

Solihull SEND Newsletter

April 2022

As the days start to get longer and the sunshine returned (albeit briefly) there is a timely reminder of all the work taking place in Solihull to give our children and young people with SEND and additional needs a brighter future.

This month we also celebrate Cerebral Palsy Awareness month and World Down Syndrome day - reminding ourselves that every child and young person with an additional need is an individual to be treasured.

On 29 March the long awaited SEND Green Paper “Right Support, Right Place, Right Time” was published. The aim of this paper is to create the right environment to ensure the aspirations of the 2015 reforms can be delivered. Please do take time to read the [review paper](#), and respond to the consultation with your thoughts.

Strategic News

Every Child and Young Person Matters, and Matters Equally

In the last edition we published the new [Additional Needs Strategy](#) for Solihull. Whilst this was written directly to the children and young people it will support, we knew we wanted to provide important information in different formats. We are therefore pleased to include a [symbol/widgit](#) version of the strategy for children and young people on our local offer. Posters are also being distributed to schools to further promote this approach.

Every Learner Matters, and Matters Equally

As we have mentioned in previous newsletters, over the past year we have been consulting through workshop groups with parent carers, schools, early years’ settings, staff from Solihull Council and from Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning group for health, to begin to co-produce Solihull’s first Strategy for Inclusive Education. All of this feedback, alongside current research in the field of inclusion, has been used to help us to draft our proposed 3-year strategy and action plan.

In line with the priorities of the Additional Needs Strategy, this is focused on inclusion and equity within our education settings - with its main aim being for all children and young people in Solihull to feel welcomed into, and included within, their local early years setting, school and

college; and for every single child and young person to be respected, valued and celebrated as a unique individual.

A broader consultation is now being planned and we are keen to hear everyone's views on this important topic so please read more below.....

Consultations

Solihull's Strategy for Inclusive Education 2022-25

The next stage in co-producing our strategy is to consult more widely. We want to hear from as many people as possible, so that we can check if we are heading in the right direction - in a way which takes into account the views and wishes of as many people in Solihull as possible.

Please complete the online consultation [here](#) - by **29 April 2022**.

Parent Carers can sign up to one of the online consultation events organised by Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPCV) on **4 & 5 April** - [Events for April 2022 – Solihull Parent Carer Voice \(spcv.org.uk\)](#)

Solihull Early Education and Childcare Parent Carer Survey 2022

We'd like to hear the views of all parents to assist with planning for early education and childcare places in the area for children aged 0-14 and up to 18 for children with additional needs. In particular, the information will be used to understand the demand for specific types of early education and childcare providers, as well as the amount and type of places that currently exist and may be needed in the future.

Please complete [here](#) - by **8 April 2022**. The outcomes will be published in the Council's Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency Plan in September 2022.

Below are all the service updates for this term:

Accessibility Strategy 2021 – 2024

Deborah Carpenter, SEND Operations Manager

The [Accessibility Strategy](#) is now live on the local offer. This outlines the local authority's duties under the Equality Act 2010, and the duties of schools in relation to this.

All schools should have an Accessibility Plan that is reviewed every three years and is available on their web page. A school's Accessibility Plan should follow the 3 key principles below and support the implementation of the local authority's vision. That vision being that all schools are accessible and inclusive:

- Guiding Principle 1: To increase access to the whole curriculum offered by schools for pupils with disabilities
- Guiding Principle 2: Improve the physical environment of schools to increase access to education and associated services

- Guiding Principle 3: Improve the access of written information for children and young people with disabilities

The SEND (0-25) service are looking to develop the strategy further with potential training options for schools in writing and implementing their plans and being able to better understand the strategy and what it means to them.

Early Years

Lisa Morris, Early Years Manager

Dingley's Promise

The Dingley's Promise Early Years Inclusion Programme was launched at the end of February. Solihull have been chosen as one of ten local authorities who are able to access ten modules of training over the next five years. The training is funded by Comic Relief and is available to anyone who works in Solihull early years' settings.

The first two modules are an introduction to early years' inclusive practice and early years' transitions. The courses aim to increase learners' awareness of the needs of all children, especially those with SEND, and to increase their confidence in supporting the learning and well-being of all children in their setting. At approximately five hours for each module the training is a big ask for settings to take part.

Settings will be able to demonstrate their commitment to continued professional development through a Dingley's Promise kite mark which will celebrate the number of people trained in the setting. Settings can sign up [here](#)

Speech, language and communication

In March the Early Years SEND Partnership supported the last of three action learning sets with a focus on speech, language and communication. As a workstream in the Maternity and Early Years Strategy action plan, the group have been looking at what is working well and how to further promote and develop early communication across Solihull. One suggestion was to hold a speech and language day which attendees thought was a great idea - so watch this space.....

Department for Education - feedback

The Department for Education (DfE) are keen to gather feedback from parents on the 'What to Expect in the EYFS' guidance for parents – available [here](#).

There are two questions the DfE would like to ask:

- Could you outline your thoughts and opinions of 'What to expect in the Early Years Foundation Stage: a guide for parents'?
- Is there any information missing from the document that would be useful to know?

Please send your responses to the Foundation Years inbox at foundationyears@ncb.org.uk.

EHCP Service

Amanda Hana, EHCP Service Manager

The service has continued its focus on 20 week timescales with the majority of new EHCP plans being completed in time, including achieving 100% in the last two months. All families are now offered person centred meetings as part of the EHCP assessment process and in January and February all families took up this offer.

The last few months have been busy with transitions work for the 15 February deadline and I am happy to report that all children with existing EHCP's going into Reception in September 2022 and moving from infants to juniors, had their placements named by the deadline. 96% of children moving into secondary placements in September 2022 also had these placements identified by 15 February.

Brian Sidwell has now been appointed as the service deputy manager and we are interviewing this week for EHCP Officers. Once we have appointed new staff we will update the structure chart available on the local offer.

The new Annual Review paperwork is now in use (available on the [Local Offer](#)) and is being well received by schools and families. The next project is to amend the new request paperwork and this will be underway soon, co-produced with schools, professionals, SENDIAS and Parent Carer Voice.

Specialist Inclusion Support Service

Paula Thompson, SISS Manager

Speech, Language and Communication Disorders (SLCD) Team Restructure

Over the last few weeks, the SLCD team has joined with the Communication and Learning Difficulties team, under the leadership of Jo Shilton - although they will maintain their own identity within this broader unit of SISS. Samantha Foster, who has been teaching at the SLCD Additionally Resourced Centre (ARC) at Bishop Wilson Primary School, will now be supporting as the Lead Professional, with responsibility for the day-to-day running of both of the LA's SLCD ARCs, the second provision being based within Valley Primary School.

REFRESH

The KS2 Nurture Provision, supporting children with SEMH needs, has been open since autumn term 2021, with the KS1 provision due to open after May half term. We have successfully recruited a teacher for KS1 class, but due to the timing of the building completion and following consultation with head teachers, we have decided not to take any KS1 pupils until September. In the summer term we will have some additional outreach capacity and will be setting up the provision ready to take pupils for 2022-23.

Educational Commissioning

Darren Jakeways, Commissioning Officer

Our first provider forum for Independent Schools and Colleges with Solihull learners with an EHCP took place online on 4 March 2022 and it was great to see so many people in attendance. It was an opportunity for us to outline our SEND strategy, our processes and contract management framework. But most importantly an opportunity for schools and colleges to tell us a bit more about what they felt about our plans and how we are doing.

We will take their feedback on board as we develop our processes and will ensure we provide more detail of what we are doing in response as we continue to work to develop and maintain good working relationships with our providers.

In addition to LA maintained and independent/non-maintained specialist provision for SEN learners, there have been increasing numbers of learners with complex and challenging needs who necessitate bespoke provision via online and face-to-face tuition services. We are currently working with stakeholders to strengthen contract and spot-purchase arrangements with current providers and ensure we have a robust process in place to mitigate any potential safeguarding, financial and reputational risks, with the introduction of tighter contract management, performance management and outcomes tracking.

Social Care and Support Services for children and young people (up to 18) with disabilities

Laura Slegg-Newton, Commissioning Officer

We are pleased to announce that from the 1 April 2022 we will be entering into a new flexible contract arrangement with [Sandant Care](#) and Social Life Opportunities [Social Life Opportunities](#) (SoLo) for the delivery of personal care and bespoke specialist (day) short breaks that are invoiced directly to the SEND Children's Social Care Team; meaning that they will be our preferred providers for these services.

Both providers have undergone a rigorous selection process, ensuring compliance against a number of factors (including CQC registration, safeguarding, health and safety, recruitment and selection, data protection, risk assessments, equality and diversity, financial standing, insurances) and quality assurance. Following a social care assessment, before a new package of care and/or support is put in place, availability will be checked with our preferred providers - families will then be given the choice of which available provider they would like to deliver the service.

It is intended that the new arrangements will help to preserve and support the development of the local social care market and help it to grow. The new arrangements will help achieve transparent and robust quality standards, whilst ensuring that Solihull Council is compliant with procurement rules and regulations.

It is anticipated that we will seek to add additional providers to the Flexible Contracting Arrangement later this year – please contact childrenscommissioning@solihull.gov.uk if your organisation would like to express an interest in becoming a preferred provider.

This new contracting arrangement will not affect current support packages delivered by other providers.

Clinical Commissioning Group

Clara McDonald, Designated Clinical Officer

The Designated Medical Officer (DMO) and Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) roles are key elements in supporting the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in meeting its statutory responsibilities for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The roles provide a point of contact for the Local Authority for seeking health advice, and also a point of contact for health providers for advice regarding SEND.

The members of the SEND designate team are:

Name	Role Days per week
Maria Kidd*	DCO 3
Clara McDonald	DCO 3 (across Birmingham and Solihull)
Dr Renu Jainer	DMO 0.5
Dr Younis Ahmed	DMO 1
Dr Amit Banerjee	DMO 1

*Maria Kidd retired from the CCG at the end of March. Her post will be recruited to but in the meantime the rest of the designate team will support the function, with additional support from Ali Beard (DCO for Birmingham).

Specialist Assessment Service (SAS)

Claire Howell, Clinical Team Lead

The service was recently awarded external NHSE funding to address the ASD waiting times. Healios, an independent company offering online ASD assessment, has been commissioned to deliver this work. They will be providing ASD assessments for 122 children on the waiting list over a period of 9 months from February 2022. Families who will be offered their assessment through Healios will be contacted.

The SAS website has been updated to reflect the current staffing structure and ways of working to help families access information about the team and the process they might expect when their child/young person is seen by the service. The SAS has recently made changes to how children are allocated from the waiting list to support a more consistent flow through the service. The SAS team recognise there is a long wait for the service and therefore regularly update the links for support for families/young people while they are waiting. In the future the service aims to provide more supporting information on the website to help people when completing their referral. The website link is here: <https://childrenscommunitytherapies.uhb.nhs.uk/specialist-assessment-service/>.

Adult Social Care

Bethany Hutchinson, Head of Service Care and Support

The SEND Adults Team have a number of Social Care Workers working alongside the Children's SEND Team, education and the All Age Disability team. We have introduced a pathway which includes joint working with the Children's SEND team and Education services for young people, from the age of 16, to aid the transition to adult's services. The SEND adults team aim to get to know young people for as long as possible before completing their Care Act (2014) assessment in time for the young person to turn 18.

A SEND adults social care worker will focus on a young person's strengths, considering what works well, what the person wants to do with their life, while also ensuring their essential care and support needs are met.

This assessment uses legislation called the Care Act (2014) and is holistic, covering all the important areas of a person's life, preparing them for adulthood. Once care and support is arranged Adult Care and Support will review a person's care needs annually.

It is our aim to ensure that moving into adulthood does not feel like a cliff edge and everything a person needs is considered and addressed as part of a thorough hand over process from Childrens Services.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme – Easter 2022

Austin Rodriguez, Head of Stronger Communities

Following a successful launch in 2021, the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme in Solihull will continue for the next three years. Offering free holiday club activities, including a nutritious meal for children from reception to year 11, in receipt of benefits-related free school meals.

Provision for SEND children has continued to increase, resulting in providers at 7 locations across the borough offering activities this Easter that are specifically designed for children with SEND, and more than 20 providers having completed SEND specific training provided by Solihull Council.

Below is a selection of activities running this Easter – for a comprehensive list of activities and locations, and to book places, please click [here](#)

- A range of physical activities promoting the benefits of regular exercise, targeted at young people who have a learning disability, learning difficulty or are identified with SEND. In addition to a range of off-site trips by **Inclusive Sports Academy (Millpool, 1st Solihull Scout Group, Lode Lane)**
- Easter Extravaganza (Teen scheme, 6-12, Playscheme, 13+), a variety of Easter related activities tailored to suit the ages and needs of each group of children. This will include crafts, games, music, and baking which help to promote the children's social development and independent living skills in a fun and engaging environment, by **SoLo Life Opportunities (Chelmsley Wood and Fire Station – central Solihull)**
- Families can learn to ride using a range of adapted bikes, for children aged 5 – 19 years by **Midland Mencap (Fordbridge)**
- A comprehensive programme of activities for 11 – 16 year olds by **Urban Heard (Fordbridge)**
- Girl specific activities for 9 – 16 year old girls by **Go Girl (Smith's Wood)**
- A wide range of practical and physical fun for 5 – 16 year olds by **Cre8fun Holiday Club (Balsall Common)**

- A wide range of activities such as Lego masterclasses, animal encounters, slime making and tie dye for 4 – 11 year olds and off-site trips for 5 – 14 year olds by **Ordinary Magic (Olton)**
- Cooking classes and physical activities for 5 – 11 year olds by **Cook Stars (Dorridge)**
- Multisports and indoor cycling for 5 – 16 year olds by **Strike 9T (Earlswood)**

Solihull Council has again provided funding for Our Voices Heard to host an fun day of sporting, crafts and swimming activities. See the OVH section below for details.

If you have any questions about activities, please contact individual providers who will be able to discuss if they can meet the needs of your child(ren) with adjustments. It is possible for providers to access additional funding to provide support if they are aware of the needs in advance of attendance.

For general HAF information click [here](#)

Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPCV)

We held our first careers fair for young people with SEND in March. This event was really successful and we have been asked to make it an annual occurrence.

We have been working hard to arrange events for the next year - our next events are:

- 4 April - Quarterly meeting for parents and professionals – with an Early Years focus
- 27 April - Meeting for parents with SOLAR - looking especially at the crisis team, and the new M-Power team

Links to register for events can be found on our facebook page [Solihull Parent Carer Voice - Home | Facebook](#) or on our website: <https://spcv.org.uk/>

We also have released our annual report, find out what we have been doing this year- [Reports - Solihull Parent Carer Voice \(spcv.org.uk\)](#)

Our Voices Heard

Our Voices Heard are running a free holiday activity day at North Solihull Sports Centre - open to all young people aged 5 – 16 years who are in receipt of benefits related free school meals and/or have disabilities or special needs. Spaces are limited, to book visit [here](#)

Solihull SENDIAS

Solihull SENDIAS are keen to increase our outreach work with families and settings. Throughout the pandemic we continued to support families through a mixture of virtual and in-person work, where covid restrictions allowed. However, we are now eager to resume and expand our community engagement at outreach events. If you are having a coffee morning, SEND drop in, co-production event or an event for parents and/or young people with additional needs, please consider asking Solihull SENDIAS to attend to support your setting and your families.

If you would like to discuss setting up a SEND community event, please contact us.

Solihull SENDIAS can be contacted by email: solihullsendias@family-action.org.uk or by phone 0121 516 5173.

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

Thank you

Charlotte Jones

Head of SEND service 0-25

