

SEND Community Event 2024



LOCAL PARTNERSHIP RESPONSE



In March 2024, 90 parent carers and professionals came together again to talk about what is going well, what isn't working and what the priorities for change are. Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPCV) wrote a report on the findings from this event (which is available on their website: [Reports - Solihull Parent Carer Voice](#)).

The content of this report has been considered by people working in SEND services in Solihull through our Joint Additional Needs Delivery Group – and this document provides a response to the issues highlighted for improvement.

Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

It is pleasing to hear parents recognising the improvements within the EHCP service – including better working relationships and the timeliness and quality of EHCPs. This has been an area of focus for the Council.

In terms of where parents would like improvements to be made:

Educational Psychology

With support from the LA to offer market forces supplements and improve pay scales, we have been successful in recruiting five more staff - an impressive achievement bearing in mind the current recruitment crisis in psychology. We will advertise again in June 2024 and hope to attract more staff for the future. The priority to provide Educational Psychologist (EP) advice for EHC assessments has remained despite staff reductions with the use of locums and reallocating EP time but we appreciate there have been delays in timeliness for some families – even one week of higher-than-average requests for new assessments can lead to capacity issues. More recently we have been able to manage this demand and the new staff will help significantly.

Annual Reviews

Schools have received training on annual reviews through the SENCO network. There is also a standing offer to all schools that the EHCP team can offer individual training sessions – this has been taken up by three special schools so far.

The annual review form guides schools through the process. The form also asks for the reasons if certain things have not happened; for example, if the paperwork wasn't circulated 2 weeks in advance or the young person didn't attend their review. One of the specific things schools must address is the outcomes in the EHCP – whether these have been met, progress towards them, any new outcomes or provision needed. The form was co-produced with SPCV, social care,

health and schools. From the next academic year we will be able to collate data from these forms on how many young people are meeting their EHCP outcomes within the key stages.

Schools are sent final EHCPs whenever one is issued and they are named – following a new assessment or when amends have been made following an annual review. Draft EHCPs or Notice of Amends are not shared with schools by the LA in line with the law - but parents are able to share and discuss these with schools should they wish to do so.

The EHCP team does attend around 20 annual reviews per month, but their attendance is not necessary and does not alter the outcome of the review. The team would try to attend a review meeting if requested for a specific reason.

An annual review makes recommendations to the LA around content of the EHCP and sometimes about placement. No decisions can be made at the annual review meeting – whether an EHCP Officer attends or not. The LA takes a view on the suggested changes based upon the evidence provided and the relevant guidance and law. Parents always get time to review and feedback on any changes.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Parents have raised concerns about a potential conflict of interest when an EHCP officer is chairing an annual review for families and also conducting the annual suitability check on the education being provided. The intention of this was to streamline things for parent carers but to ensure we have a system that families are comfortable with, and that also meets the legal requirements, all EHE families are being invited to a workshop on 28th June to develop a better process. At this workshop the children and young people are also invited to enable us to ensure their views are captured and this will be done in conjunction with Our Voices Heard.

EHCP Team

When an EHC needs assessment is underway the family will be notified of the officer dealing with this and contact information will be given. When annual review paperwork is received it is triaged by a senior officer and then actioned by a member of their team. When a Notice of Amends, or a no to amends letter, is sent to families this will have the name and contact information of the officer for any queries or follow up. Structuring the service in this way has enabled timeliness of new assessments to remain above the national average, to work through the previous backlog of annual reviews and to process new annual reviews in a more timely fashion.

We are aware that there have been families who have experienced changes of officer mid-way through a process due to staffing changes. We accept that this needs to be better communicated to parents by the senior officers and this is an area where improvement should

be seen over the next 6 months. The whole service works on a 5 working day response time – whether to phone calls or emails.

If you have any concerns or queries outside of the assessment or annual review process parents are encouraged to contact the relevant team Senior EHCP Officer/Manager by phone or email. The teams are:

- New Assessment Team – undertake new assessments and oversee newly issued EHCPs for 6 months following their issue. Senior Officer/Manager - Clare Matthews (Clare.matthews@solihull.gov.uk or 07552 850678)
- Review Team A – oversee all children and young people with EHCPs up to the end of Year 8. Senior Officer/Manager - Laura Stott (laura.stott@solihull.gov.uk or 07585 961 979)
- Review Team B – oversee all young people with EHCPs from Year 9 and above. Senior Officer/Manager - Shal Westerman (swesterman@solihull.gov.uk or 07780 493756)
- Complex Team – oversee all children and young people in independent schools or with an EOTIS/C package. Senior Officer/Manager - Siobhan Brangman (siobhan.brangman@solihull.gov.uk or 07741 687134)
- Tribunal Team – oversee the process for any child or young person, of any age, who have a registered tribunal. Senior Officer/Manager - Ros Cleverley (roslyn.cleverley@solihull.gov.uk or 07795 476 523)

An updated structure chart has been shared in the SEND newsletter, with SPCV, SENDIAS and North Solihull Additional Needs Group and will be going on the Local Offer. All officers have direct emails, landline and mobile numbers which parents and professionals can use.

EHCP Provision

We have revisited Solihull's [Graduated Approach](#) to make this easier for schools and families to access. Where parents feel that their child's school is not following this, they can request that the school convenes a Team Around the Child meeting to tease out what is required and how it will be provided; SENDIAS can support with this. If parent remains dissatisfied they can follow the school complaints process.

When parents are concerned a school or college is not implementing the content of an EHCP they can contact the EHCP service who will then discuss this with the setting with the view to ensure the content is delivered. All funding for EHCPs is decided by the multi-agency panel, which has school representatives on, to ensure that funding is adequate to meet Section F provision and in line with the LAs funding system ([How schools are funded for SEN](#)). Schools are asked to raise any funding concerns with the LA and not with parents as we do not feel this is something a parent should have to worry about and is a matter for discussion directly between the school and LA.

Mediations & Tribunals

We will begin to pilot 'Way Forward Meetings' when the LA has decided not to assess for, or issue, an EHCP. This will focus on further advice, support or plans for effective inclusion in a mainstream setting in line with the graduated approach; including signposting to other services and addressing any attendance and/or part time timetable issues. This will not affect a parents' right to mediation or tribunal (and cannot overturn the decision) but we hope this will help with children getting the support they need.

We currently have a growing number of mediations and tribunals. Decisions are made by the multi-agency panel and we hope the 'way forward meetings' will re-assure families about the quality of support that they can receive without an EHCP. We also hope that the Graduated Approach expectations will offer re-assurance and clarity about what should be delivered without an EHCP.

When cases go to mediation, an officer is sent from the LA who has the ability to overturn the panel decision on everything (except the named placement) if new evidence is provided. Cases in tribunal are kept constantly under review and if new evidence is submitted the original decision will be reviewed; and may or may not change.

Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) availability

We are reviewing the ARP model to make sure all provisions are demonstrating good impact for children and are financially viable. Our ongoing quality assurance of ARPs will feed into this review.

Special school availability

School place planning is regularly reviewed to consider short and long term demand; with special school places increasing by over 30% in the last five years. The Heights will continue to increase capacity for the next 3 years and there have been recent expansions made to both Forest Oak and Hazel Oak. A review of Reynolds Cross is also taking place. We have recently been successful in bidding for a new 150 place 11-19 special school which we hope can open in 2027 – and we will provide updates on our website: [New special free school](#)

Specialist Inclusion Support Service (SISS)

It is pleasing to hear parents recognising the support from the Autism and SEMH team.

In terms of where parents would like improvements to be made:

ADHD

Parent carers who would like further support in school should speak to their SENCo in the first instance. Schools can purchase support from SISS (or other providers) which can include training on identification and strategies to support children as well as direct work and advice for schools and families. The SEMH Team observation forms have been changed to better support the ADHD Nursing Team in making diagnostic decisions and the team will more actively encourage schools to access support.

Dyslexia

Parent carers who would like further support in school should speak to their SENCo in the first instance. The pathway is detailed on the Local offer ([Dyslexia](#)). Best practice for identification of dyslexia is for assessment to take place once a child is over 7 years old when there is evidence that difficulties are persistent. Schools can purchase support from SISS (or other providers) which can include dyslexia assessments where the pathway criteria is met. This criteria is standard for all dyslexia assessors who have an advanced Practising Certificate.

Families and Support

It is pleasing to hear parents valuing SPCV, support groups and the third sector as well as the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme and development of the Family Hubs.

In terms of where parents would like improvements to be made:

Holiday clubs

In general, there is a lack of holiday or after school clubs for all children and young people who might need to access it, so it's not an issue that is exclusive to children and young people with SEND (we provide approximately 5,000 summer holiday places through the HAFP but this is only half of the total need). The proportion of children participating in the HAFP with SEND, is fairly consistent with the proportion of children with SEND who are in receipt of free school meals, which suggests that this group isn't disproportionately affected but it is recognised that there is a lack of confidence and skills within the youth offer provision (including holiday and after school clubs) to be able to include children and young people with SEND in mainstream activities. SEND training and development features significantly in the requirements of HAFP providers so we can gradually change that picture. Where it's not appropriate for children and young people with SEND to attend mainstream activities, then there is a good short breaks offer with lots of choice and options. Take-up of this offer has been growing, but there is room for more to benefit from it.

Family support

Our current SENDIAS contract is due to end in March 2025 and we are beginning the process to recommission this service. This will involve looking at what currently works well and what could be done differently. An important part of this process will be seeking the views of local people, to determine what is required from a SENDIAS service for Solihull. We will explore a range of options to ensure the new arrangements can meet the needs of local people and communities.

Early Help

We are investing heavily in our Early Help offer for all children and families across Solihull. This includes refreshing the Parenting Offer and ensuring our resources are accessible and relevant to families. We are embedding our advice and guidance offers for parents within the [Family Hubs](#) to ensure that this is more accessible. We are also implementing a Team Around the School offer to ensure that advice, guidance and support is available through schools.

We have refreshed the threshold guidance and will be working closely with SEND colleagues to ensure a seamless approach to resources and to prevent families having to re tell their stories.

Support for families

The SISS offer for parents has been expanding. The Autism team offers face to face or virtual workshops for parent carers of children and young people who are on the autism pathway, or have been given a diagnosis of autism, and SENCOs will have this information. The Sensory and Physical Impairment Team run a number of groups for families who have children and young people with similar conditions so they can get to know each other – these are reviewed annually so parents should use the SISS annual survey to give feedback on groups desired. Schools can also choose to request support from families as part of the services they pay for, so parents should discuss gaps with their SENCo.

Solar

We have recently piloted a workshop for parents facilitated by our Lead Occupational Therapist and Systemic Family Therapist on Non-Violent Resistance (NVR). As part of our primary mental health offer, we regularly run a series of 6 session workshops for parents to help support their child (the Cathy Cresswell group for supporting children with anxiety). We have held social activities facilitated by Occupational Therapists for children experiencing mental health difficulties to access tennis, fishing and the Create Club. We have also held parties which we encourage anyone known to Solar to attend (e.g. at Easter, Halloween and Christmas). This allows young people to meet other young people - and parents have also attended with their children and siblings. We have been focussing on how we capture the 'voice of the child' in assessments. The assessment and multi-disciplinary discussions help to consider and signpost the needs of family members (e.g. resulting in referrals to Early Help or SENDIAS).

Social Care

It is pleasing to hear parents recognising increased involvement in EHCP assessments and positive feedback around the transitions information and adult's social workers.

In terms of where parents would like improvements to be made:

Respite

We currently have a block contract for short breaks supported by a programme of short breaks grant. We have managed to increase the offer during year two of the grant process which has increased both the choice and range of targeted short break provision for children and families. We will be reviewing the current targeted short breaks arrangements with a view to recommissioning these services from September 2025.

Overnight respite is an area that needs further development, through recent joint commissioning arrangements we plan to review the current offer and explore options to increase the offer to better meet the needs of our children and families.

Eligibility Criteria

A document is being co-produced with SPCV to outline the Children with Disabilities Team and Children's social care criteria. This will be published on the local offer.

Communication and holistic view of families

All social workers are undertaking training as part of the Practice Framework ('Solihull Connecting Families'). Whilst there is further work to be done to consolidate our Practice Framework staff are now able to articulate its basic principles and its underpinning values and beliefs - which was evidenced in the interactions that our staff had with Ofsted inspectors during the recent monitoring visit.

Signposting

A SEND Champions group has now been set up within children's and adults social care teams to ensure all workers are aware of the developments that are taking place within SEND and to try to improve workers knowledge and awareness of services that can support families. This will be a work in progress as it is acknowledged that as there is a turnover in staff, the experience and knowledge of workers may be variable.

Health

It is pleasing to hear parents recognising increased involvement in the EHCP process and positive feedback around the Children's Learning Disability Nursing team and Designated Clinical Officer.

In terms of where parents would like improvements to be made:

Waiting Times

In recognition of the long waiting times for Children's Community Therapies and neurodevelopmental assessment services, we have been working with our providers across children's services as part of the 2024/25 planning round to address possible solutions and arrangements going forward for some of the waiting times and quality issues. The Chairs of Solihull Parent Carer Voice and Birmingham Parent Carer Forum met with David Melbourne the Chief Executive of Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Helen Kelly the Interim Chief Nursing Officer of the ICB recently to discuss the waiting lists for children and young people across Autism and ADHD assessments and across Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Speech and Language Therapy. This is a priority at the highest levels of the ICB and is being worked on with senior leaders within UHB and BCHC.

Together, providers and commissioners are currently working on an Improvement Plan and in the meantime will be working to ensure that parents carers, children and young people have clear expectations and understanding in relation to pathways and to waiting times. There are longer term pieces of work to look at redesigning services so they best meet the needs of children and young people and ensure that all children and young people have equal chances. The recent move to joint commissioning between the ICB and LA will be key to identifying and implementing the improvement plan work. There is also a commitment from providers and commissioners to work with SPCV to review/ redesign pathways and improvement plans.

Pathways

Children and young people Continuing Care (CYP CC) training has been developed and 8 training days have been delivered to date to increase awareness of Continuing Care (CC) and provide support and guidance for professionals completing referrals. There has been an increase in referrals seen this year compared to 2023. Virtual Continuing Healthcare (CHC) checklist is training available and this has been promoted at training for external partners such as social care and education. The CHC duty team telephone number was introduced in April 2024 to provide support and guidance for professionals around CHC referrals.

The Birmingham and Solihull SEND GP handbook, which provides information to GPs in the local area is currently under review to be relaunched before the end of the academic year and will specifically include additional information on Solihull Autism and ADHD referral pathways.

Community Paediatrics

We have had significant issues with our capacity within Solihull Community Paediatrics – this was in medical nursing and administrative posts, and we know this led to reduced availability of our services for a period of time including increased use of voicemail and email for communication. We do still have some administrative vacancies but are covering this with temporary staff as much as we can. We now have an additional Paediatrician and ADHD nurse and are in the process of recruiting an additional ADHD support worker.

We have completed a review of our Paediatrician wait lists and appointment system and are now only booking 6 weeks in advance meaning any re-scheduled appointments can now be reassigned in a more timely way. Our waiting times are reducing slowly but with the referral numbers continuing to rise and a significant backlog for Community Paediatrics and ADHD nursing this will take us some time to recover despite the additional resources we now have in place. We are working with Birmingham community services who are having the same issues with waitlists and wait times and have identified patients waiting over 52 weeks for ADHD assessment to be outsourced to a private provider. The next stage is to review those waiting longer than 45 weeks. Families are being contacted individually by letter if their child meets the criteria for outsourcing.

Support

ADHD medication availability is an ongoing issue for lots of families and the team are reviewing the shortages list every week in an attempt to not prescribe anything that is not available – although pharmacies have different supplies so not all have the same medication stocked. We are not able to regularly communicate with all families but are trying to reduce issues by using this list. We have added support resources for families whose children are waiting for a community paediatrics appointment/ADHD assessment to the Solihull Local Offer website ([SEND support available](#))

We try really hard to allocate appointments in the north/ south/central Solihull areas according to home address, but we also understand that we should offer the first available appointment wherever possible. We are currently only able to offer QB testing (a computer based clinical test) at Bishop Wilson clinic as there are very specific requirements for the room and the set-up of the equipment but we are currently reviewing other clinic settings to try and find another venue in the south of Solihull.

We are working closely with Birmingham Community Services and the ICB to review ADHD pathways and support to improve access across the region. We are looking at a neurodevelopmental pathway for ADHD/Autism and recognise this would benefit patients and our teams, but this is still in the early scoping stages at this time.

Transitions

Two children and young people Continuing Care (CC) and Continuing Healthcare (CHC) transition nurses are new to post in the last six months. The transition nurses work closely to ensure a smooth transition for young people moving from Children's CC to Adult's CHC. Quarterly CHC Transition meetings have been established to discuss cases with external partners, including the EHCP team, to promote cross agency working. CHC Transition training is being developed with the aim of being rolled out in the next six months to provide greater understanding of the important of transition for families.

We have a transitions worker in Solar who identifies and young people over the age of 17 years and 6 months to help work alongside the existing clinicians to think about the needs post Solar. This has involved transitions to the voluntary sector, adult mental health teams or support from the GP as appropriate to the young person's needs.

Multi-agency working

It is pleasing to hear parents seeing the impact of multi-agency attendance for EHCP decision and quality assurance processes and that the early signs of joint commissioning are being recognised.

In terms of where parents would like improvements to be made:

Child-centred pathways

In the last year we have developed our multi-agency audits which take a deep dive into what has happened for individual children and young people. This provides a space for services to reflect upon their offer and the impact on children and to identify where improvements need to be made; with parents views feeding into this process. For children with significant Level 4 social care support needs the children with disabilities team are developing good working relationships with professionals by holding regular Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings (MDT's) to promote better communication.

Joint working

The recent changes to the annual review paperwork reminds schools to seek advice and information from all professionals involved with the child or young person in advance of the review – especially health and social care. The form specifically asks why this was not done if it was omitted. During the next academic year we will be able to use these forms to collate data

on how often this is being done. There is also investment allocated for an EHCP Annual Review portal which should make it easier for professionals to input information.

There is multi-agency representation at the weekly EHCP panels which supports work between education, social care and health teams – in addition to services working together on individual children and young people. All EHCP new requests are triaged at social care at these panels to ascertain whether a social care assessment should be undertaken as part of the EHCNA. Multi-agency input has significantly improved for all children on child protection plans and health partners attend a range of social care panels and the single alternative provision panel to support information sharing and decision making for children and young people. All partners are working together on the Early Help strategy and are involved in the MASH. Core health services have a generic email address for requests for information or attendance at EHCP or social care reviews.

Clinicians in Solar are often asked to provide supporting information for EHCP, PIP applications and housing letters and will do these. Depending on individual client circumstances support is given to parents and carers around accessing support and filling out forms.

Joint funding

Discussions are taking place between the Local Authority and Birmingham & Solihull ICB at a very senior level to see how we can improve joint funding arrangements and ensure an equitable approach to packages of care and support of children and families.

Support

We have recently published our SEND graduated approach for schools on the local offer ([Solihull Graduated Approach](#)) to help parents and professionals know what support is available and will use the feedback form on [Your Voice Solihull SEND Hub](#) to respond to gaps in information identified by parents or professionals.

Mental Health Support

It is pleasing to hear parents reporting good support from adult's services, third sector organisations and individual clinicians. We acknowledge that there are a number of challenges in relation to children and young people's mental health including waiting times, access, experience and ultimately outcomes.

In terms of where parents would like improvements to be made:

Waiting Lists

Although we expect improvements to be made across a range of areas, particularly in how people are supported whilst waiting, we accept that due to national funding issues and staff shortages combined with significantly increasing demand, that we will need to be realistic about the extent to which we can drive waiting times down. However, we are currently taking steps to explore all opportunities for improvement. Our focus is on:

- Ensuring SEND and autism is considered as part of the pathway development
- Looking at how we are supporting children, young people and their parents on waiting lists
- Reviewing all pathways, with a view to look at how these are integrated across partners and in the areas where children and young people are e.g. primary care and schools
- Reviewing the education offer across the BSol system – currently there is a good coverage of MHSTs in Solihull, but further work is needed to consider how we can support children, young people and parents
- Early help work is underway within the local authority – we are a part of reviewing how this could address needs early
- Reviewing pathways, across the system, to address health inequalities

We are reviewing the offer for parents and carers as part of this work to look at what support needs to be provided. As such, various co-production events with parents are due to take place in June/July with Solihull Parent Carer Voice to speak directly to parents of children with SEND. We are also developing a programme to have children and young people to be trained to be Experts by Experience to help Solar with any new developments.

We have started a transformation programme to look at this and will be developing a new model of care to address a number of challenges. This will mean working differently based on an integrated and graduated approach across the system. The integration element will be about how we integrate with other services, based on where children and young people are, alongside a graduated approach based on different levels of need. We are working closely with the Local Authority and our VCSFE partners to look at a more holistic package of care, focusing on prevention and early help.

We have recently started a Quality Improvement project to provide focussed interventions to children and young people on the secondary care waiting list with the aim to reduce the length of time waiting. This has involved the recruitment of three psychological therapists to provide the focussed sessions and is part of an initial 12-month project. We are hoping to have the involvement of young people and parents/carers in the review of this project. In the April school holidays, we also offered an intensive week of initial assessments, with a number of clinicians offering a greater number of assessment appointments, to bring the wait for the first appointment to an acceptable wait standard.

We have been using two assistant psychologists over the past year to telephone parents and carers to check in, to get updates and also to ascertain if support is still required. In addition, there is a duty worker who can be contacted during weekdays if there are queries regarding updates or if matters change – and they can alert senior managers to any children who require more urgent support. The Solar Crisis team is also available if any immediate concerns around a young person’s mental health arise which requires urgent support.

Offer

The Mental Health in Schools Teams (MHSTs) in Solar cover approximately 70% of the schools across Solihull and additional waves of funding attract new schools. Where schools have an appropriate private space, we have worked on offering our assessments and interventions within the setting to minimise the disruption for children and young people having to leave school for appointments. We have a number of appointments with clinicians that can be held after school hours where parent carers can manage this.

We have offered webinars to parents titled ‘Understanding Your Child’s Mental Health’, which provides an overview of how parents can learn more and also some brief strategies on what parents can do to help their child. In therapeutic sessions, parents are involved at times, and this can also be dependent on the wishes of the child or young person.

The psychiatry team within Solar are part of the wider multi-disciplinary team and will discuss children and young people who may require psychological support alongside. This is also dependent on clinician availability for the timeliness of how quickly this can be accessed.

We appreciate in Solar that there can be cross border issues, especially for families who live in Birmingham, and may have a Solihull registered GP or attend a Solihull school. With the Solar MHSTs we can support children and young people accessing a Solihull school even if registered with a Birmingham GP.

Autism support

We do not require children and young people to have a diagnosis to be able to access the service and will accept referrals for any child or young person who has a mental health need – we currently accept over 80% of referrals that are received.

Senior managers screen new referrals daily based on the information included to decide on conducting an initial assessment. All new assessments are then reviewed in multi-disciplinary team meetings to consider the child or young person’s needs and placing them on the relevant intervention pathway. If the referral indicates a need that may be best met elsewhere we endeavour to signpost to the relevant service (e.g. signposting to community paediatrics for ADHD assessments or the Specialist Assessment Service for queries around Autism

assessments). We have regular continual professional development sessions and thinking about how children and young people communicate, particularly alongside neurodivergence, can be considered.

We are reviewing our offer in Solar with Autism West Midlands to consider how best to use the limited resource we have access to.

Post 16

It is pleasing to hear parents value the Routing for Them document and apprenticeship fairs as well as positive feedback about the Employment and Skills team.

In terms of where parents would like improvements to be made:

Transitions

Information is available to parent carers and young people through the Local Offer ([Local offer - 14 to 25 years](#)) but we recognise this is not getting out to everyone. The Careers Hub have a priority in 2024/25 to work up better communications with the SEND network (Schools/SPCV/OVH) to help everyone access information that will enable better prepared decisions to be made for post 16 transitions. More information will be shared when young people have an EHCP Post 16.

Businesses

We have expanded the Supported Employment Forum to engage more local businesses in Solihull and are bringing in more Supported Internship providers to this forum to support this activity.

Employment and Training

There are Careers Pathway events for special schools twice a year to provide information advice and guidance including post 16 transition support. We plan to do more work with schools to promote the take up of supported internships and provide more examples of work-related outcomes to encourage more engagement as well as provide more employer led activity/curriculum delivery with special schools.

College

We know young people have told us they can struggle in college and would like more opportunities available locally. Our new special free school will have a Post 16 offer and this will be developed through discussions with parent carers and young people. We are also appointing a Post 16 lead to review the offer in Solihull and this will start with more conversations with young people and parent carers on the areas for priority action.

Communication

It is pleasing to hear parents are seeing improvements in the local offer and value the Family Information Service and SEND newsletter.

In terms of where parents would like improvements to be made:

Local Offer

We are continuing to make improvements. We have now checked all links on the local offer and updated where necessary; encouraging services to keep their pages up to date. We are also working with SPCV to develop more video content for the local offer so it is easier to access. Where you have specific feedback on the local offer please do complete our [Feedback Survey](#) so we can continue to make improvements.

SEND Newsletter

We sent out a reminder of the way to sign up to the monthly SEND Newsletter on social media in April (which SPCV also shared) and have also asked schools to disseminate the message to parents. Anyone can sign up to the newsletter here ([Solihull Council](#)) by choosing SEND under the Education heading.

Information accessibility

We have worked hard to make sure our Additional Needs Strategy and other updates are written in plain English for families so parents are encouraged to raise accessibility concerns about documents with services directly. We are also expanding the use of easy read symbols. Any SENCo or service can provide printed information and parents should feel able to ask for this. We will work with SPCV to understand what documents are better to print and how to share.

Schools

It is pleasing to hear parents positive feedback about individual schools and SENCos, and that parents are valuing the school engagement sessions with schools facilitated by SPCV.

In terms of where parents would like improvements to be made:

Training

All schools have been offered training in Nurture, Trauma Informed Practice, Speech and Language, Equity Diversity and Inclusion and a briefing on SEND law. We are working with schools to look at other areas of training they feel they need, and at the moment are working with health colleagues and schools to promote inclusion for children with neurodiversity– and already have an Emotional Support Literacy Assistants programme schools can join.

Transitions

Solihull Schools Strategic Accountability Board (SSSAB) have worked to improve the current transitions guide for schools and families and this will be relaunched in June. A wider review will take place for 2025 to provide schools with more time to seek input from children and young people. A number of schools are working with the University of Derby between June – October 2024 on a transitions project to develop their practice.

Support Offer

Schools have been involved in the co-production of the graduated approach and have reported they have found this information helpful and easy to navigate. We hope this will improve the consistency of offer between schools and also help schools to see what reasonable adjustments and inclusive practice can be put in place for any child. We are working closely with our schools to support them in meeting a wider range of SEND need.

EHCPs

We have co-produced an annual review form for schools to use in meetings which guides everyone through what is required of that meeting and we have just begun sending an annual review feedback form to parents so we can see how different schools are following the process. The EHCP Service are in contact with schools and ask them to identify where they are struggling to make the EHCP provision; but parent carers can also flag this with the team too for investigation.

Children's voice

We worked with KIDs and local children and young people to develop a video on the importance of children being heard and have shared it with schools and other professionals ([Information for children and young people](#)). We are now planning how to help schools share good practice around using other forms of communication and SPCV have been gaining views from parent carers.

Strategy

The current Additional Needs Strategy covers the years 2021 – 2024. Many stakeholders are positive about the content of the strategy and that the 6 priority areas reflect the desired impact for children and young people and require everyone across services to work together.

There is a clear direction from parent carers in terms of improving a consistent narrative and focusing on actions which will make a difference (support for schools, health waiting times, early identification, transitions, post diagnosis support etc.). As such, we will consult with all stakeholders from June 2024 to suggest that the current strategy is extended for a further year. This will help messages to be consolidated and enable services to focus on practical actions which have a direct impact on children and young people.

The strategy will be updated to include new actions planned for 2025 in response to parent carer feedback and cover more of the system wide support following the relaunch of the graduated approach in schools' resources. We will work with Our Voices Heard to use the children and young people events planned for the summer to gain their views.