

Solihull SEND Newsletter

October 2021

Here we are at the end of another term and the summer seems a distant memory I am sure. There are many exciting plans taking shape across Solihull this year so I think we will start to see real change in our support for children and young people with SEND, and additional needs.

National News

Unfortunately we are still waiting to see what the Government's SEND review will lead to, but know that pressure for national change continues to mount as most areas across the country struggle to meet the rising needs of children and young people. The Children's Minister, Will Quince MP, did recognise the urgency of this in his speech at Nasen Live on 24 September so hopefully there will be more news soon – and once it is released we will share with you.

Strategic News

Work on the SEND Improvement journey is continuing with some key documents currently being co-produced to support our direction of travel:

- **Additional Needs Strategy** – this will be the agreed approach across the whole local area (including education, health, care and communities). Thank you to all the professionals, parent carers and children and young people who have taken part in this work so far, sharing their views and ideas for development. We have been pleased to have had many discussions and survey responses to inform our thinking. The proposed strategy is now out for consultation so please let us know what you think.
 - **Inclusion Strategy & Graduated Approach** – a lot of work has taken place with our schools, parent carers and other professionals to develop our Inclusion Strategy which will set out our borough-wide commitment to ensuring all children and young people feel welcomed, supported and valued in school. This will be followed by schools setting out the actions they will take to ensure this happens and is felt on the ground. We are planning to be able to share the strategy towards the end of next term. To support this, work has also started on reviewing our Graduated Approach in Solihull so schools and parent carers can clearly see what support can be made available to children and young people with additional needs and how to best ensure support for individuals is kept under review.
 - **Accessibility Strategy** – we have been working with a number of colleagues across the Council, our partners, schools and parent carers to review our strategy and guidance for schools on how to ensure their settings respond well to children and young people with additional needs, SEN and disabilities. We will publish this in December and all schools will then take account of this when reviewing their own accessibility policy and other school procedures.
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Reshaping Education

We are delighted to let you know that the new structure for education services is now in place. All the heads of service and some senior posts have been filled. Where there are vacancies, further recruitment will take place during the autumn. The new structure and updated contact details can be found [here](#)

Thank you for all your feedback and being part of the reshaping discussion which have been hugely helpful and informative in finalising the future arrangements.

EHCP Team

Following the reshape of education, the StART Team have a new name - now the EHCP Team. Following further recruitment to the team, the structure chart and staff contact details have been updated on the [Local Offer](#)

We attended the Transitions Event arranged by Solihull Parent Carer Voice on 5 October to explain the process for those children and young people transitioning to a new setting in September 2022. To ensure transitions are planned effectively, schools have been asked to arrange annual reviews for children in Year 6 before October half-term and Year 11's upwards before the end of the December term.

A working group is underway (parents, schools and other professionals) to make changes to the annual review paperwork and process which will take effect by the end of the year.

Our other focus has been on improving the quality of EHCP content – with a new internal Quality Assurance framework implemented within the team and work starting with the Council for Disabled Children to look at how contributions are made for the EHCP and how these are translated into a quality plan.

Special Inclusion Support Service

REFRESH SISS Nurture Provision

The opening of Solihull's new Nurture Provision (NP) REFRESH is planned for Monday 1st November. Refresh is a short term, early intervention for primary aged children with social, emotional or mental health (SEMH) needs. Refresh is based on the same site as Coleshill Heath Primary School. Our KS2 class will open first and our KS1 class in the summer term 2022, with approximately 8-10 pupils in each class. Children attend the provision for four days per week and spend one day in their home school to maintain relationships and links. We recognise that every child is an individual; therefore our approach is personalised and bespoke and will follow the Nurture model in a welcoming, calm environment. You can find out more about the Nurture model by using this link: <https://www.nurtureuk.org/>

We are able to offer teaching and support staff with additional knowledge, skills and expertise in the area of SEMH, who will deliver an innovative and engaging curriculum. Pupils and families will also benefit from being able to access, where appropriate, our onsite therapeutic support. We will work closely with referring schools, particularly during transition periods, offering visits, advice and training as well as regular meetings where pupil progress will be reviewed. Further information is available at: <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Children-and-family-support/localoffer/REFRESH-SISS-SEMH-Nurture-Provision>

SISS Survey 2020 -21

Thank you to everyone who took part in the SISS annual survey, we had responses from 82 parents/carers, 51 SENCOs/Inclusion managers and 2 Head Teachers. Responses will be summarised in the SISS Annual service report to be finalised with EdSEND in November and published on the Local Offer.

Of the 82 parents who replied 66 (72%) rated the service their family had received at the highest level of 5 (on a scale of 1 to 5). We are extremely proud that families have valued our support so highly. Some of the many comments about what families most valued included:

"Support through video calls to assist lip reading, support at school continuously! Assisting me with working on things I feel my child is missing out on."

"All the help and support (staff) has given my son is amazing, always going above and beyond."

"All the questions I had, have been answered. Everything has been explained to us in terms we understand."

Early Years Team

As part of the Reshaping Education revision of services the Early Years Support and Assessment Team (EYSAT) and the Education Improvement Team have merged to become one Early Years Team. We are advertising for additional team members to complete the team. **To reflect the Early Years Foundation Stage reforms becoming statutory on 1 September, the Department for Education (DfE) commissioned updates to 'What to expect in the Early Years Foundation Stage' guide for parents and 'A Celebratory Approach to Working with Children with SEND – Giving additional support in the Early Years'.** These will be promoted through our work. **We have successfully bid for some Lottery Funded support from Dingley's Promise who will help us to develop a local stakeholder group to review and develop our early years inclusion work. Link to documents:**

<https://foundationyears.org.uk/2021/09/updated-guidance-to-support-the-eyfs/>

SEND School Place Commissioning Strategy 2021/24

On 20 September 2021, the Cabinet Member for Education, Children & Skills approved the SEND School Place Commissioning Strategy 2021/24. The strategy analyses the latest SEND data for the Borough and identifies the following priorities for provision development:-

- The development of Post-16 Autism and SEMH provision/pathways
- The development of services/and or provision to support Early Years and Reception pupils with additional needs.
- Further expansion of special schools places in particular SLD places with a focus around expansion at Merstone School, or through the creation of a new special school.
- Develop SEMH additionally resourced provision/special school hub for pupils with an EHCP in the secondary phase.
- Review the need for SEMH additionally resourced provision for pupils with an EHCP in the primary phase.
- Review the SEMH provision at Tudor Grange Primary – Yew Tree to include provision of KS1 places.
- Explore and develop spend to save initiatives through the creation of additionally resourced provision to target out of borough placements.

The full version of the strategy can be found on the local offer at https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Children-and-family-support/localoffer/school-place-planning_ or by contacting annpearson@solihull.gov.uk

School Commissioning

After concentrating on independent schools, the immediate priority is now for us to ensure contracts and individual placement agreements are in place with colleges, with communications commenced.

We have recently appointed a new Contracts Manager and work is underway to rollout a self assessment quality assurance programme with independent schools.

Specialist Assessment Services

From 20 September 2021, Claire Howell will be taking over the role of Clinical Lead of the Paediatric Specialist Assessment Services in health which includes the management of the Autism Assessment and Diagnostic service and the Complex Medical Needs Services. Shirley Heatherington, previous Clinical Lead, is retiring at the end of September 2021. Shirley would very much like her thanks passed on to all SENCOs across primary and secondary and parents for all the information, support and hard work that has been provided to support the children referred and being assessed by the specialist services. Over the years Shirley feels that she has got to know many SENCOS well and has worked with some amazing parents and she would also like to thank you for all the messages she has received on the occasion of her retirement. Claire Howell is currently a senior member of the Assessment Service staff so the handover of the service leadership will be seamless . Claire can be contacted on Specialist.assessmentservices@nhs.net or 0121 722 8010 and is very much looking forward to meeting with many of you moving forward.

Solihull Parent Carer Voice

Please click here for the latest newsletter....[Newsletters - Solihull Parent Carer Voice \(spcv.org.uk\)](#)

The joint Council and SPCV termly parent meeting will be held on 30 November at The Onward Club, 107 Helmswood Drive, Chelmsley Wood, B37 7NS.

And finally, I hope this update has provided a really insightful view of how all our SEND related programmes and services are progressing. We'll see you again in December.

Thanks

Charlotte Jones

Head of SEND service 0-25



Solihull SEND Newsletter

December 2021

Here we are with Christmas almost upon us. If you want an alternative (or addition) to the traditional advent calendar you may enjoy our British Sign Language version, learning a new sign each day, which is featured below.

It has been a busy term for everyone so here are some of the things we have been working on to continue to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and additional needs.

Update from Tim Browne - Interim Director of Children's Services and Skills

Some of you may already be aware that Frank McSheffrey, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care, will be leaving us early next year after accepting a role with Wirral Council. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his numerous achievements and unwavering commitment during a long and successful career with the council, particularly and most recently guiding our children's social care division through with the pandemic. Neelam Bhardwaja will join us on 20 December to provide cover for Frank's post on an interim basis, whilst we recruit permanently to the role. We will also be recruiting a fourth Head of Service for Children's Social Care and six Consultant Practitioners to add capacity for our social care services.

Strategic News

On 9 December the Council's Cabinet approved the final versions of the Additional Needs Strategy 2022-25, setting out the strategic approach across Solihull to improve outcomes for children and young people with additional needs, and the Accessibility Strategy 2022-25, which sets out how schools will make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of children and young people.

The Accessibility Strategy can be found on the local offer [here](#). The Additional Needs Strategy will be launched publically at the start of January 2022. Thank you very much to all of you who have contributed to these strategies.

The Strategy for Inclusive Education (supporting all children and young people to feel welcomed, supported and valued in school) and Early Years Strategy (focusing multi-agency support in the earliest years of development) are still being drafted and will be out for consultation next year.

Cabinet also received an update on the SEND improvement journey (highlighting the changes in practice you have heard about in these updates over the past year) and the overall financial position – recognising the need for the council to be focused upon improving outcomes for children and young people and ensuring value for money despite continued pressure on the budget.

You can read our Cabinet reports [here](#)

We are also working closely with one of our Special School head Teachers, Jane Davenport, to understand some of the challenges around education placements for children and young people with SEND. If you haven't yet shared your views with her, and wish to do so, the online survey is live until the end of term: [Unpicking SEND \(office.com\)](#)

National News

We have now heard that the Government are concluding the SEND review and planning to publish a green paper by the end of March 2022; with a Steering Group set up to inform this. More information is available here [SEND Review Steering Group - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). We don't yet know what proposed changes the review will lead to, but there is commitment to improving the outcomes of children and young people, supporting mainstream education to fulfil their responsibilities and making the system more financially sustainable.

Below are all the service updates for this term:

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EHCP Service

Following the change to Covid guidelines, the service will reduce its office based time to Monday – Wednesday. Staff can be reached on the direct landline numbers previously shared, and on Thursday and Friday will be contactable on their direct mobile numbers – as well as the usual main service number. Following some upcoming staff changes a new structure chart will be made available in the new year.

The number of initial EHCPs completed within timescale remains above 75% and over 85% of new reviews are now being completed within timescales. There is still a backlog of older reviews but we have a dedicated team working through these.

Children with EHCPs will have their Secondary School placement confirmed in their EHCP by 15 February and school leavers will have their next placement confirmed in their EHCP by 31 March. These children and young people should all have had their transition reviews by now. New annual review paperwork will be shared with schools and uploaded to the Local Offer in January. We will then start to co-produce new request paperwork to have this in place for the beginning of the summer term.

Community Educational Psychology Service

On a personal note, after nearly 4 years as Principal EP, I will be leaving Solihull in January to take up the post of Head of Service SEND with Staffordshire.] I have thoroughly enjoy working with the amazing community of teachers, LA officers, clinicians, families and children in Solihull. I wanted to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to everyone who supported us to re-launch the EP team back in 2018. I also wanted to say thank you to the amazing EP team who have built what is now a highly regarded EP service, both regionally and nationally! Recruitment for a Principal EP is underway and in the interim, I'm delighted that Melissa Jones will be taking the lead for the service as Acting Principal Educational Psychologist.

Best wishes - Halit Hulusi

Update: Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSN)

The Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance team has been commissioned for 2022-2023 which is great news for schools and families and means we can work closely with Michele Sadler and the Inclusion Service from January. Further updates and information regarding what this service will look like and how to access this support will be shared shortly. In mid-January 2022, the Community EP team will host to two Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and two Systemic Family Therapy trainees. We are looking forward to working with these trainees to support and develop our work with our families and schools.

Co-production with Health

Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPCV) is working with partners across the Health sector on a range of projects. Monthly meetings currently take place with representation from the SPVC and Health leads to discuss the key health issues that parent-carers have raised. This parent carer feedback has led to co-production within the following workstreams:

1. Situational mutism (SM) - to raise awareness and understanding of this by co-producing a parent
2. Improving understanding of access to Crisis support in mental health services - to include mapping the current crisis workstreams to identify improvements and develop next steps to raise awareness.
3. The Key Worker pilot working group - to deliver the BSol Keyworker pilot and begin to embed Key working. The aim of the pilot is that Children and Young People with a learning disability, autism, or both, with the most complex needs have a designated Key Worker.
4. Promoting Annual Health Checks at the GP for those over 14 years old with a learning disability – to improve both the uptake and the quality of the annual health checks.
5. The Autism in Schools project - to co-design and produce an autism-empowered training programme, based on understanding autistic identity.
6. Improving the Health input on the Local Offer - to ensure health information is accurate, easy to access and includes the health information that parents, carers and CYP need.
7. Learning Disability Autism (LDA) experience task & finish group (based on SENDIASS project related to hospital experiences) - to support the NHS providers to act on feedback and implement the changes that they can.
8. Reasonable Adjustments (RA) working group - to raise awareness of reasonable adjustments and identify areas for improvement (to start January 2022)

Specialist inclusion Support Service

Autism Education Trust (AET) Training

New AET modules will begin being delivered after Christmas. Dates will be confirmed by flyers direct to schools and also directly to SENCOs via our specialist teachers:

Autism and Anxiety

A 2020 study found that 52% of autistic children suffer with anxiety compared to 8% of non-autistic children.

The outcomes for this module include gaining an understanding of:

- How autistic children might express anxiety
- What can cause anxiety in autistic children
- What you can do to prevent and reduce anxiety in autistic children – strategy building

Autism and Exclusion

The national rate for the fixed term exclusion of autistic pupils is 4% higher than for the rest of the school population. (DfE 2019.)

The outcomes for this module include:

- To understand the legal context of exclusion and autism
- To understand the risk of illegal exclusion and how to avoid it occurring
- To better understand the triggers and ways of managing distressed behaviours
- To reflect on ways to support autistic children and their families during the period of exclusion
- To consider ways of transitioning the autistic child back into school and how to manage the reintegration meeting.

Early Years ELKLAN and Solihull's Communication Friendly Settings

The Early Years ELKLAN Pilot, run by the SISS SLCD Team, has now been completed by staff at five of our Early Years Settings and once all work is verified they will become Communication Friendly Settings. Elklan have commented on the very high standard of reflection and knowledge submitted so a massive congratulations to Emma Brown from Bishop Wilson, Susan Worrall from Lighthall Under Fives Preschool, Claire Jane Sargeant from Beatle Woods, Charlotte Charles from In The Woods Nursery Ltd and Dawn Woolven from Marston Green Infant School. It has been a lot of hard work for all staff and settings, but has made such a difference.

In their recent Ofsted at In the Woods nursery the impact of ELKLAN across the setting was commented upon and their Ofsted report stated; *"Areas are spacious and rich with resources, they have great fun as they explore natural resources and quickly learn new words to expand their vocabulary as staff are skilled at using and repeating words."* We are also very pleased that Charlotte Charles from In the Woods Nursery is now going to go forwards with a Level 5 qualification in Early Years Leadership. Well done to all involved!

British Sign Language videos for Christmas

Rose Ayling-Ellis has made quite the impression on Strictly Come Dancing, not only a "10" dancer, but also raising the profile of British Sign Language and the Deaf Community. Last week she said in an interview, "I have no problem being deaf, it's society that makes it harder for me". The SISS Hearing Impairment Team want to ensure the deaf children they work with are fully included in to society. There are various reasonable adjustments that can be made; correct seating position, use of subtitles, and in some cases the addition of Sign Supported English, or British Sign Language. If you would like to learn and share some Christmas signs please have a look at this alternative advent calendar <https://letssign.co.uk/product/lets-sign-bsl-christmas/> and accompanying video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hc74ImOQ440>



Early Years

In Solihull we have, for a long time, recognised the importance of early years in shaping future life outcomes. Children who have a healthy, stable early environment, rich with opportunities to learn and develop and positive relationships are supported to reach their potential. Our ambition

is to ensure these positive outcomes for all young children and to support children and families at the earliest opportunity. We hope that this can be achieved through ensuring sufficient quality early education, identifying need early and working together to support families. We are currently finalising our Maternity and Early Years Strategy through wider consultation. This will shape some of the work we do together, across services, in the next five years. We hope to make sure everyone recognises the importance of this crucial stage in a child's life. We are also writing a bid for Solihull Family Hubs and if we are successful they will be a universal 'front door' to a range of early help, public health and wider support services.

Solihull Parent Carer Voice - Winter Event

We have been amazed at the uptake of the SPCV winter family skate event taking place on 20 December, within 2 hours all the slots were allocated and after 12 hrs we had to close the list as we had received forms for 153 children and had to request an additional 30 places. All children will partake in craft activities and skating and will receive a hot meal and drink. SPCV will look at holding another HAF event at Easter to help create more opportunities for families with children of SEN and/or disabilities.

I wish you all a well deserved break over the Christmas holiday period, and that you are able to safely spend time with family and friends.

Thanks

Charlotte Jones

Head of SEND service 0-25

