

Welcome to 2023! I hope everyone has had a restful Christmas and is ready for the new year ahead.

2023 is going to be another challenging year in the world of SEND. We understand that the Schools White Paper and the SEND Green Paper and subsequent consultation have both been paused by the Department for Education. In the interim, we are expecting the Department for Education to publish a SEND Improvement Plan. I, like many of you, will be disappointed by this as we need some real recognition and action from the Department for Education that the current SEND process needs rethinking. I will ensure that we circulate any information coming from central government as soon as we get it.

On a brighter note, I'm pleased to tell you that our work on the Accelerated Progress Plan is moving into the next phase. The Strategy for Special Provision (our new model for countywide enhanced provision in mainstream schools), new Educational Health Care Needs Assessment pathway (EHCNA Pathway) and Staffordshire Coproduction Promise are stepping up a gear in this new term. We are planning to share our thinking with everyone very shortly. I would encourage you all to engage with this work and give us your views through the multiple channels that are open to do this. The Local Offer and Parent Carer Forum are the best ways to engage with this work.

I wish you all a healthy, happy and productive Spring Term 2023.

Halit

Dr Halit Hulusi

Head of SEND

Specialist Teaching Support Service (STSS) Updates

Vision Inclusion Team

Children's Glasses Collection

On behalf of colleagues in Jersey, the Team are facilitating a collection of children's glasses and optical equipment from settings within Staffordshire in order to support an Ophthalmic visit to Lahore in March 2023. The medical team will be visiting children's homes and orphanages, vision testing the children and prescribing refurbished glasses to them.

If any donations could be made to STSS visiting teachers from either the Autism, Deaf/Hearing or the Vision Inclusion Team's we will co-ordinate the collection and send it off on behalf of Staffordshire settings.

If you could pass this word out to children and families within your settings, we would be very grateful. Any donations will need to be made prior to February 17th 2023.

Autism Inclusion Team

Autism in School's Project

The Autism Inclusion Team continue to be part of the NHSE funded Autism in Schools project for a second year. In phase 2 we will harness locality working in a truly cross system approach. Funding this year will enable a variety of professionals from Health, Education and the PCF to train up and then be able to deliver the NAS Early Bird+ and Teen Life courses. These licenced trainers are then able to cascade NAS training and awareness sessions free of charge to parents with youngsters who have a diagnosis of ASC.

[EarlyBird licensed user training \(autism.org.uk\)](https://autism.org.uk)

Dynamic Support Register (DSR)

Members of the Autism Inclusion Team have recently undergone training and are now able to use the Dynamic Support Register Assessment Tool. The aim of the DSR is to prevent the admission of young people with a diagnosis of learning disability and or autism to tier 4 in-patient beds. Head Teachers and SENCOS in schools are also encouraged to make referrals to the DSR when a young person is escalating towards crisis. We have found attendance at the tracking meetings really useful and many of our students who were approaching crisis are now receiving appropriate professional mental health support. Further information can be found here:

[Dynamic Support Register - Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, ICS \(staffsstokeics.org.uk\)](https://staffsstokeics.org.uk)

Deaf/ Hearing Inclusion Team

New Team Lead

In January 2023 the D/HiT Team will be welcoming a new Team Lead, Moira Cooper. Moira Joins the Team with extensive experience from both

a schools and local authority perspective, working her way from being a busy SENCO in schools through to leading and managing an LA Sensory Team. Michelle Lane, who has held the position for the past 18 months, will be returning to her passion as a QTOD within the D/HiT Team so many of you may see an increased presence of Michelle in your schools and settings particularly if you are based in the North of the County.

Welcome to the second SEND Newsletter! My name is Nadine Young, SEND Principal Family Practitioner Lead. A warm welcome back to the new school term and happy new year! I hope you all managed to have a relaxing break over Christmas.

Key updates

2023 Phase Transfers

A major focus for the SEND team as we enter a new year is the completion of the phase transfers. Firstly, the pre 16 are due to be finalised by 15th February 2023. The teams are continuing to work hard to be completed by the 15th February and a big thank you from me to all schools who have submitted their annual reviews to enable this amendment process to be completed.

Completing all phase transfers by the statutory date will enable all annual reviews to be held in a child or young person's final year of their current setting to also include their next receiving setting and support children/young people and their parents/carers to experience a successful transition.

A warm welcome to the SEND team to Keri Hardy who has joined the team as the Principal Officer for SEND. Keri will have oversight of a number of areas within the Accelerated Progress Plan and will be co-ordinating the SENCO network moving forwards.

Training and Support

I am aware we have a lot of new SENCO's within Staffordshire and so would like to continue to promote the extensive resources and training that is on offer via the Council for Disabled Children. This is free online training that can be accessed once registered. There is training for schools, families, social care and health located here: [E-Learning \(councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk\)](https://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk)

Recommended E-Learning

- Supporting children and young people with SEND and their families - SEND basic awareness Level 1 and 2.
- Holistic Outcomes in EHCP's.
- Social Care and Send.
- Focus on Health Advice.

- Delivering Quality Annual Reviews.

SEND team contacts

[SEND family Practitioner Lead and Keyworker Contacts | Staffordshire Connects](#)

Alison Matthews:

We continue, supported by our colleagues at Entrust, to co-ordinate the delivery of Parental/Professionals Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) Webinars. These webinars have been recorded so that anyone unable to make the dates are able to watch. So far, topics have focussed on PFA EHCP outcomes, Post 16 education and training options, college SEND support, Social Care, Travel Training, an Introduction to Health and can be found here: [Preparing for adulthood - series of webinars | Staffordshire Connects \(staffordshirecares.info\)](#).

A further webinar focused on job seeking support and benefits information was delivered and recorded during December and will soon be added to the local offer. We would welcome suggestions from parents or anyone working with SEND young people of any topics they feel it would be helpful to cover in future sessions, please let us know at sfl@staffordshire.gov.uk.

EPS SEND newsletter information

In December the Educational Psychology Service completed the final term of free visiting as part of Covid lockdown arrangements. In January, we return to a traded service and have had an unprecedented response from schools in the subscription offer from January to July. The teams are eager to begin school visiting in January with the range of work we have for systemic, group and individual levels of psychological intervention.

Our service is growing! We will be recruiting new educational psychologists to all districts in 2023 with the intention of increasing our size significantly and this will have a welcome impact on our service offer to schools, settings and beyond.

We also have two papers published in national and international journals by Dr April Romney on ADHD and Dr Alex Redfern and Lauren Peach on techniques for social problem solving in primary schools and continue our national work with the British Psychological Society on dyslexia and literacy

difficulties. Locally, our Assistant Eps have trained over 100 teachers in emotion coaching, and teams are receiving positive feedback about the impact of our circles of adults problem solving technique with staff groups.

PCF

Staffordshire Parent Carer Forum (Staffs PCF) is getting parent and carer voices heard across the Local Authority decision-making structures. In the past three months we have taken the data from the surveys that our members have completed into meetings with policy makers. It has helped to start conversations based on lived experience of families of children and young people with SEND and allowed us to propose solutions that could improve service areas. We've met the political leadership of the Local Authority to share parent/carer concerns and to hear and comment on their plans for making positive changes in SEND services across the county. This year, we've prioritised three policy areas where we are working closely with the Local Authority, based on the feedback we've received from parents and carers. They are improving the Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process; achieving a better balance between specialist and mainstream provisions; and improving co-production, to ensure parents, carers and children get a bigger say in the decisions which affect them through better consultation from the start. We also encouraged the Local Authority to bring parents in for a consultation on specialist provisions at the beginning of the change process, allowing early input from those who will feel the impact of the changes. Thanks to all those that have attended, the contribution has been invaluable.

A reminder to all that Staffs PCF is an independent parent/carer-led organisation run by volunteers. We aim to be the voice of families of Staffordshire children with special educational needs and disabilities in order to positively influence the policy and systems that affect their daily lives. We are totally independent from schools, the Local Authority and the NHS. But we do work closely with them to make sure that they understand the lived experience of families of children with SEND and take it into account as they make policy and deliver services.

To find out more, please visit our website [here](#). We aim to get as wide a range of views and experiences of SEND services as possible. So, if you want to help us build an accurate picture of the realities for families of children with SEND by sharing those experiences, please fill in the forms to become a member. We're also looking for more people to get involved in running the PCF and participating in meetings with the Local Authority. If you are interested and could potentially commit some time, please get in touch for a chat with one of our steering group members info@staffspcf.co.uk.

Sarah Rivers – Headteacher of the Virtual School

Welcome to the new term colleagues.

A quick reminder that, from September 2021, the role of Virtual School Heads was extended to take a strategic leadership role in promoting the educational outcomes of children with a social worker and those who have previously had a social worker.

Virtual School team updates:

Deputy Head, Lesley Gill, began her new role in September 2022 allowing additional leadership capacity.

The mentor title changed to Virtual School advisor to better reflect the responsibilities of the role. Led by Virtual School coordinators, they cover the four Staffordshire double districts with an additional advisor specifically supporting children placed outside of Staffordshire, allowing them to remain within their district and providing continued stability. This month, Jo Dargan will be joining the Newcastle & Moorlands team to support their children placed out of county.

The Early Years coordinator and advisors support our youngest children as well as Previously Looked After Children. Sophie Davies has been recently appointed as advisor.

Three new advisors have been appointed to the Post-16 team, supporting our young people with education, training and employment. Welcome Shannon Wall, Sarah Hughes and Nicola Bailey.

From this month, the SENCo, Joanne Clark, will work additional days to support our children and their schools.

Also this month, the new Relational and Restorative team, led by Lisa Wood, will begin working with colleagues to embed relational and restorative work within our education settings.

Engagement and Participation Officer, Becky Woolridge, will continue to deliver a range of activities for children with a social work involvement to improve access and engagement to services, particularly within the arts and sport.

The Virtual School has produced a Handbook which colleagues should find useful. This will be distributed early this month.

Please contact the Virtual School about this year's initiatives:

Raising Awareness of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) [Challenging Education – Education consultancy, training and monitoring to maintained and academy schools across all phases](#)

- **Innovation Funding applications**
- Fully funded **EEF training** opportunity to support school improvement with a focus on improving literacy outcomes at KS2 [KS2 Literacy Programme for Stoke and Staffordshire Virtual Schools \(office.com\)](#)

- **Trauma Informed and Attachment Aware** - West Midlands TIAAS Digital Learning Event Friday 20 January 2023. [West Midlands TIAAS digital launch event | ARC \(the-arc.org.uk\)](#)
- **Virtual School Training Offer 2022-2023**

For more information on our team, what we do and how to contact us please see our website [Virtual school - Staffordshire County Council](#)

Speech and Language Therapy Training

The MPFT Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy team delivered a successful training session for school staff on 6th December.

Staff from seven primary and middle schools from across Staffordshire joined the online training which covered the topic of 'Blank Levels' – the understanding and use of abstract language - including reasoning, inference and prediction.

Following the session, staff completed a feedback survey and reported increased understanding of the topic and how to apply this knowledge through support in the classroom.

Neurodevelopmental Diagnostic Pathways Workshop

The Children and Families Care Group at MPFT have commenced work to review and redesign the pathway for assessment for diagnosing neurodevelopmental conditions (ADHD and Autism) in South Staffordshire. They held a workshop in September of 2022 and have a further one planned for February 2023. If you want to read more about this work or get involved in this work in future, please visit this [site](#).