

# Solihull SEND Newsletter

## November 2025

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### #SENDSpotlight

A record number of children with SEND attended our Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) summer programme with 38% of children making use of this offer identified as having SEND. This is after we increased the number of specialist SEND providers and introduced family inclusive activities.

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### National news

Last month the Secretary of State for Education announced that the expected SEND reforms would be delayed until next year to allow for a “further period of co-creation” and “testing our proposals with... families...teachers and other experts”. The delay is disappointing for everyone within the SEND system but we hope the outcome will truly remove some of the barriers our children and young people are facing.

In the meantime the DfE have published their [post-16 education and skills white paper](#) which aims to provide alternative vocational qualifications and changes to English and maths re-sits and their [curriculum and assessment review](#) which has a strong focus on inclusion.

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### Local news

We are pleased to announce that after a successful recruitment process, Jane Sowerby will be joining Solihull Council as the new Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion. Alongside wider education system changes, Jane will provide crucial leadership through the pending SEND reforms and any future SEND and Alternative Provision inspection activity.

Planning is well underway for our 2025 SEND awards ceremony in December. Over 220 children, young people and adults were nominated and selecting the finalists who have been invited to the ceremony was very difficult. Well done to everyone who has been nominated and a huge thank you to everyone who took the time to nominate them. It is always such a privilege to hear about the amazing children and young people we have in Solihull and about the adults who support them.

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## Additional Needs board

The last joint additional needs board meeting took place on 6 November 2025. The key messages were:

The Board discussed waiting times for mental health support. These had stabilised over the last few months but members agreed that a 39-week wait was still too long. However, members were advised that during August, 18% of appointments made were not attended by the child or young person. This means that those children and young people who have been waiting do not get the support they need when it can be offered to them and also prevents those appointments being offered to others. The board felt it was important to raise awareness of this and to encourage parents to reschedule appointments if they are not able to attend so that slot can be allocated to another child or young person who needs it and to help reduce overall waiting times.

The board heard about the increased commitment from colleges and employers in creating further supported internship opportunities for young people with SEND. This is a huge success for the borough, but members were advised that Solihull young people do not always take up all of the opportunities that are made available to them. A group agreed to look at why young people may not choose a supported internship to help remove any barriers and see how information could be shared earlier to support transition planning.

Members were pleased to hear about the plans for expanding shared care for ADHD by March 2026. This will see GPs taking on some of the prescribing responsibilities for children, young people and adults to allow specialist teams to focus more on assessment and intervention and further reduce wait times.

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## Early Years team

The Early Years team are running stay and play sessions as part of their offer for children not yet attending a nursery. The stay and plays are held at different Family Hubs across Solihull and are only open to children on the team's caseload, so the sessions have small numbers of children with a high staffing ratio. During the sessions, the parents play alongside their children in a group. Together we can assess the needs of the children outside of the familiarity of the home and show parents what else is available in the Family Hubs.

Each child has a SEND plan with targets to achieve at the sessions with a report written at the end of the 6-week block. This report can be used to support the graduated approach or transition into a setting. After the session, we hope parents feel more confident in attending a nursery setting, childminder, or other stay and play sessions. We also aim to help parents develop their skills to support their child's development.

The children have a great time joining in singing and playing. It's often their first experience of accessing play sessions outside of their family and we aim to make it fun and inclusive.

Rachel Priestley leaves us this term after 20 years. I would like to give her a special shout-out to Rachel who has supported the stay and play sessions and worked in homes and alongside settings. A big thanks to Rachel for all her support for early years children.

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## EY TAC and support for childminders in their role as SENCo.

Early Years Team Around The Child (EY TAC) is a way health professionals and childminders who work with families can ask for additional support from the Early Years and Sensory and Physical Impairment Teams as part of the Specialist Inclusion Support Service (SISS).

To find out more please visit the [EY TAC website](#).

Group settings and schools refer to the Area SENCo whereas childminders can refer to EY TAC. Our team of inclusion support practitioners can support you to help children in homes.

Child minders are also able to access the Early Years Inclusion Fund (EYIF). Level 1 funding is available via the application process and involves a short application and evidence of a graduated response. To find out more information about EYIF application and submission dates, please visit [Solgrid](#).

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## Solihull Music Service

Please take five minutes to watch the videos below and read the accompanying narrative to the event:

- [Performance at the Royal Albert Hall](#)
- [Behind the scenes footage of the event](#)

### ***Solihull Music performs at the Royal Albert Hall***

Solihull Music recently took 21 children and young people aged 7–20 with additional and/or complex needs to perform at the Music for Youth Proms at the Royal Albert Hall, London on Tuesday 11 November. The group proudly represented 12 mainstream and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) settings from across Solihull.

The journey behind this performance has been anything but ordinary. Each child and young person in the group has overcome significant personal barriers — from navigating the children's social care system, to the isolation of elective home education, to seeing the world through the

lens of SEND. Some carry the responsibilities of being young carers, while others manage the daily challenges of living in a world that does not always provide the equity they deserve.

Through this experience, the group has developed a deep sense of collective pride, celebrating the unique superpowers each child brings. Their performance shone a light on their resilience, determination, and creativity, and demonstrated the transformative power of music in creating connection, belonging, and joy.

This moment marks a milestone for Solihull Music as an organisation. Since 2020, it has been delivering inclusive, out-of-school music groups for families, building a vibrant and supportive community across Solihull. The Royal Albert Hall performance stands as a testament to the power of inclusion and the hope that music can bring — both on stage and beyond.

For more information, please visit our [Inclusive groups website](#).

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## EHCP transitions

Primary and post-16 Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) transitions work is underway. All primary transition annual reviews should have been held and the documents submitted to the Local Authority (LA). Any outstanding annual review needs to be submitted as a matter of urgency for primary cases. The deadline for post-16 cases is the end of November 2025.

When final EHCPs are issued to parents/carers and Children and Young People (CYP) following an annual review or a new assessment request there is a link in the email to a feedback survey. Please take five minutes to complete these surveys to ensure the LA can consider your feedback to the process and performance of the EHCP team. All feedback is greatly appreciated.

The EHCP team have continued to offer partnership meetings to our mainstream schools and a high number have taken up this offer so far. If as a mainstream school you have not had a partnership meeting yet and it is something you would like to participate in, please email [edsen1@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:edsen1@solihull.gov.uk) and your request will be forwarded to the correct senior EHCP officer so they can contact your school to arrange this meeting.

We have been pleased to welcome Taylor to our team as a supported intern student from Solihull College working two days a week. He has quickly settled into his role and integrated well with the team. Taylor has shown great dedication and enthusiasm, particularly in maintaining and updating our Needs Directory, which is essential due to frequent changes in email contacts. His contributions are already making a positive impact for the team as a whole!

Taylor has shared the following views on his experience:

*"So far at my work placement at Solihull Council I have learned some new skills and work with a lovely team and I just like to say a massive thank you to Laura for offering me this here because it's given me the confidence to work in an office environment that I'm not used to. Other thanks to Liam for all the help and support he's given me. I hope on this journey I make new friends and get some experience out of this."*

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## HEART SEND events

HEART, the Midlands Early Years Stronger Practice Hub, are running a range of free events for practitioners which focus on a child's individual needs. For more information please visit the [Stronger Practice Hubs website](#).

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## Specialist Inclusion Support Service

### **Sensory and Physical Impairment (SPI) team – continuing support for families**

The SPI team continues to offer support to children and families through our specialist groups. *Little Listeners* provides a welcoming space for children with hearing impairments to develop audition and communication skills, while *Little OWLLS* (Our Wonderful Listening, Looking Senses) supports children with multi-sensory impairments in partnership with The Amber Trust and the Solihull Music Service. These sessions offer meaningful opportunities for sensory engagement and musical exploration.

We're also delivering Deaf Awareness and Visual Awareness training to help build inclusive practice across schools and early years settings. It's always lovely to see staff from schools and nurseries attending—your presence makes a real difference. The next vision awareness training session will be held on 18 November 2025 at the council house – get booking your space!

Additionally, we're pleased to offer a full-day Moving and Handling Training on 28 January 2026—an essential session for staff supporting children with physical needs. We encourage early booking to secure a place.

### **Speech, language and communication needs**

We are planning to share this Communication Supporting Classroom Observation Tool (CSCOT) at the next SENCo Network. It's a resource developed by Speech and Language UK to help schools evaluate and strengthen communication-supportive practice within classrooms supporting staff to create inclusive learning environments for all pupils.

For more information about CSCOT, please visit the [speech and language website](#).

## SENCo networks

Our next SENCo Network meetings will take place on:

- Wednesday 27 November for secondary schools.
- Wednesday 4 December for primary schools.

These sessions will bring us together to share good practice, collaborate, and strengthen support for pupils with SEND across our schools.

## Community Paediatric Service

Parents/carers and professionals can contact the Solihull Community Paediatric Services (CPS) via email or phone.

### Phone

We have dedicated lines for cancelling of appointments, ordering repeat prescriptions (prescriptions will be at the designated destination by 10 working days), and a general enquiry line (messages left on this line will be responded to within 24 hours).

- **0121 746 4473** - Prescription line.
- **0121 746 4455** - Appointment cancellations.
- **0121 746 4473** or **0121 746 4455** selecting option 3 - general enquiries

All of these phone lines have a 24-hour answer machines available 7 days a week. The lines are open every day Monday to Friday between 09:00 and 11:00 for parents to speak to a member of staff, but these lines are very busy so callers may still get the answer machine during these times. We encourage families to please leave a message with a child/young person's name, date of birth and home address and the number you wish us to call you back on so we can access the right record for information and get back to you in a timely way. Outside of our answering hours if messages are left, we try to respond within 24 hours within our office hours – Monday to Friday 08:00 to 16:00.

### Email

- [communitypaedsscripts@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:communitypaedsscripts@uhb.nhs.uk) – this is for parents ordering repeat prescriptions only, or who have prescription queries.
- [Communitypaediatricteam@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:Communitypaediatricteam@uhb.nhs.uk) – this is for parents to use to send queries/questions/share information/return questionnaires to be forwarded to their child's paediatrician.
- [Soladhhd.nursingteam@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:Soladhhd.nursingteam@uhb.nhs.uk) – this is for parents to use to send queries/questions/share information/return questionnaires to the ADHD nursing team.

We aim to reply to all emails within 72 working hours. The Community Paediatrics service is not an acute or urgent care provider. If a child is unwell or they require an urgent medical review they should contact their GP surgery or call NHS 111.

## Healthcare leader issues back-to-school health advice

As children across Birmingham, Black Country and Solihull head back to school, healthcare leaders are reminding parents and carers to make sure their children are protected from serious illnesses ahead of winter.

Seasonal illnesses such as flu, COVID-19 and norovirus are expected to circulate more widely during colder months leading to missed school days, and there are simple steps that young people and their families can do to increase their protection.

Parents are encouraged to make sure their children are up to date with vaccinations, including the free flu nasal spray for those aged two to 16, and both flu and COVID-19 vaccines for children in clinical risk groups. It's also important to check that children have received both doses of the MMR vaccine, which protects against measles.

Good hygiene remains a simple and effective defence: regular handwashing with soap and warm water, using tissues to catch coughs and sneezes, and staying home when unwell all help to stop the spread of infection. Families are also encouraged to stay active, eat well, and manage minor illnesses at home with advice from the NHS website or local pharmacists.

A sing-along video by local NHS workers shows children the best technique for washing their hands. For self-care advice, please visit the NHS Black Country ICB website or NHS Birmingham and Solihull.

## Autism and ADHD redesign programme

We wanted to share an update on the ongoing work to improve the Autism and ADHD pathways in Solihull. The programme is now moving into an exciting new phase, where the focus is on making real changes that will help children, young people and families get the support they need more quickly and easily.

This next stage will be led by our local health and council teams, working closely together to take forward a series of practical actions. These are designed to help reduce waiting times, make services more consistent, and ensure families can access support even if they're still waiting for a diagnosis.

Here are some of the key areas we'll be working on:

- Reducing waiting lists, so families aren't left waiting so long for assessments where these are needed
- Making access fairer, with clearer criteria across services.
- Improving ADHD support, including shared care with GPs and electronic prescribing.
- Strengthening support to meet needs with or without a diagnosis, so help is available when it's needed.
- Planning for the future, with better staffing and resources.
- Improving oversight of Right to Choose pathways, to ensure quality and consistency.
- Expanding staff training, so more professionals can confidently support neurodiverse children.

This work will be overseen by the Strategic Oversight Group, with dedicated teams leading each area. Importantly, parent carers will continue to be at the heart of this work, helping to shape decisions and ensure that changes reflect real-life experiences.

## Employment and skills support

There is a range of support on offer from the Council's Employment and Skills Team to help residents get ready for work from assessing career aspirations to developing CV and interviewing skills. There are also programmes connecting residents with supportive local employers. For more information please visit the [jobseekers support site](#).

## Explore the All-Age Autism Support Service Directory

Looking for autism support in Birmingham and Solihull? The All-Age Autism Service Directory is a free, easy-to-use online resource for autistic individuals, families, caregivers, and professionals.

- Find services fast – search by keyword or location
- Covers education, health, and social care
- Local events & activities at your fingertips
- Developed with Experts by Experience for accuracy and accessibility

The Directory is regularly updated, and we welcome your feedback and contributions.

Have a service to share or can't find what you need? Email us: [aaa@landau.co.uk](mailto:aaa@landau.co.uk)

Explore it today at [www.aadirectory.co.uk](http://www.aadirectory.co.uk) and connect with support that matters!

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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](#).

If you have any feedback on the newsletter, or suggestions for future items please email and let us know at [jand@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:jand@solihull.gov.uk)

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