

Local Area - SEND newsletter for parents & carers

Newsletter Highlights



Dear Parent or Carer

Welcome to the second partnership newsletter from the teams working together to deliver SEND services in Birmingham City Council, the NHS and Birmingham Children's Trust. I hope that you will find it useful and informative.

We have really enjoyed meeting parents and carers at our workshops, and we are grateful to those who have attended for their time and contribution. There are still opportunities to 'have your say' at further events planned for this term, so please check the SEND Local Offer website for dates.

At these events, parents and carers have been giving us their feedback on the SEND Local Offer website which is Birmingham's 'one stop shop' for SEND support, information and advice. We are really pleased that more people than ever are using the site (57,000 since its launch last April). If you haven't seen it yet, please go to www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk to see what is on offer and leave your feedback on the homepage.

We continue to work hard on making changes in Birmingham and you will read about some of the changes and improvements we have made in our SENAR service as well as those of our NHS colleagues.

We know that we still have a long way to go to provide the service that our families need and deserve in Birmingham. Please be assured that change is happening and we are grateful for your support and patience. We are working to the mandate 'You Said, We Did' and I hope that you will see that reflected in the updates included in this newsletter and on the SEND Local Offer website.

Sue Harrison

Director for Children's Services/Executive Director of Education and Skills
Birmingham City Council

**What is improving?
Progress so far**

**Waiting times from the
NHS**

**Update from the
Birmingham Parent
Carer Forum**

**What is The Local Offer
anyway?**

**Are We Working Well
Together - an update?**

**Have Your Say at our
Parent and Carer
Engagement Events**

Waiting Times

- A new faster way of assessing autism in children under 7 years is being piloted
- An additional team (Healios) has been commissioned through NHSE/I funding to support with initial autism assessments in children (7 years plus) from 7th January for 8 months, the impact of this additional resource will be monitored and reported on.
- Plans to reduce waiting times for therapies are in place and are showing improvements, please see below for a breakdown per therapy service:



Occupational Therapy

Between 2018-2021 there has been a 55% reduction in children and young people (CYP) waiting for initial assessment and an 80% reduction in average (weeks) waiting time.

Speech and Language

Between 2019-2021 there has been an 85% reduction in CYP waiting for initial assessment.

Between 2019 – 2021 there has been a 44% reduction in CYP waiting for a package of care (following initial assessment).

Physiotherapy

Between 2019-2021 there has been a 52% reduction in average (weeks) waiting time.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Between 2019-2021 there has been a 56% increase in preschool children waiting for neurodevelopment assessments and a 53% reduction for school age children (7+ years) waiting for neurodevelopment assessments.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Between 2019 – 2021 there has been a 69% reduction in Children and Young People waiting for neurodevelopment assessments.



FEBRUARY 2022

Accessing health support when you need it

- We are seeking family feedback on pros and cons of virtual appointments – when it works and when it does not. Virtual appointments are successful for some families and efficient for some types of healthcare e.g., the Occupational Therapy (OT) virtual workshops have been well received by families and professionals and are continuing to run in this way.
- The virtual workshops enabled appointments to continue during the pandemic and supported communication between families and professionals. Feedback is gained following the appointment through patient satisfaction surveys and ad hoc feedback provided by families is also collected. The virtual appointments have been well received by some families especially where this positively impacts a child's behaviour, as a result some activities will continue to be delivered virtually. One family quoted:

'My daughter was happy with the video call as she doesn't like going too new places and being around new people, so being at home and being able to still have the assessment meant she could be relaxed, and professionals could see the real her'.

We are creating more face-to-face (F2F) appointments for children available with doctors, nurses, and therapists, and these are prioritised for families that do not have adequate technology for virtual appointments. The Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy service have both now recommenced face to face appointments.



Advice lines were introduced within children's community therapy and Neurodevelopment (ND) services for families to contact during waits to access information, advice and signposting to other support services.

Advice line information can be found on Trust webpages, the Local Offer pages, service flyers (created specifically in the pandemic), and has been shared with schools and GP's, it is also included in correspondence with families and partner's newsletters.

Whilst you are waiting: therapy advice phone lines and resources

Don't forget that each therapy has an advice line to call plus useful resources and videos on their webpages to support you whilst you are waiting;

Occupational Therapy - 0121 683 2325 www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/patients-public/children-and-young-people/services-parent-portal/paediiatric-occupational-therapy-service/

Speech and Language Therapy - 0121 466 6231 www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/patients-public/children-and-young-people/services-parent-portal/birmingham-slt/slt-videos/

Physiotherapy - 0121 466 5193 www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/patients-public/children-and-young-people/services-parent-portal/paediiatric-physiotherapy-service/

FEBRUARY 2022

Don't miss out : Health Check at the GP for young people age 14 and over

A key part of preparing for adulthood is keeping well and staying as healthy as possible. Every GP offers a yearly Health Check for young people and adults who have a learning disability. It starts at Year 9 (age 14) and happens every year from then on into adulthood.

www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/dont-miss-out/dont-miss-out-annual-health-checks

We want more teenagers and young adults to have their Annual Health Check at the GP as it's an important way to get to know the doctors practice as well as identify any health needs early on, so they don't get missed. You should still have the GP health check even if you are under other specialist doctors.

<https://youtu.be/z8407Uzys3E>

Each GP holds a register of those who are eligible for an Annual Health Check and usually they contact people for appointments. Do contact your GP practice to check you / your child is on the Learning Disabilities register or to get an appointment.

What to expect at an Annual Health Check

www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-06/AHC%20Easy%20Read%20Guide%20Final.pdf



Keeping care safe

- We are routinely undertaking clinical prioritisation and reviewing patients on the waiting list to ensure priority cases are seen earlier to reduce the likelihood of harm occurring whilst waiting
- Clinical prioritisation occurs at triage, when allocating children to clinic/appointments/packages of care and advice lines are available for those on the waiting list.
- We are recruiting for temporary and permanent NHS staff; more staff will help in providing timely support for children.



FEBRUARY 2022

Updates from Special Educational Needs, Assessment and Review (SENAR)

- We have reviewed the Quality Assurance processes and a holding regular meeting with partners to develop a Quality Assurance framework by April 2022.
- We have created positions for 40 new staff SEN caseworkers and more posts for Senior case workers (principal officers), Team managers, Tribunal officers, resolution officers and parent link officers. We now have 70 officers working in the service. See below for new SENAR staffing structure.
- We are providing all SENAR officers with phones to work alongside the parent link service – timeline end of March 2022.
- Reviews - although we are currently still dealing with a backlog that is impacting on timescales, we expect to be back within timescales by end of September 2022
- Education Health & Care Plans (EHCP) Assessments - within the last 12 month rolling we have completed 60% on time in December 2021, up from 53% in May 2021 and better than national average of 58%.
- We are building a new assessments process EHCPs through co-production (further information to follow).
- Complaints for SENAR is currently 14 (was 137 in November). Dedicated officers have been assigned and training delivered to corporate complaints team to align the corporate procedure.
- We have split the service officers into 4 area teams: North, South, East & West
- *If your young person is in a school the area team is determined by the school/setting postcode.
- *If your young person is out of school the area team is determined by your home postcode
- In the coming weeks/months your case workers and Senior case workers (principal officers) will be reaching out to you to identify themselves and many of you are already working closely with the service officers to resolve any issues you may have.
- We still have a long way to go to improve the service and we are working on the improvements in processes as well as how we communicate effectively. One of the key areas we are focusing on is being able to contact all members of the service and as such we are investing in giving all officers access to be able to make and receive phone calls.



Updates from Special Educational Needs, Assessment and Review (SENAR) (cont)

- Whilst we integrate this into the system, please contact our parent link service helpline on 0121 303 8461 or email: parentlinkservice@birmingham.gov.uk. Alternatively you can email the central SENAR team who will direct your query to the appropriate officer at senar@birmingham.gov.uk
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The SEND Local Offer website – the ‘one stop shop’ for information, advice and support for SEND

If you are looking for advice, support or information about any aspect of SEND, please head over to the SEND Local Offer website which is packed with useful information on anything from Home to School Transport to Speech and Language Therapy and everything in between.



If you have any comments on the site, please feel free to leave them in the feedback area of the [home page](#) – we are always looking to improve the site for families. We have added more SEND support groups to our directory, expanded information on Post 16 options, widened our information on health care as well as improving the navigation and accessibility of the site.

Working Together Well

As part of our work to improve SEND provision in our city, we are currently finding out what co-production initiatives are taking place in Birmingham. Specifically, we want to understand how parents and carers, children and young people are contributing to the commissioning, design, delivery and assessment of our services and how this way of working together could be widened, deepened, and made more effective. We are convinced that services and support that are co-produced by working together will significantly improve the outcomes we achieve.

If you have some suggestions for how co-production could be improved, we would be delighted to have them – please email them to Rowan.Griffin@birmingham.ac.uk (ideally using the email header ‘Suggestions for improving SEND co-production’).

FEBRUARY 2022

Communication and Autism Team (CAT) Leaflet for Parents

The Communication and Autism Team has developed a leaflet to give information to parents about our service and the support we give. This leaflet has been developed with the support of the Birmingham Parent/Carer Forum. www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/CAT-Parent-Offer-leaflet-.pdf

CAT PAC (Parents Awareness Course) – Secondary Schools. We have piloted our new CAT PAC, aimed at parents/carers of Secondary age pupils, and we are looking forward to a face to face launch in the Spring term, enabling parents/carers to feel empowered in supporting their young person.

Parent Link Webinars - SEND Parent webinars continue to be well attended and receive positive feedback. From September 2021 up until the end of October 2021, we have hosted 14 Parent Webinars, with 605 parents attending and 152 professionals. Head to the [Local Offer website](#), if you would like to sign up for next term.

SEND Pupil and School Support Team awarded British Dyslexia Association Quality Mark for second 3 year term

The SEND Pupil and School Support Team, who work with children and young people with cognition and learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties, is delighted to announce that the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) has confirmed that they are proud to re-verify the service's [Dyslexia Quality Mark](#) status for a further three years. This award is only issued to schools or organisations that can demonstrate that they provide high quality education and/or practice for dyslexic individuals.






Have Your Say' on SEND

We have upcoming parent and carer engagement events, where you can 'Have Your Say' on co-production and the SEND Local Offer website. Join one of our online or face to face events next month to help to influence the future of SEND in Birmingham.

'Have your Say' on SEND

You are invited to Parent and Carer Engagement Events focusing on co-production and how your voice can influence the SEND offering in Birmingham. There is a choice of online or in person, with more events planned for February and March 2022.

www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk

A photograph of a family consisting of a mother, a father, and two young children (a boy and a girl) sitting together and smiling.

<https://www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk/ofsted2021/co-production/>

FEBRUARY 2022

Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) is everyone's business: transformation of support for communication needs

Across schools, early years and health we are going through a whole system change in how we identify and support children with SLC needs. Everyone has a part to play and not everyone needs a Speech and Language Therapist. Organisations across Birmingham are working together to improve outcomes for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs in the area, through the move to and use of the Balanced System®, an outcomes based framework and delivery model for integrated services. More information about The Balanced System® can be found [here](#).

As part of the project we are working with children's therapy providers, commissioners and parents and carers across Birmingham to gather information about the current needs and services available to support children and young people, their families and carers. We would like to seek the views of parents and carers, schools, settings and Further Education, wider professional colleagues across education, health and social care. More information about the Birmingham project can be found [here](#).



The links below will direct you to specific surveys and opportunities to join in the consultation process. Parents and Carers: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/QJK2GR6>

Peer Support Workers Update from Forward Thinking Birmingham

For the past year, Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity has been fundraising under the Fight For All The Feels campaign to bring a new, innovative and accessible model of care to the service. Our peer support workers will all have their own lived-experiences of mental illness and come from the same communities and backgrounds of the people they will support.

So far we have been able to fund the first two cohorts of peer support workers, for two years. Cohort one, supporting Early Psychosis, recently started in their posts; cohort two, supporting the Eating Disorder Service and Birmingham North community hub, are currently training, cohort three will expand this further. Fight For All The Feels – Mental Health Is Worth The Fight.

Forward Thinking
Birmingham 



Birmingham Parent Carer Forum Update

Since the start of the new year, we have been involved in various Birmingham City Council events such as the **Parent Engagement Events** which we helped co-produce with the council. During the event we looked at how families would like to be involved in co-production and what that would mean for services going forwards as well as talking about some changes that could be made to the Local Offer website to make it easier to navigate and get the information you need to you as quickly as possible. These were great events and we have been able to gather some important feedback and we look forward to seeing more families as these continue into the next half term. You can find out more about them here: <https://www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk/ofsted2021/co-production/>

On Friday 28th January we held an Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) workshop with the help of Special Educational Needs Solicitor, Victoria Federico, Senior Associate at Penningtons Manches Cooper LLP. The workshop covered how to get the content of your child's EHCP right first time, preparing for adulthood, appeals to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal and much more. Look out for details of a second workshop.

As a result of the findings of the May 2021 revisit, the Department for Education (DfE) appointed a Commissioner, **John Coughlan CBE**, to hold the Local Area to account to deliver the required improvements.

At the start of the term John asked Birmingham Parent Carer Forum to put on an event where he could meet parents and carers in Birmingham. We hosted John for this Question-and-Answer session on Thursday 3rd February. Parents and carers had the opportunity to ask questions about John's role and the Future of SEND services in Birmingham. We are also looking to arrange another Q&A with John and other with Councillors and officers in the future.

We also continue to make sure we flag concerns raised to us to the relevant parties in Health, Education and Social Carer.

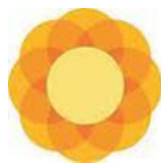
We thank you for your continued support. We wish you all the best for 2022.

BCPF Social Media update

We have now created a **private Facebook page** which is a safe space for parents to share experiences and support each other. Follow the link to join and to ensure this is a safe space please make sure you answer the questions. Birmingham Parent Carer Forum Private Group | Facebook

www.facebook.com/BirminghamPCF/





FEBRUARY 2022

Birmingham Children's Trust – making a positive difference to SEND

Birmingham Children's Trust exists to make a positive difference for children, young people and families in the city.

We work with more than 10,000 children and young people in our city every day. It is our job to work with the most disadvantaged children and young people of Birmingham and keep them safe, happy and healthy. Disabled Children's Social Care (DCSC) is part of our service and is focused on supporting families who are caring for a child aged 0-18 with substantial, complex and critical needs. We are working along side our partners in health and education to improve the SEND offering in our city; we look forward to updating you on progress in the coming months.

For more information on the Statutory services that Birmingham Children's Trust provide please visit <https://www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk>

