

Solihull SEND Newsletter

September 2025

#SENDSpotlight

This month the new Sixth Form provision opens for Forest Oak. With more space inside and outside; staff are excited to be able to develop new learning and social opportunities for the young people.

Additional Needs Board

The last joint additional needs board meeting took place on 5 September 2025. The key messages were:

- The Board were pleased to hear about recent appointments in children's services. Over the summer Rasheed Pendry joined the council as the new Director for Children's Services, becoming responsible for children's social care and education services. Additionally, the board heard about other new permanent staff in children's social care which will improve stability of the teams; including Charlotte Mayah as the Children with Disabilities Team Manager.
- Members were advised how well the early help offer was being embedded across the borough and the high number of referrals which meant families were getting help when they needed it. They were reminded of the [Family Helpline](#) and how important this was to families seeking support.
- Members were updated on plans for the next SEND Celebration Awards evening in December, and after the huge number of nominations for children and young people last year were pleased to hear more award categories were being added to celebrate their achievements.

Mental Health Text Service

A new, round-the-clock mental health text service is now available to people living in Solihull and Birmingham, offering free and confidential support at the touch of a button.

The all-age service is a partnership between Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust and Shout, the UK's first 24/7 text messaging support service, powered by the charity Mental Health Innovations.

Anyone experiencing anxiety, stress, loneliness, depression, or other mental health challenges can text **'Space' to 85258** to connect with a trained mental health professional - anytime, anywhere. The service is designed to be discreet and accessible, particularly for those who may not feel ready to speak on the phone or in person.

In addition to providing in-the-moment support, texters can be signposted to a range of local mental wellbeing and mental health services, including Talking Therapies, Crisis Cafés, and NHS 111 Option 2.

This new digital service aims to support and reduce pressure on services by offering an alternative route to support—especially for those waiting for further help or seeking early intervention.

Supporting your neurodivergent child

Over the summer SPCV worked hard with a number of services across Solihull and Birmingham to create a booklet helping parents, and professionals, to support neurodivergent children. Hard copies will be available in schools, family hubs and libraries and can also be accessed online through the [Local Offer](#) and SPCV [Resources page](#).

Hazel Oak School

We wanted to say a huge thank you to the Education Exchange West Midlands and the volunteers who turned up at Hazel Oak school over the summer to help with refurbishments. Over 50 council staff, teachers from Hazel Oak and other local schools and others in the community turned out to paint, install flooring, put new screens up and clear up all the corridors and brighten the outside spaces. The school looks fantastic now, and the children will have a better environment to learn in thanks to the hard work and dedication of everyone who went above and beyond to make a difference.

Feedback from those who attended is that it was a brilliant day with so much achieved. There was a great sense of teamwork and relationship building, and the staff at the school feel valued and supported. Most importantly, our children now have a better school to learn in. Staff and pupils at Hazel Oak have returned to school with great excitement





Education projects

In May 2025 we published our strategic plans for improvements in the education offer in Solihull. Services have been working hard, and we are grateful to schools and parent carers for their involvement and support. To see what progress has been made so far, please go to our pages on Your Voice Solihull - [Education Strategic Plan](#)

Early Years

September sees the final stage of the **early education expansion** through the working parent entitlement scheme.

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/09/how-to-apply-for-30-hours-free-childcare-and-find-out-if-youre-eligible/>

Some funded children in a Solihull setting will also be eligible for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and their settings can access [Disability Access Fund](#) (DAF). This additional funding, alongside Early Years Inclusion Fund (EYIF), can help the setting support a child with SEND through access to training, lower adult-child ratios at times or specific resources to meet needs. The annual EYIF monitoring forms highlight the difference a setting can make when they work with families and access this funding.

Here are a few comments settings shared...

Parents and carers have commented on how well the staff know and understand their children and how effective environmental changes have supported their children's needs. Parents feel confident leaving their children in the knowledge that they are safe and happy.

Parents noticed that the child has become calmer over the year. They have also been able to engage in activities without dysregulating as often. Over the year they have also been able to be toilet trained.

The main and best resource a setting has are the practitioners who work with the children. The **'Do Something Big'** campaign hopes to encourage [more people to join the workforce](#) and has highlighted the need to encourage more men in the early education workforce. [Just 3% of the early years workforce are currently men](#). We are very fortunate to have both men and women working in the early years team. Let us hear from a couple of team members.....

Peter – Early Years Inclusion Support Practitioner

"Early years for me provides constant learning and development as it always demonstrates different routes of education and perspective. Coming from a mainstream and SEN teaching background, to now an early years inclusion practitioner in the early years team, I have been privileged to support a variety of children and families where I help them with their learning in their own way and expand my own in the process. Early years for me, never fails to live up the 'wonder and awe' experience that it should be for all young children, and I count myself lucky I get to be a part of that journey with them."

Anthony- Area SENCo

"My journey in Early Years began as an Inclusion Support Practitioner (ISP), where I had the privilege of working directly with children with SEND both at home and in early years settings. This role allowed me to share practical strategies to support children's development, and I could see first-hand how these approaches boosted not only the children's confidence but also empowered the key adults engaging with them.

I later transitioned into the role of Area SENCo, a position I've held for the past four years. During this time, I've worked closely with a wide range of Solihull settings and multi-agency teams. What I love most about visiting settings is seeing how SENCos and practitioners are constantly problem-solving—thinking creatively about how to support every child's unique needs.

Each visit reveals classrooms that have been thoughtfully enhanced to spark children's interests and encourage new fascinations. It's inspiring to see environments that evolve to meet children where they are, and I often find myself borrowing ideas to use with my own children at home.

Being a male in Early Years has given me a unique perspective, and I'm proud to be part of a profession that values nurturing, curiosity, and inclusive practice."

Do you know someone who might want to explore working in early years and childcare?

Suggest they **Do Something Big**- and look at the website -

<https://earlyyearscareers.campaign.gov.uk/the-big-september-switch/>

Solihull Neurodevelopmental Pathway Redesign – Update

Partners in the Solihull system (families, schools, health professionals and service providers) are working together to redesign pathways to identify Neurodevelopmental (ND) needs, specifically identification of possible Autism and / or ADHD. The scope of the work is considering the Autism diagnosis pathway and the ADHD diagnosis and treatment pathways, both for children and young adults up to 25 years.

The Solihull Neurodevelopmental Design Group is a multi-agency working group made up of parent carers (Solihull PCV), Local Authority and education professionals, Health clinicians, commissioners and service providers to co-design a more joined-up and responsive process with a specific aim to manage demand and reduce waiting times. The ND Design group has met twice so far, and there's been strong engagement from parent carers, schools, clinicians and commissioners. Together, we've started shaping a shared vision for a pathway that recognises neurodivergence positively and where processes are easier to navigate and support is available based on need not diagnosis.

A stakeholder workshop is planned for 15th September, where participants will analyse the current system to identify blocks and come to shared agreement on realistic options to improve the experience so that the identification of ND need is made easier and waiting times can improve. This workshop will be followed by further sessions in the autumn.

The work is still in its early stages, but the aim is clear: to build a more joined-up, responsive system that makes best use of the NHS diagnostic teams and that supports CYP with neurodiverse needs sooner and in an effective way.

All Age Autism Support Service

The Landau All Age Autism Support Service (**AAASS**) **Directory** is an easy-to-use online guide for **autistic people, families, and professionals** in **Birmingham & Solihull**. Find trusted local support all in one place. <https://www.aaadirectory.co.uk/>

What's inside?

- Local events
- Support groups

- News & articles
- Podcasts

This September in Solihull

On our **Events Page** you'll find:

- Activities for ages 5–25
- Online courses for parents, carers & professionals
- Carer events and coffee mornings
- And much more!

Articles & Podcasts

Helpful resources include:

- Getting your child ready for school
- Understanding EHCPs

Get Involved!

The AAASS Directory is always growing.

- Want to volunteer?
- Got ideas or suggestions?
- Want to share an organisation or event?

Email us: aaa@landau.co.uk

Solihull Apprenticeship and Pathways Show

To help Year 10-13 pupils learn about alternative routes to university such as apprenticeships, supported Internships and T Levels, the Solihull Apprenticeship and Pathways Show will be held on Wednesday 22 October 2025 at Cranmore Park with 2:30pm-3:30pm as quieter hour.

For more information, [please refer to the flyer.](#)

HMRC Child Benefit Eligibility - What's changing

From 1 September 2025, parents and guardians of young people in non-advanced education who cannot meet the 12-hour weekly requirement due to illness or disability, throughout Great Britain and Northern Ireland, will be eligible for Child Benefit to continue.

Parents and guardians of young people who are receiving full-time non-advanced education outside of a school or college, such as being home-schooled, will also now be eligible to continue to claim Child Benefit, whether this began before or after the youngster's 16th birthday' Child Benefit legislation was amended to align with changes made by the Department for Education in 2014, who raised the statutory participation age for education in England to 18, the definition of 'full-time' education for Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit purposes, was

accidentally disapplied for a small number of customers. Due to this, parents and guardians whose children were receiving less than 12 hours a week education missed out on Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits payments between April 2014 and August 2025.

About 7 million families received Child Benefit last year. We have identified that a very small number, about 500 over 10 years, may not have been paid their correct entitlement. This affected families in England only.

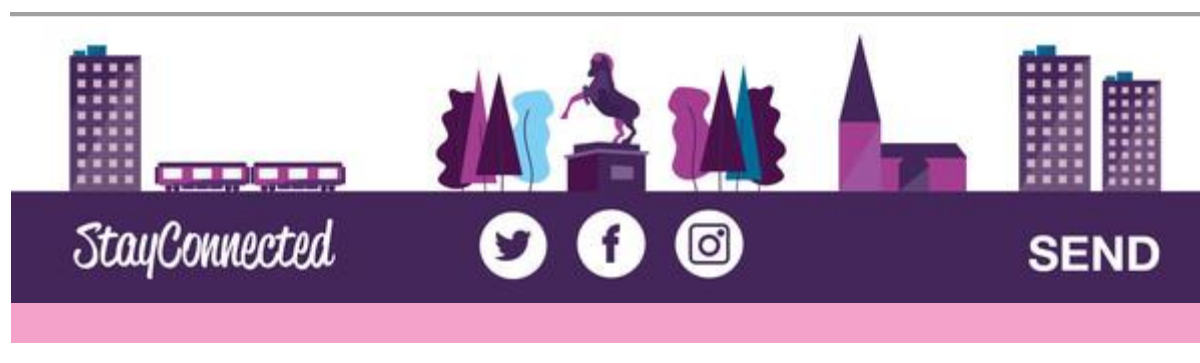
The messaging explains both the new rules coming into effect and how families can check if they may be entitled to backdated payments. Details of the changes can be found on the [HMRC Campaign Resource Centre](#).

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

Charlotte Jones

Head of Strategy - SEND & Additional Needs



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