

Solihull SEND Newsletter

January 2025

#SENDSpotlight

On Thursday 16 January the Council hosted a mental health conference for children and young people with SEND. Various sessions took place throughout the day in the Civic Suite. The attendees engaged enthusiastically as they learnt about how to look after their friends, keeping themselves well and dealing with worries. The presence of biscuits in the refreshment room was a highlight for some, but most were able to take much more from the day than a sugar rush. They went home with new coping strategies and a better understanding of their own mental wellbeing.

The event was organised with the support of the Mental Health in Schools Team, Our Voices Heard, SOLAR, and Solihull Parent Carer Voice. Alongside the sessions, stalls from a number of groups who offer help and support to youngsters with SEND and with their mental health were located near the snack supply. Every school in the borough was invited to send a delegation. 11, including primary, secondary and special schools took up the offer.

Bridget Morris, Operations Manager for SEND 0-25 said: "It was so encouraging to see how engaged all the children and young people were. 5 The Mayor with children at the event "The sessions gave them some really valuable insights into their own mental health and the support they can get, as well as how they can recognise when their friends might need a helping hand too. "The Mayor popping in was a special treat for them, I'm grateful to her and I want to thank everyone involved, it was a real example of partnership working in action."



National news

The Parliamentary Education Committee has launched a major inquiry into [Solving the SEND crisis](#). A call for evidence from any interested party is open until 30th January 2025.

nasen have released their free training courses [Online CPD Units | Whole School SEND](#) for schools to access during January – March 2025

Additional Needs Strategy

We are pleased to publish our 2024 annual report so you can see what we have been working on and achieved over the last year. We have taken the areas we still need to develop and included them in our 2025 transformation plan. Both documents are available on the local offer [Additional Needs Strategy](#)

Health Waiting Lists

The NHS is working closely with Solihull MBC to improve support for SEND children with health needs in Solihull. We know that it can take too long for children to get assessed for autism and ADHD or to have speech and language needs met. The number of children being referred for assessment has increased in recent years and our services are needing to work differently to respond to this.

It's important that we can be honest about progress and the impact of the work that we are doing. To reflect this, each update will include some things that are working and some areas that need more attention or haven't worked as we had hoped.

What's going well?

- The waiting list for assessment for ADHD has reduced for the last 3 months in a row. Whilst the reduction is relatively small it's consistent and shows that some of the steps we have taken here have begun to work
- Staff from NHS services, Solihull Council and Solihull Parent Carer Voice are now meeting every month to take forward a programme of quality improvement. The group's first area of focus in improving the information for parent carers about support that is available while people are waiting for assessment.
- University Hospital's Birmingham (the NHS organisation that provide many of the health services for children in Solihull) have developed a 'recovery plan' aimed at increasing the number of appointments available and reducing waiting times. There is still more work to do but in the last month more staff have been recruited to vacant posts and more new assessment appointments have been made available.
- As a result of this work the waiting times for some services have begun to reduce. For example the average wait for occupational therapy is now 9 weeks (down from 13 weeks in August) and 11 weeks for physiotherapy (down from 36 weeks in May)

Areas for further improvement

- While we are committed to working closely with parent carers we know we need to improve the way we do this. There are still examples of changes being made to services without parent carer involvement. Likewise, we know that the experience of parent carers when they are part of our work is not consistently positive.

- Our communication about what we have and haven't done needs to improve. We said that we would communicate about our work on a regular basis and that hasn't happened. This update will be followed by further information each month
- Waiting times for speech and language therapy have increased. This is an area we want to focus on and are confident that by changing the way services are provided we can see improvements here.
- The waiting times for children requiring assessment for ADHD and Autism are too long. It will take some time to begin to make a significant difference to this but, as described above, we have made progress in increasing the number of appointment slots. We are exploring the potential of establishing a single pathway for assessment for neurodevelopmental conditions like autism and ADHD. This would mean that people follow one assessment process which could result in some children receiving more than one diagnosis.

Activities

Inclusive Sports Academy CIC

[Inclusive Sports Academy CIC | SEND | Three Trees Community Centre, Heddingham Grove, Birmingham, UK](#)

Project Description: The project is specifically aimed at Children and Young People with SEND aged between 8- 17 years old living in Solihull Borough.

The weekly project will offer enriching and physical activity provision, that includes arts, crafts and drama and active games as well providing a healthy nutritious meal. Activities each week will be person centred, inclusive and tailored towards the individualised needs of the participants attending

Location: Renewal Centre.

Shine Youth

[ShineYouth](#)

Project Description: For children who are eligible for free school meals and are identified by their secondary schools as having Social Emotional and Mental Health SEND needs.

A weekly Youth Wellbeing Cafe after school every Thursdays which is a warm, safe space for 20 young people. At the Cafe they can participate in a range of activities including the Charity's Wellbeing Workshops: CONNECT, CREATE, PAUSE, MOVE and GIVE which all promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Location: At the Bridge, 234 Stratford Road, Shirley, Solihull, B90 for young people who live or attend school in the B90 and B91 postcodes.

Early Years

LGA case study and responding to the review

In 2024 Solihull Early Years worked with Local Government Association (LGA) to help review early years practice. As a result, LGA supported with implementation of key recommendations. One of which was to further develop confident parenting and parent lead support in Solihull, coordinated through the family hubs.

This work has led to 2 case studies now published on www.local.gov.uk/case-studies (Solihull)

- [Solihull bespoke support: supporting parent confidence and developing parent-led services](#)
- [Solihull bespoke support: data driven reach and engagement](#)

The focus of the review was to explore reasons behind the increase in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in early years. Some of the things that have happened as a result of the mini peer review include:

- Further promotion of our Solihull 'School Readiness' definition. This includes a [recording](#) to accompany the definition document. A [Solihull Super Starts](#) meeting for schools and SPCV supported a [leaflet](#) for parents of every Reception starter for the September 2024 cohort.

This complements our [speech, language and communication training](#) and we have a [People Who Help Us](#) meeting with a similar format in January 2025.

- We have a good take up of Dingley's Promise training (1020 modules completed) and more settings are achieving their Dingley's Promise Mark of Achievement (7). This will support increased confidence and understanding of how to support all children. This complements the work of the Early Years Team. The Team work to support settings to understand the needs of all children, including those with SEND. We have developed training over the last year to target support to settings and lead posts within settings. Solihull Speech and Language Therapy team also continue to work with settings where most children are eligible for benefits related 2 -year-old funding.

A new inclusion module called 'intersections within early years practice' is now available. This focusses upon intersectionality and discrimination. Sign up to reflect upon your inclusive practice- <https://dingley.org.uk/dingleys-promise-training/early-years-inclusion-programme/>. You can also view resources to support educators.... <https://dingley.org.uk/resources-for-educators/>

- Linked to the on-going LGA support and Family Hubs we have looked at how we can signpost to the most useful parent-support websites through [Health Visitors](#), [Family Hubs](#) and the [Solihull local offer](#), amongst others. This includes 'drop in' sessions, Early Years Team supported play-and stay, signposting 'start for life' support services. Working together we are making sure we understand the needs of our families and can signpost and support.
- In relation to EHCPs we have reflected upon the way we work and our [graduated approach](#). In the reporting year 2024, DfE statistics summarised EHCP plan numbers as.....

Number of plans for 'New plans - Age groups' for Age 5 to 10 and Under 5 in Solihull between 2020 and 2023

Move and reorder table headers

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Age 5 to 10	136	96	87	106
Under 5	48	93	93	80

Total 0 -10y

2020 186

2021 184

2022 189

2023 180

You can see in the table above that the number of plans in total [0-10y] has remained at a steady rate but the identification of EHCP need has been supported at an earlier age for many. Early years settings are supported to understand how to help all children and this may include requesting an EHC needs assessment.

In Autumn 2024 100% of nursery children and 94% of all early years children were agreed an EHC needs assessment at panel. 100% of early years children who were considered at Autumn 2024 panel were issued an EHCP. We could conclude that parents, with settings and early years LA support for SEND, refer appropriate children to EHC panel.

Children continue to be supported in early years at setting and specialist support levels. There has been additional guidance published in the recently issued document Early years entitlements: [operational guide](#) which guides SEND inclusion funding allocation to support emerging SEND. We hope that updated planning and target setting guidance has further supported settings to follow the assess > plan> do > review planning cycle.

This is a brief summary of *some* of the actions which have taken place since the LGA review.

Childcare Works Hub- resources to help early years and childcare....

Early years and childcare training modules have been developed by Childcare Works on behalf of DfE. These include support for SEND and business planning to support inclusion.

The link below shows where and how the Childcare Works HUB can help your business find a wealth of reliable and helpful information.

[Helping providers get the most out of Childcare Works HUB - childcareworks.org.uk](https://childcareworks.org.uk)

These include:

[Leading Early Years Inclusion](#)

[Business planning for Inclusion](#)

And the [HAF SEND Toolkit](#)

Settings such as childminders, who are not sure what financial support is available for SEND, are invited to contact Jenna Handley to ensure you are aware of additional funding. [Please see this document for details.](#)

Children's Commissioning

The Children and Families Commissioning Team is currently working with SPCV to consult parent/carers to obtain feedback and a greater understanding of how SENDIASS and SEND Mediation services are working for families, with a view to designing future services that best meet need.

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

Charlotte Jones

Head of Strategy - SEND & Additional Needs



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