

Children and Young People's Trust

Improving outcomes for children
and young people in Solihull



Newsletter | February 2011

A word from the Editor...

Did you know that February was known as 'the mud month' in old English? In Finland February is called the 'month of the pearl' which describes the pearls of ice on tree branches formed from melting snow. It's a month when we start to believe in spring again as we emerge falteringly from the depths of winter.

In fact, the perfect time to get excited about the diverse work that partners in Solihull are doing to improve the lives of our children and young people. In this newsletter you can find out about a different style of youth work on the streets of Solihull, how children and parents are getting involved in decision-making, and much more.



*Ben Lewing,
Change for Children Programme Manager*

Parents get involved

We caught up with local parent Patricia Wright to find out how parents in Solihull have their say about children's services through the Parents' Forum.

“ I joined the Parents' Forum nearly a year ago when it was just starting out. Only a few parents came to meetings at that point and we were unsure about what role the Forum should play.

“We've had a busy year. We fed back on the Public Health White Paper and have been involved in developing Solihull's parenting strategy. I also represent the Forum at the Children and Young People's Trust Board.



“Since then, more parents have joined and we have agreed that our role should be to 'create an environment where parents feel comfortable expressing their views about children's services'. We then take these views to agencies in the public, private and voluntary sector to help shape strategies.

“I feel privileged to be given the opportunity to play such an important role as a member of the Forum. It is exciting and challenging to be part of a changing environment that could potentially bring about so many benefits for our children.

“We meet once a month and are always looking for new members to join us so more parents can have their say.”

Please promote the forum to the parents you work with. Parents can contact the Parents' Forum by emailing parentsforum@solihull.gov.uk or calling Solihull Family Information Service on 0800 389 8667.

There is also a forum for parents who have a child with a disability. Parents can email info@solihullcan.org or visit www.solihullcan.org

Making an impact in Langley

Three schools in Solihull have developed a novel way to involve children and young people in decisions so we thought we would share it with you.

Pupils from Langley Secondary School, Langley Primary School and Reynolds Cross Special School have joined together to create Langley Community Council.

The Community Council has been going for just over a year and it has big plans. It aims to get pupils, parents and other members of the community working together to make a difference to their local area. Five pupils and a staff member from each school, all with voting rights and responsibilities have been meeting every four to six weeks at the Community Council meeting. So far, they have been busy getting the Council up and running and have successfully completed their first community project; redesigning the signs at Langley Hall Park.

They plan to work on more exciting projects in the coming months and for next year they are considering an Olympic themed community event. They are inviting parents onto the Council soon and are also



Ryan, Ben and Ed at a Community Council meeting with Bev Petch, Teaching and Learning Consultant

looking at inviting other members of the community such as school crossing patrols, governors and local residents.

The Community Council is a great way to develop pupils' social and emotional skills and to get them working together to make decisions which can really have an impact.

Just like children and young people are making a positive impact in the Langley community, they can also have a positive impact in your organisation. Involving them in activities like mystery shopping and service reviews will help you to improve your service as you better meet their needs.

To find out about involving children and young people in your service contact [Ben Lewing](#) on 0121 704 6691 or visit our [web pages](#).

Youth Newz

Two local teenagers use their own time to put together a newsletter for Solihull Connexions. We caught up with them to find out more...



Sally Ann Butler, 17 and Laura Cole-Wood, 18 write 'Youth Newz' every three months for their peers who are not in education, employment or training. The newsletter is then sent to as many as 500 young people.

The newsletter goes out quarterly and includes training and job opportunities, college enrolment dates, young people's success stories, volunteering opportunities and lots more.

Sally said:

“ We want to let other young people know what opportunities are available to them as so often they are not aware. If it was us we would want people to help us. ”

If you know a young person who would benefit from receiving this newsletter please let them know about it. They can join the mailing list by calling Solihull Connexions on 0121 770 9297.

Connexions offers 13 to 19 year olds (and up to 25 for the disabled/care leavers) impartial information, advice and guidance on education, training, careers, money and lifestyle decisions.

You're hired!

Most of us when we think of The Apprentice think of getting fired by Alan Sugar. But in Solihull there are 578 young people doing an apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships are an alternative to school or college for young people aged 16 and over.

Apprentices are employees; they earn a wage and work alongside experienced staff to gain job-specific skills. They also get off the job training, usually on a day-release basis at college to work towards a nationally recognised qualification.



Key facts:

- There is no upper age limit for an apprenticeship
- The minimum salary is £2.50 per hour, but many apprentices earn more
- 151 employers currently offer apprenticeships to young people from Solihull
- There are a wide range of apprenticeships available from childcare, health and social care to IT
- Apprenticeships can take between one and four years depending on the level of apprenticeship
- There are three levels of apprenticeships: ranging from GCSE level to A level and Foundation Degree

If you know a young person who may be interested in an apprenticeship they can visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk for current vacancies in Solihull.

If you are interested in offering a young person an apprenticeship first talk to your employer as they may have their own scheme set up. The Economic and Business Development Team at Solihull Council can help you set up an apprenticeship scheme, you can call them on 0121 704 6920.

See [national information and advice](#) on how to set up an apprenticeship scheme and the [Solihull for Success newsletter](#) for local success stories from employers and young people.

Young carers get a break

Do you know a child or young person who cares for a family member with an illness or disability?

Local charity Solihull Young Carers runs regular groups for young carers that give them the opportunity to take time out and meet friends in a similar situation.

Young carers meet every fortnight to enjoy activities like sports, arts, dance, photography and t-shirt design. A separate group runs for the under and over 12s.

Solihull Young Carers also takes young people on day trips and provides one to one support and advocacy.

If you know a child who is caring for a family member please let them know about Solihull Young Carers.

Solihull Young Carers accept referrals from children, family members and practitioners (with the agreement of the child).



Mask making at the under 12's Solihull Young Carers Group

Solihull Young Carers

Call: 0121 788 1143

Email: youngcarers@solihullcarers.org

Web: www.solihullcarers.org/young-carers

“ Young Carers is wicked...I get to do loads of things I wouldn't usually get to do. ”

Thomas aged 12

“ Thanks to Young Carers there's not one day that goes by that I feel alone anymore. ”

Jayde aged 14

Youth work with a difference

When we think of youth work, most of us think about the local youth centre but in Solihull there is a different kind of youth work that happens on the streets.

We go behind the scenes with Marcus Munn, a detached youth worker to find out more....

“Detached youth work is done on young people’s own territory, such as on the streets, in parks or outside shops rather than waiting for them to come to the youth centre. It gives young people who wouldn’t normally go to a centre the chance to access the youth service on their own terms”.

Marcus works with a team of detached youth workers every Tuesday and Friday night in Kingshurst and Smith’s Wood in areas that have been identified by Police as crime ‘hotspots’.

“For me, doing detached creates a buzz, as we are engaging new young people all the time and it is not manufactured or artificial in anyway. The relationship is voluntary; there is no pool table, lap top or Xbox so it’s really important how we engage and build up a relationship with young people”.

Part of Marcus’s role as a detached youth worker is to promote and support young people’s personal



development, social education and wellbeing.

“Young people speak to us about all sorts of issues that are concerning them, like sex, drugs and housing problems. We help them to make choices by providing them with information using leaflets and other resources.

“Sometimes just small conversations or interactions with a detached youth worker can help young people.

“We also give young people the opportunity to get involved in local activities and groups and

help them set up their own activity - like the portable football pitch that we set up for young people in Arran Way”.

“ Detached is good as youth workers come to where we are. I wouldn’t know about activities if youth workers didn’t come out and meet us. The workers are cool and easy to talk to about problems in school and life. ”

Young person in Smiths Wood

Latest workforce news

Check out the [Children and Young People's Workforce web pages](#) for up to date information on:

- Training
- National and local workforce news
- Safer working practices
- Workforce planning - tools to help you meet service needs and make the most of resources
- Early intervention (LINCS) - how working with other agencies to support children and young people early can save you time and money



Don't forget - a new, easy to use Common Assessment Framework (CAF) form is now available on the web pages, as well as other new forms to help you complete the LINCS process to support children and families.

To promote training or events on the website to the wider workforce in Solihull email or call: 0121 788 5374.

Local News

Research drives disability strategy

The University of Wolverhampton is carrying out some research for us to find out to what extent disabled young people in Solihull can access the same services as other young people.

The interim report tells us that disabled young people are able to access very few services compared to their peers. The findings from this research will inform our disability strategy which will look at how we can make services more accessible to all young people.

To view the interim report contact [Fiona Holmes](#) on 0121 704 6437.



Ask Parents 2011

The Ask Parents 2011 survey gives parents who use services for children and families in Solihull the chance to have their say about how they can be improved.

Please promote the survey to the parents that you work with. They can complete the survey at www.surveymonkey.com/s/AskParents2011 or can request a copy from the Family Information Service on 0800 389 8667. The closing date is 31 March 2011.

Is this Love?

As part of February's 'Is this Love?' campaign run by Solihull Youth Service and the NHS Care Trust you can [download](#) a 'positive relationships' poster. The poster clearly describes what a caring and healthy relationship looks like compared to a relationship that's negative and controlling. You can use it to prompt conversations with the young people that you work with to help them make the first steps to stop the abuse.



Young people get recognition

Care leavers from Solihull were delighted to be shortlisted for a national award from Children and Young People Now in November for producing a DVD. They were shortlisted from 500 entries in the category of Best Corporate Parent. The DVD focused on their experiences in care, both good and bad, and what we can do to make things better for other children and young people in care.



If you want to know more about the DVD contact [Yvonne Byrne](#) on 0121 704 8420.

Ofsted - THE RESULTS

Two of Solihull's Children's Centres were inspected by Ofsted late last year. Here are the results:

**Sure Start
Children's Centres**
Solihull

Rurals Children's Centre - 'good' with outstanding features

Smith's Wood Children's Centre - 'satisfactory' with its nursery Wood 'N' Tots judged as good. Whilst overall provision for the centre was satisfactory, the care, guidance, support and safeguarding of users was judged as 'good'.

Early Intervention

MP Graham Allen has written an interesting report about why early intervention is so important for children and young people and how he is determined to make it part of UK culture. [Read the report.](#)

Find out more



Find out more about the [Children and Young People's Trust](#) and how you can get involved.

Contact Information



If you have any **comments and feedback** about this issue we would like to hear from you. We're always on the look out for relevant articles, news and events for the newsletter, so please let Claire Cook our Marketing and Communications Officer know at clcook@solihull.gov.uk or call 0121 704 8474