

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

Spring 2015 - Issue 11 - **FREE!**

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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.



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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.

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A very warm welcome...



...to our Spring Newsletter!

Whilst the spring flowers bring a welcome splash of colour to herald that winter is finally over, we are also now a few months into this new era of SEN reforms. There is still a great deal of work to be done around the reforms in the city, and the demand by parent carers to have accurate information around the processes only increases and becomes more important. In this edition of the newsletter, we have included an insert which contains essential information about the reforms. We also had our conference on 6th March which saw around 70 parent carers attend St. Mary's for several workshops including the new Education, Health and Care Plans, transitions and SEN Support. The afternoon saw a lively question and answer session with parent carers quizzing various local authority and health professionals.

Of course the reforms are being carried out against a backdrop of continuing cuts to the Council budget made by central government. We can see that this has already impacted on capacity within various services within Sheffield, and parent carers are rightly concerned about

the impact this is likely to have on short breaks and respite provision, with a review currently being carried out by the Council.

Our "State of Sheffield Survey" carried out last year has been extremely important in providing evidence to both the Council and local health service commissioners about the challenges that all parent carers face in their caring responsibilities and the importance of having properly resourced services to ensure families do not fall into crisis. It is more important than ever that services work with parent carers to ensure no capacity or money is wasted on services that do not deliver or support families properly and appropriately. We will of course be doing all we can to ensure parent carers' voices and experiences are heard and listened to.

We hope you find useful information in the newsletter, and you also enjoy our features on siblings and our Forum Stars.

Best wishes

Jayne Woodward, Co-Chair

Parents' survey published

Last year, 320 parents of children and young people with additional needs took part in our "State of Sheffield" survey, by completing a comprehensive questionnaire about their views and experiences.

Their – often very detailed – responses generated vast amounts of useful data, but also took a long time to analyse. This delay may have worked in our favour, however, as the publication of our report in November 2014 coincided with the Council's budget-setting process.

We made sure that everyone who needed to be aware of our survey received a copy of the report – from local councillors and MPs to commissioners and service managers. A two-page feature in the Sheffield Star generated extra publicity, and we met with Labour MP Clive Betts to discuss our findings in a national policy context.

The report includes a raft of recommendations to Sheffield City Council and Sheffield Clinical commissioning Group. These stress the need for early intervention services like short breaks to be protected from budget cuts, and for better information and support for parents.

Will any of this actually make a difference? Well, it's still early days, but there are some positive signs. Sheffield City Council Assistant Director Dee Desgranges, who oversees the

implementation of the SEND reform programme, has pledged to work with us on an action plan to address the recommendations as new ways of working to implement the reforms are developed. The Council's Children Young People and Families Scrutiny Committee is planning to examine our findings later this year.

And health services are starting to take note, too. Patricia Edney, Clinical Director for the Children, Young People and Maternity Portfolio at NHS Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), said: "We are very grateful for this report, as the information will prove to be extremely useful in helping us to understand the needs of families across Sheffield. We will ensure that the findings from the report are disseminated between the CCG and our provider organisations as a way of helping us to formulate the right services for children and young people going forward."

To download the report, please go to www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/page/consultations or call the office on 0300 321 4721 to request a hardcopy.



Our trustees discussed the findings with Clive Betts MP

Statistics

95% of parents said that caring for a disabled child had affected their wellbeing.

19% had never had a day or evening off from caring, and **35%** said they were "struggling" or "not coping".

Many families were **missing out** on vital support because of a lack of information and signposting. For example, **38%** of those who were struggling or not coping were not accessing any kind of short break service, and the majority said this was due to a lack of information being made available.

53% of the disabled youngsters in the study had sleep problems, and **59%** displayed challenging behaviours.

There was a **marked improvement** in parental satisfaction with both mainstream and special schools, compared to our 2009 survey. However, satisfaction with mainstream schools was still much lower than with specialist settings.

63% of pupils with disabilities or additional needs in mainstream schools had suffered bullying.

Three quarters of respondents felt that their child received too little input from Educational Psychology, the Autism Team and Speech and Language Therapy.

Parents described the transition to post-16 education and adult health and social care services as a very stressful time, with **too little information and support** available for families.

40% of parents had given up work to cope with their caring responsibilities, and 41% said that a lack of suitable childcare was affecting their ability to work.

Could you be a fundraising volunteer?

We are looking for a committed individual to help us raise funds for our popular family events, such as family fun days, Christmas films and pantos. This is an interesting and rewarding role which would allow you to start small before progressing onto bigger bids as you become more experienced.



Time commitment: Around 3 hours per week. Hours are flexible and can be worked in our office at St Mary's or from home.

Key tasks: Researching potential funders; maintaining a database of funders; sending off mailings; tailoring bids to individual organisations (with support); contacting local companies (no cold calling).

Skills and experience: No previous fundraising experience required, as training and ongoing support will be provided. You will need to be self-motivated, able to work on your own and with a team, have excellent verbal and written communication skills, excellent internet research skills, good local knowledge and enjoy engaging with people.

How to apply: Please contact us to request an application form.

Information day about the SEN reforms

Over 100 people – parents, professionals and representatives from various support organisations – attended our information day about the SEN reforms on 6 March 2015 at St. Mary's Community Centre.

The event kicked off with a programme of workshops, giving parents the opportunity to explore different aspects of the reforms. Workshop topics included the concept of outcomes, the new Education Health and Care Plans, transition to adulthood, the new category "SEN Support" (which replaces School Action and School Action Plus), and decision-making for young people who lack mental capacity.

The workshops were complemented by an information marketplace, a free legal advice surgery run by Irwin Mitchell Solicitors, and a lively question & answer session with

professionals from health, education and social care.

A transcript of the question & answer session and presentations and materials used at the workshops are available for download from our website: www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/news/parents-learn-about-sen-reforms



Changes to short breaks and respite services

Sheffield City Council has put forward a number of ideas intended to save £550,000 on short breaks and respite services. This reduction is part of a £63m cut to Sheffield's 2015/16 budget.

Ideas currently being explored include:

- Changing the remit of one of the city's children's respite centres to provide care for young adults
- Recruiting more foster carers to provide overnight respite
- Reducing overheads by working more closely with health, education and adult social care; for example, by combining respite centres for children with medical needs
- Embedding the £400 short break grant in the service offer; this would mean that parents could receive either the grant or a service, but not both
- Reviewing the provision of transport to short break services
- Asking parents to pay for the cost of mainstream leisure activities accessed as part of a short break service; the council would continue to fund any extra support required by the child

Speaking at meetings with parents earlier this year, officers explained how feedback from last year's short breaks review had helped to shape the proposals. They emphasized that nothing was set in stone, and that no changes would be made until a full consultation, scheduled to start in May 2015, had been completed. The final consultation report is due to be published by 31 December 2015.

SEN Transport review suspended

Sheffield City Council has suspended a review of SEN transport arrangements for disabled children who live within the statutory walking distance from their school.

The statutory walking distance is defined as two miles for children aged under eight, and three miles for children aged eight and over.

Families who live within the statutory walking distance from their child's school had received a letter asking them to submit medical evidence to prove their child's eligibility for SEN transport.

The Forum challenged the validity of this review in light of new statutory guidance published by the Department for Education. This states that "mainstream transport requirements (e.g. the statutory walking distance) should not be conflated with assessments for the transport needs of SEN and children with disabilities".

Sheffield City Council subsequently informed us that the review had been suspended and that an apology would be issued to the families concerned.

If you have been affected by this review and want clarification about your child's continued access to SEN transport, please contact Jill Siddall, IndeTravel Project Manager, on **0114 2053542**.



Demand for specialist autism placements soars



Demand for special school places for learners with autism in Sheffield continues to outstrip supply.

This year, the council struggled to find secondary school places for around 40 children with autism, which meant that a number of year 6 pupils did not receive their final amended statement by the 15 February deadline.

Although the council has responded to a sharp increase in birth rates by creating extra capacity in the mainstream sector – e.g. by building two new primary schools – there has been no corresponding strategic approach to creating additional specialist provision.

Most special schools and Integrated Resources in the city are heavily oversubscribed, which can make them challenging places for students who cannot cope in busy, noisy environments.

A review of educational provision for learners with autism, which was carried out by an independent consultant last year, is currently being considered by the council. Parents who contributed to the review highlighted a lack of provision for autistic learners, particularly

those at the high- and low-functioning end of the spectrum who also have mental health needs and/or challenging behaviour.

To cope with the increased demand this year, Bents Green special school is working with the local authority to develop plans for alternative provision.

New provision has also been developed at Yew Tree Lodge (the former caretaker's house at Silverdale School), Clifford House on Psalter Lane, which is due to open immediately after Easter, and Sheaf Training. These centres are being set up to meet the needs of learners who are unable to access existing school and college placements; they will offer a bespoke curriculum and combine building-based provision with work placements and home visits. The centres will be run as a collaboration between Becton School (which caters for children and young people with mental health difficulties), the Home and Hospital Education Service, Sheaf Training and Lifelong Learning and Skills. Once they become fully operational, information about access routes and eligibility criteria will be published in the Local Offer. (www.sheffield.gov.uk/localoffer).

New mental health service for 16-17 year olds launched

A new mental health service for 16-17 year olds has been launched in Sheffield.

Previously, young people had to transfer from CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) to adult mental health services when they turned 16 – a move fraught with difficulty.

£300,000 per year has been allocated to extend existing CAMHS teams, with the funding split between the Learning Disabilities Team and the generic Community CAMHS Team.

This is significantly less than the £1m CAMHS had requested in their initial proposal to Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group. Concerns have been raised that the level of funding might not be enough to provide the type of service required by this age group.

A detailed evaluation will take place during the initial six-month pilot phase to assess whether the clinical model is right and sufficient resources are available.

The new service will be delivered by both children's and adult mental health services working in partnership. Overall responsibility for

providing care for this age group will fall to the children's mental health services in Sheffield Children's Hospital, and all GP and other primary care referrals will go there in the first instance.

Adult mental health services will continue to provide services for 16-17 year olds with serious eating disorders and psychosis, and will respond to 16 and 17 year olds attending Accident and Emergency. Regular meetings will be held between the two partners during the initial implementation phase to review practices and resolve any problems.



Government announces mental health funding boost

Under plans set out in George Osborne's Budget, an extra £1.25bn will be invested in mental health services over the next five years. This constitutes a 35% rise on current spending.

The money is mainly aimed at children and young people and will go towards therapy

sessions, family support work, training for clinicians and the development of websites and apps.

The government has also announced plans to introduce waiting-time standards for mental health treatment. Currently, mental health services are excluded from the 18-week referral-to-treatment standard which the NHS constitution guarantees for patients with physical illnesses.

SEND Tribunal publishes 20-year report

The Ministry of Justice has issued a report about appeals to the SEN and Disability Tribunal (formerly known as SENDIST) spanning the past 20 years. This highlights some interesting national trends:

- The number of appeals lodged with the Tribunal has been increasing year on year.

- The most common reason for appealing is refusal to assess.
- There has been a dramatic increase in appeals about children with autism, who now represent nearly half of all appeals.
- Most appeals never proceed to a hearing, as they are either withdrawn by parents or conceded by the local authority. Appeals that do proceed are usually decided in favour of parents (the success rate in 2014 was 83%).

In 2014, 82 appeals were lodged by parents in Sheffield. This represents an increase on previous years, and is more than twice as high as the national average (per population).

Coffee mornings now on Tuesdays!

Due to volunteer availability, our monthly coffee mornings will now be held on Tuesdays instead of Thursdays.

Please come along and chat to other parents and carers. Pop in for a few minutes or stay for the whole session – no need to book. We welcome all parent carers, whatever their children's needs, whether diagnosed or undiagnosed, mild or severe.

Pre-schoolers and home-educated children welcome. Tea, coffee and cake will be provided.

Dates: 5 May, 9 June, 7 July

Time: 10.30am-12pm

Venue: St Mary's Church & Community Centre,
Bramall Lane, Sheffield S2 4QZ



Insert missing?

This issue should include an insert with information about the SEN and disability reforms.

If the insert is missing, please call us on **0300 321 4721** or email **enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk** to request your copy.

The Sheffield Case Register is a database of information about adults and children with a learning disability* living in Sheffield.

It was set up in 1974 and is managed by Sheffield Health and Social Care Trust. Information is collected and updated by three home visitors (Sandra, Anne and Adriece) via a questionnaire. The Register records basic information (name, date of birth etc.), disability-specific information, other medical information, which services the person uses, their living situation, carer details and much more.

- Information from the Register is also shared with hospitals and GPs to enable them to identify individuals with learning disabilities and meet their needs.
- The home visitors provide a valuable service for families; offering information and advice on accessing services.

To find out more about the Case Register, please call **0114 2716940** or email **case.register@shsc.nhs.uk**

Why register?

- Being on the Case Register can help to prove eligibility for a disability bus pass.
- Knowing how many people with a learning disability there are and their level of their need is very important information for commissioners and service providers in Sheffield.

* The term "learning disability" refers to a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities. It does not cover individuals with average or above-average intelligence, e.g. those with Asperger's Syndrome or Dyslexia.



Home visitors Adriece, Sandra and Anne

Case Register drop-in sessions

Where:

Howden House, Union Street,
Sheffield S1 2SH

When:

Tues 21st April
Tues 19th May
Tues 16th June

Time:

1.00pm – 3.00pm

This is the section where we celebrate your children’s successes – from the small steps that perhaps only you noticed, to the big milestones everyone can see. In this issue, we feature two wonderful boys, who both happen to be called George!



Star of this issue:
George Garrard



George Garrard is nearly six years old and loves ballet, fairy tales and animals. He lives in Crookes with his mum, dad, little sister and little brother and goes to Broomhill Infant School.

His mum Kate told us: “George has just danced in a school show, with all of the other children in his dance club. He didn’t have any extra help and he taught them all to sign ‘gingerbread man’ in Makaton which they then used in their dance. Well done George and thank you to Mrs Griffiths for treating him just like all the other children. It was an inspiring example of inclusion.”



Star of this issue:
George Flowerdew



George Flowerdew is nine years old and has just learnt to ride a bike – much to the amazement of his mum, who thought the multi-tasking required would be too difficult for him to master due to his autism.

It all happened when George took part in a “Pedal Ready” session organised by Nether Green Junior School. His mum Pat said: “When they invited parents to enrol their children for a Pedal Ready session at school, I did it thinking that I might get some tips on how to approach teaching George. He’d always done OK on the little “wheel along” and then with stabilisers, but the next size up was too big for stabilisers and he was fast growing out of his bike.”

“The session leaders had said to take off stabilisers before the session, but, of course,

I’d left them on. He rode happily around the playground a few times and then one of the leaders suggested taking them off! I held my breath and almost wanted to close my eyes, so I didn’t have to watch him fall off. But I’m SO glad I didn’t, as I would have missed that moment when he just sailed off – no problem! His lack of a sense of danger was coming in handy...”

“The next step for George is to learn how to use the brakes, as he currently aims for a wall or similar to make him stop – but he can definitely ride a bike now!”



Parents often worry about the impact that growing up with a disabled brother or sister might have on their other children.



In our recent “State of Sheffield” survey, parents told us that their main worries for siblings were: missing out on parental attention (73%), having their sleep disrupted (48%), and being actively involved in caring (43%). Social isolation was another key concern, with a third of respondents saying that siblings were missing out on activities or could not have friends over.

On a more positive note, more than half of the parents surveyed said that growing up with a disabled sibling had made their other children more considerate, patient or caring.

This article provides an overview of the help and support available locally and through national organisations.

Short breaks for disabled children give parents a break from caring and allow them to spend quality time with their other children. There are many different types of short break services available; for example, holiday playschemes, Saturday clubs, overnight respite, befriending, family activities, and more. Short breaks can take place in the community, in the home of an approved carer, or in the child's home. Families can choose to receive direct payments (cash payments) instead of a short break service.

The Council's Children with Disabilities Team is the first point of contact for requests/referrals for short break services.

Contact:
Telephone: 0114 273 5368



Sheffield Young Carers (SYC) is a local charity which offers support to children and young people who live in Sheffield and who provide care for a family member who has a disability,

physical illness, mental ill health, and/or substance misuse issues.

Siblings of children with disabilities are included in this remit – even though they don't often see themselves as “carers”. However, children can be affected by their sibling's disability without being actively involved in caring; for example, by having to do a lot more for themselves than other children of a similar age.

Parents of children aged 8-21 who are impacted by their sibling's disability can make a direct referral to SYC. The support provided is flexible and may include:

- one-to-one sessions (in school where possible)
- group sessions (transport provided for 8-12 year olds, travel costs reimbursed for those aged 12+)
- holiday activities, including trips, a summer residential and fun events for the whole family
- training and participation opportunities
- advocacy and case working
- help accessing a young carer's assessment from social care
- someone to talk to

Contact:
Website: www.sheffieldyoungcarers.org.uk
Telephone: 0114 258 4595

Sibling Support Group is a service run by the Burton Street Foundation in partnership with the Ryegate Children's Centre Psychology Service. It provides therapeutic activities, disability information, practical strategies and fun for siblings of children with special needs aged 8-18 years. Parents, siblings, schools and professionals can contact the service for confidential advice about sibling issues.

Referrals can be made by parents or professionals. Support consists of weekly group meetings, which take place at the Burton Street Foundation in Hillsborough on Thursday evenings (4-6pm).

Contact:
Telephone: 0114 233 2908 / 07961 527810
Email: Simone.Harper@burtonstreet.org.uk

Something Interesting for Brothers and Sisters (SIBS)

This service is run by Sheffield Volunteering and student volunteers from the University of Sheffield.

It is aimed at children aged 8-12 years who have a brother or sister with a disability. It offers monthly activities on Saturdays to give children a break and the chance to meet others in similar situations. Activities can include things like bowling, cinema, climbing, circus skills, Laser Quest etc.

Contact:
Telephone: 0114 222 8543
E-mail: alice.wright@sheffield.ac.uk

National organisations for siblings

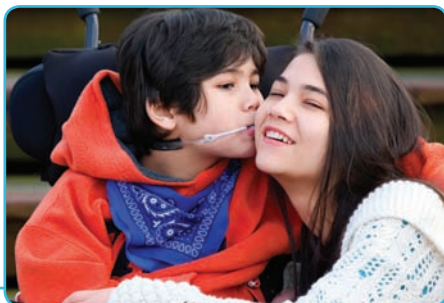
Sibs is a national organisation for siblings of disabled children and adults. They offer parents and professionals information and advice on supporting siblings and dealing with sibling issues.

Contact:
Telephone: 01535 645453
E-mail: info@sibs.org.uk
website: www.sibs.org.uk

YoungSibs is the online support service run by Sibs, for young siblings aged under 18. It provides information, advice and support, a letters section and a safe online moderated chat area. **Website: www.youngsibs.org.uk**

Continues on next page...

Babble is an online community run by the Carers Trust. It gives young carers a safe space to chat, share their experiences and access information and advice. An online team is on hand to answer questions and offer support and advice via email or one-to-one webchats. Website: <https://babble.carers.org>



My specially different brother: a sibling's story

"My brother is usually very happy and smiley and lots of the time he sings or hums to himself. However, it isn't so pleasant when he does it (very loudly) in the middle of the night and everyone is tired and grumpy the next day. Also, when he is annoyed he is really annoyed and cries and shouts because he can't tell us what's wrong. This means that when he doesn't want the thing playing on the TV or the CD, for example, he just starts screaming, throwing things or running around wildly, so I have to turn it off.

Having an autistic brother can also be very embarrassing at times. Like the time we were on a walk and he decided that he didn't want to go any further. He lay down on the ground (which was concrete by the way) and screamed and bashed his head, so we had to hurry back home, and there were a lot of people staring, because they don't understand.

He's also very unpredictable. He can't tell us what he's going to do and because he has no sense of danger he can do really dangerous things. Like when we are playing in a park, he can be playing like everyone else, but then suddenly he starts running

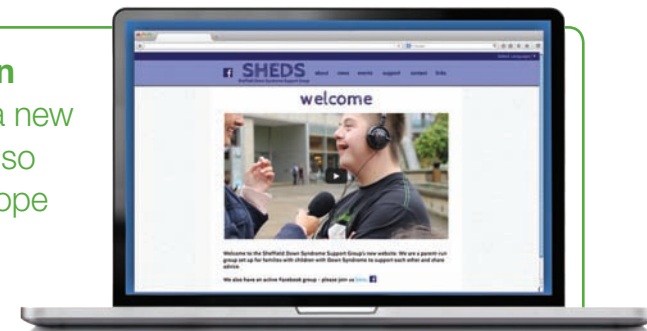
towards the exit, that can lead to a busy road and I have to run after him and catch him before he gets out, or like when he got away from my Mum's hand and ran towards the cliff edge. He's a fast runner, which makes me fast too!

Because he doesn't talk and because of his learning disability he can't do a lot of the stuff other people can do at his age so it is hard to play together, which is sad, but we can enjoy some activities together like swimming, running, climbing and horse riding (he has special riding lessons, but we can ride together in the holidays or at weekends). Also we've had a couple of brilliant weekends at Center Parcs (because we've been lucky and got a special grant) where there's lots we can do together as a family. Lots of other times we have to split up to do things.

I've also met a lot of nice people at clubs for people with disabled brothers or sisters, like SIBS and Sibling Support, and I would never have met them and done lots of exciting activities if he hadn't been so special."

The young author of this article has asked to remain anonymous.

SHEDS (Sheffield Down Syndrome Group) has a new website, and they have also made a video that they hope will help raise awareness of the group.



This video is on their website: www.sheffielddownsyndrome.co.uk

SHEDS meet once a month on a Saturday morning at St Mary's Church and Conference Centre, Bramall Lane, Sheffield S2 4QZ.

Dates for the rest of the year are...

April 11th, May 9th, June 13th, July 11th, August 8th, September 12th, October 10th, November 14th and December 12th.

Please also check the website for any changes of dates or venues.

Their other events are: an annual Christmas party, a trip to the pantomime at

the Lyceum Theatre in December, summer picnics in various parks, and trips to various places like Eureka and Cannon Hall Farm. In the last two years the group has also celebrated World Down Syndrome Day in Sheffield city centre.



SHEDS welcomes new families and continues to support current members.

You can contact them by sending an email to downsyndromesheffield@gmail.com.

Help with home adaptations and equipment

We frequently get enquiries from parents who are looking for sources of funding for home adaptations or equipment.

For example, parents may need to install soundproofing because their child is noisy during the night, or they may need a garden fence to keep their child safe while they are playing outdoors. We've compiled a list of organisations that can help:



Cerebra

Cerebra runs a grant scheme which funds up to 80% of the cost of equipment and services to help make life easier and more enjoyable for disabled children, e.g. power wheelchairs, tricycles, touch screen computers, specialist seating, trampolines, and some therapies.

To qualify, your child must be aged 16 or under and have a neurodevelopmental condition (e.g. autism, epilepsy, global developmental delay, Down Syndrome, ADHD, Cerebral Palsy). Your household income must not exceed £3,250 per month, including all benefits other than DLA.

For more information or to request an application form, please visit www.cerebra.org.uk, telephone 0800 328 1159 or email info@cerebra.org.uk.



Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

If you are a home owner, a housing association or private tenant you can apply for a DFG to make adaptations to your home to make it more accessible or safer for your child with a disability. If you are a council tenant, any adaptations to the property are free of charge. The DFG is available through Sheffield City Council.

Adaptations to housing may be funded up to a maximum of £30,000. The DFG will not pay for garden fencing, but the Family Fund may consider applications for this purpose.

- A Disabled Facilities Grant will not affect any benefits that you are claiming.
- Disabled children under 18 can get a grant without their parents' income being taken into account.
- You might not get any grant if you start work on your property before the council approves your application.

For more information about the assessment, application and approval process, please visit www.sheffield.gov.uk/caresupport/adult/support-available/equipment-technology/disfacilitiesgrant.html or call 0114 2734709.

Sheffield Stay Put and Handyperson Service

Sheffield Stay Put is a not-for-profit home improvement agency operated by Yorkshire Housing Foundation in partnership with Sheffield City Council.

The organisation provides independent advice on repairs, improvements and adaptations for those aged 60+ and disabled people of all ages (including families with a disabled child). Services they provide include:

- Applying for local authority grants and loan schemes
- Access to charitable funding
- Help with filling in forms
- Identifying benefits for which you may be eligible
- Free home maintenance advisory inspection service
- Energy efficiency advice (including grants and discounts)
- List of vetted builders and contractors

They also run a Handyperson service which can assist with small repairs and other tasks. The service is for home owners and private tenants. There is a charge for labour and materials and a quotation can be provided.

For more information, please visit www.yorkshirehousing.co.uk/home-improvement/sheffield or call 0114 2564270.

Family Fund

The Family Fund helps low-income families with a disabled or seriously ill child aged 17 or under. Grants are given for essential items that help ease the additional pressures that families face and increase their quality of life, such as kitchen appliances, computers, family breaks or specialist equipment. Help from the Family Fund is discretionary and subject to available funding.



You can apply to the Family Fund if:

- You are the parent or carer of a disabled or seriously ill child or young person aged 17 or under.
- You have evidence of your entitlement to one the following: Universal Credit, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, Employment Support Allowance, Housing Benefit or Pension Credit. If you do not receive any of the above, further information may be needed to complete your application.
- You have permanent legal residency in the UK and have lived in the UK for six months.

For more information or to request an application form, please visit www.familyfund.org.uk, email info@familyfund.org.uk, telephone 01904 621115, or textphone 01904 658085.

Top tips for engaging with professionals

As parents of children with special needs, we frequently find ourselves in situations where being our child's advocate means having to persuade, cajole and, occasionally, do battle with other people.

These are often the very people whose job it is to help our child – teachers, SENCOs, SEN officers, social workers, therapists ... It shouldn't be like that, and hopefully the SEN reforms will help to make the system less adversarial – but having good communication skills will always stand you in good stead.

Some people are naturally good at this; they seem to be able to get their point across whilst remaining calm and focused. We asked two such individuals – our trustee Laura Gillespie, who has a 14-year-old son with autism, and our volunteer Lynne, who teaches in a mainstream primary school – to share their top tips with us.

Remember that professionals don't come to work with the intention of upsetting parents or making their life difficult. Most have chosen to work in this field because they want to help our children. Laura advises: "Let them know that you want to work with them for the best outcomes for your child. This shared responsibility means that all are working in a meaningful way to help meet the needs of your child. Ask what they suggest that you can do to help, and get them to explain what they are going to do."

Know your rights. Knowing what your child is entitled to can be of huge benefit,

especially now that everyone is getting to grips with the new SEN system. Contact our office and request a copy of the new SEND Code of Practice, go on the IPSEA website (www.ipsea.org.uk), or sign up for email alerts from Special Needs Jungle (www.specialneedsjungle.com). The law is your friend – get to know it!

Take the long-term view. Don't try to solve every problem at once. Decide what will still matter in ten years' time, and concentrate on those things.

Don't rush to judgement. Sometimes we hear something that pushes our buttons – often because it reminds us of a negative experience we've had in the past. Be wary of knee-jerk reactions. Wait until you feel calmer; ask questions (even if you think you know the answers), establish the facts, and act only when you're sure that you fully understand the situation.

Follow up in writing. After an important meeting or telephone conversation, send everyone an email or a letter summarising what you think has been agreed. That way, you have evidence that you can go back to if what's been promised fails to materialise.

Keep the communication channels open at all times. Laura feels it's important to agree a method of communication from the outset: "Establish how you and the professional are going to communicate with each other, e.g. home-school diary, phone calls, emails, face-to-face meetings. Discuss what will work for both of you."

Share the achievements of your child as well as the challenges. For Lynne, this is vital

information: "I create a classroom environment where all children feel valued for their efforts. Children with SEND are aware of their own struggles with learning, so it is really important to look to their strengths and celebrate these amongst their peers. Parents can really help with this by telling teachers about things their children have achieved outside school."

Proactively share information about your child. Lynne points out that teachers can be left out of the loop: "We don't usually get copies of all reports from outside agencies (e.g. Ryegate assessments), so please share this information with us if you are happy to."

Use the "compliment sandwich" approach. "Sandwich" criticism inside two positive statements to avoid getting a defensive reaction. Similarly, try to start and end each meeting on a positive note.

Give credit where credit is due. "Behaviour that is rewarded gets repeated," is one of the

basic rules of behavioural psychology. By showing your appreciation for something that worked well, you'll increase the likelihood of people wanting to do it again.

Finally, be aware that staff may be working a lot harder than you think – but they might not always think to tell you about it. "Teachers often spend a lot of time differentiating lessons for pupils with SEN," says Lynne. "They also monitor children with SEN more closely than their peers." Yes, it's all part of their job description – but everyone needs a pat on the back sometimes!

Are you a professional who would like to communicate more effectively with parents of children and young people with SEND? We offer a one-day training course that can help! To find out more, contact us on **0300 321 4721** or email training@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk



Dates for your diary

All meetings will be held at St Mary's Community Centre, Bramall Lane, Sheffield S2 4QZ unless otherwise indicated.

April

Thursday 16 April, 10-11.30am.

Venue: Sheffield Mencap & Gateway, Norfolk Lodge, Park Grange Road.

Focus group: transition to adulthood

Sheffield City Council wants to improve young people's experience of moving from school into further education and training, and from children's to adult health and social care services. If you have recent experience of supporting your young person through these transitions and would like to make the system better for those who come after you, please come along and share your views and ideas. **Booking essential!**

Tuesday 28 April, 10am-12pm

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.

May

Tuesday 5 May, 10.30am-12pm.

Coffee morning

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

Friday 8 May, 10am-12pm.

Education subgroup

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!

June

Tuesday 9 June, 10.30am -12pm.

Coffee morning

As previous.

Friday 12 June, 10am-12pm.

Health subgroup

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!

July

Friday 3 July, 10am-12pm.

Education subgroup

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!

Tuesday 7 July, 10.30am-12pm.

Coffee morning

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

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

Save the date!

We are hoping to run another Family Fun Day at Hillsborough Sports Arena during the summer holidays. We've pencilled in **Friday 21 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!



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 (0-5+) 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	stuart.williams1@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
SENDIAS (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
Sheffield Young Carers Offers support to children and young people (8-21 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 brother or sister 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	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 experience of working in a wide range of different settings including including children and adults with ASD. Based in Nether Edge, Christina is registered with the HCPC and a member of the British Association of Music Therapy.

www.christinarhys.co.uk
christinarhys03@gmail.com
tel: 0114 255 9995
mob: 07870 931 336



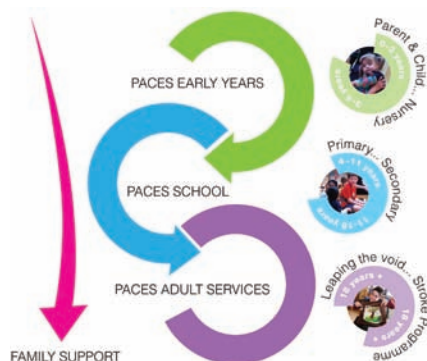
"Thank goodness for Paces! I really needed their support, knowledge and expertise to help me, help my daughter. She thinks it was worth it and so do I - they continue to help us since she left school too."

Parent

Paces Sheffield
Paces Campus, Pack Horse Lane,
High Green, Sheffield S35 3HY
t. 0114 284 4488
e. info@pacessheffield.org.uk

Setting the Pace for Cerebral Palsy

Our Services



To find out more give us a call and we will be happy to arrange your visit.

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.

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



What parents need to know

about the SEN and disability reforms

Written by parents, for parents!

This guide is relevant to you if your child or young person:

- has a statement of special educational needs (SEN)
- has a Learning Difficulty Assessment (also called a Section 139a)
- is on School Action or School Action Plus
- is on Early Years Action or Early Years Action Plus
- is struggling at nursery, school or college and may need extra help

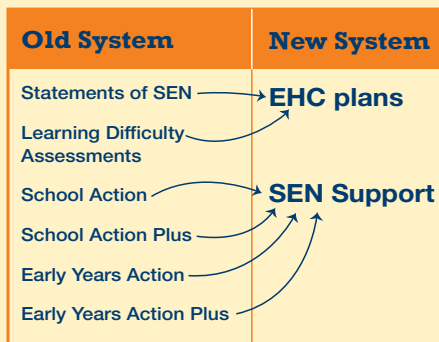
Background

A new law called the Children and Families Act, which came into force in September 2014, is changing the way in which children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) receive support.

The new legislation aims to create a system which is better integrated, more responsive and which leads to better life outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Local authorities (LAs) have been given extra funding to help them implement the reforms.

The new legislation is accompanied by a new SEND Code of Practice. This tells schools, nurseries, colleges, local authorities, health and social care providers how to interpret the law. These agencies must consider the Code and should normally follow it, unless there is an exceptional reason for not doing so.



We have FREE copies of the parents' version of the SEND Code of Practice to give away!
Call us on **0300 321 4721**
or email **enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk**
Only while stocks last!

The Local Offer

The Children and Families Act requires LAs to publish a "local offer" – that is, a website with information about the support and services available to children and young people with SEND aged 0-25 years in their area.

You can access Sheffield's local offer at **www.sheffield.gov.uk/localoffer**.

The website includes information on:

- Childcare
- Sport and leisure activities
- Short breaks and other social care services
- Support groups
- Education (including detailed information about SEND provision at individual schools, colleges, etc.)
- Transition to adulthood
- Health services
- Transport

The website is maintained by SENDIAS (Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support, formerly Parent Partnership), who can also support parents without an internet connection to access the information in the local offer. You can call them on **0114 273 6009**.

Sheffield's local offer includes a "rate and review" feature which enables users to rate individual services (including schools). You can also give feedback on SEND provision in Sheffield generally. The LA must publish a summary of the comments it receives, and say how it is going to address any issues raised. This should help to improve provision over time.

In mainstream schools, the support categories School Action and School Action Plus are being replaced by a single category called “SEN Support”.

The same is happening with the equivalent categories used by nurseries (Early Years Action and Early Years Action Plus).

SEN Support has also been introduced in 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 should adopt a graduated approach, continually revising and refining provision as they gain a deeper understanding of the learner's needs and the approaches that work best for him or her.

A learner should be placed on SEN Support if they have a learning difficulty or disability which means that they need provision that is different from, or additional to, what is normally available to learners of the same age. They don't need a formal diagnosis to qualify!

The legal definition of SEN has not changed. No child or young person should lose their support simply because the system is changing.

Schools and nurseries must inform parents if they are making special educational provision for their child.

School staff should meet with parents of learners with SEN at least three times a year to review progress. These meetings should be led by the class teacher or form tutor, supported by the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator), and should be longer than most parent-teacher meetings. You should be given a written summary of the outcomes, actions and support agreed at these meetings.

Schools and other settings can involve external specialists (e.g. educational psychologists or speech and language therapists) at any point; but they should always do so if, despite the provision of appropriate support, a learner makes little or no progress or continues to work substantially below the levels expected for their age. Parents should be involved in any decision to involve a specialist, and they should receive written information about the outcome.

If a learner continues to make less than expected progress even though the setting has been doing all it can to understand their needs and provide the right kind of support, then the parents or the school should request an EHC needs assessment (see page 7).

TIP: If you are concerned about any aspect of your child's progress, talk to their class teacher or form tutor. You can also ask the school's SENCO for advice. To find out how your child's school identifies and supports learners with SEND, search for the name of the school on the local offer website.

Not sure what some of these words mean?
Look them up in our 'Jargon buster' on page 11!

Education Health and Care Plans

Statements of SEN and Learning Difficulty Assessments are being replaced with Education Health and Care (EHC) plans, which are intended to be more holistic and person-centred.

An EHC plan is a formal legal document which 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. 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. This includes college courses and apprenticeships but not higher education (university).

The threshold for EHC plans is the same as for statements; that is, where the special educational provision required by the child cannot reasonably be provided from the resources (money and expertise) normally

available to mainstream settings. This only applies to a small minority (2-3%) of youngsters.

Children must have a statement or an EHC plan to attend a special school or Integrated Resource (a specialist unit attached to a mainstream school).

“No child or young person should lose their statement of SEN and not have it replaced with an EHC plan simply because the system is changing.”

Department for Education

If your child currently has a statement...

Existing statements will gradually be converted into EHC plans. The conversion will normally be done in the year before your child moves to the next education setting (e.g. before they move from primary to secondary school). To find out when your child's statement is due to be converted, visit the local offer website and search for “transition plan”. All existing statements must be converted into EHC plans by April 2018.

If your child has a statement, you don't have to request a conversion; the LA will write to you when it's your child's turn to move over to the new system.

The conversion process

The process starts when the LA sends you a formal notice of the transfer review and invites you to attend a transfer review meeting, giving you at least two weeks' notice.

This meeting will normally be held at school in place of the annual review meeting.

The purpose of the transfer review meeting is to co-produce your child's EHC plan. The LA

will pre-populate a template with information from your child's statement and health and social care assessments, where applicable. You must be asked if you would like a personal budget (see page 9).

Existing assessment information from the statement can only be used if the LA, the parents and the person who wrote the report all agree that it is "sufficient". If not, the LA

has to request up-to-date information, which must be provided within 6 weeks. Parents can request/submit additional advice from other professionals.

You will be sent a draft plan and invited to comment on it. A final plan must be issued within 14 weeks of the start of the transfer review.

TIPS:

If you'd like someone to support you through the conversion process, contact Core Assets and request an Independent Supporter, or ask SENDIAS for help (see page 10).

Take a look at your child's most recent assessment reports (e.g. Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy, Autism Team, CAMHS) – do they describe your child accurately, do they specify outcomes, and are they sufficiently specific and quantified about the provision your child requires? If not, ask the LA to request new reports.

Make a list of the professionals you think should be invited to the transfer review meeting, and give this to the SENCO.

Submit any private assessment reports you think would be useful to the SEN Assessment and Placement Team (see page 12).

Talk to your child about their aspirations for the future. If they are unable to communicate these, think about what their likes and dislikes tell you.

Think about the outcomes your child should be working towards (see page 9).

Carefully check the draft EHC plan against your child's statement; in particular, check that section B lists the same special educational needs as Part 2 of the statement, and that section F sets out the same special education provision as Part 3. Make sure that nothing is missing, and that any changes which have been made were agreed at the transfer review meeting.

IPSEA (Independent Parental Special Education Advice) have published a useful checklist which helps you check the plan section by section; you can download it from www.ipsea.org.uk.

If your child currently has a Learning Difficulty Assessment...

Learning Difficulty Assessments (also known as LDAs or Section 139As) were issued when a young person's statement was due to be ceased because they were moving from school into further education.

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.

Unlike statements, LDAs won't be transferred automatically. Young people with LDAs can request an EHC needs assessment at any time, provided they are still in education or training (includes apprenticeships). Any such request will be treated as a request from a new entrant (see next page).

The deadline for transferring LDAs to EHC plans is 1 September 2016. Young people with LDAs who will continue in further education or training beyond that point and who need an EHC plan, must have one.

While your child still has a statement or LDA

For a number of years, the old and the new legal system (including the associated Regulations and Codes of Practice) will run in parallel.

Existing statement legislation will remain in force until April 2018, and existing LDA legislation until September 2016.

As long as your child still has a statement, the LA must continue to make the provision described in it, they must continue to review it at least annually, and you have the same rights of appeal as previously. You can still request amendments to the statement at the annual review and at any other time.



If your child doesn't have a statement, but you think they may need an EHC plan...

Most children and young people with SEND will have their needs met without requiring an EHC Plan. However, if a learner is making less than expected progress even though the setting (nursery, school or college) has been doing all it can to understand their needs and to provide the right kind of support, then the parents or the setting should request an EHC needs assessment.

Requesting an EHC needs assessment

Before a LA can issue an EHC plan, it must carry out an EHC needs assessment. This is a full investigation of a child or young person's education, health and social care needs.

The people who can request an EHC needs assessment are: parents, young people aged 16-25, and representatives of schools and colleges. In addition, anyone else can tell the LA if they think an EHC assessment is needed (e.g. foster carers, GPs or nursery workers). Assessment requests should be submitted to the SEN Assessment & Placement Team (see page 12).

TIP: It is advisable to inform your child's nursery, school or college if you are thinking of requesting an EHC needs assessment, as they will play a major role in providing information and reports.

If you'd like someone to support you through the assessment process, contact Core Assets and request an Independent Supporter, or ask SENDIAS for help (see page 12).

Considering a request

Once a request for an EHC needs assessment has been received, the LA must decide whether to carry out an assessment.

To make this decision, they will ask your child's education provider to complete an assessment tool. The key consideration is whether your child has made less than expected progress, despite the education setting having done all it can to understand their needs and provide the right kind of support. "Progress" is not limited to academic attainment, but can also include things like social skills, self-esteem or self-care skills.

The LA must enable you / your young person to participate fully in the EHC needs assessment process, and provide you with the information, advice and support you need to do so.

The LA must write to you within six weeks to tell you whether they are going to assess your child. If they decide not to assess your child, you have the right to appeal.

Carrying out the assessment

Once the LA has decided to carry out an assessment, they will start gathering information about your child.

The LA must seek advice and information from the following people: you, the parents; your child or young person; your child's nursery, school, college or other setting; an educational psychologist; health and social care professionals; specialist teachers if your child

has a vision or hearing impairment; for a child in year 9 or above, advice about preparing for adulthood and independent living; and any other person requested by you or the young person.

Advice and information requested by the local authority must be provided within six weeks of the request.

The LA must tell you within 16 weeks of the initial assessment request whether or not they are going to issue an EHC Plan. The key consideration is whether your child requires special educational provision (funding or expertise) which is over and above that which can reasonably be provided by a mainstream setting. If the LA decides not to issue a plan, you have the right to appeal.

Co-producing the plan

Once all the information and advice has been gathered, you will be invited to a multi-agency meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to develop the EHC plan together with the professionals involved in the assessment. This includes agreeing the outcomes your child or young person will be working towards and the support they need to help them achieve these. You will also be asked if you would like a personal budget (see next page).

The draft plan

The LA will send you a draft plan and invite you to comment on it. If you have requested a personal budget, the draft plan will include a proposed budget. You will also be asked to name the school or other education setting which you want your child to attend. The LA must consult the setting before naming it in the EHC plan. Once named in the final EHC plan, that institution must admit your child.

TIP: Ask the professionals to send you their draft reports before they submit them to the LA, and check that they are accurate, clear and specific.

TIPS: Check that the description of education, health and social care provision is detailed, specific and quantified. It should clearly state who will do what, how often, for how long, and for what purpose. It is not enough to award x hours of teaching assistant support – the plan should be clear what the hours are for (activities) and how they will help your child achieve the outcomes.

Check that outcomes are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound) and sufficiently ambitious.

IPSEA (Independent Parental Special Education Advice) have published a useful checklist which helps you check the plan section by section; you can download it from www.ipsea.org.uk.

The final plan

The LA must issue a final EHC plan within 20 weeks of the initial assessment request. Once an EHC Plan has been issued, the LA must secure the special educational provision specified in the Plan, and the Clinical Commissioning Group must arrange the health provision. An EHC plan must be reviewed at least annually.



New rights for young people

When a young person reaches the end of compulsory school age (defined as the last Friday in June of the school year in which they turn 16), some rights related to EHC plans transfer from the parents to the young person.

These are: the right to ask for an EHC needs assessment, the right to make representations about the content of their EHC plan, the right to ask that a particular education setting is named in their plan, the right to request a personal budget, and the right of appeal to the SEND tribunal.

If you think your young person lacks mental capacity to make these decisions, you should alert the LA and inform them that you want to act as your child's representative. When making decisions on behalf of your young person, you must comply with the Mental Capacity Act.

You can continue to support and represent your young person even if they have capacity, if that is what they want. However, the final decision rests with the young person.

Outcomes

The SEN reforms shift the focus from inputs (e.g. hours of teaching assistant support) to outcomes (what an intervention is expected to achieve). This applies to all learners with SEND, not just those with an EHC plan.

Outcomes are the stepping stones that move a child or young person closer to achieving their long-term aspirations. They should be measurable, specific to the individual, and will usually cover a period of several years.

For example, if your child's aspiration is to live independently, then their outcomes may focus on developing specific independence skills. For example, a suitable outcome could be that your child is able to catch the bus to college without support.

The provision of a service (e.g. three hours of speech and language therapy) is not an outcome.

Having the right education and training outcomes specified in an EHC plan is very important, particularly for young adults. This is because the decision whether a young person aged 19-25 still needs an EHC plan will hinge on whether they have achieved their education and training outcomes - and if they haven't, whether remaining education will help them achieve these.

Personal budgets

If your child has an EHC plan, you have the right to request a personal budget. A personal budget is an amount of money identified by the LA to deliver some or all of the provision set out in an EHC plan, where the parent or young person is involved in securing that provision. Its purpose is to give families more control over the services and support they receive.

A personal budget can be provided as a notional budget held by the LA or school/college, as a direct payment (cash payment), or a combination of the two.

Personal budgets and direct payments are optional for families. However, the LA must prepare a personal budget if asked to do so when a draft EHC plan is being prepared (both for statement-to-EHCP conversions and new entrants), or at the annual review of an existing plan.

Direct payments for health, education and social care provision are governed by different pieces of legislation, and can be refused for different reasons.

One-page profiles

A one-page profile is a great way of sharing vital information about your child with other people, such as teachers, GPs or support

staff. It tells people on a single page of A4 what your child's strengths are, what is important to them, and how they can best be supported.

All learners with EHC plans will have a one-page profile, but they can also be used for those on SEN Support – in fact, they are great for all children!

You can create a one-page profile for your child yourself – you don't need to wait for the school to do it. You can find lots of templates and examples on the internet; have a look at: www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk or www.sheffkids.co.uk

Independent Support

Independent Support is a government-funded programme which will run until March 2016. It provides extra help to parents and young people in relation to EHC plans – both for new entrants and for those transferring from statements or LDAs.

Support will be tailored to your needs and can include explaining the assessment / conversion process; helping you to get your views across, e.g. by accompanying you to meetings or helping you to fill in forms or write letters; helping you check the draft EHC plan

before it is finalised, or providing information on personal budgets and direct payments.

In Sheffield, Independent Support is provided by Core Assets. Impartial information, advice and support is also available from SENDIAS. Both services accept self-referrals from parents (see page 12 for contact details).

Co-production

Co-production is a new approach to delivering public services. It means that service providers and service users come together as equal partners to find shared solutions.

Co-production is more than consultation. Consultation usually limits people to commenting on a range of pre-defined options; co-production starts with a blank canvas.

Co-production can happen at an individual level, e.g. when parents and professionals produce a child's EHC plan together, and at a strategic level, e.g. when a parent carer forum works with a LA to improve local services.

For co-production to work, it is essential that all participants are involved from the start and share a clear understanding of what can and can't be changed (e.g. legal requirements, funding available).



Less than expected progress

Making less than expected progress is often a first indicator that a learner may have SEN. It is also an important trigger for involving external specialists or applying for an EHC needs assessment.

Less than expected progress is defined as:

- Making significantly slower progress than peers starting from the same baseline
- Failing to match or better the child's previous rate of progress
- Widening the attainment gap, or failing to close it

This can include progress in areas other than academic attainment, e.g. social skills.

Annual Review: A meeting held once a year to look at a child's statement or EHC Plan, to record the child's progress and plan for the year ahead.

Clinical Commissioning Group: An NHS organisation which brings together local GPs and health professionals to plan and fund health services for people in its area.

Early Years Action / Early Years Action Plus: The early years equivalents of School Action and School Action Plus (see below). Now being replaced with SEN Support.

Educational Psychologist: A professional employed by the local authority to assess a child's special educational needs and to give advice to schools as to how the child's needs can be met.

Integrated Resource: A specialist unit within a mainstream school to support children with specific needs, e.g. autism, hearing impairment, visual impairment.

LA: Local Authority – the local council.

LDA: Learning Difficulty Assessment, also known as a Section 139a. A document that describes what additional learning support a young person needs in post-16 education or training. If your young person attends college and used to have statement while they were at school, then they almost certainly have an LDA.

Mainstream school: An ordinary school that provides education for children of all abilities, including those with SEND.

Mental Capacity Act: A law which sets out what happens when a person over the age of 16 lacks capacity and is unable to make a particular decision.

School Action: Mainstream pupils were placed on School Action if they were not making enough progress and needed extra help, e.g. support from a teaching assistant, special equipment or a different teaching strategy. Now being replaced with SEN Support.

School Action Plus: Mainstream pupils were placed on School Action Plus if they were getting regular input from external specialists, e.g. speech and language therapists, occupational therapists or the Autism Team. Now being replaced with SEN Support.

SENCO: Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator - a qualified teacher in a school or nursery who has responsibility for co-ordinating SEN provision.

SEND: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Special school: A school that makes specialist provision for pupils with SEND who have a statement or an EHC plan.

Statement of SEN: A legally binding document drawn up by the Local Authority which describes a child's special educational needs and the extra help they should receive. If your child attends a special school or Integrated Resource, they will almost certainly have a statement. Statements are being replaced with EHC plans.



Useful contacts

Sheffield SENDIAS

(Formerly Parent Partnership)

Tel: **0114 273 6009**

Email: **ed-parent.partnership@sheffield.gov.uk**

This service is part of Sheffield City Council and provides impartial information, advice and support to children and young people with SEND (aged 0-25) and their parents. They can support you in discussions with your child's education setting to ensure the right SEN Support is in place; advise and support you on matters relating to statements and EHC needs assessments; and help you resolve disagreements and lodge formal appeals. SENDIAS can also tell you about local leisure activities and support groups and help you with disability-related grants, benefits, health and social care services.

Core Assets

Tel: **0800 028 8455**

Email: **ISreferrals@coreassets.com**

A private company which has been commissioned to provide information and support to parents and young people in relation to EHC plans, both for new entrants and for those transferring from statements

or LDAs. This service is called "Independent Support" and is available until March 2016.

SEN Assessment and Placement Team

Tel: **0114 273 6394**

Email: **ed-sensupportteam@sheffield.gov.uk**

Postal address: **North Wing, Level 5, Moorfoot Building, Sheffield S1 4PL.**

This is the Council department that deals with statutory assessments, statements/EHC plans, annual reviews, SEN transport and specialist placements.

IPSEA

www.ipsea.org.uk

Tel. **0800 018 4016**

A national charity which offers free and independent legally-based information, advice and support to help get the right education for children and young people with all kinds of special educational needs and disabilities.

Contact a Family

www.cafamily.org.uk

Tel. **0808 808 3555**

A national charity which provides information and advice on any aspect of caring for a disabled child, including education and benefits.

About us

The Sheffield Parent Carer Forum is a parent-led charity which brings together over 1,000 families with children and young people (aged 0-25 years) with SEND from across Sheffield to provide mutual support, share information and influence policy and practice.

Membership is **FREE** and gives you access to:

- Free email bulletins and newsletters packed full of "insider" information
- Brilliant family events, like our pantos and family fun days

- A free information and signposting service
- Free information and training sessions for parents
- An influential group working to improve services for youngsters with SEND and their families

Web: **www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk**

Email: **enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk**

Tel: **0300 321 4721**

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