

Solihull SEND Newsletter

December 2021

Here we are with Christmas almost upon us. If you want an alternative (or addition) to the traditional advent calendar you may enjoy our British Sign Language version, learning a new sign each day, which is featured below.

It has been a busy term for everyone so here are some of the things we have been working on to continue to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and additional needs.

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

Some of you may already be aware that Frank McSheffrey, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care, will be leaving us early next year after accepting a role with Wirral Council. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his numerous achievements and unwavering commitment during a long and successful career with the council, particularly and most recently guiding our children's social care division through with the pandemic. Neelam Bhardwaja will join us on 20 December to provide cover for Frank's post on an interim basis, whilst we recruit permanently to the role. We will also be recruiting a fourth Head of Service for Children's Social Care and six Consultant Practitioners to add capacity for our social care services.

Strategic News

On 9 December the Council's Cabinet approved the final versions of the Additional Needs Strategy 2022-25, setting out the strategic approach across Solihull to improve outcomes for children and young people with additional needs, and the Accessibility Strategy 2022-25, which sets out how schools will make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of children and young people.

The Accessibility Strategy can be found on the local offer [here](#). The Additional Needs Strategy will be launched publically at the start of January 2022. Thank you very much to all of you who have contributed to these strategies.

The Strategy for Inclusive Education (supporting all children and young people to feel welcomed, supported and valued in school) and Early Years Strategy (focusing multi-agency support in the earliest years of development) are still being drafted and will be out for consultation next year.

Cabinet also received an update on the SEND improvement journey (highlighting the changes in practice you have heard about in these updates over the past year) and the overall financial position – recognising the need for the council to be focused upon improving outcomes for children and young people and ensuring value for money despite continued pressure on the budget.

You can read our Cabinet reports [here](#)

We are also working closely with one of our Special School head Teachers, Jane Davenport, to understand some of the challenges around education placements for children and young people with SEND. If you haven't yet shared your views with her, and wish to do so, the online survey is live until the end of term: [Unpicking SEND \(office.com\)](https://www.office.com/survey/Unpicking-SEND)

National News

We have now heard that the Government are concluding the SEND review and planning to publish a green paper by the end of March 2022; with a Steering Group set up to inform this. More information is available here [SEND Review Steering Group - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/send-review-steering-group). We don't yet know what proposed changes the review will lead to, but there is commitment to improving the outcomes of children and young people, supporting mainstream education to fulfil their responsibilities and making the system more financially sustainable.

Below are all the service updates for this term:

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EHCP Service

Following the change to Covid guidelines, the service will reduce its office based time to Monday – Wednesday. Staff can be reached on the direct landline numbers previously shared, and on Thursday and Friday will be contactable on their direct mobile numbers – as well as the usual main service number. Following some upcoming staff changes a new structure chart will be made available in the new year.

The number of initial EHCPs completed within timescale remains above 75% and over 85% of new reviews are now being completed within timescales. There is still a backlog of older reviews but we have a dedicated team working through these.

Children with EHCPs will have their Secondary School placement confirmed in their EHCP by 15 February and school leavers will have their next placement confirmed in their EHCP by 31 March. These children and young people should all have had their transition reviews by now. New annual review paperwork will be shared with schools and uploaded to the Local Offer in January. We will then start to co-produce new request paperwork to have this in place for the beginning of the summer term.

Community Educational Psychology Service

On a personal note, after nearly 4 years as Principal EP, I will be leaving Solihull in January to take up the post of Head of Service SEND with Staffordshire.] I have thoroughly enjoy working with the amazing community of teachers, LA officers, clinicians, families and children in Solihull. I wanted to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to everyone who supported us to re-launch the EP team back in 2018. I also wanted to say thank you to the amazing EP team who have built what is now a highly regarded EP service, both regionally and nationally! Recruitment for a Principal EP is underway and in the interim, I'm delighted that Melissa Jones will be taking the lead for the service as Acting Principal Educational Psychologist.

Best wishes - Halit Hulusi

Update: Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSN)

The Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance team has been commissioned for 2022-2023 which is great news for schools and families and means we can work closely with Michele Sadler and the Inclusion Service from January. Further updates and information regarding what this service will look like and how to access this support will be shared shortly. In mid-January 2022, the Community EP team will host to two Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and two Systemic Family Therapy trainees. We are looking forward to working with these trainees to support and develop our work with our families and schools.

Co-production with Health

Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPCV) is working with partners across the Health sector on a range of projects. Monthly meetings currently take place with representation from the SPVC and Health leads to discuss the key health issues that parent-carers have raised. This parent carer feedback has led to co-production within the following workstreams:

1. Situational mutism (SM) - to raise awareness and understanding of this by co-producing a parent
2. Improving understanding of access to Crisis support in mental health services - to include mapping the current crisis workstreams to identify improvements and develop next steps to raise awareness.
3. The Key Worker pilot working group - to deliver the BSol Keyworker pilot and begin to embed Key working. The aim of the pilot is that Children and Young People with a learning disability, autism, or both, with the most complex needs have a designated Key Worker.
4. Promoting Annual Health Checks at the GP for those over 14 years old with a learning disability – to improve both the uptake and the quality of the annual health checks.
5. The Autism in Schools project - to co-design and produce an autism-empowered training programme, based on understanding autistic identity.
6. Improving the Health input on the Local Offer - to ensure health information is accurate, easy to access and includes the health information that parents, carers and CYP need.
7. Learning Disability Autism (LDA) experience task & finish group (based on SENDIASS project related to hospital experiences) - to support the NHS providers to act on feedback and implement the changes that they can.
8. Reasonable Adjustments (RA) working group - to raise awareness of reasonable adjustments and identify areas for improvement (to start January 2022)

Specialist inclusion Support Service

Autism Education Trust (AET) Training

New AET modules will begin being delivered after Christmas. Dates will be confirmed by flyers direct to schools and also directly to SENCOs via our specialist teachers:

Autism and Anxiety

A 2020 study found that 52% of autistic children suffer with anxiety compared to 8% of non-autistic children.

The outcomes for this module include gaining an understanding of:

- How autistic children might express anxiety
- What can cause anxiety in autistic children
- What you can do to prevent and reduce anxiety in autistic children – strategy building

Autism and Exclusion

The national rate for the fixed term exclusion of autistic pupils is 4% higher than for the rest of the school population. (DfE 2019.)

The outcomes for this module include:

- To understand the legal context of exclusion and autism
- To understand the risk of illegal exclusion and how to avoid it occurring
- To better understand the triggers and ways of managing distressed behaviours
- To reflect on ways to support autistic children and their families during the period of exclusion
- To consider ways of transitioning the autistic child back into school and how to manage the reintegration meeting.

Early Years ELKLAN and Solihull's Communication Friendly Settings

The Early Years ELKLAN Pilot, run by the SISS SLCD Team, has now been completed by staff at five of our Early Years Settings and once all work is verified they will become Communication Friendly Settings. Elklan have commented on the very high standard of reflection and knowledge submitted so a massive congratulations to Emma Brown from Bishop Wilson, Susan Worrall from Lighthall Under Fives Preschool, Claire Jane Sargeant from Beatle Woods, Charlotte Charles from In The Woods Nursery Ltd and Dawn Woolven from Marston Green Infant School. It has been a lot of hard work for all staff and settings, but has made such a difference.

In their recent Ofsted at In the Woods nursery the impact of ELKLAN across the setting was commented upon and their Ofsted report stated; *"Areas are spacious and rich with resources, they have great fun as they explore natural resources and quickly learn new words to expand their vocabulary as staff are skilled at using and repeating words."* We are also very pleased that Charlotte Charles from In the Woods Nursery is now going to go forwards with a Level 5 qualification in Early Years Leadership. Well done to all involved!

British Sign Language videos for Christmas

Rose Ayling-Ellis has made quite the impression on Strictly Come Dancing, not only a "10" dancer, but also raising the profile of British Sign Language and the Deaf Community. Last week she said in an interview, "I have no problem being deaf, it's society that makes it harder for me". The SISS Hearing Impairment Team want to ensure the deaf children they work with are fully included in to society. There are various reasonable adjustments that can be made; correct seating position, use of subtitles, and in some cases the addition of Sign Supported English, or British Sign Language. If you would like to learn and share some Christmas signs please have a look at this alternative advent calendar <https://letssign.co.uk/product/lets-sign-bsl-christmas/> and accompanying video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hc74ImOQ440>



Early Years

In Solihull we have, for a long time, recognised the importance of early years in shaping future life outcomes. Children who have a healthy, stable early environment, rich with opportunities to learn and develop and positive relationships are supported to reach their potential. Our ambition

is to ensure these positive outcomes for all young children and to support children and families at the earliest opportunity. We hope that this can be achieved through ensuring sufficient quality early education, identifying need early and working together to support families. We are currently finalising our Maternity and Early Years Strategy through wider consultation. This will shape some of the work we do together, across services, in the next five years. We hope to make sure everyone recognises the importance of this crucial stage in a child's life. We are also writing a bid for Solihull Family Hubs and if we are successful they will be a universal 'front door' to a range of early help, public health and wider support services.

Solihull Parent Carer Voice - Winter Event

We have been amazed at the uptake of the SPCV winter family skate event taking place on 20 December, within 2 hours all the slots were allocated and after 12 hrs we had to close the list as we had received forms for 153 children and had to request an additional 30 places. All children will partake in craft activities and skating and will receive a hot meal and drink. SPCV will look at holding another HAF event at Easter to help create more opportunities for families with children of SEN and/or disabilities.

I wish you all a well deserved break over the Christmas holiday period, and that you are able to safely spend time with family and friends.

Thanks

Charlotte Jones

Head of SEND service 0-25

