



# **Solihull Early Years Service**

## **Setting Improvement Approach**

### **September 2024**

## The Government Vision for Early Years

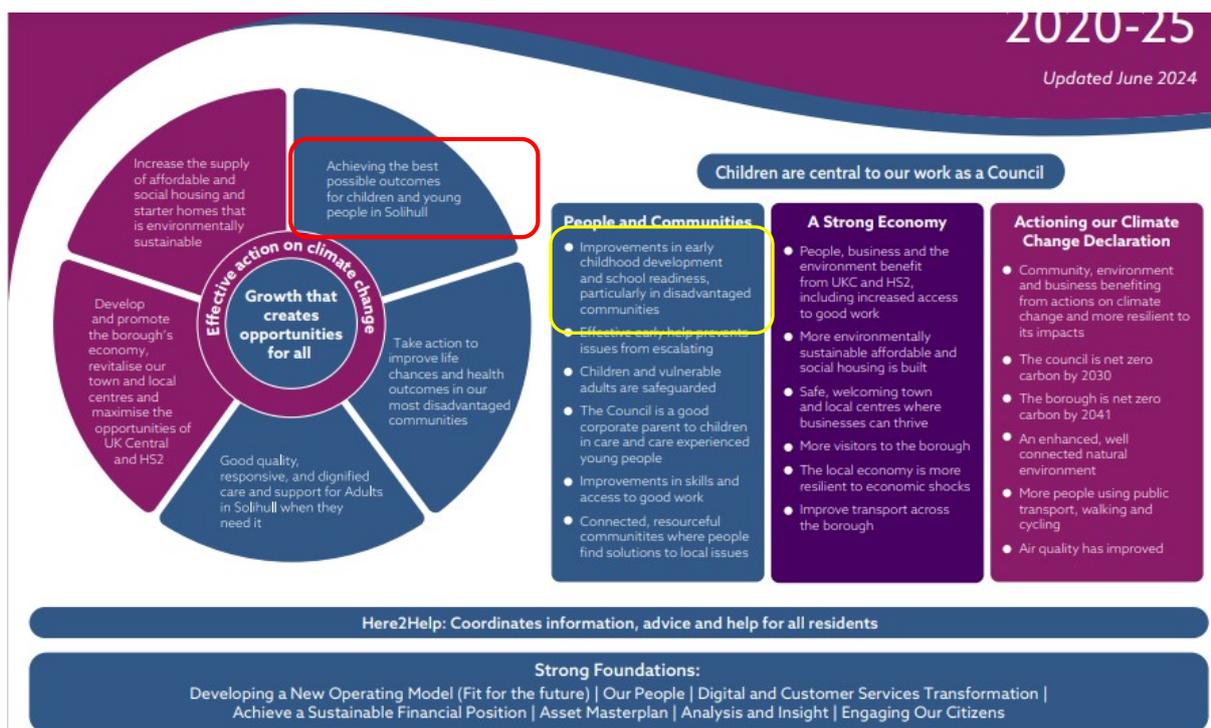
The science demonstrating the importance of early childhood is resoundingly clear; it's time the world knew about it. Whether it's raising awareness of this golden opportunity, celebrating our early years workforce or fostering alliances, our campaigns are designed to create the demand and the conditions for long-term societal change.

We can support the early years workforce better so that workers feel more valued, recognised and equipped to be the best professionals they can be. There are thousands of dedicated and hardworking individuals who are committed to supporting families in the early years, from pregnancy onwards. Their work is not always properly recognised or valued but, whether as midwives, health visitors, providers of early help and specialist support or early education and childcare workers, they make a huge difference. For example, it has been shown repeatedly that early childhood education and childcare can have a positive effect on children's developmental outcomes when the quality of services is high. Skilled and well-supported practitioners are key to the quality of services and can make a proven difference, particularly for children from low-income and at-risk families.

*Shaping Us was launched in January 2023 to raise awareness of the unique importance of early childhood and how it shapes the rest of our lives.*

*Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood*

This document outlines our Solihull Setting Improvement Approach for September 2024 to August 2025. 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, evaluations etc. The following plan shows the main priorities in the Council Plan and in particular the early years priority to narrow the inequality gap.



<https://www.solihull.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-04/Solihull-Council-Plan.pdf>

## 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 a 'good' or 'outstanding' Ofsted inspection outcome, as outlined in the Ofsted compliance and inspection handbooks such as the Ofsted early years inspection handbook. Schools are also settings, and 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 also support settings, such as child minders, to support children with SEND.

In 2024/5 we will have two new team members, funded through the early education and wrap around expansion funding, to support under 2s and for business support.

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 good).

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 the Solihull Education Outcomes and Intervention Service. 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**

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

#### **Lead practitioners**

- Setting improvement advisers support setting improvement through Solihull setting improvement approach (SIA) visits, training, and advice.
- Area SENCos support settings to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who have higher levels of need.
- A lead practitioner will be allocated to each eligible setting.

#### **Early Years inclusion support 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. These children are currently identified through the Early Years Team around the Child (EYTAC) panel.

#### **We will:**

- Risk-assess quality and need with settings to ensure that all provision is supported to be good or better. 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 less than good 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' [Early education and childcare - Statutory guidance for local authorities \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Support the development of new settings as well as existing settings to ensure that sufficient quality places for 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 reviewed as part of the setting improvement adviser and Area SENCo visits.

This document sets out the framework and protocol within which Solihull local authority 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](http://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.
- Maintained schools with early years provision for the setting improvement support from the Early Years and Childcare Adviser and all schools will be offered support from Area SENCo's.
- Group based early years registered provision for Area SENCo support - annual visit and on-going child level support. Early Years Inclusion Support Practitioners will mainly support childminders 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](http://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](http://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-1<sup>st</sup> September) visit cycle. This includes setting improvement with an EYFS or childcare focus, and also an Area SENCo annual visit (group settings) or conversation.
- 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 (requires improvement, inadequate, 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 is less than good, so requires improvement, inadequate, not met or not compliant judgements, 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 are less than good and do not yet 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 should be written to complement setting plans for settings that are inadequate, requiring intensive support.

Failure to address concerns raised in the Ofsted inspection report, where the provider has been judged less than good by Ofsted, 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.

Where capacity allows, the team may be able to support good/outstanding 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 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.
- 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.go.uk](mailto:lmorris@solihull.go.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](mailto:cmcneill@solihull.gov.uk).

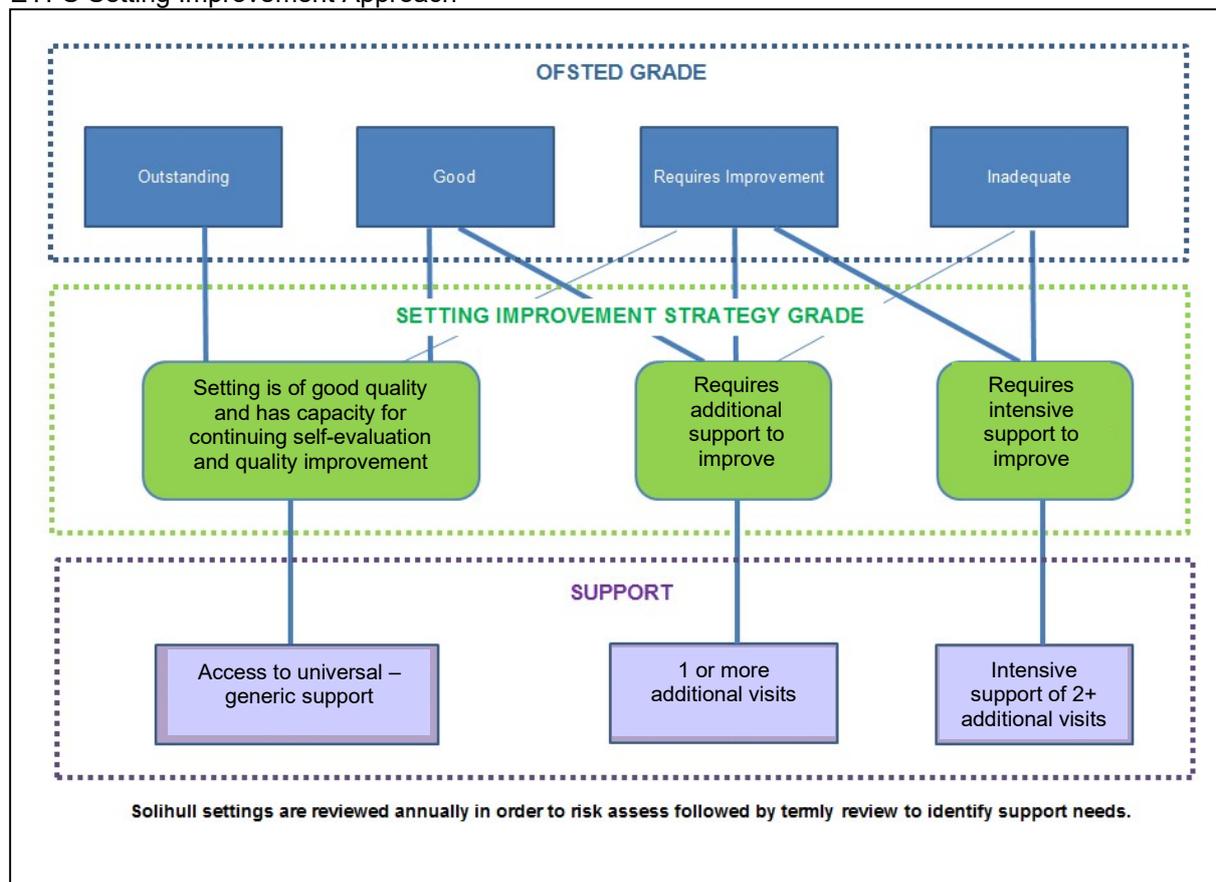
In the event of the Solihull Early Years' Service, Family Information Service (FIS) or other agency receiving complaints about a setting, we will refer the complainant back to the setting where appropriate. Every setting will have a complaints process. We will also advise the complainant of their right 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 2024)
- Early Years and Childcare Compliance Handbook and Inspection Handbook (Ofsted)
- Early Education and Childcare: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (DfE)
- Early years entitlements: operational guidance: For local authorities and providers (DfE)
- Solihull setting visit letter September 2024– [www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc](http://www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc)
- Information about Early Years Team setting SEND support <https://www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/send/>

**Additional information A – Support flowchart**

Solihull Early Years Team Setting Improvement Support summary:  
EYFS Setting Improvement Approach



Setting should receive a graded re-inspection within 6 months of the inadequate grade. Requires Improvement settings are reinspected within 12 months. These

gradings will impact on the Solihull provider agreement for Early Education Funding (EEF).

*Providers on the Early Years Register will normally be inspected at least once within a **6-year** window. Ofsted [\[links\]](#) will prioritise the first inspection of newly registered providers on the Early Years Register. This will normally be within **30 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 \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

#### **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 regional lead at Ofsted to discuss a case (H Lapworth/S Wride).

#### **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 local authority e mail.

### **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 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.