

Parents' Network

eBulletin for parents in Solihull

February 2018

This eBulletin contains important information for parents. There is a separate section with items for parents who have a child with additional needs or a disability.

Tax-Free Childcare Scheme now open to parents whose youngest child was under 9 on 14/01/18 and will open to all remaining eligible families on the 14th February 2018.

Tax-Free Childcare is a government scheme to support working parents with childcare costs. If eligible, you set up an online childcare account which you can use to pay your childcare provider directly. For every £8 you pay in, the government will pay in an extra £2. You can get up to £2000 per child per year, or £4000 for disabled children.

You can use Tax-Free Childcare to pay for:

- Registered childminders, nurseries and nannies
- Registered after-school clubs and play schemes
- Registered schools
- Home care workers working for a registered home care agency

Parents of children born on or after 15th January 2009, and parents of disabled children, can apply now. All remaining eligible families can apply from 14th December 2018.

[Click here to apply](#)

[Click here for more information](#)

Online counselling and support for children and young people 11 – 25 year olds

Solihull MBC have commissioned an organisation called Kooth to offer online counselling and support for children and young people aged 11 -25 years from 27th November 2017.

To find out how Kooth can support children and young people please view this [video](#) of a young person talking about their experience

[Click here for more information](#)

For free, friendly and impartial information contact the Family Information Service.

Call: 0800 389 8667 Email: familyinfo@solihull.gov.uk

Visit: www.solihull.gov.uk/familyinfo

Solihull College School Leaver Open Events

Solihull College are offering school leavers the opportunity to attend an open event at either the Blossomfield or Woodlands campus.

The 'Try it' events invites school leavers to have a go at as many subjects as they like, chat to tutors and explore the facilities. Staff will also be available to help young people apply on the day.

You can pre-register for the event using the link below or can call the college should you have any questions 0121 678 7000.

- Blossomfield Campus open event - Tuesday 6th March 2018 5.30pm-8pm

[Click here for more information](#)

- Woodlands Campus open event – Wednesday 7th March 2018 5.30pm-8pm.

[Click here for more information](#)

Family Information Service web pages

Our web pages have lots of useful information for parents and carers all in one place. There's a wide range of helpful topics including childcare, child safety and bullying, children with additional needs, children's centres, education, employment and volunteering, family relationships, money and housing, parenting support and things to do.

You can also find out about local and national services and get information specific to the age of your child. Visit our website at www.solihull.gov.uk/familyinfo or for information around services for children and young people with additional needs and/or disabilities please visit our local offer website <http://socialsolihull.org.uk/localoffer/>

Opt in/out of Parents' Network

If you know someone who would like to join the Parents' Network, ask them to email their details to parentsnetwork@solihull.gov.uk or visit www.solihull.gov.uk/parentsnetwork

To opt out of the Parents' Network email: parentsnetwork@solihull.gov.uk

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**This section of the eBulletin is for parents
who have a child with additional needs or a disability.**

Message from Ann Lowe - Head of 0-25 SEND service

Happy New Year to you all!

Following October's joint SMBC / CQC inspection, Ofsted has now published our [SEND report](#) . We are all really pleased that the inspectors recognised how good many of our services are to our vulnerable children and families. We know there is more work we need to do but we are making progress and this will make a positive difference to children and young people with SEND and their families.

It was good that the report also acknowledged that the SEND leadership team has a good understanding of the work that needs to be done and that the pace of improvement has increased.

One area of challenge that was highlighted was our work with parents and parent groups. We are delighted that the Parent Carer forum has now been set up. How exciting to have the opportunity to work together, making sure that parent/carers are fully involved in policy, procedure and service development.

Thank you to everyone that was involved in the inspection and contributed to sharing our strengths and areas for development with the inspectors – your help is very much appreciated and will support on going improvements to the service.

Anxious not to lose the inspection momentum, we have been working on developing the joint SMBC / CQC Ofsted Action plan. We want to be confident moving forward that we are developing the service collaboratively in accordance with the requirements of the SEND reforms and improving education, health and care outcomes for our children and young people with SEND.

In particular;

- Feedback suggests that The Local Offer has improved – there is still a long way to go but **we will be re launching the Local Offer at the end of January 2018** and will continue to work on improvements and updates.
- **Social Care Transitions Pathways are being jointly developed** in order to be confident that we are aiming for a seamless pathway of support for those young people requiring adult social care and support.

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- A lot of work is taking place around sufficiency of school places for young people with SEND in Solihull, with a particular **focus upon young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder**.
- **The Carers Centre will soon be starting to complete parent / carer assessments on behalf of SMBC.** This will roll out gradually from March / April 2018 as the Carers Centre need to recruit additional staff to support this new responsibility.
- Liz Egginton (Team Manager for StART) and I intend to hold **twice monthly surgeries to enable parent/carers and young people to come and talk to us about any concerns in relation to the EHCP process.** This will commence late February / early March – you will be notified of dates and venues.

So much is happening I could fill the whole newsletter!

Once again I wish you all a very happy new year and I look forward to us working together in 2018 to further develop services and support for children and young people with SEND in Solihull and their families.

Kind Regards

Ann Lowe

Head of Service, SEND 0-25 Learning, Skills and Progression, Children and Families, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Elmwood Place, Smiths Wood, Solihull, West-Midlands B36 0UG. Office 0121 704 6690

Contact Midlands 'Birth to Five Information session – Money Matters'

Contact Midlands invites parents and carers of children aged 0-5 with additional needs to their Free Money Matters workshop. The workshop will help parents and carers to know how to improve their finances, understand what they are entitled to and to know where to go to get support.

The session will take place on Tuesday 6th February 2018 10am-12pm at Limbrick Wood Centre, Thomas Naul Croft, Coventry, CV4 9QX. Refreshments will be provided.

You are welcome to bring someone to support you if needed. Some assistance towards childcare may be available. Free onsite parking is available.

[Click here for more information and to find out how to book a place](#)

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Autism West Midlands Sibling Workshop

Autism West Midlands are offering a 2 day workshop for siblings of children with autism during the February half term break.

The workshop is suitable for children aged 8-11 and uses fun games and activities to increase the sibling's confidence and understanding of autism and aims to:

- Help siblings meet other children who understand what it is like to have a brother or sister with autism
- Help siblings to get a better understanding of autism
- Help siblings to understand and feel positive about their role within the family
- Increase the siblings confidence

The workshop will run on Monday 19th February and Tuesday 20th February 2018 from 10am-2pm. The workshop will be held at Coleshill Heath Hub, Coleshill Heath Primary School, Lime Grove, Chelmsley Wood, B37 7PY.

Places are allocated on a first come first served basis and booking is essential. The cost to parents is £10 per child and they will be required to send their child with a packed lunch each day.

[Click here for more information and to find out how to book a place](#)

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