



Newsletter

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

Published by the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum

Written by parents, for parents!

Spring 2016 - Issue 13 - FREE!

Annual health checks

Now available for youngsters with a learning disability
Page 15

Too anxious for school?

What to do if school is making your child miserable
Pages 16 & 17

SEN funding changes

Will your child be affected?
Read our guide to find out
Pages 18 & 19

Introducing: The MyPlan

Find out what it is, and how to make it work for your child
Pages 20 & 21

About us

The Sheffield Parent Carer Forum is an independent group of over 1,000 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:

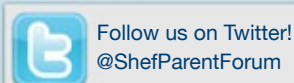
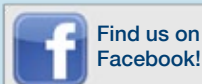
enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Website:

www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Drop-in:

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



St Mary's Community Centre



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

This newsletter has been funded through the Department for Education's Parent Participation Grant. All articles written by Sheffield Parent Carer Forum staff and volunteers unless otherwise indicated.

Your advert here?

Would you like to advertise your products or services in our next newsletter? For a small fee, you could reach up to 6,000 families in Sheffield. Our rates are:

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

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

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Design by 'Side of the Hill'

A very warm welcome to our Spring Newsletter!

Our annual conference took place at St. Mary's on 8th March 2016 and we welcomed many members and new faces. Our focus this year was on health and therapy services. Attendees had a choice of workshops where they could learn more about what the different services could offer, and there were opportunities to learn about hospital stays, how to build good relationships with GPs and to meet the managers of various services.

Building relationships with professionals and service providers is extremely important work to the Forum - we talk a lot about co-production and we believe that true co-production is all about working with service providers to design, plan and monitor services together. Only by doing this are services fully fit for purpose and answering the needs of those who use those services. Time and time again we hear that parent carers are having to be the main driver, co-ordinator and prompt for the services and support their child or young person needs. If our State of Sheffield survey showed us anything, it is that our time, energy and emotional resources are precious and limited. If we are able to work and find appropriate childcare, it is usually on a part-time basis, with below expected earning capability. The paperwork around having a disabled child or young person is a job in itself, and often short breaks and respite are the glue that holds families together and keeps them functioning. Whatever you believe



about the political economy of these times, it is essential that every pound is spent wisely within the city and working together with parent carers is a crucial part of that.

Of course getting timely and reliable information to parent carers on how they can access appropriate support for their children and families is also vital, and we hope that you will find the enclosed articles useful. If you would like to submit an article for future editions or want to get involved in any way, just get in touch or come to one of our events. You will always get a warm welcome!

Best wishes

Jayne Woodward, Co-Chair

Health and Therapy event attracts over 120 people

Since we organised our first parents' conference in 2008, holding a big annual event has become a bit of a tradition.

Many of our past conferences had an education theme, such as post-16 education or the SEN (special educational needs) reforms – so we thought we'd do something a little different this time and focus on health and therapy services instead.

There certainly seemed to be an interest in this subject, as the event was fully booked. An information marketplace with stalls run by key health services proved popular, as did the workshops on a range of health-related topics. Two of these workshops – on Speech and Language Therapy and Mental Health Services – were particularly well-attended.

If there is one thing we've learnt from past events, it's that there is never enough time to ask questions – so we offered parents the opportunity to take part in a "Meet the Manager" session and chat to service managers in small groups. Parents valued the chance to get information without needing a formal referral, and the managers got useful feedback from service users.

We were very grateful for the support from local professionals and senior health leads, but also very pleased that we were able to use some of our home-grown talent. Our trustee (and GP) Clare Peck ran a workshop on building good relationships with GPs, development worker Anne Snowdon gave advice on coping with hospital stays, and trustee Katie Monette gave the opening speech.



Overall feedback from parents was very positive, with 97% rating the event "Good" or "Very good".

Comments included:

"Lots of information in one place - people to speak to, ask questions etc. Leaflets can be taken to look at and direct parents for further support."

"Very welcoming and friendly with a good choice of workshops"

"An event I would definitely recommend to other people, including families and other professionals."

Presentations and other resources used at the event are available to download from our website:
www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/news



Parents get crash course on SEN reforms

Over the past 18 months, our workers Anne and Eva delivered 11 workshops for parents about the reforms to the special educational needs system. These focussed on SEN Support (which has replaced School Action/Plus) and EHC plans (which replace statements and LDAs).

The workshops were attended by over 130 parents and received very positive feedback, with 82% of attendees rating them "five out of five". Many parents said that they liked the informal delivery style, with opportunities to ask questions and talk to other parents, as well as the comprehensive handouts.

"All very relevant and useful information and lots of very useful resources to take away and refer to in the future." – Parent

Resources from the EHCP workshops are available to download from the "Resources" section of our website:
www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

We may be able to run more of these workshops in the future – please contact us to register your interest!

Can you help us find a sponsor for this newsletter?

Parents have told us that they really like getting a printed version of our newsletter, but with a print run of 6,000 copies twice a year, this doesn't come cheap. We urgently need to find a corporate sponsor so that we can continue to publish this valuable resource. This doesn't need to be for the full amount!

Do you (or someone you know) work for a company that sponsors local charities? Or perhaps you have some contacts in the local business community who might be able to help? If so, please get in touch!



"We urgently need to find a corporate sponsor so that we can continue to publish this valuable resource."

Breaking down language barriers

How can we reach parents who don't speak English, to ensure that we are able to represent their views?

We are currently developing a new approach based on working with bi-lingual parent volunteers. To test how this might work, we have had our leaflet translated into Urdu and included a mobile phone number for an Urdu-speaking volunteer (not their personal phone). If this is successful,



we would like to extend it to other community languages.

Could you help us with this project? If you have a child with additional needs and are fluent in English and one of Sheffield's main community languages (e.g. Arabic, Somali, Bengali, Polish, Slovak, ...), then we'd love to hear from you!

New SEND inspection regime announced

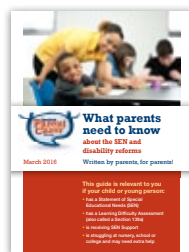
From May this year, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission will carry out joint inspections of local areas. These will assess how well the area's public bodies - local authority, health services, schools, nurseries and colleges - work together to identify and meet the needs of youngsters with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and the extent to which this helps to improve their life outcomes.

Areas will be given five days' notice of an inspection. Inspectors will visit a sample of settings and meet with representative groups of children, young people and parents (chosen by the inspectors, not the local area). On-site inspections will take five days to complete.

Reprint of SEND reforms booklets

Last year, we published a 12-page booklet about the reforms to the SEND (special educational needs and disability) system. Parents told us that they found the information really helpful, particularly the tips from other parents and the information about local processes and services. Many schools and services kept ordering more copies to pass on to parents - which meant that we eventually ran out of booklets!

Luckily, we were able to get some funding from the Department for Education to update the information in the booklet and do another print run. To request your free hardcopy, please contact our office on **0300 321 4721**. Alternatively, you can download a PDF file from the "Resources" section of our website: www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk



Representing your views

We are constantly talking to other parent carers about their issues and concerns. Here's what we do with this information:

If the issue is a one-off, we do our best to give information and signpost the parent to services who can help (we are not funded to provide casework).

If several parents raise very similar issues, we collate the information and pass it on to relevant officers. We mainly do this through our monthly meetings with Jayne Ludlam, Executive Director for Children, Young People and Families, and Alasdair Duerden, SEND Programme Manager at Sheffield City Council.

We also have representatives on a number of working groups, such as the Local Offer working group, which aims to improve information about support and services for children and young people with additional needs, and the Sleep Strategy group, which is working to improve

support for parents whose children struggle with sleep issues.

So, what's trending? Lots of parents have recently contacted us about problems with EHC plans, and we have now done a "walkthrough" with council officers to identify the issues at each stage in the process. The next step, hopefully, will be to agree some solutions! We have also been talking to a number of parents who have expressed concerns about post-16 education, and this is the next issue we want to tackle.

Please keep telling us about your experiences - good and bad!

Call us on **0300 321 4721**, email us at enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk come to our meetings (see pages 22 & 23), or engage with us on Facebook and Twitter!

LDAs to lose legal status in September

A Learning Difficulty Assessment (also known as an LDA or Section 139A) is a document that describes what additional learning support a young person needs in post-16 education or training. LDAs were mainly issued for young people with statements of SEN when they moved from school into further education.

So, if your young person is currently at college and used to have a statement while they were at school, then they probably have an LDA.

Recent changes to the SEN system mean that LDAs will cease to have legal status from 1 September 2016. If your young person currently has an LDA and will still be in education or training after that date, it may

be advisable to apply for an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan **now**.

This is particularly important for young people aged 19-25 years, as learners in this age group may be charged tuition fees from September unless they have an EHC plan.

N.B. EHC plans were introduced in 2014 to replace statements and LDAs. They can go up to age 25, but are not available to university students.

For more information, please download our parents' guide to the SEN reforms from the "Resources" section of our website: www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Useful resources for parents

Over the past few months, a number of free resources have been published online which answer many of the questions parents often ask us about.



Problem-solving toolkit

National charity Cerebra have published a brilliant Problem-solving toolkit. Written by law professor Luke Clements, the booklet provides a comprehensive, practical and easy-to-use guide to help families resolve difficulties with public bodies, such as local authorities and health services. Contains useful checklists and sample letters. <http://w3.cerebra.org.uk/help-and-information/guides-for-parents/problem-solving-toolkit>

Legal Handbook

Disabled Children: A Legal Handbook is a comprehensive, up-to-date guide to the legal rights of disabled children and their families. It explains what your child's entitlements are, and

what to do if things go wrong. Considering the heavy subject, the style is really quite accessible – you don't have to be a lawyer to understand it! The printed version costs £50, but the digital version can be downloaded free of charge from: www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/11566

Video about outcomes

If you have a child with special educational needs, chances are that people will soon start asking you about "outcomes" for your child. That's quite a tricky concept to get your head around, and even the professionals struggle with it. So, don't wait until your child's next review meeting – watch this useful video, and start thinking about outcomes now: <http://tinyurl.com/gr93q8k>

New sensory library at Autism Plus

Autism Plus have launched a new sensory library in Sheffield. The library enables individuals and families to borrow sensory equipment and aids to try out at home before deciding whether to purchase their own.

The library is based at Autism Plus, Exchange Brewery, 2 Bridge Street, Sheffield S3 8NS, and is open every Friday from 11am to 1pm.

If you have any questions, please contact trainingenterprises@autismplus.co.uk or call **0114 384 0284** and ask to speak to the Training Enterprises team.



Consultation on short breaks and respite launched

A consultation on changes to short breaks and respite services was launched at an event at Sheffield Town Hall on 12 March. Council representatives presented four proposals, based on feedback received at previous consultation events.



These changes are:

1. Short breaks grant

Parents will be asked to comment on the following options:

- Reduce the grant to a maximum of £200 per family (£400 at present)
- Choose between receiving the short breaks grant or a short breaks service
- Discontinue the short breaks grant
- Introduce means testing
- No preference

2. Short breaks in mainstream clubs

The proposal is that parents would be asked to pay for the cost of the activity and Sheffield City Council would pay for the cost of supporting the child to access the activity.

3. Short breaks in targeted clubs for disabled children

The proposal is that parents would be asked to make a £7 contribution per child per session.

4. Overnight respite

Parents will be asked if they would like the council to work with parents to look at ways

in which young people aged 18-25 years with the most complex needs could be included within Sheffield's current respite provision. Parents will be asked if they wish to volunteer to be part of this work. The council would need to consult further on any changes proposed from this work.

The consultation will be carried out by questionnaire (hardcopy and online) over a period of 10 weeks. There will be a dedicated helpline number, and supporting information including FAQs will be available online.

The council also intends to run a number of sessions at community venues and support groups to help families to take part in the consultation. Details of these will be available on the council website shortly; see www.sheffield.gov.uk/caresupport/childfam/children-disabilities/short-breaks

The council will write to all families who currently use short break and respite services - enclosing information on the proposals, a copy of the questionnaire, and links to complete the questionnaire online.

Specific Language Impairment

By Lucy and Robert Williams.

Until three years ago, I had never heard of Specific Language Impairment (SLI). Although SLI affects about two children in every classroom, the term often results in a blank look.

SLI is a type of speech, language and communication need which is more common in boys than girls. Children with SLI are usually as able and healthy as other children in all ways, with one exception; they have enormous difficulty talking and understanding language.

The impact of SLI on the child and the family is often serious. Children with SLI won't learn language in the same way as other children, just by being spoken to and encouraged. They need language to be taught by specialists. Every case is different, but many struggle with social situations, behaviour (due to frustration), confidence levels and educational attainment. I experienced this first hand when my son - who never babbled, had difficulties feeding, struggled with social situations and never talked - was diagnosed with severe SLI. It was a challenging and heart-breaking time for him and all the family.

We soon realised that it is vital that children, families and professionals affected by SLI get the right support so that children can learn and develop to their full potential. Without this support, SLI may cause a child lifelong difficulties. One way in which children with SLI in Sheffield are supported is through the UCAN Nursery, part of the Early Years Inclusion Service. My son has benefitted from this provision which not only supported him with intensive speech therapy in a nursery

setting, but also provided professional training, guidance and support to his pre-school, nursery and now infant school. One pre-school teacher said, "It has created a lasting legacy that will have a positive impact on all the children that now attend this setting." However, it will not be long until he enters key stage 1, and I am nervous about his future support and provision.

Although he is currently making good progress, he will not stop having SLI. Therefore I feel that without proper funding and knowledge of SLI, professionals will not be able to support him and other children with SLI so that they can reach their full potential.

For more information about SLI:

www.afasic.org.uk

Afasic supports parents with children who have difficulties talking and understanding language.

www.youtube.com/user/RALLIcampaign

Lots of really helpful videos explaining more about SLI.

www.ican.org.uk

Children's communication charity.

Do you have a child with SLI? Lucy and Rob would love to hear from you!

Send an email to: enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk and we will pass it on to them.

Making disabled children a priority at Sheffield Children's Hospital

By Matt Dixon, Public Governor at Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust

My youngest son, Louis, has been under the care of several departments at Sheffield Children's Hospital for many years. When he was six months old, he suffered a number of allergic reactions. These reactions caused severe asthma attacks, which turned into long bouts of pneumonia. In December 2007, we very nearly lost Louis. If it wasn't for the initial care he received in the Emergency Department and then the High Dependency Unit, he would not be alive today.

It was the scariest and most surreal few hours of my life when I watched two nurses, two doctors and a consultant all working on him at the same time. I had an overwhelming feeling of helplessness.

Louis was discharged from the hospital at 8pm on Christmas Eve and I went to visit some of the nurses who had been looking after him to thank them. A number of the nurses had finished their shifts hours earlier but had stayed behind to wrap presents for children who were waking up in the hospital on Christmas morning.

I realised what a special place Sheffield Children's Hospital is and I wanted to help in some way in the future. Eight years later the opportunity arose to become a Governor - and do just that.

"I realised what a special place Sheffield Children's Hospital is and I wanted to help in some way in the future."



In 2015 I was elected as a Public Governor for Sheffield North West. My role is to ensure that the needs of local people are being met and that their views are put forward to the hospital's Board of Directors.

The directors are currently developing strategic plans for the hospital for the next five years. The other Governors and I are involved in discussions about what the priorities should be and I was pleased to see that "improving the lives of children with complex needs and disabilities" is on the list. This was suggested following the results of the State of Sheffield survey carried out by Sheffield Parent Carer Forum.

The discussion will be opened up to the public in the coming months so you will all have the opportunity to contribute your thoughts. Look out for announcements about the consultation on Twitter, Facebook and the hospital website: www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk

You can contact Matt at: mattdixon077@gmail.com

Sheffield Family Support Group

Sheffield Family Support Group is a small, parent-led group which offers activities for children and young people with a learning disability, their families and friends.

Their monthly swimming parties at Hillsborough Leisure Centre have been running for many years. Funding from the **Big Lottery Fund** has recently enabled the group to expand its activities to include trampolining and Taekwondo.

Taekwondo

"I wasn't sure if my ten-year-old, non-verbal, autistic son would get anything from the Taekwondo session. His attention span is short and he often finds instructions hard to follow, especially in a group situation. But we had a great time! The instructors are brilliant and the EIS venue is big, airy and safe. A great session for some fitness and fun – especially on a rainy day – and (maybe best of all) it's free!!!"

Trampolining

"My nine-year-old son, who is on the autism spectrum, instantly hit it off with the very friendly and welcoming instructors. He thoroughly enjoyed the session and even managed to learn some new techniques. He now eagerly awaits the monthly session and the opportunity to meet up with the new friends that he has made."

Swimming

"The swimming sessions are a highlight for our family, especially my ten-year-old son, who has Down Syndrome, his brother and his friend who comes with us. Because our group has exclusive use of the pool, there is no waiting for slides and we can easily keep an eye on our children because the pool is not busy. And afterwards there is party food for anyone who wants to stay. The children sit and eat together and the parents chat."

Date	Activity	Time	Venue	Cost
2 April	Trampolining	4.30-5.30pm	Hillsborough Leisure Centre	Free *
9 April	Swim + party food	6.30-7.30pm	Hillsborough Leisure Centre	£1 per child
16 April	Taekwondo	10-11am	English Institute of Sport (EIS)	Free
7 May	Trampolining	4.30-5.30pm	Hillsborough Leisure Centre	Free*
14 May	Swim + party food	6.30-7.30pm	Hillsborough Leisure Centre	£1 per child
21 May	Taekwondo	10-11am	English Institute of Sport (EIS)	Free

To book or for more information, please email: Fsgswimming@outlook.com

*Time slots for trampolining MUST BE BOOKED IN ADVANCE!

We are currently applying for funding to continue our activities beyond May. If you are interested in joining us on future dates, please send us an email.

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

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

[illegible]

"We had given up on the idea of Sam being able to do up his zips when he was younger. Despite the Occupational Therapy sessions, the trainer aids and bags of patience, he just couldn't do up his zips.

As Sam went into adult services, he had an Occupational Therapy assessment and we raised it with his new Occupational Therapist, Miriam – could she think of anything that could help Sam do this?

On her advice, we bought a large zip and encouraged him to try and do it up. The standalone zip was a bit abstract for Sam to manage, but having that zip around and hearing us talk about it just gave him the impetus to try.

Then suddenly, whilst he was sat bored in a meeting, something clicked - and fiddling about with his zip, he could do it! With the cold weather, there has been ample opportunity to put his new-found ability to the test. Not only has he learnt a practical skill, but he is really proud of himself - and we have learnt never to give up!"

By Jayne Woodward





...that there are special collections for continence waste?

Waste management firm Veolia offers a special collection service for pads and nappies, which doesn't appear to be well publicised.

All you need to do is ask your continence nurse to tell Veolia that you want to be added to their weekly collection of continence waste - it's a free service.

They will then drop a yellow bin bag off at your address, and come to pick it up during the following week.



...that carers get in free at Sheffield International Venues?

Sheffield International Venues run a scheme called "Plus One" which provides free entry to a carer, friend or family member accompanying someone who needs extra help to access an activity.

To access the scheme, you need to purchase a lifeCARD for your child and select "Yes" in answer to the question "Do you require additional support to access our venues?"

No proof of disability is required.

The current price of the lifeCARD is £3 when purchased online (www.sheffieldlifecard.com) or £5 in venues. The card is valid for one year and offers savings of up to 30% on sports and leisure activities across the city. The activities you can access with a Plus One lifeCARD include gym and fitness classes, casual swimming and ice skating, and swimming and ice skating lessons.

The scheme is available at:

- Concord Sports Centre
- Hillsborough Leisure Centre
- English Institute of Sport Sheffield
- Ice Sheffield
- Ponds Forge International Sports Centre
- Springs Leisure Centre
- Heeley Swimming Pool



...that you can buy a Radar Key to gain access to disabled toilets?

A Radar Key is a large, silver-coloured key that opens more than 9,000 accessible toilets in the UK.

If your child has a disability, health condition, sensory issues (e.g. fear of hand dryers) or other anxieties that make using ordinary public toilets difficult, then you should consider purchasing a Radar Key.

GENUINE Radar Keys are available to purchase from Disability Rights UK either from their online shop <https://crm.disabilityrightsuk.org/radar-nks-key> or by post (call 0207 2508191).

The cost is £4.50 including postage.

BEWARE – Don't risk buying a cheap copy! Searching online will bring up large numbers of unofficial sellers of cheap Radar Key copies. But will it open the door when you really need it to?

Alternatively, you can purchase one from Sheffield City Council (First Point at Howden House). The cost is £3.60 for a key and information pack, or £3 if you sign the declaration stating your child is disabled and therefore eligible for VAT relief.

To find a disabled toilet near you:

Disability Rights UK keep a directory of the locations, addresses and opening times of disabled toilets. You can purchase regional listings from them at a cost of £3.50.

Sheffield City Council's Disabled Access Guide (DisabledGo) has a list of accessible public toilets and changing places venues: www.disabledgo.com/organisations/sheffield-city-council/main

There is no official accessible toilet app, but a number of free toilet finder apps are available for iPhones and Android phones. These use the GPS on your phone to locate and produce a map of toilets closest to you, and most indicate if there is an accessible toilet available.

Annual health checks for young people with a learning disability



By Clare Peck, SPCF trustee

Many of our youngsters with a disability have been served by a model that involves the Ryegate Children's Centre and the Sheffield Children's Hospital, often with very little involvement from the GP. As they become adults, the model changes so that the GP becomes the key clinician who oversees referrals to specialist departments and the adult learning disability team. As a GP as well as a mum of a child going through this transition, I thought it might be helpful to look at ways to make this transition work well.

From last year, most GPs in the city are offering an annual health check to people with a learning disability from the age of 14 years.

Here are some thoughts about how to make the check more useful.

Before the appointment:

- Make a list of the different health issues, so you can check the GP has them all summarised on the computer and there is clarity about who is taking responsibility.
- List any health concerns that you currently have (hopefully you will receive a questionnaire before the appointment to help with this).
- Ask if a nurse or a doctor will be doing the check. If the young person's health issues are complex, would the GP be the best person to begin with?

- Would the first appointment be better **without** the young person (assuming their consent), to bring the GP up to speed?

Think about:

- Will the practice need to make reasonable adjustments to care for your child? (e.g. routine appointments booked at quieter times, ways of coping if the waiting room is busy, best ways of communicating). Ask for these adjustments to be **flagged on your child's notes** as an alert; this will help the receptionist at the point of phoning. (N.B. You don't have to wait until your child is 14 to do this!)
- What monitoring needs to be done? Do you need to introduce your child slowly to the practice to get them used to having weight monitoring, blood pressure checks or blood tests?
- Would a one-page profile or a hospital passport (see box below) be helpful?
- What knowledge needs sharing about a maybe rare condition?

Finally, make sure your young person is accompanied by someone who knows their medical issues well.

To download a hospital passport form that you can complete on your computer, go to:

<http://tinyurl.com/zblsyux>



Anxiety and school attendance issues



By Stuart Williams, Principal Educational Psychologist

Anxiety can affect us all. It is a feeling of worry, unease or fear. It has its purposes and can help us to be better prepared. Before an exam, for example, it might make a young person more alert and help to improve their performance. However, there are times when anxiety can be disabling. Parents and carers report increasing levels of anxiety amongst their children or young people. Some parents report that their children are either out of school completely due to anxiety, or heading in that direction. So what can parents do?

Venetta Buchanan is Sheffield's Advisory Teacher for Elective Home Education. She regularly supports families experiencing these issues. Venetta says: "When a child's ability to cope begins to decline, it is natural for the parent to try to do what they can to counter the anxiety." She sums up her advice saying: "When it comes to children with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) and school attendance issues, I would say that the most important thing parents can do is to involve professionals in and out of their school base as soon as possible."

Support

In Sheffield there are several services that can help, and a list of key contacts is included at the end of this article. Additional information

is available on the Local Offer website (www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk). Within education, Multi-Agency Support Teams (MAST) support school attendance issues and are commissioned to provide early mental health support. All schools have access to Educational Psychology support. Obviously, making early contact with your child or young person's GP will give you advice and support. If the anxiety is related to a known special educational need, then the relevant Local Authority (LA) support team can help. For example, it is known that there is a common link between autism and anxiety. The Autism Education Team is available on their support line if advice is needed.

The legal framework

Schools have a legal duty to monitor and enforce good attendance. This means if they don't know the circumstance, they might consider fining the parent for their child's non-attendance or start court proceedings. Whilst a child is on roll at a school, the local authority has a responsibility to that child and ensuring their education is suitable for them. Schools and the LA also have a responsibility to have a policy on the education of children with medical needs. Currently the LA is reviewing its policy.

Venetta recommends working closely with your child's school and asking for support. "I would advise parents to get a plan in writing which

includes review meetings. Alongside informing professionals, parents should also document everything so that any possible court action re attendance may be challenged." Parents must remember that they have a duty to ensure their child receives an education, but if this duty is being affected by other factors, they are well within their rights to request support from the school. If this support is not forthcoming, parents/carers may find an intermediary such as the SEND lead for their locality or the SENDIAS service (formerly Parent Partnership) helpful, or they could self-refer to MAST.

Specialist services

The Home and Hospital Education Service, now known as the Becton Hospital and Outreach Team, is a service that provides support. This team works with children or young people whose education is affected by health issues (including mental health issues). Access to support from the team presumes that parents/carers have already sought support and advice from a medical consultant or CAMHS and the referral provides evidence of this. Getting the necessary appointments for these can take some time. Therefore, when a child begins to refuse to attend, parents should raise the issue as soon as possible with school and any relevant SEND support teams.

The Becton Hospital and Outreach Team do educate children at home if there is a medical reason which prevents them being out of

the home; for example, if they are immune suppressed. Otherwise support is provided in small groups settings. The Outreach Team will work with children until the child is ready to reintegrate back into school, but they do not offer permanent schooling.

Educating at home

When parents take on the responsibility to provide a full time education, they do so with the understanding that they will be expected to provide for the needs of their child. If there is a statement or Education, Health and Care Plan, the SEN Assessment and Placement Team remains involved but the responsibility now falls on the parent.

If parents feel that they may need to take this option due the problems they are experiencing, Venetta Buchanan is available to offer further advice. Venetta notes: "I can talk them through the process and also attend meetings in school to try to reduce the incidents of parents feeling they have been forced down this pathway. Parents must remember that a child cannot be taken off roll without their permission and they should not be persuaded to do so."

Parents may also wish to contact Fiona Nicholson, a former home educator in Sheffield who now writes about home education and special needs; she can help put you in contact with other home-educating families. You can find Fiona's websites here: www.ehe-sen.org.uk and <http://edyourself.org>

Key contacts

MAST	0114 205 3158
Educational Psychology Service	0114 250 6800
Autism Team helpline (1-4pm, term time only)	0114 273 6567
Becton Hospital and Outreach Team	0114 255 7679
SEN Assessment and Placement Team	0114 273 6394
Venetta Buchanan, Advisory Teacher for Elective Home Education	0114 203 7141
Sheffield SENDIAS	0114 273 6009

Council overhauls SEN funding

Yes, we know – this is starting to feel like Groundhog Day. Just when people are beginning to understand how the funding system works, someone decides to change it. AGAIN.

Should this even concern us as parents? Can't we just let head teachers and council officers sort it out between themselves? In an ideal world, perhaps. But in the real world, parents who understand how the system works are better equipped to challenge it when needed. Knowledge is power, after all. So, make yourself a cuppa and read on...

On 1 April 2016, Sheffield adopted a new system for calculating special school budgets and allocating top-up funding to mainstream schools. Here's how the changes will impact on different groups of children:

Mainstream pupils

Funding for pupils requiring support which costs **less** than £6,000 per year will not be affected. Support for these children will still come from the notional SEN element included in each school's overall budget.

Top-up funding for children requiring support which costs **more** than £6,000 per year will no longer be distributed by the local authority via the banded funding system. Instead, the local authority will delegate this funding to seven localities (A-G). The amount of top-up funding each locality receives is based on the proportion of pupils identified at levels 3, 4 and 5 on the Sheffield Support Grid (see box on the right) in that locality. The total amount of top-up funding available to mainstream schools in 2016/17 is the same as last year (£2.1m).

Localities can use the money to purchase services in bulk, or allocate it to schools to buy services individually. Schools will only be given top-up funding for learners identified at grid level 3 or above whose needs have been documented in a statement, EHC plan or MyPlan (see pages 20 & 21). (N.B. The system will not function exactly as described above during the transition phase.)

Special school pupils

Special school budgets will no longer be calculated based on historical funding levels, which were different for each school. Instead, all special schools in Sheffield will now get the same fixed amount per place (likely to be around £16,000 per year) plus top-up funding for individual learners with the most complex needs (above level 5 on the Sheffield Support Grid – see box on the right).

All special schools have assessed their pupils against the grid, and the results are currently being moderated.

There will inevitably be winners and losers; however, no school should lose more than 1.5% of its per-place budget compared to the previous year (Minimum Funding Guarantee).

Sheffield currently has around 60-70 more children in special schools than it is funded for by the Education Funding Agency, and many special schools are overcrowded. The council intends to reduce the number of special school places over the next few years by supporting mainstream schools to become more inclusive.

Integrated Resource (IR) pupils

Current funding arrangements for IRs will continue for 2016/17, while proposals for new arrangements are being developed.

National consultation on high needs funding reform

The Government is currently consulting on proposals to change the way that high needs funding is allocated to local authorities and education settings. The consultation will run until 17 April 2016. To take part, go to: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/high-needs-funding-reform>

The Sheffield Support Grid

The Sheffield Support Grid is a tool which is intended to help localities and schools allocate support to learners with SEN (special educational needs) in a fair and transparent way. It uses the four categories of need set out in the new SEND Code of Practice (communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social, emotional and mental health; and sensory and/or physical impairments).

Within each category, the grid describes five levels of need. For each category and level

of need, the grid describes a package of provision. Schools are expected to use this as a guide for planning SEN provision. You can download the Sheffield Support Grid from <http://tinyurl.com/gnkuegm>

Schools are currently assessing where each of their SEN pupils fits on the grid. The outcomes of this process, which is moderated within each locality and across the city, will be discussed with parents at their child's next review meeting.

Funding Q & A

Q: My child used to get banded funding. Is their funding level likely to change now?

Funding for children who were on bands C and D is protected whilst they remain in their current setting. Once the child moves to a new setting, their top-up funding will be reviewed. There are no such transitional arrangements in place for children who were on the lower funding bands A and B, so their top-up funding may change once they have been assessed against the grid.

Q: What should I do if I disagree with the grid level my child has been allocated?

Discuss your concerns with your child's SENCO in the first instance. If the disagreement cannot be resolved, the case should be referred to the locality's area SENCO, who may seek the view of the locality's Educational Psychologist.

Q: Could a local authority decide that only children on specific grid levels can get an EHC plan or attend special schools?

Local authorities may develop criteria as guidelines to help them make decisions, but they must not apply blanket policies. Each case must be judged on its merits. When deciding whether to carry out a statutory assessment or issue an EHC plan, local authorities must apply the legal test set out in the

legislation. Parental requests for a particular special school can only be refused on the grounds of unsuitability for the child's needs, incompatibility with the efficient education of other children, or inefficient use of resources.

Q: Does each grid level come with a specific amount of funding attached?

No – because the cost of making a specific kind of provision may vary between settings. It's the package of provision that should be the same wherever the child is educated, not the level of funding. (And let's not forget, there's a finite amount of money in the pot...)

Q: Do mainstream schools automatically get top-up funding for children with statements, EHC plans or MyPlans?

Not necessarily – it depends on whether it costs the school more than £6,000 per year to make the special educational provision required by the child. This will normally be the case for children identified at grid level 3 and above.

N.B. There is an absolute legal duty on the local authority to arrange the special educational provision described in a child's statement or EHC plan, irrespective of the grid level they have been allocated. The MyPlan (see pages 20 & 21), on the other hand, is not a legally binding document, so it cannot override the support grid.



Introducing: The MyPlan

Like many other local authorities, Sheffield recently launched a planning tool which supports good inclusive practice – a sort of “EHC plan light”.

The new document is called a **“MyPlan”**. Like an EHC plan, it uses a person-centred approach. It differs from an EHC plan in that it is not legally binding, and is issued and maintained by the setting (school, nursery or college) instead of the local authority. The MyPlan includes:

- A one-page profile with key information about the child
- A description of the child's educational health and social care needs
- The outcomes the child is working towards
- A description of the support required
- A section on transition planning
- Confidence ratings given by the parents and the setting.

You can download a MyPlan template and guidance notes from <http://tinyurl.com/h6yr88a>

(An Education Health and Care (EHC) plan is a formal legal document which describes a child or young person's educational, health and social care needs and sets out the provision required to meet those needs. EHC plans are replacing statements of SEN.)

Who is it for?

The MyPlan is primarily intended for learners on SEN Support in mainstream settings who have significant needs (level 3 or above on the Sheffield Support Grid; see page 19).

Learners with lower-level needs can also have a MyPlan if the setting and the parents agree that this would be helpful; for example, if a child requires complex but lower-level provision spread across several people/services, or where parents have expressed a lack of confidence in the setting.

The MyPlan is also important for funding purposes, as all applications for top-up funding now have to be backed up with a MyPlan, EHC plan or statement (see pages 18 & 19).

What are the benefits of a MyPlan?

The process through which a MyPlan is developed and reviewed is just as important as the document itself; children, young people and parents should be fully involved as equal partners.

Unlike IEPs (Individual Education Plans), which tend to focus on short-term educational targets, the MyPlan looks at the **whole** child, and what is important for them in the long term.

The MyPlan should also give parents a much clearer idea of the extra help provided at school - who does what, how often, and for how long.

In accordance with the new SEND Code of Practice, the MyPlan should be reviewed with parents at least three times a year.

And if a MyPlan isn't enough?

If a learner makes less than expected progress even though the setting has been doing all it can to understand and meet their needs, then an assessment for an EHC plan is indicated.

The Council expects that in most cases, a MyPlan will have been in place for at least **two** terms

before a request for an EHC plan is made. This helps to build up a comprehensive picture of the learner's needs, the interventions tried and their impact on progress, which should speed up the decision-making and assessment process.

N.B. Parents and settings have a right to request an EHC needs assessment even if no MyPlan is in place. If such a request is received, the local authority will ask the setting to use the MyPlan template to provide information about the child.

Case study

Meet three-year old Mason and his mum Leanne – one of the families who trialled the MyPlan before it was rolled out city-wide.



Mason has a diagnosis of autism. He doesn't talk, but is starting to use picture cards to communicate. Mason is fascinated by letters and numbers, and has a fantastic visual memory.

When Mason started nursery in October 2015, his lack of communication skills was a big worry for Leanne: “The major thing for me was, because he can't talk, how is he going to communicate with them? How is he going to come home and tell me if he's happy, if he's not happy?”

Through the MyPlan, Leanne was able to ensure that everyone had the information she wanted them to have. She explains: “You've got all the stress and the worries taken away from you because you've got your own opinions in there. It's a total fifty-fifty thing.”

She adds: “The one-page profile really helps with new staff, because they can just read that. Especially with a non-verbal child – they'll know

all about Mason, what he really hates, that he loves letters and numbers, and what calms him when he has a meltdown.”

When it came to looking around schools for Mason, Leanne found it useful to take the MyPlan with her. In the end, Leanne decided that a special school would be best for Mason – which meant applying for an EHC plan.

Leanne found the process very straightforward: “They had all the information because of his one-page profile, his MyPlan and all the assessments.

Because of that, we were able to have just one meeting for everyone to agree that yes, Mason needs an EHC plan.”

“I've not had to ask for anything, I've not had to push for anything,” she adds, sounding almost surprised.

Leanne is currently waiting for Mason's draft EHC plan and a decision on his school placement.



Dates for your diary

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

To ensure we have a big enough room...
it would really help us if you could
let us know in advance if you are
planning to come along to any of these
meetings. Please see inside front cover
for contact details.

For more event information, please visit
our website: www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/calendar

April

Friday 8 April, 10am-12pm

Parent workshop: Social Stories & Power Cards

Staff from the Speech and Language Therapy Service will explain how to write and use Social Stories and Power Cards. These approaches are aimed at helping your child understand situations that may be difficult for them and showing them how to respond. They are most useful for school-age children who understand and use language at a simple sentence level. You will have the chance to practise writing a Social Story or Power Card with support from staff.

Thursday 14 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.

April continued

Friday 15 April, 10am-12pm

at Red Tape Central, Shoreham Street

Parent workshop: Making visual aids

Staff from the Sheffield Speech and Language Therapy Service will show you how to use the software "Communicate in Print" to create communication aids for your child, such as visual timetables, signs, booklets etc. You will be able to print and laminate resources during the session to take home at the end.

Places are limited and must be pre-booked!

Tuesday 19 April, 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.

May

Friday 6 May, 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!

May continued

Wednesday 11 May, 10am-12pm

Meeting about EHC assessment requests

There has been a significant increase in the number of requests for statutory assessments for EHC plans in Sheffield, and we are meeting with Council officers to understand the reasons for this. This will involve examining data around assessment requests and the impact on families. Please note, we will not be able to discuss or give advice on individual cases.

Thursday 12 May, 10.30am-12pm

Coffee morning

See above.

Friday 20 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 7 June, 10.30am-12pm

Coffee morning

See previous.

July

Thursday 7 July, 10.30am-12pm

Coffee morning

See previous.

Save the date!

We are hoping to run another **Family Fun Day** for our members at Hillsborough Sports Arena during the summer holidays. We've pencilled in Friday 26 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!



Communicating in the real world

Are you looking for specialist advice and support that will help you, your toddler, child or teenager improve communication and achieve better participation in everyday life? Equal Strands is a specialist Autism & Asperger Consultancy that works with families on managing the day-to-day issues of living with autism in a socially demanding world. We focus on maximising communication and minimising anxiety, misunderstandings and conflicts.

Visit www.equalstrands.co.uk or call Heidi Keeling on 0750 4327977 for a free phone consultation.

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

Useful Contacts

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

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
Local offer A website with information about support and services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in our area	www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk
Portage Home Visiting Service* Home-visiting educational service for children under three with additional support needs and their families	0114 273 6411 debbie.marshall@sheffield.gov.uk
Ryegate Children's Centre Assessment, diagnosis and therapy for children and young people with developmental and neurological problems	0114 271 7651
SENDIAS (formerly Parent Partnership Service)* Provides information, advice and support to parents of children with SEN/disabilities in relation to education, health, social care, leisure, disability benefits and support groups	0114 273 6009 disabilityinformationservices@sheffield.gov.uk
SEN Assessment and Placement Team* Deals with statutory assessments, statements/EHC plans, annual reviews, 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 (8-25 years) who provide care for a family member, e.g. a disabled sibling	0114 258 4595 information@sheffieldyoungcarers.org.uk
Sibling Support Group Support group for children who have a 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 SnipsBusinessSupport@sheffield.gov.uk
Transport Services* Provides transport services including home-to-school transport for pupils with SEN	0114 203 7570 transportservices@sheffield.gov.uk
Vision Support Service* Supports children with a visual impairment and their families	0114 294 1201 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

Services provided by ibk initiatives

ibk Initiatives is a Sheffield-based, parent-led social enterprise offering Payroll and Budget Management Services; PA recruitment; and short breaks for disabled young people and their Personal Assistants.

Do you have a Direct Payment or Personal Budget?

ibk Initiatives offers families a payroll and budget management service which frees families from the worry of dealing with all issues around paying Personal Assistants. With years of experience in working with families with disabled children and young people receiving a Direct Payment or Personal Health Budget, we know how important it is to deliver a prompt and transparent service.

We work closely with Sheffield City Council and follow their Money Management Protocol. You can also find us on Sheffield City Council's "Sheffield Directory".

For more information, please contact Nicola Guest on **0114 223 0236** or email her at **Nicola@ibkinitiatives.com**

Recruitment

Having good support can be the vital ingredient enabling young disabled people to lead a rich & meaningful life.

ibk can help by:

- Helping you to write job descriptions and adverts
- Advertising your vacancy and screening CVs
- Interviewing and introducing prospective PAs

- Helping you get the most out of having a PA
- Offering your PAs regular supervision, team meetings and training opportunities

For more information, please contact Kate or Ewan on **01142230236** or email **recruitment@ibkinitiatives.com**

Short Breaks

ibk provides regular yoga and dance classes for disabled young people. The classes are run by highly qualified and well-respected professionals, and they are customized according to the support needs of each young person.

Yoga runs every Thursday (term time only) from 5.30-6.30pm at St Mary's Church, Bramall Lane, S2 4QZ.

Dance runs every Thursday (term time only) from 6-7pm at the U-Mix Centre, 17 Asline Road, S2 4UJ.

Cost: £4 per session (PAs are free)

For more information, please contact Gabriella on **01142230236** or email **gabriella@ibkinitiatives.com**



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.

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