

Solihull SEND Newsletter

October 2023

Welcome to the first newsletter of the new academic year. I am not sure when summer really started this year but it definitely feels like a distant memory now. The unknown of each day, waiting to see what the weather would bring, reminded me how it feels to be in the SEND world – where no day is the same and things can quickly change between going well and not so well and vice versa.

On that note, partners took the opportunity over the summer to reflect on outcomes and experiences of children and young people in the borough; looking at where things are going well and where more work needs to be done. This will form our self-evaluation ahead of a future Local Area SEND and Alternative Provision Inspection and we will share that with you all once finalised.

#SENDSpotlight

This is a new addition to our communication to help share some of the positive things that are happening in Solihull.

#SENDSpotlight – The Heights autism special school welcomed Year 7 pupils this September and formally opens for other pupils on after half-term. This means that over the next few years, 116 more children will be able to receive their specialist education in Solihull.

National News

SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan

At the end of the summer, the Department for Education released information about its [Change Programme](#) which will pave the way for delivery of actions within the national improvement plan. For the West Midlands, Telford & Wrekin are leading our regional Change Programme Partnership along with Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire. Now the programme has been launched, there will be regular updates and we will continue to share them as part of these newsletters.

Strategic News

Additional Needs Strategy

Over the summer we published the local areas response to the SEND [Peer Review](#) and [You said, we did](#) SEND Community Event and Our Voices Heard feedback. We are now revising our formal additional needs action plan (previous version available on the [Local Offer](#)) to ensure we are focused on the right priorities for the third year of our strategy.

The local partnership has also been reviewing its SEND governance arrangements to ensure there is enough visibility and drive behind the SEND improvement journey and that other work such as the Alternative Provision Strategy and Delivering Better Value is well aligned.

To help those not involved in these forums to understand what things are discussed we have agreed to share the key messages following each meeting. Here is the update from the September meeting:

1. All services reiterated the importance of everyone working together, recognising that children and young people have better experiences and outcomes when services work together well.
 2. There is a children and young people's feedback survey on Your Voice Solihull. Professionals working with children and young people need to talk to them about the survey at the end of appointments, asking them to complete this and providing support to children and young people where necessary to fill out the survey.
 3. There is a drive to create children and young people pages on the Local Offer, ensuring that there is information available written directly for children and young people, enabling them to find out information for themselves and supporting their independence skills. This work is starting now and will be ongoing.
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Children and Young People's Feedback – Additional Needs Strategy

Thank you to everyone who has supported a child or young person in sharing their experience of Solihull services through the online survey. Their voice is vital in helping us understand what is working well and what we need to focus on. Please do continue to encourage children and young people to give this feedback – using either the website link [Additional Needs survey | Your Voice Solihull](#) or the QR code.



The Right support in the Right place at the Right time. Funded by Delivering Better Value grant.

All workstreams in the project are now underway. The webpage is being developed to outline each workstream and the outcomes we are working towards. All schools will soon be able to access the National Nurturing Schools Programme and Award , as well as speech, language and communication training for their whole staff. Work has started on enhanced outreach support for schools, supporting strategically with SEND. Solihull parent carer voice (PCV) have agreed to work with us, offering schools a package of support to help parents to engage with their child's school and support effective partnership working, building on the work started last year as part of their actions from the Strategy for Inclusive Education.

Strategy for Inclusive Education

The DBV funding is enabling accelerated progress with many of the actions that form part of our Strategy for Inclusive Education Action Plan. Many schools who attended the training on Equity Diversity and inclusion (EDI) for Senior Leaders returned their EDI Action Plans at the end of the summer term and we know the rest are working with their senior leadership teams on their EDI audits this term.

We will be looking at key themes within the audit returns to inform the development of further training opportunities for schools as well as coordinating wider school to school collaborative opportunities. For those schools who didn't manage to attend the EDI workshops we plan, through CSIE, to run a further session later this term.

We have now appointed a Lead teacher for EDI, Anna Bacho Flory, who will be leading on the next stage of this project, to train 20 EDI Champions across our schools. Head teachers have received information and application forms to share with their staff. We are looking to receive

applications from teachers passionate about moving forward the EDI agenda forwards in their schools, to take part in this exciting piece of work.

We are working closely with Mulberry Bush Consultancy to coproduce a visual Roadmap which details, in a visually accessible way, the support available for all children and young people around having good Social Emotional and Mental Health, through to our specialist support offer. The aim is to help clarify and simplify pathways of support, criteria and resources across the whole system. This work is to be carried out with Parent Carer Voice, Our Voices Heard, education, health, social care colleagues, schools and the voluntary sector during the autumn term. This Road Map will go onto the Local offer and link together several current pieces of work under development, as well as identifying overlaps and gaps in support.

In addition, Mulberry Bush consultants will work with SISS, a Senior Educational Psychologist, the EHCP Service and a group of SENCos/PCV to start to produce the Graduated Approach Toolkit of resources. The first piece of work will be to co-produce Solihull's paperwork for the Graduated Approach cycle, which supports children and young people at SEN Support. There's lots more work to come on line, including beginning to co-produce Solihull's Standard/ Kitemark for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, with support from the Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education.

Local Offer

- The content of the [Preparing for Adulthood \(Transitions\) webpage](#) has been updated to reflect new content agreed with Solihull Parent Carer Voice and signed off by Adults Digital Board.
- Waiting Well documents provided by Health are available on the [Local Offer Health page](#). The documents are in the "Things to do at home to help manage health and wellbeing whilst waiting for an appointment" section.
- The updated Partnership Agreement is available on the [Local Offer - Co-production webpage](#).
- The information on the [Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance webpage](#) has been updated. This includes updated versions of the school's guidance document and parent / carer leaflet.
- The layout of the [Young People \(14 -25 years\) webpage](#) has been refreshed. The changes make the easier to use by introducing dropdown boxes for each of the key sections. A link to the "Routing for them" document is now included, along with a copy of a presentation covering post-16 options for young people with SEND. These items are in the "Guide to post-16 for parents of children and young people with SEND" section.
- The layout of the [Education \(5 - 16\) webpage](#) has been refreshed to make it clearer and easier to use with buttons replacing the text based hyperlinks.

Education Information Management Services

If any school has had a pupil join with an EHCP where Solihull Council is not the responsible authority, please send a copy of the plan and the agreed funding to edplasc@solihull.gov.uk.

This will enable us to ensure you are funded in a timely manner. Please be aware if we are unable to recover the amount from the other local authority, we will recover this from any amounts Solihull Council has have paid to you. Please also check this data is entered in your management information system along with the up-to-date primary need (and secondary need if appropriate).

SISS

Firstly we would like to welcome Jodie Fotheringham who joins SISS as our new Deputy Service Manager and then three new teachers who have joined the SEMH team. Our SISS SEMH Early Intervention Provision, REFRESH welcomes Chris Ball to the post of Head of REFRESH and of course we are excited to meet our new cohort of children who begin their journey with us this half term. The children will have the benefit of a super new playground which will give them all lots of opportunities to run, jump, balance, swing, crawl, and always a favourite, scooter and bike round our new track.

The Hearing Impairment (HI) Team will be running two workshops for parents regarding technology, tubing hearing aids, National Deaf Children's Society and a clinician to complete ear mould will be in attendance. Flyers will be sent out direct to parents of children on the HI caseload.

Educational Psychology Service – Jane Sowter

We are enjoying a busy term so far with Craig, Sidra and I starting on our training, ELSA supervision, strategic roles, tribunal work, EHCs and FCGs for SENCOs. Work for the Virtual School is underway with great feedback from the Attachment and Trauma Informed training and exciting work planned with the SISS SEMH team to support families.

The EHCs continue to provide the bulk of work for the service and we continue to experience the same recruitment difficulties as the rest of the country for both employed and locum EPs. There will be some delays to EHC assessments over the coming months as a result, so please bear with us. Following our recent advertising strategy, we have recruited one new part-time EP who joins us in December and a full-time EP who will join us next year. This is in addition to the two previously recruited trainees who will qualify and join us in September 2024. The team is growing! Wishing you all a healthy and happy Autumn term.

BRIDGET MORRIS – SEND Operations Manager 0-25 SMBC

I wanted to write an article to introduce myself and explain a little about what my role encompasses. I also want to tell you about some of the work I've been doing and some of my ambitions for the future. I joined SMBC to work in SEND in May and quickly recognised the commitment held by my colleagues in education, health, and social care as well professionals in schools and our stakeholder organisations SPCV and OVH to improve the experiences and outcomes for our children and young people with SEN or a disability.

My role is primarily to bring our partnership together, working on engagement and participation as well as specifics such as personal budgets and how we can communicate better with our children and young people. My focus initially is on wider participation as well as a drive to understand and implement changes to ensure we gather the voice of those who communicate using methods other than the spoken word.

Developments so far have been the introduction of the Engagement Planner which you can find on our [Engagement Hub](#). All our services and other contributors such as SENDIAS, SPCV and OVH are featured on the Planner, it hopes to inform all of us about what is going on across the terms socially, operationally, and strategically.

Related to this, we are working on a new integrated approach to Personal budgets and have initially introduced a page where you can find links for all services to their pages holding the details of how to request and the processes behind this. Partners recognise that the approach at the moment is difficult for families and young people to navigate, and we hope that over the coming year we find a way together to make it easier.

Lastly, I have been privileged to visit some of our providers in the community who were delivering our HAF activities and work with Solihull Music and All Age Autism. It is wonderful to see how many people want to make things better for children and young People with SEND living in Solihull, working together we can do this more effectively by reaching more of the people who need our help. What an amazing challenge that is, but I think we are more than ready for it and I look forward to seeing our success.

Health

The Vulnerabilities Team at University Hospitals Birmingham

The team consists of Learning Disability, Mental Health and General Nurses and supports Children, young people and Adults with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism. They act as a point of contact through face to face or virtual support, when utilising services as either an inpatient or Outpatient at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Heartlands Hospital, Good Hope Hospital and Solihull Hospital.

They accept referrals from families, carers, person with parental responsibility and community teams for advice and support for planned admissions or emergency admissions with a focus on improving the quality of the experience at UHB. The Vulnerabilities Team encourage the use of the **Hospital Passport** which tells staff at the hospital about your healthcare, your disability, how you like to communicate and how to make things easier for you - such as reasonable adjustments. They will also ensure that you are Digitally Flagged so staff know about your Disability and it will also alert them to any future admissions so that we can provide support.

They can be contacted Monday to Friday via the advice line 07768926651 or via e-mail vulnerabilities@uhb.nhs.uk.

Birmingham Children's Hospital - Learning Disability Team

If your child has a learning disability and you are concerned about their stay in hospital at Birmingham Children's Hospital, the Learning Disability Team can try will help and can be contacted on 0121 333 8048

Children's Health Services Waiting Times

Over the last year, much work has been done to ensure the quality and accuracy of waiting time data. [Please see this summary](#), which provides service level data, plans for patients waiting to access support and a future vision to re-design and/or transform services where required to support Children, Young People and families to have the best outcome.

Solar – Digital Transformation

A scoping project is currently in progress within the Solar Children's Mental Health Service to pinpoint digital solutions that can enhance access to services and offer new interventions to children and parents, aiming at improving their emotional and mental well-being. Planning is

being undertaken to develop a more user friendly and accessible website to better cater to the needs of families across Solihull. A consultation process involving children, parents, carers, and the workforce is actively ongoing, with a commitment to share the findings. For additional information or enquiries, please reach out to alex.church@nhs.net.

Children's Services

The Children with Disabilities Team continues to support children and young people and their families in all areas of social work practice to support positive changes to their lived experiences. Although supporting the specialist support needs of children and young people with SEND is the largest area of our work the Children with Disabilities Team, we also work with young people who have SEND that are looked after by the Local Authority or subject to Child Protection or Child in Need plans.

Staffing

Recently we have had changes to staffing and management of the Children with Disabilities Team that we would like to share with you:

- Sonya Hayden is our Interim CDT Team Manager
- Pauline McGlynn and Tracey Wright are Interim Assistant Team Manager and focus on those children and families who we feel need higher levels of support that require a Social Worker
- Angela Clement is our Assistant Team Manager who manages our Family Support Workers that focus on our children who require a lower level of support.
- Anna Stephens is the Head of Service for the Children With Disabilities Team
- Rachael Ward is now the Assistant Director for corporate parenting and oversees the SEND social care
- We also have our Business Support Team that consists of Lisa Wadsworth and Janet who support the team and respond to all enquires sent via childrensdisabilityteam@solihull.gov.uk

The team have had additional training over the summer regarding the EHCP process and we are currently focusing upon writing to children as part of our social care recording.

Our Business Support officers are currently reviewing all the Direct Payment accounts to support families that use a Personal PA and confirm that they have a current DBS check and Liability Insurance in place. Therefore please expect a telephone call from the team if this relates to your families circumstance. You are also able to contact Age UK if you require any additional support for this process.

The Children and Disability Finance team in partnership with People Plus and Age UK have introduced a weekly Direct Payments Information and Guidance Hub. These are based at

Solihull Community Hub and Solihull Connect at Chelmsley Wood. These drop in sessions support individuals receiving Direct Payments with queries and issues that they may have. Please refer to the engagement calendar for future dates.

EYFS Update

The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance has been updated for September 2023. There are 3 updates but further updates are expected next year. The Autumn updates are the changes to the minimum staff:child ratio in nursery settings from 1:4 to 1:5, a clarification to childminder ratio rules, and confirmation that 'adequate supervision' at mealtimes means that children must be within sight and hearing of an adult.

Solihull SEND Assessment Toolkit

Thank you to those of you who were involved in the development of Solihull's Early Years SEND Assessment Toolkit. This is non-statutory guidance which may be helpful to support the identification of, and targeted support for, young children's care, development and learning needs. It is available here –

<https://www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/send/graduated-approach-incl-ehcp-process/> along with the Graduated Approach Early Years Guidance.

Find out more about these tools during our Solihull Early Years Team training events and briefings- www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/training

The final news from the Early Years Team is that we have now launched our **on-line Area SENCo referral form**. This should make referrals easier for settings to use. Feedback so far is positive. Let us know what you think if you are a setting who has used the form.

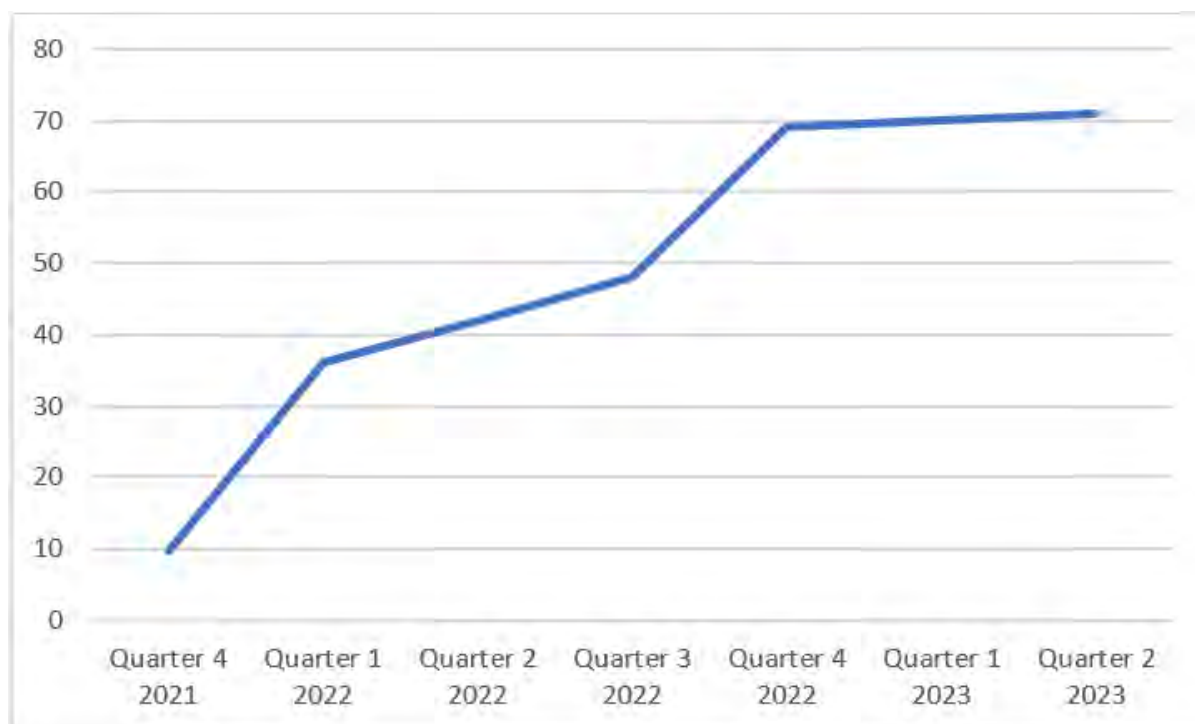
EHCP Service

We are currently heading back into transition season which is our busiest time of year. We again ask for the help of schools in ensuring that Nursery 2, and year 2 children infant schools and all year 6s have their Annual Reviews before October half term and are returned to us within the 2 week timeframe. For yrs 11, 13 and 14 we ask for the reviews to be help before Christmas.

Parents can help us by returning the response to the Notice of Amends within the two week time frame and remember to include their preference of school – remember that for young people aged 16 or over it is their preference that we need.

If a child/young person has an EHCP you do not go through the normal admissions process for a school placement for transitions. This will be done through the Annual Review process and those going into Reception, a Junior or a Secondary school you should know the placement allocated by 15th February. For those going into Post 16 you should know the placement by March 31st.

We hold monthly EHCP Quality Assurance meetings with professionals from different agencies. This data is then collected and any training needs identified. We have recently been identified as an LA with good practice around the quality of our EHCPs and our quality assurance results reflect the improvements that have been made, as shown in the graph below:



We have again planned some parent drop in sessions this year. You can come to these to ask any questions about EHCPs or processes. It does not matter if you want to come about applying for an EHCP or whether you want to ask specific questions about your case – just turn up. It was lovely to see some of you at the drop in on 17 October

The Future dates are:

The Loft - 24/02/2024 - 09:30-12:30

Location TC - 22/05/2024 - 09:30-12:30

Dingley's Promise



All level Kite Mark

Fordbridge Community Primary School celebrated receiving their Dingley's Promise KiteMark over the summer. Solihull Early Years are part of a 5-year project to promote inclusion across the borough. Dingley's Promise is a charity who have been funded by Comic Relief for this Early Years Inclusion Programme of training. All early year's settings are encouraged to access the free training. Fordbridge School were the first

to have this recognised through a Kite Mark. The Early Years Lead Mandy has valued this training and also the SchemaPlay project the school has been involved in. It has enabled them to really think about the needs of the children and families attending the school in their early years.

Well done Fordbridge and our Solihull settings who have achieved, or are on the way to being awarded, their Kite Mark or the Schema Play accreditation. All Solihull Early Years Practitioners and parents can access the training here <https://dingley.org.uk/dingleys-promise-training/early-years-inclusion-programme/> The Child's Voice training has recently been launched.

Foster carers for children with additional needs

Could you or someone you know provide overnight short breaks for children with additional needs?

If so, we'd love to hear from you. [Find out more about short breaks](#) and we are running monthly online and face to face sessions, where we'll talk you through the fostering process, the support available and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions. Make a difference to the life of a Solihull child!

[Reserve your place now](#) - booking essential.

Information evenings – online, 6:30pm to 7:30pm

- Monthly, next session is on 15 November

Coffee drop-in's – face to face, 11:30am to 12:30pm

- Monthly, next session is on 23 November – Morrison's Café, Sheldon, Coventry Road, B26 3PD

Questions? Email fosteringrecruitment@solihull.gov.uk or call 0121 788 4474

SEND Commissioning

Entrust Care Partnership working in partnership with The Open Theatre are running an amazing, weekly fun theatre group for 12 to 19 year olds with additional needs.

The group is fully staffed with experienced, caring individuals and is generously subsidised by Solihull Council through a Short Breaks grant.

We have some spaces left and would love it if your son or daughter could join us at the Core Theatre in Touchwood and experience the joy of drama.

lynnebarton@entrustcarepartnership.org.uk

Solihull Parent Carer Voice

Solihull Parent Carer Voice have been busy as usual over the summer. We can't believe its October already!!

Over the summer we carried out a Summer SEND Survey, the results of this were collated and a report presented to Children's Services Education and Skills Scrutiny Board at the beginning of September. This report can be found on our website here: [Reports - Solihull Parent Carer Voice \(spcv.org.uk\)](https://spcv.org.uk)

Over the summer we also attended Dame Rachel de Souza's, the Children's Commissioner for England, Roundtable on Attendance. This very much focused on the understanding that school attendance has significantly reduced since Covid and the understanding that emotional wellbeing, mental health and SEND play a large role in attendance.

Dame de Souza was clear that working to improve attendance is important, but that it must be done in a holistic way taking into account health as well as education - and that the route to improving attendance needs to be focused on the individual child/young person not on threatening fines. Further to this we were pleased to hear about the work of the Inclusion Service in helping and supporting children from the Assistant Director in the Children's Services Education and Skills Scrutiny in September. We have just received funding to undertake some School Engagement work.

This is focused on schools, parents and carers and children and young people coming together to help the school work as a community; improving engagement and inclusion. We are delighted to have recruited two members of staff to undertake this work who will be starting with us in mid-October - with the aim to work in 20 schools in Solihull over the next year.

We have also received funding from the Fairer Futures Fund to run our Healthy Parent Carer Course. This course looks at helping parent carers to spend a little time working on their own emotional wellbeing. These courses will run 3hrs a week for 6 weeks. We are just finalising dates and venues so please do look out for these being advertised soon. Also, if you know of a location where you think we should run this course please do get in touch.

In September we attended the SEND and Improvement Plan, Change Programme Launch in London. This programme brings together local areas in each region of England to look at piloting and testing parts of the Improvement Plan. We will be sharing further information about this shortly on our website and Facebook page. We are expecting the national data dashboard to be

released by the end of this year which will enable everyone to look at more information on a local, regional and national level. We are also expecting the new EHCP Template to be tested by the Change Programme Partnership Areas (CPP's) this Autumn/Winter so this may be rolled out in the next few months.

We have a coffee morning coming up on 23 November 9.30-11.30 at Ulverley School. You do not need to book for our coffee mornings.

On 6 November at 10am we will be holding a meeting for parent carers with some representatives from social care, including 2 of the Assistant Directors. We are just organising a venue for this meeting so further details will be coming available soon. This will be a meeting where we ask parent carers to prebook.

We are currently looking to arrange an event focused on Post-16 and Post-18 with representatives from Careers Hub, Employment and Skills, Supported Internships and more. Again more information will be coming out soon about this.

If there is any particular information that you are looking for, or events that you would like to see please do get in touch with us at Solihullpcv@outlook.com

And finally..... we are always looking for volunteers to join our team. We have a variety of roles that volunteers could help with, from admin, supporting with coffee mornings, representing SPCV at workstreams to joining our Steering Group. Opportunities are very varied and can be from an hour or 2 a month to much more! If you would like to talk to us more about this, please do contact us at Solihullpcv@outlook.com

Our Voices Heard

We are the NHS Midlands Young Reviewers! We have been tasked by NHS Midlands to investigate how youth-friendly transition services are between paediatrics and adult's care for young Epilepsy patients. We are a team of 8 Young Reviewers, half of us have Epilepsy, half of us don't. We would love to hear your thoughts and experiences of transition between services! We have been visiting clinics and speaking to professionals but we want to hear what you have to say! *All information is anonymous and all will inform the young reviewers findings*

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/P6PYVB5>

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

