

SEND PARTICIPATION PROJECT

1 YEAR REPORT



2023-2024





Jovi Arnotrading
SEND Engagement and Participation Officer

Welcome

Hello everyone,

Thank you for your interest in the SEND Participation Project. Over the past year we have made some fantastic developments in SEND participation in Slough and launched the SEND Youth Forum. We have since co-produced with many services and collaborators to increase youth voice and SEND engagement.

The young people and I would like to say a huge thank you for working with us and providing so many opportunities for collaboration. We look forward to driving more changes in our second year.



Foreword

Giovanni Ferri - Children and Young People's Transformation Lead, Neurodiversity, NHS Frimley ICS

This report presents the first-year findings and achievements of the Slough Participation Project, an initiative aimed at enhancing youth participation and ensuring that young people's voices are integral to shaping the services that affect them. At the heart of this project was the recruitment of a dedicated SEND Participation role, funded through the Better Care Fund and hosted by local youth charity Together as One to work collaboratively across health, local authority, and educational sectors.

A key accomplishment of this first year has been the establishment of a SEND Youth Forum, which has served as a vital platform for young people to contribute directly to discussions and decisions. Through this forum, youth participants have actively engaged with sector leaders to co-produce services, strategies, and information that are tailored to meet their needs and aspirations. This has included the local offer, holiday activities and improving access to health services.

This collaborative approach has not only enriched the quality and relevance of these services but has also fostered new pathways for sharing best practices across sectors. By establishing these structures and processes, the Slough Participation Project has laid a strong foundation for ongoing collaboration and innovation in service delivery. We look forward to continuing this work, further strengthening the collaborative spirit and ensuring that young people's voices remain at the core of community development.

We extend our thanks to all partners and stakeholders who have contributed to this initiative, and especially to the young people whose insights and active participation have been invaluable. We hope that this report provides a meaningful overview of the work thus far and inspires further support for youth-centred approaches in Slough and beyond.



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PROJECT AIMS

Year One:

- Increase accessibility and inclusivity across multiple services for children with SEND
 - Strengthen relationships with partners across education, health, social care, voluntary sector
 - Ensure children and young people are active decision makers and have an active role in decision-making, service planning, delivery, and review
 - Advocate for CYP with SEND to share their experience
 - Develop a SEND Youth Forum
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METHODOLOGY

In the early months of the SEND Participation Project, a key focus was understanding the landscape of SEND services in Slough, including both strengths and areas for improvement. The project lead engaged with various stakeholders, including parents, carers, professionals, and youth activity leaders. Key forums such as Special Voices (a parent and carers forum) and The Autism Group (TAG) were central to these efforts. Coffee mornings with parents and carers, along with home visits to families, helped gather firsthand experiences. Additionally, engagement with youth leaders and professionals who regularly interact with children (like SENCOs) provided insights into the community's needs.

The visits helped reveal significant barriers faced by young people and families, particularly in areas like school experiences, peer relationships, and access to youth activities. Conversations focused on these personal challenges and the wider systemic issues affecting the children. By hearing directly from young people and their support networks, the project developed a more comprehensive understanding of the obstacles within the community and education systems, laying the groundwork for more tailored interventions. This inclusive and exploratory approach ensured that the voices of those with lived experience were central to the project's development, fostering a stronger community relationship moving forward.

SEND YOUTH FORUM

The SEND Youth Forum was created to provide a pathway for the young people to share their views, lived experiences and provide feedback to decision makers. The group is also an opportunity for the young people to socialise, play games and discuss topics that are important to them.



This information is then taken to our colleagues at the local authority, in health or in education. Professionals are also welcome to come in to discuss how they can make their service more accessible or to co produce their work.

SEND YOUTH FORUM

4 Key Frameworks

Participation- Giving the young people the opportunity to be involved in the planning and reviewing of services that impact them

Social skill development- Connecting with other young people, forming peer relationships

Celebrating Neurodiversity- Encouraging neurodiversity to be viewed positively and highlighting the strengths in neurodivergent conditions.

Providing experiences- Providing a range of experiences, discussions and topics to participate in. Also engaging with other professionals in new environments

SEND YOUTH FORUM

The SEND Youth Forum are a group of the young people that have joined the group from various different avenues. Many young people joined the group through information that was shared through The Autism Group (TAG), GEMS (Parent and Carer Support Service), family support workers, school SENCO's, the local offer, Together As One and online searches.

The SEND Youth Forum represent a diverse range of additional needs, conditions, and disabilities, including:

Autism Spectrum Condition

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Dyspraxia/ Oral Dyspraxia

Becker muscular dystrophy

Global Developmental Delay

Gross motor skill difficulties

Comorbidities and other conditions include:
Anxiety, Low Mood, Selective Mutism, Dyslexia



ATTENDEES

Over the past year **20** young people have attended the SEND Youth Forum aged **11-24**.

There have been 13 SEND Youth Forum sessions and many more opportunities as part of the wider SEND Participation Project.



YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON THE GROUP

This is what the young people had to say about the group:

Think of 5 words that best describe this group?

Neurodiverse, Connected, Accepting,
Inclusive, Understanding

What is the best thing about this group?

- "We all relate to each other"
- Improving young lives
- "It's such an inclusive space"
- Building confidence
- Socialising
- Good conversation
- "The group is inviting"

What do you want to achieve?

- Educating other people about SEND
- I want to feel more confident about myself
- Teaching others with SEND that they aren't alone
- Teaching others that everyone is unique





SEND SUPPORT FORM

Through conversations with youth group leaders, it was identified that they did not always feel confident supporting young people with SEND as they did not always understand their needs and did not always know how to approach those conversations.

In the SEND Youth Forum we also found that young people did not always feel confident accessing services as they did not feel that they were accommodated or that their needs were always considered.

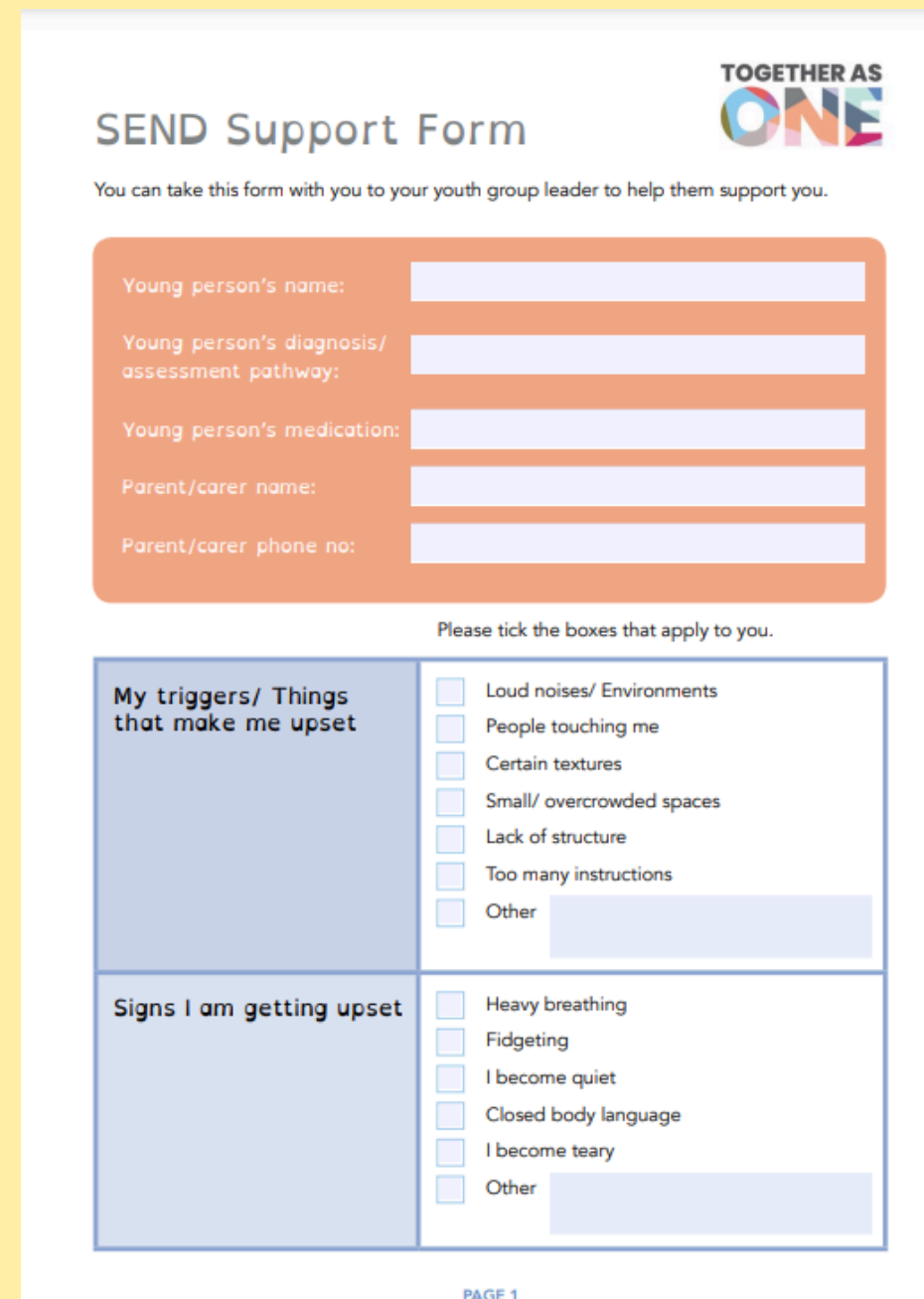
The group shared information on what their personal barriers were when attending community activities, they also shared instances when organisations did successfully make them feel comfortable and included. This information was posted on a blog on the Together As One website. [Click here to read.](#)

SEND SUPPORT FORM

In the first session, the young people discussed their challenges in accessing different community activities and they consistently highlighted that activity leaders do not always know how to support them or understand their needs.

The young people shared what they thought would be helpful for activity leaders to know about them and worked together to create a form that could be shared across the community to help other children feel comfortable and understood.

The form includes sections based on their common experiences, including how to identify when they are starting to become distressed, or dysregulated and how to support them self-regulate. The form also includes what the child enjoys and areas where they may need support.



SEND Support Form TOGETHER AS ONE

You can take this form with you to your youth group leader to help them support you.

Young person's name:

Young person's diagnosis/assessment pathway:

Young person's medication:

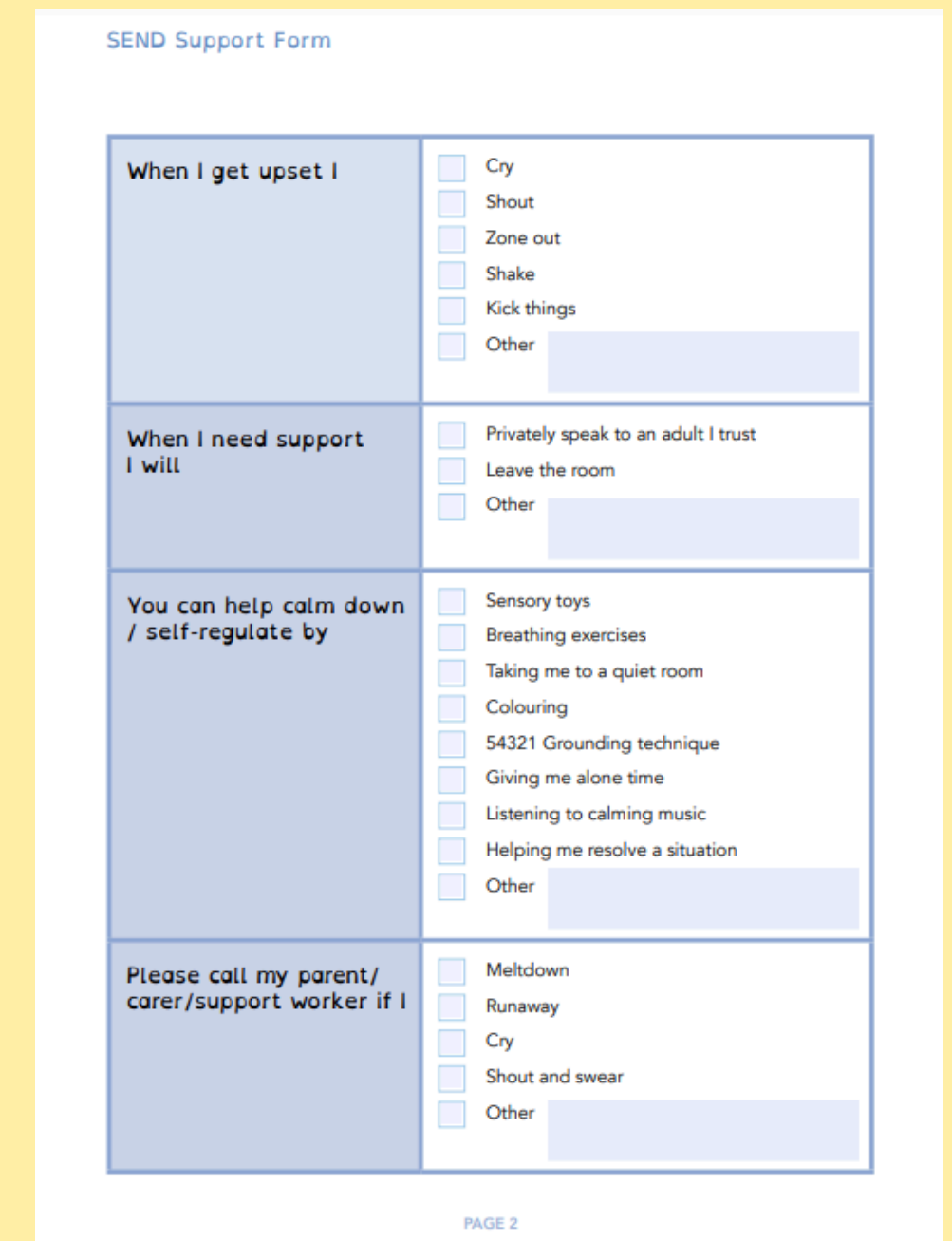
Parent/carer name:

Parent/carer phone no:

Please tick the boxes that apply to you.

My triggers/ Things that make me upset	<input type="checkbox"/> Loud noises/ Environments <input type="checkbox"/> People touching me <input type="checkbox"/> Certain textures <input type="checkbox"/> Small/ overcrowded spaces <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of structure <input type="checkbox"/> Too many instructions <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="text"/>
Signs I am getting upset	<input type="checkbox"/> Heavy breathing <input type="checkbox"/> Fidgeting <input type="checkbox"/> I become quiet <input type="checkbox"/> Closed body language <input type="checkbox"/> I become teary <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="text"/>

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SEND Support Form

When I get upset I	<input type="checkbox"/> Cry <input type="checkbox"/> Shout <input type="checkbox"/> Zone out <input type="checkbox"/> Shake <input type="checkbox"/> Kick things <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="text"/>
When I need support I will	<input type="checkbox"/> Privately speak to an adult I trust <input type="checkbox"/> Leave the room <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="text"/>
You can help calm down / self-regulate by	<input type="checkbox"/> Sensory toys <input type="checkbox"/> Breathing exercises <input type="checkbox"/> Taking me to a quiet room <input type="checkbox"/> Colouring <input type="checkbox"/> 54321 Grounding technique <input type="checkbox"/> Giving me alone time <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to calming music <input type="checkbox"/> Helping me resolve a situation <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="text"/>
Please call my parent/ carer/support worker if I	<input type="checkbox"/> Meltdown <input type="checkbox"/> Runaway <input type="checkbox"/> Cry <input type="checkbox"/> Shout and swear <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="text"/>

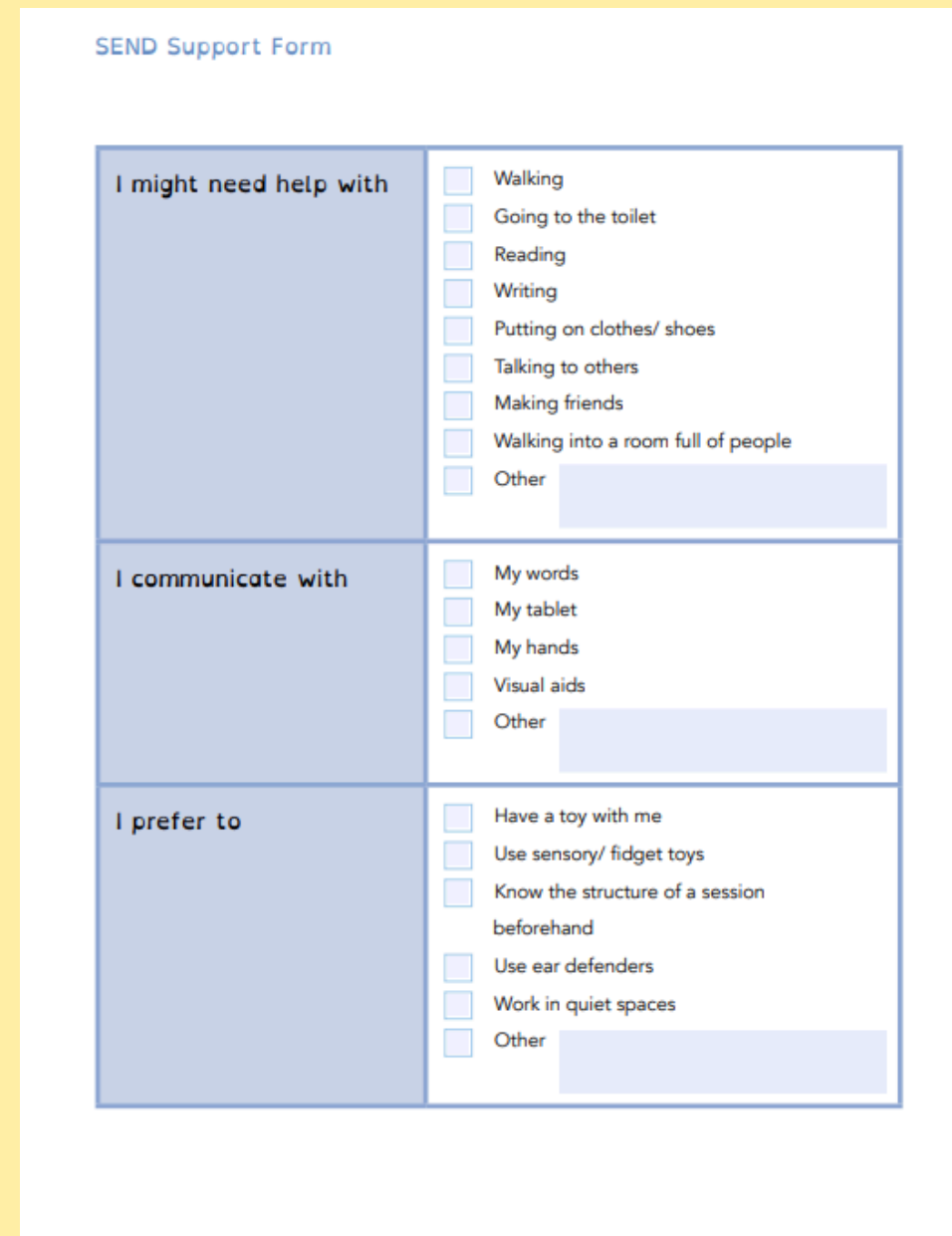
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SEND SUPPORT FORM

The form uses a strengths-based approach to capture the child's support needs. The document has also helped activity leaders feel more confident in supporting children to the best of their ability as they have a comprehensive understanding of the child's strengths and support needs that can be used when planning their activities and accommodations.

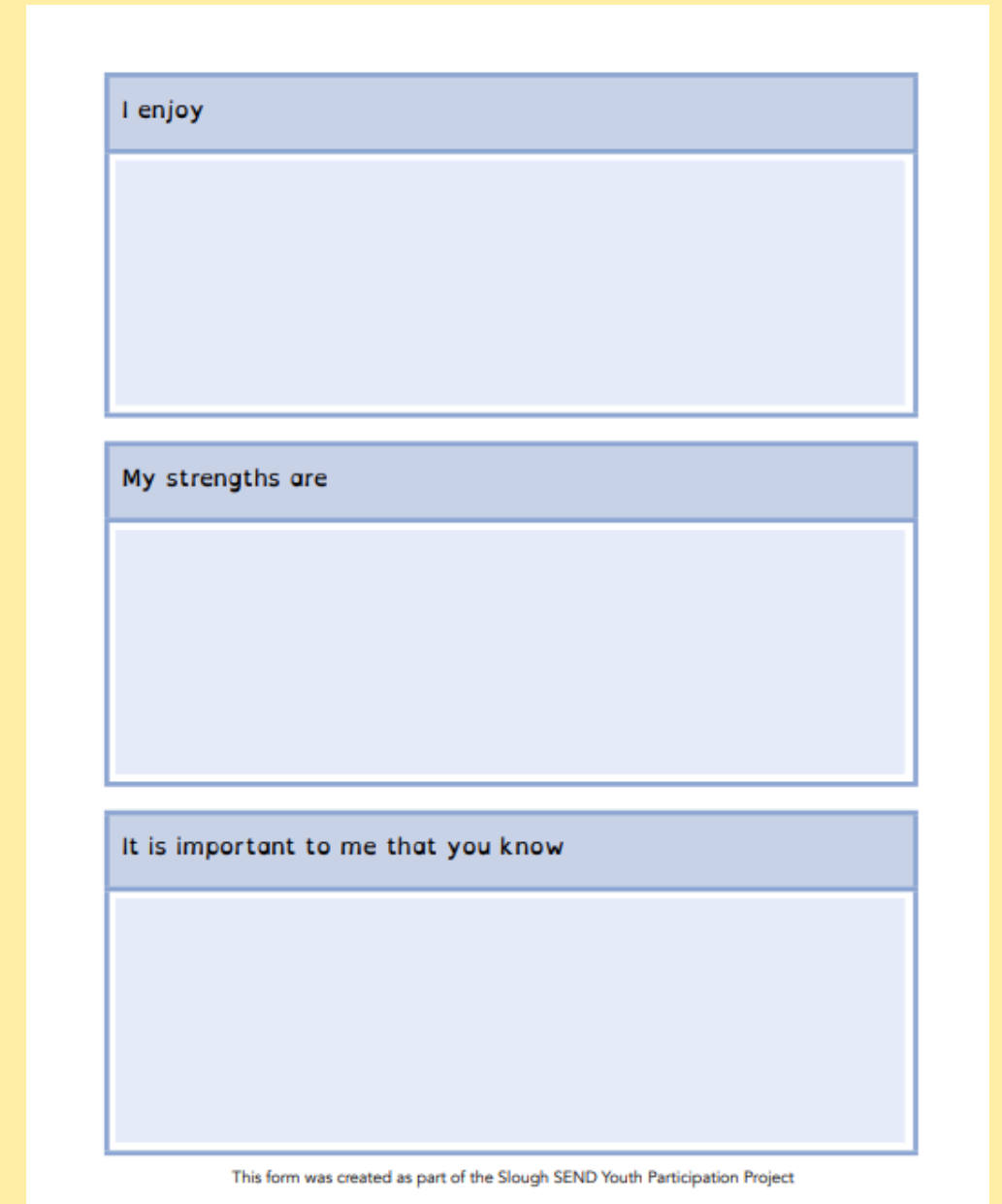
This 4-page document was designed in a quick and easy checkbox style to ensure that it is simple to fill out for both the child or parent/ care giver and it is also easy to read for the activity provider.

The document has been shared with schools and other organisations and can be accessed through our website on the SEND page <https://togetherasone.org.uk/send/>.



SEND Support Form

I might need help with	<input type="checkbox"/> Walking <input type="checkbox"/> Going to the toilet <input type="checkbox"/> Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Putting on clothes/ shoes <input type="checkbox"/> Talking to others <input type="checkbox"/> Making friends <input type="checkbox"/> Walking into a room full of people <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
I communicate with	<input type="checkbox"/> My words <input type="checkbox"/> My tablet <input type="checkbox"/> My hands <input type="checkbox"/> Visual aids <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
I prefer to	<input type="checkbox"/> Have a toy with me <input type="checkbox"/> Use sensory/ fidget toys <input type="checkbox"/> Know the structure of a session beforehand <input type="checkbox"/> Use ear defenders <input type="checkbox"/> Work in quiet spaces <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____



I enjoy

My strengths are

It is important to me that you know

This form was created as part of the Slough SEND Youth Participation Project

In the past, when a young person presented at one of our provisions, we didn't really know how to approach the conversation about their needs or the adjustments we could make to support their participation. The form provides us with a framework. It has transformed difficult conversations, into holistic and constructive conversations - a hugely significant impact. - Youth worker



STRATEGIC VOICE

THE LOCAL OFFER



The SEND Youth Forum have collaborated with the Local Offer and Resource Productions to create a video for their website.

Clare Thompson (**Acting Group Manager, Early Education, SBC**) attended the group and spoke directly with the young people about how they would like to be represented on the local offer website.

The group also reviewed the new section of the website that was targeted at young people.

Two forum members were featured in an informative animation video that will be featured on the website. In the video they shared their experiences as young people with ADHD and gave tips on how others can support people with the diagnosis or on the pathway to diagnosis.

SEND STRATEGIC VOICE

Two SEND Youth Forum members attended a SEND Strategic Board meeting.

The Board members asked the attendees about their experiences in schools before and after their diagnosis of ADHD. This discussion included questions about how supportive the schools were in understanding the young people and in making appropriate accommodations to support their learning.

The purpose of this meeting was for strategic leads to understand the experience of young people in their community. The Board recognise that young people should have a platform to share their experiences at the highest level.



DfE Informal SEND review

SEND Youth Forum members attended a Department for Education informal review where they spoke to DfE representatives about their experiences in education, their schools/ colleges resources, EHCPs.

This meeting included student representatives from Arbour Vale School, and Langley College. Throughout the day there were numerous groups meetings with the DfE including, heads of education, leaders within health, the local authority and the parent and carers forum.



SLOUGH YOUTH PARLIAMENT

This year's Slough Youth Parliament had a representative from the SEND Youth Forum who wanted to make a difference in her wider community.

Nadine Barret, Youth Participation Officer, attended one of the sessions where the young people shared their experiences with some of the difficulties they face in schools and in peer relationships. The main discussions concerned the impact that young people can have in their communities through the Youth Parliament and other youth voice opportunities.

The young people also participated in Make Your Mark with the British Youth Council. Make Your Mark is the largest youth vote which encourages young people to shortlist the most pressing topics that will be raised in future initiatives and campaigns.



HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD (HAF)

The HAF programme provides the opportunity for children and young people that are eligible for free school meals to have a free warm meal over the school holidays.

The SEND Engagement and Participation Officer has been collaborating with a team of other professionals at Slough Borough Council to ensure that young people with SEND have equal access to a range of inclusive activities where they feel confident and comfortable in the setting. In addition to this we are committed to increasing the confidence of providers working with children with SEND.

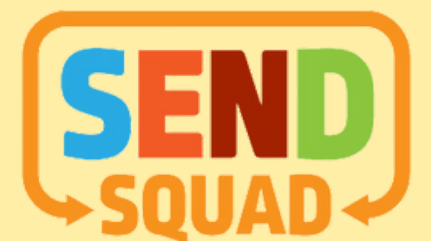
This collaboration has resulted in:

- A funding pot for 1:1 Support workers
- HAF activity providers to capture the needs of their attendees with the SEND Support Form
- Visits to the HAF activities to identify areas of support for the HAF providers
- HAF activity providers being in receipt of a toolkit with accommodations that can be applied to their setting
- Widening access training to providers



The HAF team has collaborated with the SEND Youth Forum to support improvements to the delivery plan to ensure access and inclusion for children and young people with SEND . We were keen to develop the programme to include the voice and opinions of children/YP with SEND, we used the SEND support form designed by YP to build on the application and booking process. This resulted in better support, understanding and the preparation of the needs of YP from the start of the programme delivery. This approach meant that we were also able to collaboratively support settings to receive SEND specific training, advice and guidance, with a key focus on inclusion. New processes were designed to consider the safety and engagement of YP and consideration of needs were carefully planned to ensure each child was happy, safe, loved and thriving. The work has resulted in an increased number of children with SEND who were able to access the HAF programme over the summer holidays.

Clare Thompson - Acting Group Manager Early Education





HEALTH SERVICES

CAMHS COLLABORATION

Emily Batt (CAMHS Assistant Psychologist) attended the SEND Youth Forum, following a previous session being based around mental health and accommodations to mental health services for users with SEND. Following this the SEND Youth Forum and CAMHS have developed a partnership and CAMHS have applied suggestions from the Youth Forum.

The theme of the session was to explore how CAMHS can use the voice of young people and include their suggestions into the service. Together we recognise that involving young people in decision-making not only enriches services but also empowers those with lived experiences. Their insights can lead to more tailored support and can improve overall experiences for many service users. Engaging young people actively can help ensure that services meet their needs more effectively.

The suggestions included a 'Get to know me' document that is sent out to young people prior to their appointment so they know more about who they will be working with as this can be a daunting experience. The forum and CAMHS have co-designed a 'bio' document as a result of this.

CAMHS and the SEND Youth Forum have also co-created a 'walkthrough' tour video of their appointment rooms for new clients to help ease anxieties around the new environment. This has also been narrated by young people.



CAMHS SAFETY PLANS

CAMHS and the SEND Youth Forum have worked collaboratively to review the safety plans that CAMHS share with their clients.

Two of the SEND Youth Forum members, were sent copies of the safety plans that are currently used across CAMHS. They spent time reviewing the documents and documenting their feedback. They also created an alternative safety-plan that is specifically tailored to young people based of off the members own experience with CAMHS as neurodivergent young people.

The SEND Youth Forums collaboration with CAMHS has led to the co-creation of a safety plan document that provides guidance on what the young people would like to see in facilities.



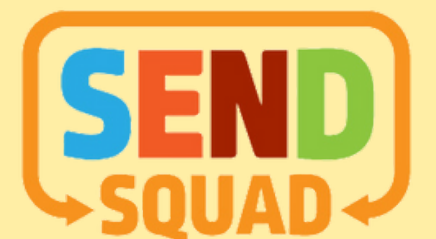


CAMHS have been working with the Slough SEND Youth Forum and the staff at Together As One to co-create a safety plan document and provide CAMHS with guidance on what young people want to see in clinics and facilities.

Emily Batt- Assistant Psychologist CAMHS

The Youth forum is an excellent resource for providing opportunities to collaborate with 'services' to ensure that the needs and wants of young people with SEND are addressed and wishes are respected. Jovi's leadership provides a relaxed, fun atmosphere where young people have opportunities to participate to the best of their abilities while ensuring ground rules and respect for all involved. As a guest to the group, I feel welcome, and opportunities to ask questions about topics are encouraged.

Clare Jenkins- Designated Clinical Officer, SEND, Frimley ICS





EDUCATION



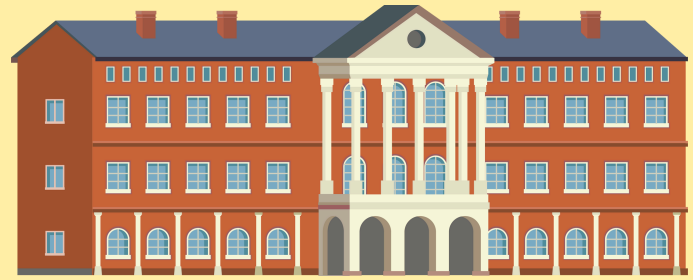
SEND PARTICIPATION PROJECT

WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES



The SEND Engagement and Participation Officer hosted a session at Wexham Secondary School that centred around the student voice of the children with additional needs. The aim of this collaborative work was to highlight the experiences, views and voices of young people with SEND and provide the students with a platform to share their views around the changes and accommodations that they would value in their school. This session was designed to give the 'power' to the young people to share what they think would make their school a more positive and productive experience for them and also improve their academic and social outcomes.





SEND PARTICIPATION PROJECT

WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES



Langley College students took part in a workshop, hosted by Together As One 20/02/2024 where they shared how they feel about entering the workforce. In the workshop the students highlighted their concerns, proposed solutions, discussed the skills that they have already gained and shared their views on a Langley College supported internship. This information was collected as a continuation of the work that Langley College does to promote student voice and have their students actively participate in reviewing and co-designing the College's projects in the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) department.

This feedback was then shared with the college so they can use the views of the young people to influence future decisions about their learning and how they can be prepared for the world of work.





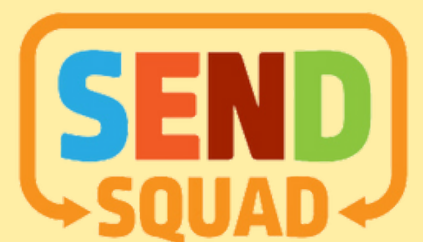
We have worked in collaboration with Jovi Armotrading and Together as One since November 2023. Our Learners have benefitted from a number of bespoke workshops that Jovi and the team have planned and delivered at the college. The learners have really enjoyed the interactive activities during the workshops and have experienced the ongoing opportunity to share their views, celebrations and concerns about the college, their local community and the services offered to them. The impact on learners is apparent as we have observed them grow in confidence and develop their personal skills in forming and reflecting on their individual views and needs.

The collaborative workshops around employability have been invaluable in gathering Learner voice and ideas to inform the planning of our employability pathways for young people with SEND. We have commenced a Supported Internship programme for 24/25 and intend to offer more transition to employment training courses and opportunities for 25/26.

Together as One provides a truly impartial, safe and professional outlet for our learners to express their thoughts and ideas. We look forward to working across 23/24 to enable our learners to take part in more community activities and continue to have a voice and feel heard, both in college and in their community. It is always a pleasure to work with Jovi and her Romaan, the energy and professionalism they bring to the college is inspiring to learners and staff alike.



Frances McSorely - Head of SEND Department - Langley College



OTHER SESSIONS AND COLLABORATIONS

- A member of the Youth Forum did a speech at a Diversity Day (hosted by Slough CVS) at Windsor racecourse about his experiences as a teenage boy with autism.
- Members hosted a whole school assembly at Ditton Park Academy to share their experiences with ADHD and the signs in girls. They also shared how it can impact day-to-day life, with the aim of increasing the understanding of students in the school.
- Young people attended the Parallel Windsor Festival of inclusivity.

- The Forum members have attended Adult Autism Steering Group
- The youth forum have consulted and provided feedback on a number of projects with the LA

These include:

- Preparation for Adulthood strategy
- Travel training transport initiative
- EHCP feedback- highlighting their understanding and involvement in EHCPs and Annual reviews.
- Annual health checks



The youth forum members also collaborated with a designer to create their logos, and gave themselves the alternative name the SEND Squad!

WHAT'S NEXT?

The SEND Youth Forum will be:

- Reviewing the new SEND Inclusion Strategy
- Collaborating with Wexham Park Hospital so that the young people can provide their feedback on accessibility and other suggestions
- Attending a DfE review
- Creating a self-regulation techniques document

The SEND Engagement and Participation Officer will be:

- Building and strengthening links with health colleagues to apply the SEND Youth Forum's inclusivity suggestions to more health settings
- Extended Youth Forum sessions to allow for cohorts from Langley College SEND Department to attend
- Collaborating with professionals at SBC and Families First to ensure the Wrap Around project is inclusive and can provide accommodations at the point of delivery
- Developing an offer to schools to consult with the students on the accommodations they feel are needed in their schools
- Working with SENDIASS to include children's views in the support they offer
- Continuing to collaborate with colleagues at the Local Authority and other organisations



We are thankful to all of the partners who have collaborated with us to ensure that young people have a say in the decisions that impact them and their future. There have been many amazing changes so far and we look forward to continually working to improve inclusivity in the services across our community and giving young people a platform to have fun together and share their experiences in order to make lasting positive change.

For more information, please contact Jovi Armotrading at jovi@togetherasone.org.uk