



PARENTING SPECIAL CHILDREN

Evaluation Report

September 2018 – July 2019



**This report covers
activities during the
academic year 2018 – 2019.**

**During this time, the
charity supported**

**2581 FAMILIES AT
LEAST ONCE**

**A 61% INCREASE
YEAR ON YEAR.**

**44% of these families
accessed more than
one service.**

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'This course, and all other courses we have taken at PSC have equipped us with the knowledge, and therefore the power to make positive changes for our family, longer term.'

Introduction

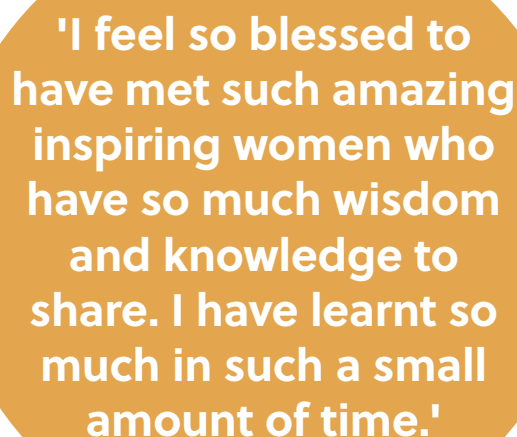
Parenting Special Children (PSC) is a Berkshire based charity aiming to improve the wellbeing of children/young people with the whole range of special needs and disabilities, including those who have experienced early life trauma.

Over the last 13 plus years, PSC has been at the forefront of responding to gaps in service provision by setting up new and specialist services and projects for families. In addition to parents/carers, we are now supporting children and young people directly as well as professionals who work with them.

Our services have expanded and currently include:

1. A helpline, over phone, email and social media
2. Specialist parenting workshops and courses
3. Sleep courses and clinics
4. Annual topic based conferences and guest speaker events
5. Community and Special Interest support groups
6. Family Fun events
7. Training opportunities for professionals working with special needs children.
8. Monthly Social and Educational groups for young people
9. Specialist workshops, courses and peer support for families of children who have experienced trauma through neglect, abuse, domestic violence and other adverse childhood experiences.

PSC services continued to be well respected and regularly used by families across Berkshire West and East during this year. We continue to enjoy strong partnerships with local authorities, schools, health and education professionals and voluntary services in the area.



'I feel so blessed to have met such amazing inspiring women who have so much wisdom and knowledge to share. I have learnt so much in such a small amount of time.'

HELPLINE

Over the year, our helpline:

**RECEIVED
301 CALLS**

**Average call length
of 39 minutes**

'The helpline has been a tremendous support to me, you always give me confidence in my parenting skills when I doubt myself, thank you so much!'

**RECEIVED
446 E-MAILS**

**SUPPORTED 453
PARENTS AND
CARERS**

PARENTING COURSES

This year, the charity delivered the following courses:

Course	Numbers Delivered	Number of Parents/ Carers
Time Out for Special Needs (TOSN) 7 weeks	4	22
Time out for ADHD (TOADHD) 5 weeks	2	15
Who's in Charge? 9 sessions	3	19
Attachment Focused Parenting 7 weeks	1	11
Total	19	67

Time Out courses:

We did not have funding to deliver 'Time Out for Autism' courses this year. With the other two TO courses, attendees filled in evaluation forms before and after the courses. Some of the things they reported were:

- A 116% increase in strategies they felt they had for managing ADHD behaviour.
- A 77% improvement in confidence in parenting their ADHD children.
- A 36% improvement in feeling supported in their role as a parent.

'The facilitators were fantastic, it opened my eyes to things I didn't know.'

'This course has been fantastic. I gained a lot of insight and understanding.'

'I feel I have gained knowledge of ADHD and how it impacts all of our lives. I have already started managing my child's behaviour differently and I'm not so frustrated with him.'

Who's in Charge:

Who's in Charge? is a specialist course providing a therapeutic approach for families of children and young people who are violent or aggressive. When comparing the forms filled in before and after the course, parents reported:

- A 150% increase in their ability to cope with their child's behaviour
- A 100% increase in feeling supported with their experience of child to parent violence
- An 80% improvement in their health and wellbeing
- A 90% decrease in their feelings of depression and unhappiness

The benefits continued for the families as reported by nearly 60% parents/carers who filled in evaluation forms three months after the end of the course:

'Things are calmer, learning to stop and think first before reacting. Less outbursts and if they do happen things calm quicker.'

'I am more assertive and have better coping strategies.'

'I have become more open minded and positive, more tolerant and patient.'

Attachment Focused Parenting course:

This was our first ever course aimed at birth families of children who have been through significant trauma and adverse experiences in their early life.

When comparing the forms filled in before and after the course:

- 100% said they felt more confident to support their child with achieving their potential.
- 100% said they felt better able to understand their child's needs and interact with them.
- 100% said they the new skills learnt had helped them to improve their relationship with their child.
- 100% of the attendees said they would recommend this course to other parents/carers.

'The course leaders went out of their way to support me and to help me to apply what we were learning to the situation. It was an incredibly useful course and really well delivered. The support I received stands out as being exceptional, at a time when I really needed it. Thank you!'

'It definitely gave me lots of good ideas plus help and support from others in same boat.'

'The course has given me more confidence in dealing with challenging behaviour.'

'I have gained strategies for improving my communication and relationship with my daughter. I am seeing improvements already in the way I handle things'.

'Yes, learnt new techniques in staying calm and new language that can help communicate more effectively.'

'Facilitators were beyond excellent. There needs to be much more of these most valuable & much needed courses.'

'It has given me a different perspective, to see things from another point of view.'

PARENTING WORKSHOPS

This year, the charity delivered **107** parenting workshops to **962** parents/carers, an average of **9** people per workshop.

'Fantastic information, feel much more confident.'

'I feel fully motivated and ready to improve many things, very empowering!'

99% of attendees said they would recommend Parenting Special Children to friends and family.

Topic	Numbers Delivered	Number of Parents/ Carers
Pre and Post Assessment workshops, Autism	34	283
Pre and Post Assessment workshops, ADHD	53	337
Autistic Girls	9	99
Dual Diagnosis – Autism and ADHD	2	42
Sensory Processing Workshops	7	158
Pathological Demand Avoidance	1	14
ADHD & Medication	1	29
Total	107	962

Parent/carers indicated an average **4 point increase** (on a scale of 1-10) when comparing their knowledge on the connection between diagnosis and anxiety before and after the workshops.

Parent/carers indicated an average **3 point increase** (on a scale of 1-10) when comparing their understanding of autism before and after the workshops, how it affects their child's behaviour and strategies to help with behaviour.



'Very helpful in teaching me a new approach. The use of examples was so re-enforcing.'

SLEEP COURSES & CLINICS

This year, the charity delivered

'Very friendly and helpful. I've left feeling confident in our next steps.'

11 courses for parents
reaching out to **93** parents.

98 in-depth sleep clinics with
parents and **14** with teens.

'Your advice worked,
He is not getting
up too early in the
morning, he sleeps
the whole night now.
Thank you so much!'

A sample of parents (25%) were asked for feedback 6 weeks after the course/clinic and this is what we found:

- 20% of parents were sleeping the required 7+ hours prior to the course/clinic. This increased to 36% after attending.
- Only 18% of parents reported that their child slept 9-12 hours prior to the course/clinic. This increased to 40% after the course/clinic.
- There was an average increase of 30% in parents' confidence in managing their child's sleep problems.

Number of secondary school workshops delivered	4
Total attendance (40% had additional needs)	200 CYP
Number of specialist school workshops delivered	7
Total attendance	77 CYP

'This course is above excellent! I have learned a lot and definitely widened my knowledge. I'll make sure I apply it to my little one and enjoy our goodnight sleep very soon. Thank you so much!'

'I thought the session was brilliant. I really felt that you took the time to listen to M and incorporate her feelings.'

79% of the children said they enjoyed the workshops.

62% of participants said that they will be making changes to their evening routine at home as a result of attending the workshops.

'Brilliant recommendations. Very knowledgeable. Thank you.'

SERVICE FOR FAMILIES OF ADOPTED CHILDREN AND THOSE IN FOSTER/KINSHIP CARE

The service supported 226 parents/carers during the year through a number of activities, representing a mix of adopters, foster carers and kinship carers of children and young people no longer living with their birth parents. Nearly 40% of them attended more than one activity.

The service also supported 143 professionals working with these children and their families.

'Our sleep improved greatly due to the children's settling better and sleeping later in the mornings. We are in a much better place after having your invaluable support and guidance around both general behaviour, and sleep routines.'

Overall, the service delivered:

- 12 parent/carer workshops on a variety of topics
- 4 seven week courses
- One to One support to 88 parents/carers
- 3 sleep courses
- 1 seminar
- 3 Family Fun events
- 6 professional training events
- 43 support groups with more than 30 sessions altogether

Courses, workshops and seminar:

- **100%** of parents/carers said they would recommend our workshops and courses to other families.
- **100%** said they felt less isolated after interacting and getting support from other parents/carers on the course.
- **100%** parents/carers said they were better able to interact with their adopted/ looked after children and more confident to support them after attending the course.
- Of the parents/carers who attended three month follow up sessions, **100%** said they were still using the skills they learnt at the course.
- **96%** of parents attending workshops reported increased knowledge & understanding.

'Really interesting and informative session, difficult subjects were treated with sensitivity.'

Sleep courses for children who are adopted or in care:

The three sleep courses were attended by 19 adopters, foster carers and kinship carers. They were asked to rate:

- how well they understood their child's sleep difficulties.
- how confident they were in managing these.
- Severity of their child's sleep problems.

Their responses were scored before and after the intervention.

Parents/carers reported a

- **33%** increase in understanding
- **81%** Increase in confidence
- **86%** improvement in severity of sleep problems after accessing the intervention.

We also set up a live sleep webinar in partnership with Parents and Children Together (PACT) for their adopters, which was watched live by 53 people.

It is available to view through this link:
<https://youtu.be/hPoY9ByARpo>

'Extremely motivating, great reminder why I do fostering.'

'As a qualified nurse, I have attended a lot of training. This workshop was most definitely, by far the most beneficial, most rewarding time spent on any course ever. A massive thank you!'

SUPPORT GROUPS

This year, PSC expanded the number of monthly support groups we run for parents/carers. Some were based in particular geographical areas while others brought together parents and carers with shared experiences.

'Warm, friendly, inviting, helping build my confidence to help my child and to make other friends.'

A – Community Support Groups:

66 parents accessed **24** sessions of monthly support groups in five geographical areas:

- Whitley in Reading
- Southcote in Reading
- Greenham in West Berkshire
- Great Hollands in Bracknell and
- Monksfield Way in Slough

Feedback on impact was collected at each session through an online survey:

- **99%** of parents found the sessions useful
- **100%** reported learning new things
- **94%** said they feel less isolated and
- **91%** made new friends after becoming a part of the group

B – Shared Experiences Groups:

We also ran **33** sessions of the following monthly groups which were accessed by **82** parents/carers in total:

- Kinship Carers group
- Male Carers group
- Adopters & Foster Carers group in Maidenhead
- Adoptive mums group
- Dads group

20 carers took part in an online survey to comment on the value of these groups:

- **100%** said they felt less isolated in their caring role since joining the group
- **100%** said they would recommend the group to others.
- **75%** said they felt more confident in their role as a male carer since attending the group

'The group has helped cement relationships and is a listening ear to us.'

'Life saver! I don't feel like I am on my own anymore. I am meeting new parents who actually get it!'



'Companionship/ comradeship, things I received from the group. So much knowledge, patience, love & support. I feel very lucky to have been able to join. Thank you.'

'It's lovely to be able to talk to people who understand and be able to share tips. A fabulous support group!'

'I would be lost without the group and its members' support.'



ANNUAL CONFERENCE

PSC ran its biggest conference yet during 2019 on 'Pathological Demand Avoidance'.

200 people attended, approximately **50%** being parents and the other half professionals.

'Very helpful and informative, brilliant conference!'

'Best training in a long while!'

'An absolutely fantastic conference delivered by superb team and speakers. Thank you very much for giving us hope.'

Delegates reported a **107% increase on average in knowledge and understanding of PDA after attending the conference.**

'I feel more confident that PDA is a "real thing", this allows me to continue to push for the right support.'

'It provided me with more understanding of why my autistic daughter behaves the way she does and how I can look after her better.'

'It was really useful to go through PDA diagnostic criteria and realise my daughter matches.'

'Very memorable, wonderful insight from an "insider"'

'It was a mix of parent and education perspectives, logical progression of topics helped me build my understanding during the day.'

TRAINING WORKSHOPS FOR PROFESSIONALS

PSC has always delivered training workshops to professionals working with children and young people with special needs. However, recently, the training is becoming more popular and we are increasingly being commissioned to go in and deliver in schools and other organisations.

This year, 300 professionals attended such training events with the charity:

Service	Number of workshops	Number of Professionals
LAAC Service	7	150
Sleep Service	6	150
Total	13	300

LAAC Service

- **94%** reported gaining new knowledge and information about how to meet the needs of the children that they work with.
- **93%** of professionals said they recommend our workshop to other colleagues.

Sleep Service

When asked about their understanding of sleep difficulties, strategies and confidence in supporting families, they reported an average **3 point increase** (on a scale of 1-10, so 30%)

'This is essential knowledge for us teachers. It was clear to see the expertise through your talk. My knowledge and confidence of SEND, Attachment and LAC has developed ten-fold.'

'Absolutely fantastic workshop! Everyone needs to be given the opportunity to hear from this charity!'



'I always find your sessions so knowledgeable. Thank you!'

'Thank you, this training has been excellent, highly informative and speakers speak both professionally and from personal experience. I enjoy the open discussions held and the positive attitude and belief that things can and will improve.'

'Really good use of my time, has hard wired things I already knew & added greater depth & understanding. Thank you.'

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE GROUPS

'The A Team' – Awesome Autism

The Autistic girls' monthly group that was set up last year met regularly for a variety of topic based workshops (for example 'Sleep, Stress, Sugar and the Spectrum') and activities (like Arts & Crafts, Cake decorating etc.).

They had 7 sessions in all accessed by 53 girls.

66% of girls attended more than one event.

Two of those were joined by parents.

When asked what is good about the A team, **75%** of respondents said they felt safe and liked being around others with similar experiences. Belonging, acceptance, feeling happy and having fun were also key aspects of the A Team for these girls.

'Listening to others helped me to understand I was not alone and to be proud of my Autism.'

'I feel understood. I found a friend.'

'I think the evenings are fantastic. Really well organised and the content is always relevant and pitched at the right level.'



At the end of last year, PSC merged with the local charity 'Auticulate. The group's aim is to support autistic children and young people develop their social, communication and independence skills and help them to navigate the mainstream world. This is done through topic based sessions, for example understanding non verbal communication, friendships & relationships etc. and off site activities like going to restaurants, travelling by train etc.

The junior group met 18 times this year and was accessed by 11 children.

'I like coming to Auticulate as it is fun and benefits me in life.'

The senior group also met 18 times and was accessed by 15 children.

FAMILY FUN EVENTS

In addition to activities and trips for the A-team and Auticulate, **PSC delivered 5 other family events** this year including 3 events at Camp Mohawk, 1 at Thames Valley Adventure Playground and one Christmas party for families of looked after and previously looked after children.

All venues were accessible for children and young people with special needs and had trained staff to ensure that families were able to fully relax and enjoy. One event included transporting families from areas of deprivation to and from the venue, who would be unable to attend without this access to safe transport.

'Really well run,
would definitely
like to attend any
other family days.'



226 children
attended the
above events in
total along with
their families.



Parents and children have told us that the events have allowed them to have time together as a family. Many of them were not able to go out together as a family, with the majority of families only going out together once a month or every few months.

Families told us that they were happy to attend our events because they were:

- An opportunity to be together as a family
- They felt safe
- There were fun activities and
- That it was an opportunity to meet with other families who understood.

100% of parents said that they felt less isolated after attending these events.

'My child went in a swimming pool for the first time and was very happy about it. He loved the sensory area. So much to do, very pleased with everything that was organised today.'



FINANCE

PSC has seen a steady growth in services alongside a healthy rise in income and expenditure over the last few years.

In addition to project specific funding, we were able to considerably increase our unrestricted funding this year through a number of measures. For the year ending 30 November 2019, we are expecting higher levels of restricted and unrestricted income plus and expenditure to reflect further growth in the size of the charity.

Income summary - FY14 - FY18



Financial Results 2017-2018		£
Restricted income from grants		£167,901
Restricted income from course fees		£4,249
Unrestricted income		£22,216
Total Income		£194,366
Direct charitable expenditure		£132,957
Governance and indirect costs		£46,050
Total Expenditure		£179,006
Net surplus		£15,360
Net surplus as a %		7.9%
Reserves carried forward to 2018-19		£47,679

FUNDERS

We would like to express our appreciation to our funders for the important financial support that they provide, which enables us to deliver majority of our services either FREE or at a very low cost to families and at a subsidised cost to professionals.

A big thank-you to:



We would also like to thank our local fundraising platforms for their dedicated support:



As well as a number of trusts who donate via The Good Exchange:



We are grateful to all of the above, as well as our individual donors and sponsors for the fantastic support that they provide, without which we cannot continue.

TEAM PSC

A big thank you to all staff and volunteers for making all of the above happen. PSC has grown to be **a strong team of 45 people, 75%** of whom are parents/carers of children and young people with special needs. Our volunteers gave the charity a **massive 1000 plus hours last year**, and make up **45%** of the team.



'We understand our son better and we feel this has helped bring us all closer together and relate more to one another, making us a happier family'

'Our family situation is so different now. I look at where we were before and I can't believe it is the same child. It is so positive, a complete turnaround!'

'I have learnt and loved all of the training and support.'

'The strategies we learnt from you literally changed our lives!'

LOOKING AHEAD

After another very successful year, PSC is looking forward to many new developments going forward, some of which are as follows:

We will be re-launching our LAAC service as 'Childhood Trauma and Attachment' service to include:

- Extended work with birth families of children with early life trauma
- More support groups for parents/carers
- New monthly groups for adopted and looked after children & young people
- More training and one to one work with schools
- Increased focus on Berkshire East
- More one to one work with complex families
- Developing resources for families of teenagers
- More training for staff and volunteers on trauma informed approaches
- More partnership working with local initiatives like 'Reducing Parental Conflict' and 'Trauma Informed One Reading'.

New workshops and courses, for example:

- Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) course
- Workshops on 'emotional regulation' for parents and young people
- Workshops on self-harm
- Series of linked workshops on 'Reducing the Stress of Caring'
- Joint workshops with local organisations like 'Jelly' (Creative Arts), 'Whole Step' (Music Therapy) and Reading Rep (theatre productions).

Building on the collaboration work we have already started with academic institutions like University of Reading, Nottingham University and University College London.

Launching our work with local companies and delivering workshops for their staff on a variety of topics.

More focus on local fundraising and commissioning to further increase our income and continue to meet the need for existing and new services.

Case studies

Real stories from our families.

Names have been changed for confidentiality purposes.

Parenting

Edwina has two sons, aged 11 and 6 with the youngest awaiting ADHD assessment. Edwina attended Pre and Post ADHD workshops, Dual Diagnosis, Autism & ADHD and Sensory Processing workshops with her partner, a total of 10 hours of training. This is what she had to say:

'I really appreciated the workshops, a wonderful resource. Last year has been a new journey and the workshops have been invaluable. It is great to go somewhere where you meet other parents who are so matter of fact about their experiences as a parent and it gives a sense of normality'

'We have learnt so much. The workshops have made us all more patient, we are all less wound up and learning how to reduce stress has made a real difference. We are all being calm and he is responding really well. We are having less meltdowns, especially in the mornings. In the last few months we are having calm routines and calm conversations. He is less stressed going into school with is helping him, the school are being very supportive. The workshops have made a real difference to home life.'

Sleep Service

Claire attended a sleep course and clinic as her son was highly anxious about going to bed. He took 1-2 hours to settle and would wake up 5 or more times per night, with sleep paralysis and traumatised by bad dreams. He only slept 1-4 hours in total.

Six weeks after attending the course and clinic, she reported that he was taking only 15 minutes to settle, waking up only once or twice during the night and sleeping a total of 9-12 hours. **A total turnaround.**

Service for children who are adopted or in care

A – From a foster carer who attended a seven week course and sleep course:

'I consider myself privileged for having attending your courses and I have taken away so much that I'm able to put to good use with the young people that I care for. I did what you suggested and found her to be in a better mood. It made me feel better also for having boosted the confidence of this beautiful girl. I feel now I've made the right decision in carrying on looking after her, but I must admit that I perhaps would've not made that decision if it wasn't for you ladies, you made me understand a lot better not only what I'm dealing with but also about myself.'

B – From an adoptive dad who attended a seven week course, a sleep course and the male carers support group:

'The group has really helped me to see things from a better perspective which has been good for home life. Through the courses, I got invaluable advice, we have got our nights back. Our son sleeps well now, he stays in his bed, falls asleep and night times are consistently good. Lots has changed for us. Life is much calmer now. Our daughter is much calmer than she was. We are seeing incremental improvements. There is less violence at home. It is easier to connect because our focus is not on managing behaviour but on connecting.'

Helpline

Anna has two children who were on CAMHS waiting list when she first contacted the charity last year. She was desperate for someone to not only give her advice but also to just listen! She needed to speak without judgement and gain as much knowledge as possible to help understand the children's needs. She went on to attend all three pre and post Autism assessment workshops, sleep and sensory processing workshops.

During the next year, she contacted the helpline few times and sought advice around schools, friendships and other issues. She went on to attend four monthly workshops for girls, our PDA conference, Who's Incharge workshop and PDA workshops.

Anna has commented on numerous occasions that knowing we were all parents of children with additional needs made things easier. Anna felt we did not judge and just 'got it'. She has gained immense knowledge, understanding and confidence in herself and her parenting. Since she first got in touch with the helpline, she has:

- Had 3 hours and 20 minutes of support over the phone.
- Had advice over email through five different email chains.
- Accessed 8 workshops.
- Attended 1 conference.
- Been signposted to and gained support from five other organisation.

Community Support Groups:

Zoe came to the first meeting of our community support group being held at her child's school. She was visibly upset and very emotional. She was struggling with her son's meltdowns, behaviours, sleep, anxiety, eating and school relationships. She felt that the school was not recognising the difficulties and challenges that were being faced at home. She felt really unsupported and very isolated.

Zoe's own well-being, confidence and self-esteem were really poor. She felt it was all her fault and was questioning her ability to parent. She wanted to find help, information and support from people who understood.

Zoe attended every session and learnt strategies to manage anxiety. She put all her learning in place at home and with time, grew in confidence. She became more assertive and worked with the school to change their approach with her son.

Auticulate

My son who has ASD, ADD and several medical issues was finding social and school life very difficult to navigate. He needed help and intervention to be able to manage and control his social behaviours and emotional regulation.

X was very anxious and although he had a wide friendship group, he would often exhaust friendships quickly through lack of self-awareness and not having the tools to cope with the nuances of social interaction and communication. This would leave him feeling upset and highly vulnerable and impacted upon his sleep, eating and confidence. X was also self-harming and chewing his clothes as his anxious state was constant.


X has thrived since joining Auticulate. He has many new coping strategies and a much better self-awareness. He is able to regulate his emotions much better so that his friendships are much healthier. He is able to understand and take responsibility for his actions, as well as ask for support before situations become difficult and upsetting for him.

He is still an anxious child, but he is much more measured and able to cope with the pressures of secondary school and social life, including self-management and independence skills and this has largely been down to the interventions deployed by the team at Auticulate, who have been very responsive to his needs. X is much more articulate about his needs too; he is better able to communicate with his peers and teachers in an appropriate way and is much happier as a consequence. **Thank-you so much Auticulate!!**

One of the biggest impacts Zoe has expressed from attending the group is that as a family they managed a holiday. With lots of planning, preparation and consideration to sensory needs, it turned out to be an enjoyable experience. Anxiety based meltdowns reduced drastically.

The difference in Zoe overall has been amazing. Her self-esteem, energy levels, confidence, knowledge, understanding and ability to communicate, help others and support her child has grown immensely. She said:

'Coming to this group is the only thing that has worked for me. If I hadn't come here and met the people I have, I wouldn't have known anything. It really has changed our lives. Thank you!'



'Throughout the progression of the course, my situation became more complex. Out of all the services involved at the time, PSC stood out as being an organisation which really cared about helping those attending the course and their children.'

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