



City parents book in to help others

Two Sheffield boys are helping to make life easier for hundreds of children suffering from the brain disease hydrocephalus, by featuring in a new book about the condition. Lesley Draper reports

FIVE-year-old Luke Smedley, from Arbourthorne, and 18-month-old Aidan Bryan-Williams, from Gleadless, were both born with hydrocephalus – an excessive build-up of fluid in the brain.

And when their parents were asked to feature in a new book about the condition they were happy to help.

"The book is a wonderful idea," said Luke's mother, Natalie Tyler. "I found it extremely informative and have got a lot from it. It's a brilliant guideline for what to expect with hydrocephalus. One of the most helpful parts is the strategies which suggest ways of solving issues and encouraging development."

Aidan's mother, Anne Marie Bryan, agreed: "I don't think you can ever have enough information, so the more advice and help the better. The book has helped me look to the future and plan for Aidan's key development stages."

The 100-page guide – *Your Child and Hydrocephalus* – is the first of its kind, written by specialists from both the UK and the US. Published by the Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, it deals with the psychological, as well as the physical effects of hydrocephalus.

Luke and Aidan have both been involved with ASBAH all their lives. Their parents were introduced to the charity when the boys were diagnosed – Luke with

hydrocephalus and Aidan with spina bifida, too.

Over the years the families, like dozens of others in the Sheffield area, have benefited from the support offered by ASBAH and when officials asked them to take part in the project, they were happy to help others struggling to cope with the same problems.

Photographs were taken during a get-together at Norfolk Park and both Anne Marie and Natalie were interviewed about their experiences.

The book explains what hydrocephalus is, how to help children develop physical and language skills, how to manage the possible psychological effects and how to deal with puberty and growing independence.

It combines specialist research and personal experiences, presented in simple terms and covering a range of issues faced by the children and their parents.

ASBAH director Andrew Russell said: "There is still much to learn about hydrocephalus. It can be mild or very disabling. It can also be stable or dangerously unstable. Clinical and research expertise is steadily advancing, including ASBAH's own work."

● *Your Child and Hydrocephalus* is published by ASBAH and is available at £9.99 plus £2 p&p. Call 01733 555988 or visit www.asbah.org

● Above: Luke Smedley, left, and Aidan Bryan-William with his mother, Anne Marie Bryan.