

# Early Education & Childcare for children with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities

Parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities have on offer to them a range of early education and childcare options to help them to select a provision that suits the needs of their child and family.

Some parents want to return to work or training following the birth of their child and will need a nursery provision or childminder to meet their child's needs and to fit in with their working hours.

Some parents want to find opportunities to meet other parents and for their child to play and mix with other young children.

From the term after their third birthday all children in Sheffield are entitled to a free early education place. This is for five two and a half hour sessions per week. Children with disabilities attend the full range of early education and childcare provisions described below.

## **Maintained Nurseries**

A maintained nursery is one that is run by the Local Authority. Open during term time only, these include nursery schools run by the Local Authority as well as nursery classes within schools. Staffed by qualified teachers and support workers the ratio of adults to children is one to thirteen. Maintained nurseries usually take children aged between 3 and 5, and offer up to five morning or afternoon sessions a week. Some maintained nurseries offer lunchtime supervision and other out of school sessions.

## Private and Community Nurseries

Open all year round, these nurseries offer all day or shorter sessions for children aged 0 - 5 years old. Staffed by practitioners with a range of early education and childcare qualifications, the ratio of adults to children varies according to the age of the children.

## Children's Centres

The development of Children's Centres is a key priority for the government's ten year childcare strategy. The Local Authority has responsibility for planning and developing thirty one Children's Centres in Sheffield. Children's Centres combine early years care and education with family support. Some are new centres and others are developed from existing nurseries. They are open all year round and provide a base for practitioners from a range of disciplines such as education, social care and health. Children's Centres cater for children between the ages of 0 to 5 and will provide childcare from 8am - 6pm.

## Playgroups and Pre-schools

These voluntary aided groups offer play and education sessions for children aged between 2 and 5 during term time only. They are run by a mixture of qualified early years workers or, in some instances, parent volunteers as well. They take place in community buildings such as social clubs, church halls and spare school classrooms. The sessions are usually for about two and a half hours but some groups are able to offer lunchtime supervision.

## Parent and Toddler groups

These groups provide an informal place for children and their parents / carers to meet other families in their local community. They are usually run by parent volunteers and offer a range of play opportunities for children from birth to school age for a couple of hours a week. Parents stay with their children for the duration of the session. Parent and toddler groups often take place in community buildings.

## Home based Childcarers (Childminders)

Home based childcarers (childminders) are self-employed and usually look after children in their own home. However, some are registered to look after children in the family's home. Home based childcarers can take children from birth until school age, and beyond if necessary (e.g. holidays and out of school care). The number of children a home based carer can take is included on their registration certificate. Some childminders are able to take children for their free nursery education grant.

## Additional Support for children with SEN

All nurseries have additional resources available to them to enable them to include children with SEN either in the form of grants or through SEN funding given directly to schools.

**A list of childminders and other childcare provision including nurseries has been compiled by the Children's Information Service (CIS and is available from SIGN Information Service on 0114 266 9476.**

## Specialist Provision

In addition to the full range of mainstream nurseries which include children with a wide range of special educational needs Sheffield also has some specialist provision. This provision is available for children with more complex needs. Some parents of children with complex needs are keen for their child to attend a local nursery with appropriate support, others feel their needs would be best met in a specialist environment. A decision about placing a child in a specialist provision is made by the Special Needs Section of the Children and Young People's Service Agency following assessment of the child's needs by people who have been involved with the child. They may be from a range of services working with young children with Special Educational Needs e.g. paediatrician, speech and language therapist but would also need to include a teacher from one of the specialist support services described in this handbook.

## Integrated Resources

There are two integrated nurseries for children with special educational needs in different areas of the city which are part of nursery classes in primary schools. These are:

Hartley Brooke Primary School  
Wharncliffe Side Primary School

Each resource takes up to ten children in any session and is staffed by a specialist teacher and teaching assistant. Many of the staff have worked with children with special educational needs for many years and built up a high level of expertise. Children attending the integrated nurseries have a range of different needs, they may for example be on the Autistic spectrum or have a combination of physical and learning difficulties.

Children who attend the integrated resources are members of the nursery class and are included in nursery activities. They also receive daily individual support from the integrated resource staff as part of a small group or on an individual basis.

The resources have close links with other services e.g. Speech and Language Therapy and Educational Psychologists.

Children would usually be expected to attend the integrated nursery nearest to where they live.

## Resources for children with Hearing Impairment

There are two specialist resources for nursery age children with hearing impairment, These are at:

Angram Bank Primary  
Lower Meadow Primary

## Special School Nurseries

Two special schools for children with severe and profound learning difficulties have nurseries and take children from the age of two. These are:

Norfolk Park School  
Woolley Wood School

They have staff who are skilled in adapting the early years curriculum to make it appropriate for children with severe and complex needs who may have multi – sensory impairments. They work closely with a range of therapists and specialist support staff to help develop children's communication and movement and ensure they have access to the right equipment to help them engage in a range of appropriate play and learning activities. The schools have a range of specialist play and hydrotherapy facilities. Both schools have a nurse on site.

## Oakes Park

This is a special school for children with physical difficulties, which also has a nursery and takes children from the age of two. Staff are skilled in adapting activities to enable children with physical difficulties to take part in the curriculum. They also work closely with physiotherapists and speech and language therapists to develop individual approaches and programmes for children. They have staff who have experience in using computer aided technology to assist communication. They also have a nurse on site.

## Shared Placements

A child may attend more than one place for early education or childcare. Some children spend part of the week in a special school nursery and part in a local Children's Centre. Some children may spend some time in nursery and part of the day with a Home based child carer. Every effort is made to meet parents and children's needs and preferences.

## Choosing nursery and childcare

Choosing the right placement for a child can seem daunting. To assist parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities Sheffield Early Years Education and Childcare Service have commissioned a booklet that helps parents to think about what they want and gives tips from other parents who already have children in nursery.

This booklet is called "**Right form the Start**" and is available form SIGN Information Service. To get a copy phone SIGN on 0114 266 9476

## Special educational needs support (SEN) for children in early years settings

All children with special educational needs and disabilities can be assessed for an individual educational programme (IEP) at whatever school or setting they attend. The IEP outlines the support needed to help them engage in the learning and play opportunities and make progress.

All schools, early years settings and local authorities have a duty to identify children who need additional help, assess their needs and monitor their progress. This duty and the arrangements that need to be made are described in the **Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice**.

Details of the SEN Code of Practice are available in the leaflets provided by the Parent Partnership Service ( tel 0114 292 2161) and in the guidance for Parents on the SEN Code of Practice produced by the Department for Education and Science.

All mainstream schools and early years settings in receipt of government funding have a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO).

The SENCO plays a key role in coordinating support to children with special educational needs and is usually a first port of call for parents who have any concerns about their child's development.

SENCOs have a range of duties which include:

- Keeping an overview of children with special educational needs and advising and supporting colleagues
- Offering support to parents and carers of children
- Ensuring liaison between parents, other professionals and staff members, particularly the manager or group leader.
- Working with managers and other members of staff to develop the SEN policy for the setting
- Assisting staff in drawing up appropriate IEPs (Individual Education Plans).
- Organising and attending review meetings and in partnership with other staff involved plan further support for the child
- Liaising between schools and other relevant agencies to assist in the transitions to new settings or schools.

If you are concerned about your child you can make an appointment with the SENCO so they can set time aside to listen to your concerns.

The **SEN Code of Practice** is designed to address the needs of children who require different levels of support.

## Early years Action

Children who have some specific difficulties or less significant needs are usually placed at the Early Years Action stage of the Code of Practice. This involves the child having an individual education programme (IEP) with some additional input, monitoring or observation from staff within the setting.

If in consultation with parents it is felt that support and advice from specialist support services is needed the child is placed at **Early Years Action Plus**.

All children at Early Years Action Plus have input from local authority support services. These services employ staff who are skilled and experienced in working with children with special educational needs. For all children at Early Years Action and Action Plus their progress is reviewed regularly, usually every term with parents. Following these reviews the Individual Education Plans are amended.

Early Years Settings funded by the local authority have additional money to enable them to give additional support to children with Special Educational Needs.

Private and voluntary nurseries are able to apply for grants to enable them to give additional support to children with SEN and disabilities for either early education sessions or childcare.

## Statements

A very small minority of children who have exceptional needs require support over and above that which can be offered by schools through their additional needs budget or the grants available to private and voluntary sector nurseries. These children require what is called a Statutory Assessment. This is an assessment that includes all professionals working with the child (including health professionals) as well as parents. This assessment may lead to allocation of additional resources or placement in one of the local authority's specialist provisions. An additional sheet is available on the range of specialist provision.

This Factsheet is available in other formats upon request, please call 0114 266 9476 for more details.

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