

# Solihull SEND Newsletter

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## January 2024

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**Welcome to our new monthly newsletter.** We hope increasing the frequency of these will provide more regular updates on key items of interest and reduce the amount of information we share at one time.

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### *#SENDSpotlight*

Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership has been pleased to launch the borough's [Early Help Strategy](#) which outlines the approach to effective early help that can offer children and young people the support needed, when they need it, to reach their full potential

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### Strategic Update

#### Additional Needs Strategy

In the last newsletters we shared the surveys to hear views about the [Additional Needs Strategy](#) during 2023. We are really grateful to the 246 parent carers and 63 children and young people who responded; and those who supported them to do so. Thank you! We are now analysing the results and will include them in the 2023 Annual Report on the strategy which will be published next month.

#### Alternative Provision Review

Work continues across all partners on our review and the development of the offer. Following the diagnostic activity in autumn term, partners met at the Council House in early December to discuss the findings and agree actions to continue to drive improvements in the offer to support good outcomes for all our children. In order to keep all the information in one place whilst we are working on this in detail, we have created a project page on the SEND Hub [Alternative Provision in Solihull](#). On this page, you will find the slides from the workshop session, key documents, actions, updates and questionnaires. Please do check back to this page for any updates or to provide us with feedback.

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## Solihull Educational Psychology Service

The service welcomes our two new EPs, Wendy Choi and Janet Lo, to the team! They join us from Warwickshire and Surrey respectively, each with many years' experience as EPs in the UK and overseas. We will be continuing all our usual workstreams over the coming two terms with greater capacity for training and additional casework for vulnerable pupils in schools. We also welcome several new associate EPs and will therefore be able to increase the rate at which we are reducing our EHC assessment waiting list. The service has returned to its previous title – Solihull EPS (SEPS), re-establishing the service at the heart of education and acknowledging the importance of the work we do for our schools. We look forward to a busy and productive Spring and Summer term!

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## Solihull Early Years and Maternity Update 2022-23

You will find an overview of the 2022-23 activity on the Solgrid early years and child webpages [here](#).

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## E-Learning for Councillors – The Importance of Speech, Language and Communication in the Early Years

LGA have recently published an [e-learning module for councillors](#). This looks at what is a speech delay or disorder, the implications for the child, family and council, tools that are available to provide support and suggested activities for councillors. This is for lead member responsible for early years and other local councillors. It reinforces the work we are doing across the Local Authority which is fully supported by our Solihull Councillors.

Many of you accessed the [speech, language and communication needs briefs](#) which outline our Solihull approach to supporting all children to be confident communicators.

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## Local Government Association (LGA) Early Years Peer Review

As part of our Solihull Maternity and Early Years work, we are planning to hold some 'fact finding' sessions. Ann Van Dyke, on behalf of the Local Government Association (LGA), is spending some time in Solihull talking to people who help give our youngest children a super start.

To help us to address the needs of our young children and their families in the best way, Ann is helping us find out your views on these themes:

- Why is there an increase in requests for EHCP for early years children in Solihull?
- Why do parents/settings go down the EHCP route?
- How well do we support children's emerging needs in early years to prevent the need for later speech and language therapy involvement and Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP)?
- Is there a shared understanding of school readiness in Solihull and how we can work together to support/promote this?

- What would help support children and families 0-5 years in Solihull, including support for home learning? (Can we do anything differently?)

Ann will, on our behalf, be inviting representatives to virtual meetings to find out your views and help steer our future planning. Ann will write up her findings in a report for us and we will continue to work with her, and with all of you, to strengthen our support for children and families where we can. If you would like to share your views please e mail [eyenquiries@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:eyenquiries@solihull.gov.uk)

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### Department for Education Early Years SEND Unit

Dingley's Promise are working with the DfE early years SEND unit to help steer the national SEND development plan with early years in mind. It is great that Solihull has been part of the Dingley's Promise Early Years Inclusion Programme, with our parents as active members of the parent board.

We hope that our Dingley's learner numbers will have increased over the winter period as learners check their progress. If you have completed the training then please ensure you complete the quiz, evaluation and download your certificate. This means we get a true picture of training completed. We now have over 400 registered learners.

Laura is a Solihull childminder who has completed most of the training currently available. She has taken the time to share her reasons for completion of the Managing Behaviours that Challenge modules, and the impact it has had. Thank you Laura. We hope that you can find time to complete this module too. [You can read Laura's story here.](#)

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### Solgrid Early Years and Childcare Website

There are further additional resources for settings and the wider workforce that have recently been added to our webpages.

Training and support for SEND- <https://www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/send/send-training-support/> including a brief recorded video for out of school care and one for the wider LA early years multi-agency health and education workforce.

Local and national SEND guidance including our response to themes identified during our visits to settings - <https://www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/send/>.

We hope that the resources on the Solihull Local offer -early years pages help you as a parent or childminder too. <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Children-and-family-support/localoffer/Early-Years-Team>.

If there are things that would be helpful for you, please let a member of the Early Years Team know. You will see a gap exists for an Early Years Inclusion Support Practitioner. Christine

Bickle has recently retired. She has supported many of our Solihull early years children, families and settings. We wish her all the best.

[A list of Early Years Team contacts is available here.](#)

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## Health

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### SAS Update

We have welcomed two new team members, Jess Moreland has joined us in the Principle Clinical Psychology posts 4 days per week and Eileen Wood in a development psychology post, working full time. We are thrilled to have them both in the team and they are currently progressing through their induction. We have also had three members of the team welcome new arrivals into their families and start their maternity leave.

The SAS current longest wait is 93 weeks and as you are aware children on the main waiting list are not prioritised, so all children referred are offered an assessment in strict date order. Last January we started an early years pathway for children who are pre school age, identified to have significant levels of needs across areas of their development, with a strong possible autism spectrum disorder profile. In addition, children have additional services already involved, who have provided additional information/observation used to support the assessment and diagnostic process.

For these children we recognise that they are likely to need alternative provision in setting, often via an EHCP and that we can work with the services involved in a collaborative approach which often means that young children are not required to be seen in clinic, instead we use virtual or setting observations to support the holistic view of the child's profile of need. This pathway has been well received and is being reviewed to make any necessary adjustments.

The Healios contract is now active, and they have seen 18 out of the 120 assessments agreed so far. They will take children regularly until 120 children/young people have received their assessment for possible ASD.

We regularly keep our website up to date and would encourage people to use the links for additional services/support on; <https://childrenscommunitytherapies.uhb.nhs.uk/specialist-assessment-service/>.

### ADHD Nursing Update

Since the last update we have seen a continued increase in referral numbers to our nurse led ADHD service.

Our team has been struggling to keep up with the new referrals, trying to support Children and young people already diagnosed with ADHD and ensuring the ongoing safe prescribing of ADHD medication for those already taking medication.

We had a nurse post agreed by our Trust that we have been recruiting to; this is to support the service increased workload.

We are trying really hard to answer phone calls and queries associated with the unavailability of some ADHD medications.

### Staffing:

Our Clinical Nurse Specialist who was off unwell has returned to work and is back carrying out clinics.

Our new Nurse has been recruited and will be starting on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024 – she will need a period of induction as has not worked in our Trust or department before but will be seeing patients as soon as it is safe and appropriate for her to do so.

Our support worker finished in our team at the end of December for a new role and our new support worker has already been recruited to and will hopefully start in February 2024.

We continue to have a health care assistant who we employ via a 'bank contract' to support our physical observations clinics to ensure the nurse led and Community Paediatrics services can continue to prescribe ADHD medication safely.

Our administrator continues to work at processing referral forms and supporting documents, scheduling clinics, sending appointment and clinical letters and answering as many calls as possible.

When we have an influx of referral forms we have an administrator that works 'bank contract' hours to support the timely processing of these.

We are trying as hard as we can to safely see as many children and young people as we can.

### Referrals:

**New patient Waitlist:** (1st December 2023 data)

486 CYP are waiting for an ADHD assessment.

Average wait 28 weeks

Median wait 27 weeks

Longest wait 96 weeks

### Follow Up Patients:

We currently have 250 CYP waiting for a follow up appointment with the ADHD nurse.

### Important Information:

- Our Community Paediatrics Service including or ADHD nurse service is not an emergency service or urgent care provider. If a child or young person is unwell please do contact their GP for advice and support.
- If a child or young person waiting for an assessment requires additional support please take a look at the resources available on the Solihull Local offer website, speak to their school/ Solihull Specialist inclusion Support Service and your GP. [Solihull Local Offer - Health](#)
- The ADHD assessment process is particularly complex and requires assessment and co-ordination of a number of pieces of evidence. It is a lifelong diagnosis and assessment therefore needs to be complete and accurate to ensure the correct care and support is available following diagnosis. Diagnosis of ADHD does not automatically resolve a young persons issues; there are many factors that affect school attendance, concentration and behaviour that should all be addressed and supported by schools and inclusion teams. Please do speak to your child's school if they are waiting for an assessment and ask them what reasonable adjustments they are able to implement in the meantime. We have been sharing information for managing children in schools with the Solihull Specialist Inclusion Support Service and with as many individual schools as possible. We unfortunately can only offer recommendations and guidance and cannot guarantee or follow up on their implementation of the suggested strategies.
- The Community services clinical and operational teams are participating in the BSOL ICB ADHD project looking to improve access to ADHD services for all children, young people and adults.

**At this time we are unable to give out appointment dates over the telephone unless they are confirmed; in this instance a letter will have been sent. We are currently only booking clinics 6 weeks in advance as we try to manage the caseload and workload efficiently and safely.**

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### SISS offer

Schools can access training, advice and direct intervention from the SISS SEMH team in order to support them in identifying and supporting children and young people with ADHD. The team has met this term with the ADHD Nurse team, to develop the SEMH team's observation and assessment schedules so that they enable better/ more tailored, information to be collected, which will support schools in making appropriate referrals and the ADHD team in making assessment decisions about children and young people who are referred into the service. The SISS SEMH Team also offer staff training in understanding and supporting children with ADHD for school staff. Where schools use an alternative provider this should form part of their offer.

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### Multi-Agency Audits

In Solihull, we want to make the auditing of partnership provision for children and young people with SEND routine. We aim to bring all the professionals involved in a child or young person's care around a virtual table and talk about;

- What's gone well
- What we could have done better/more effectively
- The plans to make sure we do better next time.

We aim to involve those practitioners who have had an impact on the child's life. This could be a big or small impact and it may be positive or not so positive.

We want to identify and celebrate the strengths of any care provided. We will highlight these to strategic leaders so that they can build them into their future plans. We will reflect on the challenges we face as professionals, things that may have hindered or prevented the progress of a child or young person. We will share these findings too and ask our strategic leaders to plan for a solution.

We launched our multi-agency audit programme in October. We shared the findings with practitioners and leaders and drew up a plan of how we will tackle the issues raised. Our next audit will take place at the end of February and beginning of March. We will be looking at the provision given to 6 Children and Young people in total who have the following profiles.

- Pupils who are on the SEND register classified as needing SEND support.
- Pupils who have recently been excluded
- "Children Looked After "in our Special Schools.

One of the most important elements of our audits is securing the thoughts and opinions of the children, young people, and their families. We did this after the meetings last time and practitioners were given feedback. To improve action planning and ensure that this vital feedback is heard by all practitioners, we are changing where this sits within the process. Now we will be talking with children, young people, and their families before the meetings. Their thoughts will then be part of the discussion and practitioners will be asked to respond to any points raised.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [bridget.morris@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:bridget.morris@solihull.gov.uk)

### Celebration of our Children and Young People with Additional Needs in Solihull

We are holding a celebratory event at the end of January. Working with OVH, our schools and some of our colleagues in the voluntary sector we will be bringing together a group of young people and children. Our Director of Children's Services, Beate Wagner will be opening the proceedings. The children and young people will hear from her about the importance of their participation in the work of the council.

We will hear from our OVH Ambassadors. They will be talking about the important work they have been doing for young people in the community. They want to let others know how to get involved. Others will express themselves through their music making and artistic talents. We are delighted that Solihull Music's Inclusive Choir will be making an appearance.

The children and young people will share their lived experience with LA and health colleagues during round table exercises. The discussions will be facilitated by LA officers from across education and social care. Representatives from SENDIASS, SPCV and some of our voluntary organisations are also supporting this event.

It's going to be a great evening and one we are all looking forward to. Many thanks to those who have agreed to attend and support!

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## Targeted Short Breaks for children and young people with disabilities in 2024

Solihull Council is working with a number of providers to offer an increased range of short breaks activities: after school, evening, weekends and in school holidays. This is thanks to new grant awards from the Council's Short Breaks Grants programme.

[Entrust Care Partnership](#) - "Unbounded" theatre club at The Core (age 11-19)

[Inclusive Sports Academy](#) - "Youth Inspired" youth club at Langley School (aged 10-18) and games club at Three Trees community centre (age 7-13)

[Inclusive Sports Academy](#) - "Inclusive Outings" trips and outings around the borough and local area (age 16-19)

[Ordinary Magic](#) - "Magic Groups" Xperience SEMH climbing group at Flash Climbing Centre (age 11-14), Girls Autism Group at Coleshill Heath School (age 7-11), Boys Autism Group at The Bridge, Shirley (age 7-11)

[Solihull Moors Foundation](#) - "Inclusive Youth Club" youth club offering a range of activities, including disability sports) at Solihull Moors football club (age 11-18)

[Signpost Inclusion](#) – "Thursday Club" Activity Hub offering range of sessions, including dance & singing, younger youth club, gaming club, multisport at Renewal Family Centre (age 3-16 depending on the activity)

[Signpost Inclusion](#) – "Woodland Engage" forest school skills and outdoor survival (offered as a block of sessions) at Mill Pool Scout Hut (age 5-16 – depending on the block)

[Signpost Inclusion](#) – "Weekend Residential" range of activities designed to enhance self-esteem and independence at Woodlands Adventure and Outdoor Learning (Walsall) (age 13-18)

[Signpost Inclusion](#) – "Holiday Activities" school holiday club offering range of activities, indoor and outdoors at a range of locations (age 4-19 depending on the activities) [Strike9T](#) - "Accessible4all" school holidays camps (half-terms only) and weekly activity drop-ins at Tudor Grange Academy, Kingshurst (age 5-14) [Urban Heard](#) - "Media for All" weekly group developing range of media skills followed by celebration event at Crabtree Hall (age 11-18)

More information about each of the projects is available on the Commissioned Short Breaks section of the [FIS Directory](#).



These services will provide group activities for children and young people who can't access mainstream activities due to the nature of their disabilities and support needs and don't require a social worker assessment to access. Families should contact their preferred provider to discuss booking a place for their child or young person.

Other subsidised Short Breaks activities are also provided by [Social Life Opportunities \(SoLO\)](#) on behalf of the Council.

Solihull Council has a statutory duty to provide short breaks for children and young people with disabilities, the main aims are to provide them with an opportunity to spend time away from their parents/carers, relax and have fun with their friends, and develop their independence. They also give families the chance to have a break from their caring responsibilities, rest and unwind, and spend time with other family members.

More information about short breaks is available on the [Local Offer](#) including eligibility. Solihull Parent Carer Voice have worked closely with the Council throughout the grant award process.

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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)

Merry Christmas!

**Charlotte Jones**

Head of SEND service 0-25

