

Preparing for Adulthood Network

UPDATE FOR SEND FORUM

6TH MAY 2026

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About the network/community of practice

- ❖ Co-chaired by Amanda Percy (Portsmouth) and Simon Brown (Chichester College Group) with support from Julie and Sonia
- ❖ Mixed membership, LA, providers, parent/carers, health representation, Careers, Participation leads and young people, national representation (WSS, NATSPEC, AOC).
- ❖ All 19 LA's are represented. Each meeting between 20 and 30 members

Provides:

- ❖ support to members in navigating the PfA agenda
- ❖ Sharing of best practice across the region
- ❖ A unique opportunity to develop relationships across the sector, support/challenge/safe
- ❖ Task and finish groups for particular topic areas and challenges



Deliverables for 25.26



Quarterly meetings held online, July 25, September 25, November 25, February 26 and March 26



Agenda included, SEND AP review and White Paper, Transition from School to FE, Employment pathways, FE funding challenges and solutions, Access to Work, Connect to Work and LA and PCF updates.



Task and Finish group worked on Ordinarily Available Provision in FE. Report and further details on the [SESLIP website](#)



Face to Face session booked for 1st July in London. DfE Post 16 Team to attend with discussions on the White Paper and the Post 16 White Paper – **to book a place contact Sonia - sonia.dayal@sdsa.net**



Children and Young People Network



About the network

- ❑ Set up in 2025 to bring together those working directly with young people with SEND and additional needs (mostly participation leads)
- ❑ Co-chaired by Adeline Gibbs (NHS) and Julie Pointer (SESLIP) with support from Sonia
- ❑ Key priorities of the group include:
 - ❑ Support to professionals to eventually establish minimum expectations to improve outcomes for children and young people's voice and participation
 - ❑ Gather an understanding of practice across the region through a data survey
 - ❑ Use data to create a **"state of the region"** report – to be launched at the Celebration Event in June
 - ❑ Share resources across the region and create new ones as required
 - ❑ Lay the foundations for a Children and Young People forum – where young people are central to the co-design and delivery of the agenda moving forward



Deliverables for 25.26

- All 19 Local Authorities engaged with the network, including some health colleagues. Membership at meetings between 10 and 20
- Task and finish group to design the survey, including a young person's survey, and to cascade across the region
- Task and finish group to design the celebration event for June – a coming together of LA representation and young people to share how young people voice has supported and influenced service design, delivery and commissioning.
- Deep dive into Ofsted/CQC inspections with an eye on participation and voice – to be captured in the report
- Appointment of chair and co-chair to move the network forward in 2026/27



Survey responses – high level

10 responses were received

9 of the 10 responses answered **yes** to Has this survey been completed on behalf of a partnership or group representing the local area?

Roles of contributors

- 5 were made by just Local Authorities
- 2 included Local Authorities, education and health
- 1 included Local Authority and Social Care
- 1 included Local Authority and health
- 1 included Local Authority and their participation team



Who is providing support?

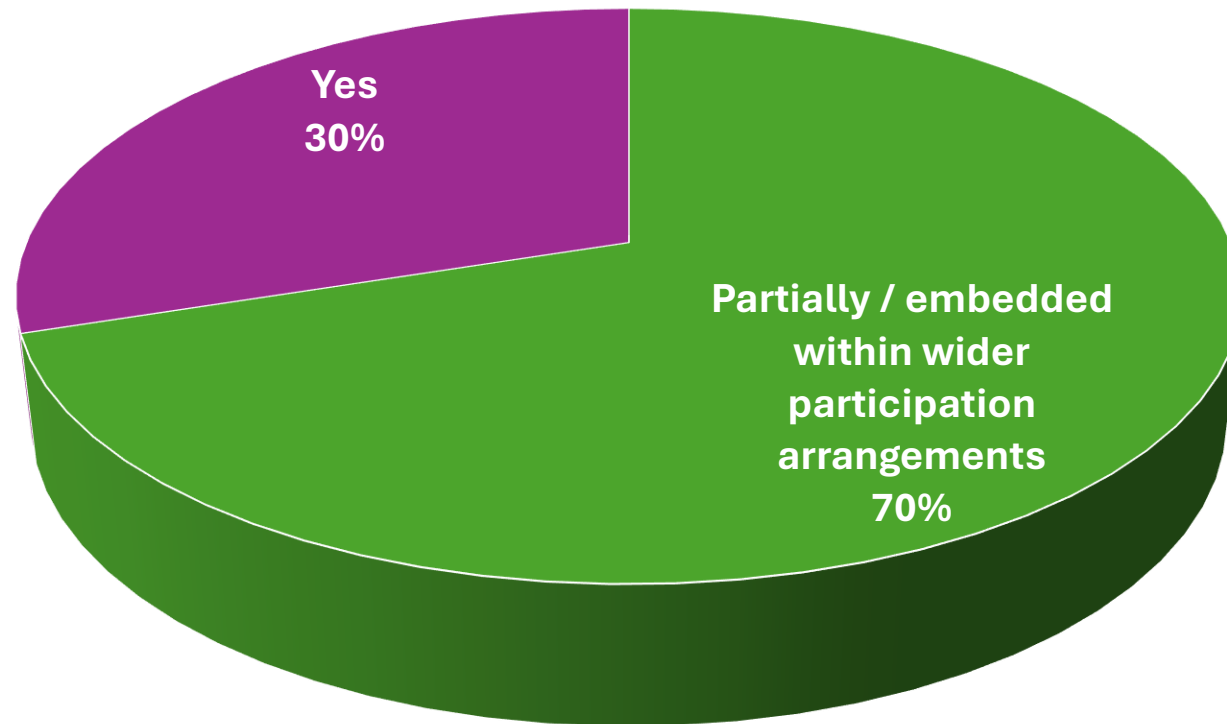
8 of the 10 Local Authorities have a formal role, team or named lead responsible for participation and engagement with children and young people (CYP) in their local area. These include:

- Information and guidance team in SEND team
- Children's Participation Service - Team Manager, Advocate, Participation Officer
- Strategic Head of Public Health
- 0.8 FTE of SEND Participation Officer. 0.2 FTE of the role covers Youth Parliament.
- Voice and participation team, as well as voice and participation officers for parents voice, kinship voice, two for Thoughtful mental health CYP.
- 2 main team members - Senior SEND project officer who is also the Co-Lead for SEND Youth Forum & a Participation & Engagement Officer. Both co-chairs of the Oxfordshire SEND Youth Forum since its launch in June 2024
- Youth Participation worker leading on a SEND Youth Forum, sitting in a specialist team of participation workers who work on other projects
- The User Voice and Participation Team sits within Quality & Performance in Children, Families and Lifelong Learning at Surrey County Council. The team provides dedicated leadership and coordination of youth participation across the local area.



SEND specific or broader?

Is this participation or engagement function specifically focused on children and young people with SEND?



How is voice captured?

All the Local Authorities use a broad range of approaches and the top 5 were:

Focus groups/forums

Surveys

Formal feedback channels

One-to-one conversations,

Digital engagement.

9 or the 10 Local Authorities **run specific participation or engagement activities for children and young people with SEND?**



What has been the impact?

- **Stronger Youth Influence**
- Young people directly influencing: Strategies, Local Offer redesign, Education, health and social care processes, Commissioning decisions, Transport and employment policies
- **Increased Visibility of CYP Perspectives**
- Clear differences between CYP and parent views highlighted.
- Authentic insights on lived experience changing professional understanding.
- **Personal Development Outcomes**
- Increased confidence and self-esteem.
- Greater independence and communication ability.
- Sense of belonging through groups (e.g., Youth Forums).
- **System Improvements**
- Co-designed EHCP paperwork.
- Accessible resources (videos, guides, easy read).
- Changes to bus pass rules, waiting room designs, and service pathways.
- **Expansion of Participation Infrastructure**
- Upskilling professionals through youth-led training.
- Creation of participation plans and toolkits.



Challenging areas

Engagement Barriers

- Accessing underrepresented groups (EHE, non-verbal CYP, youngest learners).
- Travel, cost, or geographical spread.
- CYP interest varying depending on topic.
- Families preferring recreational time over engagement events.

Capacity & Resource Constraints

- Too few participation workers.
- Over-reliance on small groups of engaged CYP.
- Short timelines from service leads making co-production difficult.

Need for Staff Training

- Inconsistent training across health, education and social care.
- Lack of awareness of how to gather meaningful CYP voice, especially for PMLD learners, Non-verbal CYP and CYP using alternative communication

Feedback Loops Not Always Consistent

- CYP don't always hear what changed because of their views.
- Variation in "You Said, We Did" practice.

Structural/Systemic Issues

- Siloed approaches across agencies.
- Duplicate requests for voice from multiple services.
- Emotional or mental health needs affecting engagement.



Common themes across all LA's

What works well

- Regular youth forums with clear purpose.
- Skilled participation workers.
- Creative and accessible engagement methods.
- Strong relationships between CYP and staff.

What's needed

- More consistency across agencies.
- Clearer strategic frameworks for participation.
- More accessible tools and training.
- A shared regional approach.
- Better mechanisms to measure impact.
- More outreach to underrepresented CYP groups.



WHO IS HEARD LESS OFTEN?

The most commonly under-heard groups were:

- Younger children
- CYP with high support needs, especially non-verbal children or those with complex communication needs
- CYP not in full-time education
- Home educated / EHE
- NEET
- CYP with language barriers

WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SAY MATTERS THE MOST RIGHT NOW

Recurring themes were:

- Being heard, believed and understood
- Timely support and reduced waiting times
- Better school inclusion, reasonable adjustments, and less stigma/bullying
- Mental health support
- Transitions to adulthood
- Post-16 pathways, employment, independence, and belonging



You are welcome to join us!

Hear from:

- DfE Participation Team
- Local Authority staff
- Young People

[Register here](#)



SESLIP
South East Sector Led
Improvement Programme



YOUNG PEOPLE'S CELEBRATION EVENT

CELEBRATING THE VOICES THAT MATTER

Join us to celebrate children and young people's achievements through voice and participation



Reading Football Club



Wednesday 24th June 2026



10:30am to 3:00pm



Refreshments will be included throughout the day and lunch is being provided

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

- ✓ Participation Leads
- ✓ Young People
- ✓ Health Leads
- ✓ PCF Leads
- ✓ Assistant Directors of Children Services

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

For further information please contact
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