

# Solihull SEND Newsletter

---

February 2022

I trust you have managed to stay safe and well so far this year. We are already well into 2022 and this year will see some significant changes to how everyone within Solihull works together to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and additional needs.

In addition to that we are still waiting to see what possible changes the SEND review will bring – and I hope our next newsletter will be able to say more about that.

---

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

As you may be aware, we had our Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) during January, which focused on how well all statutory agencies in Solihull are protecting children in the area. The letter following inspection will be published on 21 February 2022.

During this process we have reviewed our plans within Children's Social Care, following the departure of Frank McSheffrey. I am pleased to announce that Jassi Broadmeadow will now be covering the Assistant Director role whilst we recruit and that Emma Lightfoot will be covering the additional Head of Service post.

---

## Strategic News

### Every Child and Young Person Matters, and Matters Equally

We are pleased to publish the new [Additional Needs Strategy](#) for Solihull – written directly for the children and young people it will support. This sets out how all services will work together, particularly across education, health, children's and adult's social care, employment and communities. And importantly work with children and young people with additional needs (aged 0-25 years) and their parent carers so they can have the best life possible.

The strategy sets out how professionals promise to work with children, young people and their parent carers and the outcome statements we will be working towards. A number of areas for action have been identified and plans are being worked on to deliver these. However, we are calling on every professional, and service, working with children and young people with additional needs to work in this collaborative way and to think about what they can do to improve their practice; and most importantly outcomes. Together we can make Solihull a place where children and young people enjoy life, feel welcome and have the same chances of living their best life.

### Solihull's Maternity & Early Years Strategy

We want to improve outcomes for children from pre-birth to 5 years old, providing the right support at the right time for all children to start strong and stay strong. We worked with partners

to create the draft document and following a recent consultation, we will be considering all feedback in the formation of the final strategy.

We continue to develop our work on the Strategy for Inclusive Education and Graduated Approach with key stakeholders and will be able to provide more information in the next newsletter.

---

**Below are all the service updates for this term:**

---

## Educational Improvement

### **Bev Petch, School Advisor**

We have reviewed Solihull's policy 'ensuring a good education for children who would otherwise miss out on education because of their health needs'. The policy sets out how Solihull Council will comply with its statutory duty under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 to arrange suitable, full-time education for children of compulsory school age who, because of illness, would otherwise not receive suitable education and is available on the Local Offer website:

<https://socialsolihull.org.uk/localoffer/?s=policy>

The policy also reminds schools of their duties to make arrangements for supporting pupils at their school with medical conditions.

Schools are at the frontline in providing appropriate support for pupils with health needs and enabling them to benefit from and take part in all aspects of school life. Schools are more likely to secure successful outcomes for children missing or potentially missing education due to their medical conditions where key staff share information and work together holistically but we also recognise that effective collaboration between education and health is essential to delivering suitable education for these children. .

---

## Early Years

### **Lisa Morris, Early Years Manager**

Our second cohort of Early Years practitioners recently completed their *NCFE Cache L3 Award for Special Educational Needs Coordinator in Early Years Settings*. Congratulations to them all for the hard work and dedication they demonstrate, supporting families and early years children with SEND in Solihull. We now have more than forty Level 3 qualified SENCOs working in our early years private and independent settings in Solihull. We look forward to continuing to work alongside them, networking and supporting each other to continually build on their good practice and the difference our early years settings make to the lives of children and families in Solihull.

The Department for Education has committed to further investment to increase the number of staff in group-based providers, and childminders, with an accredited Level 3 SENCO qualification. This will lead to better identification of SEND, and better support for children with SEND.

There was a record number of applications for Early Years Inclusion Fund at the December panel. Settings who are applying for this additional funding may like to use the Inclusion Fund flowchart as a check that all application requirements are met and have been submitted to panel. Further panel dates can be found at the link below.

<https://socialsolihull.org.uk/localoffer/education/inclusion-fund/> - panel dates and Inclusion Fund flowchart.

---

## Educational Commissioning

### **Darren Jakeways, Commissioning Officer**

Our contact management framework for independent schools and colleges continues to develop. We have recently started testing some enhanced pre-placement checks, are rolling out a programme of quality monitoring assessments and visits to schools and we are currently undertaking some contract compliance checks in respect of insurances. All aimed at achieving better outcomes for children and young people with SEND, using our high needs funding in the most effective way.

We have also recently commenced market shaping and scoping the most appropriate contractual route to deliver the best outcomes for our children and families who utilise tuition services, mediation services, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy so watch this space for future developments.

---

## Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPCV)

Over the last term we have been working to raise voices of parents and carers within services and have held a meeting for parents and carers with Charlotte Jones (Head of SEND) and Michele Sadler (Head of Inclusion)

In the next couple of months we are holding a meeting (virtually) for parents with professionals such as: Charlotte Jones, the Community Therapies Lead, the Specialist Assessment Service Lead and health commissioners. This is at 12.30pm on Monday 14 February. If you would like to join please register [here](#)

We are also holding:

- a SEND Specific Careers Event on 8 March, so please keep an eye out for more information on this coming soon.
- sensory workshops with an Occupational Therapist, these will also include the opportunity for a sensory assessment. Again, please look out for more information coming soon.
- Basic computer skills classes from mid-February to mid-March

More events and opportunities to have your voices heard coming soon so please do look out for more information on the Solihull Parent Carer Voice page on Facebook, their Twitter page @solihullpcv and through information emailed out through schools.

---

## Community Educational Psychology Service

### **Melissa Jones, interim Principal Educational Psychologist**

Our EBSN team are working with the Inclusion Team on the relaunch of the Emotionally Based School Non-attendance pathway and our trauma informed pilot with the Virtual school and SISS colleagues is now moving into its second phase following completion of the initial training.

We have revised our supervision offer to schools and will discuss this with colleagues at SENCo networks in early February.

- Our YEF project made national news with the Youth Endowment Fund and Solihull are mentioned as a case study in this insights brief released in December on p.19 [here](#) Wider findings can be found here [here](#)

We are currently advertising to fill some vacancies within the service so look forward to welcoming new people soon. We now have new trainees with the service who will begin their courses in early February and work alongside our EPs, assistants and Trainee Eps.

---

## **Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme**

### **Austin Rodriguez, Head of Stronger Communities**

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme in Solihull was successfully rolled out in 2021. The programme that is funded by Department of Education offers free holiday club provision for children from reception to year 11 who receive benefits-related free school meals. Solihull Council recognised that a key priority was to increase and improve provision offered for children with SEN and/or disabilities. Training sessions for existing holiday club providers were successfully run by our specialist SEND clubs Inclusive Sports Academy, SoLo and Ordinary Magic. The training provides the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure clubs are as inclusive as possible for children with SEN and/or disabilities. Solihull Council also provided funding for Solihull Parent Carer Voice & North Solihull Additional Needs Group to have their own all-inclusive HAF events. Solihull Parent Carer Voice received funding for a winter family skate event at Solihull Ice Rink on 20 December, whilst North Solihull Additional Needs Group were funded for a sensory santa event at KEC Church Centre on 18 December. Parents were invited to attend the events and all children attending received a free hot meal.

From the total numbers of children who attended the Summer 2021 HAF programme, just 5% were classed as SEN and/or disabilities. The Winter 2021 HAF programme has seen an increase in attendance figures for SEND inclusion with 26% of total children classed as SEN and/or disabilities. Increasing this participation remains a key priority for Solihull Council and work is underway to implement this for the remaining three years of funding. If you would like more information on the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme please visit [here](#).

---

## **Specialist Inclusion Support Service**

### **Paula Thompson, SISS Manager**

#### **SISS SEMH Nurture Provision for primary pupils - REFRESH**

The SISS SEMH Nurture provision continues to develop with five pupils currently benefiting from their placement at REFRESH. It's been a real pleasure to see strong relationships grow between the children themselves, and the children and the REFRESH team, providing a safe space for our children to flourish. We are currently recruiting further members of the team to complement our teachers, inclusion support practitioner and play therapist. This will get us ready for opening the second group for Key Stage 1 children in May, when the final building phase is completed at Coleshill Heath School.

## **Autism Empowered Schools and Developing Identity Project**

The SISS Autism team are working to support two Solihull secondary schools who are participating in a project which aims to empower autistic young people and help them to celebrate their amazing individual identities.

The project also includes working in collaboration with Solihull Parent Carer Voice to secure outcomes that will help the school community work better together to meet the neurodiverse needs of pupils now and in the future.

The project involves working together to co-produce training resources regarding identity, and we will be training school staff to help autistic pupils understand their identity. It will also explore people's experiences and make sure that adaptations to the school environment secure inclusive practice.

There are opportunities for both parents, carers and young people to be involved in the project, with a clear evaluation process by the end of the academic year.

---

## **Autism Assessment Waiting Times**

### **Maria Kidd and Clara McDonald, Designated Clinical Officers**

To support with reduction in ASD assessment waiting times Healios, an online provider of Autism assessments, have been commissioned to see children and young people in Solihull. They will offer assessments alongside the Specialist Assessment Service (SAS) starting from 7 February, seeing 122 children and young people in total, over a period of eight months.

---

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)

Thank you

### **Charlotte Jones**

Head of SEND service 0-25

---

