

Solihull SEND Newsletter

January 2026

#SENDSpotlight

The Mental Health in Schools Team is now working within 90% of Solihull schools; and between April-October 2025 accepted 726 children who had been referred for support.

National news

- SEND reform engagement meetings have now finished and we continue to wait for the white paper and SEND reforms. However, there have been a number of government messages over the past month which give us some indication of what to expect. These include:
 - £200 million allocated to provide SEND training for teachers [£200 million landmark SEND teacher training programme - GOV.UK](#)
 - £3 billion allocated to creating more SEND places [£3bn investment to end postcode lottery for children with SEND - GOV.UK](#)

For Solihull, this means that the Department for Education will no longer be continuing with the 150 place special free school it had previously approved. Instead the Council will receive some funding to create more SEND places within existing schools – and we will now begin to work with all partners on what this could look like in our borough.



Assistant Direction Education & Inclusion

My name is Jane Sowerby and I joined Solihull as the Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion in December. I am delighted to be here and very much enjoying it! Whilst I recognise the challenging national and systemic landscape, it is a great time to join the Council, with our Ofsted inspection of Children's Services rating us as Good, and our area SEND Inspection still to come. I am an experienced Assistant

Director but am new to the Borough and to the West Midlands, my usual stomping ground is Stockport in Greater Manchester, and my background is SEND education and school improvement. I have been really impressed here in Solihull by the children and young people and how colleagues in the Council and at Solihull Parent Carer Voice work hard to give our

children a strong strategic voice which we use to make a difference to what we do. Some highlights for me have been the SEND Awards and visits to our schools.

My approach to leadership and achieving our goals is a relational one. Real partnership built on trust is how we will get to where we want to be. Building trust relies on transparency and valuing people, with our children and young people at the heart of every decision we take. I am committed to meaningful co-production and am ambitious for our children.

With best wishes

Jane

Additional Needs board

The last joint additional needs board meeting took place on 19 January 2026. The key messages were:

- The Board reflected upon the need to improve the post 16 offer; including access and promotion of what is available and to better understand what the age 14 to adulthood process and information sharing looks like for those with EHCPs. SPCV noted that SEND children have told them they really want to learn and want to be successful in the future so their aspirations need to be listened to and supported.
- The Board discussed performance and outcome data from across the partnership. Health services were asked for more clarity around the data on their reports and agreed to use consistent language for explaining waiting time trends. Education services were asked to undertake a deep dive into EHCP exclusions to identify any patterns so children could be better supported.
- Members agreed to work with OVH to create an easily accessible child and young person directory of SEND friendly and age-appropriate safe spaces and groups across the borough – and will set up a group to progress this.

Educational Psychology Service

Happy New Year to everyone from us and welcome to our new SEPS baby, Vincent, who was born on 2nd January to one of our associate team! We have started the term with refresher attachment training and a range of work in schools, including supporting staff to teach neurodivergent pupils and those in care. Our next ELSA training course is filling up and we'd very much like to ensure there is an ELSA in every school over the next few years. Emotional Literacy Support Assistants are specially trained staff who support the emotional wellbeing of our children. They receive regular supervision from EPs and provide skilled, nurturing support to all pupils who are struggling with their mental health. If any schools are yet to sign-up for this year's training course, please email us on edpsych@solihull.co.uk. Wishing everyone a pleasant Spring term.

Specialist Inclusion Support Service (SISS)

SISS Autism Team Parents Workshops - Understanding my Child's Autism– dates for diaries

1. **Early Years Workshop for parents and carers of children aged 0-5 years**, with an autism diagnosis, or who have been accepted onto the waiting list for an autism assessment.

Venue: Shirley Heath Family Hub, delivered by Wendy and Sophie, SISS Autism Team Specialist Teachers and AET licensed trainers.

- 4.26 - Making Sense of Autism in the Early Years
- 4.26 - Developing Toileting in the Early Years & Developing Play in the Early Years.
- 5.26 - online signposting session with external agencies to identify further support and advice within Solihull

1. **School Age Workshop for parents and carers of children from Year 1 to Y11**, with an autism diagnosis, or who have been accepted onto the waiting list for an autism assessment.

Venue: Riverside Family Hub, delivered by Jacinta and Rachel, SISS Autism Team Specialist Teachers and AET licensed trainers.

- 4.26 and 28.4.26, content covering understanding autism, social communication and interaction, information processing and flexible thinking, sensory differences and anxiety.
- 5.26 - online signposting session with external agencies to identify further support and advice within Solihull

Please ask your school SENCo for the flyer which contains more information and the booking form link.

SISS Sensory and Physical impairment Team

Little Listeners Group – A Wonderful Christmas Celebration and Spring Term Dates for 2026

The **Little Listeners Group**, a group which is part of Specialist Inclusion Support Service, Sensory and Physical Impairment Team offer and meets every other week at **Elmwood Place (term Time only by invitation only)**, enjoyed a truly magical Christmas session! We were delighted to welcome **Santa Claus** and the **Mayor of Solihull**, who brought festive cheer and

smiles to all the families attending. It was a lovely way to end the year and celebrate the joy of listening and learning together.

As we step into the new year, we're excited to announce the **Spring Term 1 dates for 2026** (by invitation only):

- **Tuesday 20th January** – 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm
- **Tuesday 3rd February** – 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm
- **Tuesday 17th March** – 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm
- **Tuesday 24th March** – 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm

These sessions continue to provide a warm, welcoming space for little ones and their families to enjoy stories, songs, and interactive listening activities to aid audition and communication.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the group, please contact your Teacher of the Deaf or Inclusion Support Practitioner directly.

Early years education

New Local Offer

We are pleased to announce that our refreshed Early Years Local Offer webpages are now live. Our aim was to reshape the pages to help you navigate their content. We hope that some images will be added soon. The Solihull early years local offer link is below...

<https://www.solihull.gov.uk/solihull-local-offer/early-years-education>

Early Years Inclusion Fund Report

Each year the early years inclusion fund (EYIF) report outlines how the EYIF is spent by settings to support pre-reception age children. The report is now live on the Solgrid funding webpage.

This page also includes the EYIF panel dates. We thank SENCos for their attendance at panel as the feedback shows the application process is seen as a fair one. If you are a SENCo (including childminders), please let us know if you would like to join a EYIF panel.

Link to EYIF in Solihull- <https://www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/eef/early-years-inclusion-funding-for-early-education-funded-children/>

As part of our reflection on our process for EYIF allocation we read the DfE SEN inclusion fund case studies - [Local authority management of special educational needs inclusion funding \(SENIF\) – examples of local authority practice - GOV.UK](#)

Some of the actions taken by local authorities are already in place in Solihull. This includes:

- Application process and reducing paperwork- Solihull's application form has been reduced each year. As SEND support plans are now strong, we removed the need to give the graduated approach information, which is in plans, in the application form.

- Integration within the wider SEND offer – access to EYIF is integral to the work that the Early Years SEND teams do to support and guide good quality inclusive provision.
- Proportionate reporting process- the EYIF report is as a result of the annual request for monitoring information required as part of the process of evaluating and accounting for EYIF spend. This annual audit goes alongside the discussion that takes place each time a member of the local authority early years SEND support teams visit.

Whilst the members of the panel will continue to reflect upon our processes ,we feel that these 2 comments represent the views typically received about the application form...

The form is easy to use, has good detail included, the right amount of information and support. I have been on a panel this year and I do believe it was a fair process. I also prefer the new application form.

The report reflects upon suggestions for future developments and our response.

Best Start Family Hubs- SEND support

You may have seen the news about SEND support for children as the government confirms new community-based early intervention which is to roll out in every [Best Start Family Hub](#) from April. As part of the government's pledge to roll out Best Start Hubs in every local authority next year, councils are being tasked with recruiting an all-new dedicated SEND practitioner in every hub to provide direct, family-facing support.

Children's Social Care Personal Budget Policy Launch

We are pleased to announce the launch of our new [Personal Budget Policy](#), effective from 12 January 2026. This policy is designed to provide greater flexibility and choice for families, ensuring that resources can be tailored to meet individual needs and support positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

ADHD Parent FAQs

Please see these [new ADHD Parent FAQs](#) from our colleagues in the Health Service, including details of the referral process.

Private fostering: What it is....how you can help?

Private fostering is where children are cared for on a full-time basis by people who are not direct relatives e.g. friends, neighbours.

Suspect a case of private fostering? Get in touch if a fostering arrangement you encounter doesn't seem quite right. Thanks for helping to safeguard Solihull children.

Call the **MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) team** on **0121 788 4300** or [click for information and to report cases](#)

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

Charlotte Jones

Head of Strategy - SEND & Additional Needs

