

Solihull SEND Newsletter

February 2024

Strategic Update

Additional Needs Strategy

As mentioned in the last newsletter, we have been producing a report which looks at what has changed for children and young people with additional needs during 2023, and what actions we will be focusing on this year. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this; especially those parent carers and children and young people who shared their views. The report can now be found on the Local Offer [Additional Needs Report 2023](#). During this year we will start to engage with everyone to think about what our strategy for 2025 onwards needs to look like – we will start this conversation at the SEND Community Event in March (see below).

Whole School SEND

We are pleased to share that Whole School SEND have published its second edition of [The Teacher Handbook: SEND](#) which provides resources for teachers to use to support high quality teaching, removing barriers to learning, getting to know and understand individual learnings and bringing the graduated approach to life.

#SENDSpotlight

There are 188 children and young people in Solihull with an EHCP who are starting primary school, moving from infant to junior school and moving to secondary school in September 2023. **100%** of them now have their final EHCP naming the school they will be attending. This means that the setting and school staff currently supporting them have time to help with any transition arrangements they may need so it can be as easy as possible.

EHCP Service

As I write this the EHCP service had not long finished all the work ahead of the 15th February deadline; thank you for all your support with this. The work now begins on the post 16 transitions

deadline of march 31st. If you have any review paperwork outstanding please get this back to use as a matter of urgency.

If you are a parent, career or young person who has had recent experience of the EHCP service then please fill in the survey on the link below. This helps us know what is going well and what we need to get better at.

Following a new assessment:

<https://yourvoicesolihull.uk.engagementhq.com/embeds/projects/23327/survey-tools/23807>

Following a final EHCP issued after an annual review:

<https://yourvoicesolihull.uk.engagementhq.com/embeds/projects/23327/survey-tools/23810>

Solihull Parent Carer Voice

On 6th March 2024, Solihull Parent Carer Voice are holding their annual SEND Community event. This event brings together parents, and professionals from health, education and social to talk about what has changed in SEND over the last year and what we want the next steps to be. This is an opportunity for you to give your views on SEND in Solihull and to influence the priorities for change moving forward. If you would like to join us at this event please complete the below form. <https://forms.office.com/r/qEiMd3k7MJ>

We are running our Healthy Parent Carer Courses over the next year, please do keep an eye on our social media for details of course dates.

In response to requests from parent carers for support regarding ADHD, we are working with ADHD Allies to hold monthly sessions regarding ADHD.

We also have monthly coffee and chat sessions for parent carers.

All of our events are advertised on our facebook page and will be advertised on our website, so please do keep an eye out for details: www.facebook.com/solihullparentcarervoice
www.spcv.org.uk

Early Years Team updates

It has been a busy month in the world of Early Years and SEND. Catherine McLeod the CEO of Dingley's Promise has been working hard both to share her views and the [Dingley's Promise Manifesto for Early Years Inclusion](#).

Dingley's Promise are part of both EYSEND and the [Early Education and Childcare Coalition \(EECC\)](#) working together to develop future policy and a system that supports the early years sector to help improve long-term outcomes for children.

Families, settings and government want children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to get the best start, and to be able to experience inclusion wherever possible, and it is essential that this happens in the earliest years when children have the best chance to play and learn alongside their peers.

The Department for Education is funding the EYSEND Partnership group to provide training and support. Solihull are taking advantage of this offer by attending the monthly Inclusion Lunch Breaks and promoting training so that we can share practice, ideas, and concerns. Themes can then be shared with DfE in their National meetings. I know that our Solihull Dingley's Promise parent reps are also contributing to the information sharing. We hope that *together we will create a more inclusive early years.*

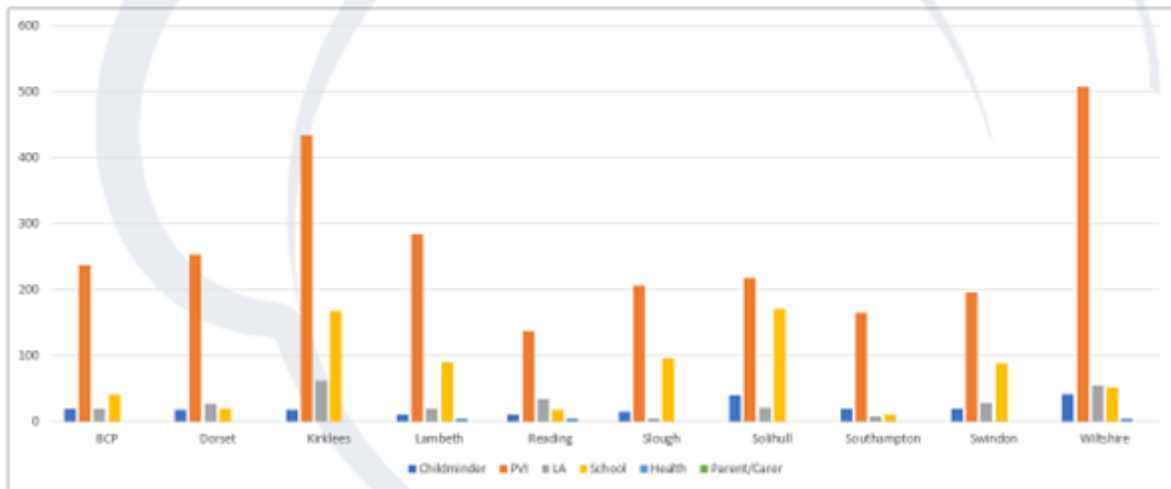
We have also shared our views about assessing SEND in the early years. The Department for Education will be releasing new guidance later this year. The aim is to ensure that the evidence gathered is proportionate, that children with SEND have the same level of quality direct time with staff, and that we are supporting children with SEND as early as possible and as well as we can. We have asked to be involved in the review of content once the guidance is created.

Find out more about the available training here - <https://www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/training/training-from-other-providers/>



We have 2 further [Mark of Achievements](#) for Dingley's Promise in Solihull. Well done to Streetsbrook Infant and Early Years Academy and In the Woods Nursery. Track your journey to the Mark using our [poster and bookmarks](#). Well done to Joanne B who is our first childminder to achieve the Mark New training modules will become available later in the Spring. Here is the December data (below) for Solihull's participation in the available training. Each training module is usually £50 per person – so please sign up and join in the offer of free training for Solihull childminders, schools, settings, parents, and health professionals.

Total Learners by Sector – Year 1 LA's



Early Years Evidence Store

Support to help you put evidence-informed approaches into practice.

DfE are supporting further early years research through their Stronger Practice Hubs programme. The [Education Endowment Foundation evidence store](#) currently has two key themes to support prime areas. We continue to promote the latest guidance through our training and also the [Leaders Briefings](#). We also produce local guidance when we work alongside you and a need for further [Solihull guidance](#) is identified. Have you seen the 'sensory processing checklist' and the 'comparison between ASD and ACEs trauma' information? We have also produced a '[Reception-delayed entry to school](#)' information sheet.

Education Endowment Foundation also run projects that Solihull settings have participated in, where this fits with priority areas in their setting improvement planning for the year. Recruitment takes place throughout the year with the current recruitment for Maths Champions. This is a subsidised programme which builds the knowledge of nursery practitioners to support children's early mathematical development.

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/maths-champions-subsidised-programme>

LGA Solihull Super Starts peer review

Many thanks to all of you who have contributed to the early years fact finding meetings with Ann Van Dyke. I know that there were some technology problems, and some contributions were received via e mail as a result. Please accept our apologies if you were unable to join a meeting.

By getting to know what is working well and what we can further improve we can target our work across early years in Solihull to areas that will support everyone most effectively. Early feedback indicates that we work well together across the early years community. Ann has a lot of experience of working in this way and can see this is a strength in Solihull. She commented upon the quality of the co-produced '[School Readiness](#)' definition although this is not yet widely understood. It is about us all adapting to support a child's readiness rather than putting the emphasis solely on something a child needs to learn do.

Once the report is finalised, we will share it with the Solihull early years community and work towards further improving how we best support our youngest children. The following questions were explored during the fact finding meetings.

- Why is there an increased request 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?)

Tax Free Childcare reminder

You can get up to £500 every 3 months (up to £2,000 a year) for each of your children to help with the [costs of childcare](#). This goes up to £1,000 every 3 months if a child is disabled (up to £4,000 a year). For every £8 you pay into this account, the government will pay in £2 to use to pay your provider. Please see <https://www.gov.uk/tax-free-childcare> for guidance.

You can use the extra Tax-Free Childcare money you get to help pay for extra hours of childcare. You can also use it to help pay your childcare provider so they can get specialist equipment for your child such as mobility aids.

Finally, the NSPCC recommendation in the recently published [Safeguarding Practice](#) review annual report 2022/23 stated:

Safe sleeping policies should be communicated clearly to all parents and carers.

I take this opportunity to share the guidance on safe sleep on our solgrid/eyc website for you to reflect upon....

<https://www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/resources/safeguarding-and-welfare/safer-sleep-guidance/>

Schools Access Duties under the 2010 Equality Act

There is still availability for practitioners and school leaders to access the excellent Free training delivered by the Council for Disabled Children through the Rise Partnership online.

The courses are just 2 hours long and provide excellent guidance in compliance and planning for schools. You can book them here - [CDC Training Calendar](#)

If you can't make the dates available then this, [Disabled Children and the Equality Act 2010: What teachers need to know and what schools need to do \(councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk\)](#), written by Phillippa Stobbs is a very good alternative and covers many areas such as behaviour policies, exclusions and accessibility.

Celebration event

Solihull's 0-25 SEND services were delighted to support Our Voices Heard (OVH) in the first event of it's kind in Solihull. Children and young people with additional needs from across the borough were able to come and share their thoughts and opinions on the things that matter to them with professionals from across all three services, education, Health, and Social care.

There was excellent representation from the children and young people from across the spectrum of need and age with over 40 in attendance as well as their families and carers. We heard music from the Solihull's Inclusive choir and the Guitaristas, a guitar ensemble who came in force with 25 members playing for everyone whilst they enjoyed their pizza suppers.

The children and young people worked in groups to tackle questions co produced with OVH and the ambassadors.

We have taken key messages away with us and communicated them to the leaders in our partnership. They include strategic and operational concerns around support and provision in Solihull covering money management, travel and services. The children and young people also highlighted how they would like us to support them practically through listening, advocacy and enabling them to be involved in things that all children are involved in.

It was a wonderful evening, but the work doesn't stop here. Some services are already changing their working practices and including children and young people in shaping those changes. We will go away and look at our current plans and strategies and build the voice of our children and young people into them. From that we will measure impact and hopefully show them that their voice really does matter.

OVH have a schedule of monthly meetings with their children and young people over the coming year and professionals have committed to attending each of these to continue the conversations. Details can be found on our engagement planner on the Local offer: [SEND and Additional Needs Your Voice Solihull](#)

Employment and skills support

There is a range of support on offer from the Council's Employment and Skills Team to help young people get ready for work from assessing career aspirations to developing CV and interviewing skills. There are also programmes connecting young people with supportive local employers. You can learn more from the webpage: [Local Offer - Apprenticeships and Employment](#)

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

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!

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

Donna Wright
Head of SEND Operations



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