



Newsletter

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

Published by the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum

Written by parents, for parents!

Autumn/Winter 2020 - Issue 23 - FREE!

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About us

We are an independent group of over 2,000 parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities and/or special educational needs in Sheffield.

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

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

Membership is free, join us today!

Fill in the membership form at the back of this newsletter, or go to www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/become-a-member

Get in touch

By Post:

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

By phone: 0300 321 4721

By email:

enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Website:

www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Drop-in:

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



Find us on Facebook!



Follow us on Twitter!
[@ShefParentForum](https://twitter.com/ShefParentForum)

St Mary's Community Centre



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

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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A very warm welcome to the autumn/winter edition of our newsletter!

I write this as we enter the second Covid-19 lockdown and I do hope that you and your family are managing in such difficult times. Please don't forget our phone line is open and our staff, trustees and volunteers are still available to support you in any way we can.

Over the summer, we have seen some further good examples of coproduction. We worked together with SEN Transport to ensure that letters to parents were easier to understand, and we helped to improve the EHCP process letters sent out by SENDSARS so parents can actually understand what needs to be done and when. I have been involved in some work with the local authority and health around supporting families who are on the waiting list for an autism assessment. This has seen a positive change in culture around the importance of joint working and considered families' needs and views.

I can remember when I first started attending meetings, I sometimes felt like a "rabbit in headlights". However, I am now confident in raising issues and concerns and it is nice to see that our feedback is welcomed and taken on board. Don't get me wrong, there are sometimes still challenging conversations, but these are necessary to get our families' views heard. With this in mind, we are looking at recruiting more parents to attend meetings to ensure our views continue to be representative of the families in Sheffield. (see page 5)



You may remember that the Sheffield Inclusion Strategy for 2020-2025 was released earlier this year, and that the next step would be to develop the action plan. We have been adamant that, in contrast to previous action plans, this one must make a real difference to our families. I am pleased to say that the plan is now beginning to take shape with a heavy focus on impact and outcomes, rather than just actions. This will hopefully see improved communication with families, quicker and earlier identification of needs and more training for staff, along with smoother transitions across the board.

Stay safe everyone, and we will hopefully meet again soon!

Best wishes,

Katie Monette

Chair

Honouring unsung community heroes

We are once again inviting nominations for our David Woodhouse Community Award. Nominations should be for an individual (rather than an organisation) who:

- Works or volunteers in Sheffield;
- is engaged in work or volunteering activities which relate directly to supporting and benefitting parent carers in the city and their families;
- has a proven track record of outstanding activity.

The successful nominee will receive a trophy, a cheque for £250 and vouchers for a spa experience and a meal.

The award is funded from donations made

in memory of David Woodhouse, who died in 2019. David was husband to Deborah, a founding member and long-serving trustee of the Forum. David was involved in many charity projects across Sheffield and worked tirelessly to improve the life chances of vulnerable children and young adults. The award seeks to honour individuals who best demonstrate the qualities that David exhibited – selflessness, dedication and community spirit.

Please contact:

enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk for more details and a nomination form.

Nominations close at mid-day on Friday 8 January 2021. The successful nominee will be announced on Friday 29 January 2021.

Don't miss the deadline for the Short Break Grant!

Sheffield City Council is still accepting applications for the Short Break Grant. The purpose of the grant is to give parent carers a break from their additional caring responsibilities. You can apply for up to £400 per family.

The deadline for applications is 31 January 2021, and the activity must have taken place and the grant must be spent before 31 March 2021.

Who can apply? You can apply if you meet all of the following criteria:

- Your child has a disability and receives a high rate component of DLA or an enhanced rate component of PIP (you can still apply if your child is on a lower rate, but you will need to submit additional information from a relevant professional);
- You are in receipt of means-tested benefits OR your family household income is less than £21,000 a year;
- Your child is under 18 years of age;

- You do NOT already receive a short break service (e.g. SNIPS club, befriending or overnight respite) or direct payment for this child.



How to apply: If you believe you are eligible, then your first step is to complete a Household Income Assessment by calling **0114 273 4567**.

When you receive confirmation that you are eligible to apply for the grant, download the application form and guidance notes from the council website: **www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/social-care/short-breaks.html**

Do not send in an application until you have completed the Household Income Assessment.

If you have any queries or need help to apply, please email **CYPF_ShortBreakGrants@sheffield.gov.uk** or call **0114 273 6032**.

Join our virtual coffee mornings!

Until we can meet again in person, we will be running regular coffee mornings on the videoconferencing platform Zoom. Join us to meet other local parents, exchange tips and support, and feel a little less isolated in these strange times!

Alongside these sessions, we will be offering bookable one-to-one slots with a professional, like an Educational Psychologist. You'll be able to take part in the general session, nip into a "breakout room" to talk to the professional, then re-join the wider meeting – all without getting out of your chair!

All you need is a smartphone or tablet, or a laptop or computer with a camera. If you've

never used Zoom before and are not sure how it works, call us on **0300 321 4721** and we'll talk you through it.

For details of upcoming coffee mornings and to book a one-to-one consultation, please visit our website **[sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/events](https://www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/events)** or follow us on **Facebook**.



Could you be a **parent carer representative**?

Do you feel passionate about improving local services for children and young people with additional needs and their families?

We are looking to expand our pool of parent carer representatives. Training and mentoring (including shadowing of experienced representatives) will be provided – we promise we won't throw you in at the deep end!

Meetings usually take place during school hours, and reps normally attend one or two meetings per month. Due to the pandemic, all meetings are virtual at the moment, so you will need a PC, laptop, smartphone or tablet to take part. If you don't have access to any of those, we may be able to help, so please don't let that put you off applying!

Would you like to attend strategic meetings with the local authority and the health service to represent the voice of parent carers?

We will reimburse any expenses you incur – such as additional data for your phone or travel expenses. We may also be able to pay you for your time; due to employment legislation, we can unfortunately only do this if you are self-employed.

Interested? Please email us at **enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk** or call us on **0300 321 4721** to find out more.

For information about all our volunteering opportunities, please visit **www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/support-us/volunteering-opportunities**

Neurodisability training for early years staff

Were you told to just “wait and see” when you first raised concerns about your child’s development? We are working on a project to improve early diagnosis and support for children with neurodevelopmental conditions.

Over the next ten months, we will be working together with Sheffield City Council and Sheffield Clinical Commissioning group to develop and deliver training for staff who work with children aged 0 to 5 years, such as nursery workers, childminders, health visitors, therapists and GPs.

The training will raise awareness of the early signs of neurodevelopmental conditions, like autism, ADHD and learning disabilities. It will help staff feel more confident about discussing any concerns with parents, enable them to make timely referrals to diagnostic services, and improve their knowledge of support services that they can signpost families to.

Parents’ experiences will be at the heart of the project. We have just run two focus groups to

collect feedback from parents, and parents and professionals will now work in partnership to develop the content of the training. They will also deliver it together; due to Covid restrictions, this is likely to be online in the first instance. In the long term, the aim is that the training will be embedded into the council’s standard training programme for early years professionals.

Meet our new project worker Amy Farry!

Amy will coordinate the development and delivery of the training and support the parents taking part. You can contact her by emailing amy.farry@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk.



Transfer of SEND careers advice service

In October, a number of youth services provided by Sheffield Futures were transferred to Sheffield City Council. This includes the careers advice service for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The team of six SEND careers advisers has now moved from Sheffield Futures into the council. Once staff have settled in, a review will be carried out, which may result in changes to the way the service is delivered. For the time being, the service will continue as follows:

Special schools: SEND careers advisers will continue to work in secondary special schools (Bents Green, Seven Hills, Talbot, Heritage Park and Holgate Meadows). The advisers

will attend annual review meetings from Y9 to Y14 as appropriate (prioritising those students who will be transitioning this academic year) and for students in Y11 at Holgate Meadows and Heritage Park. They will also do follow-up work after the review meetings with families as appropriate.

Mainstream schools: It is the responsibility of the school to provide and purchase careers advice for their students. Therefore, the first port of call for any career-related queries should be the school’s careers adviser. Mainstream schools can access further support from the SEND careers advice service for students in Y11 who have an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan.

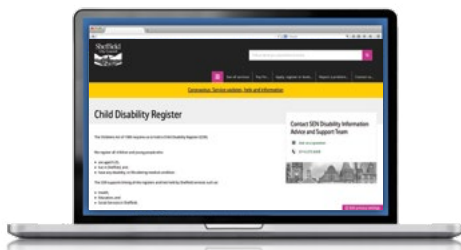
Changes to the **Child Disability Register**

The Child Disability Register (CDR) is a register of children and young people, aged 0-25 years, who live in Sheffield and have a disability or life-altering medical condition. The local authority and the NHS use the CDR alongside other registers to plan services for children and young people with disabilities. Since registration on the CDR is voluntary, it does not cover all disabled children in our area. There are currently around 2,300 children and young people on the CDR, compared to 3,275 children with Education Health and Care Plans in Sheffield.

The CDR used to be managed by the NHS, but has recently been transferred to the local authority. This has led to changes in the way children are registered:

If your child was previously registered on the CDR, you should have received an email informing you about the transfer and inviting you to update your information. The only way to do this is by completing the application

form again from scratch (see link below). The team are currently also contacting parents who did not provide an email address.



If your child is not yet registered, you can add them by completing the online form at **www.sheffield.gov.uk/childdisabilityregister**. Once enrolled, you will receive the council's SEND newsletter by email unless you opt out.

The termly newsletter "What's Going On", which used to be sent to families registered on the CDR, has been discontinued.

Give us your views and **you could win £50!**

Every couple of years, we carry out a survey to find out what you, our members, think about our organisation. This helps us to improve the service we provide, and is very important for our continued funding.

As a little incentive, we are offering you the chance to enter our prize draw for a £50

shopping voucher. To take part, simply email us the code that you'll see when you've completed the survey. The deadline is Friday 8 January 2021.



Please take 5-10 minutes to complete our questionnaire at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/spcfsurvey2020

It's flu jab time!

Getting the flu vaccine is particularly important this year, because research shows that you are more likely to be seriously ill if you get flu and coronavirus at the same time.

Changes have been made to make sure it's safe for you and your child to have the flu vaccine at your GP surgery or at school. These changes include social distancing, hand washing and wearing protective equipment.

Who is eligible for a flu vaccine?

- All children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August 2020. Vaccinations for these children are delivered by their GP.
- All children in primary school and those in Y7 at secondary school. These children will receive their vaccination in school. Parents must be asked to fill in a consent form.
- People who are on the Shielded Patient List and members of their household.
- Children, young people and adults with a serious long-term health condition. This includes people with conditions like diabetes, asthma or heart disease, and people with a learning disability or cerebral palsy.
- Carers. This includes family members who are carers and paid support workers, such as PAs. Carers need to get their flu jab from their own GP – but they will only be invited if the GP has them coded as a “carer” or “needs flu vaccine”. Contact your GP and ask them to check this if you are not sure.
- Pregnant women.
- Anyone aged 65 years and over; people aged 50 to 64 should be contacted about a flu vaccine later in the year.
- People in long-stay residential care homes.
- Frontline health and social care workers.

Please note:

You can request a free flu vaccine for yourself or your child even if you are not in the defined risk group. GPs are asked to use their clinical judgement in deciding whether someone would benefit from the vaccination. For example, although epilepsy is not on the list of qualifying conditions, people with uncontrolled epilepsy who experience increased seizures when they have a fever may benefit from the flu jab.

GPs in Sheffield have received a letter from Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group

reminding them to offer the flu vaccine to people with a learning disability and their carers, and to make reasonable adjustments for them. You may find it useful to download the letter from tinyurl.com/y4b86av2 and show it to your surgery.

Could I get several family members vaccinated at the same time?

Unfortunately, it's not that simple. This year, there are three different types of vaccines to be used in the flu programme, depending on the age of the person. These will arrive at GP surgeries in small batches at different times

in the autumn. Please be patient with your GP as they try to deliver what is now a very complicated programme.

Who gets the nasal vaccine and who gets an injection?

The nasal vaccine is normally given to children and young people aged between 2 and 18 years. There are some people who are unable to have the nasal spray, including those with severe asthma or a heavy cold. Your GP or nurse will be able to advise you.

The injection is for babies under the age of 2 years and adults aged 18 years and over who are in one of the clinical risk groups. However, if an adult with a learning disability is not able to have the vaccine due to a fear of injections, then a nasal vaccine can be given. This needs to be specifically prescribed under a Patient Specific Direction. You should ask your GP or nurse in advance, in order for them to organise this before the appointment.

What if my child is accidentally vaccinated twice?

We know that some of our secondary special schools also offer vaccinations for their students. You should be asked to sign a consent form before your child is given the vaccine. However, don't be alarmed if for some reason this does not happen and your child ends up being vaccinated both at school and by their GP. There is no increased risk of side effects in an otherwise healthy child.

Make sure that your child and those caring for them are protected this year!

For more information about the flu vaccine, go to: www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/child-flu-vaccine

Is your child waiting for an autism assessment?



Due to the pandemic, waiting times for autism assessments have increased significantly and there are now over 1,000 children on the waiting list. Sheffield Children's Hospital and Sheffield City Council are working together to contact all families on the waiting list to offer them support while they are waiting for the assessment.

They have also published useful resources for families at: www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/ASDsupport

The resources cover topics like sleep difficulties, challenging behaviour, emotional wellbeing, sensory issues, going back to school, COVID-19 and the assessment process itself. There are quick reference sheets, top tips, booklets, guides and videos across all the topics for a range of ages. If you would like a paper copy of the summary booklet, please call **0114 271 7656**.

Accessing support from the Carers Centre

The Sheffield Carers Centre offers information, advice and support to any adult who is an unpaid carer of an adult or a child in Sheffield.

During the coronavirus pandemic, services that can be delivered by phone or videoconference continue, but face-to-face meetings are not taking place.

If you care for a child, you can currently access the following services:

- Registration with Sheffield Carers Centre, which means you will be sent a Carer Card (which offers discounts on a range of activities, products and services), a welcome pack and the monthly e-bulletin. You can register online via sheffieldcarers.org.uk/contact-us/register
- Carers Advice Line (**0114 272 8362**): advice, information, signposting and referral to appropriate services. The line is currently open Monday to Friday, 10am-4pm.
- Welfare rights advice, provided by Citizens Advice Sheffield
- Wellbeing workshops (advertised in the e-bulletin)
- Community Connect Service, which provides one-to-one and small group social contact for carers who are isolated
- Pro bono legal advice – solicitor not available currently, but check the website and social media for updates.



If you care for an adult, you can access all of the above services, plus:

- Carer's needs assessments, which look at how your caring role impacts your life, and what support you might need
- Specific services that can arise out of a carer's needs assessment, such as the Time for a Break Service, which provides small grants that help carers to have a break from their caring role, and Personal Budgets for carers.

A note about Carer's Needs Assessments:

The Carers Centre is commissioned by Sheffield City Council to carry out Carer's Needs Assessments for carers of adults ONLY. They are unable to assess parent carers of children under the age of 18. For parent carers of children aged 0-17 years, carer's assessments are incorporated in the parent/carer element of the single social care assessment (also known as Child in Need or Signs of Safety assessment).

Keep in touch!

www.sheffieldcarers.org.uk

www.facebook.com/SheffieldCarers

twitter.com/SheffieldCarers

How inclusive is your child's school, nursery or college?

Sheffield City Council is running a survey about support in education for learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Please take part if your child attends a mainstream or specialist school, college or early years provider (pre-school, nursery or childminder) in Sheffield.

The survey was launched just before the first Covid-19 lockdown, and it is now running again until the end of term (18 December 2020).

The survey is anonymous but feedback will be shared with your child's school, early years provider or college. It will also be used alongside other data to offer school improvement support around SEND, and to identify and share good practice.

The questionnaire takes around 5-10 minutes to complete, and you can access it here: tinyurl.com/yyjcf9l



SENDSARS letters improved

The SEND Statutory Assessment Advice and Review Service (SENDSARS) is the department in the council that deals with Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans and specialist placements.

Parents have told us that the letters they receive from SENDSARS contain too much legal jargon and can be difficult to understand.

We met with council officers to review these letters and make them more parent-friendly. They are now much shorter and simpler. Additional information about things like processes, timescales and legal rights is no longer included in the letters themselves, but provided through factsheets which are enclosed with each letter.

Covid “Grab and Go” hospital passports

The NHS has created a quick form for people with a learning disability and/or autism to complete if they need to go to hospital because of Covid-19. It gives doctors and nurses important information about the patient, such as their communication preferences, existing health conditions, or any medication they take.



You can download the form here:
<https://tinyurl.com/y57atykx>

Guidance notes for completing the form can be found here:
<https://tinyurl.com/y4lodskq>

New Integrated Resources open in north of city

Three new Integrated Resources (IRs) for children with communication and interaction difficulties (such as autism) have opened in the north of Sheffield.

IRs are specialist units in mainstream schools for children with complex needs. Children must have an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan to be placed there.

The new IRs are all part of the Cascade Multi-Academy Trust, and are located within the following schools:

- Beck Primary School (8 places)
- Whiteways Primary School (10 places)
- Hucklow Primary School (12 places)

Each of the new IRs consists of a purpose-built classroom and a sensory room. Children can access the mainstream part of the school in line with their needs – there is no fixed amount of time they must spend in a mainstream classroom.

Matthew Peers, Strategic Commissioning Manager in Sheffield City Council, said: “The new IR places with Cascade Multi-Academy Trust are part of a broader plan to increase IR provision in the city. Currently, we are exploring opportunities for more IR places, with a goal of these being available from September 2021. In doing this, we are taking into account a range of factors, including the needs that are prevalent in different areas, the availability of suitable spaces to house an IR, and the types of SEN need that the host school is best suited to meeting. We are delighted that Cascade are able to provide these places, and we’re looking forward to seeing children thrive in these IRs.”

For more information about three new IRs, please contact Cascade Inclusion Lead Lisa Whitehead: lwhitehead@cascademat.co.uk / 0114 2426736.



Sensory room at Beck



Classroom at Whiteways

Disabled teenagers locked out of Child Trust Funds



Child Trust Funds were set up by the government to encourage parents to save for their child's future. Children born from September 2002 were given vouchers worth £250 in their first year and another £250 at the age of 7. For lower-income families, the payment was £500. Children receiving Disability Living Allowance were given an extra payment of £100 or £200 in 2010/11. The money was invested in tax-free accounts that parents, family and friends could also contribute to.

The savings pots could now be worth up to £1,500, or more if parents added contributions. Around 6.3 million young people should benefit from this saving scheme, with the first funds starting to pay out from September this year. However, it is estimated that around 180,000 severely disabled teenagers will not be able access their money.

The money in the Child Trust Fund belongs to the child and can only be taken out by them once they reach the age of 18. But some young people will not have the mental capacity to make this sort of financial decision and will not be able to access their savings. For their families, the only way of accessing the money is by applying to the Court of Protection to become a financial deputy. The application process is difficult and expensive. The court fees alone are

almost £400 and there may be other hidden costs, such as having to pay for a mental capacity assessment. Families may need the help of a solicitor which will add to the expense. For some, the cost of applying to the court may be more than what is in the trust fund.

Parents across the country have been contacting their MPs to highlight this problem and Sir Ed Davey from the Liberal Democrats raised the issue at Prime Minister's questions. Finance industry trade bodies have also sent proposals to the government that would allow the fund managers to release the money to parents, but there is no news of progress on this issue yet.

Child Trusts Funds were scrapped in 2011, but it is thought that the same problems may apply to the current Junior ISAs. If you think that your child may not be able to manage their savings or have the capacity to give you Power of Attorney when they are an adult, then you should seek financial advice before investing in savings products that lock money in until they are 18.

For more information on Child Trust Funds, including links to organisations that can help you track down lost funds, see this BBC news article: www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-53935933



School admissions

Choosing a school for a child with a special educational need or disability (SEND) is difficult at the best of times. Because of the pandemic, families are facing additional challenges this year, as open days can only be held as virtual events.

We thought it might be useful to provide an overview of the admissions process - what should happen when, and what you can do if you are not happy. The article also covers admissions outside a child's normal age group and in-year transfers between schools.

If your child has SEND but no EHC plan

If your child does not have an EHC plan (see box), you can only apply for a place at a mainstream school or college, and you must follow the normal admissions process (see www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/schools-childcare/apply-school-place).

Please note:

For oversubscribed schools, applications will be prioritised using a set of categories, such as living in the school catchment area, or having siblings at the school. Medical, social or special educational needs are not considered one of the priority criteria, but can be used as a tie breaker within a priority category. Such needs will only be considered if you submit supporting evidence from a professional, such as a hospital/doctor's letter or report, **before** the closing date for applications (see timescales below). The Admission Committee will consider whether only the preferred school can meet your child's needs, and may prioritise your child within their admission category if they believe that there is compelling evidence to do so.

It is unlawful for an admission authority to refuse admission to a child who has SEND, but has no EHCP:

- because of the child's challenging behaviour (except in very limited circumstances); or

- because it believes the child should be assessed for an EHC plan or because they need a lot of extra support.

Any such refusal to admit can be challenged through the appeals process.

Timescales

Primary school admissions: closing date for applications 15 January 2021, offer date 16 April 2021

Secondary school admissions: closing date for applications 31 October 2020, offer date 1 March 2021

How to appeal

You are entitled to appeal for a place at any school which your child has been refused. The appeal panel is independent of the Local Authority and can offer a place at a school that is "full".

You must complete an appeal form for each school you wish to appeal for. You can download this from:

www.sheffield.gov.uk/pupiladmissions

The appeal panel can only consider the reasons (and any supplementary information) which you gave on your original application.

An Education Health and Care (EHC) plan...

is a legal document which describes a child or young person's educational, health and social care needs and the specialist provision required to meet those needs. EHC plans are issued by local authorities for children and young people with significant needs who need more support than a mainstream school can normally provide through existing resources. More information: <https://tinyurl.com/yxzf3h9>

If your child has an EHC plan

Children and young people with EHC plans are placed in schools through the EHC plan process, **not** the general admissions process.

You have a legal right to request that a particular school or college (mainstream, special or Integrated Resource) is named in your child's plan. The local authority will ask you which school you prefer your child to attend when they first issue an EHC plan for your child, and also when your child is due to move to a new setting (e.g. from primary to secondary school). You can give more than one preference.

Once you have expressed a preference, the local authority must consult with the school or college and must name it in the EHC plan unless:

- It is unsuitable for the age, ability, aptitude or SEN of the child or young person, or
- The attendance of the child or young person would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, or the efficient use of resources. (The "efficient education of others" exception cannot be used in relation to mainstream schools or colleges if there are reasonable steps that the school or college could take to ensure inclusion.)

Once a school or college is named in the child or young person's EHC plan, that school or college must admit them (exceptions apply for independent schools).

Timescales

If your child is due to start school or move schools, the local authority will ask you to complete a preference form well before the normal admissions deadline. This year, parents were asked to express their preferences by 30 September (primary-to-secondary transfers) or 16 October (children starting primary school). This is because the local authority needs time to consult with schools. They must then issue a final EHC plan naming the school or college your child will transfer to by the following national deadlines:

- **15 February** for children transitioning from nursery to primary school, infant to junior school (Y2 to Y3 with a physical site move) or primary to secondary school (Y6 to Y7)
- **31 March** for young people transitioning from secondary school to post-16 education (Y11 to Y12 / college), and for Y14 placements

How to appeal

If you disagree with the choice of school or college named in your child's plan (or other aspects of the plan), you can appeal to the SEND tribunal. For more information, see www.ipsea.org.uk/appealing-to-the-send-tribunal

It is also advisable to contact SENDSARS to see if the disagreement can be resolved without having to go to tribunal.

Education outside a child's normal age group

Parents can make a request for their child to be educated outside of their normal age group; for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health. In addition, parents of summer-born children (i.e. those born between 1 April and 31 August) can request to defer their child's entry to school by a whole year.

If the request is made when applying for a school place, the decision rests with the admission authority (usually the local authority or an academy trust). The views of the head teacher of the school concerned must be taken into account.

FEATURE

If a child is already on a school roll, it is for the head teacher to decide how best to educate them. This may, on occasion, include deciding that a child should be educated in a year group other than the one indicated by their age. Such decisions should be based on sound educational reasons and be made in consultation with parents.

Parents should be aware that there is no guarantee that the placement in a different age group will continue throughout the child's education. See childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/education-of-children-outside-of-their-chronological-age-group/ for more information.

School-to-school transfers and in-year admissions

For children without an EHC plan, parents wishing to move their child to a different school outside the normal admissions round should complete a mid-term transfer form. This is available from their child's current school in electronic form, and needs to be signed off by that school.

For children with an EHC plan, the parents or the current school should contact SENDSARS and request an emergency review of the EHC plan.

For children newly arrived in Sheffield, parents should contact the Children Missing from Education Team. If a newly arrived child has an EHC plan, then parents should contact SENDSARS instead.

A parent must never be encouraged or pressured into transferring their child to another school in order to avoid an exclusion or because the current school is of the opinion that the child's needs cannot be met. This practice is unlawful and contrary to the Disability Discrimination Act.

Useful contacts

SSENDIAS (Sheffield SEND Information Advice and Support): Provides impartial information, advice and support to parents of children with SEND, including in relation to appeals and SEND tribunals.

☎ **0114 273 6009**

✉ **ssendias@sheffield.gov.uk**

SENDSARS (SEN Statutory Assessment and Review Service): Deals with statutory assessments, EHC plans, annual reviews and specialist placements.

☎ **0114 273 6394**

✉ **sendassess&review@sheffield.gov.uk**

School Admissions Service:

☎ **0114 273 5766**

✉ **ed-admissions@sheffield.gov.uk**

School Appeals Service:

☎ **0114 273 4008**

✉ **schoolappeals@sheffield.gov.uk**

Children Missing from Education Team:

☎ **0114 2736462**

✉ **ed-missingchildren@sheffield.gov.uk**

FEATURE

Grants for families with disabled children

It costs up to three times more to raise a severely disabled child than it does to raise a child without disabilities. For many families, the coronavirus pandemic has increased the financial strain.



Here are some charities and trusts that may be able to help.

Family Fund

www.familyfund.org.uk

The UK's largest provider of grants for families with disabled children. Funds family breaks, sensory equipment, clothing, kitchen appliances, computers and much more.

Eligibility criteria: Disabled or seriously ill children aged 0-17 years, whose parents are eligible for Universal Credit, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based JSA or ESA, housing benefit, pension credit or income support. If you do not receive any of these benefits you can still apply, but will need to provide some extra information about your household income.

To apply: Visit www.familyfund.org.uk or call **01904 550055**. If you have not received a grant from the Family Fund since 1 April 2020, you can re-apply now (instead of having to wait 12 months, as you normally would).

Newlife

www.newlifecharity.co.uk

Provides funding for essential equipment, such as beds, buggies, wheelchairs, seating systems, communication aids and much more. They also offer emergency equipment loans, a free loan service for specialist toys, and comfort capsules for children who have been given a terminal diagnosis.

Eligibility criteria: Disabled children and terminally ill children under 19, who are

permanently resident in the UK.

To apply: Call the Newlife Nurse Helpline on **0800 902 0095** to discuss your application, then fill out the application form. Your application must be supported by a professional involved in your child's care, such as an Occupational Therapist or Social Worker.

Children Today

www.childrentoday.org.uk

Provides grants for specialised equipment, such as electric wheelchairs, walking aids, adapted trikes, adapted car seats, specialist seating, hoists, sensory equipment, weighted blankets and more.

Eligibility criteria: Children and young people with a disability up to the age of 25 years.

To apply: Contact info@childrentoday.org.uk / **01244 335622** to request an application form. You will need to provide a reference from a health professional who works with your child and a quotation from the supplier of the equipment.

Caudwell Children

www.caudwellchildren.com

Funds powered wheelchairs, specialised buggies, therapy tricycles, multi-sensory equipment, specialised car seats and harnesses, sports equipment and more. Provides 70% to 80% of the total cost of equipment.

Eligibility criteria: Children aged 0-18 years (up to 25 years for sports equipment) with a chronic

FEATURE

illness or disability. Household income must be less than £45,000 per year before tax (excluding benefits). Must be living legally in the UK.

To apply: Apply online via www.caudwellchildren.com/apply-support or call **0345 300 1348**.

Happy Days Children's Charity

www.happydayscharity.org

Funds holidays and day trips for young people and their families, as well as day trips and activity holidays for groups.

Eligibility criteria: Children aged 3–17 years with learning difficulties, physical or mental disabilities, and with acute, chronic or life-limiting illnesses. Also young people who have been abused or neglected, witnessed domestic violence, been bereaved or who act as carers for a parent or sibling.

To apply: Download an application form from www.happydayscharity.org/applications or call **01462 530710**.

The Adamson Trust

www.theadamsontrust.co.uk

Provides financial help with the cost of holidays or respite breaks.

Eligibility criteria: Children and young people aged between 3 and 17 years with physical, mental or emotional impairments.

To apply: Download an application form from www.theadamsontrust.co.uk. You will need to provide supporting evidence from a professional and details of the planned holiday.

Merlin's Magic Wand

www.merlinsmagicwand.org

Provides complimentary one-day tickets to a Merlin attraction for the child and their immediate family. Can also help with travel costs, but not overnight accommodation.

Eligibility criteria: Seriously ill, disabled or disadvantaged children and young people

aged 2–18 years (incl.). Must not have received tickets through the charity previously.

To apply: Go to apply.merlinsmagicwand.org. You will need to provide documentation which states your child's condition and date of birth.

Sunny Days Fund

www.sunnydaysfund.org.uk

Provides grants for white goods, sensory equipment, IT equipment (not iPads), clothing and more. Also offers week-long breaks at their two holiday homes in Clacton-on-Sea, Essex.

Eligibility criteria: Children under 18 years with a range of conditions, such as Leukaemia, Cerebral Palsy, vision/hearing impairment, autism, Down syndrome, terminal and life-limiting conditions.

To apply: Call **01376 528376** and ask for Margaret, or email margaret@sunnydaysfund.org.uk. You will need to provide supporting evidence from a professional.

Not eligible, or can't find what you're looking for?

There are many more grant-giving organisations than those listed here. Some of them only provide grants for children with specific conditions, or whose parents work in specific jobs. Have a look on the following websites:

Disability Grants:
www.disability-grants.org

Sky Badger:
skybadger.co.uk/help/finances
Contact their help desk if you can't find the right grant or are struggling to complete an application form:
<https://skybadger.co.uk/contact/helpdesk>

Surviving lockdown with two disabled children

By Lizzie Marcer

This year started off like any other. Life is always busy, as our two youngest boys both have complex needs. Leo (12) has Down syndrome and autism and Sammy (7) has autism and ADHD.

Our house is an autism-friendly environment and consists of sensory tents, cupboards with sensory toys, visual calendars and prompts, not forgetting the therapy cats. It's vital to maintain a strong sense of humour at all times.

Our daily life consists of familiar routines and lots of predictability as far as this is possible. This reduces the boys' anxiety and helps them enjoy life's experiences. Day-to-day demands on me and my husband as parent carers are often intense, as the boys' needs are extremely diverse and this is very difficult to manage. We try to ensure that all family members are getting their needs met. We have a neurotypical 18-year-old who is a wonderful

brother to Leo and Sam and a constant source of play fighting, chasing, games and tickles.

When the first lockdown was announced in March, all of the boys' familiar routines ended overnight. We added new visuals around the house to explain about the germs and what extra things we need to do to keep safe. The loss of vital routines, for example being unable to go to school, see grandparents and see friends, was extremely upsetting for Leo and Sam. We tried to establish a new pattern of life as much as was possible.

We all felt extremely anxious and overwhelmed at this time. A sore throat easily escalated to a stay in Intensive Care in our heads. Soon after lockdown began, Leo got a cough and we panicked. At that stage Leo was thought to be potentially very vulnerable, due to previous heart surgery and the immunocompromised nature of people with Down syndrome. Luckily Leo was fine - it was just a normal sore throat. In those early days of the lockdown, I think we all found it hard to process the reality of the situation we were facing.

We were very lucky with the support we received through this time, although the battle to get this support had been long and exhausting. I know that a great number of SEN parents had a very different experience to us and felt totally isolated, unsupported and forgotten.

We had fantastic support throughout from both the boy's schools with regular contact and also actual access to school for the boys when this was necessary. The staff from Burton Street phoned us every week to check





Leo and Sammy on their daily walk at Graves Park

how we all were coping and helped us out where they could by arranging trips out for Leo. Our wonderful carers continued to help us out, offering much-needed respite. CAMHS and the social work teams were also very supportive during this time.

Our youngest, Sam, was transitioning from infant to junior school at this time. We were waiting to hear about Sam's allocated school place from February to June over the period of lockdown. Eventually we got an answer in July, after a lot of stress and pressure. This added a whole new level of anxiety to an already difficult time. According to the law, the decision about Sam's school place had to be made by 15 February, so the delay wasn't Covid-related. I know parents who are still waiting now, in early November, for a decision regarding a school transition that should have happened in September. My heart goes out to these families.

So here we are again, going back into lockdown. We are constantly worrying about Covid and if any of us get ill, and who will

look after the boys if this happens. Balancing mental wellbeing and health with the risks of various activities for the boys has been difficult over the last few months. We've done pretty well though, with only one required period of isolation for Sam when his bubble burst at school. Now the future seems overwhelming once again. However, we have a lot to be grateful for and hopeful about. Up to now we have all remained well, which is the most important thing. Leo has adjusted to Zoom meet-ups with friends and for his Dancestars sessions. Sammy and Leo are enjoying video stories read to them by their grandparents.

The support and love I have seen the SEN community give to each other over the last eight months has been truly heart-warming. At times we have all struggled, but have battled through with a wicked sense of humour. We have been sharing information to support each other. Sometimes just talking to others, people who you know truly understand your situation, is the best therapy ever.

FORUM STARS

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...

For this issue we have TWO stars!



Our cover star Summer is 11 years old and has been diagnosed with autism, learning disability and dyspraxia.

This year, Summer learnt how to ride her bike without support – after trying for over five years. Her mum Nicola says: “As parents, we thought this was just one of those things she wouldn’t be able to do. But in April this year, she got on her bike and with utter determination between her and her dad, learnt to ride it without any sort of support in just two days!”

Summer also raised £660 for the Little Princess Trust by donating 13 inches of her beautiful hair. Her mum reports: “Summer is absolutely petrified of having her hair cut in a salon, she dislikes the noises and smells that come with it. She normally has her hair cut at home, surrounded by home comforts. Going to a salon to donate her hair was an amazing achievement, and she has since asked to try a salon again.”

Summer started secondary school in September. Because of the lockdown, she was not able to visit the school beforehand and could only watch virtual tours on YouTube. Since all her peers moved to different schools,



she knew absolutely no one there. Despite this challenging start, Summer has taken things in her stride. “She has settled in well and made friends,” reports her mum. “For Summer, this is huge, as she never had real friends before.”



FORUM STARS



Chiana is nine years old and has autism and severe dyspraxia. She recently achieved her Black Belt 1st Dan in Te-Sheng-Do Karate.

Chiana normally trains at her local community centre. She was meant to take her Black Belt test back in March, but the assessment had to be postponed because of the lockdown. Chiana was determined not to let this stop her from achieving her goal, and kept training in her back garden with the help of her older sisters. She was finally able to take her test in October.

Her mother Tracey said: "This is such a fantastic achievement, especially considering the challenging year we've all had. We are so proud of her determination to keep going despite her difficulties."

Chiana struggles with her self-confidence, but will sometimes surprise herself by what she is capable of. Her mother reports: "When she needed to work on the power behind her kicks and punches, she did this by taking her anxiety out on the pads they use. She ended up kicking the upright heavy punch bag across the room!"

Tracey has nothing but praise for Chiana's instructor, Carl Beckett: "Carl is amazing and really understands her needs. He will explain exactly what she needs to improve on without making her feel bad about herself."

Star of this issue:
**Chiana
Hawley-
Kirkby**



Useful Contacts

0-5 SEND Service (formerly 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
ADHD Support Service Run by Family Action, this service provides information, support and training for families with a child with ADHD	07587 633179 adhd.sheffield@family-action.org.uk
Autism Education Service* Supports mainstream schools to meet the needs of pupils with autism and related conditions	0114 273 6567 (helpline, 1-4pm) 0114 250 6800 (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 305 3121 jgibson@nexusmat.org
Child Disability Register A local register of disabled children aged 0-25.	www.sheffield.gov.uk/childdisabilityregister
Children with Disabilities Team* Social work team for children and young people with disabilities	0114 273 5368
Contact National charity which provides information and advice on any aspect of caring for a disabled child, including education and benefits	0808 808 3555 info@contact.org.uk
Direct Payments Team* Provides support, advice and guidance relating to direct payments	0114 273 5985
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 martin.hughes@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 other education providers	0114 205 3542 jill.siddall@sheffield.gov.uk Indetravel@sheffield.gov.uk
IPSEA National charity providing free legally-based advice on educational issues for parents of children with SEN	Book a call-back via www.ipsea.org.uk
Local offer A website with information about support and services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Sheffield	www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk/localoffer

Useful Contacts

Paces Sheffield A leading specialist centre for children with cerebral palsy and other motor disorders	0114 284 4488 info@pacessheffield.org.uk
Portage Home Visiting Service* Home-visiting educational service for children under three with additional support needs and their families	0114 273 6411 debbie.marshall@sheffield.gov.uk
Ryegate Children's Centre Assessment, diagnosis and therapy for children and young people with developmental and neurological problems	0114 271 7000
SSENDIAS* (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 ssendias@sheffield.gov.uk
SEN Statutory Assessment and Review Service (SENDSARS)* Deals with statutory assessments, EHC plans, annual reviews and specialist placements	0114 273 6394 sendassess&review@sheffield.gov.uk
Sheffield Carers Centre Offers information, advice and a range of services for carers, including parents of disabled children	0114 272 8362 support@sheffieldcarers.org.uk
Sheffield Children's Hospital	0114 271 7000 sheffield.childrenshospital@sch.nhs.uk
Sheffield Young Carers Offers support to children and young people (8-25 years) who provide care for a family member, e.g. a disabled sibling	0114 258 4595 information@sheffieldyoungcarers.org.uk
Sibling Support Group Support group for children who have a sibling with a disability	0114 233 2908
Special Needs Inclusion Playcare Service (SNIPS)* Helps disabled children aged 5-18 years access out of school activities / clubs to give their parents a break from caring	0114 273 5368 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 sarah.blake@sheffield.gov.uk skerrigan@taptonschool.co.uk

* Part of Sheffield City Council

SUPPORT GROUP FOCUS

ASPERGER'S CHILDREN & CARERS TOGETHER

Asperger's Children and Carers Together (ACCT) has been delivering activity and support group sessions for autistic children and their families since 2006.

You might know about the weekly club sessions we run for children and young people including our multi-activity Activate and Teenage Club sessions at St Mary's on Bramall Lane. We also offer weekly football coaching sessions on Friday evenings for autistic children and young people at Goals Sheffield, with separate pitches for younger and older children. These in-person groups all reopened in July after lockdown with reduced capacities and social distancing measures in place.

Places on in-person sessions are in high demand, so we have also continued to run some of the online clubs we started during lockdown, including our Minecraft and Dungeons & Dragons groups. Through these sessions, we are able to support more families and offer some support to those who are self-isolating or unable to access in-person groups.

"ACCT has led to improvements in our son's self-awareness, his acceptance of his diagnosis and given him positive role models."

In pre-Covid times, ACCT organised family trips out and monthly family swimming sessions. We look forward to the time we can do that again.

We also run a fortnightly online peer support meeting for parent carers on Tuesday evenings. This friendly and supportive group hosts useful discussions and information sharing. Parents and carers are welcome to come to these sessions even if your child doesn't access ACCT support. Parent carers can also join our public and private Facebook groups for information and support.

It's free to join ACCT and free to access our activities. More information is available on the ACCT website www.acctsheffield.org.uk or by emailing enquiries@acctsheffield.org.uk.



"The parents' meeting about managing transitions back to school after lockdown was really helpful - I realised that we're not alone in this."



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 :

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

Signature

Date

Please note: By signing this form you consent to the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum storing your information. We will not pass any of your details on to any third parties. Members of our postal mailing list will receive a regular newsletter. Members of our email list and text messaging list will receive news updates and events information. You are free to opt out of this service at any time.

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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