all of this, good home-school communication is essential. Parents have a key role to play in helping school staff understand why a particular behaviour occurs. When it comes to managing behaviour, consistency is key; everyone needs to apply the same strategies.

Challenging an exclusion

To be legitimate, an exclusion must be lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate. If the exclusion is permanent, it must also be in response to a serious breach, or persistent breaches, of the school's behaviour policy; or a situation where keeping the child in school would seriously harm their own education or welfare, or

that of other pupils. Government guidance states that head teachers should, as far as possible, avoid excluding permanently any pupil with a statement of SEN or Education Health and Care (EHC) plan.

If you think that your child's exclusion is unfair, you may want to challenge the decision. If it's a **fixed-term exclusion**, you should talk to the head teacher in the first instance. If that doesn't help, you can ask the school's governing body to “reinstate” your child. You can also do this after the exclusion has happened, to get a note added to your child's school record indicating that the exclusion was not justified. If it's a **permanent exclusion**, there is a formal process that must be followed.

National charity IPSEA have published useful exclusion support sheets which are tailored to a range of situations; you can download them from <http://tinyurl.com/hczq3t2>.

If you believe that the exclusion (fixed-term or permanent) has occurred as a result of disability discrimination, you can make a claim to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability). This must be done within six months of the exclusion.



A parent's perspective

“My daughter does not have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, but it has become clear over the years that sensory issues are really important; loud concerts, busy corridors, being touched on her head or shoulder all can cause a meltdown.

Ball sports have always been a challenge for fear of being hit by a flying ball; so a volleyball lesson in an echoing gym was a kaleidoscope of noise and touch.

My daughter said she did not want to play volleyball and became upset and refused to join in. She was encouraged by her teaching assistant and teacher to join in, so she ran for the door. A member of staff tried to stop her leaving, and so she kicked them on the shin. As a consequence of her hurting a member

of staff she received a formal exclusion from school.

Hindsight is easy, but I wish they had listened to her in the first place, kicking was her last resort. I wish they had understood how painful sensory overload is. I wish her teaching assistant had just gone out of the room with her to calm down. The exclusion from school made her distraught, maybe she learnt from it but I suspect a similar incident in a special school would have been handled differently. This is a difficult area for mainstream schools, but as well as training to avoid situations like this, we need to be talking about appropriate sanctions.”

Sheffield parent of a young person with a disability

Information, advice and support

Exclusions are stressful and upsetting, so get all the help and support you can. Some good places to go for help are:

SENDIAS (formerly Parent Partnership) provides impartial and confidential information, advice and support to parents/carers of children and young people with SEND: email disabilityinformationservices@sheffield.gov.uk or call **0114 273 6009**

The National Autistic Society runs a School Exclusions Service; email schoolexclusions@nas.org.uk or call **0808 800 4104**

The Down's Syndrome Association has an Inclusion Worker who can advise you; email info@downs-syndrome.org.uk or call **0333 1212 300**

IPSEA have a range of exclusion support sheets tailored to different situations (<http://tinyurl.com/>

[hczq3t2](http://tinyurl.com/hczq3t2)). You can book a 30-minute telephone advice session with one of their trained volunteers via www.ipsea.org.uk

The School Exclusion Project provides free advice and free representation to challenge permanent exclusion: <https://schoolexclusionproject.com>

The Coram Children's Legal Centre is a charity that specialises in law and policy affecting children and young people: go to www.childrenslegalcentre.com or call **08088 020 008**.

The local authority's Exclusions Team provides support around permanent exclusions; contact Genine Nuttall, Exclusion and Reintegration Officer, on **0114 2736197** or genine.nuttall@sheffield.gov.uk, or Sarah Kelly, Complex Case Worker, on **0114 2735750** or sarah.kelly@sheffield.gov.uk

Activities for children and young adults with additional needs

When

Friday 18th November 2016
10am-2.30pm
(registration and coffee from 9.30am)

Where

St Mary's Community Centre,
Bramall Lane, Sheffield S2 4QZ

FREE LUNCH provided! (booking essential)

Does your child spend a lot of time at home, glued to a screen?

Do you struggle to find clubs that can cater for your child's needs?

Would you like to employ someone to support your child, but don't know where to start?

A free information day for parents and carers. Organised by parents, for parents! Professionals and practitioners also welcome!

If your child has additional needs, it can be harder for them to access clubs and activities in the community. They might need extra support, a smaller group, a quieter venue or staff with specific skills. This event is about helping you find the right activities for YOUR child.

Our information marketplace is a great opportunity to find out what's available and make contact with sports and leisure providers who specialise in supporting children with additional needs. You'll be able pick up leaflets and talk to staff and volunteers from around 30 local organisations.

We'll also be running several workshops about the help that's available from Sheffield City Council:

Short breaks and respite services for disabled children

An overview of the services available, who they're for, and how to access them.

Personalisation

Would you prefer to get a cash payment instead of a social care service? Find out how to apply for a Direct Payment and what you can use it for.

Getting ready for the adult social care assessment

Important information for parents of young people aged 16+ who may need help from adult social care.

How to Book

Please book online if you possibly can – it helps us reduce admin costs! Go to:

<http://specialneedsactivities.eventbrite.co.uk>

If you don't have internet access, fill in the reply slip below and post to:

Freepost RTBJ-SHTR- RRGJ
Sheffield Parent Carer Forum,
St. Mary's Church & Community Centre,
Bramall Lane, SHEFFIELD S2 4QZ.

Activities for children and young adults with additional needs BOOKING FORM

I am a parent Carer (free)

I am a professional (include cheque for £20 made payable to: Sheffield Parent Carer Forum)

Name: Tel. (Mobile):

Postal Address:

Postcode

Email address:

Do you have any special dietary requirements?

Do you have any access needs? (e.g. wheelchair access, interpreter)

Please select a MAXIMUM of TWO workshops you would like to attend:

Short breaks and respite services for disabled children

Personalisation (Direct Payments)

Getting ready for the adult social care assessment

Dates for your diary

All meetings will be held at:

St Mary's Community Centre,
Bramall Lane, Sheffield S2 4QZ
unless otherwise indicated.

To ensure we have a big enough room...

It would really help us if you could let us know in advance if you are planning to come along to any of these meetings. Please see inside front cover for contact details.

For more event information

please visit our website:
www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/
events

October

Friday 7 October, 10-11.30am

Introduction to Makaton

Anna Westaway, Speech and Language Therapist and Regional Makaton Tutor, will give an introduction to Makaton signing and teach you some basic signs relating to home life and school/nursery. This session is suitable for parents wanting to learn some simple signs to help them communicate with their children. It may be particularly useful for children who are just starting school or nursery. **Booking essential.**

October continued

Monday 10 October, 10am-12pm

Dyslexia workshop

Led by an Educational Psychologist and a SENCO, this practical workshop is aimed at parents who suspect that their child may have dyslexia, or who have recently received a diagnosis. Find out what help is available in Sheffield and how to access it, how schools are expected to support learners with dyslexia, and practical tips for supporting your child at home. **Booking essential.**

Thursday 13 October, 10.30am-12pm

Coffee morning

Come and chat to other parents and carers. Tea, coffee and CAKE! Pop in for a few minutes or stay for the whole session – no need to book. We welcome all parent carers, whatever their children's needs, whether diagnosed or undiagnosed, mild or severe. Pre-schoolers and home-educated children welcome.

Thursday 20 October, 12-2pm

Meet the Autism Team

The Autism Team supports mainstream nurseries, schools and colleges to meet the needs of learners with autism and related conditions. This meeting is an opportunity for parents to learn more about their work and provide feedback.

November

Thursday 3 November, 10am-12pm

Health subgroup meeting

Come and join our small group of enthusiastic parents who want to improve local health services for children with disabilities. All parents welcome, not just those of children with medical needs!

Tuesday 8 November, 10.30am-12pm

Coffee morning

See previous.

Friday 11 November, 10am-12pm

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

This is an open meeting, all welcome! After the AGM part (chair's report, election of trustees, annual accounts) we will hear updates from our parent reps about the work they have been involved in.

Friday 18 November, 9.30am-2.30pm

Information day: Activities for children and young adults with additional needs

Does your child spend too much time at home, glued to a screen? Find something better for them to do – visit a range of information stalls from specialist sports and leisure providers and find out how they can support your child. There will also be workshops on short breaks and respite, transition to adult social care, and direct payments. See page 20 for more information.

November continued

Friday 25 November, 10am-12pm

Education subgroup meeting

Please come along to our Education subgroup to talk to other parents about special educational needs (SEN), swap useful information, and help us influence education policy - particularly the implementation of the SEN reforms - in Sheffield. This is a friendly and informal group, and new members are always welcome!

December

Thursday 8 December, 10.30am-12pm

Coffee morning

Come and chat to other parents and carers. Tea, coffee and CAKE! Pop in for a few minutes or stay for the whole session – no need to book. We welcome all parent carers, whatever their children's needs, whether diagnosed or undiagnosed, mild or severe. Pre-schoolers and home-educated children welcome.

Saturday 10 December, 9.30am-12pm

Christmas film

Thanks to funding from Gripple Ltd. we have once again booked the Showroom Cinema for a private film screening. The film (title to be confirmed) will be shown without trailers and with the lights dimmed, the sound reduced and a separate room for relaxation during the screening. Free refreshments will be served before the film. Booking essential. Invitations will be sent to our members in November – respond quickly to avoid disappointment!

Useful Contacts

ADHD Support Service Run by Family Action, this service provides information, support and training for families with a child with ADHD	0114 2750981
Autism Service* Supports mainstream schools to meet the needs of pupils with autism and related conditions	0114 273 6567 (helpline, 1-4pm) 0114 273 6412 (office) moira.bolan@sheffield.gov.uk
Becton Hospital and Outreach Team* (formerly Home and Hospital Education Service). Provides education for children who are unable to attend school for medical or related reasons	0114 255 7679 schofields@becton.sheffield.sch.uk
Carers in Sheffield Offers information, advice and a range of services for adult carers caring for an adult (over 18)	0114 272 8362 support@sheffieldcarers.org.uk
Child Disability Register A local register of disabled children aged 0-19. Join up to receive the termly newsletter "What's Going On"	0114 271 7626 martina.capaldi@sch.nhs.uk
Children with Disabilities Team* Social work team for children and young people with disabilities	0114 273 5368
Contact-a-Family National charity which provides information and advice on any aspect of caring for a disabled child, including education and benefits	0808 808 3555 helpline@cafamily.org.uk
Core Assets Provides independent information and support to families in relation to EHC plans (both for new entrants and for those converting from a statement/LDA)	0800 028 8455 isreferrals@coreassets.com
Direct Payments Team* Provides support, advice and guidance relating to direct payments	0114 273 5985
Early Years Inclusion Service* Works with young children (0-5+) with additional needs both in their homes and in settings	0114 273 6411 elizabeth.hodkin@sheffield.gov.uk
Educational Psychology Service* Works with families and staff in educational settings to support the education and development of children and young people	0114 250 6800 stuart.williams1@sheffield.gov.uk
Hearing Impaired Service* Works with deaf and hearing-impaired children and their families	0114 273 6410 caroline.chettleburgh@sheffield.gov.uk
Independent Travel Training* Trains young people with disabilities/learning difficulties to use public transport to get to school, college and work placements	0114 205 3542 jill.siddall@sheffield.gov.uk Indetravel@sheffield.gov.uk

IPSEA National charity providing free legally-based advice on educational issues for parents of children with SEN	Book a call-back via www.ipsea.org.uk
Local offer A website with information about support and services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in our area	www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk
Paces Sheffield A leading specialist centre for children with cerebral palsy and other motor disorders	0114 284 4488 info@pacessheffield.org.uk
Portage Home Visiting Service* Home-visiting educational service for children under three with additional support needs and their families	0114 273 6411 debbie.marshall@sheffield.gov.uk
Ryegate Children's Centre Assessment, diagnosis and therapy for children and young people with developmental and neurological problems	0114 271 7651
SENDIAS (formerly Parent Partnership Service)* Provides information, advice and support to parents of children with SEN/disabilities in relation to education, health, social care, leisure, disability benefits and support groups	0114 273 6009 disabilityinformationservices@sheffield.gov.uk
SEN Assessment and Placement Team* Deals with statutory assessments, statements/EHC plans, annual reviews and specialist placements	0114 273 6394 ed-sensupportteam@sheffield.gov.uk
Sheffield Children's Hospital	0114 271 7000 sheffield.childrenshospital@sch.nhs.uk
Sheffield Futures Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) Team Supports young people with learning difficulties & disabilities to make the transition into further education and employment	0114 201 2800 enquiries@sheffieldfutures.org.uk
Sheffield Young Carers Offers support to children and young people (8-25 years) who provide care for a family member, e.g. a disabled sibling	0114 258 4595 information@sheffieldyoungcarers.org.uk
Sibling Support Group Support group for children who have a sibling with a disability	0114 233 2908 simone.harper@burtonstreet.org.uk
Special Needs Inclusion Playcare Service (SNIPS)* Helps disabled children aged 5-18 access out of school activities / clubs to give their parents a break from caring	0114 273 4017 SnipsBusinessSupport@sheffield.gov.uk
Transport Services* Provides transport services including home-to-school transport for pupils with SEN	0114 203 7570 transportservices@sheffield.gov.uk
Vision Support Service* Supports children with a visual impairment and their families	0114 294 1201 joanne.hogg@sheffield.gov.uk
Within Reach Sport and physical activity for disabled people of all ages	0114 273 4266 activity.sheffield@sheffield.gov.uk

* Part of Sheffield City Council

Future in Mind

Transforming mental health services

Future in Mind is a government initiative which aims to transform the way child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) are delivered nationally.

It follows the publication of a report in March 2015, which found that nearly three quarters of children and young people with mental health issues did not receive appropriate mental health services. The report put forward the case for a radical transformation of children's mental health services in England.

The government has made additional funding available to enable local areas to deliver the transformation programme.

So what's happening here in Sheffield?

We are working to transform CAMHS so that services are delivered in the community and outside hospital settings. For families, this means that specialist mental health services should be easier to access and provide a better experience for children and young people, as we only want children and young people going into hospital when they really need to.

A large amount of work is also taking place in schools, with the aim of improving the ability of schools to support their pupils' emotional wellbeing and mental health, and



to improve the links between schools and specialist mental health services. In the past year, Sheffield has been part of a national pilot called CAMHS School Link, which has seen 10 schools in Sheffield trialling "in reach" from CAMHS. In practice, this has involved clinical staff from CAMHS working in schools to improve their mental health provision by delivering training, and recommending changes to schools' working practices to better support mental health. The pilot has been well received by Sheffield schools and highlighted as good practice nationally. When this work is rolled out to other schools in Sheffield, families should see improved communication between schools and other services, and ultimately better support for children and young people in school to support their mental health. Over the next four years we will continue to progress our transformation, and we will be involving parents and carers in this work. Sheffield CCG and Sheffield City Council are looking to work with a range of parent/carers groups, including the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum, to ensure this happens.

If you would like to find out more about Future in Mind, please visit www.sheffieldccg.nhs.uk/our-projects/emotional-wellbeing-and-mental-health-strategy.htm

*By Matthew Peers,
Commissioning Manager Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health, Sheffield City Council*

Sheffield Parent Carer Forum Application for Full Membership

Full membership is free and open to all parents and carers of children and young people (aged 0-25 years) with special educational needs and/or disabilities 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 by SMS

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

2



Freepost RTBJ-SHTR-RRGJ
Sheffield Parent Carer Forum
St. Mary's Church Community Centre
Bramall Lane
SHEFFIELD
S2 4QZ

Fold along here



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