

Happy New Year and welcome to January's edition of the SEND newsletter.

As we jump into 2025, we are taking the opportunity for a reset in SEND and for us to continue to work on improving the services, that we provide to you and your families. We are excited to update you - so keep an eye out for service updates and other helpful information in future newsletters.

Introduction from Cllr Puja Bedi, your Lead Member for Education and Children's Services

As Lead Member for Children's Services at Slough Borough Council, a very important part of my role is being involved in advocating for and working to provide high quality SEND services in Slough.

I feel passionately about the importance of developing and implementing our SEND and Inclusion strategy over the next 5 years and seeing our vision come to life.

The SEND team works incredibly hard to provide these vital services for children, young people, and families, to ensure they can thrive, and by building strong relationships between the team and the cabinet, we hope to progress further on in the future.

Our SEND vision is "Through inclusive practice, all children and young people are happy, healthy,



safe, take an active part in their community and have fulfilled lives" and this is something I hold close to my heart, and I am hugely thankful for the work that has been done over the last year, and I am excited for what is to come.

Puja.bedi@slough.gov.uk

Contacting the SEND Team

There are two dedicated email addresses to help you contact us, and to help us effectively respond to you, we would ask that you please use the correct email address depending on the nature of your contact with us:

SEND_EHCNArequest@slough.gov.uk

This email is the address to send all your ECH Needs Assessment requests.

SENDteam@slough.gov.uk

This email is for all other enquiries.

Or call us on **01753 787676**.

Join our mailing list, so you don't miss out on future updates on the service!

Anyone can join our SEND newsletter mailing list, so please encourage your fellow SEND parents and carers and fellow professionals to subscribe for direct updates and information. They can email us directly at SENDnewsletter@slough.gov.uk to be added to the mailing list.

We are changing the way that we do things, and we want you, and our children and young people to be at the heart of everything that we do!



Phased Transfers Deadline for 2025

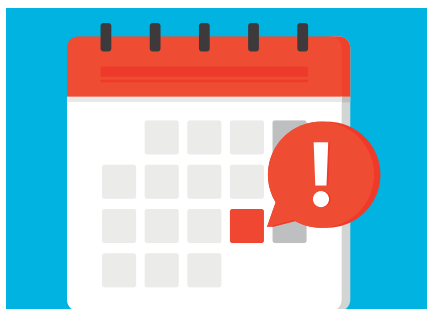
For the SEND Team, the first two months, into a new year, are dominated by the Phase Transfer Process.

This is where children and young people, with EHCPs, transition from nursery to reception, or from primary to secondary school. Secondary young adults, moving into post-16 provision, will have their EHCPs finalised in March.

What happens during phase transfer for children and young people with an EHCP?

Moving to a new school or further education setting is both an exciting and anxious experience for all children, young people, and their families. However, when your child has an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP), the process can be particularly worrying as you may not be sure how a new setting will meet your child's needs.

The local authority's SEND Service is here to help. They will guide you through the transfer process and answer any questions that you may have. If you'd like to speak with a member of the SEND team, please call: 01753 787676.



The deadline for phase transfer reviews remains the same every year:

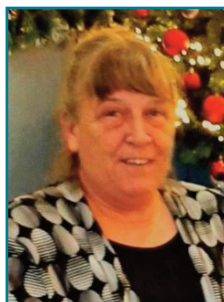
- **31 March in respect of secondary to post 16 institutions.**
- **15 February in all other cases.**

Special Voices - A Parent Carer Forum for Slough

A parent carer forum is a group of parents and carers of disabled children who work with local authorities, education, health, and other providers, to make sure the services they plan and deliver meet the needs of disabled children and families.

The main aim of Special Voices is to raise awareness about the rights and needs of children/young people with additional needs, and to ensure that they and their families are consulted and involved in any decisions made, during planning or developing services for them.

Special Voices has a main steering group of voluntary parents/carers who have taken on the role of gathering your collective views and presenting them to service planners and decision makers to ensure that services are needed. To find out more, visit the Special Voices website www.specialvoices.co.uk or call: 07990 693439.



Mandy Gunn
Chair of Special
Voices

update

Since we produced our last newsletter, we have welcomed three new members into our service.

A huge welcome to Jay Murphy, who joins us as our SEND Operational Lead. Jay comes to us with an extensive legal background, having worked as a barrister for many years. Jay's understanding of SEND services, local authorities, and the law, means that she is very well placed to be able to drive the service improvements that are needed and what our children, young people, and families deserve.

We also welcome Charlie Randell and Veronica Cummings, who join us as experienced SEND Case Officers this month, and who are eager to meet some of our SEND Community here in Slough. December was also a month of goodbyes, with some of our case workers moving onto other roles outside of Slough Borough Council. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Joanne Jackson, Vanessa Taylor, Diana Moore-Gibson and Claire Steel for all of their hard work and wish them all the best going forward.

We will be recruiting to further posts in 2025 and we are excited to update you in upcoming newsletters!

You said...

We did...

An important part of any improvement journey is listening to feedback from parents and carers, who have a lived experience of using the SEND service and who are best placed to advise of what we could do better!

Following on from a review of our active complaints, we were able to look at themes such as lack of adequate communication, with families frequently reporting delays in responses, inconsistent updates due to caseworker changes, and a lack of clarity about next steps. There are also ongoing concerns about significant delays in finalising EHCPs, actioning annual reviews, and implementing Tribunal orders, many of which exceed statutory timeframes.

Additionally, complaints often highlight the negative impact these delays have on children's development and access to appropriate support. In addressing these complaints, we realised that we were able to really understand where children and young people, parents, carers, and professionals felt, and where we were going wrong.

To address some of the common themes we have created the following.

1. A dedicated and experienced Complaints Officer - Sofia Farid,

who was previously a Team Leader in the SEND service and who has extensive experience in all aspects of the SEND processes and casework. Since changing role in December, Sofia has been proactive in responding to any concerns raised corporately, which has seen the number of outstanding complaints reduce significantly for the first time in many months.

2. A dedicated enquiries phone line, that is managed on a rota basis throughout the working day. This enables adequate cover and ensures that there is someone available during office hours, to handle your query. We have also reviewed the telephony system and are currently working with our provider, to ensure that we have a robust and fit for purpose telephone system going forward.

Each month we will take the opportunity to update you on the continued improvement plans and ideas, via our newsletter. But you can take a more proactive role in helping to guide the improvements required, to deliver a service that is worthy of our children and young people. It is easy to get in touch with your ideas and feedback - email us SENDnewsletter@slough.gov.uk



SENDIASS training opportunities

We are pleased to share that regular training sessions on a variety of SEND topics are available on the SENDIASS website.

These training opportunities are designed to support parents, carers, young adults, and professionals alike, offering valuable insights into the SEND system and how to navigate it effectively.

Both morning and twilight sessions are available, providing flexible options to suit different schedules. We encourage everyone to take advantage of these sessions to gain a deeper understanding of SEND-related topics and improve their knowledge and skills in supporting young people with SEND.

For more information and to book a place, please visit Slough SENDIASS www.sloughsendiass.org.uk

Chat to SENDIASS

We will provide free, impartial, and confidential advice and support to parents, carers, and young people with SEND

Including:

- all aspects of SEND, from initial concerns and identification through to ongoing support and provision
- the law on SEND, health and social care
- Slough's local policy and practice and much more.

**Every Wednesday
Starting 15 January 2025, 5-7pm**

Email or call for Teams log in:
sendiass@slough.gov.uk
01753 787693

Slough Borough Council



GEMS

Autism & ADHD Support Service
East Berkshire

The GEMS team is passionate about transforming services for children, young people and adults who have been diagnosed with, or who may have autism and/or ADHD. Helping people navigate their way through a range of information and make sense of this, reflecting their personal needs and preferences.

As a parent/carer, you may feel that more information, help, or advice is needed when supporting the needs of your child, who may have behavioural, sensory, social and/or communication challenges. GEMS recognise this and have provided a variety of FREE courses and workshops that will help develop your knowledge of autism and/or

ADHD. Your child does not need to have a diagnosis for you to be able to attend, they can be waiting for an assessment, or you can suspect they may have Autism and or ADHD.

You will be listening to and speaking with trainers with extensive experience of delivering autism and or ADHD courses and will have the opportunity to meet and share strategies with other parents/carers. To view and book on available training on a range of topics, visit the website:

www.gems4health.com/workshops

Landline: **01753 373244**

Freephone: **0800 999 1342**

Email: gems.4health@nhs.net



Sibs exists to support people who grow up with or have grown up with a disabled brother or sister.

It is the only UK charity representing the needs of over half a million young siblings, and over one and a half million adult siblings.

Have you ever thought about running a group support for young siblings? Our sibling group leader training session, will give you all the information that you need to plan, run and evaluate your own local sibling group. It is taking place online via Zoom on Wednesday 26 March at 9.15am-1.15pm. For more information and how to book, please visit www.sibs.org.uk



Newsletter feedback:

this is your newsletter!

If you would like to suggest any changes to this newsletter, see additional information, be added to the mailing list, and/or give feedback, please email sendnewsletter@slough.gov.uk

Thank you to Joanna Adams (SEND Officer)

For her work on supporting a child at our school. Previously I have had poor experiences where SEND Officers will avoid any communication and not pick up the phone or respond to emails unless escalated.

From my perspective, the entire experience was incredibly positive. Joanna demonstrated a high level of professionalism and a solution-focused approach throughout.

I was particularly impressed by her responsiveness and proactive communication. When I sent an email requesting an urgent

meeting, she promptly scheduled a Google Meet for the following morning, demonstrating a clear commitment to addressing my concerns.

Joanna's dedication and professionalism serve as an excellent example of the high standards we should all strive for within Slough. If this level of service and support becomes the standard, I am confident that the future of SEND provision and education in Slough looks bright.

Coral Snowden
Principal - Western House Academy

Thank you for taking the time to catch up with us. If you would like to make any article contributions, in future editions, get in touch SENDnewsletter@slough.gov.uk. We would love to hear from you!