

Sheffield Information Link

Customer Satisfaction and Service Impact
Survey Report

February 2011



Sheffield
Information
Link

Introduction

Following the Government's spending reviews in 2010 it became increasingly apparent to the Civil Sector that there would be far reaching implications for the future delivery of services, not only in this sector but also across private and public sectors.

Sheffield Information Link recognises that demonstrating the social and economic value of its services, and the quality of its organisation will become increasingly important in a decreasing marketplace.

Sheffield Information Link has conducted this survey in order to document:

- Individual client's satisfaction with the service delivered by the organisation
- Organisational satisfaction of the services received from Sheffield Information Link, the ask Sid Team and the SIGN Service
- The impact of the service on the lives of Sheffield families
- The impact of removal of services on individual families and organisations currently engaging with the service
- The value placed on its services by its users

Survey Sample

The sample for individual clients was taken from a 3 month (one quarter) period and consisted of 680 individuals. We received 670 responses which is a 98.52% return.

The sample for organisations was 1600 organisations and providers as detailed on the Evince database utilised by SIL. We received 329 responses which is a 20.56% return.

The sample for the SIGN service was 67 professionals working with the service and 63 clients. We received 10 responses from professionals which is a 14% return and 37 responses from clients which is a 58% return.

We also asked 100 organisations who advertise on the ask Sid database what they thought to the service they received. We received 98 responses which is a 98% return.

Methodology

The surveys were conducted by the following means:

- Direct mail out
- Direct personalised e-mails
- On-line submissions via the ask Sid and SIL websites
- Direct telephone calling by SIL Data and Information Officers
- In person at drop in clinics and children's centres across the city

Scoring

All respondents were asked to answer the same set of questions which were scored on a scale of 1 – 5 with values as described below:

Score	Explanation
1	Not bothered about this Its not important to me I don't see this as being valuable
2	This concerns me a little It's not very important to me I don't attach much value to this
3	I am concerned about this This is important to me I value this
4	I am really concerned about this This is really important to me This is really valuable to me
5	I am very/extremely concerned about this This is very/extremely important to me This is very/extremely valuable to me

Question 6 was for other service providers only but was also scored as above.

Question 7 was for ask Sid organisations only and responses were recorded as Poor, Good, Very Good or Excellent.

This report will evidence the results both statistically and qualitatively by also sharing the comments received from respondents.

Executive Summary

Hundreds of Sheffield families, child care professionals and disability specialists are demanding that the city's most vulnerable children and families are not cast into the wilderness by public spending cuts.

Independent family information service Sheffield Information Link and its information service for families with disabled children are threatened with closure. Thousands of Sheffield families and hundreds of professionals agree that the closures would cause devastation to children and families that need help with disabilities, health and education.

SIL carried out a survey and found that:

97% of Sheffield families say that SIL/SIGN services are important or extremely important to them

86% of Sheffield families say that SIL/SIGN services are valued and should be protected from budget cuts

80% of Sheffield families are extremely or really concerned about the loss of SIL/SIGN services

76% of Sheffield families say access to SIL's independent, high quality information is very/extremely important to them

93% of Sheffield families think that SIGN's specialised information for children with disabilities is very or extremely important

92% of family related services/businesses say that SIL services are valuable or very valuable to their businesses

Key Comments

Childcare Worker - Tinsley Children's Centre

I feel the service that Sheffield Information Link offers is invaluable to parents. We have had excellent feedback from the parents who use the children's centre on the prompt and efficient service SIL offers. I feel most families would be sad to see a loss of such a service.

Sharrow Junior School

Without this service families would find it extremely difficult to source accurate/impartial information on childcare/children's services in the Sheffield area. Having someone to support and guide parents/carers through the process enables parents to make fully informed choices according to their needs. Parents find this service invaluable.

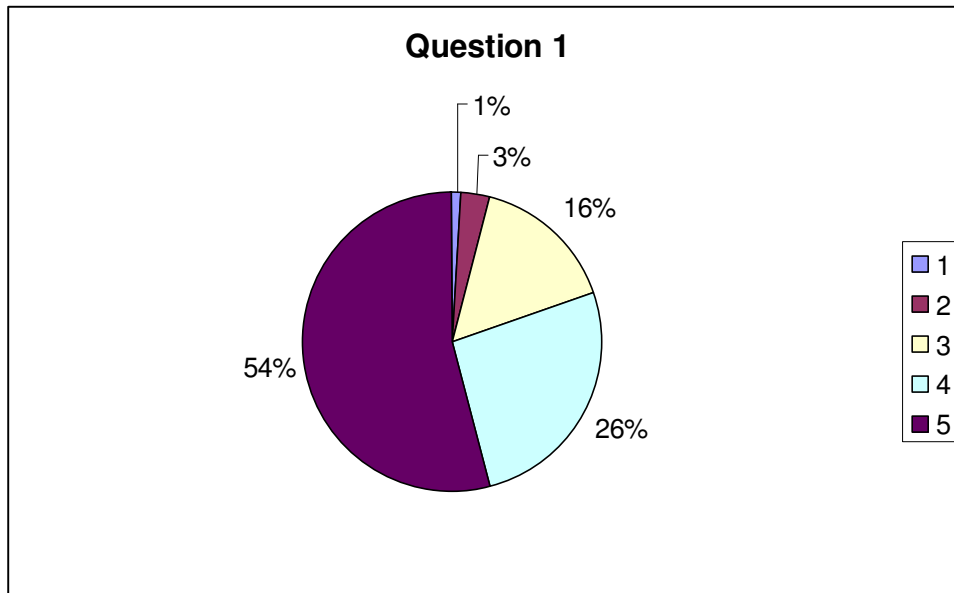
Childcare Provider

I am not pleased that this service is closing. I use the service regularly to recruit staff and to advertise the afterschool club. I also send parents over for information. What is going to replace this service? This service is well used and is needed in the city.

Results

Question1

How concerned are you at the impact of the spending cuts on family information services such as those provided by Sheffield Information Link (inc SIGN and ask Sid)?



Scores: 1 not bothered at all to 5 extremely concerned

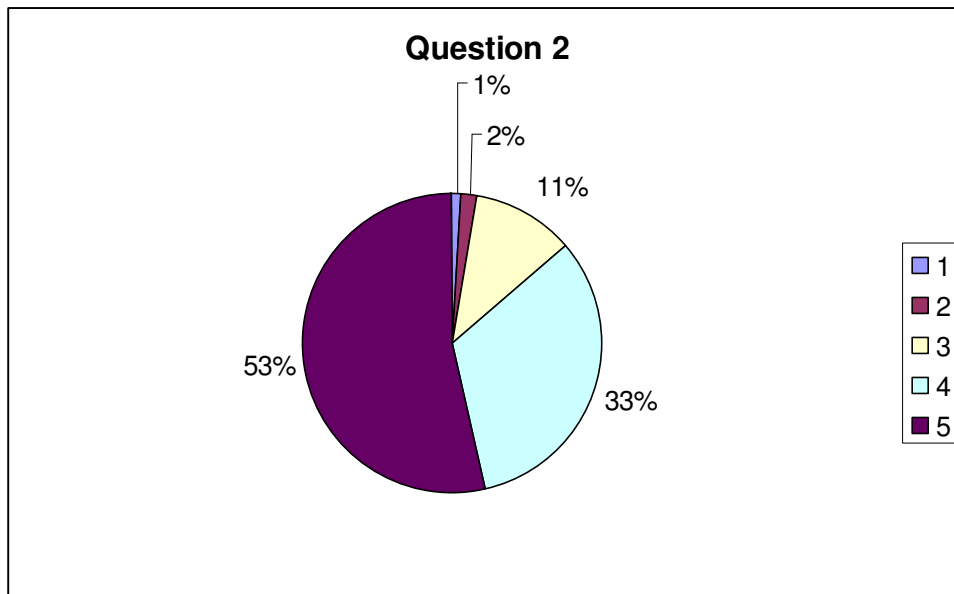
"SIL is a very important service within Sheffield and it would be a great shame if the service no longer existed" (Parent)

670 Respondents

96% of respondents were concerned or very concerned about the impact of spending cuts on the services offered by SIL.

Question 2

How important is it to you that family information services are maintained and protected from the planned spending cuts?



Scores: 1 not important at all to 5 extremely important

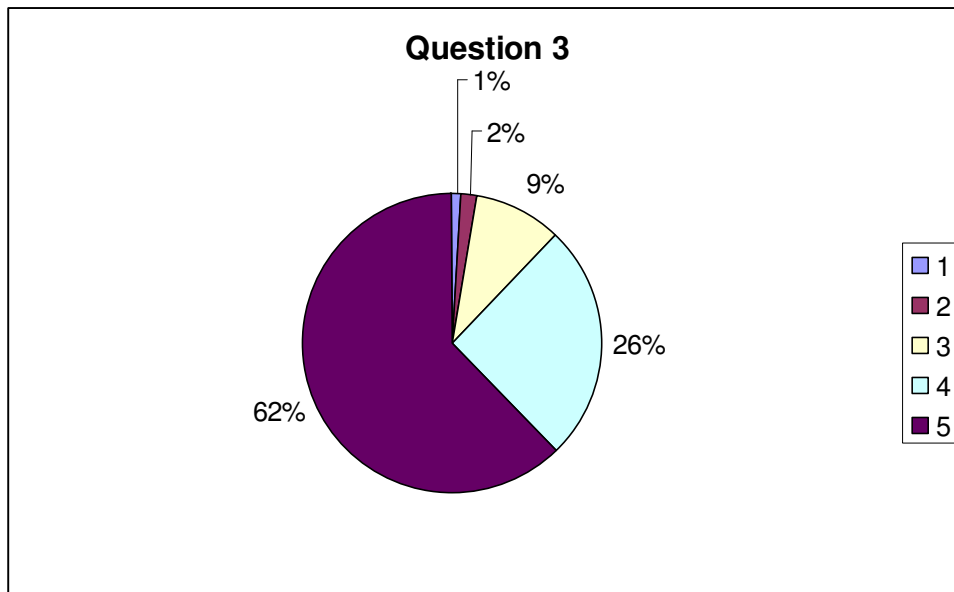
"I feel the service that Sheffield Information Link offers is invaluable to parents. We have had excellent feedback from the parents who use the children's centre on the prompt and efficient service SIL offers. I feel most families would be sad to see a loss of such a service." (Tinsley Children's centre)

670 Respondents

97% of respondents thought it was important or extremely important that family information services are maintained and protected.

Question 3

How important to families in Sheffield do you think services such as those provided by SIL are?



Scores: 1 not important at all to 5 extremely important

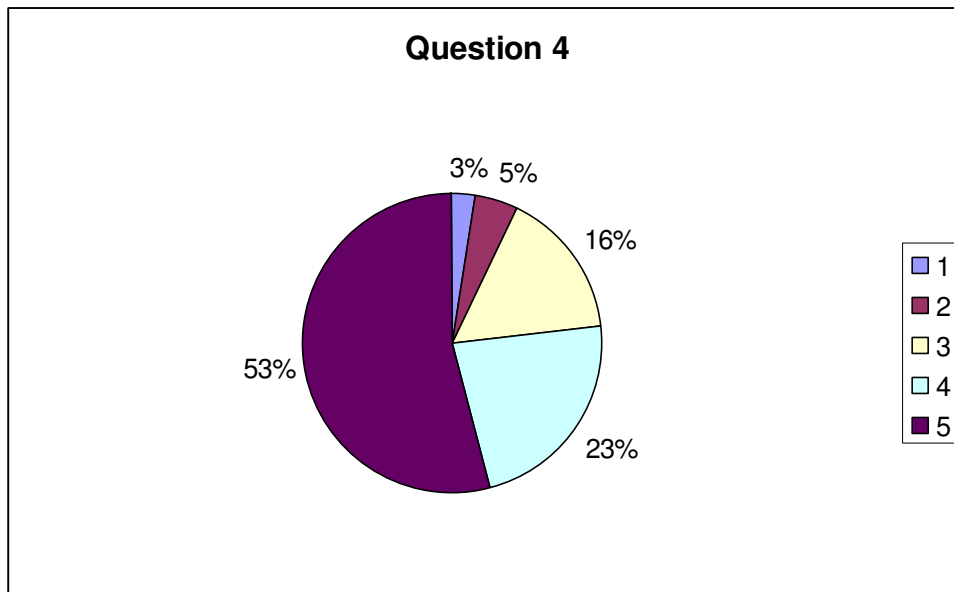
“Without this service families would find it extremely difficult to source accurate/impartial information on childcare/children’s services in the Sheffield area. Having someone to support and guide parents/carers through the process enables parents to make fully informed choices according to their needs. Parents find this service invaluable.” (Sharlow Junior School)

862 Respondents (670 individuals and 192 providers/organisations)

97% of respondents thought that the services provided by SIL were important or extremely important to families in Sheffield.

Question 4

How important has it been to your family to access independent, high quality information about family related issues?



Scores: 1 not important at all to 5 extremely important

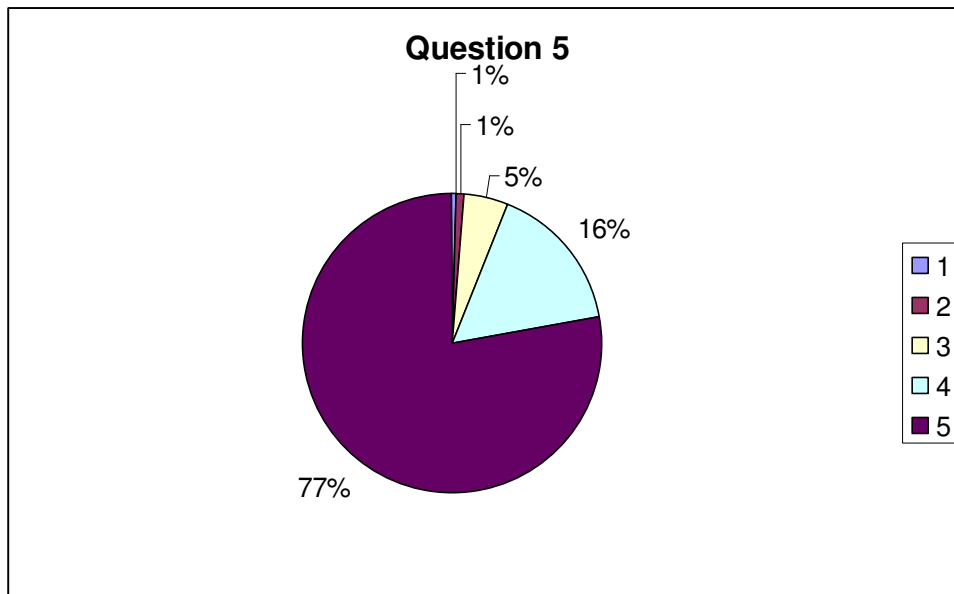
“Very valuable service – not only for the children but all the family and mums.” (Parent)

431 Respondents

92% of respondents stated that access to SIL’s independent, high quality information had been important or extremely important to their family.

Question 5

How important do you think it is that Sheffield families and professionals have access to specialised information about disabilities in children?



Scores: 1 not important at all to 5 extremely important

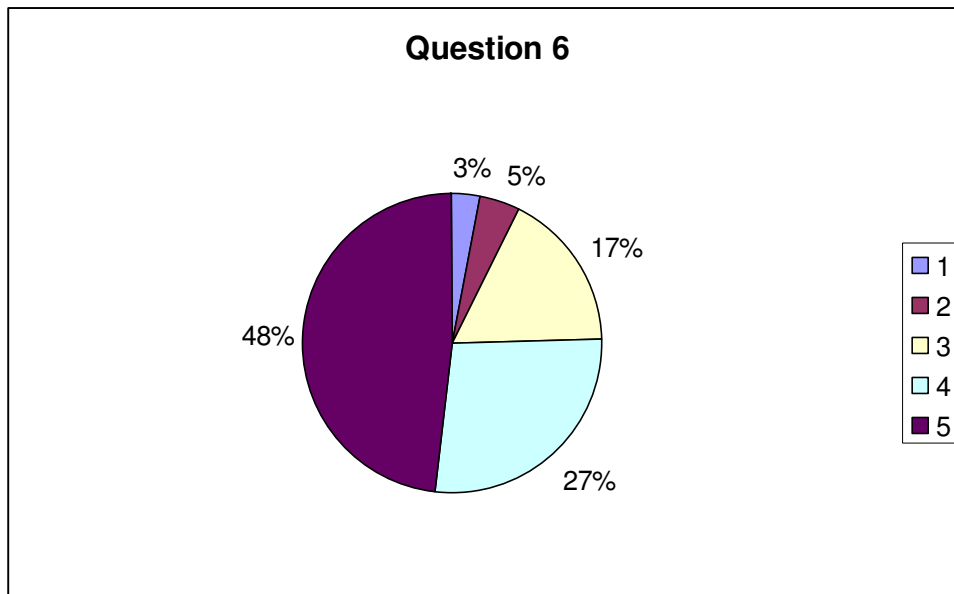
*“As a professional working with families whose children may have a disability, I have used the service on numerous occasions and have always found it a fantastic resource. I am certain that families with disabled children would suffer should this service be ceased.”
(Professional)*

667 Respondents

98% of respondents think that it is very or extremely important that they have access to specialised information for children with disabilities.

Question 6

For other service providers only – How valuable to your business are the information services provided by SIL?



Scores: 1 not valuable at all to 5 extremely valuable

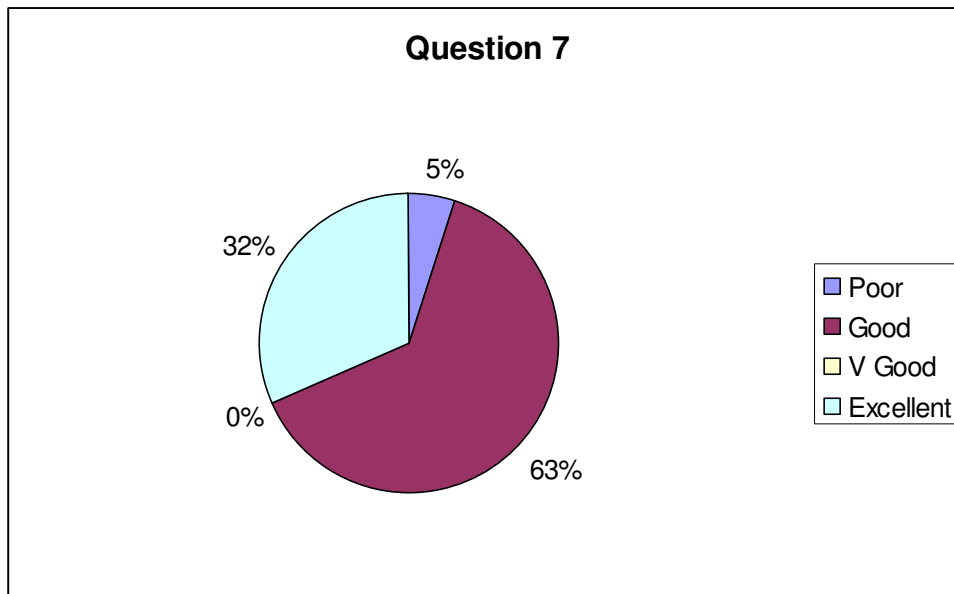
"We are very supportive – your service is brilliant . Our clients who receive information from you are well informed about our services. Your staff are well informed and qualified."
(Kids Art Academy)

329 Respondents

92% of respondents stated that SIL services were valuable or very valuable to their businesses.

Question 7

For ask Sid organisations only – What do you think of the service you receive from SIL’s ask Sid team.



“Always there, reliable and useful. Really keep in contact.” (Meadows Children’s Centre)

98 Respondents

95% of respondents rated the services received from SIL’s ask Sid team as Good or Excellent.

Comments from respondents

What people said about the whole SIL service package:

Parent

Nobody tells you anything – midwives had not told us this stuff. If we had known this it would have helped us a lot. All very useful. It will be a detriment to a child if no access to good disability info. Shouldn't be cutting back. Want the council to fund activities etc as without it leads to obesity. I want more activities in my local area. There are lots of parents with no money who don't know about free stuff.

Childcare Worker - Tinsley Children's Centre

I feel the service that Sheffield Information Link offers is invaluable to parents. We have had excellent feedback from the parents who use the children's centre on the prompt and efficient service SIL offers. I feel most families would be sad to see a loss of such a service.

Childminder – Meadow's Children's Centre

Always there, reliable and useful. Really keep in contact.

Parent at Meadows Children's Centre

The information gave us the options and ability to make the choice that was best for us

Parent Support Worker

Sheffield Information Link is a valuable service and we know that families use the service to find information on groups and childcare when returning to work

Shortbrook Community Clinic

We use it and our clients use SIL on a daily basis and they provide a valuable service to the community.

Sharrow Junior School

Without this service families would find it extremely difficult to source accurate/impartial information on childcare/children's services in the Sheffield area. Having someone to support and guide parents/carers through the process enables parents to make fully informed choices according to their needs. Parents find this service invaluable.

Lynsey Birds – Client at Burngreave Children's Centre

I think SIL is a valued service to our project and for the public members of society

Amran Mohammed – Client at Burngreave Children's Centre

SIL is very important for my family and other families who need support for information as SIL has staff who speak different languages and give good information to find nursery and childcare near my area.

Parent

Thank you for getting this information to me so quickly.

I really appreciate your help, as it is very difficult to access information in 1 place.

I hope the service you provide continues to be supported.

A Strategic Project Manager – SCC

I have found you and your service invaluable over the years and a true advocate for Partnership working.

Childcare Provider

I am not pleased that this service is closing. I use the service regularly to recruit staff and to advertise the afterschool club. I also send parents over for information. What is going to replace this service? This service is well used and is needed in the city.

Parent

Very useful service, I wouldn't have been able to get the information from anywhere else

Parent

Valuable service, must be promoted and kept if possible

Parent

SIL is a very important service within Sheffield and it would be a great shame if the service no longer existed

Transition worker Tupton and King Egberts School

In the past SIL and ask Sid have aided me with help given to a child within my care. The child was pregnant. We were able to direct her to essential services and help her continue her education during her pregnancy and after the birth of her baby.

Parent

Very valuable service – not only for the children but all the family and mums.

Parent

Your service makes people aware of what's out there – it's a shame about these cuts

Parent

Services like this help mums get out and about and not feel so isolated and alone

Parent

I've found SIL services really useful, both for info on childcare and on activity in my local area. The information I received was detailed, useful and provided very quickly. I would recommend the service to others (and have done) and would like to use it again in the future as my child gets older – thanks very much

Working Parent

Working parents need more support for extended and out of hours care for shift work, like up to 7pm helps professional workers/doctors etc

Parent

Unlike the families of Government personnel us ordinary families who aren't as privileged need to know what's out there for us. And why have cuts to our future? The youngsters that they're affecting will be making decisions on our future when they run our country and we become pensioners. If such cuts do happen more families will be broken and they'll suffer.

Childminder

I have made connections with a large number of families through SIL. It is the only place I advertise – it is vital

Louise Nash - Parent

I have completed and submitted the survey. I hope this helps, as the service has been a valuable resource for me as a parent and as childcare professional. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Parent

I think that information services are extremely important to providing information/support to families and children with special needs

Family Support Worker – Foxhill Children’s Centre

If you weren’t on the end of the phone it would make my job much more difficult.

Mrs S. South Sheffield - Parent

SIL's information on activities for children during the school holidays has been invaluable to me. Plus their 'Places to Visit' guide gives me inspiration on where to take my toddler, and is full of places I would never have otherwise found locally or on the internet. Their advice on childcare is also second to none, and this sort of comprehensive information just isn't available anywhere else.

M Razaq – Sharrow Children’s Centre

Any services providing help and services to families/parents/carers is invaluable, especially the help given to lone parents. I hope this service continues and is not affected by the cuts. All staff I have met through this service have been extremely helpful, professional and informative. Thank you.

Cath Baker – Sharrow Children’s Centre

I signpost families to SIL on a daily basis and it is always useful to be able to put them in touch. The holiday and activities information is always popular. The information provided by SIGN has been invaluable both to give to parents and for staff information. We value this service very highly and to lose it will be a disservice to Sheffield families and those involved with them.

Mrs A – Parent

Where else would parents get all the information in one place or know where to get childcare. I wanted to score higher than 5.

Mrs H – Parent

I have found your service invaluable. Great info always received.

Downs Syndrome Society - Sheffield

We are very supportive of this service, including SIGN, we are concerned about the impact this would have and would like to offer any help you think you might need.

Greentop Circus Centre

Your service is very important to us – as a charity with not much funding we appreciate the impact you have on our business through the information stored on the database.

Hannah – Kids Art Academy

We are very supportive – your service is brilliant. Our clients who receive information from you are well informed about our services. Your staff are well informed and qualified – I’m going to write to Paul Scrivens about this and about the cuts in general.

Gillian Gascoigne – Parent

Please don’t cut when such a valuable service is provided. Stop spending on fountains etc that no-one really needs.

Anonymous Parent

Used your service in the past to find out about local child minders - very valuable service provided

What people said about the possibility of losing the SIGN disability service:

Caroline Bleakley – Paediatrician

I have frequently liaised with this excellent resource. They are a definite valuable part of the Ryegate Children's Centre. Sue James (SIL's Service Delivery Coordinator for the SIGN Service) provides excellent valuable support to our vulnerable families with autism and autistic spectrum disorders at the Ryegate parent's workshops, we had excellent feedback from our families about just how helpful they have found this

Rebecca Gumpert – Clinical Psychologist

It would seriously undermine and reduce the efficiency of my clinical work as I rely on SIGN services to provide practical "back up" to my clinic based ideas and advice. I think it is essential to have an expert service on site which is easily accessible for patients before/after appointments and professionally endorsed by the clinicians working with the families. Parents often say that there seems to be "so much out there" that it is hard to select what is truly appropriate to their child's needs and locally available.

Clare Lawson – Occupational Therapist

There would be an increase in workload in some situations chasing details re: charities/other services. Some families on caseload would have unmet needs. This is a brilliant service that helps to put families in contact with services provided by statutory services or voluntary services, that help to promote the health and wellbeing of children and young people and meet their needs under standard 8 of the NSF. For families already stretched practically and emotionally, it is a great support to link them up with services it is a) hard to find out about and b) families don't have time to investigate themselves due to increased care demands. I have used it to find hairdressers for people with complex disabilities, after school activities for young people and support groups for Asian parents.

Clinical Psychologist

The information packs provided by SIGN for the ASD workshops for parents have been invaluable and much appreciated. Also parents seen clinically who have been recommended to SIGN for information on a range of clinical issues have always given positive feedback and been provided with the information they needed. This has often saved me and my colleagues or other clinicians valuable time which can then be used to help other children and families. SIGN staff have a wealth of expertise and knowledge which is of greater value and I believe it would be a real shame and a false economy to see it all go to waste.

Sian Ball – Occupational Therapist

The information service at SIGN is incredibly useful to me as a professional. Part of my remit involves acting as a conduit for parents/carers who are seeking information pertaining to their child's disability and its impact on daily life. Examples of service value:

- Client's attending Occupational Therapy, asked for information on swimming lessons for children with disabilities, accompanied by Mum's only. (Cultural and religious restrictions) They were directed to SIGN where they received help from an advisor face to face
- On a home visit a client's parent asked for information on the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance. On return to Ryegate I queried the required information at SIGN. My enquiry was dealt with straight away and I was able to telephone the child's parent and give them the answer

Both examples were attended to quickly. Both had successful outcomes. Without SIGN both examples would have taken a considerable amount of my time to research and then respond to the parent.

Julie Warburton – ADHD Liaison Nurse

I refer all my clients to this service, it is vital to our patients and also to professionals. All my clients inform me how helpful and useful this service is and it is increasingly important as it provides information and resources to empower and inform parents. I give all my clients the details of SIGN and I know that many of them have found it invaluable. The service points them in the right

direction. Many of our clients experience significant family stress and this specialised service is a lifeline to them.

Social Worker – Children and Young People’s Service

As a Social Worker, there is a lot of red tape involved with my job and I don’t have any spare time to research support groups for families for instance. That’s where SIGN staff come in: they will make enquiries on my behalf and give me a direct telephone number and I can then make contact with other organisations on behalf of the families that I work with.

Clinical Psychologist – Ryegate

I would have to spend more time and very expensive time looking for information for families or even seeing children to give them information which could have adequately been provided by SIGN.

Early Support Worker

Being able to access the enormous amount of information and knowledge held by SIGN saves a huge amount of time (and therefore money) as opposed to having to find this information myself.

Rosemary Bowyer – OT Dept Ryegate

I find it helpful to pass details onto parents for SIGN as I am often unable to give them the advice they need.

Julia Barker - Manager, Social Work Department for Children with Disabilities at the Ryegate Centre.

I am very concerned at the potential loss of a valuable service. It’s very important. A lot of our families need good advice about services and SIGN have been providing this. It makes a big difference to families’ ability to cope if they are made aware of services and entitlements. Our department find SIGN very helpful and we regularly advise families to contact them for information about services. They have a large amount of information for our client group which is children with disabilities 0 – 5. This is a vulnerable group of children. Parents have given positive feedback about SIGN to us. Parents need information on a range of subjects e.g. benefits, support groups, child care, recreation. SIGN can help on all these subjects so parents don’t have the stress of going to different agencies for information or not finding out at all.

Dr Sue Gentle - Consultant Paediatrician

We see children with complex developmental problems who benefit from information obtained via SIGN, as do we. Were SIGN not there, we would have to try and find information in a far less expert way and inevitably, our families would be less well informed. Sheffield being a multi cultural city, we see patients from a range of ethnic and linguistic groups. SIGN is invaluable in helping us, therefore our patients and families, to access information in their own first language.

Physiotherapist – special schools and Developmental Coordination Disorders Team

As a therapist who diagnoses children with Developmental Coordination Disorder I regularly advise parents to access SIGN in order to obtain accurate and up to date information about their child’s diagnosis. The closure of SIGN would mean that parents of the children I see and diagnose would have to find their own information out about the condition. This would create problems for the therapist as there is so much inaccurate information available (particularly on the internet) that additional therapy time would have to be spent correcting and re-educating parents. The closure of SIGN would impact on my caseload because I would need to spend additional time searching for information regarding availability of accessible holiday clubs and sports clubs for the children with additional needs. This can be very time consuming because the information can be difficult to find

Dr P Hall - Clinical Psychologist

The service is extremely important as source of up to date information of services and support within the city for children with disabilities. Care for children with disabilities extends beyond the purely medical. With the psychosocial support provided by services such as SIGN families can

gain a greater quality of life and without such services they can experience great distress, isolation and difficulty.

Laura McQuillan – Occupational Therapist

I frequently recommend that families access SIGN, to provide them with information that I am unable to. This includes everything from activity clubs, to information on conditions, to places for support for grant / benefits information etc. As therapists, we have a clear outline of what our service can provide - we would be unable to provide this information giving service, as we simply do not have the time. The SIGN service is an excellent and unique service that should not be cut. I have previously worked in trusts that do not have such a service and have genuinely found SIGN to be most beneficial. There is a pressure for us to see as many children as possible and to discharge them as quickly as possible. I often feel that by directing families to SIGN, they are empowered to find out about services within the city that will enable them to be supported post-discharge. We see such a broad range of children, with such a broad range of needs that it is impossible for us to offer all of the information that SIGN can provide. I can not see that the work that SIGN do could be simply taken on by any other services, as other NHS services are stretched to capacity already.

Linda Cripps and Cheryl Beckley – Occupational Therapy - Ryegate

There would be a gap in provision of information for our families.

This would impact on our clinical time as we would have to research data ourselves. It is an invaluable service to both professionals and clients.

N Harrower – Consultant Paediatrician

The loss of this valuable resource would have a significant impact on my service as it provides essential information to patients and families, guiding them through the maze of options available. My workload and that of other Ryegate colleagues will increase if SIGN closes as families will come to us looking for information. Disabled children are a highly vulnerable group and the loss of SIGN will have a negative impact upon them and those who look after them. This is a short-sighted move not in the interests of patients or families.

Jane Richards – Early Years Inclusion Outreach Worker

It would mean up to date information and services would not be accessible for me to sign post families to the correct services. I came as a worker to use SIGN as I am starting 2 ready steady go groups. I do not have the knowledge of all additional needs and disabilities and where there is help in the area and sign were extremely accommodating in giving me help guidance and information that I can pass onto families.

I feel that is extremely important to have a central base where families can go personally or telephone for advice when they are going through a distressing time.

E Morton – Parent

AS I haven't got internet access the service is invaluable to obtain information, especially information which is specialist and not so mainstream. The service has been incredibly invaluable to me as my oldest son has a disability and my younger son is being assessed for SEN issues. Families like mine need all the advice and information they can get and SIGN has helped tremendously.

Wendy Wilson – Parent

When my little boy got a diagnosis I found this service very useful and without the information I was provided I would not have any understanding. I think as a parent the SIGN service is a very important information centre. It's useful information that parents need. I would have been at a loss without their help and I may still need information in the future as many other parents/carers may.

Anonymous Parent

Without SIGN we may be unaware of services available that be helpful. The publication of events over school holidays is invaluable.

Lydia Wilson

As a professional working with families whose children may have a disability, I have used the service on numerous occasions and have always found it a fantastic resource. I am certain that families with disabled children would suffer should this service be ceased.

Anonymous Parent

My 14 yr old daughter with epilepsy, ASD & LD has had a few quiet & happy years but will be leaving school in the next 2 yrs. We used SIGN at the beginning of her difficulties & will be using it again soon to access clubs & support for teenagers/young people. Mainstream info services don't understand the needs of kids with SENs.

Anonymous Parent

I would not be able to find out about services my child/my family may be entitled to - might miss out on services.

Anonymous Parent

SIGN as been a very important resource since my son's diagnosis. They have been able to give out information about Autism, have been a resource for information to pass on to schools and also a resource for activities that are accessible to special needs family.

It is vitally important that families have access to a service that helps to gather information for families with special needs to access. Where else will we go for this information!!!

Jayne Woodward – Parent

SIGN have always been the go-to people for sources of information for support our family has needed. There are no other sources that can provide this in a timely and reliable way.

Getting reliable information is key to all parents and carers of disabled children in the city. The loss of that specialist knowledge will have a massive impact.

C Seekings – Parent

SIGN was especially useful when my son was first diagnosed. If they were not there to give advice and pass on loads of information I would have been in No-mans Land - not knowing where to turn next. It is a convenient office to visit and telephone for any updated material. SIGN keeps me updated with all new services / changes. Closure would mean a lack of current information and an increase of my time trying to find what I want. It will also mean that I will miss out on loads of info for which I have no idea exists. I would be lost without the service. It is all "fight fight fight" for our children to get what they are entitled to. It's great to have a place where they know who can help us. It's not easy being a parent of a child with SEN.

Sarah Church – Parent

I would be asking to see the paediatrician or a psychologist or a social worker on a regular basis if I hadn't had this direct source of information, although health care professionals generally have very little detailed knowledge of services available other than specifically health. I may also have had mental health issues of my own without the information they provided. It was SIGN at Ryegate that provided me with information about autism, with information about DLA and how to apply and a contact name of someone at PACES who can help apply. They provided information about SNIPS and childcare, SNIPS were the route for regular Saturday respite. Provided a list of groups providing activities that cater for the disabled like Swimming group at Westfield. KIDS together and the Sheffield family support group information came through SIGN, we have been to ball pools every week and again Swimming and enjoyed visits from Santa through this group. Queuing at a usual Santa's grotto just doesn't work. Most recently Merlins magic wand application form. It's also the newsletter they send out that we found out about the disability INDEX and then from the index had access to the LD specialist nurses who have since helped us access free travel. SIGN also provided info on the Cinema passes, slice cards. There is no one source for all this information otherwise. You should be making it work better by ensuring all newly diagnosed children get a 'pack' that promotes the service and then it might get used more effectively. I only found out about it because was on site at Ryegate whilst kids were having assessment. I had to go to the desk to ask but then discovered a whole host of information. If it is underused it's because healthcare professionals are not advertising it enough as part of their day to day work. It was also a source of NHS being able to access participants for research projects related to health and social care

issues something that will have saved a lot of time spent on other methods of ethical recruitment.

Anonymous Parent

Without this service I wouldn't know half the things I do now about what is out there in regards to help with finance health or education. Not to mention the wealth of information they have about various organisations that put carers/parents in touch with families allowing me to know that I'm not on my own and support is out there. To lose this service would be a DISASTER.

Why is it ALWAYS the vulnerable ones in our communities that get the rug pulled from under their feet. Surely there must be other areas to pull funding from e.g. first class travel on trains that certain execs/directors seem to enjoy on a regular basis or the elaborate spread at some of these meetings that are held. I know it happens because I have to sometimes raise the orders (I work for the council) getting rid of SIGN and other services like it, is criminal it really is. I bet that a few of these decision makers do not even know what SIGN is all about. I'm really gutted and disappointed that pulling this service has even been suggested. It's like taking away the very air we need to breathe, fatal!

Anonymous Parent

As the parent of a disabled child I do not know where else I could turn for support and advice relating to my child other than my GP which is very hard as appointment times are very long and often not convenient for me. This service has been a life saver and without it my family's lives would be a lot worse.

Ros Bishop - Professional

Parents who access services use this to track down further information or to break down what has been given further. This is freeing up our time to work with further families requesting our front line services. It is of value when you need a list of up to date charities providing funding for specific items/ equipment. To be able to pass on SIGN as somewhere for confused and worried parents to get further information of their child's disability. Lots of our parents use it to borrow literature or DVD's or to find help groups for their child's condition.

Anonymous Parent

Not used them for 18 months but they were so helpful when my daughter was diagnosed at Ryegate, I wouldn't have known about dla, clubs, groups etc SIGN's links were good – The index registered our daughter as disabled too and they knew so much about disability/medical side to my daughter conditions. SIGN filled a gap in our knowledge - disabled kids don't come with a manual and SIGN/INDEX really helped us find our feet.

Anonymous Parent

It has been useful as a source of information about many things eg: childminders, SNIPS. Often as a parent of a child with special needs you have to interface with so many professionals, you need a central resource.

Anonymous Professional

I am a worker at the Sheffield Children's Disability Team, SIGN has helped me relay accurate information about support available to families. Without SIGN I do not believe I could have gathered such detailed information myself.

Debbie Isitt – Parent

Every time I have had any problems gaining access to services I have called into the office and gained information. Particularly about activities available after school and at weekends that are appropriate for my son. There is no where else I know of where this info is available which would have left me with an unhappy teenager with nothing to do in his spare time.

Pat Flowerdew – Parent

We would lose the one point of contact for specialist information about our son's condition and the services that are available for him and the family

We have received information about the availability of grants, accessed information on literature and used the lending library; staff have always been very pro-active and offered help and information about services that we didn't know about.

Sue Jenner – Professional

I work with The Learning Support Service and deliver training to schools on SEN and always share with staff the info on SIGN which I know they find helpful. I have contacted you often and your service is excellent. I am certain many people benefit from the work you do and I am very disappointed to think it is under threat.

Anonymous Parent

My son has ASD and we found there was no post diagnostic support with Ryegate but SIGN helped so much signposting to local support groups and childcare providers for children with additional needs. Sue who works there is doing a brilliant job.

Anonymous Parent

This would have a large impact. SIGN is the first port of call when needing information regarding my disabled son and I feel I would not know where else to go to furnish me with such help and advice when I require it. I have sought information in the past when required and find the staff very friendly and helpful. Such services are necessary for us and our children and I strongly feel such spending cuts should be moved to other services which do not affect disabled children.

Andrea Clayton – Parent

Closure of this service would have a great impact, considering I have only just discovered SIGN. I wasn't made aware of this service until recently, this is a lifeline to parents such as myself with 2 children with special needs. The service is the difference between feeling alone and having no-one to turn to for info, and help and knowing there is someone there at the end of the phone. This service is vital.

Anonymous Parent

I would lose the link to specialist knowledge that has enabled me to achieve an understanding to get the correct resources and support for my son. This will affect the rest of his life. To lose this dis-arms parents and carers. SIGN colleagues were supportive with knowledge and gave an in depth view to my son's support/welfare needs. It gave me the confidence to ask for what I felt he deserved. I needed re-assurance and I got it and evidence eg: leaflets, verbal communication. Without SIGN parents/carers/children lose an independent, empowering support life-line that makes a positive difference to all our children both now and in the future.

Anonymous Parent

I wouldn't know where to go to get help and support for my family and my disabled child, we would be isolated as a family. We were despairing until we contacted SIGN who gave us information about my son's condition, how to deal with it and also support groups for us to attend.

Karen Youd – Parent

There would be no help without this service.

Anonymous Parent

There would be no more easy access to forms and valuable advice. It's so easy to pick up the phone and speak to someone who can guide you or put you in touch with other services. I rely on this very much – there is not enough of this kind of service and it should be more not less.

Anonymous Parent

This is the only place I have found help for our family and my son in Sheffield.

E Howarth – Family Support Worker

We would lose a valuable source of information and support for vulnerable children and their families. SIGN has been a very valuable source of help – it would be a sad loss. We have used this service to obtain support information for our families for many years and have always found them reliable and very helpful. Our families have benefited from their services for a long time.

David Hawkes – Parent

I would lose an important source of information. I have used the service to find out about registered child carers at the centre on Leopold St and I have used the service at Ryegate to obtain information about learning disabilities and related support services. Not all adults have easy

access to information so it removes an important source of information. Not everyone has access to the internet. Also face to face contact is important. I had hoped to be able to use the services of SIGN in the future but I would not be able to do so from now on if the service goes.

Debbie Watters – Family Support Worker AMD MAST

SIGN has always been the first place I tell my clients to contact for any information and support groups for children with disabilities. This would have a big impact for clients whose children have just been diagnosed. They are unsure of what is out there to help them with support and financial issues. I have always found the staff very friendly and helpful in giving reassurance and guidance. This is a very valuable service and it would have a big impact on the families if taken away.

Anonymous Parent

SIGN closure would have a high impact on us as a family as we don't have a computer or access to the information we need only through SIGN. Our life is more comfortable now that we can just ring SIGN whenever we have a concern or want information. When we got a diagnosis for my son they sent us everything you would ever want to know about his condition and groups he could attend etc. SIGN is a real lifeline, it would be upsetting and such a shame if it was to close.

Charnjit Kaur-Javed (Parent)

I recently found out my child has Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Although I had already suspected that was the case it still was a shock emotionally and mentally when the diagnosis was finally made. I felt at a total loss of what to do in terms of benefits, knowing of services that provide some help and having access to books on my son's condition. I was provided with help and support for all the above issues through the SIGN service. I honestly don't know how I would have managed without their assistance. I still continue to use this service for situations that arise or that I become aware of over time and it is of great comfort to me knowing that I can come here and ask for help with answering my queries. I strongly believe this SIGN service is a vital place for ALL parents who have a child with special needs and I have ALWAYS found the staff willing to help in any way they can.