

SOLIHULL'S ADDITIONAL NEEDS STRATEGY

2022-2025

ANNUAL REPORT

DECEMBER 2022

During this year we have made lots of changes to how we support children and young people with additional needs and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) across Solihull. There are also other things that have happened which we hadn't planned for when we wrote our strategy in 2021.

In this report we want to tell you what we have done, what you think about this and some of the new things we have to now think about and plan for.

What have we been doing?

The number of children and young people with additional needs is growing across the country. We are seeing this rise in Solihull.

This means that we are having to look at the services we have and think about what we could do differently – so everyone can get the help they need. In education we have changed our services to schools and families to help children and young people from an earlier age, and before needs become harder to respond to; in health we have looked at how children and young people are referred into services so they can get help from the right people more easily and we have increased the number of social workers and family support workers in children's services so families receive more help when they need it.

We know we have more work to do in our children's social care service and following our inspection in October 2022, Ofsted told us we were inadequate in this area. We have started many things to help us improve but these will take a while to be seen by families. This is a priority for Solihull Council.

In health, we have also changed from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to an Integrated Care Board (ICB). The ICB's job is to plan how to meet and improve people's health needs. Your support won't be affected by this change, but it means we can work better together in different parts of Solihull to make future improvements.

We have been developing better ways to engage with you but this has taken us longer than we planned. There will be lots to share with you at the start of 2023 and we will have a SEND website so you can find information easily and share your views with us.

What you have told us...

Towards the end of 2022 we asked parent carers and children and young people for their views using an online survey shared through Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPCV) and Our Voices Heard (OVH); and other organisations providing support for parent carers. We received 218 responses from parent carers and 109 from children and young people.

63% of parent carers responding said they knew of the Additional Needs Strategy and 83% of those said they understood it; compared to 33% of children and young people. This shows we still have some work to do so everyone knows what we are trying to make happen in Solihull over the next few years. Posters advertising the strategy were printed for all schools so we need to understand what impact this has had and what else we could do to improve the message. We are also working on an animated video for children and young people so they can hear about the strategy in an easier way.

46% of parent carers responding said they had seen improvement in additional needs and SEND support and services in the past year in Solihull; and 92% of those said they had felt these improvements themselves. 50 parent carers told us about the services where they had seen improvements and the most common area mentioned was the EHCP Service at Solihull Council (with 34 parent carers telling us about that). Other services mentioned were SEND support services, schools, early years, school nursing and SPCV:

“I was told by other parents that going through the EHCP process is always horrendous and that I would need to fight all the way through, I actually found the process went really smoothly and the LA were really supportive.”

“I like that the LA and health come to meetings with families- organised by SPCV. It means we can all find out what they are doing directly from them.”

“EHCP's are better. I get replies when I call or email and the quality of my children's plans is so much better. The member of staff who did one of my children's plans at annual review was fantastic, we were having difficulties with the school and rather than me having to be the one fighting for help the EHCP officer did it all for me. In 11 years in the SEND world in Solihull this was the first time I felt that I wasn't fighting the whole system on my own, the LA were supporting and helping me to get what my child needed. For my other child another very good experience with the EHCP team. The SEND team in the LA seem so passionate about helping children and families. I am really hopeful for the future for the first time.”

Parent carers have also told us they wanted more information on the EHCP process so the team have run online meetings with SPCV and SENDIASS to talk about this. We have also given training to schools.

Parent carers also asked for more information on what is happening around SEND in Solihull so we have been producing a termly newsletter for everyone involved in SEND. This means we can share messages and you can keep up to date with changes and news. The information in this newsletter has been changing over time in response to things that parent carers are asking for – for example, information on current children's community therapy wait times, including Speech and Language Therapy, Physiotherapy, Occupational Health and for Autism assessments. We are also planning to include more services in the future.

There has been lots of work happening in Solihull and we make sure that parent carers are part of the whole process, working in co-production, across all of our changes in education, health and care. SPCV sit on all of our groups to make sure we are always listening to, and thinking about, what parent carers, and their children and young people, want.

What has changed?

We wrote this strategy at the end of 2021 but since then other things have happened which we didn't know at the time. These include:

- The government have told us they are making changes to how we all need to work to support you better ([SEND Review](#)). These changes will probably start in 2023, but we don't know all of the detail yet and what we will have to do to make these changes in Solihull.
- We are part of a government programme called Delivering Better Value in SEND, which supports improved delivery of SEND services for children and young people while ensuring services are sustainable. This is a new programme and we are starting to make our plans for this. We will share them with you in early 2023.
- All services are struggling to find staff who have the right skills and experience to provide the support all children and young people need. This is the same around the country, but we have to think differently about how we can make sure people in Solihull with additional needs can get that support.
- Head Teachers are telling us that since the return to school after the Covid lockdown, more children are finding it really hard to keep safe in school and are also hurting others. We are seeing more exclusions from school than we would have expected.

What have we been doing to improve the priority areas we shared with you in our strategy?

Priority 1 - I can see that everyone is working together to help me make my life better...

What we said we would do	What we have done	What we are doing next
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure everyone in Solihull thinks about how their work can help make 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have done lots of work making sure that people join up what they are doing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want to make sure more people know about this strategy and the work we are

<p>things better for you. This includes sharing information and finding ways to check we are making things better</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help people know what support is available for you in Solihull. We will make sure this is easy to find and get support. That you can move easily between services and get advice on what is possible as you get older • Look for ways that staff supporting you work better together, so they include other people who can help and learn from each other. We will set out how we want those staff to behave and what they need to know. For example, staff will work together to improve what is written in your Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) if you have one 	<p>to make improvements for you – for example making sure the priorities of the new autism and learning difficulty strategies link with this strategy and that other services really think about how their work helps you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have started to pull information together across education, health and care so we can understand what is happening in Solihull and what else we need to do • We have found a way of being able to ask you how you feel each time you talk to a service, if you want to • We have changed the way our Local Offer looks so you can find information more easily • We are making sure that when we start to write your EHCP we start by asking you about you – what you like and don't like and what you would like to do when you grow up • We have put a system in place to look at the quality of advice and content of EHCPs to make sure they are as good as they should be and tell us all about you 	<p>doing – we will be asking you how we can do this better</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want to look at when you aren't happy with our decisions and have to use the tribunal process, especially when there are many services involved • We want to share an online feedback system with you so you can always tell us how you are feeling about our support – so we can make the changes we need • We want to make sure that we use our information, and what you tell us, to understand how much we are helping to make things better for you, and what else we need to do • We will continue to review and update the Local Offer and we want to make sure we hear from you about what information you want on the Local Offer, and how you want it to look • We are working with partners across the West Midlands to rollout Olivier McGowan Mandatory Training for all health and social care staff is expected to further strengthen the training offer and increase knowledge
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		and use of reasonable adjustments across health services.
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27% of parent carers told us that you thought we were improving against this priority in 2021 and this has increased to 59% in 2022. We know we still have work to do but are pleased to see we are making progress. The biggest issues for you were communication and consistency (of staff and services or settings across Solihull).

“Communication within services, communication between services, a family approach rather than individual child”

Only 31% of children and young people told us that you could see people working together to help you (72% could see this, or sort of see this) and 44% knew where to go when help was needed (76% knew or sort of knew). We need to do more work with children and young people to understand where the gaps are and how we can help them all of the time.

Priority 2 - I can see that Solihull has the services and support I need...

What we said we would do	What we have done	What we are doing next
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree what we want to do with families and how we will work together with the new Integrated Care Board (ICB) to change things for you across Solihull and the area you live in. We will help other people supporting you to know how to get the help you need. • Look at how we can do more joined up work between the Council and ICB to give you better support. Learning from what 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders are working together to ensure we have one strategy and clear plans to improve services for you. • We have started to plan how we can work differently in North Solihull, especially how we support with your SEND or mental health needs as you told us this was important to you. We are working with Aston University to do this. • We have set up a group to review the way we work together if you have needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will share the Mental Health transformation plan for 2023 and 2024 on the Local Offer website. • The Children and Young People Delivery and Improvement Group had an away day in December 2022 which will focus on how we can connect services together and bring them closer to you in the community. It will also look at how we can help communities to

<p>has worked well in the past or where we have seen problems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at how we can better plan and pay for support for you if you need help from education, social care and health at the same time. 	<p>that require a specialist package of care from education, social care and health at the same time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are supporting the development of care in the community to ensure it is closer to children and young people to help improved their outcomes. • As a partnership we have worked together on a number of projects including; the Keyworker Project for those at risk of admission to a Tier 4 bed, an All Age Autism Support Service and an Autism in Schools Project to support children, young people and adults with Learning Disability and/or Autism 	<p>have a voice in their care and the development of support services.</p>
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21% of parent carers told us that you thought we were improving against this priority in 2021 and this has increased to 54% in 2022.

“There are pockets of really good practice but it is difficult for all families to know either that they exist or how to access them. SENDIASS are an absolutely vital service to support parents through the minefield and the barriers still in place more support for this amazing group of volunteers would ensure families were supported in a way that they could totally trust. There are still barriers to support. The autism team are great, knowledgeable supportive when able to access but they are so closely linked to school funding that it is difficult for parents to get that advice and support except through school commissioning. It would be so valuable to be able to have ‘a parent hotline’ for parent specific advice and support on a variety of SEN specialisms.”

Children and young people told us that they felt they had less help and support in their community or with their thoughts and feelings than in school or with their health. However, there is work we need to do in all areas so you feel better supported. We have included the response from our survey from children and young people below:

Do you feel you are getting the help and support you need....	Yes	Sort of
in school	32%	83%
in the community	21%	56%
with your health	37%	66%
with your thoughts and feelings	24%	58%

Priority 3 - My voice is heard, and it makes a difference...

What we said we would do	What we have done	What we are doing next
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will make sure that all the work we do, the plans we make and the services we review includes you and your parent carers from the start. • We will write an Engagement Plan so that everyone knows what we will be doing and when. This is so you, and your parent carers, can be involved as much, or as little, as you want to. Helping us plan what we need to do and seeing if this has made a difference. We will find different ways to listen to the voices of all children and young people so we can hear what you have to say. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have made sure that we talk to you and your parents to help plan changes to how we work. Our Voices Heard help us to hear what you think and make things better. • We have met some of your parents by working with Solihull Parent Carer Voice to hold meetings and hear what is important to them. • We have put more information into our SEND Newsletter so you can see what is happening in Solihull. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will share our engagement plan with you so you can see what things are coming up and how you can get involved, if you want to. • We want to increase our parent and student groups so they are in more schools. • From January 2023 we will be setting up quarterly drop-in sessions for parent carers to meet staff from the EHCP Service, social care and other SEND support services to help you access these teams and have your questions answered.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will make sure there are chances for you to be involved in the way you want to be. About the things that matter to you and at a time and place that works for you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPCV have been supporting some schools to set up parent groups so they can hear directly from you about the things that matter. • Our Voices Heard have set up student participation groups in 12 schools so children and young people can share their views about their schools and also feedback on important issues to other services across the Council and health. • We have rolled out the Mind of My Own phone app in order to support children and young people share their views with their social workers about their lived experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to support early years settings in their training through Dingley's Promise so staff have different ways they can hear children's voices. • We will work with Our Voices Heard to find out what else we need to do so you feel listened to by those supporting you. • We will continue to ensure that the use of Mind of My Own is rolled out to all social worker and children and families currently involved with children social care. • We will continue to review what children and families tell us about the lived experience in order to address needs and concerns in a timely way and improve the way with support them.
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31% of parent carers told us that you thought we were improving against this priority in 2021 and this has increased to 54% in 2022. We know there is more work to do to make sure we hear voices from more parent carers throughout our work and that you use feedback to help us improve – including being specific when you complain so we can better understand what the issues are and find a solution with you.

Only 15% of children and young people felt that their voice made a difference and 53% said it did, or sort of did. Where you did feel heard and things had changed it was usually because of one person or one school or one team – it wasn't all of the time. You said you felt more listened to in school (59% of you) than by health (53%) or by your community (50%). But you also told us of things you were doing to help that:

"I think people now listen more than they used to. I have joined Our Voices Heard and I like being able to give my thoughts and know that I am being listened to"

We need to talk to you more about this to understand if people aren't taking the time to listen to you, if they don't hear what you are saying and change what they do, or if they do make changes but don't tell you about it. This is something we will be doing in the next year.

Priority 4 - I feel welcome, understood, valued, appreciated and included wherever I go...

What we said we would do	What we have done	What we are doing next
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how inclusive Solihull is - the places you go and the help you get. This includes community buildings, spaces, services, groups and organisations. We will increase trust and confidence in what they offer by setting a local inclusion standard. • We will agree the Accessibility Strategy and Strategy for Inclusive Education for schools and have a dedicated inclusion youth champion within the Solihull Youth Opportunities Board (YOBS) • Have more training, learning and development options for all people working with you (staff or volunteers). This will include voluntary, community, social enterprise, public sector and schools. This is so they can provide better support and always value what you, and your parent carers can do, and are interested in. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have shared our Strategy for Inclusive Education which helps schools to think about what else they can do to make you feel included in school. We have been testing our plans and training with 7 schools. • We have shared our Accessibility Strategy for schools which means we all have thought about the changes needed so you can go to school, learn and be with your friends. • We have two people on our Solihull Youth Opportunities Board who have the job of always checking we are thinking about you in our work. • We have made sure our Holiday Activity & Food Programme is working well so more of you can enjoy activities and clubs in the school holidays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools will be talking about what they can do to include you and hearing what other schools have been doing when Head Teachers get together in February 2023, meaning that all schools will become involved in this inclusion work. • We are working with your parents to think about other short break activities so there will be some new things starting in 2023. • We will start looking at how inclusive our community buildings, spaces, services, groups and organisations are. This will help enable the community and local youth offer to be as inclusive as it can be.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Solihull promise for help, support and activities to always be available for you. This includes better support for the Short Breaks offer and Holiday Activity & Food programme so more children and young people can be included. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have worked with your parents to develop our short breaks activities, using SoLO. • We have developed a Situational Mutism information pack with advice and guidance for professionals and parent carers and shared this with professionals across Solihull including GPs. 	
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25% of parent carers told us that you thought we were improving against this priority in 2021 and this has increased to 57% in 2022. Parent carers said this was the other priority area where we were doing the best; although we have more work to do. You told us that all areas felt more welcoming to children and young people compared to their accessibility, and that whilst schools were doing better in these areas, mental health and other medical appointments were the most challenging. We have included more responses from our survey below:

My child finds this area very or mostly good for...	Education	Clubs, groups and holiday clubs	Medical appointments	Mental health appointments	Local community
being accessible	64%	44%	38%	29%	40%
making them feel welcomed and included	71%	53%	43%	35%	47%

Parents raised issues with general public space accessibility and the provision of clubs and activities for those with additional needs. Lots of comments were made around children and young people’s mental health issues and their ability to access support and be comfortable out of their home.

“Are there local opportunities for my child to access? No. The local parks are a perfect example of how children with disabilities have been overlooked. Beyond this, groups that advertise they are inclusive are predominantly not. I don’t feel that Solihull is a neurodiverse community.”

It's not a makaton friendly community and most schools do not have a SEN representation on their governing boards. These things tell me that the message coming through is that our children are second class citizens."

Only 26% of children and young people said they felt welcome and included when they went to different places; but 76% said they did feel, or sort of feel, that. You told us more that it mattered how people treated you more than what services or clubs were around and wanted people to see you as a person. You want...

"More places where they understand people like me"

"Better understanding of SEND I sometimes feel isolated"

"Places need to be calmer and quieter and the people there need to understand children more"

Priority 5 - In planning for my future, I know what will happen, when it will happen and who I can communicate with about this...

What we said we would do	What we have done	What we are doing next
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join up more of our processes and communication across education, health, care and the community so we work better to support you in being the best you can be. For example, we will look at our Youth Offer. • Provide information so people supporting you (including in schools and colleges and your family) can start to talk to you about your future and what could be possible. We will do this in different ways. • Understand Solihull's Post 16 offer and improve this. For it to be more welcoming to all young people, provide different 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have started to look at what information we already have and where the gaps are. We have shared a Transitions Leaflet to help you know what to expect when becoming an adult. • We have made more places for Supported Internships. • We have set up a short computer course for young people with SEND to help you get the skills you need for work. • We have found people with the right skills who understand your needs to help you find employment or training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will be looking at what the education offer is for young people over 16 in Solihull and seeing how we can give you more options. • We want to hear from you more about where you think the law isn't being followed so we can provide more information on the work we do and how we do it so you feel more confident in that. • We will be looking for more supported Internship opportunities with other businesses in Solihull.

<p>options and help them into employment. For example, our Supported Employment Programme will help you get into a supported internship, unpaid work experience and paid work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have created some new Supported Employment Jobs in Solihull Council. • We have asked you about where you prefer to meet with us to get help finding work or training and made sure you are comfortable in that setting. • We have streamlined our transfer processes between Children’s and Adult’s Social Care to make sure that • We have designed clear pathways to support young people and their families plan for their future. • Young people and their parents are more aware of the pathways and opportunities at key transitions points. • Young people can successfully navigate into an adulthood which promotes their choice, supported across the system as required. • We have worked with Solihull GP practices to further embed Annual Health Checks for young people over the age of 14 with a Learning Disability. There has been more people accessing their health check, and greater awareness amongst people and education professionals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work with more employers to help them become Disability Confident. • If you have an EHCP and are looking for work, we will make sure you get support more quickly. • We will evaluate the impact of the work through joint social care transition audit in order to understand the impact that this work is having of Young People and their families. • We will be joining up processes between social care and health in order to maximise people’s opportunity to have a healthy and fulfilled adulthood. • We have further work to do to promote Annual Health Checks for people with Learning Disabilities so they are aware earlier on.
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20% of parent carers told us that you thought we were improving against this priority in 2021 and this has increased to 51% in 2022. This is one of the areas where you said we had the most work to do and 70% of you said we have to make more improvements to help you move between services. A number of you commented on the difference between “law” and “policy” so we want to talk to you more to find out what you mean by this and how we can improve trust between parents and services.

“Not letting children ‘fall off the radar’. Providing a continuous plan for children so they can develop an expectation of what they should receive. Providing more support generally.”

44% of children and young people told us they knew where to get help or have their questions answered, and 75% knew where to go, or sort of did. We therefore need to make sure information for you is easier to find and understand.

“helping me understand life and what I can do”

Priority 6 - I can get the right support I need at the right time for me...

What we said we would do	What we have done	What we are doing next
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review our way of supporting you as soon as it is needed through our Early Years Strategy and Graduated Approach. Develop how we work across services in the Council (with Reshaping Education giving us a new Inclusion Team) so schools better understand how to support you and can get extra help as soon as they need it. • Improve the information in our Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) so people working with you clearly know what you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have shared our Early Years & Maternity Strategy so you can see our future plans and goals to support you better earlier in your life. • We have shared new paperwork and changed the way we work so requests for EHCPs, and their reviews, focus on you more and have the information people need to support you. • We are now checking how good our EHCPs are before we send them to you so we can make sure they are right. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will be finishing our work on the Graduated Approach and checking this with everyone before we share it. We will put it on the local offer as work in progress in March 2023. • The new CATCH service, website and referral form will be launched January 2023. • We are reviewing Special School Nursing, Community Paediatrics and Looked After Children services is being planned, so they can better support you.

<p>can do well, what you need help with and how best to support you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work with our therapy services to find ways to speed up the waiting time. We will give you more information and advice whilst you are waiting and make sure you, and your parent carers, know where to find this. • We will improve the information within our social care assessments for EHCPs to ensure services which can support you and your family are clearly identified and signposted to. • If we have agreed that you need social care support, we will review this every year. This information will support the annual review of your EHCP if you have one. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have started talking to people in schools and your parents about how they can help you as soon as you need it (our Graduated Approach), but we need to do more work on this. • We are bringing 5 community therapies services together into a new pathway called CATCH (Child and Adolescent Therapy Care and Help). It will have a new single referral form to make it easier for professionals to refer you and easier for you to access these services. • We are working to offer you support if you are waiting for therapy services by making sure you are seen quickly if you are at risks and setting up advice lines so people who support you can get information and advice. • We have set up One Stop Clinics' to provide support to children with speech, language and communication needs. • We have worked with parents to write a set of principles that explain how professionals can work better together to ensure you get the support in the right place if you live on the border between Birmingham and Solihull. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are working with parent-carers to improve the way waiting list information is shared to make it easy to understand for all. • All children will be seen by social care as needed as part of the 12 months annual review process to ensure that the updated assessment reflect the changing needs of children and families. • We will continue improve our work with children and families to ensure that the social care contribution to EHCP is in line with the children and family's needs and look at the timeliness of this work. • We want to work with other areas on our cross border principles to reduce barriers if you live on the border between areas.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have streamlined our children’s social care processes to make sure information is available for EHCP assessments. We now have a dedicated manager to take part in the EHCP decision making meetings and processes. • We have continued to contribute to the annual EHCP review for children open to children services and in receipt of a package of support and respond to specific requests to review those children not open to social care. • We are continuing to build a greater understanding of the differences in law, assessments and ways of working across education and children’s social care to help the teams work better together. 	
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19% of parent carers told us that you thought we were improving against this priority in 2021 and this has increased to 51% in 2022. 44% of you also said you now felt better able to access support more quickly and 40% better supported by professionals so we still have more work to do.

“Waiting lists are way too long. I personally have found it very hard to find the right support.”

Only 32% of children and young people told us they thought they were getting the help and support they needed in school and 37% with their health.