

Topic: Opportunity

# Norfolk SEND Youth Forum



**Norfolk SENDIASS**  
Information, Advice and Support Service

*We provide free, confidential and impartial information, advice and support about special educational needs & disabilities (SEND) for children, young people, parents and carers.*

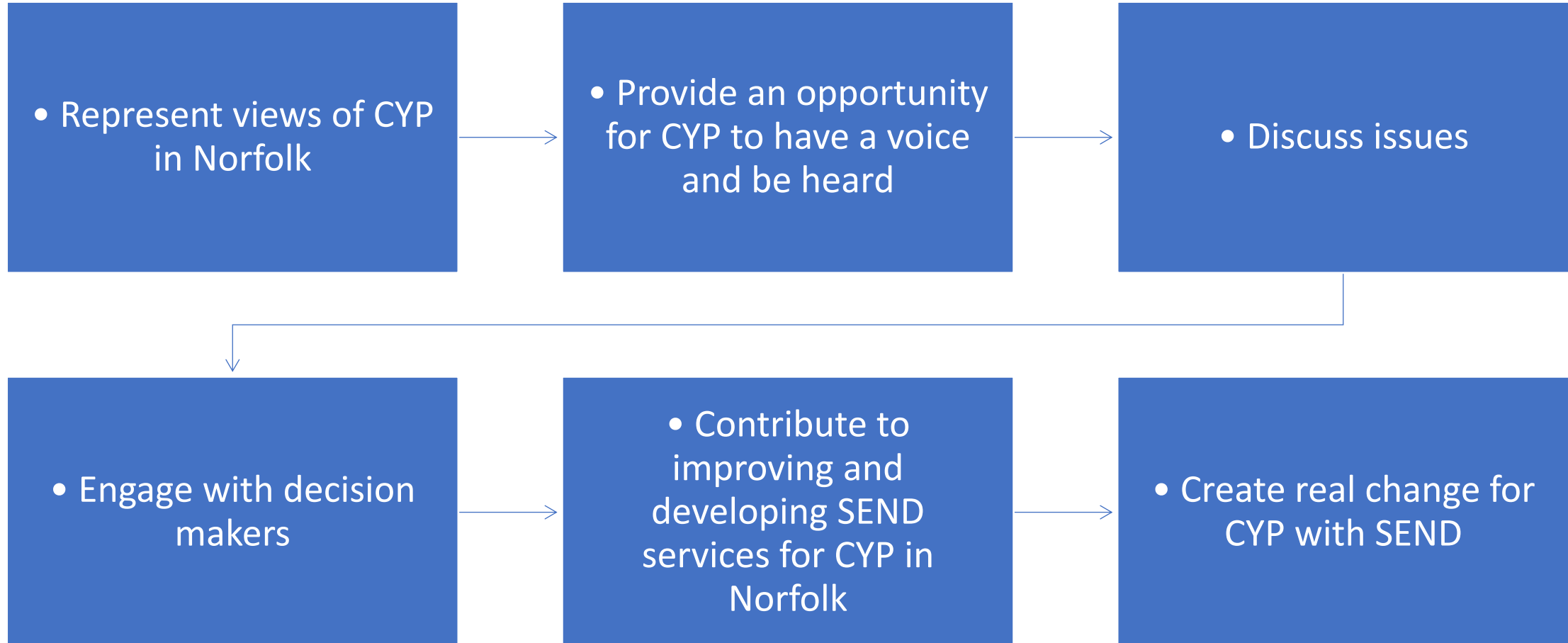
The background of this block shows a close-up of a laptop and a headset, suggesting a customer service or support environment.

# Introducing to you today.....

- Lily
- Isaac
- Charlotte



# Aims of the Group:



# What happens at the Norfolk SEND Youth Forum?

- Regular online meetings (every month)
- A minimum of X3 trips/outings/meetings face to face per year.
- Agenda co-produced with CYP
- Fun activities – building trust and developing positive relationships
- Professional consultations
- Opportunities to speak about their experiences to share holders
- Space for YF members to raise issues of concern
- Focus on ownership - CYP developing the Youth Forum to be what *they* want it to be
- Celebration and sharing sessions





# 2024

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Gaming Cafe Trip, March 2024





Flourish Awards September 2024, Finalists for the Individual Award.



We discussed the theme of “**opportunity**” with the Norfolk SEND Youth Forum, and three themes dominated:

- **Education**
- **Social opportunities**
- **Employment**



## Education:

### Feedback from members of the SEND Youth Forum:

- Risk assessments at schools too restrictive and do not always cover young people with SEND.
- Schools need to be more patient with us and be prepared to make extra help for us. Previous schools I've been to have sometimes been too lazy
- to do things for young people with additional needs.
- Schools do not listen to me.
- School did not allow me to take my wheelchair on a trip even though I needed it. I took the wheelchair with me and when I used it the school said it was a good job I brought it even though they had said I didn't need it. School did not listen to me.







## Lily speaking about Education

Hi I'm Lily and I'm with the Norfolk SEND youth forum, and I joined because I want to try to make a difference for all the SEND people in Norfolk and make sure they know they are not alone with wanting change. Today I wanted to talk about education, specifically how education was for me as a disabled person with cerebral palsy, dyslexia and possible ADD, this is my experience and I know this may not be the same for everyone.

When I was in school sometimes I felt as if my disability wasn't taken seriously enough because my disability isn't visible all the time, almost as if they were thinking "oh she can walk so she doesn't need that much help, she'll be fine" This is a stereotype I think needs to change. **Not ALL disabilities are visible** and more people need to understand this.

I kept in school until year 4 where I decided to be homeschooled because the school environment was too much for me, then after being homeschooled for a year I decided to go back since I missed the social side of school, so I returned for year 6 and wanted to try high school. Up until high school only a couple of schools I went to gave me the support I needed. As soon as I got to high school I was immediately disappointed. My teachers who were teaching me didn't even know I was disabled because they weren't told, I think that explains the rest of that experience. So after not even a few months into high school I decided that homeschooling was the only option for me. This upsets me now to see that I HAD to become homeschooled because I just didn't get the support I needed, which from what I've heard from other homeschooled kids that it was a similar thing for them too, as well as the fact that homeschooling isn't an option for everyone. This is why support in education needs to change.

But on a more positive note, since then I've joined city colleges 'year 11 course' for home educated people and the support has been amazing. I only do 3 days a week for my lessons and it's so much better for me mentally, and I have time to do my homework as well, where-as in school it was 5 days a week with a 2 day break which you would then have to do homework on those 2 days off. It was just too much for me.

At city college when I got the support immediately it almost made me sad because seeing how easy it was for them to accommodate me showed me how truly let down I have been in the past. But overall I think that if city college which has over 8000 students can accommodate my needs, then any other school with less students can do the same. Because of my experiences this makes me so passionate to help other kids with SEND to make their childhoods and experiences in school positive and to remember the joys of school rather than the lack of help and negative experiences.

## Social Obstacles: Feedback from members of the Norfolk SEND Youth Forum:

- Want to attend places such as social clubs on my own and be independent and can be frustrating as have to rely on parents/carers.
- Find it difficult to travel by myself as I need to keep safe but want to be more independent.
- The effort needed when you have additional needs is more exhausting for us than other young people.
- Having no prior information about an event can cause anxiety, and I worry about things. The barrier is there is not enough information so I can be prepared.
- Want to be independent and see other people doing what they want to do but I can't
- It is getting harder as we get older.
- Want to be independent and see other people doing what they want to do but I can't
- People do not see hidden conditions



## Isaac speaking about social opportunities:

I have always found being social very difficult, I need some understanding to be able to communicate and interact with others. Where I live, there is nothing set up **for young people like me.**

I tried a Sea Cadet's group but I didn't understand what I needed to do so gave up after an hour of being there. My hobbies are gaming but the nearest gaming café is in Norwich. I started at a cricket team but they did not understand me and this made me upset so I left. I would like to have somewhere close by that I could get to independently where my friends and I could have fun. I did attend a Church Youth group but my mum had to come and help, I enjoyed this but when I left high school I was unable to go anymore and there was nothing else for me.

For further education, the only college that would consider me for a place that was near me (21 miles away) would only let me do a level 1 course, I knew that I would be bored with this so I had to look elsewhere. I now travel over 40 miles to get to a suitable college this takes me over 2 hours each way, I have to get to Fakenham by car and do the rest by bus. It makes it hard to have friends as I live so far away from anyone and it also stops me seeing my friends here as I am out for long days. On my days off I do not want to go back into Norwich which is where most opportunities for socialising and doing things I enjoy are.

The increase in bus fares is not going to help, however there is not a great bus service near me.

I am struggling to find a part time job as where I live there are not many employers who would consider me, most of the work is in hospitality which would be a difficult environment for me to work in. Nobody has offered to help me find a job and I wouldn't know who to ask for support.

Covid was difficult for me because I got used to staying in and enjoyed working using the technology. I have struggled ever since to want to get out and be with others and it does not help that there is nowhere for me to go with my friends. We meet online but this is different to being able to go out and about with people as I am just in my bedroom.





# Employment – YF Feedback

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- **Feedback from members of the Norfolk SEND Youth Forum:**
  - Work experience - Automatic response from most schools - my so called "work experience" opportunity was only one thing working in a charity shop or help with woodland maintenance and I wanted to work with children.
  - Wanted to be a volunteer at the hospital but not given chance after training due to epilepsy. They raised my expectations but left me disappointed and frustrated as was not offered opportunity to be a volunteer after the training.
  - When I was trying to get volunteering/work, the man wasn't listening to what I wanted to do.
  - I need prescription medication for my ADHD which can result in me not able to access certain job opportunities that I would like to do.



# Charlotte speaking about Employment

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I am 23 years old, and have struggled to find employment, I am keen to work.

It's hard to find employment when you have a disability or medical condition, I feel like people judge me before they even meet me and don't hear what I have to say.

I had help from a Norfolk Employment Co-ordinator, who said there was nothing out there and even struggled to find any volunteer roles. There seems only charity shops or gardening roles available.

My passion is to work with children. I already volunteer for Action for Children and a couple of guide groups (Rainbows and Brownies) and they seem to see me as a person and what I can offer and not my disability.

I tried to volunteer to work at the hospital, I achieved all the training, I had managed to start at the hospital, but within a couple of weeks, it was decided that my epilepsy could cause a problem, as it was too much for people to feel responsible for me, and I hadn't even had a seizure in that time, I also hadn't asked for people to look after me. And why is it we are good enough to volunteer but not good enough to be paid in a role.

I would like to see more job opportunities for people with disabilities.

For more employers to be open minded to what people with disability have to offer.



## **Changing attitudes to disabled people**

Barriers are not just physical. Attitudes found in society, based on prejudice or stereotypes also disable people from having equal opportunities to be part of society.



# Feedback from our members:

- Want social opportunities which they can access close to where they live.
- Can recognise when a setting is proactive in meeting their support needs....and when they are not.
- Rely heavily on parents, to enable them to access and engage in activities and opportunities, into adulthood.
- They share the same aspirations as other young people to be independent, have relationships, have fun with people their own age, and to have more opportunities to access work and meaningful activities.



### What our members say....

I feel  
valued

We have a sense  
of community

I love how members  
of the group support  
each other

I feel inspired  
and happy

I feel listened  
to and equal

It is fun and I  
always enjoy the  
meetings!



# Contact Details:

How to:

- Register (join) the Norfolk SEND Youth Forum or
- Make a request to consult with the group:

Go to the Norfolk SENDIASS Web site and complete an on-line Registration Form or Professional request form, and we will then contact you to identify and discuss how we can best support you.

<https://www.norfolksendiass.org.uk/young-people/>

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