



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 2025 Issue 32- FREE!

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About us

We are an independent group of over 3000 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



Find us on Facebook!

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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Information day improves family finances

Raising kids is expensive, and raising kids with additional needs even more so. There is help available, but finding information that is relevant to your individual situation isn't easy.

Our information day about financial support, held on 28 February 2025 at Niagara Conference and Leisure Centre, tried to address this.

It featured a busy information marketplace where parents were able to speak to staff from a range of organisations, such as Citizen's Advice, the Preparing for Adulthood Team, Family Action or the DWP. We also ran a programme of workshops throughout the day, which covered topics like disability benefits, Universal Credit, support with family finances, and support into employment.

Our day has been so beneficial, from learning about finances to who to contact re. educational advice.

We have had more questions answered than we came with.

We had so much advice, and so many of our unanswered questions were covered in depth.

In total, around 110 people – including over 60 parent carers – attended the event. Their feedback showed that we had achieved our objective, with 77% saying that they had learned something that would improve their family's finances. If you missed the event, don't worry! Turn to pages 12-15 to see some top tips from the day.

Sensory vaccination clinics

Did you know that special vaccination clinics are available for children and teenagers who experience sensory overload or have a fear of needles?

Run by the School Nursing Vaccination Team, these clinics are for children and young people aged from 3 years 9 months to 19 years. They provide a quieter, calmer environment with longer appointment slots to ensure a more comfortable experience. The team can give information about vaccinations, listen to any concerns, and introduce helpful resources for managing needle anxiety.

Children and young people will only be vaccinated if they feel comfortable. If vaccination isn't possible during the appointment, the team can provide ongoing support, including strategies for managing fear and panic, grounding techniques, and a graded exposure approach to help build confidence over time.

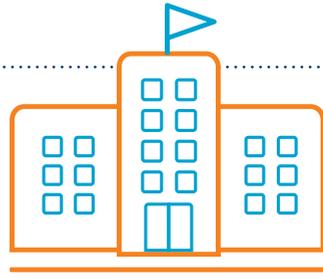
Sensory clinics are held monthly on Saturday mornings (additional weekday sessions during the school holidays) at Concord Sports Centre and are by appointment only. To discuss your child's individual needs, please call **0114 305 3230** or email **scn-tr.sheffielddutysn.vacandimm@nhs.net**.

What's next for the Autism in Schools project?

Autism in Schools was a national initiative aimed at improving support for autistic children and young people in mainstream schools. Due to its positive impact, Sheffield has continued the project beyond the national programme.

We have been a key partner in the project since it launched in 2021. Our role has been to facilitate a constructive dialogue between parents and school staff through monthly parent meetings. In parallel, national charity KIDS ran in-school sessions for pupils with SEND. As a result, school policies were changed, adjustments were made and children's experiences improved.

To date, fifteen secondary schools and two post-16 settings in Sheffield have taken part. Additionally, ten Sheffield primary schools have engaged in a similar initiative under the label PINS (Partnerships for Inclusion and Neurodiversity in Schools).



National funding has been secured for another year to support primary schools. During the 2025-26 academic year, PINS will focus on embedding previous work and recruiting at least eight additional primary schools into the project. Longer-term funding for continuing the Autism in Schools project in secondary schools is currently being investigated.

To share insights from the project more widely, we have collaborated with Rotherham, Doncaster and Barnsley to create an animation about the experiences of autistic pupils in mainstream schools. The film reflects feedback from children around not feeling heard, difficulties forming friendships, and struggling with the sensory overload of a busy school environment. Narrated by Sheffield children, the animation will be used in primary schools to raise awareness and promote peer understanding.

Sensory backpacks at Weston Park Museum

New sensory backpacks are available at Weston Park Museum.

The backpacks include a puppet, magnifying glass, textured squares and a ball. They are free to borrow and available from the welcome desk at the museum. Ear defenders are available too.



Sensory group for teens and parents wins award

A joint initiative by the Sheffield Sensory Service, national charity KIDS and Sheffield Parent Carer Forum has been recognised with an award from NHS England for its outstanding impact on families.

The project consisted of a series of six one-hour sessions for young people aged 11–16 who were on the waiting list for the Sensory Service. Led by a neurodivergent adult and an Occupational Therapist, the sessions helped the teenagers gain a deeper understanding of their sensory differences and explore practical coping strategies.

Alongside the teen sessions, parents participated in their own group, facilitated by our Peer Support Worker Amanda and an Occupational Therapist. These sessions not only equipped parents with knowledge about their children's sensory needs and effective support strategies, but also highlighted small, practical steps parents could take to improve their own wellbeing.

The project had a profound impact on both the teenagers and their parents. The young people found inspiration and reassurance in hearing directly from a neurodivergent adult, while parents gained a strong sense of community and felt less isolated.

Occupational Therapist Rebecca Plant said: *"The group has been an amazing experience! Not only has it been beneficial for the families attending the groups, but it has enabled us to reflect on how we work across the Sensory Service and consider other collaborative work we can offer."*



"We look forward to continuing and developing our collaboration with the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum."

SPCF worker Amanda added: *"This has been an incredibly rewarding piece of work. Parents told me that the support and understanding from the Peer Support Service were invaluable. One parent said they would not normally have considered a support group, but that this gave them the realisation that it might help, and the confidence to attend again."*

More information

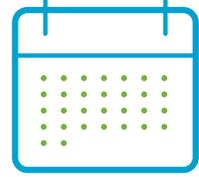


How to access the Sensory Service



Virtual therapy area for children with sensory needs

Long waits for autism and ADHD assessments



Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust has published a statement about current waiting times for autism and ADHD assessments. You can read it here: www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/services/child-development-and-neurodisability

Children who are referred for an assessment today can expect to wait between three and eight years. Pre-school children with suspected autism currently wait three years, while school-age children wait six years for autism assessments and over eight years for ADHD assessments. The waiting time for ADHD is longer because of the additional time required to manage ADHD medication. (There is no routine follow-up care for children diagnosed with autism.)

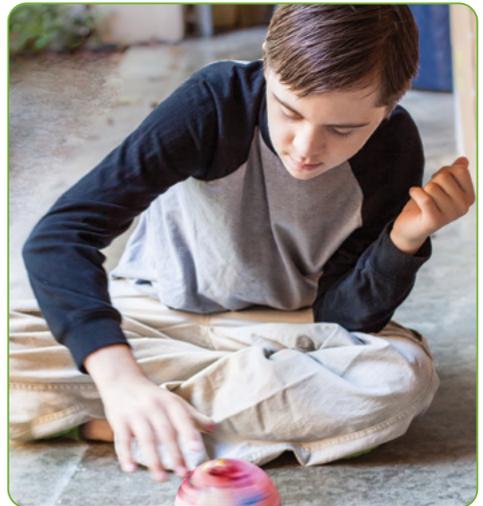
If you are on the waiting list and have concerns about your child, you should talk to your GP, who may be able to suggest additional support options and consider whether to make a request to expedite (speed up) your child's referral. Referrals are only expedited on very rare occasions.

Patients aged 16 and over

Children waiting for an autism or ADHD assessment will be transferred to the corresponding adult waiting list when they reach 16 years (for autism) or 18 years (for ADHD). When this happens, they will NOT join the back of the queue. Instead, they will be slotted into the adult waiting list at a similar position to the one they had on the child waiting list. You will receive a letter when your child has been transferred. Waiting times for adult autism assessments are currently shorter, so these young people should be seen sooner.

NHS Right to choose

If your child or young person has been referred for an autism or ADHD assessment, you have the right to choose an alternative provider. This is called "NHS Right to Choose". The provider can be an NHS organisation or a private or independent provider who has a commissioning contract with the NHS. Some of these providers may have shorter waiting times. However, there can be issues with ADHD medication that you need to be aware of. You can find more information about NHS Right to Choose on our website: sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/information/health-wellbeing/nhs-right-to-choose



Information and support while you wait

For helpful information, videos and resources, take a look at the Sheffield Children's Hospital website. Visit tinyurl.com/2c5ztemj for ADHD and tinyurl.com/37swxnaz for autism.

The Sheffield Mental Health Guide (www.sheffieldmentalhealth.co.uk) is a directory of mental health services, activities and resources for children and adults.

Our Peer Support Service offers information, support and signposting. All of our Peer Support Workers have lived experience

of caring for a child with additional needs and a good understanding of local services. Call us on **0300 321 4721** (select option 1) or email peersupport@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk.



Sheffield City Council's Local Offer website has information about support and services for children and young people with additional needs in Sheffield. Visit www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk/localoffer

SEND inspectors visit Sheffield

Between 24 February and 14 March 2025, inspectors from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission visited Sheffield to assess how well the city's education, health and social care services support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). They also evaluated alternative provision for young people who are too ill to attend school, and those who have been excluded.

The inspectors looked at a few randomly chosen cases in detail, visited several SEND services and education settings, and gathered the views of parents, children and professionals through an online questionnaire. They also met with some of our trustees and staff, who fed in parents' views.



There are three possible inspection outcomes:

-  **Positive:** Areas with this rating will be inspected again after five years.
-  **Inconsistent:** This rating prompts a reinspection after three years.
-  **Significant concerns:** Requires the area to produce an action plan showing how they are going to improve things, and prompts a monitoring inspection after 18 months.

We expect that Sheffield's inspection outcome will be published in early April. Sign up to our email list (sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/become-a-member) or follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/SheffieldParentCarerForum) to be the first to hear!

Concerns about proposed changes to SEN transport

Parents have told us that they are worried about potential changes to transport for post-16 students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

In a consultation that closed on 12 February 2025, Sheffield City Council outlined a proposal to replace SEN transport by minibus or taxi with personal transport budgets for most post-16 students.

The cost of transporting children with SEND to school or college has been increasing year on year, and the Council now faces a £7m overspend in this area. Several other local authorities in England have announced similar plans.

Transport for post-16 students is “non-statutory” – which means that local authorities don’t have to provide it.

In our response to the consultation, we highlighted concerns about the potential impact on families – such as forcing parents to give up work, compelling young people to travel independently before they are ready or causing them drop out of education entirely. We believe that a personal transport budget should be a choice, not an imposition.

The consultation received almost 1,000 responses, and a report is due to be presented to the Council’s Education, Children and Families Policy Committee in May.



A personal transport budget

is an amount of money given to parents that is calculated based on the travel distance. For example, a student who lives 3-5 miles away from college and attends 4 days per week would receive £1,094 per year. With such a budget, responsibility for getting the young person to school or college would pass from the Council to the parents.



Autism and ADHD training videos **now on YouTube**

Our Autism and ADHD training package is now available as videos on YouTube. Originally delivered by a team of trained parent carers between June and October 2024, the training has already been accessed by over 200 Sheffield professionals and practitioners. Attendees rated each section of the training an impressive nine out of ten stars!

The videos are useful for anyone who works with children aged 0-12 years. You'll learn how to spot the signs of autism and ADHD, understand the current Sheffield referral pathways, and find out where to signpost



families for help and support. Crucially, you'll hear directly from parents with lived experience! The videos have a total running time of over five hours, but you can easily jump to specific topics that interest you.

The training was funded by NHS England and co-produced by Sheffield Parent Carer Forum, Sheffield City Council and Sheffield Children's Hospital.

You can access our Youtube channel by scanning the QR code above or on the link below.
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC43etGNLWX8lQkNBW1y0Tow>

Connection through gaming

Spectrum Gaming is a national charity led by autistic adults. It offers a safe online space where autistic young people can connect with others and develop friendships.

To join the community, you must be 10-17 years old, live in Sheffield and have an autism diagnosis, or be on the waiting list for an assessment, or self-identify as autistic.

Members have access to a private Minecraft server and an online community via Discord - a voice, video and text chat app. Interactions are moderated and facilitated by a team of youth workers under the guidance of a Clinical Psychologist.



There are regular online events around young people's interests - including gaming, cooking, crafts and more. Spectrum Gaming also offer in-person meetups across Sheffield, so that young people can meet the friends they've made online in real life, once they feel ready.

For more information, please visit www.spectrumgaming.net or email info@spectrumgaming.net

Changes to speech and language therapy for young children



The Sheffield Speech and Language Therapy Service is trialling a new approach based on coaching parents to deliver interventions for their pre-school children.

These changes are backed by research showing that upskilling parents to support their child's communication development is the most effective approach for this younger age group. The service hopes that the shift towards parent-focussed interventions will enable it to cope with a continued rise in referrals.

During the Autumn term 2024, therapists reviewed all of the early years children on the nursery caseload. Based on this review, children who were thought to benefit from a parent-focussed intervention were discharged with a communication plan in place (see box). Their names were added to the waiting list for one of the following interventions:

- Parent and child interaction sessions
- Language groups
- Playing together
- Rhythm and rhyme groups
- Phonology clinic

Waiting times for these interventions currently average six to eight months.

Children who did not require a parent-focussed intervention were discharged with a communication plan in place. Parents and nurseries can seek a re-referral to the

service either if they need more support once the targets outlined in the plan have been achieved, or if they need help to work on the targets.

For newly referred children, an initial assessment will still be carried out in clinic. This may lead to further assessment in the home and/or the nursery setting, access to a parent-focussed intervention or referral to a specialist team.

As the service shifts its focus towards more parent-focussed interventions, therapists are spending less time in nursery settings. To compensate for this, they are offering additional training, consultation appointments and resources to nursery staff.

The impact of these changes is being closely monitored, and a review will be carried out in September 2025.

Communication plans contain information about a child's communication strengths and needs and highlight specific targets for parents and nursery to work on. Any relevant resources to support this work are provided by the Speech and Language Therapy Service.



How do health visitors support children with additional needs?

Health visitors work with families who have children under five years old. They can provide guidance on topics such as sleep routines, behaviour, diet or continence.

Health visitors also help to identify early signs of developmental delays or health issues. If there are any concerns about a child's development, health visitors can help in the following ways:

- Providing social and emotional support to parents, for example by supporting them to access local toddler groups, Family Hubs or Talking Therapies, or by delivering targeted packages of care in the home.
- Referring or signposting families to local services that can help.
- Arranging a 2-3 Year Integrated Review (see box), if the child attends a nursery or childminder.
- Refer families to a DISCOVER group; these are playgroups for children under the age of five years with additional needs, which are run by the health visiting team and other partners at seven venues in Sheffield.

Get in touch Call **0114 3053224** to speak to a member of the health visiting team.

The 2-3 Year Integrated Review combines the Early Years Foundation Stage Progress Check at age two (carried out by childcare providers) and the 2-2 ½-year Development Review (carried out by a health visitor or nurse). It involves a face-to-face meeting between the parents, the health visitor/nurse, and the child's keyworker and SENCO (if they attend a nursery) or their childminder. The aim is to identify any developmental concerns and ensure access to early intervention. Outcomes may include referrals to specialist groups or services, like the 0-5 SEND Team or Speech and Language Therapy.

Looking for a toddler group for your child with additional needs?

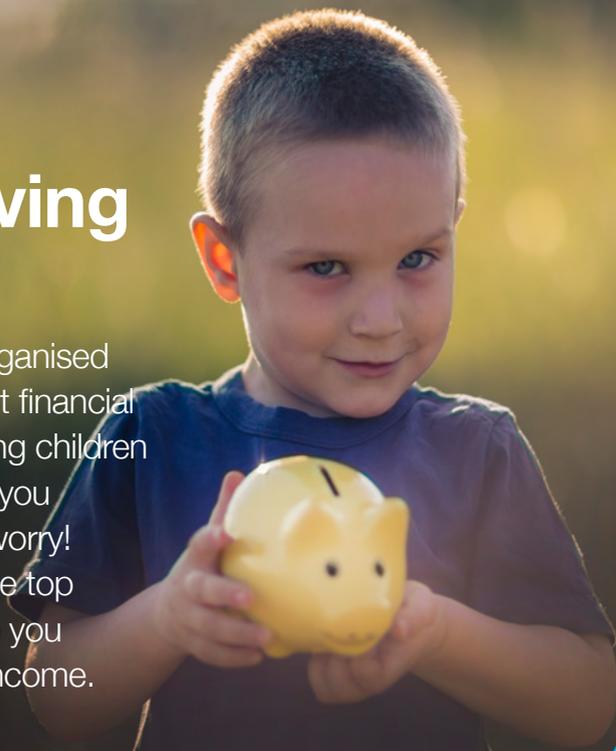
We have an overview on our website:

sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/information/childcare/groups-for-young-children-with-additional-needs/



Money-saving tips

In February 2025, we organised an information day about financial support for families raising children with additional needs. If you couldn't make it, don't worry! We've put together some top tips from the day to help you maximise your family's income.



Get a benefits check to make sure you are claiming all the benefits you're entitled to. Call national charity Contact on **0808 8083555**, use the Turn2Us benefits calculator at **benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk**, or call Sheffield City Council's Community Support Helpline on **0114 2734567**.

If you only do one thing, do this!

Check if your child has a Child Trust Fund. Child Trust Funds are tax-free savings accounts that were given to every child born between 1 September 2002 and 2 January 2011. The government contributed up to £500 to them, depending on the child's date of birth and household income. This could now be worth £1,000 or more. Children can access their money when they reach the age of 18. If you're not sure where your child's account is held, you can use this online tool to find it: **findctf.sharefound.org**

Switch to a social tariff for your telephone and broadband. Social tariffs are cheaper broadband and phone packages for people claiming Universal Credit, Pension Credit and some other benefits. Prices are around £10 - £23 per month. To check if your current provider offers a social tariff, go to: **www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-and-broadband/saving-money/social-tariffs**

Important: If your child lacks mental capacity to take control of their savings, you will need to apply for a court order to access the account on their behalf. This is a lengthy and potentially expensive process. You can find more information here: **contact.org.uk/help-for-families/campaigns-and-research/child-trust-fund-campaign/**

Check if your young person can get help with education-related costs through a 16-19 bursary.

Bursaries are available for students aged 16-19 years, as well as those aged 19+ who have an EHC plan. There are two types: Vulnerable student bursaries of up to £1,200 are available for young people who meet certain criteria, e.g. those who receive PIP and Universal Credit. Discretionary bursaries are awarded by schools, colleges and other training providers, who set their own eligibility criteria (usually household income). You need to apply directly to your child's school, college or training provider. See www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund for more information.

Get help with utility bills and debts:

- Every utility company has an “Ability To Pay” support team. If you are struggling to pay your bills, contact your utility company as soon as possible.
- British Gas offer energy debt write-off grants of up to £2,000 for households struggling with their energy bills (not just British Gas customers) – see www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk for more information.
- Citizens Advice Sheffield run an Energy Affordability Helpline which provides debt, benefits and energy efficiency advice. Call **0800 4480721** Monday to Friday, 10am-4pm.
- LEAP provide free energy and money-saving advice for people on low incomes or who are in receipt of income-related or disability-related benefits. Call **0800 0607567** or visit applyforleap.org.uk
- Free energy advice is also available from Green Doctors (**0300 3033292**) and National Energy Action (**0800 304 7159**).

- Yorkshire Water have a range of schemes designed to help people struggling to pay for the water they need. For example, they can cap your bills, help if you've fallen into arrears, or offer payment breaks. Contact them on **03451299299** or visit www.yorkshirewater.com/bill-account/help-paying-your-bill for more information.
-

Get help with the cost of food. Food support in Sheffield is provided in lots of ways by many organisations. This includes food banks, social pantries, “pay as you feel” social cafes and community groceries. Some require a referral while others are open to anyone. You can find a list here: www.sheffield.gov.uk/cost-of-living/find-food-support-sheffield

Apply for a hardship grant from the Council. Sheffield City Council has a range of grants for Sheffield residents who are experiencing hardship, and these don't have to be paid back. Call the Community Support Helpline on **0114 273 4567** (option 0) for more information.

Get help with Council Tax bills:

- **Council Tax Support:** If you are on a low income and need help to pay your Council Tax, you may be able to claim Council Tax Support. Call **0114 2736777** or visit www.sheffield.gov.uk/benefits/council-tax-support for more information.
 - **Council Tax discounts for disabled people:** You may be able to get a discount (not means-tested) if your property is the main home of a disabled person (adult or child) and that person requires adaptations to use a wheelchair indoors, OR a second bathroom or kitchen, OR the use of one room in the house.
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- **Council Tax discounts for single people:**

You can get a 25% discount (not means-tested) if you are the only adult in your property. This may apply even if there are other adults in the household, as full-time students, adults with a severe mental impairment and some full-time carers (e.g. parents providing care for a disabled child over the age of 18) are disregarded. Call **01142 736633** or visit **www.sheffield.gov.uk/council-tax/council-tax-discounts** for more information.

Get help with your rent. Sheffield residents in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit who are struggling to pay their rent can get help from the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme. Call **0114 2736983** or visit **www.sheffield.gov.uk/benefits/discretionary-housing-payment** for more information.

Get help with mental health issues. Research shows that 50% of adults who are struggling with debt, also have a mental health issue. Talk to someone and get help. For example, the Sheffield Support Hub (44 Bank Street – near Sheffield Cathedral) offers free mental health support for anyone aged 16 or over, via a walk-in service and bookable appointments. See **www.mhm.org.uk/sheffield-support-hub** for more information. Sheffield Talking Therapies (**www.sheffieldtalkingtherapies.nhs.uk**) offers a range of free NHS talking therapies for stress, anxiety and depression to anyone aged 18 or over.

Protect your pension with Carer's Credit. Did you know that you will only get the full basic state pension if you have

paid a certain amount of national insurance contributions? If you are not working or have a very low income because you are caring for someone, you could be losing out – unless you are claiming Carer's Credit. For more information, please visit **www.gov.uk/carers-credit**

(You don't need to apply if you receive Carer's Allowance, Income Support or Universal Credit as a carer – you'll get credits automatically.)

Get help with the cost of public transport. Your disabled child might be able to get a Disabled Person's Pass, and you might qualify for a With Carer Pass. Both allow you to travel for free on many buses, trains and trams in South Yorkshire. A Disabled Person's Railcard gives discounts on adult rail fares, but not child fares. However, it may still be worth getting one for your child as it also gives one person travelling with the cardholder 1/3 off most rail fares. See **www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk/localoffer/getting-around/public-transport-travel-passes** for more information.

Apply for a CEA card. The Cinema Exhibitors' Association (CEA) Card is a UK-wide card scheme for participating cinemas. It entitles you to one free ticket for a carer. Your child must be at least five years old and in receipt of DLA, PIP or registered blind. The card costs £6 a year. Visit **www.ceacard.co.uk** to find out more.

Get a Carer Card. The Sheffield Carers Centre offers a Carer Card which provides discounts on many activities, products and services. You need to register with the Sheffield Carers Centre to access it. Visit **www.sheffieldcarers.org.uk/carers-card-offers** for more information.

FEATURE

Apply for a grant for your disabled child or young person:

- The Family Fund provides grants for families on a low income with a disabled or seriously ill child or young person aged 0-24 years. See www.familyfund.org.uk for more information.
- Many other charities give grants to families in order to help with things like specialist equipment, therapies, essential items, or holidays. You can search for them on websites like www.disability-grants.org or grants-search.turn2us.org.uk.

- Sheffield City Council's Short Break Grant is a payment of up to £400 which aims to give parents a break from caring. It is for families on a low income with a disabled child aged 0-17 years who is not accessing another short break service (e.g. SNIPS). See www.sheffield.gov.uk/social-care/children/short-breaks for more information.

Ask about free entry for carers.

Many major attractions and organisations in the UK allow free entry to a parent or carer accompanying a disabled person. It's always worth asking if a discount is available!



**Confused?
Don't know
where to start?
Speak to
someone
in person!**

Pop into the Moor Market's Welcome place on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday between 10am and 3.30pm for a free hot drink and a chat.



The PA Champion Project

Supporting Personal Assistants in Sheffield

The PA Champion Project is a new project funded by Sheffield City Council. It currently employs two PA Champions, Seirian Davies and Hannah Kerr.

The project aims to address the shortage of PAs by raising awareness about their role and the vital work they do, and by encouraging people to sign up to the Sheffield PA Register. The Sheffield PA Register (www.sheffieldparegister.org.uk) is a website that puts PAs and families in touch with each other.

The PA Champions attend job fairs, work with partner organisations and speak to jobseekers. They also run awareness-raising sessions in Sheffield schools and colleges, telling students about working as a PA while they are studying and the opportunities this kind of role can bring in the future.

Since the project launched in September 2024, the PA Champions have spoken to over 800

people in various settings, and the number of PA profiles on the PA register has increased dramatically. There has also been an increase in the number of applications received by individual employers recruiting PAs.

The PA Champions have set up a PA support network to build a stronger PA community in Sheffield. Acting as a virtual staffroom, the network hosts an online discussion forum as well as information about education, training and development opportunities, employment rights and mental health and wellbeing support. It offers a safe space for PAs to ask questions, access help and support, and connect with other PAs. There are also in-person events that PAs can attend. It is free to join, and members can access exclusive wellbeing events, discounts and freebies. Please visit pa-support-network.mn.co for more information and to join.

A personal assistant (PA) is someone a family or disabled person employs to help with day-to-day living.

A PA might help a disabled child or young person to access clubs and activities, provide support within the home or accompany a family on day trips.

Most families pay for their PA using a Direct Payment. This is a cash payment provided by the local authority in place of a social care service, such as a SNIPS club. The amount depends on the child or young person's assessed level of need and varies from family to family. For more information about Direct Payments, please scan the QR codes.



Under 18s



Over 18s

Case study

Lucy receives a direct payment of five hours per week for her son with complex needs. She has struggled to find suitable PAs in the past and spent many years without the right support for her son.

In October 2024, she placed an advert on the PA register, looking to recruit a new PA. She received more than ten applications. Lucy said: "This is a higher number of applications for one

vacancy than ever before, more than in many years of recruiting and employing PAs! There were some highly-skilled candidates, and for once it was difficult to choose whom to hire rather than feeling like I had no real options. I interviewed several candidates, and I am very happy with the person I hired. My son loves her, and she meets his needs well."

Get in touch!

The PA Champions would love to come and speak to your group or attend an event to raise awareness of the role of PAs.

They would also love to hear from people who have lived experience of employing PAs and who would be interested in

supporting other parents to navigate the Direct Payments system.

You can contact the PA Champions by emailing **s.davies@championsheffield.org.uk** or **h.kerr@championsheffield.org.uk**

Peer Support Service Update



It has been a busy and successful year for the Peer Support Service, with more parent carers benefitting from our support than ever before. All our Peer Support Workers have lived experience of caring for children with additional needs. They offer information,

support, advice and guidance on issues related to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). We work closely with other services and signpost families to organisations with expertise in specific areas.

Supporting parent carers

Over the past 12 months:

139
parent carers

accessed over 360 one-to-one support sessions via telephone call, video call or face-to-face meeting.

417
parent carers

attended information sessions on topics such as introduction to autism, demand-avoidant behaviour, sensory needs, or neurodivergence and anxiety, held in community venues.

What parents say about our support:

It's thanks to you I've had a safe space to talk things through. I felt alone and didn't have anyone really in my circle to talk to as they just did not understand. It's so valuable that you come with personal experience.

It was helpful to know we're not the only people having a hard time.

I've felt heard, supported and validated.

My Peer Support Worker has been brilliant, really supportive and informative.

Expanding peer support

We continuously seek new ways to listen to and support parent carers through various initiatives. These currently include:



Parent carer support group

A new monthly group at Sharrow Community Forum for parent carers who identify as disabled or neurodivergent and who parent a child or young person with additional needs.



Wednesday Night Club

A thriving group for dads and male carers at the Stephen Harrison Snooker Academy. Sessions run monthly on a Wednesday evening (6.30-9.30pm) and offer an opportunity to get together in an informal way to chat, have a coffee and enjoy a game of snooker.



Coffee & Chat

A bi-monthly drop-in coffee morning at the Burton Street Foundation with bookable one-to-one consultations with a professional (e.g. from the Sensory Service, SSENDIAS or Educational Psychology) running alongside it.



Peer support drop-ins

Open to any parent who wants to chat with a Peer Support Worker. No appointment necessary!

Working in partnership to support families

We collaborate with a range of other organisations to provide additional support, including:

- Discover groups – These are SEND playgroups for families with young children under five, run by the Health Visiting Service and supported by our Peer Support team (see page 11 for more information).
- School SEND events – We attend SEND coffee mornings, run information sessions and support SENCOs by offering support and advice to families.
- Supporting migrant women – We work with Family Voice to offer weekly one-to-one support at Common Ground Community Centre in Nether Edge for migrant women facing complex barriers.
- Collaborations with other SEND charities – We regularly attend drop-in events hosted by organisations like Neurodivercity, Mencap or High Green Development Trust. We are currently planning a joint event in May with the Grand Mosque.
- Ryegate services – We work in partnership with the Sensory Service and Educational Psychology to provide support to parent carers while their children attend group sessions.

How to Access Support

You can reach us through the following channels:

- Telephone: Call **0300 321 4721** (option 1) to ask a quick question or to seek advice, guidance and signposting around a particular issue. Leave a message if we are unavailable, and we will get back to you within a couple of days.
- Email: Contact **peersupport@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk**
- In person: Speak to a Peer Support Worker if you attend a session or see them out and about.

Find out more

To find out about our upcoming groups and events, see pages 24-26 of this newsletter, visit **www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/events**, or follow us on Facebook!

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...



Louie is 18 years old. He has a diagnosis of Cornelia de Lange syndrome, a rare genetic condition that affects his entire body. Louie has a learning disability, complex health needs, a visual impairment and upper limb bone deformities, known as bilateral radial-ulnar synostosis. Essentially this means that he is completely unable to rotate his hands and forearms from a palm-down position.

Imagine the daily hurdles this presents – simple tasks like accepting change, carrying a plate of food and drink, or feeding animals become incredibly difficult. But Louie refuses to be defined by what he can't do. Instead, he focuses on what he can do—and that is to create stunning jewellery!

Louie's passion for jewellery started from an early age and flourished when he joined Freeman Specialist College, which specialises in metalwork. He also receives private tuition from a silversmith. Some of his designs require intricate techniques, and while his condition presents physical barriers, he never gives up. When faced with a task he can't complete in a traditional way, he finds a creative workaround. For example, to make a twisted silver bangle, most jewellers use pliers - something completely inaccessible to him. So, Louie found another way.

He used a drill instead - problem solved!

His mum, Amanda, couldn't be prouder. She said: "Louie is inspirational! He never gives up, and he is always kind and thoughtful. He dreams of being a millionaire and is always thinking about helping others."



Louie has big ambitions. He said: "I'd love to set up my own workshop so that I can make jewellery whenever I want. I also want to start selling my work."

But that's not all—Louie is already thinking of ways to give back. He told us that he'd like to make some items for Sheffield Parent Carer Forum to help us raise money, so that we can support more parents. Offer accepted, Louie!

Want to see Louie's beautiful creations? Check out his work on Instagram: [@vippe.rs](https://www.instagram.com/vippe.rs)

Useful Contacts

<p>0-5 SEND 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>Autism Social Communication Education & Training Service (ASCETS – formerly Autism 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* Provides education for children who are unable to attend school for medical or related reasons</p>	<p>0114 305 3121 jgibson@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 and Vision Support Service* Supports deaf and visually impaired and blind children aged 0-25 years and their families</p>	<p>Head of Service: bernadette.roe-dean@sheffield.gov.uk Deaf/Hearing Support: 0114 273 6410 rachel.dickens@sheffield.gov.uk Vision Support: 0114 2941201 joanne.hogg@sheffield.gov.uk</p>
<p>Direct Payments Support Service* Provides information, advice and support in relation to direct payments, for both children and adults</p>	<p>0114 205 6825 directpaymentsupportservice@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 General enquiries: educational.psychology@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>
<p>IPSEA National charity providing free legally-based advice on educational issues for parents of children with SEN</p>	<p>www.ipsea.org.uk</p>
<p>Local offer* A website with information about support and services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Sheffield</p>	<p>www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk/localoffer</p>
<p>Neurodivercity Sheffield (formerly Sheffield ADHD Project) Provides information, training and support to families of children and young people diagnosed with ADHD and those with neurodiverse conditions prior to a formal diagnosis</p>	<p>0114 2412733 neurodivercity.sheffield@family-action.org.uk</p>

Opportunity Sheffield* Employment and skills service helping to break down barriers to employment	0114 229 6168 opportunity@sheffield.gov.uk
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
Preparation for Adulthood Team* Supports young people with a disability to move from children's to adult social care services	0114 2057288 (general adult social care business support) pfa@sheffield.gov.uk (direct)
Ryegate Children's Centre Assessment, diagnosis and therapy for children and young people with developmental and neurological problems	0114 271 7000
SSENDIAS* Provides impartial information, advice and support to parents of children and young people aged 0-25 with SEN/disabilities in relation to education, health, social care, leisure and support groups	0114 273 6009 sseudias@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 Young Carers Offers support to children and young people (8-25 years) who provide care for a family member, e.g. a disabled sibling, and those who are affected by familial substance misuse.	0114 258 4595 information@sheffieldyoungcarers.org.uk
SNIPS (Special Needs Inclusion Playcare Service)* Supports children aged 5-18 years to access short break activities to give their parents a break from caring	0114 273 5368 CPYDsnips@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

Dates for your diary

Information & booking

For more information and 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.

Please note: Venues and dates may be changed at short notice. We will endeavour to let you know if they do, but please check our website for any changes before attending group sessions.

April

 24 April, 9.30am-12pm
at Abbey Lane School

Information session: Neurodivergence and anxiety

How does anxiety affect children and young people who are neurodivergent? We will tell you about strategies you can use to support your child. Peer discussions will be encouraged.

Booking essential.

 25 April, 10am-12pm
at Highfield Adventure
Playground building

Parent Carer Support Group

A monthly peer support group for parents who identify as disabled and/or neurodivergent and care for a child or young person with additional needs. No diagnosis needed, and no need to book.

April continued

 29 April, 10am-1pm
at Common Ground, Nether Edge

Information session: Understanding sensory needs

This session will help you gain a deeper understanding of sensory needs. We will examine what “sensory” means, how it impacts behaviour, and what you can do to support your child or young person effectively. **Booking essential.**

 30 April, 12-2pm,
online

Information session: Speak up!

It can be hard for parents to get their own and their child’s voices heard. We will look at what it means to be an advocate for your child and give you lots of hints and tips for speaking up for them. **Booking essential.**

May

 1 May, 5-8pm
at Sheffield Mencap

Information session: Introduction to autism

For parents of children with suspected or recently diagnosed autism. Learn about the main traits, challenges and strengths associated with the condition. **Booking essential.**

May continued

 9 May, 10am-1pm,
Ryegate Children's Centre

Information session: Your sensory toolkit

Find out about sensory needs and strategies you can use to help and support your child or young person. This session will be delivered with a member of the Sensory Service. **Booking essential.**

 14 May, 6.30-9.30pm
at Stephen Harrison Snooker
Academy

Men's Wednesday Group

Free snooker group for dads and male carers. No need to book, just turn up!

 22 May, 9.30am-12pm
at Burton Street Foundation

Coffee & Chat

Drop-in coffee morning with bookable one-to-one consultations with a professional (from the Autism Social Communication Education Training Service - ASCETS) running alongside it.

Consultations must be pre-booked.

June

 3 June, 6-8pm
online

Information session: Understanding sensory needs

An online version of the same event as on 29th April. **Booking essential.**

June continued

 6 June, 10am-12pm
at Highfield Adventure
Playground building

Parent Carer Support Group

A monthly peer support group for parents who identify as disabled and/or neurodivergent and care for a child or young person with additional needs. No diagnosis needed, and no need to book.

 18 June, 12.30-2.30pm
online

Information session: Preparation for adulthood

Get ready for your young person's transition to post-16 education and adult health and social care services. We'll tell you what should happen and when, and signpost you to sources of advice and support.

Booking essential.

 18 June, 6.30-9.30pm
at Stephen Harrison Snooker
Academy

Men's Wednesday Group

Free snooker group for dads and male carers. No need to book, just turn up!

More dates on the next page...

Dates for your diary *continued*

June continued

 20 June, 9.30am-12pm
at Dobcroft Infant School

Information session: Introduction to autism

As previous.

 25 June, 10.30am-1pm
at Shortbrook Family Hub

Information session: Neurodivergence and anxiety

How does anxiety affect children and young people who are neurodivergent? We will tell you about strategies you can use to support your child. Peer discussions will be encouraged.

Booking essential.

July continued

 10 July, 9.30am-12pm
at Burton Street Foundation

Coffee & Chat

Drop-in coffee morning with bookable one-to-one consultations with a professional (from the NHS Sleep Service) running alongside it. **Consultations must be pre-booked.**

 15 July, 6.30-9.30pm
at Stephen Harrison Snooker Academy

Men's Wednesday Group

Free snooker group for dads and male carers. No need to book, just turn up!

July

 4 July, 10am-12pm
at Highfield Adventure
Playground building

Parent Carer Support Group

A monthly peer support group for parents who identify as disabled and/or neurodivergent and care for a child or young person with additional needs. No diagnosis needed, and no need to book.

August

 29 August, 10m-3pm
at Niagara Conference
& Leisure Centre

Family Fun Day

Our highlight of the summer! We're still confirming arrangements, but we'll hopefully be able to offer all the old favourites – from bungee trampolines and adapted bikes to exotic animals. Booking essential. Booking instructions will be sent to our members only by email and SMS a few weeks before the event.

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 on the following page.

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

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Sheffield Parent Carer Forum
St. Mary's Church Community Centre
Bramall Lane
SHEFFIELD
S2 4QZ

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