

Solihull SEND Newsletter

February 2022

I trust you have managed to stay safe and well so far this year. We are already well into 2022 and this year will see some significant changes to how everyone within Solihull works together to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and additional needs.

In addition to that we are still waiting to see what possible changes the SEND review will bring – and I hope our next newsletter will be able to say more about that.

Update from Tim Browne - Interim Director of Children's Services and Skills

As you may be aware, we had our Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) during January, which focused on how well all statutory agencies in Solihull are protecting children in the area. The letter following inspection will be published on 21 February 2022.

During this process we have reviewed our plans within Children's Social Care, following the departure of Frank McSheffrey. I am pleased to announce that Jassi Broadmeadow will now be covering the Assistant Director role whilst we recruit and that Emma Lightfoot will be covering the additional Head of Service post.

Strategic News

Every Child and Young Person Matters, and Matters Equally

We are pleased to publish the new [Additional Needs Strategy](#) for Solihull – written directly for the children and young people it will support. This sets out how all services will work together, particularly across education, health, children's and adult's social care, employment and communities. And importantly work with children and young people with additional needs (aged 0-25 years) and their parent carers so they can have the best life possible.

The strategy sets out how professionals promise to work with children, young people and their parent carers and the outcome statements we will be working towards. A number of areas for action have been identified and plans are being worked on to deliver these. However, we are calling on every professional, and service, working with children and young people with additional needs to work in this collaborative way and to think about what they can do to improve their practice; and most importantly outcomes. Together we can make Solihull a place where children and young people enjoy life, feel welcome and have the same chances of living their best life.

Solihull's Maternity & Early Years Strategy

We want to improve outcomes for children from pre-birth to 5 years old, providing the right support at the right time for all children to start strong and stay strong. We worked with partners

to create the draft document and following a recent consultation, we will be considering all feedback in the formation of the final strategy.

We continue to develop our work on the Strategy for Inclusive Education and Graduated Approach with key stakeholders and will be able to provide more information in the next newsletter.

Below are all the service updates for this term:

Educational Improvement

Bev Petch, School Advisor

We have reviewed Solihull's policy 'ensuring a good education for children who would otherwise miss out on education because of their health needs'. The policy sets out how Solihull Council will comply with its statutory duty under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 to arrange suitable, full-time education for children of compulsory school age who, because of illness, would otherwise not receive suitable education and is available on the Local Offer website:

<https://socialsolihull.org.uk/localoffer/?s=policy>

The policy also reminds schools of their duties to make arrangements for supporting pupils at their school with medical conditions.

Schools are at the frontline in providing appropriate support for pupils with health needs and enabling them to benefit from and take part in all aspects of school life. Schools are more likely to secure successful outcomes for children missing or potentially missing education due to their medical conditions where key staff share information and work together holistically but we also recognise that effective collaboration between education and health is essential to delivering suitable education for these children. .

Early Years

Lisa Morris, Early Years Manager

Our second cohort of Early Years practitioners recently completed their *NCFE Cache L3 Award for Special Educational Needs Coordinator in Early Years Settings*. Congratulations to them all for the hard work and dedication they demonstrate, supporting families and early years children with SEND in Solihull. We now have more than forty Level 3 qualified SENCOs working in our early years private and independent settings in Solihull. We look forward to continuing to work alongside them, networking and supporting each other to continually build on their good practice and the difference our early years settings make to the lives of children and families in Solihull.

The Department for Education has committed to further investment to increase the number of staff in group-based providers, and childminders, with an accredited Level 3 SENCO qualification. This will lead to better identification of SEND, and better support for children with SEND.

There was a record number of applications for Early Years Inclusion Fund at the December panel. Settings who are applying for this additional funding may like to use the Inclusion Fund flowchart as a check that all application requirements are met and have been submitted to panel. Further panel dates can be found at the link below.

<https://socialsolihull.org.uk/localoffer/education/inclusion-fund/> - panel dates and Inclusion Fund flowchart.

Educational Commissioning

Darren Jakeways, Commissioning Officer

Our contact management framework for independent schools and colleges continues to develop. We have recently started testing some enhanced pre-placement checks, are rolling out a programme of quality monitoring assessments and visits to schools and we are currently undertaking some contract compliance checks in respect of insurances. All aimed at achieving better outcomes for children and young people with SEND, using our high needs funding in the most effective way.

We have also recently commenced market shaping and scoping the most appropriate contractual route to deliver the best outcomes for our children and families who utilise tuition services, mediation services, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy so watch this space for future developments.

Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPCV)

Over the last term we have been working to raise voices of parents and carers within services and have held a meeting for parents and carers with Charlotte Jones (Head of SEND) and Michele Sadler (Head of Inclusion)

In the next couple of months we are holding a meeting (virtually) for parents with professionals such as: Charlotte Jones, the Community Therapies Lead, the Specialist Assessment Service Lead and health commissioners. This is at 12.30pm on Monday 14 February. If you would like to join please register [here](#)

We are also holding:

- a SEND Specific Careers Event on 8 March, so please keep an eye out for more information on this coming soon.
- sensory workshops with an Occupational Therapist, these will also include the opportunity for a sensory assessment. Again, please look out for more information coming soon.
- Basic computer skills classes from mid-February to mid-March

More events and opportunities to have your voices heard coming soon so please do look out for more information on the Solihull Parent Carer Voice page on Facebook, their Twitter page [@solihullpcv](#) and through information emailed out through schools.

Community Educational Psychology Service

Melissa Jones, interim Principal Educational Psychologist

Our EBSN team are working with the Inclusion Team on the relaunch of the Emotionally Based School Non-attendance pathway and our trauma informed pilot with the Virtual school and SISS colleagues is now moving into its second phase following completion of the initial training.

We have revised our supervision offer to schools and will discuss this with colleagues at SENCo networks in early February.

- Our YEF project made national news with the Youth Endowment Fund and Solihull are mentioned as a case study in this insights brief released in December on p.19 [here](#) Wider findings can be found here [here](#)

We are currently advertising to fill some vacancies within the service so look forward to welcoming new people soon. We now have new trainees with the service who will begin their courses in early February and work alongside our EPs, assistants and Trainee Eps.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme

Austin Rodriguez, Head of Stronger Communities

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme in Solihull was successfully rolled out in 2021. The programme that is funded by Department of Education offers free holiday club provision for children from reception to year 11 who receive benefits-related free school meals. Solihull Council recognised that a key priority was to increase and improve provision offered for children with SEN and/or disabilities. Training sessions for existing holiday club providers were successfully run by our specialist SEND clubs Inclusive Sports Academy, SoLo and Ordinary Magic. The training provides the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure clubs are as inclusive as possible for children with SEN and/or disabilities. Solihull Council also provided funding for Solihull Parent Carer Voice & North Solihull Additional Needs Group to have their own all-inclusive HAF events. Solihull Parent Carer Voice received funding for a winter family skate event at Solihull Ice Rink on 20 December, whilst North Solihull Additional Needs Group were funded for a sensory santa event at KEC Church Centre on 18 December. Parents were invited to attend the events and all children attending received a free hot meal.

From the total numbers of children who attended the Summer 2021 HAF programme, just 5% were classed as SEN and/or disabilities. The Winter 2021 HAF programme has seen an increase in attendance figures for SEND inclusion with 26% of total children classed as SEN and/or disabilities. Increasing this participation remains a key priority for Solihull Council and work is underway to implement this for the remaining three years of funding. If you would like more information on the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme please visit [here](#).

Specialist Inclusion Support Service

Paula Thompson, SISS Manager

SISS SEMH Nurture Provision for primary pupils - REFRESH

The SISS SEMH Nurture provision continues to develop with five pupils currently benefiting from their placement at REFRESH. It's been a real pleasure to see strong relationships grow between the children themselves, and the children and the REFRESH team, providing a safe space for our children to flourish. We are currently recruiting further members of the team to complement our teachers, inclusion support practitioner and play therapist. This will get us ready for opening the second group for Key Stage 1 children in May, when the final building phase is completed at Coleshill Heath School.

Autism Empowered Schools and Developing Identity Project

The SISS Autism team are working to support two Solihull secondary schools who are participating in a project which aims to empower autistic young people and help them to celebrate their amazing individual identities.

The project also includes working in collaboration with Solihull Parent Carer Voice to secure outcomes that will help the school community work better together to meet the neurodiverse needs of pupils now and in the future.

The project involves working together to co-produce training resources regarding identity, and we will be training school staff to help autistic pupils understand their identity. It will also explore people's experiences and make sure that adaptations to the school environment secure inclusive practice.

There are opportunities for both parents, carers and young people to be involved in the project, with a clear evaluation process by the end of the academic year.

Autism Assessment Waiting Times

Maria Kidd and Clara McDonald, Designated Clinical Officers

To support with reduction in ASD assessment waiting times Healios, an online provider of Autism assessments, have been commissioned to see children and young people in Solihull. They will offer assessments alongside the Specialist Assessment Service (SAS) starting from 7 February, seeing 122 children and young people in total, over a period of eight months.

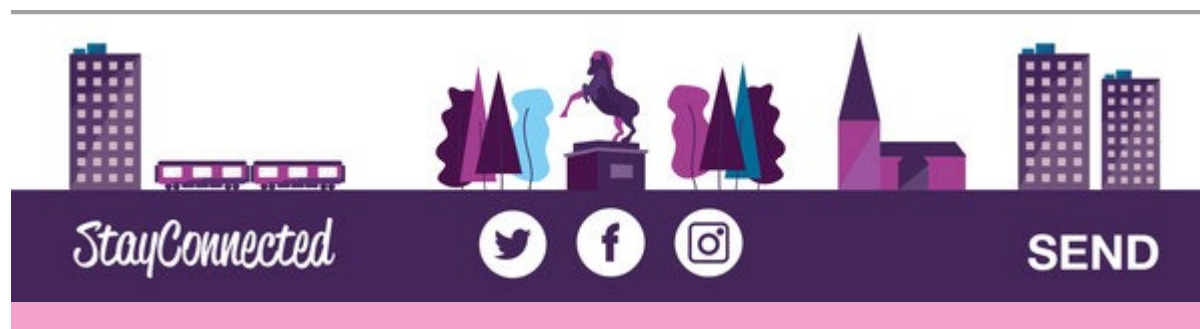
If you think other people you know would be interested in this newsletter please encourage them to sign up on the Council website: [here](#)

If you have any feedback on the newsletter, or suggestions for future items please email and let us know: jand@solihull.gov.uk

Thank you

Charlotte Jones

Head of SEND service 0-25



Solihull SEND Newsletter

April 2022

As the days start to get longer and the sunshine returned (albeit briefly) there is a timely reminder of all the work taking place in Solihull to give our children and young people with SEND and additional needs a brighter future.

This month we also celebrate Cerebral Palsy Awareness month and World Down Syndrome day - reminding ourselves that every child and young person with an additional need is an individual to be treasured.

On 29 March the long awaited SEND Green Paper “Right Support, Right Place, Right Time” was published. The aim of this paper is to create the right environment to ensure the aspirations of the 2015 reforms can be delivered. Please do take time to read the [review paper](#), and respond to the consultation with your thoughts.

Strategic News

Every Child and Young Person Matters, and Matters Equally

In the last edition we published the new [Additional Needs Strategy](#) for Solihull. Whilst this was written directly to the children and young people it will support, we knew we wanted to provide important information in different formats. We are therefore pleased to include a [symbol/widgit](#) version of the strategy for children and young people on our local offer. Posters are also being distributed to schools to further promote this approach.

Every Learner Matters, and Matters Equally

As we have mentioned in previous newsletters, over the past year we have been consulting through workshop groups with parent carers, schools, early years’ settings, staff from Solihull Council and from Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning group for health, to begin to co-produce Solihull’s first Strategy for Inclusive Education. All of this feedback, alongside current research in the field of inclusion, has been used to help us to draft our proposed 3-year strategy and action plan.

In line with the priorities of the Additional Needs Strategy, this is focused on inclusion and equity within our education settings - with its main aim being for all children and young people in Solihull to feel welcomed into, and included within, their local early years setting, school and

college; and for every single child and young person to be respected, valued and celebrated as a unique individual.

A broader consultation is now being planned and we are keen to hear everyone's views on this important topic so please read more below.....

Consultations

Solihull's Strategy for Inclusive Education 2022-25

The next stage in co-producing our strategy is to consult more widely. We want to hear from as many people as possible, so that we can check if we are heading in the right direction - in a way which takes into account the views and wishes of as many people in Solihull as possible.

Please complete the online consultation [here](#) - by **29 April 2022**.

Parent Carers can sign up to one of the online consultation events organised by Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPCV) on **4 & 5 April** - [Events for April 2022 – Solihull Parent Carer Voice \(spcv.org.uk\)](#)

Solihull Early Education and Childcare Parent Carer Survey 2022

We'd like to hear the views of all parents to assist with planning for early education and childcare places in the area for children aged 0-14 and up to 18 for children with additional needs. In particular, the information will be used to understand the demand for specific types of early education and childcare providers, as well as the amount and type of places that currently exist and may be needed in the future.

Please complete [here](#) - by **8 April 2022**. The outcomes will be published in the Council's Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency Plan in September 2022.

Below are all the service updates for this term:

Accessibility Strategy 2021 – 2024

Deborah Carpenter, SEND Operations Manager

The [Accessibility Strategy](#) is now live on the local offer. This outlines the local authority's duties under the Equality Act 2010, and the duties of schools in relation to this.

All schools should have an Accessibility Plan that is reviewed every three years and is available on their web page. A school's Accessibility Plan should follow the 3 key principles below and support the implementation of the local authority's vision. That vision being that all schools are accessible and inclusive:

- Guiding Principle 1: To increase access to the whole curriculum offered by schools for pupils with disabilities
- Guiding Principle 2: Improve the physical environment of schools to increase access to education and associated services

- Guiding Principle 3: Improve the access of written information for children and young people with disabilities

The SEND (0-25) service are looking to develop the strategy further with potential training options for schools in writing and implementing their plans and being able to better understand the strategy and what it means to them.

Early Years

Lisa Morris, Early Years Manager

Dingley's Promise

The Dingley's Promise Early Years Inclusion Programme was launched at the end of February. Solihull have been chosen as one of ten local authorities who are able to access ten modules of training over the next five years. The training is funded by Comic Relief and is available to anyone who works in Solihull early years' settings.

The first two modules are an introduction to early years' inclusive practice and early years' transitions. The courses aim to increase learners' awareness of the needs of all children, especially those with SEND, and to increase their confidence in supporting the learning and well-being of all children in their setting. At approximately five hours for each module the training is a big ask for settings to take part.

Settings will be able to demonstrate their commitment to continued professional development through a Dingley's Promise kite mark which will celebrate the number of people trained in the setting. Settings can sign up [here](#)

Speech, language and communication

In March the Early Years SEND Partnership supported the last of three action learning sets with a focus on speech, language and communication. As a workstream in the Maternity and Early Years Strategy action plan, the group have been looking at what is working well and how to further promote and develop early communication across Solihull. One suggestion was to hold a speech and language day which attendees thought was a great idea - so watch this space.....

Department for Education - feedback

The Department for Education (DfE) are keen to gather feedback from parents on the 'What to Expect in the EYFS' guidance for parents – available [here](#).

There are two questions the DfE would like to ask:

- Could you outline your thoughts and opinions of 'What to expect in the Early Years Foundation Stage: a guide for parents'?
- Is there any information missing from the document that would be useful to know?

Please send your responses to the Foundation Years inbox at foundationyears@ncb.org.uk.

EHCP Service

Amanda Hana, EHCP Service Manager

The service has continued its focus on 20 week timescales with the majority of new EHCP plans being completed in time, including achieving 100% in the last two months. All families are now offered person centred meetings as part of the EHCP assessment process and in January and February all families took up this offer.

The last few months have been busy with transitions work for the 15 February deadline and I am happy to report that all children with existing EHCP's going into Reception in September 2022 and moving from infants to juniors, had their placements named by the deadline. 96% of children moving into secondary placements in September 2022 also had these placements identified by 15 February.

Brian Sidwell has now been appointed as the service deputy manager and we are interviewing this week for EHCP Officers. Once we have appointed new staff we will update the structure chart available on the local offer.

The new Annual Review paperwork is now in use (available on the [Local Offer](#)) and is being well received by schools and families. The next project is to amend the new request paperwork and this will be underway soon, co-produced with schools, professionals, SENDIAS and Parent Carer Voice.

Specialist Inclusion Support Service

Paula Thompson, SISS Manager

Speech, Language and Communication Disorders (SLCD) Team Restructure

Over the last few weeks, the SLCD team has joined with the Communication and Learning Difficulties team, under the leadership of Jo Shilton - although they will maintain their own identity within this broader unit of SISS. Samantha Foster, who has been teaching at the SLCD Additionally Resourced Centre (ARC) at Bishop Wilson Primary School, will now be supporting as the Lead Professional, with responsibility for the day-to-day running of both of the LA's SLCD ARCs, the second provision being based within Valley Primary School.

REFRESH

The KS2 Nurture Provision, supporting children with SEMH needs, has been open since autumn term 2021, with the KS1 provision due to open after May half term. We have successfully recruited a teacher for KS1 class, but due to the timing of the building completion and following consultation with head teachers, we have decided not to take any KS1 pupils until September. In the summer term we will have some additional outreach capacity and will be setting up the provision ready to take pupils for 2022-23.

Educational Commissioning

Darren Jakeways, Commissioning Officer

Our first provider forum for Independent Schools and Colleges with Solihull learners with an EHCP took place online on 4 March 2022 and it was great to see so many people in attendance. It was an opportunity for us to outline our SEND strategy, our processes and contract management framework. But most importantly an opportunity for schools and colleges to tell us a bit more about what they felt about our plans and how we are doing.

We will take their feedback on board as we develop our processes and will ensure we provide more detail of what we are doing in response as we continue to work to develop and maintain good working relationships with our providers.

In addition to LA maintained and independent/non-maintained specialist provision for SEN learners, there have been increasing numbers of learners with complex and challenging needs who necessitate bespoke provision via online and face-to-face tuition services. We are currently working with stakeholders to strengthen contract and spot-purchase arrangements with current providers and ensure we have a robust process in place to mitigate any potential safeguarding, financial and reputational risks, with the introduction of tighter contract management, performance management and outcomes tracking.

Social Care and Support Services for children and young people (up to 18) with disabilities

Laura Slegg-Newton, Commissioning Officer

We are pleased to announce that from the 1 April 2022 we will be entering into a new flexible contract arrangement with [Sandant Care](#) and Social Life Opportunities [Social Life Opportunities](#) (SoLo) for the delivery of personal care and bespoke specialist (day) short breaks that are invoiced directly to the SEND Children's Social Care Team; meaning that they will be our preferred providers for these services.

Both providers have undergone a rigorous selection process, ensuring compliance against a number of factors (including CQC registration, safeguarding, health and safety, recruitment and selection, data protection, risk assessments, equality and diversity, financial standing, insurances) and quality assurance. Following a social care assessment, before a new package of care and/or support is put in place, availability will be checked with our preferred providers - families will then be given the choice of which available provider they would like to deliver the service.

It is intended that the new arrangements will help to preserve and support the development of the local social care market and help it to grow. The new arrangements will help achieve transparent and robust quality standards, whilst ensuring that Solihull Council is compliant with procurement rules and regulations.

It is anticipated that we will seek to add additional providers to the Flexible Contracting Arrangement later this year – please contact childrenscommissioning@solihull.gov.uk if your organisation would like to express an interest in becoming a preferred provider.

This new contracting arrangement will not affect current support packages delivered by other providers.

Clinical Commissioning Group

Clara McDonald, Designated Clinical Officer

The Designated Medical Officer (DMO) and Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) roles are key elements in supporting the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in meeting its statutory responsibilities for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The roles provide a point of contact for the Local Authority for seeking health advice, and also a point of contact for health providers for advice regarding SEND.

The members of the SEND designate team are:

Name	Role Days per week
Maria Kidd*	DCO 3
Clara McDonald	DCO 3 (across Birmingham and Solihull)
Dr Renu Jainer	DMO 0.5
Dr Younis Ahmed	DMO 1
Dr Amit Banerjee	DMO 1

*Maria Kidd retired from the CCG at the end of March. Her post will be recruited to but in the meantime the rest of the designate team will support the function, with additional support from Ali Beard (DCO for Birmingham).

Specialist Assessment Service (SAS)

Claire Howell, Clinical Team Lead

The service was recently awarded external NHSE funding to address the ASD waiting times. Healios, an independent company offering online ASD assessment, has been commissioned to deliver this work. They will be providing ASD assessments for 122 children on the waiting list over a period of 9 months from February 2022. Families who will be offered their assessment through Healios will be contacted.

The SAS website has been updated to reflect the current staffing structure and ways of working to help families access information about the team and the process they might expect when their child/young person is seen by the service. The SAS has recently made changes to how children are allocated from the waiting list to support a more consistent flow through the service. The SAS team recognise there is a long wait for the service and therefore regularly update the links for support for families/young people while they are waiting. In the future the service aims to provide more supporting information on the website to help people when completing their referral. The website link is here: <https://childrenscommunitytherapies.uhb.nhs.uk/specialist-assessment-service/>.

Adult Social Care

Bethany Hutchinson, Head of Service Care and Support

The SEND Adults Team have a number of Social Care Workers working alongside the Children's SEND Team, education and the All Age Disability team. We have introduced a pathway which includes joint working with the Children's SEND team and Education services for young people, from the age of 16, to aid the transition to adult's services. The SEND adults team aim to get to know young people for as long as possible before completing their Care Act (2014) assessment in time for the young person to turn 18.

A SEND adults social care worker will focus on a young person's strengths, considering what works well, what the person wants to do with their life, while also ensuring their essential care and support needs are met.

This assessment uses legislation called the Care Act (2014) and is holistic, covering all the important areas of a person's life, preparing them for adulthood. Once care and support is arranged Adult Care and Support will review a person's care needs annually.

It is our aim to ensure that moving into adulthood does not feel like a cliff edge and everything a person needs is considered and addressed as part of a thorough hand over process from Childrens Services.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme – Easter 2022

Austin Rodriguez, Head of Stronger Communities

Following a successful launch in 2021, the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme in Solihull will continue for the next three years. Offering free holiday club activities, including a nutritious meal for children from reception to year 11, in receipt of benefits-related free school meals.

Provision for SEND children has continued to increase, resulting in providers at 7 locations across the borough offering activities this Easter that are specifically designed for children with SEND, and more than 20 providers having completed SEND specific training provided by Solihull Council.

Below is a selection of activities running this Easter – for a comprehensive list of activities and locations, and to book places, please click [here](#)

- A range of physical activities promoting the benefits of regular exercise, targeted at young people who have a learning disability, learning difficulty or are identified with SEND. In addition to a range of off-site trips by **Inclusive Sports Academy (Millpool, 1st Solihull Scout Group, Lode Lane)**
- Easter Extravaganza (Teen scheme, 6-12, Playscheme, 13+), a variety of Easter related activities tailored to suit the ages and needs of each group of children. This will include crafts, games, music, and baking which help to promote the children's social development and independent living skills in a fun and engaging environment, by **SoLo Life Opportunities (Chelmsley Wood and Fire Station – central Solihull)**
- Families can learn to ride using a range of adapted bikes, for children aged 5 – 19 years by **Midland Mencap (Fordbridge)**
- A comprehensive programme of activities for 11 – 16 year olds by **Urban Heard (Fordbridge)**
- Girl specific activities for 9 – 16 year old girls by **Go Girl (Smith's Wood)**
- A wide range of practical and physical fun for 5 – 16 year olds by **Cre8fun Holiday Club (Balsall Common)**

- A wide range of activities such as Lego masterclasses, animal encounters, slime making and tie dye for 4 – 11 year olds and off-site trips for 5 – 14 year olds by **Ordinary Magic (Olton)**
- Cooking classes and physical activities for 5 – 11 year olds by **Cook Stars (Dorridge)**
- Multisports and indoor cycling for 5 – 16 year olds by **Strike 9T (Earlswood)**

Solihull Council has again provided funding for Our Voices Heard to host an fun day of sporting, crafts and swimming activities. See the OVH section below for details.

If you have any questions about activities, please contact individual providers who will be able to discuss if they can meet the needs of your child(ren) with adjustments. It is possible for providers to access additional funding to provide support if they are aware of the needs in advance of attendance.

For general HAF information click [here](#)

Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPCV)

We held our first careers fair for young people with SEND in March. This event was really successful and we have been asked to make it an annual occurrence.

We have been working hard to arrange events for the next year - our next events are:

- 4 April - Quarterly meeting for parents and professionals – with an Early Years focus
- 27 April - Meeting for parents with SOLAR - looking especially at the crisis team, and the new M-Power team

Links to register for events can be found on our facebook page [Solihull Parent Carer Voice - Home | Facebook](#) or on our website: <https://spcv.org.uk/>

We also have released our annual report, find out what we have been doing this year- [Reports - Solihull Parent Carer Voice \(spcv.org.uk\)](#)

Our Voices Heard

Our Voices Heard are running a free holiday activity day at North Solihull Sports Centre - open to all young people aged 5 – 16 years who are in receipt of benefits related free school meals and/or have disabilities or special needs. Spaces are limited, to book visit [here](#)

Solihull SENDIAS

Solihull SENDIAS are keen to increase our outreach work with families and settings. Throughout the pandemic we continued to support families through a mixture of virtual and in-person work, where covid restrictions allowed. However, we are now eager to resume and expand our community engagement at outreach events. If you are having a coffee morning, SEND drop in, co-production event or an event for parents and/or young people with additional needs, please consider asking Solihull SENDIAS to attend to support your setting and your families.

If you would like to discuss setting up a SEND community event, please contact us.

Solihull SENDIAS can be contacted by email: solihullsendias@family-action.org.uk or by phone 0121 516 5173.

If you think other people you know would be interested in this newsletter please encourage them to sign up on the Council website: [here](#)

If you have any feedback on the newsletter, or suggestions for future items please email and let us know: jand@solihull.gov.uk

Thank you

Charlotte Jones

Head of SEND service 0-25



Solihull SEND Newsletter

July 2022

Wow. What a year that has been!

Things are certainly very different this year heading into the summer. For many of us, lives have returned to normal as holidays and gatherings are planned and those moving to a new school or college in September have been able to at least visit to help their transition. Hopefully you are also seeing the impact of our improvement journey in practice; providing better EHCP and SEND support for children and young people in Solihull.

Strategic News

Strategy for Inclusive Education

Thank you to all who took the time to respond to this consultation. As always, your contribution was valuable and changes have been made to the proposed strategy as a result.

We are now working through the process of the strategy being formally approved and agreeing how best to implement it in the new academic year – so watch this space!

Partnership Agreement

We have been working with Solihull Parent Carer Voice to update the agreement for this year. This sets out how education, care and health will continue to work strategically with the parent carer forum to ensure our priorities, new ways of working and decisions are informed directly by parent carers across the borough.

[The updated Partnership Agreement is available here.](#)

Delivering Better Value

Earlier in the year the Department for Education launched a programme to support 55 Local Authorities with the highest deficit in their High Needs Budget.

Solihull Council have been included in the first tranche of this work and over the summer we will be working with Newton and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) and stakeholders to understand the strengths and challenges of our local SEND partnerships and start to identify actions for improvement. We will keep everyone updated through future editions of this newsletter.

Consultations

There are a number of national consultations happening at the moment so please do take a look and respond if you are interested – this is the best way to have our voices heard nationally as focus turns to the SEND system.

SEND Green Paper

This sets out a number of proposals aimed at providing the structure needed in local areas for the 2015 SEND reforms to be effective and brings SEND and alternative provision together. The consultation is open until **Friday 22 July**.

[The SEND Green Paper consultation is available here.](#)

Reviews of EHCPs: Proposed Timescales

This sets out proposals around the planning of an EHCP annual review as well as the decision making following the review. The consultation is open until **Friday 12 August**.

[The Reviews of EHCPs consultation is available here.](#)

SEND Local Area Inspection Framework

This sets out proposals to change how local areas are inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission to assess how well partners work together to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people. The consultation is open until **Sunday 11 September**.

[The SEND Local Area Inspection Framework consultation is available here.](#)

Operational Activity

Based on your feedback on the content of this newsletter (thank you!) we wanted to reflect on this academic year and think about the improvements we have been making around the EHCP system. We know everyone's experiences will vary, and we still have work to do, but hopefully you will have seen some of this yourselves:

What you said:	What we did:	The results:
It is taking too long for new EHCPs to be processed.	Increased staffing and changed the structure of the EHCP Service. Set up timescale monitoring.	33.8% of plans were issued within 20-weeks in 2019. In 2021 this reached 54.7% and by June 2022 the cumulative figure was 65%.
Reviews of EHCPs are not timely nor carried out consistently.	Co-produced new annual review paperwork. Strengthened processes in schools and the LA.	On average, 60% of new annual reviews are having amendment decisions made within 4 weeks, and 80% of plans finalised in time.

		The historic annual review backlog has reduced from 1784 to 494.
EHCPs are not of high enough quality.	<p>Implemented a new EHCP template.</p> <p>Provided training to staff and advice-givers on good quality and SMART outcomes.</p> <p>Implemented a quality assurance process.</p>	<p>Recent feedback from a parent's solicitor told us it was "the best she has seen for being specific, clear and SMART".</p> <p>A parent commented "this is the best plan I have seen from Solihull".</p> <p>A SENCo also wanted to compliment the team on the content & detail in the plan which was "clear and purposeful".</p>
Children and young people transitioning to a new school in September wait too long for their placements to be confirmed.	<p>Strengthened processes in schools and the LA.</p> <p>Asked schools to prioritise reviews for transition years.</p> <p>Set up timescale monitoring.</p>	<p>By 15 February 2022, 97% of EHCPs were finalised for school transitions compared to 63% in 2021.</p> <p>By 31 March 2022, 67% of EHCPs were finalised for post-16 transitions, more than double the previous year.</p>

Below are the service updates for this term:

Early Years - Lisa Morris, Early Years Manager

The Cost of Childcare for Parents [DfE]

The Department for Education has released a package of measures which they hope will increase childcare support for parents, boost the number of childminders and drive take up of childcare offers to address rising costs. [Details on these measures are available here.](#)

Please signpost parents to [Childcare Choices](#) to see support available for childcare costs.

[A consultation on the regulatory changes to childcare support is available here.](#) The consultation closes on **Friday 16 September.**

Solihull Maternity and Early Years Strategy

We are currently working on a summary version of the Maternity and Early Years Strategy. Actions such as the promotion of *Dingley's Promise Free Inclusion Training* and refining the *Early Years Team Around the Child (EYTAC)* approach have resulted in more settings accessing inclusion training and 90 children have been referred to the EYTAC panel for support since September.

Some settings may now be ready to apply for the Dingley's Promise Kite Mark.

[Further EYTAC information can be accessed here.](#)

[Find more information about Dingley's Promise here.](#)

EHCP Service - Amanda Hana, EHCP Service Manager

Staff changes

From **Monday 11 July** the EHCP Officers in our teams are:

Assessment team

Name	Contact no.
Jill Essex (team manager)	07493 864 792
Karen Tunnicliff	07825 386 285
Tina Marshall	07826 548 218 0121 779 1774 (Mon - Wed)
Afton Cohcrane	07900 662 977 0121 779 1780 (Mon - Wed)

Review team A (0 - yr 8)

Name	Contact no.
Kay Reid (team manager)	07425 636 589 0121 779 1778 (Mon - Wed)
Paige Roberts	07468 360 085 0121 779 1781 (Mon - Wed)
Dorinda Olympio	07823 786 391 0121 779 1740 (Mon - Wed)
Jackie Woods	07552 850 718 0121 779 1788 (Mon - Wed)
Kerrie Murphy	07385 949 452 0121 779 1777 (Mon - Wed)

Review team B (yr 9 and above)

Name	Contact no.
Shal Westerman (team manager)	07780 493 756 0121 779 1726 (Mon - Wed)
Laura Stott	07585 961 979 0121 779 1783 (Mon - Wed)
Hannah Wolfe	07585 402 176 0121 779 1787 (Mon - Wed)
Megan White	07900 660 565 0121 779 1711 (Mon - Wed)
Lynn Bailey	TBC

Backlog Review team

Name	Contact no.
Ros Cleverley (team manager)	07795 476 523 0121 779 1722 (Mon - Wed)
George Smith	07900 737 909 0121 779 1782 (Mon - Wed)
Katie Bright	07342 003 811 0121 779 1770 (Mon - Wed)
Jalal Uddin	07788 375 335 0121 779 1795 (Mon - Wed)

Please do not hesitate to call people if you need to speak to them.

Officers in very specific roles, such as tribunals and complex cases, have **not** been included.

New Request paperwork and transition reviews

This term we are focusing on finishing the updated New Request paperwork so that it can be in place for September. We are also working on getting lists of transition reviews due to schools before the end of term to help them plan.

As a reminder:

- Year 6 and Nursery 2 annual reviews must be held **before October half term**.
- Leavers Annual Reviews must be held **before Christmas** (includes all year 11s and all year 13s plus some year 12s).

This is line with the legal deadline for identifying next placements for these children and young people. These deadlines are a priority for the service to ensure children and young people have ample time for transition.

Last year we were very successful in identifying placements for those going into reception and year 7 and we would like to repeat this success. However, the transition deadline was not as successful for young people moving into post-16 so there is a focus on improving this.

We cannot do this alone and need the support of our schools and colleges to achieve this.

Working together we can really make a difference!

Specialist Inclusion Support Service - Paula Thompson, SISS Manager

We would like to thank everyone for the work we have done together this year despite the many challenges we have all continued to face.

Support from schools for developing both the Graduated Approach work and our Refresh provision has been greatly appreciated, including running panel meetings. Particular thanks to all staff at Coleshill Heath School and Head Teacher, Nicole Fowles, for their enthusiasm and patience while working with us to ensure Refresh can open completely in September.

We welcome feedback on the offer of the SISS teams and the quality and impact of the work that teams do supporting children, families, schools and settings; ideas for developing and improving within our current resourcing are particularly welcome.

Our annual survey is open until the end of term, so please do contribute, it should take about 10 minutes. All feedback is collated and included in our annual end of year report, with actions to be taken as a result outlined in the report produced in September. [The annual survey is available to fill in here.](#)

Recruitment updates and staff changes

We are currently finalising recruitment to our non-teaching posts at Refresh primary SEMH Intervention provision.

In addition, we are recruiting teachers within the Autism and CLD Teams due to Jo Shilton and Jenny Wingfield leaving us in the summer and Josie McGlynn retiring, though Josie will do some work for us in the autumn term. Zoe Foster from the sensory team is also retiring in the summer but will be returning to do some work for us whilst we recruit a new candidate for her post.

We wish all staff leaving us the best of luck for their future and everyone else a lovely summer break.

Community Educational Psychologists

We are delighted to welcome Jane Sowter to the Council as our new Principal Educational Psychologist. Jane joined us on 27 June and brings a wealth of experience to the team.

Sadly, Stella Lawlor, Senior EP, will be leaving us during August – we are extremely grateful for what she has brought to Solihull and wish her all the best for the future.

We know there is a national shortage of EPs but are hoping to recruit more staff in the new academic year so we can continue to provide necessary support to children, young people and their families, and increase our capacity for school services.

Educational Commissioning - Darren Jakeways, Commissioning Officer

Development of a Solihull Carers Strategy

A carer is anyone who provides unpaid support to a family member, child of any age, or friend who needs help because of illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or addiction.

We understand carers in Solihull face significant challenges, and supporting carers of all ages is a priority for the Council; we want to develop a strategy that sets out how we are going to make changes in order to improve our support to carers of all ages.

Some workshops with carers have already taken place and we will be inviting parent carers to a workshop after the school summer holidays.

If you would be interested in taking part in a workshop to develop the strategy please email childrenscommissioning@solihull.gov.uk and we will send you the details when they are confirmed.

Holiday Activity Fund

Solihull's Holiday Activity & Food Programme (HAF) is ready for its second summer programme. The funding was introduced last year by the Department of Education to provide free holiday provision for children on free school meals nationwide.

Solihull is hosting its best programme to date with 38 organisations providing free holiday provision throughout the borough. Activities on offer include multi-sports, netball, cooking classes, Commonwealth Games trips, drama classes and youth clubs for older children.

One of the main objectives of Solihull Council is to improve the HAF offer for children with SEND and additional needs. We would like children with SEND to be able to access HAF opportunities throughout the borough and take part in engaging and enriching activities that support the development of resilience, character and wellbeing alongside their wider educational accomplishments.

There has been an increase in SEND participation following each programme and we aim to continue this development. The summer programme contains five organisations specialising in provision for children with SEND and progress is underway to make all organisations as inclusive as possible.

Mandatory training sessions have been funded to increase skills and knowledge within organisations offering SEND services and ensure tools are available to make them as inclusive as possible. Sessions such as MAKATON, GEARS and Youth Mental Health Awareness training are available for organisations to attend.

The Department of Education have confirmed the HAF programme will be funded until 2024/25 and improving the SEND offer in Solihull's Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector will remain a priority.

[Find the list of HAF providers, including the section for SEND specialist provision here.](#)

Clinical Commissioning Group

Specialist Assessment Service (SAS)

Parent/carers have told us:

- We are not seeing a reduction yet in the SAS wait times (approximately 94 weeks).

What has been done:

- The service has recently changed how it completes assessments to allow them to see more children. In addition, Healios (a private provider of autism assessments) have been commissioned to complete additional assessments.
- The service has successfully recruited workers to fill any existing vacancies and now has a fully staffed team.

What this means:

- The new assessment model has enabled the service to see approximately 50% more children and young people a month, increasing from 20 assessments to 30. This is in addition to the children that will be seen by Healios.
- Children that would have waited 18 months to be seen will now be seen within 12 months and continued reduction in wait times is anticipated with Healios' support and a full team.
- To date, this has had a limited impact on the lengthy wait times felt by families. On average the service receives 30 new referrals a month, meaning that the increased assessment rate keeps wait times roughly the same. Referral rates also vary throughout the year; for instance 59 referrals were accepted in May 2022.
- The additional changes will start to be felt in the coming months.

Next steps:

- The SAS service will continue to monitor referral numbers to understand the level of demand.
- The service will monitor how wait times are impacted by Healios' additional support and will use this information to guide future service planning.
- An action plan will be developed to further reduce wait times.

Support available:

The [SAS webpage](#) is regularly updated with links for support for families/young people while they are waiting.

Speech and Language Therapy (SLT)

Parent/carers have told us:

- There are still extremely long wait times between first and second appointments for SLT (approximately 78 weeks).

What has been done:

- The SLT service acknowledges that the wait time between first and second SLT appointments is long and steps have been taken to ensure children are seen in a timely manner. This includes clinical prioritisation and an improved discharge process to ensure children are not remaining with the service longer than required.
- 'One Stop Clinics' have been introduced - short sessions where specific language targets are set and reviewed. These clinics are for children that have been assessed and are waiting for a support plan but do not require specialist support from speech and language therapists. Children are referred to these clinics internally by the SLT team.

What this means:

- The wait between first and second appointments has reduced from 78 weeks to 49 weeks and wait times are expected to continue decreasing. Families will now be seen quicker than they would have been previously.
- Initial feedback from the One Stop Clinics is that they are working well for children with a stammer or language difficulties. It is leading to many children being discharged prior to treatment, therefore reducing the overall wait between assessment and treatment.

Next Steps:

- The SLT service will continue to monitor the impact on wait times and adapt the way services are delivered if necessary.
- The SLT team will continue to provide updates to parents on wait times and any challenges to service delivery.
- The One Stop Clinics will run on a long-term basis and form part of the routine offering. Regular feedback from these clinics will continue to inform future service planning.

Support available:

The [SLT webpage](#) contains information and links to support for families/young people while they are waiting.

Include Me Games

This July, Everyone Active, in partnership with Solihull Council, is running its Include Me Games event for the first time since the pandemic began. Running across both North Solihull Sports Centre and Tudor Grange Leisure Centre as well as external providers, activities will include table tennis, gym access, disability swimming, rowing sessions, inclusive boxercise and much more!

The event will run for the whole week kicking off on **Monday 11 July** with the Include Me Games giving people with disabilities the chance to take part in a range of activities. Both centres and the external providers will be providing a range of free sessions, all free of charge.

The Games are a great way for people to get together, experience new sports and, most importantly, have fun!

Find the timetable, information on all the activities and instructions on how to book on our Facebook pages: [@TudorGrangeLC](#) and [@NorthSolihullSC](#)

Solihull Active

There are lots of inclusive activities for people with disabilities happening in Solihull. There are lots of ways to stay active, with a range of activities from swimming to table tennis, sensory walks and more. [Check out the Solihull Active website](#) for further information or contact Solihull Active by phone - 0121 704 8207, or by email - solihullactive@solihull.gov.uk

Marathon Kids UK

[Marathon Kids UK](#) is a free programme that runs at North Solihull Sports Centre and Olton Jubilee Park on weekends and during the school holidays, allowing children to maintain regular exercise even when school's out. To take part please download the free Marathon Kids UK app on [iOS](#) or [android](#) and simply turn up ready to have some fun!

Olton Jubilee Park

- **9am on the second and fourth Saturday of each month** come rain or shine!
- For more information on the Olton Jubilee Park sessions, [click here](#).

North Solihull Sports Centre

- **10am every Saturday** come rain or shine!
- For more information on the North Solihull Sports Centre sessions, [click here](#).

Parkrun

[Parkruns](#) are free weekly community events held all around the world. 5k runs take place on Saturday mornings in parks and open spaces. On Sunday mornings, there are 2k junior runs for children aged 4-14.

Parkrun is a positive, welcoming and inclusive experience - there is no time limit and nobody finishes last. Everyone is welcome to come along, whether you walk, jog, run, volunteer or spectate.

Locations in Solihull:

- Brueton Parkrun - [click here for more details.](#)
- Babbs Mill Parkrun - [click here for more details.](#)
- Malvern Park Junior Parkrun - [click here for more details.](#)

Inspired to Try Diving

If you enjoy heights, an adrenaline rush, and want to gain skills and flexibility, diving is for you.

Sessions are being held at [Tudor Grange Leisure Centre](#) on **Thursday 28 July, every 30 minutes between 10am-3pm.** These are free and available to under 16's.

The **11am-11:30am** and **11:30am-12pm** sessions are accessible sessions for children with a learning or physical disability.

Participants need to be able to swim 25m unaided without goggles in deep water.

Call Tudor Grange Leisure Centre for more information - 0121 704 6371.

You can [find the booking form here.](#)

Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPVC)

Solihull Parent Carer Voice have been very busy over the last few months.

Meetings and workshops for parent carers

We have previously held the following meetings for parent carers:

- about the Solihull Strategy for Inclusive Education
- about SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper
- with SOLAR
- with Childrens Services and Adult Social Care

We have also held the following workshops for parent carers:

- *'Supporting Your Child's Mental Health through Exams'* with Ordinary Magic
- *'Contents of an EHCP'* with the EHCP Service and SENDIAS.

Upcoming:

- **Monday 11 July** - workshop for parent carers with Cerebra
- **Thursday 14 July** - event for parent carers of children starting nursery and reception

Healthy Parent course offering

We have been busy preparing a Healthy Parent course to parent carers in Solihull.

This course is designed to help support parent carers with their own emotional wellbeing and help them cope with all the pressures of being a parent carer.

The first course will be delivered in the Autumn Term so please so keep an eye on our social media and website for information and how to register for a place. This course will be offered

free of charge to any parent carer living in Solihull or any parent carer whose child/young person accesses services in Solihull.

Information available for parent carers

SPCV have been busy creating information for parent carers.

The slides from the EHCP Contents workshop page are available on our website, we have also created a video about reasonable adjustment and a video about applying for an EHC Needs Assessment. Both of these are available on our website or on our YouTube page.

Parent Engagement Groups and events

We have also been increasing the number of schools that we are working with to set up Parent Engagement Groups and are now working with 6 schools.

We will shortly be putting out a calendar of events for the Autumn Term, including our hugely popular SEND Careers event and meetings for parent carers with professionals.

If you would like to suggest events or there are subjects you would like us to create information or videos about, please let us know by emailing solihullpcv@outlook.com

Links to register for events can be found on our [Facebook page](#) or on the [SPCV website](#). We have also released our annual report - [find out what we did in 2021/22 here](#).

We are also looking for more people to be involved! If you would like to get involved and make a difference for children, young people and families in Solihull please contact us at

solihullpcv@outlook.com

If you think other people you know would be interested in this newsletter please encourage them to [sign up on the Council website here](#).

If you have any feedback on the newsletter, or suggestions for future items please email and let us know: jand@solihull.gov.uk

Thank you

Charlotte Jones

Head of SEND service 0-25



Solihull SEND Newsletter

October 2022

Welcome back to a new year.

I hope you all managed some rest and recuperation at some point over the unusually dry and warm summer. September is always a time of change with many children or young people starting in new settings and others starting to think about their next steps - but on top of that, this year, we are waiting to hear from government on a number of consultations which closed over the summer so we can think about what that means for us all.

Strategic News

Strategy for Inclusive Education

We are really pleased to report that after many months of working with a range of schools, professionals and parents the strategy was approved over the summer and is now in place. Seven schools are taking part in piloting the training and inclusion audit tool this term and we will use their feedback to inform the wider offer which will be in place in February 2023 when leaders from all schools are coming together to focus on improving education inclusion across the borough. This is a really exciting time for schools and families and it has been great to see the passion and drive of so many key people across the area. Please keep an eye on this newsletter for future updates and if you haven't seen it yet, the strategy is available on the local offer here: <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/children-and-family-support/localoffer/inclusive-education-strategy>

Delivering Better Value

We have begun our conversations with Newton and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) to prepare for this programme, aimed at helping us to identify ways we can make financially sustainable changes which provide high quality outcomes for children and young people. Our first task is to produce operational and financial baselines and forecasts so we can really understand where pressures are coming from, and how any changes we make in the future are likely to have an impact. In the next newsletter we should be able to tell you what those changes could be.

Additional Needs Strategy

As we head into the last few months of the strategy's first year we are beginning to evaluate what difference this has made. The most important piece of this work has always been to hear of the experiences children and young people, and their families, have in Solihull. We are currently developing an online tool to allow constant feedback and interaction so we can continue to listen and adapt. However, in the meantime we are working with SPCV and a number of other organisations to design a more usual survey to seek views. This will be available shortly so please do keep your eyes out for this, and please join in!

Below are the service updates for this term:

Children's Social Care – Joel Desous

As some of you may already be aware, there are changes afoot from government with the new National Social Care and SEND reforms coming through imminently. In the meantime, I just wanted to update you on the work we are doing to support and improve the social care contribution to the Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) for many children and families in the borough.

Once a referral is received for an EHCP assessment, a shared multi-agency decision is made at a weekly meeting to determine whether the child will be assessed for a potential EHCP plan.

When there is a decision to assess, the EHCP social care assessors based in the Children with Disability Social Work Team will undertake a social care needs assessment with the family. This assessment is not to be confused with a Child and Family Assessment, which is undertaken by a social worker in line with Section 17 of the Children Act when there is the need to determine potential safeguarding concerns. The Child and Family Assessment is a much more in-depth holistic assessment. The social care needs assessment is set out to determine the needs of the family and whether or not the identified needs can be met without children social care intervention.

For many children, the outcome may be to access the Local Offer for social care activities with SoLO, a provider which is subsidised financially on an annual basis to allow affordability for families. SoLO provide a range of activities and clubs specifically for children and young people with disabilities.

There are also a range of other services families can be signposted to that provide activities for children with disability not able to access mainstream groups. The school of thought is to enable and not disable children further from accessing the specialist services SoLO provide, and to get

them involved with peer social groups outside of the home and school setting without the need for more personal support on a one-to-one basis.

Some children are clearly not able to access some of the specialist activities independently due to their complex needs and there will be some consideration to grant the family with some financial support by way of direct payment (DP) hours. This follows the completion of the social care needs assessment, which will be utilised to set up one-to-one support with a Personal Assistant (PA). This is designed to allow flexibility for what type of activities the child enjoys and can physically, emotionally, or cognitively undertake.

We are aware of some of the concerns parent carers have raised around the lack of resources within the local community as part of the Local Authority graduated response to individual needs. We are working hard with other directorates within the Council to develop an appropriate early help response to your child's needs.

It has been heart-warming to read the positive comments about the impact the support provided to some of you has had on your children.

Some of you have told us that the support provided is **'life changing'** in giving **'me a few hours break from my caring role'** at the same time as allowing their child/ren to have some fun undertaking an activity they would not otherwise get the opportunity to do if the support were not in place.

Parents **of older teenagers who have a PA in place have been very positive about their child being supported** to catch a bus to their favourite shops at the same time as developing their sense of independence, their social skills, learning to read a train or bus timetables, ordering and paying for goods and being part of the wider community.

During August and September 2022 four of our older disabled children have **had their support ceased as they have made so much progress in their life skills** and are now able to, after much work from parents and the PA, **access some social settings alone**. What wonderful news this is in terms of their increasing independence.

Some of the parents and families we work with, have challenged us to improve our service delivery and timely response to concerns. We have heard you and will continue to drive our practice forward to improve service delivery. Not everything is where we want it to be and as you all know, we are on an improvement journey. The social care team is however committed to improving the way we support you and provide you with the service that you and your children require.

SISS – Paula Thompson

There have been only a few changes within teams at the start of the autumn term. Jo Shilton, Team Coordinator for Communication and Learning Difficulties (CLD) left SISS at the end of the summer term and we are currently looking to recruit for January 2023. At the moment any queries for the traded element of the CLD work should go to a school's Named Teacher, or Paula Thompson: pthompson2@solihull.gov.uk

The Sensory and Physical Impairment Team are pleased to welcome Alison Shortt who joined as a full time Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI) after the retirement of Zoe Foster at the end of the summer term. Currently, we are recruiting to fill one part-time vacancy for a QTVI.

All radio-aid equipment has been returned to students and schools as the new academic year is now underway. Loan agreements have been updated where there is a change of school or equipment. An alternative option to the Solihull insurance can be [found here](#), which may be of interest to you.

For anyone looking for an insight into the Deaf community and what life might be like for those who lose their hearing, have a watch of [John & Joe Bishop: Life After Deaf](#).

Refresh (Nurture intervention provision for primary aged pupils)

At the start of this term our Refresh Team has been out and about supporting pupils as they have begun to settle into their new classes in their home schools. As part of our outreach package we have been supporting school staff and parents with this transition.

Our KS2 group are now back on site with us at Refresh and making great progress, and we have been really excited to open our new KS1 group this term. We have welcomed a new Inclusion Support Practitioner (ISP) to the KS1 team. Both groups are settling in well and we are enjoying having 'family time' throughout the day when both groups come together.

This term we will be working with Solihull Active as they deliver their *Eat Well, Move More* healthy lifestyle programme. The Solihull Music Service will be working with us too and we can't wait to see what new skills the pupils will be learning.

We will be welcoming more pupils to Refresh following the Panel meeting on Monday 3 October. We will begin to transition to more of a cohort model this year and we are keen to work with a wider range of referring schools.

EHCP Service - Amanda Hana

New EHCP request paperwork

The new request paperwork is now live. This has been developed with professionals, SENDIASS and SPCV. This form now collects all of the information which is needed to support the Council in its decision making process so should improve timeliness and accuracy. Therefore, our hope is that this paperwork will make the process more streamlined and easier for all involved and provide more clear guidance - such as a helpful checklist of what needs to be completed before sending. This form is available for anyone to use but all new requests from schools sent to the team must be completed on this paperwork.

If you are a parent and are struggling with the information requested, you do not have to complete this form and can write to the EHCP Service to request an EHCP assessment – however, if your child is known to professionals and/or settings we will need to contact them for the information asked for within the form before making a decision. The new form can be found on the [Local Offer](#). If you need this form in another language please let us know.

Annual review timescales

As we are all aware, the EHCP process has specific legal timescales to ensure the timely and efficient completion of all processes. This requires everyone involved to respond in the timescales set out to ensure we can offer the best service and support for our most vulnerable children and young people. One of our challenges is receiving annual review paperwork in a timely way following the review meeting. We are therefore reminding schools to ensure the review paperwork is completed and sent to the EHCP service in the legal timescale of 10 calendar days from the date of the review meeting. This enables us to process the review in a timely manner and meet further deadlines. If you have any questions about the timescales or processes, please do not hesitate to contact the team to discuss.

Transition planning

The time is upon us again when we are preparing to complete transition reviews. We are required to finalise EHCPs (naming new settings) by 15 February and 31 March for Post 16 learners. This is a statutory deadline and ensures professionals have time to consider and secure appropriate placements and children and young people can have time for a successful transition.

Schools are therefore reminded to ensure transition annual reviews are carried out, completed and sent to the EHCP Service by:

- October half-term: for children currently in Nursery, Year 2 in Infant Schools and Year 6
- December: for young people in Year 11 and Year 13

Please contact the team if you have any questions or require any support.

Community Educational Psychology Service (EPS) - Jane Sowter

It's been a busy summer for the EPS and the start of term already seems a while ago! We have written to all schools with the details of our new traded offer and continue our work for high needs children and families across the borough. At the moment we are managing the EHC workload, despite being short-staffed, due to the hard work of our EP team and the stalwart group of locum EPs who support us.

Thank you to all our schools and families for your collaboration during the assessment process and for helping us produce our psychological advice in a timely manner. Evaluations of the Attachment and Trauma project and the Emotionally Based School Non-attendance Project have both demonstrated rewards (more below) and we also continue to work with the SISS team to support social inclusion and mental health.

The EBSN pathway is now open to new referrals. The first Panel date of the new term was Thursday 29 September and Panel will be every 2-3 weeks during term time. Referrals need to be submitted by Tuesday 5pm of Panel week. For referral criteria, please refer to the Local Offer under 'EBSN'. You will also find our guidance there with advice on early intervention, systemic working with children, young people and their families, and formulating and intervening according to individual case presentation. An abridged version of our guidance has been created by the Anna Freud Centre, along with input from other Educational Psychology Services, which includes a snap shot of risk factors for EBSN, alongside ideas for universal and targeted provision. The resource can be found here: [Addressing emotionally-based school avoidance \(annafreud.org\)](https://www.annafreud.org)

Work on the Graduated Approach continues alongside our partners and we are contributing to other Council priorities wherever we can, including support for refugees, DSL training, school development and critical incident support. The EPs are planning various small pieces of development work and training over the year and we will soon be announcing a new programme to help schools develop the emotional wellbeing and resilience of their pupils – watch this space!

Children and Young People Commissioning - Laura Slegg-Newton

Targeted Short Breaks in Solihull

This month we've got two main pieces of news to tell you about:

New Short Breaks Contract awarded to SoLO

Children, young people and their families will benefit from continued support from [Social Life Opportunities \(SoLO\)](#) after they were awarded a new three-year contract by the Council to provide short breaks for children with disabilities, following a competitive tendering process. The new contract commenced on 1 September 2022 and provides group activities for children and young people who can't access mainstream activities due to the nature of their disabilities and support needs. Activities take place after school, in the evening, on weekends and during the school holidays.

Solihull Council has a statutory duty to provide short breaks for children and young people with disabilities, the main aims are to provide them with an opportunity to spend time away from their parents/carers, relax and have fun with their friends, and develop their independence. It also gives families the chance to have a break from their caring responsibilities, rest and unwind, and spend time with other family members.

SoLO have previously held this contract and are currently reviewing and refreshing the activities on offer in conjunction with children and young people with disabilities and their families. Details of the short breaks activities currently available are on [SoLO's website](#). If you'd like to enquire about Short Breaks opportunities for your child, SoLO can be contacted by phone on 0121 779 3865 or email info@sololifeopportunities.org

Children and young people are eligible to attend short breaks activities and services:

- Up to their 19th birthday (or until the end of Year 13 if they attend a special school)
- If they are resident in the borough or are in care and are the responsibility of Solihull Council, wherever they are placed
- If they have a disability (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) that prevents them from accessing universal services without substantial ongoing additional support.

Solihull Short Breaks Grants Programme

In addition to our short breaks contract with SoLO, Solihull Council is offering grants to organisations providing positive activities for children and young people with disabilities.

Activities may take place after school, evenings, weekends and/or during school holidays. Participation in these activities must enable parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities time away from their caring duties.

It is intended that the Short Breaks Grants Programme will:

- Meet the need for short breaks for an increased number of families
- Widen the choice of providers offering short breaks for children and young people with disabilities in Solihull
- Deliver a wider range of short breaks activities and improve the choice for families in deciding the type of short break activity their child would like to attend

Further details for organisations interested in providing short breaks, including a factsheet and application form, is available on the Council's website [Voluntary and Community Sector \(VCS\) Funding \(solihull.gov.uk\)](#)

Applications for the first round of funding opens from 5 October 2022 and closes on 6 November 2022. Activity delivery will be from January 2023. Grants will be between £5,000 - £25,000 for delivery up to December 2023 in the first instance, with up to £40,000 available for exceptional and/or, larger projects. (Future funding will be available up until August 2025).

Eligibility to attend grants-funded short breaks will be the same as outlined above for SoLO Short Breaks, however it is anticipated that some projects/activities may be targeted at particular groups of children and young people with disabilities. Details of successful grant applicants, and how to sign your child up for these short breaks will be published in December.

Commissioning for Learning – Steve Fenton

SEND Commissioning Manager

We are pleased to announce we have appointed to this newly created post. The successful candidate is Jamie Rynberk who will start with us over the next month or so. His key responsibilities will include evaluating the provisions we have in Solihull against the needs of pupils we need to commission specialist places with; to work on developing out post-16 provision and to strengthen the local authority approach to working better with schools with ARPs.

Special Free School Bid

The DfE have announced a second wave of applications for special free schools. You will recall that Solihull was successful in wave 1 - and The Heights school will open in 2023 and cater for pupils with Autism and associated high level Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs, building up to 116 pupils.

Demand for specialist places continues to grow, and we are facing unprecedented demand in the areas of Multi-Sensory Impairment, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties, and Severe Learning Difficulties. We will be looking to submit a bid around these needs by the deadline of 21 October 2022.

Engagement – Deborah Carpenter

Members of the additional needs group have started working together to develop an Engagement Planner. This will help our service users know what is happening, when it is happening and how they can get involved. We are working closely with our colleagues across the local authority, to ensure our work is in line with developments in engagement across all services. As part of this work, we will be coming to families and young people to ask what engagement means to them, and to make sure our communication methods are clear and accessible to all.

A Here2Help hub has been created on the Council website to provide people with a central location to access lots of useful information - whether they need help with food, energy, financial advice or wellbeing. Please do take a look at the pages and share with any families who you think would benefit: [Here2Help](#)

Early Years - Lisa Morris

I have had the pleasure of reading through some of the monitoring forms for [Early Years Inclusion Fund](#) this summer. Early Years settings can apply for additional funding from the Council to aid inclusion of children with emerging special needs at either level 1 or level 2 and for specialist equipment.

Early Years Inclusion Fund Panel members also visited three settings to celebrate their practice. We have used feedback from practitioners to adjust the application process through the year to ensure funding supports settings to support children. Some of the feedback is included below...

"We had excellent feedback from parents stating how much their children have achieved within our setting, how happy they have been. Communication using Makaton was a strong point."

"Parents appreciated the specific resources that were purchased at an age-appropriate level to support their child's progress."

"Parents like the fact that we will listen to what they say helps their child and we can provide similar things in setting to support them there too."

The Early Years Team are seeking feedback from settings and families to guide our ongoing work. One year into our reshape as the current team we would really value compliments and suggestions. Some recent feedback for our support work with children is listed below and we also take on-board suggestions that will enhance our support offer.

"S had a very positive impact on the knowledge and skills of J's 1:1 LSA and me – through the modelling, discussions and resources she shared/sent."

"I feel the family as a whole have benefitted from K's support."

"R input strategies that really helped us as practitioners and A, but also helped with the home development and support too."

Work continues to focus on our [Maternity and Early Years Strategy](#) development activities and working together to help our youngest children to have success for today and be prepared for tomorrow. Further, Dingley's Promise Inclusion training has been made available to our Solihull settings. The new modules focus on behaviour and working with parents.

High numbers of Solihull Early Years settings remain graded as good or outstanding in their most recent Ofsted inspection at 97%. This time of year begins our cycle of annual joint-evaluation visits. We look forward to visiting all our targeted settings through the year to celebrate, review and support practice.

Solihull Music – Claire Batty

We are very pleased to be able to offer FREE inclusive music making sessions this term. Alongside making music, and having fun, these sessions help promote personal and social outcomes. Please click on the [link here](#) to sign up to any sessions.

Solihull Parent Carer Voice

Solihull Parent Carer Voice has as always been busy over the last few months. We have taken the opportunity over the summer to build our team and will be adding their biographies to our website soon. We are always looking for more people to join our team so if you are interested please do get in touch.

We have also been doing lots of planning over the summer and will have exciting news to release soon!

Events

We have held a coffee morning for parent carers following the return to school and it was lovely to see so many people attending. We also held a webinar in conjunction with Estates Planning Solutions to give parent carers information about estate planning, deputyships and discretionary trusts. Again, this information will be on our website or please do feel free to contact us if you would like more information about this.

On 10 October we had a meeting for parent carers with Nick Page (Council Chief Executive) Tim Browne (Interim Director of Children's Services) Iona Payne and Delyth Berni-Smith (Assistant Directors for Social Care) and Cllr Michael Gough (Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children) - this

was an opportunity for parent carers to find out what is being done to improve SEND services in Solihull and what more still needs to be done.

18 October - we have a coffee evening for parent carers.

10 November - SEND Careers Fair, this is for young people aged 14-25 and their parent carers.

All our events are on our Facebook page, [on our website](#) and are emailed out to schools to share so please do keep an eye out.

We try to make our events accessible for as many people as possible, we do have sensory equipment available for both children and young people and for adults if it would help with attending. If there are any barriers for anyone accessing our events, please do let us know and we will try to overcome these.

Resources

We have developed a library of resources that parent carers are able to borrow. We also have a number of iPads available for parent carers to use if they are struggling with access to online meetings/consultations/appointments.

Workstreams

We are involved with many different workstreams across education, health and social care, working to improve services for our children and young people and their families in Solihull. Information about these workstreams can be found in our quarterly newsletter that is on our website, or if you would like more information, please do contact us. Some of these workstreams are: Joint Additional Needs Board, Inclusion Programme Board, Speech Language and Communication Needs, Autism in Schools, Parent Engagement Groups in Schools, Holiday Activities and Food, Children and Youth Offer, Maternity and Early Years, All Age Autism Support Service, Children and Young Peoples Mental Health board, and many more.

Healthy Parent Carer Course

As parent carers ourselves we know the challenges that we can all face and we know the impact it can have on our own emotional wellbeing and mental health. We also recognise that there is often little support available. As such we have trained to deliver a course to parent carers called Healthy Parent Carer Course. This course was written by Exeter University and Parent Carers and specifically focuses on wellbeing for parent carers. The course is run for 2 hours a week for 12 weeks and is online. Parents can self-refer, or we accept referrals from schools and services with parental consent.

Solihull SEND Community Roundtable

The roundtable is bringing together community organisations and support groups that work with or support children and young people with SEND or their families in Solihull, enabling organisations to share knowledge and support each other. Currently the Roundtable has 23 member organisations which is fantastic.

Solihull Parent Carer Voice can be contacted at:

solihullpcv@outlook.com

www.spcv.org.uk

Facebook: Solihull Parent Carer Voice

Twitter: @solihullpcv

Our Voices Heard

Our Voices Heard is the children and young people's forum for Solihull and has recently received funding for a second year. The forum is busy creating a calendar of events for this year and this will be shared shortly.

Our Voices Heard are also looking to work in and with schools this year to enable more children and young people to have their voice heard and to make a difference to services in Solihull.

If you would like to contact Our Voices Heard they can be contacted at

ourvoicesheardsolihull@outlook.com or on their Facebook page; Our Voices Heard.

If you think other people you know would be interested in this newsletter please encourage them to [sign up on the Council website here](#).

If you have any feedback on the newsletter, or suggestions for future items please email and let us know: jand@solihull.gov.uk

Thank you

Charlotte Jones

Head of SEND service 0-25



Solihull SEND Newsletter

December 2022

It seems that many retailers this year are rising to the John Lewis challenge over Christmas adverts. Christmas can be a mixed experience for many families, but I am heartened that many of the adverts are all focusing on the same thing; everyone having the people around they need to support them, feeling understood and accepted and us all going that extra step to bring happiness.

We are all very aware that nationally the SEND system has not been able to deliver what was expected, and we are all dealing with the challenges that brings, but every day we can see those small actions making a big difference by working together.

Strategic News

Strategy for Inclusive Education

In November, the Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education (CSIE) ran training on Inclusion, Equity and Diversity, for the seven schools who are piloting the Inclusion Audit Tool this term. The training received great feedback and was thought provoking for all involved, particularly reflecting on issues such as intersectionality, power and bias. It was great to hear this month how the seven schools involved in the pilot (Langley Secondary Academy, Coleshill Heath, Dickens Heath, Knowle and Smithswood primary schools, Streetsbrook Infants and Hazel Oak Special) are using the Audit Tool and gaining the voice of their school community to reflect on their current inclusive practice. This training has also been rolled out to all SENCOs/Inclusion Leaders at the SENCO network meetings in November, feedback so far has been really positive. Pilot schools will be feeding back their thoughts on the Inclusion Audit Tool at the end of term, so it can be tweaked and finalised to share with all schools at the Head teachers Conference on 9 February 2023.

We are also really pleased that three schools have signed up to the match funded National Nurturing Schools Programme (Coleshill Heath, Dickens Heath and Greswold Primary schools) Training will commence in January 2023. Finally, two schools (Bishop Wilson and Greswold) have signed up for an exciting 'Action Research for inclusion and SEND project, part of NASEN's

DfE funded '[Universal SEND Services](#)' programme running from now until 2025. The two schools will be piloting a key part of the Strategy for Inclusive Education, which is Action Research in schools, learning will inform future setting up of Strategy Linked School Enquiry Groups. Working with The University of Derby, both schools will benefit from guidance from leading academics in the field of ISEND (who are also qualified teachers), learning how to setup and run their own Action Research for ISEND projects.

Finally, CSIE and Professor Brahm Norwich from the University of Exeter and Professor Peter Hicks from Edge Hill University met with Education Heads of Service and Team Managers to share initial baseline data in relation to Solihull's inclusive practice. This is a historic perspective, within the context of the COVID pandemic, and will provide a working document to inform and measure the impact of the Strategy for Inclusive Education over the next three years.

Delivering Better Value

We are grateful to the many people across education, care and health who have come together over the last month to undertake case reviews and help us to identify what some of the barriers are to children and young people with EHCPs achieving their 'ideal' outcomes. The themes from these sessions will be informing our next steps on the Delivering Better Value programme as we start to reflect on what we can do to remove these barriers. We know from the baseline work we have completed that there is no specific cause of the pressures in Solihull – and we are simply facing rising demand for EHCPs and increasing costs across the whole system. We are therefore looking at how we can best increase support and capacity to better meet the needs of all children and young people in any provision in Solihull and this will shape our action planning.

Additional Needs Strategy

As mentioned in the last newsletter, and our special edition, we have been seeking the views of children and young people, and their families to what difference the strategy has made over the past year. Thank you to everyone who participated, and those of you who helped parent carers and children and young people do so. We are currently analysing the feedback and will include it within our annual report on the Additional Needs Strategy which will be available early in 2023.

SEND Inspection Framework

As you may be aware, Ofsted consulted on a new local area SEND inspection framework to come into force during 2023. In preparation for this we have liaised with the West Midlands Peer Review Programme to request an inspection readiness peer review visit relating to SEND. This will take place on Tuesday 17 and Wednesday 18 January and contact will be made before that date with those who need to be involved. This will give us an impartial view on how well Solihull is meeting the needs of its children and young people with SEND and help us to prioritise our ongoing work.

Specialist Inclusion Support Service

The SISS annual report will go to EdSEND this week and will be published on the Local Offer. Feedback on the services provided has been really positive from both families and schools.

- 76% (42 out of 55 parent/carers) who responded to the SISS survey this year rated the support from SISS teams at the highest level of 5 'very good'.
- 64% of 42 school respondents rated the quality of support from SISS at the highest level of 5 'very good' rising to 79% and 78% for the CLD and Autism Teams respectively.

Feedback included:

Schools

"The flexibility and availability from both SISS teachers we access have been incredible. The information and advice they have provided staff, students and families has been fantastic."

"Excellent INSET delivered. Positive impact for all teaching staff."

"Has been amazing! Reports are incredibly thorough and useful and have helped greatly with placements for children as well as identifying dyslexia and gaining insight into learning needs."

"Invaluable support provided. Supporting 1:1, small group work and assessments. Providing advice for the development of nurture facilities and attended complex TAC meetings."

Families

"The specialist has been amazing, the support she has given to my son and us as a family has been both above and beyond."

"My son's case worker, well what can I say, amazing at his job, so supportive, understanding, but teaches amazing ways to cope. But always support the family as well...such an amazing service to have in schools."

REFRESH

The REFRESH provision based at Coleshill Heath primary school now has its KS1 provision up and running, alongside the KS2 provision. We have recruited to the Play and Family Therapy post following the departure of our previous play therapist and are currently recruiting to some of the KS2 roles, as some of our teaching staff move on. After such a short period, it has been great to see how much the majority of children are enjoying attending and how well home school staff and families are working with the REFRESH team to enable the children to be successful.

High Needs Pathway

We have also been able to recruit this month a play therapist to join the High Needs SEMH Pathway providing much needed support for children, families and schools, working alongside the High Needs teacher, educational psychologist, and Inclusion Support Practitioners.

The High Needs Pathway report is due to be published shortly and support will be reviewed as part of the Graduated Approach workstream to ensure resources best meet the needs of the children and clearly feeds into and out of other pathways.

Health

Kooth

Kooth offers emotional and mental health support for children and young people aged between 11 and 24. On Kooth, qualified counsellors are online seven days a week to provide young people with online counselling. This is done through chat-based messaging via drop-in or booked sessions and is available for children and young people in Solihull and Birmingham.



CATCH Launch Event

Solihull CATCH is the new name for the Children's Therapy Services in Solihull Community. We'd like to invite you to come and learn about our new vision, how the service will work for you as a professional or as a parent and to meet some of our staff. The launch event will include a presentation/video and an opportunity to discuss the service. Tea and coffee available. We look forward to meeting you!

When - Wednesday 18 January 2023, 9.30am – 3pm

Where - Chelmsley Wood Primary Care Centre – Room 2 (1st floor)



ADHD Nurse-led Service

We are pleased to share that the Solihull ADHD Nurse-led service has been successful in recruitment and a new Children's Nurse will be joining the service in early 2023. The new Clinical

support worker is now in post and has completed induction. Temporary nurse specialist staffing is in place currently to ensure service delivery continues whilst the team wait for their new member to start.

UHB have advised that QB testing is being explored for Solihull which would further enhance the diagnostic process for children and young people with ADHD. The QB test is a computer-based test that measures the core symptoms associated with ADHD including hyperactivity, impulsivity and inattention/distractibility.

Solihull Children's Learning Disability Nursing Service

The Solihull Community Learning Disabilities Team are in the process of recruiting Learning Disability Nurses and registered nursing associates to replace nurses who have left recently. There are new team members starting in December, a maternity leave staff member returning in January and a nursing and a support worker vacancy still to be recruited to. This has not affected our service for direct referrals and referrals continue to be triaged and managed by the team.

Education Inclusion Service

Attendance Support

We have begun implementing the new guidance from the DfE, 'Working together to improve attendance (May 2022)'. So far this term we have hosted two workshops for school staff aimed at introducing the new guidance and exploring strategies for supporting pupils with persistent absence in schools.

These sessions were well attended and the feedback very positive. Thank you to all school staff who attended the sessions both for your time and contributions to the sessions. It is important that we use these sessions to hear about your challenges and share good practice. We are currently planning future workshops and training and welcome any suggestions on particular areas that we should focus on. The next training session for schools is being developed in partnership with Solar and the Educational Psychology Service and will focus on the impact of mental health challenges and attendance. This workshop session will focus on building resilience and will include an element of sharing information about the services that are available to support schools, children, and families. Further details on this and other sessions will be available next term.

All schools should now be aware of their named Education Inclusion Service Officer and we have started rolling out a programme of meeting attendance leads in schools. Currently the team are focussing on those children with severe absence (less than 50% attendance). Schools unsure of their named officer should contact the Education Inclusion Service on 0121 704 6663.

Elective Home Education

The policy and processes relating to the oversight of children who are Electively Home Educated (EHE) has been reviewed in advance of an expected requirement that the Local Authority hold a

register of EHE children. All families have been contacted to ensure that we hold up to date contact details, and our process for considering suitability has been revised. In cases where the education is deemed to be unsuitable, we are working with families to help their children access an educational placement. Currently there are 295 children and young people known to be EHE in Solihull, which is a significant reduction compared to recent years.

Permanent Exclusions and Suspensions

We are seeing a significant increase in the numbers of children and young people being suspended or permanently excluded this year. So far this term there have been 37 children permanently excluded compared to 46 during the whole of the last academic year. Officers are currently looking into the reasons for this increase to see what intervention and prevention support can be made available. We are also exploring ways to increase provisions for children following permanent exclusion.

EHCP Service

Once again, we are at that time of year where we are focussing on transitions into (and between) schools.

Positively, many schools and nurseries have been very helping in holding the Year 6, Nursery 2, and Year 2 (Infants) EHCP reviews before the October half term period, enabling us to name placements by the 15 February 2023 deadline. There are, however, some reviews where paperwork remains outstanding, so this is a gentle reminder that we need this urgently.

The next deadline is then 31 March 2023 for school leavers, and we have asked schools to have all those reviews done (and paperwork with us) by the end of the Christmas term. We know that people are working hard on those!

Everyone's support to meet these deadlines is greatly appreciated. We know that it makes a real difference for children and families.

The EHCP service is currently recruiting Officers and a Caseworker (including maternity cover which could be a secondment). If you know of anyone that would be interested, please encourage them to get in touch.

The EHCP service are holding two parent 'drop-ins' at The Loft (West Mall, Chelmsley Wood, B37 5TN) on 20 January 2023 from 10:00–13:00 and 20 March 2023 from 13:00-16:00. These are for any parents that would like to pop in and talk to us – no appointments needed! We are also working with other teams to see if we can make this a multi-agency drop-in for parents, too. We are holding a similar event for schools on 22 March 2023, also at The Loft, from 14:00-16:00. If these events are a success, we will consider scheduling them regularly.

Preparing for Adulthood

Moving forward, the 0-25 SEND Team (that work with young adults with disabilities in education) will also be supporting young people that have a diagnosis of Autism who are transitioning from Children's to Adult services. If a young person already has a Children's Social Worker, they will ensure a referral is made to Adult Services. If you are a carer of a young person with Autism who is 18 years of age or above and they do not receive a service from Children's Services, please contact our One Front Door duty on 0121 704 8007 to request an assessment.

Education Outcomes and Intervention

Early Years

The Early Years Team have been talking to Solihull parents and practitioners working in Solihull to re-define our Solihull School Readiness definition. Here is the centre of the word art which represents the largest words that most people felt were important when considering 'readiness' for statutory school. We will share the final guidance when it is complete.



In the summer we had 165 practitioners registered to access the Dingley's Promise training. There are now four modules of inclusion available through our Solgrid Early Years and Childcare site [www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/training]. Complementary to the module on Managing Behaviours That Challenge for settings, is the Understanding Your Child module available on Solihull's Five to Thrive website <https://www.solgrid.org.uk/fivetothrive> .

The course is free for families to access, and the code APPLEJACKS can be used for anyone in Solihull to complete this course. Both courses focus on the communication that younger years [and older years] children use to tell us they have needs and wants. There are also courses for pregnancy and after the birth.

The Five to Thrive website is also where you will find a summary of the Solihull Maternity and Early Years Strategy and an update on the current context as [key indicators](#).

The Department for Education [DfE] are soon to share the details of their Professional Development Programme for early years. PDP is an evidence-based programme aimed at helping practitioners to support the recovery and learning of the most disadvantaged children. It comprises modules on communication and language, maths and personal, social and emotional development (PSED) delivered through a combination of self-study and online webinars. Feedback from those practitioners who accessed the previous PDP were positive. So, if you are a setting who has disadvantaged children and those with SEND then look out for your invite from the Education Development trust and DfE. The course is free to those registered and eligible to access it. It will be on-line training with some funding available for cover.

Music Service

Solihull Music is continuing to grow. A recent recruitment campaign has enabled more new teachers to be appointed to enable the hub to meet the current demands for lessons. The new middle management team has provided well needed capacity for the hub to focus on it's main aim which is removing barriers so that all pupils can access music. There are already inclusion groups set up to enable pupils with SEND to participate in group performance, SEMH groups, support for young offenders. Solihull Music also works in close partnership with the virtual school to provide lessons for LAC. Schools can contact Claire Batty should they want any more information about these groups or lessons. There are now also locality leads within the management team. These leads will be conducting a needs analysis of their area so we hope schools will provide some feedback to enable the best provision to be put in place. locality leads will share more information around the education hub at the next collaborative meeting.

Education Improvement Team

A priority for us is working with schools to identify the gaps in current provision for pupils with complex needs. This work has started with pulling together all of the current provision and pathways and working with schools to establish current pressures and how the local authority can The team are currently completing this terms school improvement visits and challenge and support meetings. The focus for next term is going to be provision for SEND pupils and capturing best practice in schools.

Children with Disability Social Work Team

Our Children with Disability Team has continued to grow to meet the demand for the service over the last 12 months. We have recently welcomed the addition of a new Assistant Team manager who has settled into the team over the last month. Now we have three Assistant team managers, two of these focus on the management of the social work element, with the third managing the

EHCP social care and Family Support Workers. We continue to make every effort to recruit Social Workers so that we can continue to meet the demand for support.

Our Children with Disability Team continues to support children, young people and their families with all areas of social work practice to implement and support positive, impactful changes to the child's life experience. This may include an assessment and tailored support for children and young people with complex disability needs that require higher levels of support in which the local offer cannot meet. Our Children with Disability Team recognises that there remains a significant difficulty with Personal Assistant recruitment across the region. As such Solihull MBC are working with providers and local universities to help facilitate recruitment which we are hopeful will reduce waiting times for children and families to get support.

There will be a representative from our Children with Disability Team that will attend the drop-in sessions for the EHCP co-production meetings that are starting in January 2023. Please feel free to come along to speak to us.

Community Education Psychology Service

We are delighted to be introducing the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme to Solihull next year! The programme offers training and ongoing supervision for staff to become registered Emotional Literacy Support Assistants, who are able to make a big difference to the mental health needs of your pupils.

Costs are great value – just £650 for the six-day training course and a further 300 a year for the supervision that ensures ongoing registration with the national ELSA network. There is a maximum of one place per school and initial invoices will be sent before the start of the course.

The additional time commitment from your senior leadership team is minimal – line-management for ELSAs runs as it usually would at school, but we ask that line managers attend a half day training with their ELSAs at the start of the course and also join at least one supervision session each year subsequently.

If your school would like to nominate a delegate to become an ELSA, then please email us on edpsych@solihull.gov.uk by Monday 12 December to claim your place.

Children and Young People Commissioning

The number of learners with complex and challenging needs that necessitate bespoke provision is increasing. This is particularly for learners requiring regular therapeutic input to support their education, or where mental health difficulties are leading to behaviours that may present as significantly challenging and therefore children/young people are not accessing or engaging with school.

Solihull Council is currently engaging with the market to determine what model would be most effective in delivering tuition services to our children and young people. We want to learn from those organisations currently delivering services for children and young people in the borough, and those who might be interested in doing so in the future.

This market engagement also provides the opportunity for organisations to specify their interest in delivering services in Solihull.

Solihull Council is seeking to understand views of the provider market and its ability to offer innovative solutions to meet the needs of our children and young people in the borough.

Solihull Parent Carer Voice

As always, Solihull Parent Carer Voice have been busy over the last few months. We have been awarded funding to set up two Autism Support Groups in Solihull, one is for parent carers and family members of autistic individuals and the other is for Autistic individuals aged 18+, these support groups are being run by Emma Bowden and more information can be found on their dedicated Facebook page- Solihull Autism Support Groups, or on the Solihull Parent Carer Voice website.

Events

On 10 November we held a SEND Careers Fair for young people and their families, this was a fantastic event attended by over 160 people. If you would like more information on the exhibitors, please do contact us.

On 25 January 2023, we are holding a meeting for parent carers with Tim Browne, Charlotte Jones and Iona Payne, at the Fordbridge Centre, 10am – 12pm. If you would like to attend this meeting, please register here: <https://forms.office.com/r/huZdmTWiM3>

We are also busy planning more events including a transitions workshop. All our events are on our Facebook page, on our website and are emailed out to our membership and to schools to share so please do keep an eye out.

We try to make our events accessible for as many people as possible, we do have sensory equipment available for both children and young people and for adults if it would help with attending. If there are any barriers for anyone accessing our events, please do let us know and we will try to overcome these.

Resources

We have developed a library of resources that parent carers are able to borrow. We also have a number of iPads available for parent carers to use if they are struggling with access to online meetings/consultations/appointments.

We also have links on our Facebook page to websites where information on Cost of Living Support can be found. If you can't find this information, please do get in contact with us and we can send it to you.

Parent Engagement Groups

We are working with numerous schools across Solihull to help facilitate parent engagement groups in schools. The aim of these groups is to build strong relationships between parents/carers and schools to better support the children and young people attending. The groups look at what is working well in the school, what can be learnt from that and transferred to other areas, as well as what could be improved within the school and then focuses on working together as a school community to improve.

We know that when schools and families have strong positive relationships the outcomes for children and young people is better, so this work aims to support that.

Work streams

We are involved with many different work streams across education, health and social care, working to improve services for our children and young people and their families in Solihull. Information about these workstreams can be found in our quarterly newsletter that is on our website, or if you would like more information, please do contact us. Some of these work streams are: Joint Additional Needs Board, Inclusion Programme Board, Speech Language and Communication Needs, Autism in Schools, Parent Engagement Groups in Schools, Holiday Activities and Food, Children and Youth Offer, Maternity and Early Years, All Age Autism Support Service, Children and Young Peoples Mental Health board, and many more.

Healthy Parent Carer Course

As parent carers ourselves we know the challenges that we can all face and we know the impact it can have on our own emotional wellbeing and mental health. We also recognise that there is often little support available. As such we have trained to deliver a course to parent carers called Healthy Parent Carer Course. This course was written by Exeter University and Parent Carers and specifically focuses on wellbeing for parent carers.

The course is run for two hours a week for 12 weeks and is online. Parents can self-refer, or we accept referrals from schools and services with consent.

Solihull SEND Community Roundtable

The roundtable is bringing together community organisations and support groups that work with or support children and young people with SEND or their families in Solihull, enabling organisations to share knowledge and support each other. Currently the Roundtable has 24 member organisations which is fantastic.

If you are interested in joining us as a Parent Representative or Steering Group member, please do get in touch.

solihullpcv@outlook.com

www.spcv.org.uk

Facebook: Solihull Parent Carer Voice

Twitter: @solihullpcv

If you think other people you know would be interested in this newsletter please encourage them to [sign up on the Council website here.](#)

If you have any feedback on the newsletter, or suggestions for future items please email and let us know: jand@solihull.gov.uk

Thank you.

Charlotte Jones

Head of SEND service 0-25

