



Solihull Early Years Service

Setting Improvement Approach

September 2025

The Government Vision for Early Years

The foundations of the stronger society this government wants to build must be laid down from the very start of children's lives. ...

The opportunities to learn, grow and thrive that this government wants for every one of our children must be there right from the beginning. That means our conception of education has to begin – and does begin – long before the first day at primary school.

It means helping families to support their children to succeed through the love, curiosity and experiences they share every day, and it means high-quality learning and play in the crucial, formative early years.

We know that ensuring the best start in life transforms life chances for individuals – but it does more than that. It helps us to build stronger communities, a fairer society and a more prosperous economy. If we are to deliver on that sacred promise - that we will give our children better opportunities than we have had ourselves - we need a step change in the focus and priority that our society gives to children's critical early years.

Giving every child the Best Start in Life, DfE - July 2025

This document outlines our Solihull Setting Improvement Approach for September 2025 to August 2026. We aim to provide support for settings to ensure children receive quality nurturing early education and care. Our approach is flexible to meet Solihull priorities and government initiatives through the year.

Each year, we revise our emphases to address aspects of provision identified through our intelligence gathering - Ofsted reports, the visits we make, national and local initiatives, your evaluation etc. [see additional information C]

The following plan builds on the Council Plan and in particular the early years priority to narrow the inequality gap. The Local Government Outcomes Framework represents some of the main outcomes that the local authorities are held to account for. Every early years setting needs to meet minimum standards within the Early Years Foundation Stage. All settings need to meet their Ofsted registration requirements. Some child minders are in agencies and their agency will support them in setting, rather than the local authority. All settings can access our training.

Local Government Outcomes Framework – main outcomes for early years [draft outcomes framework]

Best start in life Improve early child health, family support and early education to give children in every part of the country the best start in life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Percentage of children with a good level of development up to 5 years old (DfE) (see early children's health measure included in health and wellbeing outcome)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Take-up rate of 2yo disadvantage childcare offer (DfE)Take-up rate of 3-4yo 15hrs childcare offer (DfE)
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<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-outcomes-framework-call-for-feedback>

Solihull Vision and Purpose

Education Outcomes and Intervention

Our vision

Transforming life chances by holding children and young people at the heart of everything we do.

Our purpose

To be ambitious for children and young people - ensuring all have access to a high-quality inclusive education which empowers them to lead independent and successful lives.

Solihull Local Authority Early Years Team

To ensure that children in Solihull have access to good and inclusive early years provision and make the required level of progress to enable an effective transition into a statutory education which meets their needs. This will be achieved through building capacity and quality of early years providers across the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors and by providing a targeted approach to effectively identify, assess and meet individual children's needs holistically.

Success for today and prepared for tomorrow

In Solihull, the aim is that every setting will be of high quality, and early years foundation stage (EYFS) settings will achieve an Ofsted inspection outcome which indicates that their application of the Early Years Foundation Stage and their registration requirements are sound. Schools are also settings, and quality support will be available to maintained schools who have early years foundation stage (EYFS) children. Area SENCo support will target all schools and larger group provision. Early Years Inclusion Support Practitioners (EY ISP) also support settings, such as child minders, to support children with SEND. EY ISPs may also work in homes.

Settings can register with Ofsted on the early years and/or childcare registers.
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childminders-and-childcare-providers-register-with-ofsted/the-ofsted-registers>

Settings who are registered with Ofsted should understand the requirements of their registration and ensure at least the minimum standards are met and they are compliant with legislation (provision is secure/ met).

In Solihull, the local authority (LA) has appointed an Early Years Team to support this aim. A core role of the Solihull Early Years Team in delivering this vision, is to promote high standards in all early years and childcare settings in the borough. The Early Years Team are part of Solihull Education Outcomes and Intervention Services. They work closely with education and health professionals across Solihull.

Solihull Early Years Team roles:

Early Years Team Manager

- Leads the Early Years Team

Locality leads- one quality lead and one SEND lead

- For the north and east, and west locality areas of the borough

Lead practitioners

- Early years and childcare advisers: setting improvement advisers support quality improvement through annual setting improvement approach (SIA) visits, training, and advice. This is available for schools, group settings, child minders and for those on the childcare register.
- Area SENCo: the area SENCo supports group settings to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who have higher levels of need.

Early years practitioners

- Inclusion support practitioners support adults caring for children with SEND to meet children's needs in homes and as they transition to settings. They also give extra setting improvement support through modelling strategies for key staff (when capacity allows). These children are currently identified through the Early Years Team around the Child (EYTAC) panel process. This includes EY ISP support for child minders.
- Extra support may be available to settings from our under 2s support practitioner (temporary post).

We will:

- Risk-assess quality and need with settings to ensure that all provision is supported to be at least at the expected /strong standard and meeting the required frameworks. Each year we will identify settings in scope for the annual cycle of visits. This supports settings to self-evaluate and identify aspects and support for ongoing quality improvement and the inclusion of all children.
- Prioritise our support to those providers who need it most such as those with Ofsted grades that are not yet at expected standard and those needing guidance due to the setting context or the individual needs of the children that attend.
- Support early years settings in all aspects of meeting the needs of children with SEND. This may involve signposting to health services who can support.
- Ensure that the local authority (LA) statutory requirements are met as set out in the DfE 'Early education and childcare: Statutory guidance for local authorities' <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-education-and-childcare--2>
- Support the development of new settings as well as existing settings to ensure that sufficient quality places for 9 month old +, 2, 3 and 4-year-olds are available (LA sufficiency duty - Childcare Act 2006 sections 6 and 13).
- Fulfil the duty to improve the well-being of children under five and reduce inequalities (Childcare Act section 1 2006).

Settings have responsibility for their own improvement and for making the best use of the professional challenge, support and training available to them. They are also accountable for the deployment and effectiveness of the resources available to them. Settings should have a self-evaluation process in place, along with aspects identified for development. This will be considered as part of the Early Years and Childcare Adviser and Area SENCo visits.

This document sets out the framework and protocol within which Solihull LA delivers its statutory duties and non-statutory services in support of Solihull settings.

A summary of this approach will be available on www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/support for providers. Setting support from the Area SENCo is also summarised [here](#). The Team Manager presents an annual report to Solihull Schools Forum and the local authority.

The settings we work with (proportionate to their service availability and need):

- Settings that are registered with Ofsted on the early years register and/or the childcare compulsory register.
- In-school support targeted towards maintained schools with early years provision for the setting improvement support from the Early Years and Childcare (EYC) Adviser. All schools will be offered support from Area SENCo's.
- Group based early years registered provision for EYC advise and Area SENCo support - annual visit and on-going child level support.
- Early Years Inclusion Support Practitioners will mainly support Ofsted registered childminders/ settings where they have children with high need.
- Settings that are registered for early education funding (EEF). There is an expectation that all early education funded settings will work with the Early Years Team to maintain quality.
- Settings on the voluntary register where a concern has been raised. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis, or where capacity allows.

Generic training opportunities are available and will be advertised through www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc - this includes some on-line training links. Additional safeguarding training is available through Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) at training.solihullscp.co.uk/Learning-and-Development.aspx

Solihull Early Years Team will support setting improvement and promote high standards by:

- Monitoring and evaluating the performance of settings by supporting self-evaluation and setting improvement through our annual (August-1st September) visit cycle. This includes setting improvement with an EYFS or childcare focus, and also Area SENCo whole setting conversation as part of the visits to support settings to support children.
- Providing information, advice and training to early childhood education and care providers in proportion to need. We will prioritise settings where the need is greatest; for example, when they are in an Ofsted category (with insecure quality-urgent improvement/ needs attention, not met or non-compliant).
- Working with leaders and SENCos to support inclusion for children with SEND, helping ensure all children are fully included in all settings.
- Supporting settings to provide early identification and ongoing support using the graduated approach for children with SEND.
- Supporting settings to complete appropriate, high quality, referrals to ensure children receive timely and effective intervention by appropriate services.
- Facilitating the sharing of best practice between settings.
- Working together within and beyond the local authority to signpost, support and share intelligence for best financial and social value.
- Helping settings to access DfE training and signposting to other external support such as that through Dingley's Promise and WM Growth Hub.
- Giving additional school support which will be brokered as outlined in the School Improvement Strategy.

Solihull Early Years setting improvement joint evaluation visit

The setting improvement approach (SIA) support visit forms part of the on-going risk assessment of a setting. The risk assessment includes intelligence from the Area SENCo and Early Years Inclusion Support Practitioner visits as well as involvement and feedback from other local authority services such as the Specialist Inclusion Support Service (SISS), Family Information Service (FIS) etc. The visits have been designed using Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted documentation which forms the basis of a framed conversation between the Early Years and Childcare Adviser and the setting. It helps to identify settings' strengths and development needs and aid the prioritising of support from the team. Joint evaluation activities in EYFS settings contribute to this review. The risk assessment also considers previous Ofsted judgements.

Solihull LA will use the data from the review to:

- Inform resource deployment for support proportionate to need/Ofsted grade.
- Identify areas for future training and development.
- Inform the local authority of the quality of Solihull provision and measure the impact of our support.

Allocation of support

Settings who receive an Ofsted judgement which grades them as needs attention or urgent improvement will be offered targeted support from Solihull's Early Years Team to help them address areas for improvement and develop high quality practice and provision. This may include signposting to further training.

Settings who do not yet fully meet Ofsted registration requirements should have more detailed plans to outline their development actions. The LA support will be targeted to meet these improvement aspects. Early Years Team plans will be written to complement setting plans for settings that are needing attention or causing concern.

Failure to address concerns raised in the Ofsted inspection report will result in further formal interactions with senior LA team members. This will be through written correspondence and/or an invitation to discuss arrangements to address concerns in a face-to-face meeting. Concerns about childcare providers that relate to welfare and safety may be reported to Ofsted through the Applications, Regulatory and Contact (ARC) Team. If a setting needs further support to maintain quality between Ofsted inspections, these formal discussions may be organised to see how LA support can complement the settings own quality improvement.

Where capacity allows, the team may be able to support targeted settings to maintain quality by providing support targeted to a specific need, and where the setting requires external support to improve.

Area SENCo and Early Years Inclusion Support Practitioner SEND support

This support will be targeted to settings proportionate to the needs of the individual child and setting. Support will be determined on a case-by-case basis. It will depend upon the setting context, needs of the child and capacity of the service.

Working in Partnership

Partnership is a two-way process in which we work together for the safety, well-being, and development of children.

We will:

- Treat each other with respect.
- Be open and honest, and act with integrity.
- Recognise the uniqueness of individuals and the settings and take this into account when planning support and challenge.
- Arrange visits at a time and date agreed in advance where we can all give appropriate attention to the learning and self-evaluation opportunities presented by the visit. Attend pre-arranged visits at the time/ date agreed.
- Write and agree a record of the visit together detailing any discussion held, and actions agreed. This is known as a note of visit, record of event or SEND Support Plan. On occasions this may take the form of a report.
- Strive to do what we say we will do and carry out any actions resulting from the visit.
- Maintain confidentiality unless required to share information to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of children or vulnerable adults, or where it is in the best interests of the setting.

We may share information with other agencies and professionals as appropriate to ensure effective support and positive outcomes for children. Notes of visit are only available to the Solihull Education Outcomes and Intervention Service. Contact details of settings may be shared with DfE or their commissioned service who can provide support and training.

Compliments and complaints procedure

We welcome positive feedback and can reflect on concerns about our Early Years Team activity if these are raised with us.

If you are happy or unhappy with any aspect of our support or have suggestions to make about the service provided, we would like to know about it. Please discuss it with the Early Years Team member concerned.

Support visits have evaluation opportunities built in. If a concern cannot be resolved, please ask to speak to the Early Years Team Manager, Lisa Morris on 0121 704 6150 or email: lmorris@solihull.gov.uk

Concerns about the manager can be raised with Claire McNeill, Head of Education Outcomes and Intervention on 0121 704 6620 or email cmcneill@solihull.gov.uk.

In the event of the Solihull Early Years' Service, Family Information Service (FIS) or other agency receiving complaints about a setting, we will refer the complainant back to the setting where appropriate. Every setting will have a complaints process. We will also advise the complainant of their right to refer the complaint to Ofsted.

Key documents:

- Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework:
Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five. (DfE >1.9.2025)
- Early Education and Childcare: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (DfE)
- Solihull setting visit letters September 2025–
<https://www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/support/preparing-for-your-visit/>
- Information about Early Years Team setting SEND support
<https://www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/send/>

Additional information A – support from early years and childcare advisers

Ofsted evaluation areas: safeguarding, inclusion, curriculum and teaching, achievement, behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines, children's welfare and well-being, leadership and governance.					
Ofsted early years quality grades	Exceptional	Strong standard	Expected standard	Needs attention	Urgent improvement/ enforcement action/ safeguarding not met [LA funding]
	1	2	3	4	5
7 judgment areas including safeguarding	Support from the LA may be given to improve the aspects which are identified as 'expected' or 'needing attention' linked to the reports next steps' or if the adviser and setting feel they are likely to be if inspected.			Support from the LA will focus on the aspects that need attention/ require urgent improvement. If most evaluation areas receive these grades, then the LA may 'call in' the leaders & owners to plan action.	
Childcare judgement	met			Not met- action/ enforcement action	
Level of annual support -this is a guide. Each setting's context is different, and the judgement profile will determine levels of support post-Ofsted.	<i>Generic</i> support – access to universally available support... training and annual visit Some settings may require some additional support where an evaluation area is identified during inspection/ self-evaluation (including setting improvement visits)			<i>Additional</i> external support is required to support improvements where an evaluation area(s) needs attention.	<i>Intensive</i> external support needs to ensure lasting, embedded improvement. Including in-setting safeguarding training if it is judged as not met
Support continues until both the setting and adviser(s) recognise the settings internal capacity to embed improvement.	As above		LA adviser can support with up to 3 or 4 additional visits - depending upon the areas of improvement need. This should be identified in the setting's own improvement plan. Advisers across the team may also pair up to give support.		Intensive support of 4+ visits – this may also involve bespoke in-setting training & a LA action plan in addition to the setting's own action plan.
External support	DfE and stronger practice hub support that is available to all.		Stronger practice hubs may offer more targeted support.		

Setting should receive a graded re-inspection within 6 months of any area receiving an urgent improvement grade. If any area needs attention, settings are reinspected within 12 months. These gradings will impact on the Solihull provider agreement for Early Education Funding (EEF). Ofsted are planning to move from inspection within a 6-year window to return to a 4-year window (April 2026) where all areas are graded as expected standard or above..

*Ofsted will prioritise the first inspection of newly registered providers on the Early Years Register. This will normally be within **30 months** (which will change to 18 months) of their registration date.*

Additional information B: Ofsted partnership working

Contacting Ofsted as part of the [Protocol between Ofsted and local authorities on sharing information about childcare providers - GOV.UK](#)

Step 1

Early Years Team member will discuss concerns with the provider.

Step 2

If concerns remain, the Early Years Team member will discuss concerns with the Early Years Team manager/senior person.

Step 3

We may contact our WM regional lead at Ofsted to discuss a case.

Step 4

We will alert the provider that we are sharing information with Ofsted as recommended, unless Ofsted advise against this.

Step 5

Share the information with Ofsted through the LA e mail. (Ofsted extranet link).

Information not covered by existing protocols

Local authorities often have knowledge about applicants or registered early years settings arising from their particular duties. This may relate to:

- A decline in quality at the setting.
- The registered person not accepting or responding positively to local authority support or intervention, such as not turning up to training events, refusing visits from the local authority or not acting on advice that the local authority gives about how to meet requirements.
- The applicant or registered person's understanding of the [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage](#)

When local authorities have a concern about safeguarding and/or the welfare of children at a setting, but that concern falls below their locally agreed threshold for child protection intervention, they must share this information with Ofsted. This will usually be through our normal concerns process set out in our leaflet [Information for parents about Ofsted's role in regulating childcare](#).

Local authorities should also share any information with us that raises concerns about the applicant's or registered person's ability to provide a good-quality service in line with the requirements for registration. This includes their ability to meet both the learning and development and the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage'. This is information that Ofsted, as the regulator, should know.

The information may:

- have accumulated over a period of time.
- relate to a one-off incident.
- cover a more obvious lack of knowledge and experience about the requirements for registration.

Having this type of information provides an opportunity for us (Ofsted) to assess the information from the local authority alongside the information we already hold about a provider or setting. If there is information to suggest that a provider is not meeting requirements, we will normally carry out a full inspection and publish an inspection report. However, sometimes we may need to investigate very serious concerns ahead of an inspection.

Additional information C: Annual plan> do> review process for our support

<i>Activity</i>	<i>process</i>	<i>timeline</i>
On-going review of visits and Ofsted inspections [& local intelligence from other services]	Individual role members will raise emerging themes at role meetings for group consideration for action We will reflect upon an accumulative view of visits, to monitor take up and the ability to complete visits / support [number of visits completed and capacity].	Throughout the year- as issues and celebrations arise
Annual review of settings- individual and collective review.	Reviews of provider feedback as shared on visit note, e mails, formal Microsoft Teams evaluations, etc to explore- what is working well and what needs more focus? This may result in training or a focus for the annual review options or changes to methodology [targeting of settings or a quality improvement area]. Individual quality risk review would result in a 'rag' rating to show settings of concern on our provider overview. This risk assessment [RA] would result in support proportionate to need. ..extra help where it is needed. Schools where a risk is identified will be considered at school RA.	End of spring to summer School training for admin by Easter to publish Summer term. Setting [PVI, cm, childcare] training overview by school holidays to publish before Autumn term.
National and local guidance – statutory and good practice- research	The implications of new research and guidance will be considered as published throughout the year. Any relevant implications built into the annual visit review options/ support visits.	Key themes will be considered throughout the year and also during Summer planning.
Planning the annual approach- leading to published guidance for settings and team guidance for reference.	Provider feedback and national guidance [DfE/ Ofsted/ etc] will influence the direction of travel for annual visit amendments where local intelligence indicates a need. Statutory EYFSP, ASQ and SEND data will also be a consideration. This includes training, reading and research for the team to support implementation.	Summer formalised 'approach' updates> SEND support Childcare Childminder PVI group School focussed visits
Annual cycle begins and the offer of annual visits are communicated to childcare, PVI groups, childminders, and school settings.	Setting improvement approach [and School Improvement Approach] is updated and published on the early years and childcare website. Letters and e mails to providers briefly outline the offer Early years and childcare website overview and support materials. Team Manager updates SIA document for service	September -Autumn term trials to test out the approaches and modify as necessary.
Annual report to school forum	Team Manager report for School Forum to outline the Early Education Funding and Designated Schools Grant spend and evaluate the year.	Autumn term