

Solihull SEND 0-25 Service

NEWSLETTER



July 2021

Well I am pleased to say we are reaching the end of another year. A year like no other in so many ways.

I am sure many minds are moving to thoughts of family time, rest and the return of the sunshine (hopefully) over the summer. However, I can't help thinking that for many people this last year has certainly taken its toll and the summer may not be without its continued challenges.

I read something recently which said we aren't all 'in the same boat' – we are all in the same ocean; but each boat is different. I think this is an important distinction and reminds us to show kindness and empathy to each other, and to especially recognise how difficult some people's journey can be. I know myself that there were times this year my boat felt more like a sieve!

With the first Joint Additional Needs Strategy for Solihull under development, an additional £1.2m investment into the Council's SEND services over the next two years and increasing partnership working across education, health, care, the voluntary sector and parent carers we all have a reason to feel positive about the future. We have already heard that changes are starting to be felt in some areas and next year will see many more improvements for children and young people; and their families. The SEND Improvement section contains survey links for all parent carers and children and young people to help inform this work.

Last week was national co-production week and it was great to be able to celebrate partnership working between the Council, CCG and Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPCV). The week culminated in a virtual coffee morning so we could jointly share our work, and future plans, with other parent carers. It was a great event to be part of and we will continue to look for ways in which we can continue engagement with parent carers. We also shared the fantastic news that the Council, CCG and SPCV are working together to set up a children and young people's forum – I cannot wait to hear what they have to say!

As always, if you have any comments on this newsletter, or ideas for future content, please contact us at JAND@solihull.gov.uk

NATIONAL SCHOOL SUPPORT

Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) - As part of its COVID response, the DfE have provided funding for primary schools in areas of social deprivation to register for this free 20-week programme targeted at helping young children overcome language difficulties. The application process is open until 30th July and more details can be found online: <https://www.teachneli.org/>

Don't forget what we already provide in Solihull. Information available on this SISS local Offer pages [LO SISS](#). Resources for parents are also available at: [SISS Parents](#)

NASEN – continues to offer free membership to professionals. Do sign up and see how their resources, training, support and project work can help your school. They are also the leaders in Whole School SEND and the Community of Practice. Register here: <https://nasen.org.uk/register>

PARENT CARERS

Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPCV) have issued their first quarterly newsletter which you can access here: [Newsletters - Solihull Parent Carer Voice \(spcv.org.uk\)](https://www.spcv.org.uk/newsletters) You can follow them on Twitter @solihullpcv, on Facebook or the website [Solihull Parent Carer Voice SPCV | Inspiring Positive Change](https://www.spcv.org.uk/inspiring-positive-change) or by applying to become a parent representative.

Children & Young People's Voice – we are really excited to be able to set up a forum for children and young people and ensure their views and experiences inform practice. As a first step, we are looking for a project lead to make this happen. If you think you have what it takes, or know someone who might, you can find out more information here [Children and Young People's Voice - Solihull Parent Carer Voice \(spcv.org.uk\)](https://www.spcv.org.uk/children-and-young-peoples-voice)

Are you a Parent Governor of a local authority maintained school? Do you have a child attending school in Solihull? If so, we have two vacancies on our Children's Services, Education and Skills Scrutiny Board - where you can join elected councillors and have direct input to our policies on education provision for pupils of school age. If you are interested, further information is available [here](#)

CHILDRENS VIEWS

Lessons Learned in Lockdown - The Council for Disabled Children have published their report following research with a wider range of children, parents and professionals to understand the impact on children and young people and what support they need going forward. The full reports are available [here](#)

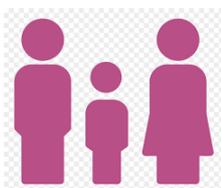
Ask, Listen, Act – researchers from Liverpool are leading a project to work with children and young people with SEND, their parents/carers and professionals to co-develop key priorities for the future to reduce the long-term effects of COVID-19 and lockdowns for these children. More information on the study is available [here](#). A initial survey is open to a wide range of stakeholders and if you are interested in participating, they can be found on this link: [Survey](#)

SEND IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY

Ahead of writing our new strategy for children and young people (0-25) with additional needs, special educational needs and/or disabilities the Joint Additional Needs Management Board has been considering our strategic priorities for the next 3 years. Discussions have taken place with settings, services, parent carers and children and young people with the aim of bringing together all activity focused on improving children and young people's lives.

HAVE YOUR SAY!

We are particularly interested in hearing the experiences and views of parent carers and children and young people with additional needs. So if you haven't done so already please do complete the survey, or support your child or children to do so:



Parent Survey - Please click [SEND & Additional Needs Parent Carer Survey](https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/SEND-Additional-Needs-Parent-Carer-Survey) ([smartsurvey.co.uk](https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk))



Child/Young Person Survey - Please click [SEND & Additional Needs Children's Survey](https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/SEND-Additional-Needs-Childrens-Survey) ([smartsurvey.co.uk](https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk))

The strategy will be important in bringing together a number of developments across the borough to ensure there is a clear direction to improving outcomes for children and young people – as displayed in the following visual relating to education:



Reshaping Education in the Council

Thank you to all of you who talked to us about your experiences and ideas about how we can improve our education services, particularly for those with additional needs. As a result, we are making some internal changes to teams and some significant financial investments to improve outcomes for children and young people, not least with £1.9m for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

We have produced a [summary \[link\]](#) of the proposals and we will keep you updated on developments as we move forward and staff are appointed.

Statutory Assessment & Review Team (StART) Update – Amanda Hana

New Plans - things continue apace in the START team. The majority of new plans are now consistently being completed within 20 weeks – 70 % for April and May and rising to 89% in June. We are confident we can maintain this level of timely completion – making a real difference to the experience for families and schools.

Person centred planning - Last week the team received further training on person centred approaches. All families who are going through the new assessment process will be offered a person centred planning meeting in approximately week 12 or 13 of the process, along with representatives from the StART team and the school.

Outcomes - We are increasing our focusing on writing SMART outcomes for all new plans and those being amended as a result of an Annual Review. Work is ongoing with colleagues across education, care and health to ensure assessments and advice provided supports the writing of SMART outcomes.

Annual Reviews - With the improvements being made around new plans, our next area of work will focus more on Annual Reviews. We are beginning to regularly send out the 4-week decision to amend letter following receipt of the paperwork from schools and are aiming to finalise plans within 8 weeks of issuing the Notice of Amends.

Changes are being made to our casework management system so we can report on, and monitor, the team's performance in this area of work. The co-production workshops to develop our annual review paperwork is now being planned for the autumn.

Amendments - We are ensuring that all plans being sent out to schools are formatted as Word documents to enable them to be amended in the Annual Review using the ~~strike through~~, **bold** protocols. If schools have historic plans in PDF formats they are welcome to contact us to get a word copy (edsen@solihull.gov.uk). So the team can process amendments more quickly, we are asking that schools use this system; and that EHCPs are not returned following reviews with hand written amends or tracked changes. Hopefully by working together we can make the process work and ensure that all plans remain current and appropriate. As we move forward improving the quality and compliance of EHCPs parents and schools may find that some of the content is moved around in the plan to a more appropriate section – this will be seen as deletion from one area but addition to another so please do not be concerned.

Staffing – I am really pleased that we have a number of new permanent staff joining us over the next month and will also have some extra capacity to help manage the backlog of annual reviews. An additional investment of £1m into the StART Team has also been agreed so we will be advertising these new vacancies shortly – providing the resources we need to respond to the increasing numbers of EHCPs whilst continuing our improvement journey. We will issue an updated list of StART team members, and their contact details, ready for the start of the new year.

Specialist Inclusion Support Service (SISS) Update – Paula Thompson

It's hard to believe we're actually nearing the end of term and of this academic year. We would like to thank you for your continued support, for working so closely with us and for being so understanding of the many changes we've had to implement as the context has changed for all of us. What a steep learning curve it has been at times!

Feedback - We are currently seeking your feedback on the quality and impact of the services you have received from SISS throughout 2020-21. We value all the feedback we get and use it to develop and improve the services we provide for children and young people with SEND, their families, and schools. So if you haven't already completed the SISS survey you can find it at [online survey \[link\]](#) the full survey should only take around 10 minutes to complete, even if you have used all the services we offer. *Please note that feedback has also been separately requested for the **high needs SEMH team**, run jointly with the council's Community Education Psychology Service.*

Autism Team - All schools will be receiving letters detailing your allocation of time from the Autism Team for 2021/22 and details of your named specialist teacher. For next year schools will be allocated time based on the number of children diagnosed with autism in their school. This is to facilitate more proactive, planned, joint working and a fairer system of support. Additional support for children with higher level needs related to their autism will be available through a High Needs Support Request- details have been given to SENCOs and will be published on the Local offer.

SEMH & CLD Team - For schools who purchase the SEMH and CLD Team, you will be receiving confirmation letters/emails detailing your hours and named specialist teachers before the end of term. Our Training Brochure is being finalised for the next academic year and will be sent out shortly - we are hoping that face to face training will be back on the agenda by then! Please take note of the SENCO network dates at the back of the brochure.

COVID Recovery – The support from SISS has ceased taking new referrals, but will continue to support referred children and families until October half term. The team, funded for one year, has worked with 42 children from both primary and secondary schools. Feedback from schools and families has been overwhelmingly positive about the support delivered. Feedback includes:

“I was very impressed with the support provided by the SEMH COVID Recovery team.” (School)

“I am indebted to this amazing team. I cannot say enough positives how amazing this support has been. This team have been quite simply THE BEST.” (Parent)

“We really felt that the team cared about helping N and he was as much of a priority to them as he is to us which was so reassuring.” (Parent)

For Awareness - For everyone, but hearing aid users in particular, we would just like to highlight the importance of being vigilant around the use of button batteries in hearing aids, toys, household objects etc. They are small batteries that give much happiness when powering devices but can cause much sadness if they are not stored or managed in equipment safely. Here is a link to help understand the importance of being aware of the dangers these button batteries can do, and the steps to take in the unfortunate event of an accident. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/button-batteries-campaign-how-to-stay-safe>

Inclusion - We are just completing analysis of the feedback from the Inclusion Strategy workshops. This will be shared with the Inclusion Strategy Board and Head teachers in September, and we will include details in the next newsletter. Many thanks to everyone who gave their time to take part in these workshops.

Community Educational Psychology Service (CEPS) Update – Halit Hulusi

News - This month we said farewell to Dr Louise Jones as she moves to Worcestershire to take up a new post as Principal Educational Psychologist. We will miss her amazing contribution to our team and our work in Solihull. I want to personally wish her luck and best wishes in her new post. I and the team also send our best wishes and thanks to Dr Kim Meyrick who will be leaving us in August to take up her new post in Leicester City.

We had a huge response to our recent recruitment drive and I am delighted to let you know that we will be welcoming three EPs to Solihull. Stella Lawlor will be joining us from Derby as Senior Educational Psychologist. Dr Craig Joyce (EP) and Dr Louise Rayfield (EP) will also be joining us before the for the start of the Autumn term. We look forward to welcoming our three new colleagues to the team.

Accelerated Learning - We have been really pleased to deliver training this term to settings on how to use Direct Instruction (DI) and Precision Teaching (PT) to accelerate learning. As EPs we know that when delivered accurately, DI and PT are hugely powerful approach when it comes to accelerating learning for specific skills such as reading, spelling and mathematical skills. We were staggered by the expressions of interest from Solihull settings to this offer. To date, we have now delivered this training to over 139 delegates from 31 schools. I would encourage all schools to contact their EP in the autumn term to build on this approach. DI and PT are a game changer when it comes to accelerated learning.

Parent workshop ‘Understanding your child’s mental health’ - The Community Educational Psychology Service continues to work closely with our colleagues in SOLAR. EPs will be delivering a range of workshops for parents on the topic of understanding your child’s mental health. These sessions are running between June and August 2021. EPs are working with schools and Solihull Parent Carer Voice to set up further sessions in the Autumn term to continue this support. Watch this space for further news.

Accessibility Strategy – Deborah Carpenter

As many of you are aware, I have been consulting with groups across Solihull for feedback on the Accessibility Strategy. It has been very useful to speak to each one of you. Whilst the workshops have allowed many of you to share your concerns over accessibility in Solihull, there have also been some really positive stories of how reasonable adjustments have been made to allow children to access the school of their choice, within their local area. Where there are gaps in this provision, there have also been some excellent suggestions on ways to move forward.

The three key elements of the strategy, are to improve the following for children with disabilities:

- Access to the curriculum
- Access to the physical environment
- Access to written information

I have had some exciting conversations with partners across Solihull, including planning and asset management, to identify ways of using budgets more strategically across the borough. There are still consultation meetings planned up to, and during, the summer holidays and I am eagerly awaiting feedback from key partners who have received a copy of the plan so far and would like to contribute.

Over the summer holidays, this information will be collated to identify the next steps in Accessible provision for Solihull, which I look forward to sharing with you in the Autumn Term.

Commissioning Update

Targeted Short Breaks/Leisure Activities for children and young people with disabilities

Targeted short breaks are organised leisure activities designed specifically for children and young people with disabilities providing opportunities for enjoyable life enhancing experiences without their primary carers, which contribute to their social inclusion, personal and social development. In addition, short breaks enable parents and carers to have a break and be able to do other things. Your child does not have to have had a social care assessment to attend targeted short breaks. Solihull Council currently commissions SoLO (Social Life Opportunities) to provide targeted short breaks at a subsidised rate. The Council is currently reviewing their short breaks offer for children and young people with disabilities, and want to ensure that the activities that are available meet the needs of families in Solihull. We are therefore asking parents/carers to complete this survey <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/5UGTEL/>. The survey will close on the **5th August**, all responses are anonymous and your views will help inform what services are available in the future. Findings of the survey will be published on the Local Offer in the autumn.

Framework of social care and support services for children

Solihull Council has a statutory duty to provide social care services for children and young people with an assessed social care need. Currently some families choose to receive their social care support as a direct payment and arrange services themselves. Others choose to have the Council organise the services on their behalf - the Council is currently reviewing how it organises and purchases those social care and support services for these families. If your child has an assessed social care need relating to their disability the Council would like to hear from you about what is important to you about the services your family receives and the organisations that provide those services – the types of services include personal care, 1:1 short breaks, and overnight breaks. We will be holding focus groups during the week of **13th September** - if you are interested in being part of that or would like to know more about the framework please email childrenscommissioning@solihull.gov.uk with your contact details and we will be in touch.

Summer Activities 2021

During this year's school holidays, there are numerous activities and events happening for children and families in Solihull, as well as Ofsted Registered holiday schemes and childminders offering care throughout the summer holidays. More details on Summer Activities will be available from 13th July and details of childminders and holiday schemes are available on the [Local Offer](#)



Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)

This summer there will be free places available at some of the activities and childcare providers listed above for families of children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals. Just look out for the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) logo on the above links and contact the providers directly to book your place. For more information on the HAF programme visit our [HAF Webpage](#). We will continue to update this page with details of activities, events and holiday schemes as information becomes available over the summer.

If your child has additional needs or a disability knowing what the right activity is for your child may not be easy to work out, but our Inclusive Activities & Inclusive Childcare factsheets can help – available here: [Summer Activities](#). You can also access information and advice about a range of [mental wellbeing services for young people](#) offering support during summer 2021.

Our [Solihull Family Service Directory](#) lists information all year round on Ofsted registered childcare providers, activities and support services for families and the Family Information Service can be contacted on 0800 389 8667 or email familyinfo@solihull.gov.uk.

I hope the sun shines for us all over the school break and you can enjoy more quality time with friends and family.



Charlotte Jones
Head of SEND Service 0-25