



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 2017 - Issue 16 - FREE!

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About us

We are an independent group of over 1,400 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.



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@ShefParentForum



St Mary's Community Centre



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

This newsletter has been funded by
Trusthouse Charitable Foundation and
Bailey Thomas Charitable Fund.

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- 1/2 page £75
- 1/4 page £37.50

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A very warm welcome to our **Autumn newsletter!**

Back to school with a bang!

I am sure that for many of you, the beginning of September was filled with mixed emotions – relief that the holidays are over, sadness that they've ended, fear of a new school year, excitement that your child has reached the next stage in their life, dread of your child transitioning to secondary school, pride over how they have coped with it all ... the list goes on. Whatever you're feeling, we hope that you are comforted by the knowledge that we are here to support and assist you.

We know that for many families, the special educational needs system still isn't working. Change is not happening fast enough, and many parents are frustrated and angry. We continue to gather the issues raised by parents and feed them back to the relevant people in the council and the health service. Our parent representatives attend many meetings where they hold services to account and regularly challenge their ways of working. Parent carer forums were set up to work in this way in order to influence policies and make families' lives that little bit easier. For more information about how we work, please turn to page 20/21. Please do contact our office if you have any burning issues. The more parental views we have, the better.



There are exciting and busy times ahead for the Forum. Our JumpStars trampolining sessions have been a real success and will continue for the foreseeable future. We have other exciting events planned, such as a low-noise fireworks party, a Christmas film and our annual information day. You can find a list of upcoming events on pages 22 & 23.

I hope you enjoy this issue. We regularly publish news and information on Facebook, Twitter and our website, so please follow us and keep in touch.

Best wishes,

Katie Monette
Chair



Disabled kids enjoy fun day out

"Highlight of the summer holidays!"

On the 18th of August, 79 families – almost 300 people – came to Hillsborough Sports Arena to attend our sixth family fun day.

There was a wide range of activities for all ages and abilities, including bungee trampolines, bouncy castles, a petting zoo with exotic animals, drumming, dance and animation workshops, and a variety of sports and craft activities. While the children played, their parents got a chance to relax ... helped by the fact that, for once, there was no lunch to prepare, as the lovely staff at Hillsborough Sports Arena had taken care of that!

"We appreciate the opportunity to attend the family day. We miss out on so many of these things, fairs etc. I'm so happy we can have a great day here."

Many parents commented how relaxed and friendly the event was – just right for children who don't cope well with crowds and noise.

"Really good event, involving groups of people from all communities."

The weather held up until about an hour before closing time, when it started to rain. As the

crowd started to thin, wet children continued to huddle around the bungee trampolines and the animals. Clearly, those were the star attractions, and we'll be sure to invite them again next year!

"My son really enjoyed it, it's a lovely atmosphere where he can feel comfortable being himself."



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!

Win **FREE** cinema tickets!

Did you know that you can win free cinema tickets, just by posting a brief comment on our Facebook page?

Every month, we give away four cinema tickets, donated by our friends at Cineworld. The tickets are for their disability-friendly screenings, which take place on the first Sunday of each month at 11am.

To enter the draw, simply follow our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/SheffieldParentCarerForum) and add a comment to the post about the next Cineworld disability-friendly film when it appears in your

news feed. Your chances of winning are around 1 in 40 – much better than the lottery! The draw is open to members and non-members, but it is easier to contact winners if they are members because we already have their contact details.

For more information about disability-friendly film screenings, go to:

www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/resources/leisure

www.dimensions-uk.org/families/autism-friendly-environments/autism-friendly-screenings

Cupcakes for a cause

We were one of the beneficiary charities of the Nether Edge Farmer's Market held in September.

Nether Edge Farmer's Market is a Sunday market which regularly attracts over eighty stallholders and many hundreds of visitors to this area of Sheffield. It is run entirely by volunteers, and contributions from stallholder fees are donated to local charities.



We ran our own stall at the market and raised over £200 by selling cakes, biscuits, pakoras and paintings – all produced by our own volunteers and staff, and their children!

The money raised will go towards a special low-noise fireworks party on 7 November (see page 22 for details).

Family Wellbeing Information Day



Organised by parents, for parents!
Professionals & practitioners also welcome!

A FREE event for parents and carers of children and young people with additional needs.

FREE LUNCH provided!
(booking essential)

WHEN:

Friday 17th November 2017
9.30am-2.30pm

WHERE:

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

HOW TO BOOK:

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

Go to: <http://buytickets.at/sheffieldparentcarerforum/116453>

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

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



Fun and information!



Disabled children face many additional stresses, and are more likely to experience problems with their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Caring for a disabled child can also affect the wellbeing of their parents and siblings.



So what can you do to support the resilience of ALL family members – including your own? Come along to our information day to find out!

- Browse our **information marketplace** to find out what's available in Sheffield and make contact with organisations who can support your family's wellbeing. You'll be able to pick up leaflets and talk to staff and volunteers from around 30 local organisations.
- Take part in **taster sessions for stress-busting activities** like dancing, singing, art, yoga and meditation. If you've always wanted to give these a try but felt uncomfortable about joining a class, this is your chance. No special talents required!
- Attend **workshops** on specific topics, like "Keeping your relationships strong" or "Managing stress". Return home armed with ideas and strategies to try straight away!



Family Wellbeing Information Day Booking form

- ☐ I am a parent carer (free)
☐ I am a professional (include cheque for £20 made payable to: Sheffield Parent Carer Forum)

Would you like to have lunch? Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you have any special dietary requirements? (vegetarian and halal options provided)

Egg free ☐ Dairy free ☐ Gluten free ☐

Name:

Is there anything we can do to make this event more accessible for you?

Tel. (mobile):

Postal address:

Email address:

Do you give us permission to take photos of you at this event and use them in our publicity? Yes ☐ No ☐

Childcare funding changes



This year, the government introduced a raft of reforms to childcare funding. Some of these will be of particular interest to parents of young children with disabilities:

30 hours of free childcare

From September 2017, working parents are entitled to an extra 15 hours of free childcare for three- and four-year-olds. This is on top of the existing 15 hours of free early learning for all parents of three- and four-year-olds, and some two-year-olds. (Two-year-olds qualify for 15 hours of free childcare if they receive Disability Living Allowance or have an EHC plan.) For more information, please visit the Sheffield Directory: <https://tinyurl.com/ybfnffma>.

Disability Access Fund

This is money given to childcare providers to help support three- and four-year-olds with special educational needs and/or disabilities in their setting. Providers get one payment of £615 per year per eligible child. Children are eligible if they access free early learning and

receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Early years providers are responsible for identifying eligible children – so make sure they know if your child gets DLA! For more information, please visit the Sheffield Directory: <https://tinyurl.com/yawha6w4>.

SEN Inclusion Fund

Every local authority must now have an SEN Inclusion Fund to support early years providers in meeting the needs of individual children with SEN. To access this fund, providers should contact the council's Early Years Inclusion Team (**tel. 0114 273 6411**). A member of the team will carry out an assessment and advise on any additional support needs, including additional funding.

More information

The Family and Childcare Trust has published a comprehensive guide to childcare for families with disabled children. Download it from: <https://tinyurl.com/y8e9n52z>.

Do you have concerns about your toddler's speech development?

Can your toddler understand simple commands or instructions like "sit down" or "give me your cup", without you giving them extra clues by pointing or gesturing?

Does your toddler use recognisable single words (at least 20-50 single words by the age of 2 years)?

If you have any concerns regarding your child's speech and language development, the Sheffield Speech and Language Therapy Service can help. Therapists now run monthly drop-in clinics at nine Children's Centres, where you can get advice and/or an initial assessment.



Contact your local Children's Centre for information about clinic dates. Please note, drop-in clinics are for children who are NOT currently on the service's caseload.

Speech and language therapists also run weekly Talking Toddler groups at several Children's Centres. Your child needs a referral to attend these. Please speak to your Health Visitor, or contact the Sheffield Speech and Language Therapy Service (**tel. 0114 3053957 / email dana.taylor@nhs.net**) for more information.

Can LEGO® therapy help children with autism?

The University of Sheffield, University of York and Leeds & York Partnership NHS Trust are running some research with mainstream schools in Sheffield, Leeds and York to see whether LEGO®-based therapy can improve social difficulties that are often experienced by children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The therapy has started to be used in some schools already, but there is no real evidence to show whether it is helpful for children, so the research team is running a randomised controlled trial to test the therapy. The research will include 240 children recruited through schools over two years. The team have already contacted schools in Sheffield, Leeds and York and have received a lot of interest.

Schools will either deliver the LEGO®-based therapy weekly for 12 weeks, or they will not

deliver the therapy at all for one year - there is a 50:50 chance of a school delivering the therapy. The schools that do not deliver the therapy are part of a 'control group', which means that the children at these schools should not have any LEGO®-based therapy while they are taking part in the research. A control group is needed in research like this so it is clear whether any improvement is down to the therapy.

The researchers will collect information from the schools, parents and children taking part at three times over the year-long trial to see if anything changes.

For more information, please see the website **www.comic.org.uk/research/lego** or contact Sarah Jacob Eshtan on **s.eshtan@sheffield.ac.uk**.

Short Break Grant programme now open

Families with disabled children and young people aged 0-19 years can now apply 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 gym membership, family days out, to pay for additional support to enable your child to access an activity, childcare to allow you to have a day or nights out, etc.

The deadline for applications is 31st December 2017. The grant must be spent and the activity must have taken place by 31st March 2018.

You qualify for the grant if:

- Your child/young person receives a High Rate component (care or mobility) of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) OR
- Your young person receives an Enhanced Rate component (daily living or mobility) of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) OR

- You already receive another form of short break following an assessment, e.g. SNIPS, overnight stays in a residential unit, direct payments, etc.

If none of these conditions applies you can still apply, but you will need to ask a professional (e.g. GP, Health Visitor, SENCO) who knows you and your child to provide additional information.

An application form and guidance notes are available for download from the Council website (www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/social-care/short-breaks). If you don't have access to a computer or printer, you can ask SENDIAS to send you a hardcopy.

Questions? Please contact SENDIAS (formerly Parent Partnership) on **0114 273 6009** or email disabilityinformationservices@sheffield.gov.uk. Please note: SENDIAS will NOT be able to tell you whether your application has been received. If there is a problem with your application or they need more information, they will contact you directly. Please allow at least six weeks after submitting your application before making any enquiries about its progress.

Do you care for an adult?

Carers of adults may be able to get a grant for a break from the Sheffield Carers Centre. Whether they qualify depends on the outcome of an initial assessment. The grant is intended for those carers with the greatest need who would not otherwise be

able to have a break. It is not means-tested. The assessment could also result in other options, such as a spa voucher or free/discounted community activities. For more information or to request an assessment, please contact the Sheffield Carers Centre on **0114 272 8362**.

Families charged for post-16 SEN transport

In September 2017, Sheffield City Council introduced a new charge for post-16 SEN transport. Parents of students who travel to their post-16 provider by taxi or minibus are now required to pay a contribution of £540 per year towards the cost of transport.

Forum representatives met with Cllr Jackie Drayton back in June to discuss parents' concerns about the travel charge. Unfortunately, this did not result in a change in policy.

However, Cllr Drayton committed to holding a review to assess the impact on families. You can read notes from this meeting on our website: <https://tinyurl.com/yd7n662m>.

Enquiries to our office indicate that many families affected by the travel charge still do not know how to access the 16-19 Bursary and/or the hardship fund set up by the council to help those struggling to make the payment.

There are two types of 16-19 Bursary

1) The discretionary bursary is for students from families with a household income below £16,190 (for those attending Sheffield College, the threshold is £26,000, and you must be in receipt of certain benefits).

2) The vulnerable student bursary is for students who get specific benefits (including students in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance and DLA or PIP).

To apply for either of the two bursaries, talk to your child's school or college.

Hardship fund

The hardship fund was set up by the council to help families struggling to pay the travel charge. There is no fixed upper income limit, and all applications will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. For example, families may be able to access the fund if they have more than one child requiring post-16 SEN transport, or if the discretionary bursary they receive falls below £540. For more information, contact the Assessment and Training Team on **0114 205 3542**.

Questions? Check out the travel charge Q&A on our website:

www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/news/sen-transport-charge-qa

“All Together” anti-bullying programme

Has your child's school signed up to the All Together anti-bullying programme yet?

Participating schools get free access to targeted resources to help tackle bullying, as well as online staff training, a pupil wellbeing questionnaire and support to create an anti-bullying action plan.

The programme has a special focus on reducing bullying of children with special educational needs and disabilities. It runs until September 2018.

For more information, please go to: <https://tinyurl.com/yc5xbud8>.



Healthy Minds project rolled out to more Sheffield schools

Sheffield Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) will be working with an additional 45 Sheffield schools from September 2017 as part of the Healthy Minds project.

Healthy Minds works with schools to help them to support young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing. It was developed by Sheffield CAMHS working with ten pilot schools and has been recognised nationally as an example of good practice.

Key activities offered within Healthy Minds are:

- Training for all school staff on the fundamentals of young people's mental health and the implications for learning.
- A Healthy Minds survey to be offered to students, parents/carers and staff to understand the specific needs of an individual school.
- Developing an action plan for each school based on its Healthy Minds survey. This will cover further training needs, development of PSHE materials or school protocols to further support young people's emotional wellbeing.
- Engage student voice through the development of Healthy Minds champions.
- Provide clarity for staff, students and parents about who they can talk to if they are worried about a young person's mental health.
- Further development of the Sheffield CAMHS website for secondary students
www.epicfriends.co.uk



- Specialist mental health training for key staff in schools.
- Mental health consultation with key staff in schools.

How were the participating schools chosen?

Participating schools were chosen through an application process. Schools were assessed on their ability to engage and weighted for need. The 45 schools for 2017-18 are across the city, in all seven localities of schools.

How will the project be rolled out to the schools not currently taking part?

The project is being rolled out in a phased approach, with 40 new schools taking part per academic year. A phased approach has been taken to allow us to make changes to the Healthy Minds approach as we learn what works and what doesn't.

Commissioners from Sheffield CCG and Sheffield City Council are currently working with staff from Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust, to consider how the Healthy Minds approach could be developed to support children and young people who are in special schools.

Will this project address bullying in any way?

Every school taking part in Healthy Minds has a needs assessment as part of the project, as the Healthy Minds activity is bespoke to a school's needs. If an issue such as bullying is highlighted in the needs assessment, the Healthy Minds activity undertaken by CAMHS in the school will take this into account.

Will there be any SEND-specific work, e.g. supporting students with autism and high anxiety?

Again, this is dependent on the needs assessment of the school and whether this is identified as an issue or not.

It's important to note that Healthy Minds is focused on improving a school's culture and capacity to support emotional wellbeing and mental health, rather than providing direct 1-1 support for children and young people. The aim of the project is to enable schools to support emotional wellbeing and mental health

issues that do not require a CAMHS referral. The support provided by CAMHS helps schools to know whether the issue requires onward referral.

If a child is identified as needing additional emotional wellbeing and mental health support in a Healthy Minds school, the CAMHS worker in the school can provide advice, and support to the school to make a referral to the appropriate service.

Will each school have a Healthy Minds lead?

All Healthy Minds schools are required to nominate a member of staff to be the Healthy Minds lead for that school. This lead provides a point of contact for CAMHS and helps coordinate Healthy Minds activity in the school.

For further information and the full list of schools who are currently involved, please visit www.learnsheffield.co.uk/Articles/Healthy-Minds-Roll-Out-201718

New special free school announced

Sheffield is one of 19 local authorities which have been successful in securing funding from the government for a new special free school. The new school will provide 40 to 60 places (including 20 short-term placements) for pupils aged 7 to 16 years who have autism and social, emotional and mental health needs. The cost of building and setting up the school will come from the Department for Education, but Sheffield will not receive any extra funding for the school places.

The council hopes that the new school will:

- Improve the diversity and quality of the education offer in Sheffield and meet a gap in current provision. Some of the pupils in the target group are currently educated in schools outside Sheffield and some are currently out of education.
- Give parents more choice and give young people opportunities to pursue qualifications in line with their academic potential.

The deadline for applications to sponsor the new school is 24th November 2017 and the school should open to pupils in 2019 or 2020.

Transition

For parents and children alike, the move to a new school or college can be fraught with anxiety. We asked a few parents and their children to tell us how it went.

The best of both worlds: dual placements

“ I felt anxious about my daughter's transfer to secondary school from the moment she settled in to Year 3. I knew the time would fly by and wanted to be as well prepared for it as possible.

Ena has Down's Syndrome and attended a mainstream primary school, with support from a teaching assistant. Although she has a learning disability she can read and write and retain information and I wanted her to have the best chance to succeed with her education – which parent doesn't?

I remember regularly hearing that if I wanted Ena to achieve academically then she should go to mainstream, if I wanted her to be happy and make friends she should go to a special school.

I didn't want to restrict Ena socially or academically, so I decided to push for a dual placement. The local authority was supportive when I suggested it to them and arranged a meeting with the two schools I was considering. The two schools were initially less supportive as, for them, there were issues with how it would work within the curriculum and potentially giving up a whole place for a student who would only be with them part time.

It was finally agreed that Ena would spend two afternoons per week in the special school but be on roll in the mainstream school. To formalise this, I made sure it was written into her Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.

For Ena, the placement has worked really well. When I ask her which school she prefers she says both.

The arrangement might change slightly as she moves into Year 8, depending on how the curriculum works, and maybe as the pupils in mainstream start working towards their GCSEs, Ena will spend more time in the special school. At the moment, everything is working well and I feel that she has the best of both worlds.

By Nikki Chowdry (parent)



If you would like to talk to Nikki about dual placements, please contact our office (see page 2) and we'll pass on your message.

Friends protect from bullying

“ I started high school in 2016. Transition was amazing but nerve wracking! I have made loads of new friends and most of the teachers are really nice.

The school is really big and when I first saw it I was really worried that I would get lost. Luckily, older students helped me find the right classroom. When I eventually did get to the right room the teacher didn't shout at me but said, “try not to get lost next time”.

The dinner hall can get a bit crowded, but I do manage to find my friends (most of the time). Tutor time is really good. We mainly read a book, do activities or you can just talk to your friends who are next to you.

At the beginning of the year, I got bullied by an older boy who was in Year 10. He laughed and pointed at me every time he saw me because of how my teeth looked. However, I have braces now, so there is no reason to make fun of me anymore!

My friends were really supportive and stuck up for me or wouldn't leave me on my own. Two of my new friends got bullied but they have settled into my growing friendship group and are now happy.

Now I am going into Year 8 and I am really looking forward to it. As I have new teachers, I'm a little bit nervous, but I'm really looking forward to seeing my friends again. To those moving up to secondary, I hope it goes well and good luck!

”

By Gabby Monette, aged 13



Making new friends at college

“ Last year I moved from King Edwards Upper School to Hillsborough College. I was excited but nervous. The things I really liked were to be able to do Art and Dancing and other creative things. College can be helpful with making friends and being more confident. Sometimes when I got annoyed, Sharon really helped me. If you are coming to college, never give up on making friends.

”

By Jessica Peck, aged 17

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...



Jordan Brace, aged 19, recently won two gold medals playing Boccia in the Special Olympics, which took place in Sheffield in August. Boccia is an indoor target game similar to bowls, which involves throwing leather balls towards a target.

Jordan has Down's Syndrome and severe learning difficulties. He first started playing Boccia at primary school, and has been training with Sheffield Smashers Boccia Club for the past six years.

His mum Julie told us: "Smashers have encouraged and supported him and given him the opportunity to enter the Special Olympics. He thoroughly enjoys attending the club each week, which also enhances his concentration and social skills."

Amazingly, Jordan took part in the Special Olympics not only as an athlete, but also as an entertainer. Performing with his group "Dance Stars", he entertained thousands of spectators at the Opening Ceremony held at Bramall Lane.

The Special Olympics were an unforgettable experience for the whole family. "During this time Jordan has been on Radio Sheffield, Calendar and Look North", said his mum. "It has been an absolutely amazing experience for myself and Jordan, and he is enjoying the attention of being in the public eye. I cannot explain how proud I feel of Jordan's achievement!"

Star of this issue:
**Jordan
Brace**



Sheffield Smashers Boccia Club

[www.facebook.com/
SheffieldSmashersBocciaClub](https://www.facebook.com/SheffieldSmashersBocciaClub)

Dance Stars

[https://sites.google.com/view/dancestars-
sheffield](https://sites.google.com/view/dancestars-sheffield)

Busy Hands

Busy Hands is a stay-&-play group for families with a child (or children) of primary school age or younger, with additional needs.

The whole family is welcome to join us and play, do craft, have an evening meal and relax with other families. This includes siblings and parents/carers. It is a safe and supportive environment with lots of tea and coffee where there are no judgements, and lots of understanding. A place where our children can be themselves and we can relax a little and enjoy them having fun.

We have lots to play with - there are trains, Lego, cars, jigsaws, Happyland, dolls, prams, Meccano... and lots more that can be brought in to suit the interests of the children attending. We have craft activities such as painting, colouring, sticking, junk modelling, beads and more. There are also things to suit our children's sensory needs, such as a massive cuddly polar bear, a super snuggly Firespiral blanket to curl up in, and a huge parachute to hide under and play games with. Sensory play activities vary from week to week and have included cornflakes,



gloop, rice and big rolls of paper to draw on. So many options that can be adapted to whatever makes for happy children!

At each meet-up we cook dinner and sit down together to eat it. We can adapt to suit most dietary requirements and fussy eaters if we know in advance. Trust me, there is not much we haven't seen or worked around! And there is pudding, fruit or cake or something equally yummy!

Busy Hands is run by parents of children with additional needs and aims to provide a supportive, friendly network for families and somewhere where we can celebrate our children's achievements, share our frustrations, share information and give each other a much-needed friendly face and confidence boost. The group was set up in 2015 and is now run primarily by three parents of children with special needs: Mel, Jen and Jane. Between us we have first aid and food hygiene training, DBS checks and Methodist church safeguarding training, so all the boxes are ticked and covered!

We meet fortnightly on a Friday, between 4.30pm and 6.30pm, at Carterknowle Methodist Church Hall on the corner of Abbeydale Road and Edgedale Road.

More information can be found on our Busy Hands Facebook page (www.facebook.com/BusyHandsClub) or contact us by text on 07762 575989.



School funding in crisis £ 🏠 📉 £ 🏠 📉 £ 🏠

You may have seen the headlines in the national press about the impact of school budget cuts – schools making teaching assistants redundant, shortening the school day, cutting subjects and even asking parents to set up direct debits.

These cuts have hit pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) especially hard – to the point of forcing some pupils out of the mainstream education system altogether. Exclusion rates of pupils on SEN Support have increased both nationally and in Sheffield. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the same may hold true for home education – not the “elective” type, but the kind where parents are so concerned about their child’s wellbeing that they see no other option but to take them out of school.

Extra funding announced

School funding was a key issue on the doorstep during the general election, and parents, teachers and unions ran some very effective campaigns. In July this year, the government announced an extra £1.3bn for schools (mainstream and special) over the next two years. This is not new money, though – it comes from cuts elsewhere in the education budget, such as the free schools programme.

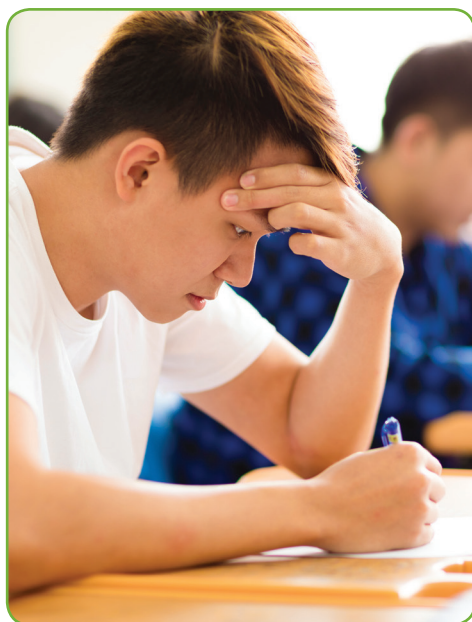
How far will this money stretch when rising pupil numbers and inflation are taken into account? According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), the extra cash means that, instead of a planned 2% cut between 2017 and 2019, school funding will now be frozen in real terms. The IFS estimates that between 2015 and 2020 school budgets will have declined in real terms by 4.6%.

A national funding formula

The government currently funds schools through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The DSG is given to local authorities, who then distribute it to schools in their area using a locally agreed formula.

This will change in 2020 with the introduction of a national funding formula, which aims to remove big regional differences in levels of per-pupil funding. School budgets will then be set by central government, instead of local authorities.

Leading up to this, there will be a two-year transitional period during which the government will publish notional (theoretical) school-level allocations under the new formula, but local authorities will continue to distribute the funding to schools using their local formulae.



The situation in Sheffield

A flat-cash settlement

The amount of per-pupil funding given to Sheffield by the government in 2017/18 is the same as in 2016/17. However, schools are having to absorb a number of cost increases and additional responsibilities (inflation, pension and national insurance contributions, etc.) – so a flat-cash settlement effectively amounts to a cut in real terms.

Impact of the national funding formula

Sheffield has historically been one of the worst funded big cities in England. There had been hopes that the new funding formula would address this, as initial indications suggested it might. However, notional school-level allocations for 2018/19 only indicate a modest £4m rise for Sheffield (our total DSG allocation this year was £309m).

Initial analysis suggests that all our mainstream schools will see an increase of around 0.5%, and some (mainly secondary) schools can expect increases of up to 3%. When cost increases and inflation are taken into account, however, even a 3% increase really only equates to a standstill budget. (NB These are only notional allocations – during the two-year transition period, local authorities will continue to allocate funding to schools using their local formulae.)

The outlook is slightly more positive for our high needs allocation, which funds things like special schools, integrated resources, locality top-up funding and specialist support services. This funding is expected to increase over the next couple of years – but it still won't be enough to keep up with rising demand.

Increased demand for special school places

Both locally and nationally, there has been a trend for more children to attend special schools, probably driven by a significant increase in the number of children with complex disabilities over the past decade. In Sheffield, this is compounded by a rising birth rate.

Places in all our special schools are very much in demand. Every year, demand outstrips supply – causing anxiety, stress and heartache for the families whose children are refused a place.

So why don't we just build more special schools? Well, there is one in the pipeline – a new special free school for around 40-60 students with autism and social, emotional and mental health difficulties (see page 13). In addition, some of our special schools have created more space by educating groups of students off-site.

However, these initiatives are only intended to create more physical space, NOT more school places. Why? Because we don't have the money to staff them. High needs funding allocations for local authorities are based on historical settlements and have not kept pace with the increase in pupil numbers. Although our high needs allocation is set to rise when the national funding formula is introduced, this will be staggered over several years and won't address the immediate pressures.

Between 2015/16 and 2017/18, the number of special school places commissioned by Sheffield City Council increased from 991 to 1,090. To fund this year's increase in places, the council reduced per-place funding for all special schools by 1.5% - in other words, they cut the cake into ever smaller slices, because the overall size of the cake hasn't changed. If you have a child in a special school, you may have felt the impact of this.

The increasing demand for special school places leaves very little funding for supporting pupils with complex needs in mainstream schools. (The council did manage to keep locality top-up funding for mainstream schools at the same level as last year, at £2.1m – but arguably, that wasn't enough money in the first place.) This, in turn, fuels the demand for more special school places... and so the cycle continues.

continued on page 26...

What do parent carer forums do?

Our parent carer forum is part of a national network of over 150 forums in England. All of these forums work with their local authorities, education settings, health providers and other partners with the aim of ensuring that the services they plan and deliver meet the needs of disabled children and their families. Together, these local forums reach over 77,000 parent carers.

Here's how we work in Sheffield:

Giving information

We believe that informed parents are empowered parents. We regularly provide information for our 1,600+ members through our email bulletins, text messages and newsletters. The newsletter enables us to reach far beyond our membership; we currently print 6,000 hardcopies of every issue, which we distribute to over 250 local organisations, including all of our local schools and children's centres. Our information booklets have a similar reach. Social media is another important tool; our Facebook page and Twitter account have over 1,000 followers each. We also organise parent workshops and conferences.

Gathering feedback

We use many traditional consultation methods, such as questionnaires, conferences, focus groups and our Education and Transition

subgroups to find out what parents think about the services their children receive. However, these methods do not suit everyone, and we also engage with parents through more informal events, like our coffee mornings, family events and outreach visits to schools and other settings. Over 40% of our members have attended at least one of our events.

Representing parents' views

Our parent representatives attend dozens of meetings with council officers, health and education professionals every year. Most of these focus on specific areas of work, such as the Local Offer, the Autism Strategy or EHC plans. We have regular meetings with Jayne Ludlam, Sheffield's Executive Director for Children, Young People and Families, and sit on the Inclusion Programme Board, a top-level strategic group.

The role of our parent representatives is to feed back the experiences of ALL parent carers – they are not there to talk about their own issues. Our reps value and use your feedback; you can talk to them at our events (see pages 22 & 23), or contact them via our office (tel. **0300 321 4721**, email enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk).



Challenging times for co-production

We are now in the fourth and final year of the transition to the new SEN system. The SEN reforms were meant to bring about a culture change, and usher in a new era of “co-production” – a person-centred and collaborative way of working, with families at the heart of decision-making.

Austerity has made it very hard indeed to achieve this goal. The Children and Families Act 2014 may have given our children new rights, but there just isn't enough funding to deliver them in reality. For many families who are fighting to have their child's needs met, the system feels just as bureaucratic, uncaring and adversarial as ever.

That's unacceptable, and it needs to change. Cuts to local authority and school budgets are a major factor in this (see page 18), and we need to keep up the pressure on the government to put this right.

But it's not just about the money – this is also about changing attitudes, training staff and developing robust processes. We don't believe that council officers, head teachers and SENCOs get out of bed in the morning with the intention of making our children's lives miserable. Most of them want to get it right – and the less money there is to spend, the more important it is that they do get it right first time. We can only achieve that by working together.

Who are our members?

Since we launched our membership scheme in 2010, our membership has grown steadily year on year. We now have over 1,600 members. Around 1,400 of these are families with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. We also have around 200 associate members – professionals who work with our children, like SENCOs, teachers and speech and language therapists. We are in the process of setting up an affiliate membership scheme, which will formalise our links with local parent support groups to help us reach even more parents.

Where do our members live?

We have members in all parts of Sheffield. The biggest postcode areas are S5, S6 and S8.

What kind of disabilities are represented?

Our members' children have a wide range of needs, such as sensory impairments, dyslexia,

learning difficulties, speech and language needs, physical disabilities, medical needs and others. The biggest impairment groups are autism spectrum disorders (45%) and social, emotional and mental health needs (11%). This is in line with the needs of children with statements/EHC plans in Sheffield as a whole. Around 13% of our members have more than one child with additional needs.

How old are the children?

Our members' children cover the full age range, from 0 to 25 years. Most children are in the 5-19 age range, with numbers tailing off at the younger and older end.

How diverse is our membership?

Some 26% of our members come from a non-white British background. The biggest ethnic minority groups are Pakistani, African, and non-British white backgrounds.

Dates for your diary

All meetings will be held at:

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

Book your place

To book your place on any of the events listed here, please visit our website www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/events or call our office on **0300 321 4721**.

October

Thursday 12 October, 10.30am - 12pm
Coffee morning

Tuesday 17 October, 6 - 7pm
Jump Inc. Meadowhall, Vulcan Road
JumpStars inclusive trampolining session

November

Tuesday 7 November, 6pm, St Mary's
Low-noise fireworks party
This is a special low-noise fireworks party for children who have never been able to attend a public display because of the noise and crowds. There will be an indoor room to watch the fireworks from for those who need it. Hot drinks and food (baked potatoes, hot dogs, Parkin etc.) will be provided free of charge. Places are limited and must be pre-booked, so please think whether this really describes your child's needs before you book.

Thursday 9 November, 10.30am - 12pm
Coffee morning

November continued

Friday 10 November, 10.30am - 12pm
Annual General Meeting (AGM)

This is an open meeting, all welcome! We'll hear a report from the chair, (re)elect our trustees, and review the annual accounts.

Friday 17 November, 9.30am-2.30pm
Information day: Family Wellbeing
Information and strategies for looking after the emotional wellbeing and mental health of all family members. For more information, please see pages 6 & 7.

Tuesday 21 November, 6 - 7pm
Jump Inc. Meadowhall, Vulcan Road
JumpStars inclusive trampolining session

Monday 27 November, 10am-12pm
Workshop: Helping your child with communication difficulties deal with emotions
Does your child struggle to communicate and regulate their own emotions, or to understand the emotions of others? In this workshop, a speech and language therapist will show you different strategies and resources you can use to help your child. Places are limited and must be pre-booked.

December

Friday 1 December, 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! No need to book, just turn up.

December continued

Tuesday 5 December, 10.30am - 12pm

Coffee morning

Tuesday 5 December, 7 - 9pm

Information session: EHC plans

For parents of children transferring from a statement of SEN to an EHC plan, and for those applying for an EHC plan for the first time. Find out how the EHC process works, how to prepare, and what your rights are.

Booking essential.

Thursday 7 December, 11am - 2pm

Information session: EHC plans

A repeat of the session from 5th December.

Saturday 9 December, 9.30am-12pm

Showroom Cinema

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!

Tuesday 19 December, 6-7pm

Jump Inc. Meadowhall, Vulcan Road

JumpStars inclusive trampolining session

2018 dates

For 2018 dates, please visit our website

www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/events/

Coffee mornings

Our coffee mornings are run by our friendly volunteers Thaeeba and Pat. They are open to all parent carers, whatever their children's needs, whether diagnosed or undiagnosed, mild or severe. Pre-schoolers and home-educated children are welcome too. Pop in for a few minutes or stay for the whole session – no need to book. You can be sure of a warm welcome and plenty of tea, coffee and cake! The venue address is St Mary's Community Centre, Bramall Lane, Sheffield S2 4QZ.



JumpStars inclusive trampolining sessions

These are discounted, disability-friendly trampolining sessions for children with additional needs and their siblings, held at the new Jump Inc. centre near Meadowhall. Only Sheffield Parent Carer Forum members are eligible to attend. **Sessions must be pre-booked and pre-paid online.** A link to the booking form is published on our website and circulated to our email list a couple of weeks before each session.



Useful Contacts

ADHD Support Service Run by Family Action, this service provides information, support and training for families with a child with ADHD	0114 4782980
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
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 National charity which provides information and advice on any aspect of caring for a disabled child, including education and benefits	0808 808 3555 info@contact.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)	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 7000
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 Carers Centre (formerly Carers in Sheffield) Offers information, advice and a range of services for carers, including parents of disabled children	0114 272 8362 support@sheffieldcarers.org.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 laura.westmorland@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 sccphysicalactivityandsport@sheffield.gov.uk

* Part of Sheffield City Council



The council feels that the best way to address this issue would be to ensure all schools are inclusive, increasing parental confidence in mainstream schools and consequently reducing demand for special school places. Officers argue that this would reduce overcrowding in special schools and generate savings from SEN transport, which could then be reinvested into supporting more pupils in mainstream education.

But is this realistic, given the recent rise in the birth rate in Sheffield and the overall increase in complexity? Is it realistic, given that some mainstream schools are already struggling to meet the needs of pupils with SEND? To reverse the trend towards special schools, wouldn't you need to invest more cash in mainstream schools first? And how can we get mainstream schools to adopt a more inclusive ethos, when there is such a relentless focus on exam results?

These are complex issues, and it is unlikely that they can be solved through local policy alone. Underfunding of SEND and the lack of incentives for inclusion are national issues, and require national solutions.

What can YOU do?

- Tell your MP about the impact of school funding cuts on your child
- Tell us as well – we share this feedback with our umbrella organisation, the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF), which has regular meetings with the Department for Education
- Support a national campaign, such as www.fairfundingforallschools.org
- If support for your child is reduced, contact SENDIAS for advice (see page 25 for contact details)



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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	<input type="text"/>	Surname	<input type="text"/>
Street and house number	<input type="text"/>		
Town/city	<input type="text"/>	Postcode	<input type="text"/>
Email address (please print)	<input type="text"/>		
Home phone	<input type="text"/>	Mobile	<input type="text"/>
Your ethnic group (optional)	<input type="text"/>		

About your disabled child/children

Child 1

Date of birth	<input type="text"/>
Main disability	<input type="text"/>
Other disabilities	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
School (name)	<input type="text"/>

Child 2

Date of birth	<input type="text"/>
Main disability	<input type="text"/>
Other disabilities	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
School (name)	<input type="text"/>

Child 3

Date of birth	<input type="text"/>
Main disability	<input type="text"/>
Other disabilities	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
School (name)	<input type="text"/>

Please tick as appropriate :

<input type="checkbox"/>	Please add me to your email list.		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Please add me to your text messaging list.		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Please add me to your postal mailing list.		
I am happy to take part in consultations:			
<input type="checkbox"/>	by phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	by email
<input type="checkbox"/>	by post	<input type="checkbox"/>	by SMS
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.

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