

Solihull SEND Newsletter

July 2022

Wow. What a year that has been!

Things are certainly very different this year heading into the summer. For many of us, lives have returned to normal as holidays and gatherings are planned and those moving to a new school or college in September have been able to at least visit to help their transition. Hopefully you are also seeing the impact of our improvement journey in practice; providing better EHCP and SEND support for children and young people in Solihull.

Strategic News

Strategy for Inclusive Education

Thank you to all who took the time to respond to this consultation. As always, your contribution was valuable and changes have been made to the proposed strategy as a result.

We are now working through the process of the strategy being formally approved and agreeing how best to implement it in the new academic year – so watch this space!

Partnership Agreement

We have been working with Solihull Parent Carer Voice to update the agreement for this year. This sets out how education, care and health will continue to work strategically with the parent carer forum to ensure our priorities, new ways of working and decisions are informed directly by parent carers across the borough.

[The updated Partnership Agreement is available here.](#)

Delivering Better Value

Earlier in the year the Department for Education launched a programme to support 55 Local Authorities with the highest deficit in their High Needs Budget.

Solihull Council have been included in the first tranche of this work and over the summer we will be working with Newton and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) and stakeholders to understand the strengths and challenges of our local SEND partnerships and start to identify actions for improvement. We will keep everyone updated through future editions of this newsletter.

Consultations

There are a number of national consultations happening at the moment so please do take a look and respond if you are interested – this is the best way to have our voices heard nationally as focus turns to the SEND system.

SEND Green Paper

This sets out a number of proposals aimed at providing the structure needed in local areas for the 2015 SEND reforms to be effective and brings SEND and alternative provision together. The consultation is open until **Friday 22 July**.

[The SEND Green Paper consultation is available here.](#)

Reviews of EHCPs: Proposed Timescales

This sets out proposals around the planning of an EHCP annual review as well as the decision making following the review. The consultation is open until **Friday 12 August**.

[The Reviews of EHCPs consultation is available here.](#)

SEND Local Area Inspection Framework

This sets out proposals to change how local areas are inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission to assess how well partners work together to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people. The consultation is open until **Sunday 11 September**.

[The SEND Local Area Inspection Framework consultation is available here.](#)

Operational Activity

Based on your feedback on the content of this newsletter (thank you!) we wanted to reflect on this academic year and think about the improvements we have been making around the EHCP system. We know everyone's experiences will vary, and we still have work to do, but hopefully you will have seen some of this yourselves:

What you said:	What we did:	The results:
It is taking too long for new EHCPs to be processed.	Increased staffing and changed the structure of the EHCP Service. Set up timescale monitoring.	33.8% of plans were issued within 20-weeks in 2019. In 2021 this reached 54.7% and by June 2022 the cumulative figure was 65%.
Reviews of EHCPs are not timely nor carried out consistently.	Co-produced new annual review paperwork. Strengthened processes in schools and the LA.	On average, 60% of new annual reviews are having amendment decisions made within 4 weeks, and 80% of plans finalised in time.

		The historic annual review backlog has reduced from 1784 to 494.
EHCPs are not of high enough quality.	<p>Implemented a new EHCP template.</p> <p>Provided training to staff and advice-givers on good quality and SMART outcomes.</p> <p>Implemented a quality assurance process.</p>	<p>Recent feedback from a parent's solicitor told us it was "the best she has seen for being specific, clear and SMART".</p> <p>A parent commented "this is the best plan I have seen from Solihull".</p> <p>A SENCo also wanted to compliment the team on the content & detail in the plan which was "clear and purposeful".</p>
Children and young people transitioning to a new school in September wait too long for their placements to be confirmed.	<p>Strengthened processes in schools and the LA.</p> <p>Asked schools to prioritise reviews for transition years.</p> <p>Set up timescale monitoring.</p>	<p>By 15 February 2022, 97% of EHCPs were finalised for school transitions compared to 63% in 2021.</p> <p>By 31 March 2022, 67% of EHCPs were finalised for post-16 transitions, more than double the previous year.</p>

Below are the service updates for this term:

Early Years - Lisa Morris, Early Years Manager

The Cost of Childcare for Parents [DfE]

The Department for Education has released a package of measures which they hope will increase childcare support for parents, boost the number of childminders and drive take up of childcare offers to address rising costs. [Details on these measures are available here.](#)

Please signpost parents to [Childcare Choices](#) to see support available for childcare costs.

[A consultation on the regulatory changes to childcare support is available here.](#) The consultation closes on **Friday 16 September.**

Solihull Maternity and Early Years Strategy

We are currently working on a summary version of the Maternity and Early Years Strategy. Actions such as the promotion of *Dingley's Promise Free Inclusion Training* and refining the *Early Years Team Around the Child (EYTAC)* approach have resulted in more settings accessing inclusion training and 90 children have been referred to the EYTAC panel for support since September.

Some settings may now be ready to apply for the Dingley's Promise Kite Mark.

[Further EYTAC information can be accessed here.](#)

[Find more information about Dingley's Promise here.](#)

EHCP Service - Amanda Hana, EHCP Service Manager

Staff changes

From **Monday 11 July** the EHCP Officers in our teams are:

Assessment team

Name	Contact no.
Jill Essex (team manager)	07493 864 792
Karen Tunnicliff	07825 386 285
Tina Marshall	07826 548 218 0121 779 1774 (Mon - Wed)
Afton Cohcrane	07900 662 977 0121 779 1780 (Mon - Wed)

Review team A (0 - yr 8)

Name	Contact no.
Kay Reid (team manager)	07425 636 589 0121 779 1778 (Mon - Wed)
Paige Roberts	07468 360 085 0121 779 1781 (Mon - Wed)
Dorinda Olympio	07823 786 391 0121 779 1740 (Mon - Wed)
Jackie Woods	07552 850 718 0121 779 1788 (Mon - Wed)
Kerrie Murphy	07385 949 452 0121 779 1777 (Mon - Wed)

Review team B (yr 9 and above)

Name	Contact no.
Shal Westerman (team manager)	07780 493 756 0121 779 1726 (Mon - Wed)
Laura Stott	07585 961 979 0121 779 1783 (Mon - Wed)
Hannah Wolfe	07585 402 176 0121 779 1787 (Mon - Wed)
Megan White	07900 660 565 0121 779 1711 (Mon - Wed)
Lynn Bailey	TBC

Backlog Review team

Name	Contact no.
Ros Cleverley (team manager)	07795 476 523 0121 779 1722 (Mon - Wed)
George Smith	07900 737 909 0121 779 1782 (Mon - Wed)
Katie Bright	07342 003 811 0121 779 1770 (Mon - Wed)
Jalal Uddin	07788 375 335 0121 779 1795 (Mon - Wed)

Please do not hesitate to call people if you need to speak to them.

Officers in very specific roles, such as tribunals and complex cases, have **not** been included.

New Request paperwork and transition reviews

This term we are focusing on finishing the updated New Request paperwork so that it can be in place for September. We are also working on getting lists of transition reviews due to schools before the end of term to help them plan.

As a reminder:

- Year 6 and Nursery 2 annual reviews must be held **before October half term**.
- Leavers Annual Reviews must be held **before Christmas** (includes all year 11s and all year 13s plus some year 12s).

This is line with the legal deadline for identifying next placements for these children and young people. These deadlines are a priority for the service to ensure children and young people have ample time for transition.

Last year we were very successful in identifying placements for those going into reception and year 7 and we would like to repeat this success. However, the transition deadline was not as successful for young people moving into post-16 so there is a focus on improving this.

We cannot do this alone and need the support of our schools and colleges to achieve this.

Working together we can really make a difference!

Specialist Inclusion Support Service - Paula Thompson, SISS Manager

We would like to thank everyone for the work we have done together this year despite the many challenges we have all continued to face.

Support from schools for developing both the Graduated Approach work and our Refresh provision has been greatly appreciated, including running panel meetings. Particular thanks to all staff at Coleshill Heath School and Head Teacher, Nicole Fowles, for their enthusiasm and patience while working with us to ensure Refresh can open completely in September.

We welcome feedback on the offer of the SISS teams and the quality and impact of the work that teams do supporting children, families, schools and settings; ideas for developing and improving within our current resourcing are particularly welcome.

Our annual survey is open until the end of term, so please do contribute, it should take about 10 minutes. All feedback is collated and included in our annual end of year report, with actions to be taken as a result outlined in the report produced in September. [The annual survey is available to fill in here.](#)

Recruitment updates and staff changes

We are currently finalising recruitment to our non-teaching posts at Refresh primary SEMH Intervention provision.

In addition, we are recruiting teachers within the Autism and CLD Teams due to Jo Shilton and Jenny Wingfield leaving us in the summer and Josie McGlynn retiring, though Josie will do some work for us in the autumn term. Zoe Foster from the sensory team is also retiring in the summer but will be returning to do some work for us whilst we recruit a new candidate for her post.

We wish all staff leaving us the best of luck for their future and everyone else a lovely summer break.

Community Educational Psychologists

We are delighted to welcome Jane Sowter to the Council as our new Principal Educational Psychologist. Jane joined us on 27 June and brings a wealth of experience to the team.

Sadly, Stella Lawlor, Senior EP, will be leaving us during August – we are extremely grateful for what she has brought to Solihull and wish her all the best for the future.

We know there is a national shortage of EPs but are hoping to recruit more staff in the new academic year so we can continue to provide necessary support to children, young people and their families, and increase our capacity for school services.

Educational Commissioning - Darren Jakeways, Commissioning Officer

Development of a Solihull Carers Strategy

A carer is anyone who provides unpaid support to a family member, child of any age, or friend who needs help because of illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or addiction.

We understand carers in Solihull face significant challenges, and supporting carers of all ages is a priority for the Council; we want to develop a strategy that sets out how we are going to make changes in order to improve our support to carers of all ages.

Some workshops with carers have already taken place and we will be inviting parent carers to a workshop after the school summer holidays.

If you would be interested in taking part in a workshop to develop the strategy please email childrenscommissioning@solihull.gov.uk and we will send you the details when they are confirmed.

Holiday Activity Fund

Solihull's Holiday Activity & Food Programme (HAF) is ready for its second summer programme. The funding was introduced last year by the Department of Education to provide free holiday provision for children on free school meals nationwide.

Solihull is hosting its best programme to date with 38 organisations providing free holiday provision throughout the borough. Activities on offer include multi-sports, netball, cooking classes, Commonwealth Games trips, drama classes and youth clubs for older children.

One of the main objectives of Solihull Council is to improve the HAF offer for children with SEND and additional needs. We would like children with SEND to be able to access HAF opportunities throughout the borough and take part in engaging and enriching activities that support the development of resilience, character and wellbeing alongside their wider educational accomplishments.

There has been an increase in SEND participation following each programme and we aim to continue this development. The summer programme contains five organisations specialising in provision for children with SEND and progress is underway to make all organisations as inclusive as possible.

Mandatory training sessions have been funded to increase skills and knowledge within organisations offering SEND services and ensure tools are available to make them as inclusive as possible. Sessions such as MAKATON, GEARS and Youth Mental Health Awareness training are available for organisations to attend.

The Department of Education have confirmed the HAF programme will be funded until 2024/25 and improving the SEND offer in Solihull's Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector will remain a priority.

[Find the list of HAF providers, including the section for SEND specialist provision here.](#)

Clinical Commissioning Group

Specialist Assessment Service (SAS)

Parent/carers have told us:

- We are not seeing a reduction yet in the SAS wait times (approximately 94 weeks).

What has been done:

- The service has recently changed how it completes assessments to allow them to see more children. In addition, Healios (a private provider of autism assessments) have been commissioned to complete additional assessments.
- The service has successfully recruited workers to fill any existing vacancies and now has a fully staffed team.

What this means:

- The new assessment model has enabled the service to see approximately 50% more children and young people a month, increasing from 20 assessments to 30. This is in addition to the children that will be seen by Healios.
- Children that would have waited 18 months to be seen will now be seen within 12 months and continued reduction in wait times is anticipated with Healios' support and a full team.
- To date, this has had a limited impact on the lengthy wait times felt by families. On average the service receives 30 new referrals a month, meaning that the increased assessment rate keeps wait times roughly the same. Referral rates also vary throughout the year; for instance 59 referrals were accepted in May 2022.
- The additional changes will start to be felt in the coming months.

Next steps:

- The SAS service will continue to monitor referral numbers to understand the level of demand.
- The service will monitor how wait times are impacted by Healios' additional support and will use this information to guide future service planning.
- An action plan will be developed to further reduce wait times.

Support available:

The [SAS webpage](#) is regularly updated with links for support for families/young people while they are waiting.

Speech and Language Therapy (SLT)

Parent/carers have told us:

- There are still extremely long wait times between first and second appointments for SLT (approximately 78 weeks).

What has been done:

- The SLT service acknowledges that the wait time between first and second SLT appointments is long and steps have been taken to ensure children are seen in a timely manner. This includes clinical prioritisation and an improved discharge process to ensure children are not remaining with the service longer than required.
- 'One Stop Clinics' have been introduced - short sessions where specific language targets are set and reviewed. These clinics are for children that have been assessed and are waiting for a support plan but do not require specialist support from speech and language therapists. Children are referred to these clinics internally by the SLT team.

What this means:

- The wait between first and second appointments has reduced from 78 weeks to 49 weeks and wait times are expected to continue decreasing. Families will now be seen quicker than they would have been previously.
- Initial feedback from the One Stop Clinics is that they are working well for children with a stammer or language difficulties. It is leading to many children being discharged prior to treatment, therefore reducing the overall wait between assessment and treatment.

Next Steps:

- The SLT service will continue to monitor the impact on wait times and adapt the way services are delivered if necessary.
- The SLT team will continue to provide updates to parents on wait times and any challenges to service delivery.
- The One Stop Clinics will run on a long-term basis and form part of the routine offering. Regular feedback from these clinics will continue to inform future service planning.

Support available:

The [SLT webpage](#) contains information and links to support for families/young people while they are waiting.

Include Me Games

This July, Everyone Active, in partnership with Solihull Council, is running its Include Me Games event for the first time since the pandemic began. Running across both North Solihull Sports Centre and Tudor Grange Leisure Centre as well as external providers, activities will include table tennis, gym access, disability swimming, rowing sessions, inclusive boxercise and much more!

The event will run for the whole week kicking off on **Monday 11 July** with the Include Me Games giving people with disabilities the chance to take part in a range of activities. Both centres and the external providers will be providing a range of free sessions, all free of charge.

The Games are a great way for people to get together, experience new sports and, most importantly, have fun!

Find the timetable, information on all the activities and instructions on how to book on our Facebook pages: [@TudorGrangeLC](#) and [@NorthSolihullSC](#)

Solihull Active

There are lots of inclusive activities for people with disabilities happening in Solihull. There are lots of ways to stay active, with a range of activities from swimming to table tennis, sensory walks and more. [Check out the Solihull Active website](#) for further information or contact Solihull Active by phone - 0121 704 8207, or by email - solihullactive@solihull.gov.uk

Marathon Kids UK

[Marathon Kids UK](#) is a free programme that runs at North Solihull Sports Centre and Olton Jubilee Park on weekends and during the school holidays, allowing children to maintain regular exercise even when school's out. To take part please download the free Marathon Kids UK app on [iOS](#) or [android](#) and simply turn up ready to have some fun!

Olton Jubilee Park

- **9am on the second and fourth Saturday of each month** come rain or shine!
- For more information on the Olton Jubilee Park sessions, [click here](#).

North Solihull Sports Centre

- **10am every Saturday** come rain or shine!
- For more information on the North Solihull Sports Centre sessions, [click here](#).

Parkrun

[Parkruns](#) are free weekly community events held all around the world. 5k runs take place on Saturday mornings in parks and open spaces. On Sunday mornings, there are 2k junior runs for children aged 4-14.

Parkrun is a positive, welcoming and inclusive experience - there is no time limit and nobody finishes last. Everyone is welcome to come along, whether you walk, jog, run, volunteer or spectate.

Locations in Solihull:

- Brueton Parkrun - [click here for more details.](#)
- Babbs Mill Parkrun - [click here for more details.](#)
- Malvern Park Junior Parkrun - [click here for more details.](#)

Inspired to Try Diving

If you enjoy heights, an adrenaline rush, and want to gain skills and flexibility, diving is for you.

Sessions are being held at [Tudor Grange Leisure Centre](#) on **Thursday 28 July, every 30 minutes between 10am-3pm.** These are free and available to under 16's.

The **11am-11:30am** and **11:30am-12pm** sessions are accessible sessions for children with a learning or physical disability.

Participants need to be able to swim 25m unaided without goggles in deep water.

Call Tudor Grange Leisure Centre for more information - 0121 704 6371.

You can [find the booking form here.](#)

Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPVC)

Solihull Parent Carer Voice have been very busy over the last few months.

Meetings and workshops for parent carers

We have previously held the following meetings for parent carers:

- about the Solihull Strategy for Inclusive Education
- about SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper
- with SOLAR
- with Childrens Services and Adult Social Care

We have also held the following workshops for parent carers:

- *'Supporting Your Child's Mental Health through Exams'* with Ordinary Magic
- *'Contents of an EHCP'* with the EHCP Service and SENDIAS.

Upcoming:

- **Monday 11 July** - workshop for parent carers with Cerebra
- **Thursday 14 July** - event for parent carers of children starting nursery and reception

Healthy Parent course offering

We have been busy preparing a Healthy Parent course to parent carers in Solihull.

This course is designed to help support parent carers with their own emotional wellbeing and help them cope with all the pressures of being a parent carer.

The first course will be delivered in the Autumn Term so please so keep an eye on our social media and website for information and how to register for a place. This course will be offered

free of charge to any parent carer living in Solihull or any parent carer whose child/young person accesses services in Solihull.

Information available for parent carers

SPCV have been busy creating information for parent carers.

The slides from the EHCP Contents workshop page are available on our website, we have also created a video about reasonable adjustment and a video about applying for an EHC Needs Assessment. Both of these are available on our website or on our YouTube page.

Parent Engagement Groups and events

We have also been increasing the number of schools that we are working with to set up Parent Engagement Groups and are now working with 6 schools.

We will shortly be putting out a calendar of events for the Autumn Term, including our hugely popular SEND Careers event and meetings for parent carers with professionals.

If you would like to suggest events or there are subjects you would like us to create information or videos about, please let us know by emailing solihullpcv@outlook.com

Links to register for events can be found on our [Facebook page](#) or on the [SPCV website](#). We have also released our annual report - [find out what we did in 2021/22 here](#).

We are also looking for more people to be involved! If you would like to get involved and make a difference for children, young people and families in Solihull please contact us at

solihullpcv@outlook.com

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

