



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!

Spring 2017 - Issue 15 - FREE!



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About us

We are an independent group of over 1,300 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:

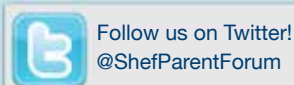
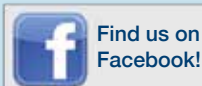
enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

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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- 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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Letter from the Chair

A very warm welcome to our Spring newsletter!

Firstly, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Katie Monette. I am Co-chair of the Forum and will be officially taking over as Chair in May. I am very excited and enthusiastic in continuing to drive the Forum forward like the previous Co-chairs, along with our staff and volunteers, have done. Jayne Woodward and David Roe have worked tirelessly over previous years and I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank them for all their efforts and hard work.

The Forum is growing its membership on a daily basis which is fantastic news! Our first dedicated trampolining session (see page 4) sold out in two days, and we received 50 new membership applications. We are hoping to bring more events for our families to enjoy in the not too distant future, so watch this space! However, as the Forum grows, so does the workload, and with our current staff and volunteers, there are only so many hours in the day. If anybody could spare any time to volunteer, whether it be for the odd hour or more, please contact our office on **0300 321 4721**. We can only do more for our families if we have the capacity.

A role I have taken on as Chair is to build better relationships with local parent-led support groups, so we can share information and offer each other support and guidance. If you are part of any group who would like to work with the Forum, please contact the office and I look forward to meeting with you.

I hope you enjoy all the articles and features in this edition of the newsletter. Lots of work goes into producing this so we can continue to inform our families of what is happening in the unique world of SEN. If you have any ideas or suggestions for future articles, or if you can help in any way, please get in touch. We would love to hear from you!

Best wishes,

Katie Monette
Co-Chair



Introducing JumpStars inclusive trampolining sessions

Trampoline parks are all the rage at the moment – but for many children with disabilities or additional needs, the loud music and flashing disco lights can be overwhelming. So when a new trampoline park opened near Meadowhall, we asked the operator Jump Inc. if they'd be interested in running disability-friendly trampolining sessions for our members. They said yes!



The first session took place on 21 March and was very well attended, with almost 70 children taking part. Without the music and disco lights, the place felt so much calmer – it was actually possible to have a chat without shouting!

Who can attend? Sessions are open to children and young people with additional needs and their siblings. There are no age restrictions. However, children under the age of six must be accompanied in the jump area by an adult. Only families who are members of Sheffield Parent Carer Forum are eligible to attend. If you are not yet a member, you can register via our website, or fill in the form at the back of this newsletter. Membership is free of charge.

How much does it cost? Thanks to Jump Inc., we are able to offer these sessions at a heavily discounted rate of just £4 per participant (child or adult) – that's less than half the normal price. There is no charge for parents who just want to watch their children on the trampolines.

Do parents need to stay? Yes. Although Jump Inc. staff are on hand to assist the children on the trampolines, parents must supervise their children at all times. Depending on your child, this may mean that you need to join them on the trampolines, or can just watch them from the café area.

Our staff and volunteers will be available to provide peer support and signposting for parents during the sessions. We are also hoping to chat to you about your experience of services and feed this back to the local authority and other partners.

When are the sessions? Sessions take place on the third Tuesday of the month, at 6-7pm. The next ones are on 18 April, 16 May, 20 June and 18 July 2017.

Do I need to book? Yes. Sessions **must** be pre-booked and pre-paid online. Please visit www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/events for more information and a link to the booking form.

Photo competition winners 📷📷📷📷📷📷

We are delighted to announce the winners of our very first photo competition!

In our autumn newsletter, we had asked our readers to send in joyful, positive images of their children with additional needs. We received over 50 entries, giving us a wonderful glimpse into the lives of your children – from family holidays to birthday parties! Our trustees had a difficult job choosing the best ones, but in the end, three clear favourites emerged:



A charming photo of Leon Reuber, aged 16, won first prize. It was taken by his father at a Karneval party in Germany, which explains the hat and shirt! His mum said that it "captures one of Leon's increasingly rare smiles".



Second prize went to Sally Toland for her photo of her son Reuben playing in the sand dunes. Sally told us that the picture "captures all his good bits and spirits".



Fionn Lawlor's photo of her daughter Millie opening presents at her 11th birthday party came third. We asked Fionn what the present was that had made Millie so ecstatically happy – it was make-up!



The three winners all received a £20 shopping voucher. There were many other brilliant entries, and you can see some of them on page 26.

New information booklets

We have just published two new guides for parents. Written by our workers Eva and Anne, the booklets aim to provide information frequently requested by parents. They have been proofread by relevant officers and professionals to ensure they are factually correct.

Special Educational Needs Support in School is aimed at parents of children and young people who attend a mainstream school in Sheffield. The booklet explains how schools identify and support pupils with SEN, what a MyPlan is, how the EHC needs assessment process works, and what parents can do if they encounter difficulties. You can download it from www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/resources/education

The 14 to 25 Transitions Guide is an update of our old Transitions Timeline which reflects the SEND reforms and new legislation in the Care Act. It is aimed at parents of young people with EHC plans aged 14 to 25 years in mainstream and specialist education who are preparing for adulthood. It covers education, health, social care, employment, finance and benefits. You can download it from: www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/resources/transitionpost-16-provision

If you haven't got internet access, please call us on **0300 321 4721** to request a hardcopy.

Win FREE cinema tickets!

Our friends at **Cineworld Sheffield** have confirmed that they will continue to give us four free cinema tickets per month, to pass on to our members.

The tickets are for their disability-friendly screenings, which take place on the first Sunday of each month at 11am.

To be entered into the draw, simply follow our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/SheffieldParentCarerForum) and "like" the post about the next Cineworld disability-friendly film.

Disability-friendly screenings are now being offered by all cinemas in Sheffield. They take place in a relaxed environment, where people understand the needs of children with

disabilities and their families. Lights are left on low, the sound is turned down, and there are no trailers or advertisements. For more information, please visit our website: www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/resources/leisure



Engaging with the Slovak Roma community

Sheffield has a large and growing Slovak Roma community (approx. 2,000-4,000 people). There is evidence that hearing loss is an issue in the Roma community, affecting around 7% of Roma school pupils. However, Slovak Roma parents are underrepresented among our membership, and we felt that we needed to learn more about the issues affecting this community.

We worked with Darnall Wellbeing, a local community organisation working with new arrivals, to develop and translate a questionnaire. This asked parents about their experiences of getting a diagnosis, accessing information, support and services for their child, and the impact of the child's disability on the family.

Staff from Darnall Wellbeing, who between them speak Roma, Slovak, Czech and English, used this questionnaire to carry out structured interviews with ten Roma families. This yielded lots of learning for both the parents and staff, and resulted in a range of follow-up actions, such as help with letters and appointments. The results are currently being written up and will be available on our website from mid April.

Alternatives to GCSEs

For students with special educational needs (SEN) who are unable to take their GCSEs or achieve pass grades, Year 10 and 11 can be a tough time.

Parents report a significant impact on their children's stress levels, self-confidence, and engagement with education. Nationally, 14-year-old boys with SEN get far more permanent and fixed-term exclusions than any other group.

But what alternative qualifications and pathways into employment are there, and are any of our local secondary schools offering them?

One of our members, Mark Wild, is looking into this issue. He is keen to hear from parents about their children's experience of the current GCSE system – how it is affecting your child, your family, and your child's prospects.

He'd also like to hear from parents of young people who have been offered other options (e.g. ASDAN).

You can contact Mark on:

m.wild1972@gmail.com

or **0779 5598829**,

or read his blog at:

<http://blog.aspireforbetter.co.uk>



SEN provision criticised in Sheffield Telegraph

In February 2017, several anonymous articles appeared in the Secret School column of the Sheffield Telegraph. These criticised the Council's SEN Team for delays in issuing Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, and for writing plans that are too vague about the provision required. They also raised concerns about long waits to access children's mental health services and assessments at the Ryegate Children's Centre.

The articles were widely debated on social media, and galvanised a group of parents into setting up a Facebook group with plans to hold a rally at the Town Hall. However, the protest was called off as the organisers were worried that this could have a negative impact on their already strained relationships with the SEN Team.

The issues raised in the Telegraph are consistent with the feedback we have been receiving from our members. We have shared this feedback with the council to improve the experiences of families going through the EHC



process. For example, we raised concerns about the quality of EHC plans, and this led to the Council setting up a Quality Assurance group. This group, which has representation from parents and schools, carries out spot checks of recent EHC plans and gives feedback to the plan writers.

We have also worked with Sheffield Healthwatch to highlight the excessive waiting times for therapies such as Occupational Therapy or Clinical Psychology at the Ryegate Centre.

It is clear that more needs to be done. We need to find solutions that work, and the best way to do this is by working together. To facilitate this, we arranged a meeting between the Facebook group and senior representatives from Sheffield City Council (including Jayne Ludlam, Executive Director for Children, Young People and Families) and NHS Sheffield. This meeting was due to take place shortly after this newsletter went into print. A report will be published on our website in mid April.

Update on the EHCP backlog

We asked Sheffield City Council to give us an update on progress made towards clearing the backlog of overdue Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. Here's what they told us:

New EHC Plans
Sheffield City Council have been working hard to improve the assessment and planning for children and young people who need an EHC plan. The average length of time it took to complete a new EHC Plan that was started in 2016 was 27 weeks, compared to an average of 45 weeks for those started in 2015. This is a significant improvement.

The Council continues to prioritise the work to ensure all new EHC Plans are completed within the 20-week statutory timescale. A new caseload management system has been put in place that is already ensuring robust monitoring of progress for every draft EHC plan. Urgent work is also taking place to ensure all overdue EHC Plans are finalised as quickly as possible. In September 2016, there were 245 new EHC Plans that were over 20 weeks and had still not been finalised. By the end of February 2017, this had reduced to 59 new EHC Plans (approximately 10% of the total number of Plans issued since January 2016) and only 30 of those were over 30 weeks. Most of them will have been finalised by the time this newsletter has been published.

It is worth noting that there has been a steady increase in the total number of EHC Plans and Statements in Sheffield, rising from 2,099 in January 2015 to 2,596 in February 2017.

Converting Statements to EHC Plans

A total of 894 Statements have been converted to EHC Plans since the new legislation came into force in 2014. There are 59 conversions that have taken more than 20 weeks and are still not finalised. Most of these cases are not straightforward and specific action is being taken on each one to finalise the EHC Plan as soon as possible. By the end of March 2018, a further 1,201 Statements will need converting to EHC Plans to ensure there are no Statements left after this point in time. This is a challenging task and the Council has put in place robust plans to ensure it can be completed.

Sheffield Council appreciates that the EHC Plan and assessment process can sometimes be stressful for parents and that any delay can cause uncertainty about your child's education. Officers are always happy to listen and can give an update on individual cases. Please do contact your SEN Officer via the Duty Desk on 0114 273 6394.



SEN funding boost

The Department for Education has announced that local authorities will get extra funding to carry out a strategic review of their provision for learners with SEN. Sheffield's share of this funding is £241,889. The review will help local authorities assess whether their range of mainstream and specialist provision is fit for meeting the changing needs of their population, and help them prepare for the introduction of a new national "high needs funding formula" next year. Sheffield has historically been under-funded, and there is a chance that the new formula could bring some extra SEN funding into our city.



In addition, local authorities will get extra infrastructure funding to improve and expand facilities for pupils with SEN, e.g. by building new classrooms, buying equipment, or making existing buildings more accessible. Sheffield will get almost £1.5 million over a period of three years – which isn't much, considering that almost all our special schools are overcrowded.

This year, local authorities were also given a slightly larger allocation under the SEND Implementation Grant, to help them complete the transfer to the new SEN system by April 2018. Sheffield's share of this money is £383,135.

Introducing the Interim Senior Officer for SEN, Health and Partnerships

My name is Tom Common and my role is to make sure the Council (education and social care) work closely with health to develop effective partnerships to better support children and young people with SEN or a disability. Parents and carers should be at the very centre of that partnership.

One area where we know we need to improve is timescales around Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans and we are working hard to do that. However, we are also working with early years services, schools and post-16 providers to help develop and share the skills that are needed to provide children with the very best learning experience, wherever possible in their local mainstream school, with the right support – in and out of school.

The effectiveness of inclusion boils down to the willingness and ability to do things a little differently to accommodate individual needs.

Whilst money and other resources are important, building an inclusive culture is probably even more important – especially in these days when schools seem to be judged so heavily on pupil attainment. I look forward to working with the Parent Carer Forum to explore how we can make Sheffield one of the most inclusive cities in the country.

You can contact me on
tom.common@sheffield.gov.uk

PS. Please don't be put off by the word 'interim' in my job title. Sheffield Council are going through a re-structure to bring services for children, young people and families more closely together with services for adults. Inevitably that will mean some change to structures. But the whole point is to make it easier for parents and young people to get the right help at the right time. I hope to be around for quite some time!



Consultation on charging for SEN transport

Sheffield City Council has been consulting on a proposal to charge parents of students over the age of 16 for SEN transport.

At the moment, post-16 students in Sheffield who are unable to travel to school or college independently because of their disability receive SEN transport by minibus or taxi free of charge. This service, however, is discretionary, meaning that local authorities are not legally required to provide it.

In the wake of substantial budget cuts, most local authorities have reduced the discretionary services they provide, and several areas are now charging families for post-16 SEN transport.

Sheffield City Council is proposing to charge £540 per year for students who are educated within South Yorkshire, and £700 per year for those who are educated further afield. Families would be able to spread the cost, e.g. by paying in monthly instalments. They would also have the option of taking their young person to and from school or college themselves and receive a discretionary travel allowance based on the distance.



The proposed charges do not reflect the full cost of SEN transport, which is much higher; they are based on the equivalent public transport cost paid by non-disabled students (e.g. the cost of a termly rail, tram and bus pass).

Sheffield City Council is also proposing to scrap the discretionary zero fare bus pass for post-16 students in low income families.

The Council expects that families will use a grant called the 16-19 Bursary Fund to cover the costs of transport, books and other course-related costs. This grant pays up to £1,200 per year. To qualify, you must either have a household income below £16,190 per year, OR your young person must receive Income Support (or Universal Credit) in their own right, OR they must get Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and DLA/PIP.

Questionnaires were sent to all families with children in years 11 to 14 who might be affected by the changes. People not directly affected by the changes were invited to submit freeform responses. The consultation closed on 24 March 2017. You can download our Trustees' response from our website.



SEND inspections get underway

In May 2016, a new inspection regime for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) was launched. These inspections are carried out jointly by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. They look at how well different services in one local area – schools, nurseries, colleges, local authority departments, health services – work together to identify and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND, and improve their outcomes. This includes pupils with and without Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans.

Over the course of the five-day inspection, the inspectors visit a selection of settings, where they talk to staff, pupils and parents, and look at children's case notes and plans. Parents' views are also sought through telephone interviews, webinars, and via the parent carer forum.

The findings from the inspection are summarised in an inspection outcome letter; there is no overall grading. If the inspectors find that a local area is performing badly, they will ask it to submit an action plan. You can see all the inspection outcome letters published to date on <https://tinyurl.com/gv9oo47>

The inspectors do not evaluate the quality of the individual providers or services they visit during the inspection. However, they can trigger a full Ofsted inspection if they find bad practice.

Nobody knows when Sheffield will be inspected. It could be next week – local areas get one week's notice – or it could be in four years' time.

To prepare for our role in Sheffield's SEND inspection, we have been collating and summarising hundreds of comments we've received from parents over the last couple of years.

Please keep your feedback coming; call us on **0300 321 4721**, send an email to enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk, or talk to us at our events (see pages 22 & 23).

We log everything you tell us, and then summarise it so individuals can't be identified. Please make sure that you're a member (there's a membership form at the back of this newsletter), so that we can contact you as soon as our inspection is announced!

New on the web

The **Let's Talk Directory** is a guide to emotional wellbeing and mental health services for children and young people in Sheffield. It lists almost 50 local and national organisations which can help with a wide range of issues, such as eating disorders, bullying, substance abuse, self-harm, relationship issues, and many more. You can download it from: www.sheffieldccg.nhs.uk/Your-Health/lets-talk-directory.htm (This is a large file which can take a long time to download.)

Epic Friends (www.epicfriends.co.uk) is a new website developed by Sheffield CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) with funding from the Children's Hospital Charity. It is designed to help young people help their friends who they think may have mental health problems. Young people can also use the site to find out about difficulties they're experiencing, and parents, teachers and others can use it for information and advice.

The Council for Disabled Children

has published a guide to help practitioners develop good-quality EHC plans. It is also a useful resource for parents whose children are going through the EHCP process. The document contains excerpts from real EHC plans and two example plans. You can download it from:

<https://tinyurl.com/mzkkzwd>

In response to enquiries from parents, we've added two new pages to the 'Resources' section of our Forum website (www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/resources)

- **Leisure** has information about local leisure providers who specialise in supporting children and young people with additional needs.
- **Legal advice** lists local and national organisations which provide legal advice for families with disabled children, most of them free of charge.

Carers Centre now also supports parent carers

January 2017 saw the start of a new contract between Sheffield Carers Centre and Sheffield City Council. This contract, to provide a citywide carers information and support service for adult carers, will bring some changes to the way the Centre works, and the services offered. One of these changes is that the Carers Centre will now be able to offer support and information to parents of disabled children, as well as adult carers of adults.

Services provided include:

- Support and Information Service
- Help with planning for emergencies
- Legal and benefits advice
- Counselling sessions
- Free Spa 1877 vouchers (one per carer – call **0114 278 8942**)
- Employment support for carers
- Training for carers
- Peer support, e.g. via telephone befriending service, buddy scheme

The Carers Centre has over 23 years' experience of informing and supporting carers and is hoping to increase a small team of dedicated staff and a fantastic team of volunteers (most of them carers) to enable more carers to be offered the support they need. However, there won't be a dedicated support worker for parent carers. The Carers Centre will continue to involve carers in the design and delivery of services to ensure that what is delivered is what carers say they need.

Any adult carer can register with the Carers Centre. You may just wish to receive their quarterly newsletter and find out more about the service, or you may need more support, for example through the Carer Advice line.

The Carers Centre can be contacted by calling **0114 272 8362**, or by emailing support@sheffieldcarers.org.uk



A British Muslim Mother's Experience of Autism

By Husna Begum

"Mummy... Ice cream," blurted my three-year-old daughter as she shoved her tiny pink socks into my hands. I knew exactly what she meant. She wanted me to make her an ice-cream out of her socks; thrusting one inside the other to form an imaginary ice-cream dome with a rather elusive cone. I obliged with a grin, as I knew the alternative would be to buy her a real one on a bitterly cold day or to endure her vexations the entire journey home from nursery. And whilst she happily feigned the licking of her pink ice cream sock, I was secretly observing those passers-by who may notice the rather odd behaviour of my child; oblivious to the fact that she is autistic.

Like many mothers of autistic children, I often feel self-conscious about my child's sometimes curious behaviour when out in public. What are people really thinking? Or are they judging my parenting style? For me, the issue is also one of sensitivity. I am a practising Muslim and whilst autism is no stranger to my community, there is often a varied response to its presence; those ranging from the suspicious and cynical to those that are accepting and compassionate.

Since my daughter's diagnosis I have encountered all manner of attitudes. I tend to find that there are those who are indifferent to the idea that a "hidden disability" like autism even exists. They put my child's behaviour down to cultural superstitions or that "doctors just say these things". Their opinions are the ones I fear most because they are less willing to talk about the condition openly as if somehow



"talking" about it is culturally inappropriate. And it is this group of people that I dread encountering most, when out in public; as they are the ones staring at my daughter when she has her "ice cream sock" moments, believing somehow she is to blame for her own peculiar behaviour.

Fortunately, the Muslim community is diverse in its attitudes. For all those who are ignorant, there is a growing show of tolerance, acceptance and understanding, particularly amongst the youth. As a mother, being able to talk about my child's diagnosis, treatment and condition has been my coping mechanism, even if it does put me at odds with a cross section of the community. I have accepted that God has given me a child who is different, so why should I deny her the right to access the treatments and services available to autistic children from all faiths, all because I feel embarrassed?

Talking about autism is working for me and my child.

I urge Muslim mothers in my position to do the same. As Muslims, we have a rich tradition of seeking solace from prayer. We should be drawing on these traditions as well as learning from those outside our community to enable us to better cope with a diagnosis and in turn give our children the best future possible. Maybe then one day, no one will question why my child has an 'ice-cream sock'.

Making the transition to adult respite

By Marion Hutchinson

My son James stayed at Rushey Meadow [a council-run residential respite home for children with severe learning difficulties] for overnight respite and had been very happy and settled there. However, at midnight on the morning of his 18th birthday this stopped.

I was dreading how we were going to cope with life without respite and the support that this gives us as a family unit and James for his independence. There was also the worry that, even if there was something out there, how much respite could we have? You never hear any good or positive stories, so I was not hopeful.

I knew James himself would be able to handle the transition as long as I got it right (no pressure, mum!). James's world is full of books, computers, DVDs etc.; he needs support for his safety and wellbeing, but the actual building doesn't seem to have a great impact on him.

After the assessments by social services, I looked at the "Adults" section of the Sheffield Directory (www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk) and was pleasantly surprised to find several adult service providers that supported young adults and would also meet James's needs.

I visited each place and talked to the managers about James so they could give an initial judgement of being able to meet his needs or not. Each place was different:

some offered transport, some did not; some were very activity-focussed, some left it to the client to decide how they spent their time whilst they were there.

The transition didn't happen overnight, we had a six-month gap and I found myself in the role of key worker, pulling all the information together to enable the best possible outcome for James.

We now have the same level of support we had at Rushey Meadow. The process takes a fair bit of work, time and patience but James is now staying at 'Step Up Support' where he happily runs in and settles himself at home. He has filled their world (and cupboards) with his treasures... and I get to sleep.



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...

[illegible]

"My name is Kamelija. I am not a "syndrome". I am not some "diagnosis". With all these presumptions that people have about me, it hasn't stopped me from getting a green belt in Karate. It hasn't stopped me to be fluent in three languages: Lithuanian, English and Sign Language.

It hasn't stopped me from winning the "Sheffield's Young Person of the Year" award in 2011. I do not see my disability as a barrier; I see it as an opportunity. I see it as a chance to break the status quo. My dream is to represent Great Britain in the Paralympics. With all my successes behind me, I know I can make this dream a reality.

My name is Kamelija and I can."



Star of this issue:
Kamelija
Ahmed

Support Group Focus

Autism Hope

We are a new parent run support group based in North Sheffield.

Our group was founded by two mums, Carlie and Jenny, who both have autistic sons. We started the group as we both had experienced the worry and loneliness that caring for a child with autism can bring, and the instant connection you feel when you meet another person who understands!

Our group is a place where parents and carers can meet and discuss their experiences openly in a relaxed friendly atmosphere where there is no judgement, just plenty of tea and cake!

Our members have children of all ages with autism, so the experience and support available is wonderful.

We aim to provide as much information to help each other as possible and are lucky to have the support from other charities and agencies. At our March meeting we had Sparkle Sheffield joining us, and in April we have SENDIAS. Future groups include speakers on Sibling Support and the emotional wellbeing of parents and carers.



Carlie with son Isaac



Jenny with son Luca

If you would like to join us, we would love for you to come along. We meet on the 1st Tuesday of every month, at 9.30am-11.30am. The venue is St John's Parish Centre, 21 Housley Park, Chapeltown, Sheffield S35 2UE.

Children are welcome to come along; we set up a small play area with sensory toys to help entertain them.

For more information, please contact
Carlie Brough on 07968 984179 or join
our "Autism Hope" Facebook page.



Help in exams

Here's a recent enquiry from a parent: *a student with Asperger's in Year 11 had performed far below his ability in his mock GCSEs. His handwriting, slow and messy at the best of times, had deteriorated into a barely legible scrawl, and he had been unable to complete a number of papers within the time allowed. The parent had asked the school whether her son might qualify for extra time in exams, but was told that it was too late to request this.*

If you think that your child may need help in their GCSEs, it's important to start planning early. Here's how it works...

What are access arrangements?

Extra help in public exams is known as "access arrangements". Their purpose is to allow students with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do. They must not give the student an unfair advantage or compromise the integrity of the assessment.

Examples of access arrangements include:

- Extra time
- A reader
- A scribe
- Assistive software (e.g. screen reader/voice recognition)
- A word processor
- Working in an individual room
- Supervised rest breaks
- Modified papers (colour, font size, braille etc.)
- A prompter



Access arrangements must be appropriate to the exam and the student. For example, a student with dyslexia may need extra time for a written exam, but not for a practical one.

Any kind of access arrangement must reflect the student's **normal way of working** (except in the case of injuries). For example, a student would only be allowed to use a laptop in exams if they normally use one in class. The arrangement must not suddenly be granted at the time of the exam.

Who qualifies for access arrangements?

Access arrangements are a way of discharging the duty to make reasonable adjustments set out in the Equality Act 2010. To qualify, a student would need to be considered "disabled" within the meaning of the Act – that is, having a mental or physical impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This impairment must put them at a **substantial disadvantage** in comparison to someone who is not disabled.

For some types of access arrangements, a student must undergo a formal assessment before the school can apply for them. These assessments might measure things like reading speed, writing speed, spelling accuracy, or cognitive processing speed. To qualify, the student's scores must fall well below the average expected for their age.

How do you apply for access arrangements?

It's important to start the process early. For GCSEs, all access arrangements should be in place at the start of GCSE courses. Talk to your child and ask them if they think they will need support in exams, and if so, how this can best be provided. Make sure they understand that this support will need to form part of their normal way of working in the classroom.

Next, ask the SENCO if your child is being considered for access arrangements – hopefully, they are already on their radar. The SENCO will have to consider your child's need for access arrangements on a subject-by-subject basis, and determine what would be the most appropriate arrangement. Some access arrangements are not allowed in specific exams, e.g. students can't have a scribe for Modern Foreign Languages.

What happens next depends on the type of access arrangements your child might need:

- For arrangements like extra time, a reader, a scribe, a computer reader or speech-to-text software, a formal assessment is required. This needs to be carried out by a specialist

assessor. In some schools, a member of staff (often the SENCO) holds the required qualifications. Alternatively, the school can commission an external assessor. Assessments are valid for two years.

- If the assessment shows that your child qualifies, the school needs to submit an application to the Joint Council for Qualifications. Applications must be submitted by specific deadlines. For GCSEs taken in June, the deadline is usually in February.
- Other access arrangements, such as supervised rest breaks, a prompter or provision of a laptop, can be decided by the school without having to carry out a formal assessment or submit an application.

For **all** access arrangements, the school must be able to produce evidence to show that the arrangement is part of the student's normal way of working.

Every year, the Joint Council for Qualifications publishes a document called 'Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments', which explains the rules in detail. You can download it from: <https://tinyurl.com/bv7rnh9>

A note about SATS

Access arrangements can also be put in place for SATS, which are administered at the end of Year 6. Some access arrangements, such as extra time, early opening or compensatory marks, must be applied for in advance. Reports from professionals are not required. Pupils with statements or EHC plans automatically qualify for up to 25% additional time.

Other arrangements (e.g. scribes, word processors or other technical aids) do not

require an application, but schools must notify Standards Testing Agency after the tests have been administered. Some arrangements (e.g. readers, prompters, or rest breaks) require neither application nor notification.

As with GCSEs, any additional support provided in the tests must be part of the pupil's normal way of working, and schools are expected to be able to provide evidence for this. For more information, see <https://tinyurl.com/khb2om4>

Special Olympics Great Britain National Summer Games

7-12 August 2017

The largest disability sport event of 2017 is coming to Sheffield!

By Tom Kavanagh, Young Athletes & Families Programme Manager

Around 2,600 athletes with intellectual disabilities of all ages and abilities will travel to our city from across the country. They will be supported over four days of competition by 800 coaches, 750 volunteers, 150 officials and over 5,000 family and friends.

Special Olympics GB is the largest registered charity providing year-round sports training and competition opportunities for people with intellectual (learning) disabilities. The Games is the showpiece event which occurs every four years. Almost 1.5 million people in the UK (2% of the population) have an intellectual disability.



Our families play an essential and ongoing role in enabling athletes to achieve their potential. The continuous support our athletes receive from parents, siblings, grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles makes us feel both inspired and proud. We know from experience that the National Summer Games offer families the opportunity to share and celebrate their son or daughter's abilities. We expect that around 5,000 family members will travel to Sheffield from all corners of Great Britain to support our athletes, and we want them to enjoy the competition but also enjoy the wonderful and historic city of Sheffield and the surrounding area.

To recognise the contribution made by families, we are delighted to offer a Families Programme throughout the games. Our sincere thanks for the support of our friends and supporters from the Lions of British Isles and Ireland, who are looking forward to delivering the 2017 Families



Village at Tudor Square in Sheffield city centre. This will be their second consecutive games, and will coincide with their 100th anniversary.

If you have a family member who has a learning disability, or would just like to know more about the Games, Special Olympics Great Britain are inviting you to come to Tudor Square between midday, Sunday 6th August and midday, Friday 11th August. Come and learn about the Special Olympics and visit our information stands in the 2017 Families Village, or just stop by for a cup of tea and say hi!

If you have someone in your family with a learning disability and you think they would be interested in getting active and healthy, please contact Yorkshire Sport Foundation on 0330 20 20 280 or email info@yorkshiresport.org

For more information, visit our Games website: www.sheffield2017.org.uk

#Sheffield17 #SeeingIsBelieving



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/

April

Tuesday 18 April, 6 - 7pm
Jump Inc. Meadowhall, Vulcan Road
JumpStars inclusive
trampoline session

May

Thursday 4 May, 10am - 12pm
at Red Tape Central, Shoreham Street
Parent workshop:
Making visual aids
Staff from the Sheffield Speech and
Language Therapy Service will show you
how to use the software "Communicate
in Print" to create visual resources for your
child, such as visual timetables, signs,
booklets etc. You will be able to print and
laminate resources during the session to
take home at the end. Places are limited
and must be pre-booked! Call us on **0300
321 4721** or book via our website: www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/events

May continued

Thursday 11 May, 10.30am - 12pm
Coffee morning

Friday 12 May, 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.

Tuesday 16 May, 6 - 7pm
Jump Inc. Meadowhall, Vulcan Road
JumpStars inclusive
trampoline session

Wednesday 17 May, 12.30 - 2.30pm
Transition subgroup meeting
Do you care for a teenager or young
adult (16-25 years) with additional
needs? Then come along to our new
Transition subgroup! Chat to other
parents about the transition from
children's to adult services (education,
health and social care) in a friendly and
supportive atmosphere. Your views
and experiences will help us influence
transition in Sheffield.

June

Tuesday 13 June, 10.30am - 12pm
Coffee morning

Tuesday 20 June, 6 - 7pm
Jump Inc. Meadowhall, Vulcan Road
JumpStars inclusive
trampoline session

July

Thursday 13 July, 10.30am - 12pm
Coffee morning

Tuesday 18 July, 6 - 7pm
Jump Inc. Meadowhall, Vulcan Road
JumpStars inclusive
trampoline session

Save the date!

We are hoping to run another **Family Fun
Day** for our members at Hillsborough Sports
Arena during the summer holidays. We've
pencilled in Friday 18 August, 10am-3pm,
and invitations will be sent out to members
as soon as funding for this event has been
confirmed.

**Don't miss out – sign up today by
completing the membership form
at the back of this newsletter!**

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 trampoline sessions

These are discounted, disability-friendly
trampoline 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. For more
information, please see page 4.



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 carers, including parents of disabled children	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@cafamilly.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@pacesheffield.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

Here are some more pictures from our recent photo competition...



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

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