



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

Autumn 2014

Issue 10 - **FREE!**

Short breaks grants

Apply now for up to £400 per family!

Page 9

The SEN reforms

The system has changed – what will it mean for your child?

Page 16

A ramp is not enough

What the Equality Act means for leisure providers

Page 15

Parents' stories

How we found a way to teach our autistic son

Page 20



About us

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

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

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

Membership is free, join us today!

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

Get in touch

By Post:

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

By phone: 0300 321 4721

By e-mail:

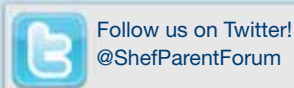
enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Website:

www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Drop-in:

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



St Mary's Community Centre

Members of



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



Proudly sponsored by Irwin Mitchell Solicitors. Legal experts in services for you and your family including challenging health and social care packages, special educational needs, court of protection issues and personal injury claims.

www.irwinmitchell.com

Your advert here?

Would you like to advertise your products or services in our next newsletter?

For a small fee, you could reach around 4,000 families in Sheffield. Our rates are:

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

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

Printed by Brightstar Creative Ltd. Views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of Sheffield Parent Carer Forum. Sheffield Parent Carer Forum does not endorse any organisations, products or services mentioned in this newsletter. Please contact us before reproducing any material contained in this newsletter. We welcome articles from parents, professionals and practitioners. Please contact us to discuss possible contributions. Sheffield Parent Carer Forum is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Company number: 7226540. Charity number: 1145913

Design by 'Side of the Hill'

A very warm welcome to our Autumn Newsletter!



After our successful Family Fun Day at Hillsborough Sports Arena on 18 August, we return to the new academic year and the implementation of the new SEN reforms which came into force from 1 September. A lot of work has already been carried out around these, but a great deal more still remains. Clearly the transition to new ways of working and embedding the different processes properly will take some time. We will continue to work hard to ensure partner organisations and service providers work with families, and keep our children and young people at the heart of what they do. An update about the reforms can be found at pages 16-19, and we are currently planning our next conference in March 2015 so that members can get a clear picture of what the reforms actually mean to them and the progress that is being made in Sheffield.

We received over 300 responses to our State of the City Survey and a short summary of the findings is on page 6.

The survey was extremely important so we could get an accurate and timely snapshot of the lives, priorities and concerns of parent carers in the city. The information will underpin the work we do with service providers in numerous ways. A big thank you to everyone who contributed to this.

Also inside this edition, we welcome and celebrate our 1,000th member to the Forum and bring you the latest information about the short breaks grant scheme, local news and dates for your diary.

We hope you find the different articles and information useful. If you have any suggestions or ideas for articles you would like to see or contribute to future editions of the newsletter, please just get in touch.

Best wishes

Jayne Woodward, Co-Chair

Family Fun Day is a big success



Disabled children and their families enjoyed a fun-filled day at Hillsborough Sports Arena on 18 August.

The event had been organised by the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum in partnership with Sheffield Wednesday's National Citizen Service programme.

Parents were able to relax while their children took part in a range of accessible activities, supported by volunteers from both organisations. Highlights included bungee trampolines, bouncy castles, drumming and dance workshops, adapted cycles, and a whole host of inclusive sports and craft activities.

Sheffield Wednesday mascot Ozzie Owl paid a visit, but faced fierce competition from two other furry stars – Pepper the rabbit and Amelia the ferret (pictured) from Heeley City Farm!

Forum worker Eva Juusola said: "We had a great turn out, with over 250 people attending. The weather was kind to us, too, and it was wonderful to see so many happy faces. For families with disabled children, the long summer holidays can be a very stressful time, and events like ours give families much-needed break."



Jayne Woodward, the Forum's co-chair, added: "We couldn't have done it without the fantastic support from Sheffield Wednesday FC and the rest of the community. Schools lent us chairs, friends provided gazebos, sports groups ran free activities, and we even had a fire engine and library van dropping by. It was a real team effort!"

To see more photos taken at the event, please visit our Facebook page.

Would you like to be kept informed about similar events?

Just fill in the membership form at the back of this newsletter, and opt into one of our mailing lists – it's free!

Forum welcomes 1,000th member

We have reached an important milestone by signing up our 1,000th member. This makes us one of the largest parent carer forums in the country.

The 1,000th member is Katherine Walsh, who lives in Millhouses with her partner Steve and their sons James (7) and Will (2). Katherine said, "I am very honoured to be the 1,000th member of the Parent Carer Forum. Since joining the Forum, I have already met some wonderful people, attended a coffee morning and accessed their telephone support. I was so grateful that I was not only pointed in the right direction, but all the supporting information I needed very quickly arrived in the post."

Katherine's son James has a medical condition called Congenital Adrenal

Hyperplasia; this means he is unable to make the stress hormone cortisol and requires medication four times a day. Katherine explained, "He was very poorly when he was first born, but early diagnosis saved his life and he has grown into a lovely, lively, fun-loving 7-year-old who we are all proud of and love very much."

"As any parent of a child with a chronic medical condition and indeed all parents know, there are worrying and stressful times when it's great to see a friendly face, hear a kind word and chat to other mums and dads in similar situations."



Christmas film

Thanks to generous funding from local manufacturer Gripple Limited, we will once again be arranging a private film screening for our members at the Sheffield Showroom.

The event will take place on Saturday 6 December in the morning. Film details and booking information will be circulated to our mailing lists nearer the time.

Please ensure we have up-to-date contact details (preferably an email address) for you so you don't miss out!



Apology

Unfortunately a small batch of our spring newsletters was posted with insufficient postage. Members affected received a grey "Postage Due" card from Royal Mail and were asked to pay a surcharge. We sent an email to our email list and offered to reimburse anyone who had paid the surcharge.

If you were affected and would like to claim a reimbursement, please do get in touch.

We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience caused.

Parent survey highlights impact of caring

Many families raising disabled children in Sheffield are struggling to cope, according to a survey conducted by the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum with funding from the government's Department for Education.

A total of 320 parent carers took part in the study, aimed at evaluating the impact of caring for a disabled child on the whole family. Parents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with services accessed by their children.

A worrying 35% of parents said they were "struggling" or "not coping", and 26% stated that they often neglected themselves. A third of respondents said that they had not had a single day or evening off from caring for six months or more.

The survey revealed that many families face additional vulnerabilities, with over a quarter stating that they were lone parents, had a disability or long-term illness themselves,

or cared for more than one disabled child. There was a large number (57%) of low-income households, linked to the fact that 40% of parents had given up work because of their caring responsibilities. Only 10% of respondents were managing to hold down a full-time job.

The survey highlights capacity issues in several services that support disabled children: 74% of respondents said there was "too little" input from Educational Psychology, the Autism Team and Speech and Language Therapy. Parents also raised concerns about social care services, particularly in relation to transition.

On the plus side, there was a marked improvement in parental satisfaction with both special and mainstream schools, compared to our 2009 survey. However, satisfaction with specialist settings remains higher than with mainstream schools.



We will discuss our findings with councillors, commissioners, service managers and the local media. A full report will be published on our website in early October. Please contact us if you would like us to send you a copy.

Parent Partnership Service changes its name

The Sheffield Parent Partnership Service has changed its name to **Sheffield SEN and Disability Information, Advice and Support** (SSENDIAS). The change in name reflects a change in remit; under the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities now have a duty to provide an impartial information, advice and support service which covers education, health and social care across the whole 0-25 age range. Parent Partnership services previously only dealt with education-related issues, and only up to the age of 19.

In addition, the new service will be able to provide information about leisure opportunities, disability benefits and support groups. It will be accessible not just to parents, but also to the children and young people themselves.

For contact details, please refer to our "Useful contacts" pages at the back of this newsletter.

Coffee mornings

We are continuing to run coffee mornings for parent carers on the second Thursday of each month. Meetings take place at St Mary's Community Centre on Bramall Lane between 10.30am and 12noon. Come along for a friendly chat with parents in a similar situation, swap useful information, and take some time out from your caring responsibilities!

It doesn't matter what your child's needs are and whether they have a diagnosis or not. Pre-schoolers and home-educated children welcome!



Sheffield College publishes booklet for students with additional needs

Last year, we approached The Sheffield College to highlight a lack of information about the support available for students with additional needs. The College was keen to improve this, and worked with us to produce information which prospective students with special educational needs or disabilities and their parents may find useful. A booklet has just been printed and will be distributed to schools in the autumn term.

To request a copy, please contact The Sheffield College on **0114 260 2600**.

Interested in Football?

The number of opportunities for disabled people to play football within the City of Sheffield is growing faster than it has ever done before. There are 11 teams in Sheffield who play in affiliated football; however, there are recreational football opportunities available to people who just want a kick about. Sheffield and Hallamshire County FA can support any disabled person wanting to play football or currently playing football to ensure they have the best experience possible.



Both of the professional clubs in the City, Sheffield Wednesday and Sheffield United are keen to get more people playing and watching football with them.

For more information please call Matt Elkington, Disability Football Development Officer on **0114 241 4992** or alternatively email matt.elkington@sheffielddfa.com.

“Working together” training for professionals

Developed and delivered by our team of parent trainers, Working Together is a one-day training course for professionals who work with children with additional needs and their families.

The training provides a unique insight into the often challenging realities of caring for a child with a disability, and explores ways of working in partnership with parents – a key theme under the Children and Families Act 2014.

Limited spaces are still available for our next open sessions on 30 January and 29 April 2015, 9.30am-2.30pm, at St Mary's Conference Centre, Bramall Lane. Tailor-made training sessions on clients' premises can be arranged on request.



For more information, please visit our website or contact us on 0300 321 4721 or email us at training@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Speech and Language drop-ins

The Sheffield Speech and Language Therapy Service is running drop-in sessions for parents who are worried about any aspect of their child's speech and language development, or simply want more information.

Venues and dates until December 2014 are:

Early Days Children's Centre
(every 2nd Thursday, 9.30-11.30am)

The Meadow Children's Centre
(every 3rd Tuesday, 10-11.30am)

Chapeltown Library
(every 3rd Thursday, 10-11.30am)

Shooter's Grove Children's Centre
(every 2nd Friday, 10-11am)

Sharrow Children's Centre
(every 1st Wednesday, 10-11.30am)

Burngreave Children's Centre
(every 2nd Wednesday, 10-11.30am)

Darnall Children's Centre
(every 3rd Wednesday, 1-3pm)

Crystal Peaks Library
(every 1st Friday, 10am-12pm)

For more information, please contact Dana Taylor or Jane Staton on 0114 305 1893 or 0114 305 1894.

Short break grants available now!

Parents of disabled children and young people aged 0-19 can now apply for a one-off grant payment of up to £400 to give them a break from caring.

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

The deadline for applications is 31 January 2015, and the money must be spent by 31 March 2015.

You are eligible for the grant if:

- You live in Sheffield and Sheffield City Council has a responsibility for your child (e.g. education) **AND...**
- Your child receives the high rate care or high rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) **OR...**
- You already receive another form of assessed short break, e.g. residential provision, SNIPS, direct payments.

If none of these conditions applies you may still be eligible, but will need to ask a professional who knows your family to fill in an Additional

Information Form. If you were awarded the grant in 2013/14 following the submission of additional information, you do not need to resubmit this information provided it is less than 12 months old.

Further information and an application form can be downloaded from the Council website; go to www.sheffield.gov.uk/shortbreaks and click on “Grants”. Please allow 6 weeks for your application to be processed.

For general information about short breaks, please contact SSENDIAS (formerly Parent Partnership) on **0114 273 6009** or email disabilityinformationservices@sheffield.gov.uk



Advertisement



ibk initiatives Inclusive Theatre Company
Sept 2014-July 2015

Where we meet The Centre In The Park, Norfolk Heritage Park, Guildford Avenue, Sheffield, S2 2PL
When we meet Every second Saturday during term time. A full list of dates will be provided on request.
5-11 year olds: 9.30am-12pm, 12-19+ year olds: 1pm-3.30pm
What's the cost? Each session will cost £5. We will invoice you at the start of each term.
PAs are welcome to come and support the young people.

Our group leaders are skilled in performing arts and have experience in running theatre companies
For more information contact Kiera on: **0114 223 0236** or **07580 147671**, email: kiera@ibkinitiatives.com
www.ibkinitiatives.com

Use of escorts under review

Sheffield City Council is aiming to save money by reducing the use of escorts on a small number of SEN transport routes.

However, a recent letter sent to all parents of children in receipt of travel assistance may have caused unnecessary alarm.

Transport officers told us that the escort review mentioned in the letter was mainly aimed at Integrated Resources (IRs). Officers have been working with IR staff to identify youngsters who would be able to travel without an escort. Escorts will only be removed following consultation with parents and subject to a thorough risk assessment.

However, the move could also impact on other children, as routes may need to be changed to put children who are able to travel without an escort on the same bus.

Transport Manager Simon Ebbins emphasized that there were no plans to get rid of ALL escorts or even a significant number. He pointed out that Sheffield has been using escorts almost by default on 100% of routes, whereas other local authorities have been

employing them more selectively. He reassured parents that all changes would be thoroughly risk assessed, and that CCTV cameras would be installed on buses without escorts as part of the safeguarding mechanism, to protect both the driver and the young people travelling. Sheffield spends a significant share of its £5m SEN transport budget on escorts. There is a constant pressure on the budget and therefore a need to make savings.

If you have any concerns about these changes and would like to talk to someone, please call Transport Services on **0114 203 7570**.



Meeting about SEN transport
We are meeting with transport officers on Friday 17 October, 10am-12noon, at St Mary's, to discuss the escort review and any issues at the start of the new school year.
Everyone welcome!

Concerns about capacity of SEN Team

Several parents have contacted us to express concerns about a lack of communication regarding specialist placement decisions, as well as delays in issuing final statements.

The backlog appears to be a result of capacity issues in the SEN Assessment and Placement Team, which deals with statements and specialist placements. Due to unfilled vacancies and staff illness, the Team was operating at a third of its capacity just before the summer holidays.

All of the vacancies have now been recruited to, and additional government funding is being used to employ four extra members of staff on one-year contracts to handle the transition to Education Health and Care (EHC) plans. The team will then consist of 16 full-time workers.

Between September 2014 and April 2018, the team will have to convert an average of 54 statements and LDAs into EHC plans every month (see pages 16-19).

Help with energy bills

If you are part of a low-income household and care for a young child or someone with a disability you may be entitled to a £140 discount on your electricity bill this winter through the Warm Home Discount Scheme.

Unfortunately, not all energy suppliers take part in the scheme, and they all have different qualifying rules.

If you think you may qualify, contact your supplier and say you are asking about the Warm Home Discount. Or look on your supplier's website and search for "Warm Home Discount". There is a list of the suppliers who are in the scheme at www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme/eligibility. Claims should be made as soon as possible. Suppliers have a fixed amount of money for this group and when that runs out, the supplier will close its scheme.

While you're at it, ask your energy supplier about their Priority Services Register. You may be eligible for services including:

- **priority reconnection if your supply is interrupted and advance notice if they have to stop your supply;**
- **alternative facilities for cooking and heating if your energy supply is interrupted;**
- **free advice and information.**

You may get a Cold Weather Payment if you're getting certain benefits. Payments are made when your local temperature is either recorded as, or forecast to be, an average of zero degrees Celsius or below over seven consecutive days. You'll get a payment of £25 for each seven-day period of very cold weather between 1 November 2014 and 31 March 2015.

You may be entitled to a cold weather payment if you have a disabled child and get:

- **Income Support and income-based Jobseeker's Allowance**
- **Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA):**
- **Universal Credit**

If you are entitled to cold weather payments, you will automatically be sent a payment for each period of cold weather, but if you think you should receive one and you are not paid, you can make a written claim to your local benefit office.



Changes to Educational Psychology Service

In April 2014, the Sheffield Educational Psychology Service moved from a fully commissioned to a part-traded service model.

This means that the local authority now only funds statutory work (mainly activities relating to statutory assessments) and a small amount of core time from a named Educational Psychologist for mainstream schools, including Academies. Core time is set at two days per year for primary schools and four days per year for secondary schools.

The reduction in local authority funding is expected to be made up by “trading”; that is, schools buying in additional educational psychologist time from their delegated budgets. The service offers a “standard” package of five days for primary schools and ten days for secondary schools per year, and an “enhanced” package of seven days for primary schools and 16 days for secondary schools per year. It can also provide bespoke packages for individual schools or groups of schools working together.

So far, over 84% of mainstream schools have purchased additional time from the service, and most have bought in at a higher level than they had previously received. A few schools have chosen to use private educational psychologists instead.

Work with special schools and Pupil Referral / Inclusion Centres will carry on as before – i.e. free at the point of delivery with no trading arrangements.

Principal Educational Psychologist Mary Collins said: “There has been a national shift in funding from local authorities to schools directly, and so it makes sense for schools to have more choice and control, and to contribute more. This is in line with developments in most other areas. Developing a trading arm will enable us

to offer a more flexible and creative menu of options, and respond more easily to requests for bespoke interventions.”



Good to know

Parents are welcome to ring the Educational Psychology Service on 0114 250 6800 for general advice; this does not count against the school's allocation.

Referrals can only be made by schools, not parents. If you feel your child needs to be seen by an educational psychologist, you should speak to the school's SENCO.

Schools must obtain written consent from parents before an educational psychologist can assess or work with their child.

Parents should receive feedback following an assessment or intervention, either directly from the educational psychologist or through school.

Kids Together Club

The Kids Together Club is a parent-led charity for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, their siblings and friends.



Many of the families who access Kids Together have experienced negative reactions when attempting to take their disabled child to a mainstream soft play centre. This can be due to a variety of reasons, including challenging behaviour which is not always understood or accepted by other parents/carers; access issues faced by a child with reduced mobility requiring adult support to access the equipment, which is not always allowed in regular play sessions; or the family being rushed and feeling like they are in the way.

The Kids Together Club is a fully inclusive group where the charity hires a soft play centre for the exclusive use of its members on a fortnightly basis, including school holidays. Parents are welcome and encouraged to climb on the equipment with their child, without pressure to rush or avoid areas. The parents/carers are all very much aware of the behavioural challenges that are faced by our children and can rest assured that our sessions

offer a non-judgemental environment.

The group offers a support network to parents by parents in the same or similar situations, often with advice and understanding that is difficult to find elsewhere. Kids Together has been a lifeline to some.

The young people involved in the club have also found it an invaluable resource. Many of the siblings have said they had faced teasing and name calling at mainstream leisure activities, leaving them embarrassed by the sibling with SEN/disability. This group enables them to be proud to play with their siblings, again without judgement, having a peer support group from other siblings.

Most importantly, the children with SEN/disability are able to be themselves, access what THEY feel comfortable with, join in when THEY feel able to. The majority of the time we experience all members interacting with each other, adults and children alike.

New members are always welcome!

When: Sessions are held fortnightly on Tuesday evenings, 6.30pm-8.30pm.

Where: Jungle Mania, Unit 6 & 7 Coleford Business Centre, 291 Coleford Rd, Sheffield S9 5NF

For dates of upcoming meetings, please contact **Jason** on **07778 518010** or **Linzi** on **07879 468428**. You can also ask to join their closed Facebook group.

In this section, we celebrate your children's successes – from the small steps that perhaps only you noticed, to the big milestones that everybody can see. Please keep sending us your stories and tell us what your wonderful children have been up to!

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Dan Holmes, aged 17, made his debut on the Crucible stage this summer, when he joined a 91-strong cast of amateur actors to perform *The Sheffield Mysteries*. The play – a re-telling of familiar biblical stories in a modern Sheffield setting – garnered rave reviews.

Dan, who lives in Fulwood with his mum, dad and younger brother, is no stranger to the stage. As a member of Hallam 89 Theatre Group, he's already been in a number of productions at the University Drama Studio, including *Oliver Twist*, *James and The Giant Peach*, *Our Day Out* and *Treasure Island*.

Dan said: "It was amazing and really awesome to be in the *Sheffield Mysteries* at the Crucible Theatre in July this year."

Dan played Robbie, a teenager who tries to stop his father Abraham from leaving him and his brother Isaac behind.

Dan will be treading the boards again shortly, when he performs "Oh What a Lovely War" with Hallam 89 at the University Drama Studio.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Star of this issue:

**Dan
Holmes**



Question: It's difficult for my disabled child to access mainstream leisure services. Providers are often well prepared to accommodate wheelchair users, but struggle with children with learning difficulties or challenging behaviour. Are providers allowed to exclude these children, or to charge parents more if they have to provide extra staff to support their child?

Answer: Service providers must do what they can to make accessing their services possible for disabled people. Section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 states that reasonable steps should be taken to avoid putting a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage when compared to persons who are not disabled. This applies not just in relation to physical features (e.g. steps), but also in relation to things like policies or additional assistance to help disabled persons access services. The Act is clear in stating that organisations are NOT entitled to require a disabled person to pay the costs of implementing reasonable adjustments; in other words, if the adjustment is reasonable, parents of disabled children shouldn't have to pay more.

So when is an adjustment "reasonable"? The Equality and Human Rights Commission has published guidance on reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, which provides a good illustration of what factors should be taken into account, e.g. the size and resources of the organisation, the cost and practicality of the adjustment, and health and safety requirements. You can download it from www.equalityhumanrights.com/publication/reasonable-adjustments-disabled-pupils.

To request a reasonable adjustment, write to the leisure provider and specify the substantial

disadvantage that is being caused to your child. Compare your child to a (hypothetical or real) child without disabilities accessing the same service. Suggest ways in which the disadvantage could be overcome, and communicate as many reasons as possible why the adjustment is reasonable.

Focus on how the adjustment will benefit **all** children with your child's type of disability, rather than your child alone. This is because service providers are not expected to anticipate the needs of **every** individual who may use their service, but they are required to think about and provide for features which may impede persons with particular kinds of disability.

If a service provider refuses to make a reasonable adjustment, you could take a claim for disability discrimination to the county court. This must usually be done within six months of the discriminatory act, and it is recommended you get legal advice before you embark on this. Also, if the service provider is a member of a trade association or ombudsman service, you could ask this organisation to investigate a complaint.

Answer provided by James Henshall, Paralegal, Public Law Department, Irwin Mitchell LLP. This is an abridge article; please contact us if you would like us to send you the full-length version.

Further information: The Equality Advisory & Support Service (EASS) operates a freephone advice line on 0808 800 0082.

The Sheffield Parent Carer Forum runs free legal advice sessions where you can discuss your case with a solicitor from Irwin Mitchell; please refer to pages 22 & 23 for dates.

The SEN reforms: what parents need to know



On 1 September, the Children and Families Act 2014 came into force. Part 3 of this Act changes the way in which children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities receive support.

The new legislation is intended to create a system which is better integrated, more responsive and which leads to better life outcomes for our children and young people. It is accompanied by a new SEN Code of Practice, which everyone – schools, nurseries, colleges, local authorities, health services – must have regard to.

Overall, the reforms are an improvement on the old system – particularly for young people in further education and training. The timing, however, couldn't be worse. Fears have been raised that austerity-stricken councils could use the reforms to raise thresholds, reducing the number of children who qualify for support. The Department for Education has responded

to these worries by categorically stating that “no-one should lose their statement or LDA and not have it replaced with an EHC plan simply because the system is changing”.

Councils have been given extra funding to help with the implementation of the reforms. For Sheffield, this equates to just over £1m in 2014/15, with further funding to be made available next year.

Education Health and Care Plans

Statements of SEN and Learning Difficulty Assessments (LDAs) are being replaced by Education Health and Care Plans (EHC) plans, which are intended to be more holistic and person-centred. An EHC plan describes a child's educational, health and social care needs and sets out the provision required to meet those needs and achieve agreed long-term outcomes.

Like statements, EHC plans are formal legal documents, and any provision specified in the relevant sections must be provided. EHC plans

can be maintained up to the age of 25 provided the young person remains in education or training (whereas statements cease when a young person leaves school or turns 19).

New entrants

All new statutory assessments must now be carried out under the new legislation. The EHC assessment process will involve more face-to-face discussions with the family and will take a maximum of 20 weeks (previously 26 weeks).

The threshold for EHC plans is the same as for statements, that is, where “the special educational provision necessary to meet the child or young person's needs cannot be reasonably provided within the resources normally available to mainstream settings”. This is not the same as the threshold for “top-up” or ‘banded’ funding. There are circumstances where it would be appropriate for a child or young person to have a plan but no top-up funding, or occasions where a child who receives top-up funding might not need a plan – it depends on what is best to meet the needs of the child or young person in question and help them achieve their outcomes.

Conversion of existing statements

Existing statements will gradually be converted into EHC plans during the next three and a half years. This will be done in cohorts, starting with children who have multi-agency funding arrangements and those who are due to transfer to a different setting in 2015. A local transition plan has been published on the Local Offer website (www.sheffield.gov.uk/localoffer).

Transfers will happen via a transfer review that will take the place of the normal annual review. This must involve an EHC needs assessment; however, existing assessment information

within the statement can be used if everyone agrees that it is sufficient.

Until your child has had their transfer review, their statement will retain its legal force, and reviews and appeals will be dealt with under the old system.

Conversion of existing LDAs

LDAs were issued when a young person with a statement left school and moved into further education or training.

An LDA does not confer the same rights as a statement. This is why young people who currently receive support as a result of an LDA are a priority group for the conversion. They can request an EHC needs assessment at any time during the next two years, provided they are still in education or training. Any such request will be treated as a request from a new entrant.

For those young people with LDAs who don't request an assessment, the council must consider at the end of the transition period whether they may need an EHC plan. This is likely if they will remain in further education or training after April 2016.

Personal budgets

Any child or young person with an EHC plan is eligible for a personal budget. This is an amount of money identified by the local authority that can be used to deliver some or all of the provision set out in their plan. It can be provided as a notional budget or as a direct payment (cash payment), or a combination of both. Direct payments for educational provision are subject to a number of restrictions.

Continues on next page...



Independent supporters

The government is funding a range of private, voluntary and community sector organisations to provide support to families during the EHC planning process (both for new entrants and those transferring from statements or LDAs), over the next 18 months. In Sheffield, the Independent Support programme will be delivered by **Core Assets**.

SEN Support

Between September 2014 and September 2015, the support categories School Action and School Action Plus (and their Early Years equivalents) will be replaced by a single category called “SEN Support”. SEN Support is also being introduced into further education colleges and sixth forms.

Having just one category instead of two does not mean that everybody will get the same level of support. Settings still need to adopt a graduated approach, tailoring provision to learners’ needs.

Schools no longer have to issue IEPs (Individual Education Plans), but they must still keep a record of the interventions and support put in place, and document their effectiveness. They should also meet with parents at least three times a year to review progress.

The Local Offer

The new legislation requires local authorities to publish a “local offer” – that is, a website

with information about the services available to children and young people with SEN/disabilities aged 0-25 in their area.

You can access Sheffield’s local offer at www.sheffield.gov.uk/localoffer. The website consists of two main parts: a directory of service providers, and information and guidance pages. It is maintained by SENDIAS (formerly Parent Partnership), who will also support parents without internet to access the local offer.

Members of the Forum were involved in drawing up an initial specification for the website and helped to compile templates with questions for schools and service providers.

Schools were encouraged to complete these templates in partnership with parents, but many found this difficult due to the tight timescales. However, schools are free to amend their local offer profiles at any time, and we hope that they will involve parents in future reviews.

We are delighted that Sheffield’s local offer includes a “rate and review” feature which enables users to give star ratings and post comments. We believe that this has the potential to increase accountability and help parents make informed decisions. However, it will only be helpful if lots of people use it. So log on, find your child’s school, nursery or short breaks provider, and post a review today!

A word of caution: Sheffield’s local offer website is by no means a finished product. Both the functionality and the content still need a lot of

work. However, we think that the site has a lot of potential, and we are committed to keep working with the council until we get it right. If you’d like to get involved in this work, please get in touch!

Further reading

For an overview of the reforms, a summary published by the Council for Disabled Children is a good place to start:

www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/resources/cdcs-resources/summary-of-the-children-and-families-act

The Department for Education has published a parent-friendly version of the new SEN Code of Practice, which includes all the key information, but is significantly shorter than the full version. You can download it from www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers

Special Needs Jungle have published a series of helpful flowcharts:

www.specialneedsjungle.com/sen-reforms/send-reforms-resources/

Information sessions for parents

We are running a series of information sessions for parents to help them prepare for the changes. Sessions will be tailored to the needs of specific groups, i.e. parents of children with statements, parents of children on School Action/School Action Plus, and parents of young people aged 16+. Please refer to pages 22 & 23 for dates. Additional session dates will shortly be added to our website: www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/calendar. We also have limited funding to run sessions at schools or clusters of schools; please contact us for more information.



Being Well through Mindfulness Based Practice:

to help build resilience in a disabling world

This course is for those of us whose families have been touched by a family member we love being on the receiving end of negative and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. We know it can be difficult at times to hold on to our own well-being and the quality of life we would choose for ourselves and our families.

Dealing with difficulties is an inevitable part of life – particularly in the circumstances we are considering. How we deal with problems can play a major role in not only the outcome, but in terms of the impact on our well-being. Building personal resilience can be very helpful.

Resilience does not eliminate stress or erase life’s difficulties. Instead it gives people the strength to tackle problems, overcome adversity and move on with their lives.

This 6 week course aims to look at some ideas and practices that might be helpful.

To book a place on our autumn 2014 course please contact Pippa Murray: pippa@ibkinitiatives.com

Teaching Joel

A personal experience of
Applied Behavioural Analysis



My son Joel is severely autistic, non verbal, has a severe learning disability, chronic pain issues and sound sensitivities. Quite a combination!

Looking back on Joel's development, there have been many challenging times. There has, however, been one approach that has been a lifeline: Applied Behavioural Analysis with Verbal Behaviour therapy (ABA/VB).

This therapy teaches children a wide range of skills by breaking them down into smaller tasks, and teaching those tasks in a structured way through motivational techniques.

Many families, like ourselves in Sheffield, fund ABA privately or through grants from the Caudwell Children trust (which uses means-tested criteria), as it is not widely known or used by NHS or educational services.

I remember clearly our ABA consultant asking me what I wanted Joel to learn first.

I wanted him to be toilet trained to go to school and also to stop running off. It was the first time someone had looked at our son and seen possibility, not problems. He was toilet trained for school and he soon learnt to come to us when we called.

The learning didn't stop there. Joel was taught PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) when we had been told by an NHS speech and language therapist that he couldn't be taught PECS as he didn't have enough items to motivate him. A fine motor skills and copying programme gave Joel the skills he needed to be able to start using Makaton hand signs. Other programmes developed his expressive and receptive language, independence, cognitive skills and motor skills, to name but a few.

So how does ABA work in practice? Well, take hair cutting for example. Joel hated anyone touching his hair, he would flinch as though in pain and so hair cutting was a very fraught affair! We would have to swaddle him in a blanket, my husband holding him down while I tried to cut his hair, with Joel thrashing his head about and screaming. Invariably he ended up with long hair, often being mistaken for a girl.

We asked our ABA consultant to help and she set up a desensitisation programme to reduce his fear of having his hair cut.

We started by quickly and gently stroking Joel's head once, as we passed, doing it little and often and with increasing frequency as he began to tolerate this. The next stage was to "pair" a highly motivating activity (for Joel it was singing) whilst lifting small strands of his hair. Once this was tolerated it was time to introduce the scissors! At first we would have the scissors near him on the floor or table when he was doing an activity he enjoyed, moving them nearer to him over time. The next stage was to move the scissors over his head whilst he was doing a preferred activity.

Once this was established, we chose a highly motivating reward and Joel asked for it through PECS. The PECS picture of the treat was put on a "wait" card, we cut a tiny bit of his hair and gave him the treat immediately after. This way Joel started to understand he would get a positive reward out of letting us cut his hair. He now has a decent hair cut (my skills are improving) and via a token board will wait for 50 cuts of the hair before having his reward. The long-term aim will be to fade the motivators so the hair cutting becomes an everyday aspect of life and to

also get him into different hairdressers, so as an adult he can access a service we thought he would never be able to!

Another invaluable area of support and teaching not just for Joel but to us as parents has been his ABA behaviour management program. I feel sad to say this, but what we have been offered by other services has not been effective or helpful. In environments that do not adopt good communication and ABA behaviour management we have had severe problems with Joel's behaviour. It is in these instances that I get a glimpse of what our lives would have been like without ABA.

"It was the first time someone had looked at our son and seen possibility, not problems."

ABA is not well known or widely used in Sheffield's NHS or educational settings, but it is now a recognised treatment by the NHS (see NHS choices web site: www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Autistic-spectrum-disorder/Pages/Treatment.aspx). It is also well established in other countries, particularly the US. Surely it must only be a matter of time before this treatment that has saved our sanity and our family is available to all in the UK.

By Maria Fernandes

Please note: Each ABA programme is individual to the child and should only be implemented and reviewed by a person who is trained in ABA techniques.

Dates for your diary

October

Thursday 9 October, 10am-12noon

Legal advice sessions

Parents can book a free 30-minute advice session with a solicitor from Irwin Mitchell to get advice on a wide range of personal law matters, including wills and trusts, special educational needs (SEN), appeals against benefits decisions, and more.

Booking essential!

Thursday 9 October, 10.30am-12noon

Coffee morning

Come and chat to other parents and carers. Tea, coffee and CAKE! Pop in for a few minutes or stay for the whole session. We welcome all parent carers, whatever their children's needs, whether diagnosed or undiagnosed, mild or severe. Pre-schoolers and home-educated children welcome.

Tuesday 14 October, 10am-12noon

Information session: EHC plans

For parents of children with existing statements of SEN and those planning to request a statutory assessment. Find out when and how your child's statement will be converted into an EHC plan, how to prepare, and what your rights are.

Booking essential.

Friday 17 October, 10am-12noon

Meeting about SEN transport

This is an opportunity for parents to meet with officers from the SEN Transport Service and help improve home-school transport in Sheffield. We will discuss measures to reduce the number of escorts (see page 10) and review how the start into the new school year has gone.

October cont.

Thursday 23 October, 10am-12noon

Health subgroup meeting

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

November

Friday 7 November, 10am-12noon

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

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

Thursday 13 November, 10.30am-12noon

Coffee morning

As previous.

Friday 14 November, 10am-12noon

Information session: SEN Support

For parents of children on School Action / School Action Plus. Find out when and how these categories will be replaced by the new "SEN Support" category, and what this might mean for your child.

Booking essential.

Monday 17 November, 12-2pm

Legal advice sessions

As previous.

November cont.

Friday 28 November, 10am-12noon

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 very welcome!

December

Saturday 6 December, 9.15-11.45am

Christmas film

Save the date! We've arranged a private film screening at the Showroom Cinema, thanks to funding from Gripple Limited. Film details and booking information will be circulated to our mailing lists nearer the time.

Booking essential.

Thursday 11 December, 10.30am-12noon

Coffee morning

As previous.

January 2015

Tuesday 13 January, 10am-12noon

Legal advice sessions

As previous.

February

Friday 6 February, 10am-2pm

Anti-bullying workshop

What can you do to protect your disabled child from bullying? In this workshop, an anti-bullying expert from Contact a Family will tell you how to spot the signs of bullying, what the law says, what the responsibilities of schools are, and what parents can do to help. Free lunch provided.

Booking essential.

March

Thursday 5 March, 12-2pm

Legal advice sessions

As previous.

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/calendar

Useful Contacts

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| ADHD Project Provides information, support and training for families with a child with ADHD | 0114 321 1705 | katy.greaves@family-action.org.uk |
| 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 |
| Children with Disabilities Team* Social work team for children and young people with disabilities. First point of contact for requests/referrals for short breaks services | 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 |
| Direct Payments Team* Provides support, advice and guidance relating to direct payments | 0114 273 5985 | amanda.hill@sheffield.gov.uk |
| Early Years Inclusion Service* Works with young children (0-4) with additional needs both in their homes and in settings | 0114 273 6411 | elizabeth.hodkin@sheffield.gov.uk cathy.wigg@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 | mary.collins@sheffield.gov.uk |
| Hearing Impaired Service* Works with children who are hearing impaired | 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 |
| IPSEA National charity providing free legally-based advice on educational issues for parents of children with SEN | 0800 018 4016 | Email information service via www.ipsea.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 | |

| | | |
|---|---------------|--|
| School to School Support (formerly Learning Support Service) Run by Talbot Specialist School, this service supports schools & parents to improve inclusion and attainment of pupils with SEN & disabilities | 0114 293 0932 | edlss@sheffield.gov.uk |
| SEN Disability Information Advice and Support (formerly Parent Partnership)* 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, SEN transport 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 and disabilities to make the transition into further education and employment | 0114 201 2800 | enquiries@sheffieldfutures.org.uk |
| Sibling support group Support group for children who have a brother or sister with a disability | 0114 233 2908 | philip.hazlehurst@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 | amanda.hill@sheffield.gov.uk |
| Social Care Transition Team* Team of social workers who offer a transition planning service for young disabled people leaving full-time education | 0114 273 5368 | katarina.bajin-stone@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 | marion.broadhurst@sheffield.gov.uk |
| Within Reach Provides sport and physical activity for disabled people of all ages | 0114 273 4266 | activity.sheffield@sheffield.gov.uk |

* Part of Sheffield City Council

Advertisements: SPCF accepts no responsibility for advertisements. We urge families to check all references, preferably by telephone, and to ask for a DBS check.



MUSIC THERAPY

SAFE AND CONFIDENTIAL

CHRISTINA RHYS has considerable experience of working in a wide range of different settings including adoption, and with children on the autistic spectrum.

Based in Nether Edge, Christina is registered with the Health Professions Council and is a member of British Association of Music Therapy: www.BAMT.org.uk

Mobile: 07870 931 336
Email: christinarhys03@gmail.com



HOMEOPATHY

... could help your child fulfil their potential.

It can help with:

- sleep problems
- appetite and digestive complaints
- health conditions such as eczema, asthma, allergies or recurrent infections
- behaviour problems... and much more.

Homeopathy is safe for all ages from 0 to 100+ and has no side effects.

Gill Upham BSc RSHom PCH
Registered Homeopath

I have worked as a homeopath for 14 years, including running clinics for SureStart and working with children with autism and other disabilities.

0114 229 5161 / 07906 893171

gill.upham@gmail.com

www.gillupham.co.uk

**Wellforce, 28 Wilkinson St,
Sheffield S10 2GB**

Low-cost homeopathy clinic for families on means-tested benefits also available.



ibk enrichment & vocational study programme for young people aged 16 – 25

ibk is launching an enrichment and vocational study programme in October 2014 to help disabled young people learn the skills they need to make their way in the world. We will work with each young person to uncover their dreams and to plan a programme of learning and experiences to help them take steps towards those aspirations. Our study programme includes:

- **Personal Development**
- **Sports & physical activities**
- **Rights & entitlements**
- **Social enterprise**

From 9am – 5pm each Wednesday & Thursday during school/college terms.

Cost: £60 per day (£7.50 per hour)

For more information, please contact:
Pippa Murray: pippa@ibkinitiatives.com,
0114 223 0236 or 07941 106 228,

www.ibkinitiatives.com

Sheffield Parent Carer Forum Application for Full Membership

Full membership is FREE and open to all parents and carers of disabled children and young people (0 - 25) 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.

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

2

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

Fold along here



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