

Welcome to the December issue of the SEND newsletter. This is a space for us to share news and updates across the service, events and resources from our partners and highlight stories from the community.



SEND and Inclusion Strategy update

We are excited to share the progress of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy, which continues to grow and evolve thanks to your valuable input. The feedback gathered from parents, carers, and educators during the recent workshops, as well as through the online survey, has played a vital role in shaping the strategy.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has contributed so far. Your insights and suggestions have been carefully reviewed and incorporated into the development of the strategy. To ensure transparency and show how your feedback has been used, we have created a 'You Said, We Will'

document, which is now available on the Local Offer website.

We are committed to hearing from as many voices as possible. Consultation on the strategy will remain open until 20 December, so there is still time to share your thoughts and ideas.

Visit the [Slough Local Offer](#) to view the strategy and the feedback document. If you have further comments or suggestions, please don't hesitate to get in touch via email:

samantha.caley@slough.gov.uk

Together, we can create a strategy that truly reflects the needs and aspirations of the SEND community in Slough.

Contacting the SEND Team

There are two dedicated email addresses to help you contact us, and to help us effectively respond to you, we would ask that you please use the correct email address depending on the nature of your contact with us:

SEND_EHCNArequest@slough.gov.uk
This email is the address to send all your ECH Needs Assessment request.

SENDteam@slough.gov.uk
This email is for all other enquiries

Or call us on 01753 787676

Anyone can join our SEND newsletter mailing list, so please encourage your fellow SEND Parents and Carers to subscribe for direct updates and information - they can email us directly at SENDnewsletter@slough.gov.uk We are changing how we do things and we want you and your young people to be at the heart of everything that we do.



Staff updates and new appointments in Slough SEND

As part of our ongoing commitment to building a robust and high-performing SEND team, several staff changes have taken place:

- Brynmor Smart, who temporarily held the post of Head of Service (SEND), has transitioned voluntarily to the role of Tribunal Lead.
- Paul Crulley, who joined Slough in October as SEND Operational Lead, has now stepped into the position of Head of Service (SEND) as of December 9.
- Sofia Farid has moved from her previous position as Team Lead for Annual Reviews to take up the role of Complaints Officer, a voluntary shift.
- Jay Murphy, a highly experienced SEND manager, has joined the team as SEND Operational Lead and will also oversee the Annual Review Team.

Like many local authorities, Slough SEND relies significantly on

experienced interim staff. However, we are determined to increase the number of skilled permanent team members in the coming months. Establishing a solid foundation is imperative for providing consistency to schools, families, children, and young people.

Introducing Paul Crulley, Head of Service (SEND)



I am excited to step into the role of Head of Service (SEND) and bring my varied career experiences in

management, education, and SEND to Slough. My background as an educator allows me to empathise deeply with teachers, headteachers, and SENDCOs as they navigate the complexities of the SEND landscape.

My vision for Slough SEND is to become one of the leading examples in the country of how empathy, professionalism, and financial management can work together to ensure children and young people receive the correct support and opportunities.

In collaboration with colleagues across the local authority, I have already started driving service improvements. Together, we are committed to achieving excellence for your children and young people.

I look forward to meeting and working closely with as many of you as possible in the coming months to ensure we continue to improve outcomes for the Slough community.

Celebrating partnership: attending the Special Voices Event

We were delighted to attend the recent Special Voices (SV) event, hosted by our valued Parent/Carer Forum. It was an inspiring and energising day that highlighted the strength of partnership working between Slough SEND and the parent/carers community.

The event provided an opportunity to hear directly from parents and

carers about their experiences, challenges, and hopes for the future. These honest and insightful conversations are invaluable as we continue to shape and improve SEND services in Slough. It was also a chance to share updates about our ongoing work.

The dedication and passion of the Special Voices team were clear to see. Their tireless work in bringing

together parents, carers, and professionals creates an open and collaborative environment that benefits everyone involved.

A huge thank you to Special Voices for organising such an impactful event. We look forward to continuing this vital partnership as we work towards shared goals for our children and young people.

Keeping you updated

SEND Challenges and priorities

The period from November through March is traditionally one of the most demanding for SEND teams across local authorities, and this year is no exception. In Slough, several critical areas are being prioritised to ensure statutory duties are met and services for schools, families, children, and young people are improved.

Phase Transfer - a top priority

The statutory deadlines for completing amended Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) for school-age children are fast approaching. These deadlines, part of the Phase Transfer process, are set for February 15 for children transitioning to a new school setting and 31 March for Year 11 students moving into post-16 education.

Meeting these statutory deadlines is the highest priority for Slough SEND during this period. Recognising the challenges presented by limited staffing capacity, our new Head of Service (SEND) is working with colleagues across the local authority to bring in additional resources to support the Phase Transfer process.

In the coming months, we will also announce process improvements to ensure smoother transitions for schools, parents, children, and young people. These enhancements aim to make the experience of Phase Transfer more efficient and less stressful for all involved.



Building for the future

Slough SEND is committed to addressing these challenges head-on and ensuring that services meet statutory requirements while providing the best possible outcomes for children and young people. By focusing on immediate priorities such as Phase Transfer, Annual Reviews, and EHCP compliance, and by bringing in additional capacity where necessary, we aim to build a stronger, more efficient service.

We thank our schools, parents, and wider community for their patience and support as we work towards these goals. Further updates will follow in the coming months as we implement and embed improvements across our processes.



Addressing delays in annual reviews

One of the ongoing challenges for Slough SEND has been managing delays in addressing Annual Reviews. This essential area of statutory work requires immediate action to stabilise and return to an acceptable service level. Staffing capacity constraints have contributed to delays, but we are now focusing greater effort on tackling this issue.

To address these delays, a task force is being established. Its primary focus will be on identifying Annual Reviews requiring amendment notices and ensuring that these are completed in a timely and efficient manner.

Improving compliance with the 20-week statutory timescale

Another area of priority lies in meeting the statutory 20-week timescale for the assessment and, if appropriate, production of an EHCP. External factors have caused compliance rates to fall below expected levels, requiring urgent attention.

To address this, we are arranging further resources to support our existing assessment team. This additional capacity will enable the timely production of new assessments and EHCPs, ensuring compliance with statutory deadlines.



Inclusion Champions - join the movement for a more inclusive Slough

Supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), along with their families, should be seen as everyone's responsibility. We are striving to create a culture where inclusion and a strengths-based approach to supporting children and young people with SEND become second nature.

This is where Inclusion Champions come in. We invite you to get involved and join a growing community of individuals committed to making a difference. Together, we can spark a cultural shift towards a more inclusive Slough.

You might think that, as one person, you have little influence to redesign services or make systemic changes - but our collective energy can create meaningful impact for the young people we serve.

Who can be an Inclusion Champion?

Anyone can! You don't need to work in a SEND service, hold a specific job title, or even be in a people-facing

role. Whether you're a parent, professional, volunteer, or simply someone passionate about inclusion, your voice matters. Inclusion Champions are needed everywhere to help foster understanding, break down barriers, and ensure everyone feels valued and supported. Join us in making a difference!

What's Involved?

As an Inclusion Champion, you'll be part of a vibrant network of like-minded people who are driven to create change. You'll receive training, development, and ongoing support to help you advocate for children and young people with SEND effectively.

Here's what you'll gain access to:

- **Initial Training:** A ½ day or 1-day face-to-face session to get you started.
- **Collaboration Opportunities:** Work closely with young people with SEND and Special Voices Parent Carer Forum to understand how to be a strong champion for their interests.

- **Networking & Peer Learning:** Participate in networking and development sessions to share successes, challenges, and resources with other Inclusion Champions.
- **Ongoing Skills Development:** Receive continued training in tools and techniques to challenge and improve the culture of inclusion across Slough.

Ready to get involved?

Together, we can break down barriers and promote inclusion in every corner of Slough. Whether you're a professional, parent, or passionate community member, your voice and efforts can help create a more inclusive environment for all.

To express your interest or learn more about becoming an Inclusion Champion, please contact Samantha Caley at: samantha.caley@slough.gov.uk

Let's work together to build a community where every young person feels seen, valued, and supported.

What's new in the Early Years Education SEND Team?

The Early Years SEND team have developed a new Early Years Nurture Group, a SEND specific group for early years children and families run by our two Early Years practitioners Sarah Covell and Amanda Zanini.

This group has been set up for early years children referred to the service by paediatricians at the Child Development Centre, and by Early Help practitioners who are working with young children with complex needs, and the Nurture Group is by invite only.

During the sessions the practitioners will work with the children using different play techniques and early interventions that are identified for the child's specific needs, the techniques are modelled to the parent/carers and the reasoning behind the said approaches so that they can be used independently with their children.

The EY practitioners introduce the children and families to visual communication and Makaton signing to support the development of communication. For children that can attend our Nurture Group sessions regularly, practitioners are able to facilitate supported transitions for the child and work with the new setting, identified learning styles and strategies can be shared with settings during transition, this information helps to establish a starting point for new plans to be quickly put in place. This in turn improves the outcomes for a child's early years development.

The practitioners share their knowledge and skills and have

introduced half termly workshops for the parents to learn new skills, make appropriate resources, and discuss the benefits. Regular guest speakers are invited to come along and share their services and job roles. The group provides contact details of the SEND services available to Slough children, encouraging parents to feel empowered to know their rights and actively help prepare for their child's future.

Practitioners work with multi agencies and contact with local settings and professionals from various agencies, health, social care, nursery providers and schools. When needed, and with permission from parents, they work together and share information to ensure the best outcomes and high levels of support are in place for our children and their families.



If further information is required, please email: eyinclusion@slough.gov.uk

CAMHS project

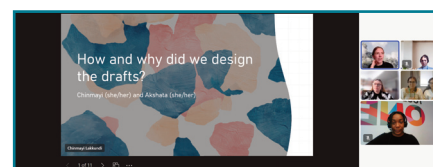
The SEND Youth Forum's collaborative work with CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) is an exciting part of a quality improvement project, led by Emily Batt (Assistant Psychologist, CAMHS), in partnership with the SEND Youth Forum.

This initiative provided a valuable opportunity for two forum members to work directly with Emily and Jovi Armotrading to review and redesign the current safety plans used by CAMHS.

Together, they co-designed a new version of the safety plan, focusing on making the document more child-friendly, interactive, and accessible. Changes were made not only to the design but also to the language used, ensuring that it resonates with young people and is easier to understand. This process reflects our commitment to ensuring that services are designed with young people, for young people, with their voices at the centre.

The project culminated in the forum members presenting the new safety plan to the CAMHS team, where they had the opportunity to ask questions and engage directly with the Clinical Psychologist. Both forum members expressed a keen interest in psychology as part of their future career aspirations, making this a particularly impactful experience for them.

This collaboration highlights the strength of co-production, ensuring that young people's perspectives are not only heard but actively shape the services they use.



Empowering Youth Voices: SEND representation in action

We are thrilled to announce that the SEND Slough Youth Parliament Representative Rachita Dhoke, played a key role in the Slough Youth Awards held on 22 November by presenting an award. This is not only a fantastic way to celebrate the achievements of young people across Slough, but also a valuable opportunity for our representative to build confidence and public speaking skills.

Our Youth Parliament is proud to include a growing number of members with additional needs, and we are committed to fostering

safe, inclusive spaces where all young people can participate meaningfully and positively impact their community. These inclusive environments ensure that everyone's voice is heard and valued.

The Youth Voice Team is also excited to announce the development of a new youth group. This group will play a crucial role in influencing two key boards, including one responsible for implementing the SEND Strategy. By participating in these boards, young people will have a real platform to share their

lived experiences, insights, and ideas directly with decision-makers. This initiative empowers them to shape services and policies that impact their lives and their community, making a tangible difference.

We are proud of our young people's commitment to leadership and inclusion, and we look forward to seeing how they continue to inspire and drive positive change in Slough.

For more updates and ways to get involved, stay connected with the Youth Voice Team!
sloughforyouth@slough.gov.uk

Local festive events and activities

Christmas is here - a time of joy and reflection, which can bring a mix of emotions for many.

There are so many wonderful activities and events happening this festive season to get everyone in the holiday spirit. From family-friendly outings to tailored activities for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), there's something for everyone to enjoy.

What's happening this Christmas?

Christmas Holiday Activities 2024

Discover a variety of events and workshops designed to keep the whole family entertained during the holidays. From creative crafts to festive games, there's no shortage of fun this season.

Slough Rocks

Looking for inspiration? Explore Slough Rocks for exciting ideas, including outdoor trails, festive markets, and winter wonderland experiences.

Inclusive Activities for Children and Young People with SEND

Activities designed specifically for children and young people with SEND are clearly marked with the Local Offer symbol on our website. These events ensure accessibility, inclusivity, and opportunities for everyone to enjoy the magic of Christmas.

Let's make this Christmas unforgettable with festive fun, inclusive events, and opportunities to create cherished memories with your loved ones.

Visit the [Slough Information and Services Guide | Christmas holiday activities around Slough](#) for more details, and let the celebrations begin!

SENDIASS training opportunities

We are pleased to share that regular training sessions on a variety of SEND topics are available on the SENDIASS website.

These training opportunities are designed to support parents, carers, young adults, and professionals alike, offering valuable insights into the SEND system and how to navigate it effectively.

Both morning and twilight sessions are available, providing flexible options to suit different schedules. We encourage everyone to take advantage of these sessions to gain a deeper understanding of SEND-related topics, and improve their knowledge and skills in supporting young people with SEND.

For more information and to book a place, please visit [Slough SENDIASS](#)



SEND Youth Forum

As part of the SEND Participation Project, the SEND Youth Forum was established to offer young people a platform to share their views, lived experiences, and provide valuable feedback to decision-makers across services.

This initiative not only empowers young people to engage in shaping the services that impact them, but also provides a space for them to connect with their peers, build social relationships, and discuss issues that matter to them.

In addition to offering these opportunities, the Youth Forum serves as a conduit for feedback that is shared with our colleagues in the local authority, health, and education sectors. We also invite professionals to join us, fostering discussions on how services can be made more accessible, and identifying opportunities for co-production - where young people, parents, and professionals collaborate to design and improve services.



The group operates based on four key frameworks:

- **Participation:** Empowering young people to play an active role in the planning, development, and review of services that directly affect them.
- **Social Skill Development:** Creating opportunities for young people to connect with others, build peer relationships, and develop key social skills.
- **Celebrating Neurodiversity:** Promoting a positive view of neurodiversity by celebrating the strengths and contributions of neurodivergent individuals.
- **Providing Experiences:** Offering a range of activities, discussions, and experiences that engage young people in new environments, while also providing the chance to meet and collaborate with professionals in meaningful ways.

We are excited to share the SEND Participation Project Annual Report, which highlights the significant achievements of the past year. This report, led by the SEND

Engagement and Participation Officer, Jovi Armotrading, offers a powerful reflection of the hard work, dedication, and progress made within the project.

The SEND Youth Forum has played a pivotal role in amplifying the voices of young people, providing them with a platform to share their experiences and perspectives. The growth of the forum has not only created an inclusive and supportive environment but has also helped foster a sense of community among the young people involved. Through these efforts, they have developed greater confidence, strengthened their sense of belonging, and raised awareness about the experiences of SEND young people. To download and read the full report - [Annual Report](#)

The SEND Youth Forum is open to 11- 25-year-olds and meets on the last Wednesday of every month from 5.30-7.30pm at 29 Church Street, SL1 1PL. We encourage all young people who are interested, to join us and become a part of this vibrant, impactful group.

For further information contact:

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Email: jovi@togetherasone.org.uk

Website: [SEND - Together As One](#)