



FORUM FOCUS

News & Updates from Solihull Parent Carer Forum

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CHAIR'S WELCOME – SUE HAWTHORNE-SLATER

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. Firstly I want to thank the whole team of the Solihull Parent Carer Forum, all of our committee, who work extremely hard and are so dedicated to working together as a fantastic team for the benefit of all the Solihull children with additional needs and their families.

The hours they all put in are incredible and I am proud of them all and also proud to have the honour of moving up from interim chair to hold the chair position now.

You will see how busy we have all been and what we have been up to, including our AGM and law event. Also please keep free the 8th June when we will be holding our summer event, again at Northern House School 11-2pm.



GREAT NEWS! AUTISM FREE SCHOOL BID GETS THE GREEN LIGHT

The SPCF were delighted to hear on the 11th March that Solihull's bid to the Department of Education for the special free school to support autistic children had been successful. The new school, which is likely to be open in two years, will have up to 100 places for autistic children and young people aged between 7 and 16 years old. The Council's preferred option is for a dual site school with locations in both the north and south of Solihull.

It will provide an outstanding education for pupils attending the school together with support for autistic children at mainstream schools through an assessment centre based at the new site. Cllr Ken Meeson, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills, said: "This is fantastic news for children and families across Solihull. We know we have comparatively high rates of autism diagnosis in the borough. This funding means we can take an important step in delivering the Council's ambitious programme to provide an exceptional educational environment which fully understands and caters for the individual needs of children and young people with autism."

The next steps are for the Council to now start advertising the opportunity for potential trusts to apply to establish the new school. The specification will be published on the Council website.

The Parent Carer Forum are pleased to be working with the Council on this project and putting forward the parents' voice throughout the process.

NNPCF FEEDBACK

National Network of Parent Carer Forums AGM & National Conference (attended by Su and Emma)

During the 2 day conference in Coventry we had the opportunity to meet members of Parent Carer Forums all over the country as well as the NNPCF steering group members and national representatives.

The conference also marked a 10 year celebration of PCF funded participation. We represented Solihull PCF and took our work plan, newsletters and success stories to share and celebrate.



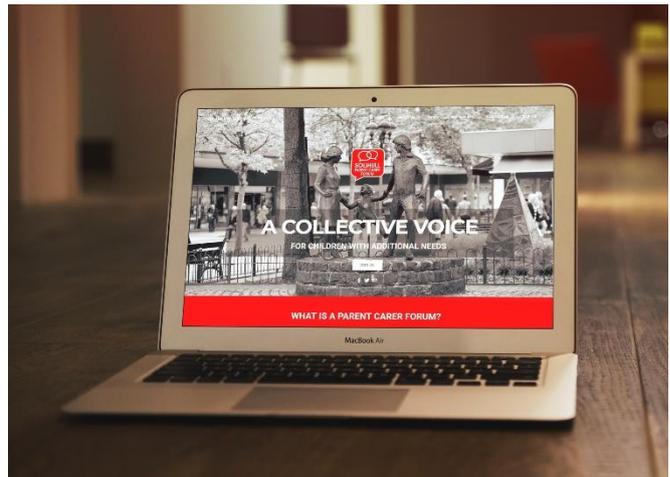
All members of SPCF were asked to vote and choose 3 workshops that were on offer to attend. Emma and Su attended 'De-mystifying SEND Funding' (led by the DfE), 'Whole School SEND', Principles of Co-Production (run by NNPCF reps) and the PFA 16-25 pathway (run by NNPCF reps and Contact). The DfE was particularly interesting, where it was noted by Andre Imich that high needs funding is currently just under 6 billion pounds!

We were also lucky enough to hear Nadhim Zahawi MP and Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Children and Families address the conference, in addition to Caroline Dineage MP Minister of State for Care (video-link) and hear from NHS and DfE representatives.

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN BRIEF

To date the Management Committee has:

- Contributed 1700 plus hours of volunteer work. If you base a working day as 7 hours the committee have contributed 242 working days.
- Created the new SPCF logo and associated branding, website, social media and promotional items.
- Hosted a launch event with prominent speakers Lee Burden and Vickey Weaver.
- Organised a fantastic summer event for Solihull children with SEN and their families.
- Attended the two day National Parent Carer Forum conference in Coventry.
- Hosted a coffee morning every couple of weeks to raise awareness.
- Recently joined the Autism Strategy group.
- Supported two transition events, aimed at publicising young people's options as they reach late teens.
- Gathered views on reasonable adjustments across the borough and delivered a presentation to the SEND Board.
- Hosted a SEN Legal event with a specialist SEN solicitor
- Attended board meetings, raising awareness of lawful requirements and parental voice.
- Communicated with Solihull Healthcare professionals to provide recommendations to enhance the care provision for parents/carers and their children that access their services.



SEND BOARD FEEDBACK

This board meeting takes place every two months and is chaired by Phil Leivers, Assistant Director of Education & Skills with senior representatives from many areas including SENDIAS, Education, Health and Social Care and, of course, our own representatives from Solihull Parent Carer Forum.

We have been attending all of the SEND Board meetings, and in January attended the away day. We have made valid contributions to these meetings, and are always asked for our views. At the March meeting we presented our Reasonable Adjustment Survey results. This was met with enthusiasm and it is thought that it can provide the basis for teacher and SENCo training to enable children to access their education with much less stress, and hopefully will lead to improved levels of inclusion for all children.

TRANSITION GROUP

We have been part of a group working on new transition guidelines for all schools to follow in Solihull, including academies. The aim of these guidelines is to bring together the transition approach across Solihull, ensuring that all children and their families experience a smooth transition between school years, and between education environments.

The guidelines feature best practice examples from a variety of settings, reasonable adjustment advice, and how to work together with families and carers to maximise each child's successful transition to a new situation.

These guidelines are at the final stage of development before being piloted at several schools in the borough this summer term, with the aim being to review this pilot and amend the guidelines accordingly before full roll out in September.

We are proud of being part of this coproduction, and hope that these guidelines will have a positive impact on families experience in education in our borough.



BE REASONABLE!

Under the Equality Act 2010, education providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled students are not discriminated against. The Solihull Parent Carer Forum noticed that "Reasonable Adjustments" within education settings in Solihull was an important topic to gain parental opinions on. We therefore designed a survey which attempted to do this, and 209 people decided to take part so thank-you! The results will help to inform future practice and policies within Solihull.

So far we have presented the results to the Ed SEND Sub group and the SEND Board and there has been considerable interest in the results from the Local Authority, Educational Psychologists, SISS, Schools and other professionals.



You can download the results on our website in the '[News](#)' section as well as follow a link to our You Tube Channel to view a video presentation by Natasha Compton. If you'd like more information about Reasonable Adjustments you can visit the Disability Rights UK website where you'll find a useful fact-sheet, also linked to via the article on our website.

REVIEW OF SEN LAW EVENT - SUSIE DZIAMA, COMMITTEE MEMBER

Last February we hosted an event for parents concerned about school-related anxiety whose children are out of school as well as the subject of school transport. The event was also a platform for our Annual General Meeting, where we gave a brief introduction as to what The Solihull Parent Carer Forum do as well as electing our Management Committee. At this point, the whole committee formally step down from their roles. Those parents/carers present were then asked whether they agreed that they are happy for all those that had stepped down to be officially re-elected into the committee for another year. This was agreed and confirmed by a showing of hands.

The SEN Law event itself was a workshop which provided parents and carers with empowering advice detailed by SEN Law professional Gurvinder Kaur.

The majority of those who attended were there due to their child being out of school, albeit not electively, and among other questions, wanted to know what their legal rights were. Key areas that arose through discussion were;

- Elective Home Education (EHE)
- Education otherwise than at school (EOTAS)
- Unable to attend due to ill health (UTAIH).



Gurvinder stated that "Parents don't always know which category their child or young person comes under." This led to further conversation around unauthorised absence and those that had felt pushed into de-registering their child.

Following an interval, discussion moved on to School transport. Areas of concern were around placement at the nearest suitable school and whose responsibility it was for getting a child there. Throughout the workshop, those present were invited to ask questions and from subsequent feedback it was deemed to be a very informative and appreciated event.

During the interval, attendees had been requested by the Parent Carer Forum to provide areas of focus that we as the committee could take on board for the forthcoming year. These were provided anonymously, and participants posted their ideas up onto one of our banners. These were all gratefully received, have been collated and discussed by the SPCF.

SAVE THE DATE – FREE SUMMER EVENT!

Saturday 8th June will see our second annual family fun day at Northern House School – 11-2pm.

Last year this was a fantastic event enjoyed by lots of families. All the activities and refreshments were free! This included burgers, ice creams, bouncy castle, tombola, sports activities and an animal experience.

The day is planned with lots of care and attention given to sensory needs, with activities well-spaced out, a quiet area provided and minimal (if any) queuing among many considerations also addressed. This year we promise another great selection of activities to suit all attendees and look forward to welcoming you all to this great event!



LADIES IN RED – DROP IN FOR A CHAT & CUPPA!

In order to reach out to parents in a relaxed and informal way we are running our 'Ladies in Red' drop-in coffee mornings! These are held on the first and third Fridays of each month during term time. These events will be confirmed on Facebook Page so please check first to ensure each session is running. Alternatively email solihullpcf@gmail.com

You'll find us in the Family Renewal Centre Café from 9.30-11.30. Tea and coffee will be provided so please do join us for a chat about what's going on in our world and yours! We are also pleased to announce that **SENDIASS** will be in attendance at these sessions on the first Friday of the month.

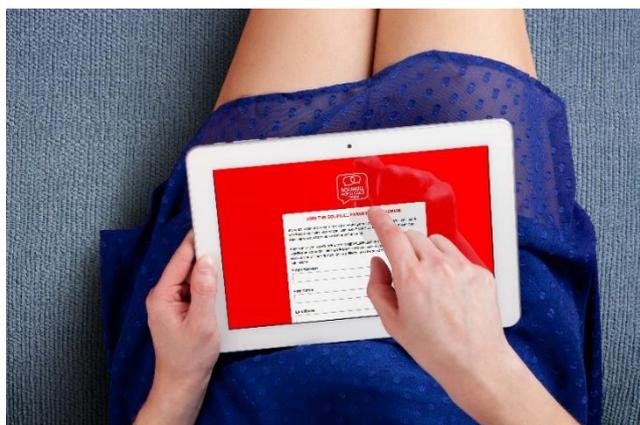
INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT MORE?

If you are a parent or carer of a child or young person (aged 0-25) with additional needs who lives in Solihull and/or whose child uses Solihull Education, Health or Social Care Services you can become a member of the forum!

Once you join you'll receive updates about our activities as well as opportunities to participate, such as being involved in consultations and research projects!

However much or little you choose to get involved you will be helping to make a difference to the services that matter so much to our children. So please add your voice to that of others'. The more people we represent, the more our joint voice will be heard by decision makers in our area.

You can find us on Facebook, Twitter and on the web at solihullpcf.org. Please check out our pages to find out more about what we do and why we do it. Click below to join today and spread the word to others!



Thank-you for reading! And don't forget, you can sign up to receive updates at www.solihullpcf.org/join-us