

Young Voices

Information about a West Sussex young people's group



This has been written by SENDIAS and West Sussex Young Voices.
It is suitable for Young People (YP), parent/carers and professionals.

Who are Young Voices?

- ❖ Young Voices is a youth voice group in West Sussex.
- ❖ It is made up of young people with additional needs (including SEND and neuro-divergent conditions) up to the age of 25.
- ❖ Young Voices' members aim to influence positive change within WSCC services, whilst also having fun and making friends.

What is the Young Voices forum?

- ❖ The Young Voices Forum was created in 2018.
- ❖ It is supported by the WSCC SEND Participation Lead.
- ❖ Members are secondary school age up to age 25, and have a range of needs, skills and talents.
- ❖ All members feel that young people having a voice is important and are 'experts by experience'. They live in, are educated in, or are cared for by West Sussex.

What does SEND mean?

- ❖ SEND stands for **S**pecial **E**ducational **N**eeds and **D**isabilities.
- ❖ Some Young Voices' members would describe themselves as a disabled person, others say 'additional needs' and some would describe their needs differently or prefer not to give themselves any particular label.
- ❖ Young Voices include neurodiversity and social, emotional, and mental health needs within their group.

Who can join Young Voices?

- ❖ Young people must be secondary aged up to age 25, live and/or study in West Sussex, and have an additional need.
- ❖ Young people do not need to have an EHCP or have a diagnosis to take part.

How can Young Voices help me?

- ❖ Young people say that participating in Young Voices has boosted their confidence.
- ❖ There is a focus on supporting young people's employability. This includes life skills such as making a good first impression, being assertive, giving a good presentation and teamwork.
- ❖ Half termly social sessions provide opportunities to meet new people and socialise in a supported way. Some young people have made lasting friendships and connections with others.
- ❖ Young people's contributions and achievements are celebrated with certificates and when young people are involved with a project requiring more time and effort, they are thanked with gift vouchers.
- ❖ Young people are also offered the opportunity to work towards an ASDAN award if they wish to.

Are the meetings in person or face-to-face? Would I have to attend them all?

- ❖ Young Voices meet every two weeks, on Thursdays.
- ❖ You would not need to attend every fortnight, but they recommend you attend as often as you can to get the best out of the group

- ❖ The meetings are 'hybrid'. The in-person element is currently in Worthing, and the online option uses Zoom.
- ❖ Young people do not need to have an EHCP, be on their school/college's SEND register or have a diagnosis to take part.

If I join the forum, how could this help other Young Voices?

- ❖ Young Voices' views are reported to the Children First Board, the SEND and Alternative Provision Board and multiple steering and working groups and other decision makers in WSCC. These organisations focus on improving services children and young people use.
- ❖ Young Voices look for small changes that can make a big difference by asking young people what matters to them.
- ❖ It really does make a difference for decision makers to hear from real young people about their lives, experiences, hopes and dreams. For example, Young Voices have created a training workshop about sensory overload; they have now delivered this to multiple teams of professionals, to improve their understanding of autism and sensory overload.

How would Young Voices protect my digital and personal safety?

- ❖ Young Voices will never use your name, photos or any other personal details that could identify you, unless you give your express consent.
- ❖ Any social media groups are monitored by staff, and are closed groups, which means that they are private and invitation only. Risk assessments and procedures in place to ensure that this is done safely.
- ❖ Any inappropriate activity, including bullying, will not be tolerated.
- ❖ Young people are always asked to register ahead of these online events and meetings, and they will never admit someone until they know who they are.
- ❖ No personal details will be shared, and young people are always asked to take part using their first name only.

Further information:

- ❖ Contact Young Voices- lauren.boal@westsussex.gov.uk or voice@westsussex.gov.uk
- ❖ Other sources of local information for young people include local [libraries](#), the [WSCC Local Offer](#), [Your Space](#) and [Find it Out Centres](#)
- ❖ [Other SENDIAS factsheets](#)



Any questions? If so, contact us at SENDIAS (cyp.sendias@westsussex.gov.uk) and we will advise you if we can. If we don't know the answer, we will signpost you to another service who can advise you.

Service Statement

The role of the SENDIAS service is to ensure all parents, children and young people have access to impartial information, advice and support so they can make informed decisions related to their situation. Any information that is shared with the service is in confidence unless permission has been obtained to share this with any individuals, services and agencies that may be able to help in the circumstances. For more detail, view our [policies and privacy notice](#) on our website.

How to contact us: Tel: 0330 222 8555 / Email: send.ias@westsussex.gov.uk or cyp.sendias@westsussex.gov.uk (up to age 25) / Website: www.westsussexsendias.org

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