

Impact Statement 2020/21



Around 13,000 children and young people in Sheffield have a disability or special educational need. Services designed to support them are overstretched and underfunded. Their parents face significant challenges, from financial strain to securing the right support for their child. Many feel isolated, stressed and anxious every day. National research has shown that families with disabled children have been disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Who we are and what we do

We are an independent local charity run by and for parents of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Our aim is to provide mutual support, share information and influence policy and practice. We support families by:

Providing an information and signposting service

Organising information events and training sessions for parents

Gathering parents' views and representing them at strategic meetings

Organising social events where families can meet each other

Providing training to raise awareness of the issues faced by our families

Our year in numbers

We were able to continue all our main activities during the coronavirus pandemic. Our staff worked from home, and our contact with parent carers and our strategic partners continued by virtual means.

During the financial year 2020/21:



850

hours of work (approx) donated by our volunteers



112

new families joined our organisation



12,900

copies of our newsletter distributed



240

items of parental feedback logged



239

meetings attended by our parent representatives with Sheffield City Council, Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group and other partners



3

neurodisability training sessions for 73 Early Years professionals co-delivered with other partners



11

virtual coffee mornings, attended by 27 different parent carers, with representation from 9 services



3

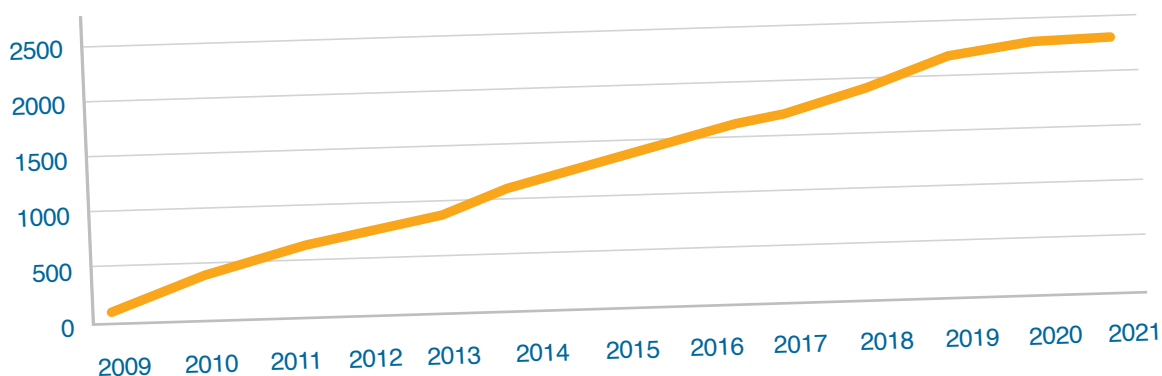
information/training sessions, attended by 11 different parent carers

Our members

We have **2,285** members, consisting of **2,032** families and **262** professionals and practitioners. Our members have **2,331** children and young people with SEND.

The pandemic has impacted on the recruitment of new members. Membership growth reduced from an average of 200 new members per year, to 130 new members in 2020/21. It should be noted, however, that demand for our services remains high, and that the overall increase in membership has not been matched by a corresponding increase in funding.

Our members come from all postcode areas of Sheffield, and their children cover the full range of age groups and disabilities. Around 22% of our members are not White British.



Connect

Due to the pandemic, all our social events, such as the family fun day, the Christmas film and our disability trampolining sessions, had to be cancelled.

By changing from face-to-face to virtual delivery, we were able to continue with our parent training sessions and coffee mornings, which enabled parent carers to speak directly to professionals from a range of services. Although these virtual sessions were less well attended than face-to-face meetings, the parent carers who came along told us that they had found them useful:



"This [Makaton course] has been so useful for myself and my children at home. My son has Cerebral Palsy and is visually impaired with global developmental delay, and Makaton has been amazing for him. I would also like to say that courses and training like this are amazing and it's nice to know that there is stuff out there for parents too and not just professionals."

Inform

We keep parents informed through a range of channels:



Website:
10,000
users per year



Email bulletins:
sent to over
1,600
subscribers



Newsletter: approx
6,000
copies per issue,
two issues every
year



Facebook: over
2,700
followers, average
post reach of over
950 people



Twitter:
over
1,500
followers

Families regard us as a source of trusted, verified information. In our 2020 membership survey, 86% of parent carers said that being a member had made them feel better informed about services. Access to relevant and accurate information was particularly important during the pandemic. We created dedicated coronavirus pages on the Local Offer website and our own website, produced a

special "Back to school" issue of our newsletter to aid children's return to school after lockdown, and increased our social media presence. 87% of respondents to our membership survey rated the information we provided during the coronavirus pandemic as "good" or "excellent". Information empowers families, increases their options and ultimately improves children's life chances.



"My husband and I have just booked our vaccine for Sheffield Arena - thanks to your [Facebook] post! No Carers Allowance as we work, carers for two autistic children, have been able to book in at the Arena using NHS number and we have been flagged at GP as carers for the kids!"



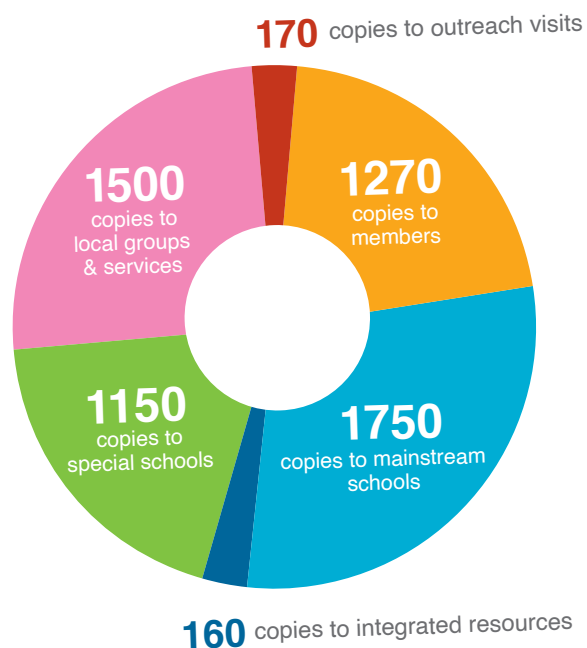
"I just wanted to express my thanks for putting on the coffee morning. The document you sent me has been hugely helpful and the space to just be able to say some of these things out loud was just a relief."

Newsletter distribution

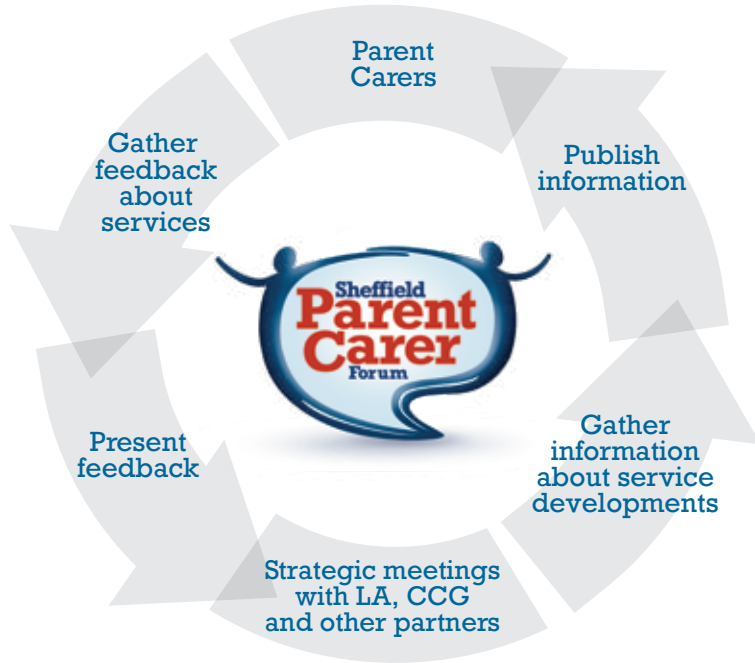
We distribute 6,000 printed copies of the newsletter because we feel it is important to reach beyond our membership, so that as many parent carers as possible can benefit from the information and emotional support we provide. Not all parent carers have the energy or inclination to join a forum like ours. The newsletter is also an important marketing tool for us – around a quarter of our members joined our organisation as a result of reading our newsletter. We also circulate an electronic version.



Distribution of printed copies per issue



Empower



Virtually every local authority in England has a parent carer forum. Forums work with local authorities, health and other local partners to review, design and improve services for children and young people with SEND. Together, they reach over 80,000 parent carers.

We collaborate with other parent carer forums in the region by attending Yorkshire and Humber cluster meetings. These regional clusters feed information into our national steering group, which is represented on many top-level boards.

We continuously gather parent carers' views through social media, outreach, questionnaires, meetings and calls and emails to the office. Twice a year, we condense this feedback into a report, which we present to the local authority and the health service. We also feed parent carers' views into meetings of around 20 strategic and operational groups we attend regularly.

Our parent carer representatives are highly experienced and provide continuity through times of change. Parent carers trust us to do this job well. In our 2020 membership survey, 98% of respondents said that they were "confident" or "very confident" that we could accurately represent their views.



We would like to thank our current funders:

- **Sheffield City Council**
- **Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group**
- **Department for Education**
- **People's Health Trust**
- **Health Education England**