

# Solihull SEND Newsletter

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## March 2025

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### *#SENDSpotlight*

On 26th February parent carers and professionals working in the SEND area came together at the third annual SEND community event to talk about what 'belonging' looks like for children and young people in the borough

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### National news

The Education Committee has produced a report to government on ways to improve the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, including breakfast club inclusion for pupils with SEND. You can read the full [Schools Bill – Education Committee report](#) online.

In February the Children's Commissioner and her SEND panel of young people met with the Department for Education to explore how to build a more inclusive education system that works for all children. You can read more about what was shared on the [Children's Commissioner for England](#) website.

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### Local news

On 15th March, 23 children and young people from Solihull Music's inclusive music groups and creative choir performed at the Music for Youth Festival for deaf, disabled and neurodivergent young musicians at Symphony Hall in Birmingham. It was an amazing event enjoyed by all. You can find out more about the children's excitement for the event and their passion for music and singing by watching the [ITV News](#) article.

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### Additional Needs Board Meeting

The last joint additional needs board meeting took place on 14 March 2025. The key messages were:

- The Board discussed the positive nature of the SEND community event, in particular the valuable discussions around children and young people feeling that they belong and in how services can design their offer thinking about differences

- The Board were pleased to hear that funding was available for a further year to continue the work between the council, ICB and parents in supporting a number of primary schools to improve their inclusion of neuro-diverse children (PINs project)
- The Board were updated on the 2 new ambassadors and 22 schools working with Our Voices Heard to build engagement and participation of children and young people and were keen to promote this great work for further encouragement of others to become involved

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## Early Years Celebrations

We are currently celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> Professional Development Programme practitioner training completion. Well done to childminder Deanne who completed the 3 areas of training- communication and language, social and emotional development and early maths modules. You may have seen the announcement by the Royal Foundation to sharing the '[Shaping Us](#)' guidance. This stresses the importance of social and emotional development in the early years. Well done to all 20 Solihull practitioners who have committed to completing this training.

We also have two new Mark of Achievement awards to celebrate. Well done to Burman Infant School and Coleshill Heath School who have achieved the Mark because they have supported their early years staff to access the inclusion training. We know that enabling the number of staff required to reach a Mark is not easy, so well done to all 9 settings who have now achieved this. There are now two new modules for 2025. The Leading SEND and Intersectionality modules have recently been added. Sign up to Dingley's Promise to access this free training <https://dingley.org.uk/dingleys-promise-training/early-years-inclusion-programme/>

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## Transformation – Cognition and Learning

Last year the LA commissioned an independent report into our specialist provision and one of the recommendations was to undertake a review of how the LA defines pupil need in relation to learning difficulties. A working group consisting of professionals from mainstream schools, special schools and the local authority has been established to explore national approaches and compare these to current local practice. Through discussion, we hope to create a draft document to use as a basis for consultation with key stakeholders.

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## Solihull Early Years Team

*This month I am sharing some of the wrap around support available in the borough. We also celebrate the new breakfast club announcements.*

## Online meeting > Supporting play- including risky play in Solihull settings

*'While children must not be exposed to harm in the realisation of their rights under article 31, some degree of risk and challenge is integral to play and recreational activities and is a necessary component of the benefits of these activities.'*

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) encourages a balanced approach to managing risk in children's play. The HSE says clearly that anyone planning or providing play opportunities should aim to weigh up the risks and benefits, rather than completely avoid risk.

**Microsoft Teams** Thursday 10th April 2025 between 1.30pm and 3pm

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 340 469 406 278 Passcode: Erm7sD

**Audience:** Solihull leaders, Councillors, site managers, all age school and settings, holiday play schemes and out-of-school clubs, DSLs, social workers, play workers, community teams, Family Hubs, and anyone with an interest in the benefits of play who works in Solihull.

Join us for an afternoon of reflection. Consider the benefits of supporting children to test their capabilities, challenge themselves, to build resilience and overcome fear. How does the adult supervise and make skilful judgements when supporting children to test themselves and to manage their own measured risks. Access to active play, and its risks, helps supports children's physical, intellectual and emotional development. At a time when wrap around provision, early education and childcare is being expanded, how can children learn to be safe through active play outside their home. For children with SEND, risk in play is even more crucial, because choices for these children are sometimes more limited.

### **Presenters:**

**Ali Wood** ~ Ali Wood is a freelance playwork consultant. She is the chair of The Young Opportunities Solihull, has co-managed Meriden Adventure Playground and is a trustee of The Playwork Foundation UK. She is co-author of Playwork in Practice: Applying the Playwork Lens Across the Children's Workforce [2024] and Reflective Playwork. Ali brings her research knowledge, and practical application of approaches into practice, to this training session. Ali will explore the benefits of play and risky play. How should we support children's autonomy so that children can have the opportunity to direct their own play? What is the role of adults in keeping children safe when providing an exciting, inspiring, creative play environment to support children's independence? She will talk about risk benefit assessment and play sufficiency

**Ofsted representatives and Myth Busting** ~ Jo Holt and Katie Rudge (Ofsted regulatory inspectors) talk about supporting play as inspectors find out 'What is it like to be a child or learner in this provider?'

**Solihull Health, Safety and Risk Service** ~ Nicki Evans (Health and Safety Advisor) considers children's play and leisure: promoting a balanced approach

Read more about risky play -

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/articles/znpwkty>

[Risky Play Leaflet - Play Scotland](#)

<https://play.wales/play/play-and-risk/>

**Further support for wrap-around providers on [Childcare Works Hub](#)**

[Inclusive practice in wraparound provision](#): a package of resources from NASEN.

These 10 bitesize video resources produced by NASEN support providers to enhance inclusivity and better support the needs of children with SEND and include information on:

- [The 4 broad areas of need, 'labels' and EHC plans.](#)
- [SEND legislation, guidance and reasonable adjustments.](#)
- [Inclusive environments](#)
- [Working in partnership with parents, carers and children](#)
- [Behaviour as communication](#)
- and much more!

**Three Solihull schools are breakfast club early adopters**

[Three Solihull schools](#) have been announced as early adopters for the breakfast club government funded scheme. This includes [creating inclusive provision](#). We look forward to learning from their trail blazing work.

Our Lady of the Wayside Catholic Primary School

Kineton Green Primary School

Kingshurst Primary School

**Early Years Inclusion Fund [EYIF] report and monitoring**

Every year the local authority writes a report which outlines the ways that EYIF has supported children in early years. This is now available here - <https://www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/eef/early-years-inclusion-funding-for-early-education-funded-children/>

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**Solihull SEND Multi-Agency Audits – Cycle 6 March 2025**

Many thanks to the parents and professionals involved in our most recent multi-agency audits. This set of audits considered the systems in place to support children and young people with the following profiles

- Children on the roll of a school but not attending
- Children and young people attending Triple Crown Centre
- Young people who are currently not in Education, Employment and Training

In addition to these cases, we looked at good practice from the Virtual School and how the partnership supports those children who are looked after.

Whilst the findings of these audits won't be published, they will be fed through the system to colleagues across the partnership to influence and form future improvements in our practice.

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### Solihull Parent Carer Voice

Solihull Parent Carer Voice held their annual SEND Community event at the end of February, bringing together parents and professionals from across Solihull. This year we were looking at the difference between inclusion and belonging, what belonging would look like and feel like for our SEND children and young people and how this can be achieved.

We are collating the feedback from this and will share it with you all soon.

We have published our Annual Report which can be found here: [Reports - Solihull Parent Carer Voice](#)

We have also published a booklet called Masking in a SEND World, which can be found here: [Resources - Solihull Parent Carer Voice](#) we are delighted that this booklet has been so popular that we have had to request a second print run! If you would like a hard copy, please do get in touch with us at [enquiries@spcv.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@spcv.org.uk).

### Support to find the right pathway for you

There is a range of support on offer from the Council's Employment and Skills Team to help residents get ready for work from assessing career aspirations to developing CV and interviewing skills. In addition, the team can connect you with supportive local employers and offer in-work support to ensure smooth transition into work. Please fill out [this form](#) and share briefly your circumstances in the optional message to get support.

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### ICB

The NHS continues to work closely with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Solihull Parent Carer Voices to improve support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who have health needs in Solihull. We recognise the challenges families face in accessing timely assessments and therapy services, and we remain committed to making improvements.

The number of referrals for autism, ADHD, and speech and language support has continued to rise, putting additional pressure on services. We are taking steps to address this, and while some areas are showing progress, we know there is still much more to do.

#### **Priority areas for improvement:**

- **Parent Carer Engagement** - While we are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers, we acknowledge that co-production is not yet consistent across all services. Some changes to services have been made without sufficient parent involvement, and we are committed to address this. The children, young people, their families, and carers will remain at the centre of the Quality Improvement programme of work.
- **Communication** - We recognise the need to improve how we share updates on progress. As part of our commitment to improved communication and transparency, an update on developments and progress will be provided through the newsletter, and our own internal networks, highlighting what is going well and areas that need further improvement.
- **Speech and Language Therapy Wait Times** - While efforts are being made to improve service provision, waiting times for initial assessments have increased. Steps are being taken to improve access, including additional recruitment and pathway improvements.
- **Neurodevelopmental Pathways** - ADHD and autism assessment waiting times remain too long. We are exploring the possibility of a single neurodevelopmental assessment pathway to improve efficiency and ensure children receive the right support as early as possible.
- **Community Paediatrics and EHCP Requests** - Demand remains high, affecting waiting times. A fixed-term medical post has been introduced to provide additional capacity, particularly for statutory medical assessments and EHCP advice requests.

#### **What's Going Well?**

##### **Waits:**

- **ADHD:** The waiting list for ADHD assessments has seen a small but consistent reduction over the past three months. Efforts to streamline processes and increase capacity are starting to show impact.
- **Therapy Services:** Waiting times for some therapy services have improved:
  - **Occupational Therapy:** The average wait is now **9 weeks** (down from 13 weeks in August 2024).
  - **Physiotherapy:** The average wait is **14 weeks** (down from 36 weeks in May 2024).
  - A joint Early Years Pathway for occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and speech and language therapy (SALT) is being developed to better support children with complex needs, including sensory feeding issues and cerebral palsy.

- A second phase of outsourcing ADHD assessments to Clinical Partners is underway, targeting children who have been waiting more than 45 weeks.

### **Partnership Quality Improvement Programme of Work:**

Monthly Quality Improvement meetings between NHS services, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, and Solihull Parent Carer Voice continue to drive quality improvement initiatives. A programme of work priorities has been established to focus on the following:

- Improved communication and quality improvement of pre-referral process, referral pathways and support whilst waiting for assessments
- Clear, easy to access, up-to-date information made available to parents, carers, young people and professionals via The Solihull Local Offer.

### *Developments to date:*

- **Review of Local Offer/Universal Offer:** Joint work is underway with NHS and Solihull MBC to review the Local Offer Website which will involve a mapping of the Solihull Universal Offer, consideration of Early Help, Support Whilst Waiting information and other Voluntary Council and Social Enterprise support.
- **UHB Recovery Plan:** University Hospitals Birmingham (UHB) has put in place a Recovery Plan to increase appointment availability and reduce waiting times. UHB are actively working on setting up text reminders for all community paediatrics and ADHD appointments. The Team is in the process of obtaining consent from parents/ carers and updating clinical records in support of the process – timeframe for implementation has been scheduled for the **end of March 2025**.

Additional staff have been recruited, helping to make more assessment slots available.

- **A new Early Years Speech and Language Team Lead** has been appointed, developing universal and targeted support to reduce the number of referrals requiring specialist intervention.
- **Cross Border Principles:** Solihull Community Paediatrics team are working closely with Birmingham Community Healthcare colleagues to discuss cross border pathways and processes to ensure alignment and delivery of an equitable service across BSol. In line with this work, cross border arrangements out of the BSol area are also being reviewed.

### **Next Steps:**

- Quality Improvement programme priorities: Impact and improvements will continue to be monitored via the Quality Improvement Oversight Group. Developments will continue to

be communicated to the SEND Local Area Partnership, professionals, parents, carers and young people.

- NHS & Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council commissioners continue to meet with NHS service providers for added assurance that contractual obligations and quality standards are being met across community service therapy waits.

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## SAtA CYP Advocacy Service

Did you know that SAtA offers an Advocacy service for Solihull Children and Young in aged 14 and over who are autistic and/or have Learning Disabilities to help them gain the right support at the right time leading to smoother life transitions?

Both 1-2-1 advocacy and group workshops are available.

Common reasons for 1-2-1 advocacy can include (but are not limited to);

- Transition from Children's to Adult's Services
- Supporting a Young Person to avoid Hospital admission
- Supporting transition to new accommodation

We also deliver self-advocacy workshops for pupils at 3 local SEND schools. The sessions are a mix of planned subjects and those suggested by the students taking part. Sessions have previously included;

- Wishes and fears for the future
- Communication and listening skills,
- Self-esteem and mental wellbeing.

We work with Children and Young People to build self advocacy skills and improve their confidence to speak out & make their wishes and opinions known to professionals that they engage with. We can also support with referrals to appropriate services e.g, employment support We accept referrals from any source (including family and self-referral) for children and young people with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism, age 14 +, living in Solihull or having a Solihull GP. Send referrals through our website: <https://solihulladvocacy.org.uk/referrals> or call [01217064696](tel:01217064696).

## Landau - All Age Autism Support Service (AAASS) Directory

The AAASS Directory is a simple, user-friendly platform helping autistic individuals, families, and professionals in Birmingham & Solihull find local support services.

### What You Can Find:

- ◇ Local events
- ◇ Support group details



- ◇ Newsletters & articles
- ◇ Podcasts

### Join Our Volunteer Team!

We're looking for volunteers of any age connected to Autism! If you have 1-2 hours a week spare, you can:

- Learn to update an online directory
- Gain new skills & meet new people
- Help educate & inspire others
- Interested? Contact us at: [aaa@landau.co.uk](mailto:aaa@landau.co.uk)

### Contact Us

The AAASS Directory is always growing! If you:

- ◇ Can't find what you need
- ◇ Have suggestions
- ◇ Want an organisation featured

We'd love to hear from you! Email: [aaa@landau.co.uk](mailto:aaa@landau.co.uk)

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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](mailto:jand@solihull.gov.uk)

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