



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 2023 Issue 28- FREE!

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About us

We are an independent group of over 2000 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

St Mary's Community Centre



National Network of Parent Carer Forums
'Our Strength is our Shared Experience'
www.nnpcf.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.

If you wish to unsubscribe from this newsletter, please contact us on **0300 3214721** or email enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

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Give feedback on your child's SEND provision

We have worked with Sheffield City Council to create a survey to find out how well different schools, nurseries and colleges in Sheffield support learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and how welcoming they are when families first make contact with them.

Your feedback will be used to decide which settings will be offered training and support

to improve their SEND provision, and to share best practice.

Complete the survey here: <https://haveyoursay.sheffield.gov.uk/embeds/projects/22071/survey-tools/22958>



Could **YOU** be our next **Treasurer?**

This is a key role within our established and thriving organisation! We're looking for someone with experience of charity finance and bookkeeping who can commit to a minimum term of two years.

The time commitment is approximately five hours per month. Find out more: <https://sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/news/could-you-be-our-next-treasurer/>



More special school and IR places planned for Sheffield

In Sheffield, as in the rest of the UK, demand for specialist placements continues to increase.

Since 2018, seven new integrated resources (IRs) and 300 new special school places have been created in the city. This includes the new Discovery special school, which opened on the Norfolk Park estate in September 2022.

The local authority is looking to create more school places for children with special educational needs across both mainstream and special schools.

In mainstream, the ambition is to double the number of Integrated Resource (IR) places in the city by 2027. A number of schools and Academy Trusts across the city are currently involved in discussions with the local authority. It is anticipated that these units would then start to

open from September 2024 – it typically takes around 12 months to set up an IR.

In terms of special schools, activity continues to open a new special school for children with social, emotional and mental health needs for September 2024. This opening date is not yet confirmed due to challenges on construction timeframes and other related issues. We'll provide further updates once we know more.

In February 2023, Sheffield and Barnsley's joint bid to open a new special school (Key Stage 2-4) for 200 pupils, with places split 50/50 between the two local authorities, was approved by the government. The school is expected to be built in the north of Sheffield and will cater for students with needs relating to autism and communication/interaction. An opening date has not yet been confirmed.

Short Break Grant scheme now open

Sheffield City Council is now 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.

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*;
- Your child is under 18 years of age;
- You are in receipt of means-tested benefits OR your family household income** is less than £21,000 a year;
- You do NOT already receive a short break service (e.g. SNIPS club, befriending, overnight respite) or direct payment for this child.

*If your child does not receive high rate DLA or enhanced rate PIP you can still apply, but you will need a relevant professional who knows your child and your family to complete and sign an "Impact Information Form" which explains your child's disability and how this impacts on your whole family.

**Your household income consists of the income from everyone, aged 18 and over, who lives in the household, and includes Child Tax Credits. DLA and PIP do not count as part of your household income.

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** (choose option 4, then option 6).

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/social-care/short-breaks

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

It will take around six weeks to process your application. Once complete and accepted, the money will take three to five working days to reach your account.



More information

For top tips on completing the application form, please see:

<https://sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/information/short-breaks/top-tips-for-completing-short-break-grant-applications/>

If you have any queries or need help to apply, please contact Ashely Gray (SNIPS / Children with Disabilities Team) on **0114 2375368** or email Ashley.Gray2@sheffield.gov.uk



ADHD drop-ins for parents

Chat to other parents of children with ADHD and meet staff from Sheffield Children's Hospital, Ryegate, Sheffield City Council and Family Action.

Contact Family Action on **07587 633179** if you have any queries about the sessions.

Drop-ins will take place at:

Family Action, Scotia Works:

Leadmill Road

Time: 10am-12pm

Dates: 17 May, 14 June, 12 July, 13 Sept

Lowedges Community Centre:

Gresley Road

Time: 9.30am-12pm

Dates: 23 May, 18 July, 19 Sept

Transition coffee mornings and pop-up surgeries

Sheffield City Council is running a series of events for young people with SEND in Y9 and above, and their parents, to help them with the transition to post-16 education and adult services. No need to book, just turn up!

Coffee mornings

These are an opportunity to speak to the Council's Post-16 SEND Officer and meet other parents in a similar situation.

Where: Sheaf Training, Norwood Drive, Sheffield S5 7BH

When: 26 April and 7 June, 9:30am –11am

Pop-up surgeries

These are an opportunity to speak with officers from education, health, social care, transport and other services.

Where: Sharrow Community Forum, Vincent Road, Sheffield S7 1DB

When: 16 May at 9.30am –12pm

New Early Years advice line

The 0-5 SEND service works with young children (aged 0-5+ years) with additional needs both in their homes and in settings. They have set up a dedicated phone line, which is operated by the Early Years Inclusion Teachers. Parents and professionals can ring this number for advice and referrals.

Call: 0114 2037773

**Available:
Monday, Wednesday
and Friday, 1-4pm,
during term time**



Please note: If your child has been diagnosed with autism, please contact the Autism and Social Communication Team instead (**0114 2506800**, Monday to Thursday, 1-4pm, during term time).

Local Offer website revamp

Sheffield's Local Offer website has a new look!

Check it out at www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk/localoffer

The Local Offer is the central "go-to" source of information about local support and services for children and young people (0-25 years) with special educational needs and disabilities.

It has information about childcare, education, EHC plans, social care, health services, leisure opportunities, transition to adulthood, benefits, and lots more.

The new website offers improved search and navigation facilities and is a lot easier



on the eye. Sheffield City Council's new Local Offer Officer, Wayne Priestley, is currently reviewing all the information pages and service listings, so you can be sure that what you're reading is correct and up to date.

You can tell the Council what you think about the Local Offer website by filling in a short survey: <https://tinyurl.com/2te9cdty>

You can also email Wayne at localoffer@sheffield.gov.uk to tell him if information is missing or incorrect, links don't work, or you know about a service or group that you think should be listed.

Revised Transitions Guide available now

Do you need information about your child's transition to post-16 education and adult health and social care services?

We have been working with Sheffield City Council, health services and other partners to revise our guide for parents of young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) aged 13+. It is packed full of useful, up-to-date information that tells you exactly what you need to do and when.

You can read the Transitions Guide on Sheffield's Local Offer website: www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk/localoffer/transition-into-adulthood

The guide covers:

- What needs to happen in each school year, from Y9 all the way to Y14
- Which services can help you, and how to access them
- Where to find out about different opportunities in Sheffield, from youth clubs to employment support

Scan the code to view the Guide online. If you need a printed copy of the guide, please contact Wayne Priestley by emailing localoffer@sheffield.gov.uk or call 0114 205 3849.



Autism and sensory resources

The Sheffield Children's Hospital website has a useful section on neurodisabilities...

... such as ADHD, autism, cerebral palsy, Down Syndrome, learning disability and sensory processing difficulties – see www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/services/child-development-and-neurodisability.

The sections on autism and sensory processing difficulties have recently been updated and now include a host of resources that parents may find useful:

- Autism resources: Go to <https://tinyurl.com/krfucfy> to read information about the autism assessment process and get advice on common issues like sleep, toileting and behaviour. There are lots of booklets, top tips and videos you can watch, including recordings of the autism workshops that were previously offered as face-to-face workshops.



- Resources for sensory processing difficulties: Go to <https://tinyurl.com/vfm237h7> for information and advice on supporting children with sensory processing difficulties, e.g. those who are over- or under-sensitive to certain types of touch, sounds, smells, tastes etc. There is a “virtual therapy area” with videos and picture symbols for things like dressing, teeth brushing, sleep, managing challenging behaviours, and more.

There is also a useful page about help with hospital visits for children with autism and/or learning disabilities: <https://tinyurl.com/yrpxwke2>



New Council SEND Facebook group

Sheffield City Council have set up a new SEND Facebook group where you can get updates, ask questions and get answers from other parents and professionals.

You can join the group here: www.facebook.com/groups/953107629404035/



Introducing our new Peer Support Service

It can be hard for parents to find out which organisations and services offer support for children and young people with additional needs and their families. If you are not sure where to turn or just need to talk things through with someone who understands, then our Peer Support Service could be just what you need. Any parent or carer can access the service, even if their child does not have a diagnosis.



All our Peer Support Workers have lived experience of caring for a child with additional needs and a good understanding

of local services. They know what it's like to face the day-to-day challenges that can be so exhausting and tricky to manage.

Who's who in our Peer Support Service



Sharon

Sharon began working for Sheffield Parent Carer Forum in July 2022 and leads the Peer Support Service. She brings

to the service her knowledge from many years of teaching in primary schools in communities where families spoke over 30 first languages. She is passionate about advocating for families where English is an additional language and for those who find it hard to navigate the complex world of SEND.

She is a trained mindfulness teacher and has a strong interest in self compassion and well-being. In her free time she loves to sing, read and be outside in nature. She has a large

extended family and two wonderful grandsons who keep her on her toes!



Rebecca (known as Becca)

Becca became a member of the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum a year ago.

She is a mother of a five-year-old boy with cerebral palsy, a learning disability and global developmental delay.

She is a mental health first aider and has worked for ten years as a family support worker, meeting parents face to face and going out into the community, bringing help to families in need wherever they are.

PEER SUPPORT SERVICE

Becca believes that breaking through loneliness and reducing isolation is key. She looks forward to building communities for parents.

Born in Sheffield, Becca has a large extended family in the area, and she enjoys spending time with them and socialising with her friends.



Amanda

Amanda has been an active member of the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum since 2008 – right from the start!

She is a mother of three children: a 25-year-old son with autism and dyspraxia, an 18-year-old daughter with ADHD and a 16-year-old son with Cornelia de Lange Syndrome and complex medical needs.

Amanda brings to the service her many years of experience working as a teaching assistant with children with disabilities, and as an advice worker for a charity.

Having fostered and adopted children, Amanda is especially apt at providing support to fostering and adoptive parents of children with special needs. She is particularly interested in shining a light on early life history and therapeutic parenting, and she's also great at giving advice around provisions for children with genetic conditions.

In her free time, she enjoys training her new puppy, and dreams of travelling “anywhere that's hot ...”



Alison

Alison has been a member of the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum for the past six years.

She is a mum of a five-year-old with a physical disability, and a former teacher and Integrated Resource leader for autistic children.

Education is Alison's speciality. She wants to see EHC plans applied correctly to support children at school and is keen to advise parents on coping strategies with challenging behaviours. Her personal experience taught her about the importance of self-care for carers.

Alison is a dog lover and enjoys going on walks with her lab, Teddy.



Eleanor

Eleanor has been volunteering at the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum for the past two years.

She is a mother of two boys: a gloriously autistic eight-year-old and his loving neurotypical six-year-old brother.

She is also a writer, a musician, and an English as a Second Language teacher, and has ample experience in advocacy groups for inclusion and autism rights.

Having lived in several countries, Eleanor is particularly aware of the challenges facing immigrant carers, and is keen to assist newly relocated families to navigate the system. She hopes to empower parents of bilingual children and help remove barriers to early intervention and support.

Eleanor is a self-professed news junkie. When not glued to the radio, she enjoys drawing comics and walking in the Peak District.

See the following pages
for the services we offer...



How to access the service

There are many ways you can access the service:

- Call and chat to someone on our phone line – you can ask a quick question or seek **Advice, Guidance and Signposting** around a particular issue. Call us on **0300 321 4721** and select option 1 for our Peer Support Service. Phone lines are open 10am to 1pm, Monday to Thursday during term time. You can call during these times and speak to someone or call any time and leave a message. We will get back to you within a couple of days.
- Email **peersupport@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk** with a question or to ask for someone to call you back.
- Request **One-to-One Support**. If you would like to have a more in-depth conversation about your situation and feel a longer session or series of sessions would be helpful, then ask about our one-to-one service.
- Book onto one of our **Information Sessions** if there is a topic that interests you.
- Come along to one of our **Peer Support Groups** to meet parents who are wanting to connect with others in similar situations.

Our Services

Advice, guidance & signposting

Our Peer Support Workers have access to a wealth of information on both local and national organisations that offer support and guidance for families, as well as knowledge from their own lived experience. They can offer advice and support or help signpost parents to services and organisations that are best suited to help them.

One-to-one support

One-to-one support sessions offer parents dedicated time to talk to someone in confidence who is there to listen, help and support. Session times are agreed and booked in advance to suit each individual's needs. These can take place via a telephone call, video call or a face-to-face meeting in a local community venue. If you feel you would benefit from this type of support, please get in touch.

Information sessions

At every opportunity we listen to the voices of parents. We make a note of their questions and concerns and look for common themes. This is very useful information to feed into statutory services and also helps us to find out which topics parents would like to know more about. Information sessions will be available throughout the year in community venues offering advice, guidance and signposting related to a range of interesting topics. All sessions are advertised on the Events section of our website (<https://sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/events>) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/SheffieldParentCarerForum) and places can be booked via our website. If there are any topics you would like to know more about, please get in touch.

Peer support groups

These groups are run by our Peer Support Workers and offer a space where parents can

What parents have told us

come together to support each other and share their experiences. All parents are welcome, and everyone's experience is considered equally important and valued.

The format and content of sessions will vary from group to group, depending on what members find useful. Parents may ask for information on topics of interest, such as managing behaviour or concerns about sleep. Peer Support workers can bring different topics to the group for discussion or ask a visitor with expert knowledge to give a presentation and answer questions. There may be sessions where parents just want a safe confidential space to talk to each other. Groups are held in community venues and schools in different parts of the city. They may be weekly, monthly or every half term, depending on what each group decides. There is no need to book, just turn up. Times, dates, and venues of groups can be found on the Peer Support section of our website: www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/about/peer-support-service. If you have any questions or are interested in setting up a group in your own community, please get in touch.

Looking forward

As a new service we are currently unable to help parents complete paperwork, provide individual support in meetings with schools and other services or contact and make referrals to other services on their behalf. However, we do know there is a great need for this type of support and will be looking to offer this once the service becomes more established.

"It is so beneficial speaking with someone who really understands due to knowing how it feels being a parent to children with additional needs. It's hard to put into words, but lived experience really helps with the advice you are given."

Laura - accessed One-to-One Support

"Peer Support give us information and self-confidence. They guide us where we need to go."

Nazia - Tinsley Peer Support Group

"Having the peer support group is great for meeting other parents that are in the same position as me. It's a great help being able to talk to someone who has a child that needs that extra help and support."

Tracey - Manor Peer Support Group

"Having people in the same situation as me to talk to has been invaluable. Other people at best are kind and others just don't believe you. So demoralising and crushing when what you need is people who get it, can just listen and totally get it and validate how you feel. Others in the same boat know what you need sometimes before you do yourself, being with people who can validate and empower you to support your child the best you can."

Sue - Stocksbridge Peer Support Group



Managing “The Talk”

When and how to discuss a diagnosis of neurodiversity with your child

Receiving an autism or an ADHD diagnosis is a significant moment for parents. Even if it confirms long-entertained suspicions, obtaining the final black-on-white confirmation is another step in realising that your child is different to other children and that life is taking you on a different path than the one you had planned.

Having struggled with accepting, understanding and adjusting to the reality of their child’s neurodiversity, parents may find it difficult to discuss the diagnosis with them, often citing fears of “labelling the child”, “overwhelming them”, or – if the child seems happy at home and in school – “creating a problem where there isn’t one”. Thus, children often hear the words “autism” or “ADHD” spoken over their heads in consultation rooms, or whispered between parents, long before they are made aware of their diagnosis.

When is the right time to tell a child they are neurodivergent?

Lea Ibell, freelance writer and mother of three, argues we should talk to children, even very young children, as soon as they

notice they are different: “My eldest son was strongly affected by ADHD and sensory-motor difficulties. He couldn’t assess his strength, control his movements, or manage his impulses and moods, so he often hurt other children. He would then cry because kids at nursery ran away from him, and playdates often went terribly wrong. It was obvious to me that I had to explain to him why this was happening, so he doesn’t blame himself and develop low self-esteem; so he doesn’t internalise others’ view of him. If your child constantly hears children saying he’s mean, he’ll eventually believe it.”

“ I accentuated the positive ”

Lea started the conversation with her three-year-old son using simple language:

“We didn’t use the term ADHD but invented our own word: ‘super-active’”

I accentuated the positive: that he’s super-strong and super-fast, that he’s full of energy and wants to do a million great things at once, but I also explained why this could cause problems. We used the car metaphor. I’d tell him: ‘your car has such a powerful engine,

but the brakes need some work, and brakes are important, so you don't run people over.”

Lea's instinctive approach to discussing her son's ADHD with him goes hand in hand with expert recommendations for introducing an autism diagnosis to children: “if they're asking questions – it's time to chat”, and “avoid technical terms,” are two tips offered by the National Autistic Society, along with emphasising the child's strengths during the conversation.

Lea warns however, against idealising ADHD and playing down the challenges. “There's no use repeating clichés such as ‘I love you just the way you are’. Obviously, reality is more complex if you're protecting their siblings from them or giving them pills to change their behaviour. Children see through that. I'm honest about what's wonderful about ADHD, but also about how it makes our life difficult as a family, and difficult for him.”

When she introduced medication, Lea again used a child-friendly approach. “I didn't want him to think we were giving him pills to control him. Luckily, ADHD medication is a stimulant. I explained that the pills help his body stay awake so that he doesn't have to keep waking it up by running around in class, and that would help him learn and play with friends, which is basically how the pills work.” Now they're part of the family's morning routine: he takes his pill, like his dad has his coffee and Lea her vitamins: “We all need to take something to work better.”

“ I'll leave it to him to decide ”

When he was seven, Lea's son replaced “super-active” with “the grown-up word” – ADHD. Lea told him that with the big word comes responsibility: “He can choose who he shares this information with. Of course, all his teachers are aware of his diagnosis, but

in social situations, I leave it to him to decide who to tell and when.”

For Jack Birkinshaw, the word “autism” was never a secret. “I was diagnosed so young, it's always been a normality for me. I kind of just grew up knowing. There wasn't a specific time when I was told.”

However, Jack struggled to reconcile the diagnosis with his sense of self: “I didn't really notice I was different,” explains the 25-year-old university graduate, “but whenever I was taken out of class to do an activity related to autism, that's when I felt different. There'd be a support worker sitting with me at maths and I'd think: ‘why is he sitting next to me and not next to other kids?’. Even though they were trying to support me, it made me feel excluded and I didn't understand why.”

“ I needed them to be clear ”

Looking back on his schooldays, Jack wishes teachers had been more upfront with him about the connection between his diagnosis and the interventions he was receiving:

“I can't ever remember the word autism being used. Instead they'd say: ‘we noticed you are struggling with...’”

I don't think they were beating about the bush on purpose, but it was almost like they were afraid to explain the diagnosis to me, and I needed them to be clear – to be on my level.”

Jack describes his journey from knowing the term to understanding the condition: “My mum was always honest with me about my autism, but until I was about 18, I just didn't get it. Only later was I able to sit and think: ‘that's when I've done this’, or ‘that's why I do that’.” He now reflects on how he struggled with social situations and friendships: “I used to mask a lot. I'd try and act like other people. Now I know it was my autism.”

Despite the difficulty with comprehending the diagnosis, Jack doesn't think he was told too soon: "The fact that I knew from the start was a good thing. It wasn't this big revelation, and that helped. Another advantage was that I always felt free to discuss it, if it ever came up in a conversation. I never felt any shame. Never felt I had to keep quiet about it. All my friends know I'm autistic."

Growing up with his autistic identity has helped Jack relate to other people on the spectrum. Today he works as a personal

assistant to a younger autistic person: "He's more severely affected than me, but I notice certain things that he does that I either do or have done, like how he depends on a routine, or beats his chest a lot, like I used to do as a kid."

To parents who hesitate about speaking with their children, Jack says: "I don't think there's any point in waiting. If you think your child is autistic, you should get them diagnosed and tell them. It's important not only for them but for you as a parent as well."

More information

Books and articles for parents

 Washington Post article about explaining autism to your child:
<https://tinyurl.com/2f5xwtjy>

 "Talking with your child about their Autism diagnosis" book, by Raelene Dundon

 Podcast about explaining ADHD to your child, family and friends:
<https://tinyurl.com/yc6xj7n7>

Videos to watch with children:

 Amazing things happen:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ezv85LMFx2E

 Float (Disney+ subscription required):
www.disneyplus.com/en-gb/movies/float/7dIYGyfvHWEJ

Let's Learn about Autism - activity packs by the Autism Education Trust:

 Early Years:
<https://bit.ly/eyes-lets-learn-about-autism>

 Primary (4-7 years):
<https://bit.ly/primary-4-7-lets-learn-about-autism>

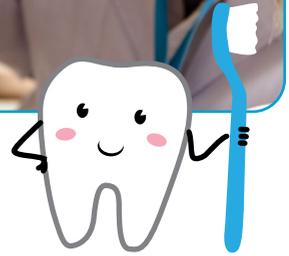
 Primary (8-11 years):
<https://bit.ly/primary-8-11-lets-learn-about-autism>

 Secondary:
<https://bit.ly/secondary--lets-learn-about-autism>

 Post 16:
<https://bit.ly/post-16-lets-learn-about-autism>



Help for children who struggle to access dental care



If your child's regular dentist is unable to treat them, they may need a referral to the Community and Special Care Dentistry Service. This service provides dental care in community settings for children and adults who find it difficult to receive treatment in a regular general dental practice, due to their additional needs.

They look after people with severe learning and/or physical disabilities or mental illness, patients who are elderly or housebound, and those who have a medical condition which affects their dental care. There is more information about the service for patients here: <https://publicdocuments.sth.nhs.uk/pil2784.pdf>

How can my child access the service?

Patients must be referred into the service by a health or social care professional. There are criteria for referrals to be accepted. For children the service will usually accept:

- Children with additional needs that significantly affects provision of dental care

(for example, learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders)

- Children with severe dental anxiety or other behavioural management difficulty where treatment has already been attempted and preventive care provided. Children will normally be accepted for a single course of treatment but may be offered continuing care if difficulties are ongoing.

The service recommends that parents take their children to the general dental practice the rest of the family go to in the first instance. If your child finds it difficult to attend the family dentist, then they can be referred to the Community Dental Service.

Don't have an NHS dentist? To find a regular dentist you can search www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/dentists/how-to-find-an-nhs-dentist/ Not all dental practices will have capacity to take on new NHS patients. You may have to join a waiting list or look for a different dentist who is taking on new NHS patients.



Autism in Schools project extended

A project aimed at improving support for autistic students in mainstream schools has been so successful that it has been extended.

A total of 15 mainstream secondary schools in Sheffield are currently taking part in the project. Work has included the development of a training package for school staff (which will be rolled out to all schools in Sheffield) and in-school groups for autistic students.

Our role at the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum has been to set up and run monthly parent groups in each school, and these will now continue until March 2024. The groups welcome parents of students with any kind of additional needs, not just autism; that includes those without a formal diagnosis.

Using feedback gathered from parents, our project workers have been working with key

staff to make improvements across the school for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

What has the project achieved so far?

The parent groups have established a consistent route for parents to feed back to schools what is working well and what could be better. Using parent feedback, schools have improved information and communication, raised the profile of autism and SEND, adjusted policies and amended website content. We have also seen that parents really appreciate the chance to meet other parents, support each other and share experiences.

Participating schools and their support worker



- Oasis Don Valley
- Outwood Academy
- High Storrs (starting in April)
- Newfield
- Stocksbridge High School



Project worker:
Kathleen Green

Email: kathleen.green@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Phone: 0300 321 4721 Extension 110

Examples of impact



Increased numbers of pastoral staff and teaching assistants



Changes to facilities and resources to support students with SEND, including nurture facilities

Involvement of parents in reviewing a school's new SEND policy



SEND newsletters and improvements to the SEND information on school websites

Increased parental knowledge of interventions and support available in school

Changes to the format of SEND review meetings in response to parents' feedback



More signposting of parents to external agencies for support

Increased understanding and use of reasonable adjustments in school



- Chaucer Academy
- Firth Park
- UTC Sheffield
- Parkwood
- Yewlands
- Meadowhead



Project worker:
Sharon Court

Email: sharon.court@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Phone: 0300 321 4721 Extension 109

- Springs Academy
- Sheffield Park Academy
- Westfield School
- Notre Dame



Project worker:
Anna Marie Emmett

Email: annamarie.emmett@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Phone: 0300 321 4721 Extension 108



What do parents think?

An interim evaluation carried out by an external reviewer found that “the project workers play an important role in providing a bridge for parent carers’ issues to be raised with the school in a way that is protective and supportive.” Parents said that they valued the peer support provided by the groups and the relationships they

have been making with each other; they liked being able to meet and talk to other parents from the same school and knowing they are not alone. Group meetings have also provided parents with an opportunity to gain information that they would not have otherwise been given.

“Thank you for telling me things, wouldn’t have known otherwise.”



“It really helps knowing we can express our thoughts and concerns and having a middle man so to speak to pass them on to school. Secondary school and communication with staff feels very detached from parents. You are bridging that gap.”

“I think the group in school is really positive and also just really good for parents to feel they have peer support within the school, to work together with school to improve things and not feel like a lone voice.”

“When you know that other people behind closed doors are feeling the same as you do, you don’t put as much pressure on yourself, you forgive yourself a lot more.”



“You all know that everyone’s in the same boat and you’re not alone, it’s not just your child.”



The woman who went to bed for a year

By Sue Townsend, Penguin Books 2012
Reviewed by Eleanor Cantor

In “The woman who went to bed for a year”, Eva, mother of twins and recent empty-nester, retreats to her bedroom and stays there. We follow her “bed strike” as, amid unfolding family disasters, it spirals out of control.

Famous for her brand of farcical class comedy, Townsend moves between realism and absurdity as she describes the growing chaos around Eva and her orbit of relatives, neighbours and new admirers. Fans of “Adrian Mole” and “The Queen and I” will probably find this book equally amusing, but for carers it raises questions regarding casual representation.

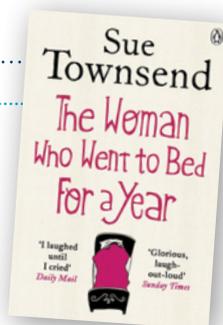
For a novel that isn’t specifically about disability, the number of references to it is striking. Already in the first hundred pages we learn that Eva’s twins are autistic (though no one cares or does anything about it, until the gifted siblings form a dangerous alliance against the world), Eva’s window cleaner opens up to her about his challenges raising his severely disabled daughter, her husband, Brian, rants at a group of children with cerebral palsy, and her mother, Ruby, leaves a rambling voice message about a shopkeeper’s “mongol boy”, which sends our heroine condescendingly philosophising:

“Eva imagined a Down’s Syndrome boy running a wool shop. And then wondered why the boy and his friends had an extra chromosome? Did we normal people lack a chromosome? Had nature miscalculated her ratios? Were the narrow-eyed kindly

souls with their short tongues and ability to fall in and out of love in a day meant to rule the world?”

It seems that the characters are measured by their attitude to disability. Thus, Brian’s insulting the disabled children’s group fits in with his egotism and arrogance, while Ruby’s use of offensive terms enhances her portrayal as ignorant and uneducated. Aside from the problematics of using disability as a moral compass, this technique – if it is one – also backfires: we’re supposed to root for Eva; to applaud her rebellion after years of putting everyone’s needs before hers. Yet, this supposedly all-sacrificing-mum-who-just-had-enough isn’t convincing as such, when we consider how she had ignored her autistic kids’ emotional needs. Perhaps fewer garden makeovers and perfect Christmases, and more seeing and taking in, would have served her family better.

It may well be that disability isn’t a literary device here, but just part of the mix. After all, the book mentions racism, domestic abuse, dementia, sexual harassment, and a whole host of other “heavy” topics, dealing with them all equally feather-lightly. Townsend sees no reason to be reverential about disability or anything else for that matter, and one can’t help but wonder how this decade-old novel would have been received in today’s climate. But the problem isn’t the non-PCness of Townsend’s writing – it is its deeper flippancy: the book ends with Eva saved by what she calls “kindness, simple kindness”, but has she or her author shown that kindness to the disabled minor characters living on the book’s margins?



Developmental Language Disorder

A common condition most people have never heard of



By Rebecca Bergmann, Speech and Language Therapist

Developmental Language Disorder or DLD is a difficulty understanding and/or using language, when there is no other underlying cause such as hearing loss, autism or learning disability.

There is no known cause of DLD – it is a Neurodisability, relating to the way brains are wired.

DLD is often called a 'hidden disorder' as children may not stand out as being any different to their peers. They may be able to chat in social situations but struggle with more technical language in the classroom or when they need to explain something. Some children have difficulties with understanding language - this can often be quite hard to spot as they may use lots of other strategies to compensate, which masks their struggles.

DLD often impacts on other aspects of life, and these difficulties can be more noticeable. When we struggle with language, lots of other things can be tricky – such as reading and writing, understanding and learning in the classroom, concentrating and listening to lots of talking, making friends, coping in new or busy social situations like birthday parties, or managing emotions. Consequently, children may struggle with self-esteem, confidence or behaviour.

It is these aspects that often get noticed before the language difficulties – and then children may be thought to have behaviour difficulties, learning difficulties, ADHD or autism, which is not necessarily the case.

Whenever we are concerned about children's behaviour or learning, we need to consider language difficulties.

Sometimes children who have DLD also have a speech difficulty – this means that when they say a word or sentence, they are difficult to understand because they miss sounds out or use the wrong sounds. This can add to their frustrations and is another barrier to being able to communicate effectively with other people.

DLD is a life-long condition which means that language will always be more tricky than other aspects of life and learning. However, children will make progress and often have strengths in other areas. We need to encourage, praise and build on the strengths of these children in order to increase their resilience and self-esteem.

DLD is very common; research has shown that it affects at least two children in every classroom, but most of these children have not yet been identified.

Unfortunately, awareness of DLD is low, even among professionals. This may be because the condition was previously referred to by

a different name (SLI or Specific Language Impairment), and also because affected children were often described in more general terms as having 'a few difficulties with language' or 'Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)'. However, speech and language therapists are now working hard to identify and correctly diagnose children with DLD.

Identifying DLD as early as possible is important as it enables children and families to access the right strategies, therapy and support. School staff and other professionals also need to know about a child's diagnosis in order to

learn the best ways to teach and support them academically, socially and emotionally.

If you are concerned that your child may have DLD, you and/or your school can refer your child to the Speech and Language Therapy Department, Flockton House, Union Road, Sheffield S11 9EF / Tel **0114 2262333**. Please be aware that waiting lists for assessments across the Speech and Language Therapy Service are very long.

For more information about DLD in Sheffield, please contact Rebecca Bergmann, Clinical Lead Speech and Language Therapist for DLD, by emailing rebecca.bergmann@nhs.net

More information

Groups and courses

Parents of children with a diagnosis of DLD can take part in a parent programme called 'DLD Together' to help them learn more about the diagnosis, meet other families and connect with the national organisation Afasic for further support. Please contact the Sheffield Speech and Language Therapy Service on **0114 2262333** to find out more.

At the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum, we run a termly Speech and Language Therapy subgroup, which is also for parents of children with DLD. It feeds into an ongoing review of speech and language support for children and young people in Sheffield. For meeting dates, please see page 22 (Dates for your diary).

Awareness-raising videos

DLD 1-2-3: www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQ-s02HWLb0

Darcie's story: www.youtube.com/watch?v=38ur_bxJJG4

Lily Farrington's amazing DLD animation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwOfkj0dj_0

Information and resources

The Sheffield Children's Hospital website has a resource library, which includes articles and videos explaining language strategies that you can use with your child. Go to <https://library.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/> and use the filters at the top of the page to look for resources on listening and attention, language strategies and more.

National charities RADLD (www.radld.org), Speech and Language UK (www.speechandlanguage.org.uk) and NAPLIC (www.naplic.org.uk) all have lots of useful information and resources for parents and teachers.

Teachers can also access training and resources via the Learn Sheffield Website: www.learnsheffield.co.uk/Training/Salt-Resources-and-training - look out for the section on Developmental Language Disorder.

Dates for your diary

Venue addresses

St Mary's Church and Conference Centre:

Bramall Lane, Sheffield S2 4QZ

Sharrow Community Forum:

Vincent Road, Sheffield S7 1DB

Can't attend in person but would like to join us online?

Please let us know and we'll send you a meeting link (where suitable).

Book your place

To book your place on any of the events listed here, please visit our website www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/events or call our office on 0300 321 4721.

April

Tuesday 25 April, 10.30am-12pm

at St. Mary's

Coffee morning

Wednesday 26 April, 10-11.30am

at St. Mary's

Speech and Language Therapy and DLD subgroup meeting

This group is for parents of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs. We will look at proposed changes to speech and language therapy provision in Sheffield and give feedback. **Please book your place.**

April continued

Friday 28 April, 10am-12pm

at St. Mary's

Subgroup for adoptive and foster parent/carers

Are you an adoptive or foster parent/carer in Sheffield of a child or young person aged 0-25 years with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)? (includes SGO/kinship carers) Please join our new subgroup to give feedback on services and processes for identifying and supporting SEND in looked-after and previously looked-after children. We welcome any parent/carer and no diagnosis is required.

Please book your place.

May

Wednesday 3, 10 and 17 May,

9.45am-2.30pm

at Sharrow Community Forum

Makaton course level 1 & 2

Led by a speech and language therapist. Learn the Makaton signs from Stages 1 to 4 in a relaxed way with other parents. Places are subsidised and cost £44 per person, which is purely to cover the cost of the manuals. Fees can be waived for parents on means-tested benefits. **Booking essential.**

Tuesday 16 May, 10am-12pm

at St Mary's

Transition subgroup meeting

This group is for parents of young people aged 14-25 years with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This meeting will have a focus on employment support, and we'll be joined by representatives from Autism Plus and Opportunity Sheffield to

May continued

learn more about the support they offer. We are a friendly group and there will be time to chat and swap information with other parents. No need to book, just turn up.

June

Thursday 1 June, 2-3.30pm

at **Sharrow Community Forum**

FREE trial session: craft for children with additional needs

This is an opportunity for your child to try out the craft sessions we'll be running with Ignite Imaginations during the summer holidays.

Booking essential – see entry under JULY/AUGUST.

.....
Tuesday 6 June, 12.30-2.30pm

at **St Mary's**

Education subgroup meeting

Please join our Education subgroup to talk to other parents about special educational needs, swap useful information, and help us influence education policy in Sheffield. We are a friendly and informal group, and new members are always welcome. This meeting will have a focus on the 0-5 SEND Service, so is only relevant to parents of young children. No need to book, just turn up.

.....
Thursday 22 June, 10.30am-12pm

at **St Mary's**

Coffee morning

.....
Friday 30 June, 10-11.30am

at **St Mary's**

Speech and Language Therapy and DLD subgroup meeting

As previous.

July/August

Mondays 24 and 31 July and 7, 14, 21 and 28 August., all 2pm - 3.30pm

at **Sharrow Community Forum**

FREE craft sessions for children with additional needs

Free art workshops for disabled children and their families, led by a professional artist from Ignite Imaginations. We encourage you to book onto multiple sessions. Aimed at age 7-11 years, but older children who enjoy 'younger' activities and non-disabled siblings are welcome, too! Parents must stay for the whole session. **Booking essential** – go to <https://tinyurl.com/yc5k9pjr> or contact Ignite Imaginations on **0114 2686813 / enquiries@igniteimagination.org.uk**.

Coffee mornings

Our coffee mornings are run by our friendly volunteers Thaebea and Pat. They are open to all parent carers, whatever their children's needs, whether diagnosed or undiagnosed, mild or severe. Pre-schoolers and home-educated children are welcome too. Pop in for a few minutes or stay for the whole session – no need to book. You can be sure of a warm welcome and plenty of tea, coffee and cake!

Events already booked up?

Don't miss out – join our email list! Sign up today by completing the membership form on our website (sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/become-a-member) or at the back of this newsletter!

Useful Contacts

<p>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</p>	<p>0114 273 6411 0-5SEND.SupportService@sheffield.gov.uk</p>
<p>ADHD Support Service Run by Family Action, this service provides information, support and training for families with a child with ADHD</p>	<p>07587 633179 adhd.sheffield@family-action.org.uk</p>
<p>Autism Education Service* Supports mainstream schools to meet the needs of pupils with autism and related conditions</p>	<p>0114 2506800 (helpline 1-4pm) autism.educationteam@sheffield.gov.uk</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>0114 305 3121 jjgibson@nexusmat.org</p>
<p>Child Disability Register A local register of disabled children aged 0-25</p>	<p>www.sheffield.gov.uk/childdisabilityregister</p>
<p>Children with Disabilities Team* Social work team for children and young people with disabilities</p>	<p>0114 273 5368 fieldwork-cdtbs@sheffield.gov.uk</p>
<p>Contact National charity which provides information and advice on any aspect of caring for a disabled child, including education and benefits</p>	<p>0808 808 3555 info@contact.org.uk</p>
<p>Deaf/Hearing Impaired and Vision Support Services Supports deaf / hearing impaired and visually impaired children aged 0-25 years and their families*</p>	<p>Head of Service: bernadette.roe-dean@sheffield.gov.uk Deaf/Hearing Impaired: 0114 273 6410 rachel.dickens@sheffield.gov.uk Vision Support: 0114 2941201 sarah.blake@sheffield.gov.uk</p>
<p>Direct Payments Team* Provides support, advice and guidance relating to direct payments for children</p>	<p>0114 273 5985 childrensdpenquiries@sheffield.gov.uk</p>
<p>Educational Psychology Service* Works with families and staff in educational settings to support the education and development of children and young people</p>	<p>0114 250 6800 deborah.page@sheffield.gov.uk</p>
<p>Independent Travel Training* Trains young people with disabilities/learning difficulties to use public transport to get to school, college and other education providers</p>	<p>0114 205 3542 jill.siddall@sheffield.gov.uk Indetravel@sheffield.gov.uk</p>

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
Paces Sheffield Runs a specialist school for children with cerebral palsy and other motor disorders, and a day service for adults.	School: 0114 2845298 office@paces-school.org.uk Day service: 0114 5510419 darren.walker@pacesheffield.org.uk
Portage Home Visiting Service* Home-visiting educational service for children under three with additional support needs and their families	0114 273 6411
Ryegate Children's Centre Assessment, diagnosis and therapy for children and young people with developmental and neurological problems	0114 271 7000
SSENDIAS* 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 www.sheffieldsendias.org.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 www.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
Special Needs Inclusion Playcare Service (SNIPS)* Supports children aged 5-18 years to access short break activities 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

* Part of Sheffield City Council

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...

Joseph is ten years old and has a diagnosis of autism and language disorder.

Joseph loves attending martial arts classes and has recently achieved his Blue Black Stripe belt.

Attending the classes has helped Joseph to improve his coordination and motor skills. Joseph knows that 'practice makes progress' and he has learned to persevere with his movements and learn new techniques. Joseph is learning focus, discipline, teamwork and to respect himself and others.

As Joseph's confidence levels have grown and his speech has improved, he can now ask a coach for help. The coaches are incredibly supportive, doing everything possible to meet his needs.

Joseph was assessed individually for new belts until it felt possible that he would cope with grading as part of a group. Joseph has since achieved two belts in full group gradings and has been able to take part in sparring and partner work with his peers. His mum Anna said: "I am so proud of Joseph, he always tries his best and is determined to do well. Joseph is now happy to grade with his peers and this is a massive achievement. I am so grateful to the amazing team at Excel Martial Arts."

Star of this issue:
Joseph Emmett



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.

Tear along here

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