

# Working together to achieve together



*Agreement to work  
together for children  
and young people  
with Additional  
Needs*

**November 2025**

**Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC),  
Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System (BSol ICB), Solihull  
Parent Carer Voice (SPCV), Our Voices Heard (OVH), University  
Hospital Birmingham (UHB) and Birmingham & Solihull Mental  
Health NHS Foundation Trust**



## FORMAL AGREEMENT

*Working as equal partners we are committed to making a difference to the lives and outcomes of children and young people with additional needs and their parent carers.*

*A revised improvement journey is being defined and co-production is at the heart of these plans.*

**Rasheed Pendry**

SMBC

**Helen Kelly**

BSOL ICB

**Bhavna Gokani**

University Hospital Birmingham

**Vanessa Devlin**

Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS

**Heather Delaney**

Parent Carer Voice & Our Voices Heard

## Foreword

This agreement seeks to provide a framework across Solihull for all key strategic partners to work in collaboration to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people. It is set within the context and principles laid out in the articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and in recognition that all children and young people's right to participate in decision-making is enshrined in law via Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of Practice and the Care Act 2015.

We acknowledge that good participation does not just mean listening to children and young people and their parent carers; but also acting on their lived experiences and giving them good feedback about the decisions we make.

In order to ensure that all voices are heard, we will make sure that appropriate and accessible participation opportunities are available - providing the support that parent carers, children and young people need to take part in a way that works for them.

Good participation will be embedded as standard across services and considered from the very earliest stages of the commissioning cycle and throughout (from assessing needs, looking at best practice, service design and transformation; ensuring capacity meets demand to monitoring service provision).

### Roles and Responsibilities

## Statutory services

Children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities often receive a number of different services. These could be provided by nurseries, schools or colleges and specialist therapists, as well as professionals in education, health, and social care.

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, the government placed duties on the local health, social and education services that provide for these children and young people. In particular, the local area health, social and education services need to work together to:

- › publish a 'local offer' setting out the support and provision in the area for children and young adults with special educational needs or disabilities (or both)
- › provide accessible information to children and young people, as well as parents and carers, about the services and support available in the local area
- › work with children and young people, their parents and carers, and service providers to make sure that any special needs or disabilities (or both) are identified as early as possible
- › assess (in co-operation with children and young people and their parents and carers) the needs of children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (or both) who may need an education, health, and social care plan (EHCP)
- › produce an EHCP for all children and young people who are assessed as needing one (all relevant agencies should cooperate to do this and involve the children and young people and their parents and carers)
- › provide children and young people with the support agreed in their EHCP and regularly review their plans

## Parent Carer Forum

Recognising the importance of parent carer involvement at a strategic level alongside health, care and education services, the Department for Education provides a grant to facilitate Parent Carer Forums in every local area.

**Solihull Parent Carer Voice** is the established forum and the strategic partner of Solihull MBC and Birmingham & Solihull ICB.

Parent Carer Voice is a group of parents and carers of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their aim is to make sure the services in the area meet the needs of disabled children and their families.

They do this by gathering the views of local families and then working in partnership with health, care and education to highlight where local services, processes and commissioners are working well, or challenge when changes or improvements need to be made.

Parent Carer Voice will represent parent carers in Solihull at all strategic SEND and Additional Needs forums within the borough – providing an insight into the lived experience of children, young people and families across the borough and working across the partnership to facilitate improvements. They are an equal partner in this arrangement and will provide effective support and challenge to services.

Parent Carer Voice will provide the recognised communication route with parent carers; raising collective parent carer views, sharing information, and collating parent carer feedback.

The partnership will also jointly consider how best to increase participation of children and young people, so they also have an equal voice in the services designed to support them.

## Child and Young People's Forum

Recognising the importance of the voice of children and young people themselves in both informing the support available for them and in evaluating the impact it has on their lives, Solihull MBC and BSol ICB provides funding to facilitate a forum – **Our Voices Heard**.

Since September 2021, Our Voices Heard has developed as a project that supports children and young people living with SEND, between the ages of 0-25 accessing services or living in the Solihull borough - by providing an active voice to provision and enabling strategic change of those lived experiences.

Our Voices Heard actively engages with services including health, social care, education, third sector organisations and youth justice, alongside meeting children and young people in schools, the community, arranged community sessions and virtual sessions to provide safe spaces to hear honest voices.

Our Voices Heard are directly involved in Solihull's SEND and additional need strategies, alongside a wider range of co-production work with education, health, social care and other services to focus on enhancing children and young people's experience and learning from what they would like to enable positive change.

Our Voices Heard visits 24 schools each half-term, talking to over 120 children and young people, in addition to their community groups and established group of 9 young ambassadors - to support gaining as many voices as possible. They aim to collect the voice of

at least 800 children and young people per year; and have reached 311 in the past 4 months alone. After all, a collective voice has its own power.

## Education Services

Everyone at Solihull Metropolitan Council wants to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEN or a Disability. We all work together to commission the right services, make sure that our children and young people are included in our communities and at school and that they get the best outcomes whilst having a great experience. There is a whole team working on assessing the needs of our children and young people and giving the schools and colleges that they attend the best advice possible to make sure that they feel confident and learn well in school.

Sometimes our children and young people might need an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). This happens when we come to an agreement with them, their families, and professionals that they need something additional to what is usually on offer at school or college. This plan allows us to put some extra things in place (maybe some therapy support or perhaps extra help to learn) to make their journey through school or college as productive as possible. There is a whole team assigned to this too. We assign EHCP coordinators to each request and they work with children, young people, and their families throughout the process. We look at what a child or young person's needs are and what support will help them so we can make the right decisions; including whether to fully assess need, whether or not an EHCP is the right course of action and when it is, what additional support is required – all of which are made by a panel of professionals from all services. Parent Carer Voice representatives attend these panels to observe the process (with permission from parents or the young person) as we want to be as transparent as possible in our decision making.

When everyone agrees that the planned provision is right and the child or young person is attending a school or college which is able to meet their needs, our specialist services can work with those settings; supporting them in doing the right things for the children and young people in their setting. We want our children and young people to be happy to go into school and learn. We are ambitious for them and want them to gain the skills and knowledge to enable them all to be able to move onto the next stage of their life journey.

We know that there are things we need to get better - sometimes waiting times for assessments are too long, sometimes we listen but we don't always hear what is being said, sometimes we don't see what needs to change, things that used to work aren't working anymore. This agreement goes a long way to tackling this. By working together with children, young people, and their families as well as everyone named on this agreement, we know that things will improve.

## BSol ICB

NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board (ICB) has been established as the NHS organization responsible for NHS function and budgets.

An ICB is a statutory NHS organisation responsible for developing a plan for meeting the health needs of the Birmingham and Solihull population, managing the NHS budget, and arranging the provision of health services in the Integrated Care System (ICS) area. You can find out more

about who we are and what we do here - [NHS Birmingham and Solihull \(icb.nhs.uk\)](https://icb.nhs.uk)

## University Hospital Birmingham

University Hospitals Birmingham provides a wide range of specialist services from the following hospitals for young people and adults in different areas across Birmingham and Solihull: Heartlands, Good Hope, Solihull, and Queen Elizabeth Hospitals.

We also offer children and young people who live in the Solihull area a wide range of therapy services for those that may be experiencing difficulties with communication, physical movement or general everyday activities, or difficulties that may indicate an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Ensuring our patients have the best experience alongside excellent clinical care aids recovery and well-being. We are committed to a programme of continual improvement by listening, learning, and acting on feedback, and involving our communities in our work.

## Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

Operating out of more than 40 sites, we provide a comprehensive mental healthcare service for residents of Birmingham and Solihull, and a range of specialist mental health services to communities across the West Midlands and beyond.

We provide a number of services for children and young people with mental health conditions. These include early intervention and detection, community services and inpatient services: Solar, Solihull Early Intervention Service, Forward Thinking Birmingham, CASCADE and Ardenleigh secure service.

## Social Care

Solihull Children's Social Care is committed to working in partnership with children and their families, as well as with partner agencies such as education and health. Improving outcomes for children and families in Solihull is a priority for the council (Council Plan 2025 - 2030). Our vision is to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer, and more prosperous through growth that creates opportunities for all. We will achieve this through being ambitious, open, honest, and keeping our promises to children and families. It is essential that we enable personalisation, choice, and control at the centre of assessments and support for children and young people (from 0-25 years).



# Co-Production Charter

## What is Co-production

“Co-production is not just a word, it is not just a concept, it is a meeting of minds coming together to find shared solutions. In practice, Co-production involves people who use services being consulted, involved, and working together from the start to the end of any project that affects them. When Co-production works best, people who use services and carers are valued by organisations as equal partners, can share power, and have influence over decisions made.”

*National Co-production Advisory Group.*



## Our Co-production Principles

We will:

- › Be welcoming and caring.
- › Treat everyone equally and with respect.
- › Communicate clearly and honestly.
- › Work in partnership and be inclusive.
- › Agree upfront the level of co-production on any activity.
- › Use a co-production logo on published documents.
- › We will develop and cultivate our working relationships in order to achieve trust.

We, as people in Solihull who access services, families, carers, council officers, decision makers, and partner organisations are committed to ensuring that we work together to ensure that the principles of effective co-production underpin the shaping and improving of services.

## The process of Co-production

To ensure that genuine co-production happens in Solihull we will:

- › Be clear about the nature of the work to be undertaken and the level of co-production needed to get the best outcome.
- › From the start consider “who do we need to involve?” and make contact at the first possible opportunity. We will always ask “who have we missed?”
- › Directly involve children with SEND, their parent/carers along with other participants to ensure our way of working together is built on trust, transparency, and open communication.
- › Consider when, where and how any meetings will take place to make sure that they are accessible to all.
- › Come to the table with a blank agenda and build it together with the people that access a service, their families, and carers. We will monitor the agenda and how it progresses to ensure it is clear how all views have shaped the direction.
- › Give equal value to every participants contribution.
- › Ensure that everyone gets the same information, at the same time, in a way that they can access it.
- › Maintain confidentiality as agreed for every project.
- › Facilitate discussion and actively listen.
- › Always provide feedback so that people can see what happens as a result of their participation.
- › Understand that the final outcome may be a compromise, however we will ensure that all voices have been heard in reaching a compromise.



## Always remember: Who, Where, When, What, Why and How

- › **Who** are we engaging?
- › **Where** are we meeting? Make sure this is a setting where everyone feels comfortable and can access it. Can it be a virtual meeting?
- › **When** are we meeting? Remember school run times and working parents. Make sure everyone is given enough notice.
- › **What** method of engaging will suit the purpose best?
- › **Why** are we co-producing and what is the outcome we are looking for?
- › **How** will we co-produce this piece of work?

## The definitions we will use...

### Co-production

Working with people to make things better. Working together from the beginning of a project, through to the end, to plan and design services that affect them.

We will co-produce when planning or designing services and documents, where it is important for all those involved to jointly decide on the next steps and have an equal say in the outcome. We have key partners who we work with to gather ideas from different communities.

### Consultation

When we come up with plans, checking with people that they are right. Consultation happens when there is the opportunity for stakeholders to influence the work.

We will consult on policies, strategies, and decisions, where there is true scope for those consulted to influence the finished product. We will consult with people where the decisions will affect them. Sometimes we will consult on documents where there is a legal requirement to do so.

### Engagement

Talking and listening to people and gathering their views. Exploring what matters to people to feed into the work we do.

We will engage when we want to hear as many voices as possible, and to explore new or developing ideas on projects we are working on.

### Communication

Sharing information with people in a way they can understand it. To keep them informed about the changes that affect them.

We will communicate in different ways and in different formats, so everyone who needs to access the information, can do so. If needed, we will translate our communication for those who need it.

# How we will know if it is working – our accountability framework

We will know that true co-production is embedded in Solihull when all parties can agree with the following statements:

- › I know from the start of any work who will be engaged with and at what level.
- › I am an equal partner and am listened to and valued.
- › I am able to be a part of the process and am able to participate in all stages.
- › My views and experiences are represented.
- › I receive clear information, timely information in a format that is accessible to me.
- › I know that policies, processes and services have been co-produced.

We will also monitor and evaluate to ensure that effective co-production is happening:

## EVIDENCE

- › All partners who have engaged in co-production should be able to see their work within whatever is produced or undertaken. This includes detailing the contributions in service specifications, policies, and procedures.

## EVALUATE

- › We will ask all services to evaluate the impact of co-production in activities within their area and report this to the partnership.
- › We will gather feedback to ensure that all stakeholders feel that their voices have been heard and that they have been able to make a difference.

## ESCALATE

- › Parent Carer Voice will consider the effectiveness of co-production of services in their termly meetings with service leads.
- › Engagement and co-production will be incorporated into the set agenda of partnership meetings to enable any identified areas of good practice, or barriers being faced, to be shared and discussed.

**The strategic partnership is brought together by the Joint Additional Needs & Disabilities Board which meets half-termly to monitor activity across all agencies and oversee outcomes for children and young people with additional needs. This board is held to account by the SEND Executive Board and Place Committee.**

