

Impact Statement 2021-23



Around **14,500** pupils in Sheffield have a disability and/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 cost-of-living crisis.

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 a peer support, information and signposting service

Organising information events and training sessions for parent carers

Gathering parent carers' 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

The last two years in numbers

Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2023:



511

new families signed up as members



1,600

hours of work (approx) donated by our volunteers



629

meetings of strategic and operational groups attended by our parent carer representatives



550

items of parental feedback logged



183

different families attended our family events



206

different parents attended our information / training sessions



170

parent meetings held as part of the Autism in Schools project



24,000

copies of our newsletter distributed



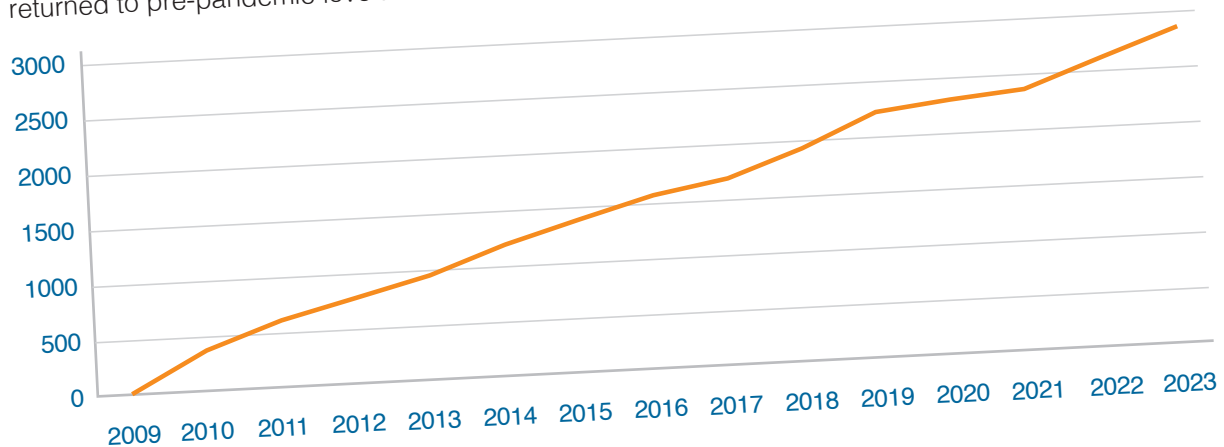
275

Early Years professionals attended our Neurodisability training sessions

Our members

We currently have **2,820** members, consisting of **2,501** families and **319** professionals and practitioners. Membership growth slowed down during the pandemic, but has since returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Our members come from all postcode areas of Sheffield, and their children cover the full range of age groups and disabilities. Around **23%** of our members are not White British – this is in line with the city as a whole.



Connect

We have been a key partner in the Autism in Schools project, running monthly parent groups at 15 mainstream secondary schools in Sheffield.

We have also received funding to set up a Peer Support Service for parent carers in Sheffield, and this service launched in January 2023.

We held **86** events and meetings in 2021-23, attended by almost **500** different people. This included four large family events and two conferences. Many of our events were oversubscribed. Soft engagement through events like family fun days, coffee mornings and peer support groups enables us to build relationships with parents and can be the first step towards them becoming more involved. Our events also help to build a community and reduce isolation and stress.

“The event [family fun day] was well planned and suitable for all ages and abilities. The children with us loved all the activities.”
- Parent

“I just wanted to say thank you for the Christmas felting craft session. I was feeling quite stressed before I got there but it was very enjoyable and I came away feeling a lot better.”
- Parent

“Thank you so much, the kids absolutely loved [the Christmas film]. It is our only event we all enjoy, it's so relaxed and for kids that hate people and father Christmas it's perfect.”
- Parent



Inform

We keep parents informed through a range of channels:



Website:
30,000
users in
2021-23



Email bulletins:
sent to over
2,000
subscribers



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



Facebook: over
3,700
followers



X (Twitter):
over
1,600
followers

We also ran a variety of information events and training sessions for parents. During 2021-23, these were attended by over **200** different people. Families regard us as a source of trusted, verified information. In our 2022 membership survey,

82% of respondents said that being a member had made them feel better informed about services. Information empowers families, increases their options and ultimately improves children's life chances.



I have been able to access activity groups that I was previously unaware of - this has provided more opportunities for my child to do interesting things that they enjoy.
- Parent



The Makaton level one [course] was such a massive help for me and husband, we have been using loads of it with our little girl and also passing it on to our families so they can understand her as well.
- Parent

Newsletter distribution

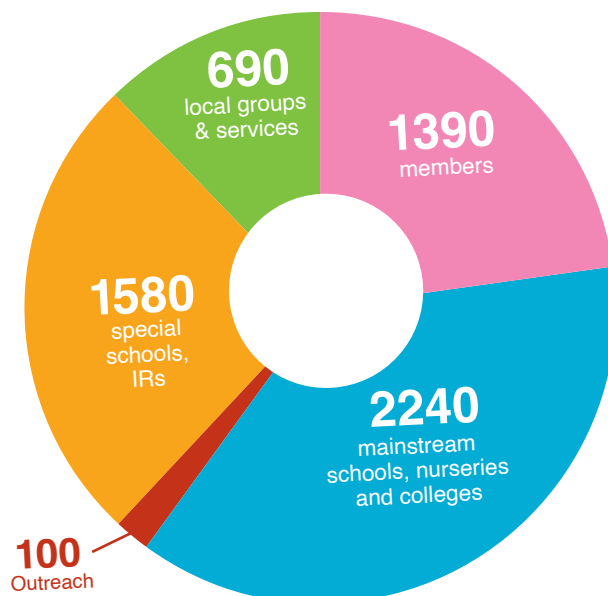
We distribute **6,000** printed copies of the newsletter because we feel it is important to reach beyond our membership, so that as many parent carers as possible can benefit from the information and emotional support we provide. Not all parent carers have the energy or inclination to join a forum like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



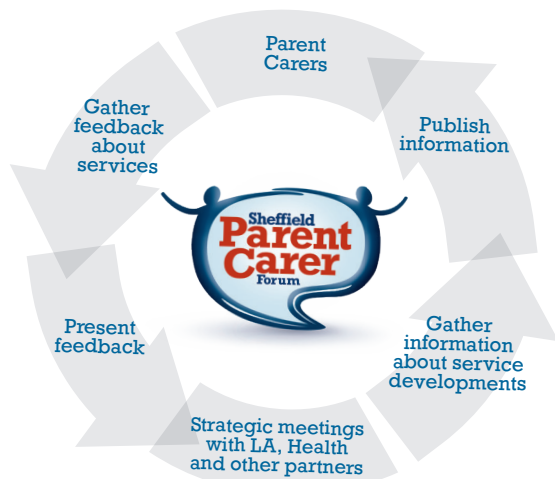
SPCF have been a valuable guide along this pathway! A helping hand and really good advice on lots of matters. Even learning really useful advice from reading stories from other parents. It was learning about the 'short breaks grant' through SPCF that we were able to take our son with ASD on a holiday where he felt at ease and was able to enjoy.
- Parent



Distribution of printed copies per issue:



Empower



Virtually every local authority area in England has a parent carer forum. Forums work with local authorities, health services and other local partners to review, design and improve services for children and young people with SEND. Together, they reach over 110,000 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 our peer support work.

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 25 strategic and operational groups that 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 2022 membership survey, **95%** of respondents said that they were "confident" or "very confident" that we could accurately represent their views.

Co-production with parent carers keeps officers focussed on children and young people with SEND, resulting in services that are more closely aligned with local needs.

We would like to thank our current funders:

Sheffield City Council

South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board

Department for Education

People's Health Trust

Health Education England

Facey Family Foundation

Gripple Ltd.

Impact

We know from the feedback we receive that our day-to-day work, support, advice and information sharing has a positive impact on families. We are also working to improve things for the future – we were instrumental in setting up a Short Breaks Steering Group and ensuring that children and young people are a focus in the city's new Autism Strategy.

Below are a few examples of impact during 2021-23:

- We successfully advocated for the creation of a new role dedicated to maintaining the local offer website. As a result, a local offer officer is now in post, and the information on the site is improving.
- We worked with the council to update our old transitions guide. The revised document has now been published and parents report that it is useful for managing their child's transition to adulthood.
- Our active involvement in the Autism in Schools project played a key part in improving the educational experience of students with additional needs across 15 mainstream secondary schools in Sheffield.
- We helped to create and deliver SEND training for hundreds of professionals working in nurseries and schools across Sheffield.



www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk