

Central Bedfordshire SENDIASS: Digital solutions to support and enhance our offer

The context

Central Bedfordshire Local Authority has a population of around 300 000 with approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ under 18 years old. It is a largely rural area with roughly half living in the countryside and the remainder in large market towns. In the 2011 census 10.3% of residents were from black or ethnic minority communities. In 2017 8.2% of school children were known to be eligible for free school meals. The number of EHC plans issued each year continues to increase with over 2000 currently in place and approximately 11.5% of students receive SEN support.

In November 2019 an Area SEND Inspection was completed by Ofsted which resulted in a Written Statement of Action being produced, which is still being implemented.

Central Bedfordshire SENDIASS is an in-house service which meets the statutory duty to provide impartial information, advice and support as detailed in the SEND code of Practice 2015 Chapter 2. In September 2020 we were joined by a Youth Engagement SENDIASS officer who has been implementing an action plan to lead the development of a service which better meets the needs of Children and Young people (CYP) with SEND.

In March 2020 the country experienced significant restrictions due to the Coronavirus pandemic which resulted in schools closing and a working from home approach. Emphasis was placed on technology which supported remote learning and working including virtual meetings.

The issue

Supporting the CYP to engage with SEN processes that affect them; supporting their voice and empowering them to move forwards with independence.

With multiple practitioners, schools and colleges across the region each taking a different approach to engaging CYP the challenge was to find a motivating, flexible and personal approach which CYP can own and can be shared easily, is responsive to need and easy to maintain.

An added complication was doing this during a pandemic when only meeting remotely was possible.

The support provided by IASS

The Youth Engagement officer has been developing the outline of a procedure to support engagement that can act as a guide for SENDIASS officers supporting CYP directly and can also be taken forward by the CYP to use with other practitioners in the future. Part of this procedure includes helping the CYP express their views and/or concerns to their school and/or supporting practitioners. The Youth Engagement officer meets individually with the CYP virtually. They will use the format of a Jamboard to create the structure and recording of their discussions as the CYP begins to express them.

Jamboard is a google page white allows participants to collaborate (anonymously if required) in real time on an interactive digital whiteboard that can be saved and shared. For more information please use the link below:

<https://support.google.com/jamboard/answer/7424836?hl=en>

The CYP can continue to use the Jamboard after the meeting- adding to it or using it as a communication tool to raise questions. Jamboard is personal to each CYP and the information recorded is led by them. It can be specific to the current situation impacting on a CYP or more generalised. Multiple whiteboards can be used to help develop ideas e.g. what's working/what's not working/next steps/review. It is an easy format to use remotely which can be modified at any time and shared with other practitioners. Once shared, the Jamboard can also become a communication tool for sharing ideas to develop solutions or raise further questions. However, the CYP remains in control of who they share it with and who can edit it. The process promotes a "tell it once" approach and as it is 'owned' by the CYP it can be a powerful tool to support their voice, particularly during meetings where they may find it difficult to express themselves.

Examples of where we have found the approach useful or where we feel it could be utilised include to support a CYP:

- during the EHC needs assessment process or annual review of an EHC plan.
- to raise a complaint with their school
- with PfA planning
- following an exclusion.
- in formal processes such as mediation or disagreement resolution
- through the appeal process and at a tribunal hearing.

The difference made

During the pandemic, when it was only possible to meet remotely, it proved a useful tool to start building a relationship with a CYP and to produce a resource they can take forward; promoting their independence.

All of the CYP supported by IASS have SEND and may experience needs which create barriers to them participating in meetings and sharing their views, concerns and ideas. Some CYP may experience additional barriers to expressing their voice and feeling it is heard. This resource is helping to break down some of these barriers.

We have now experienced a number of cases where it has been a successful tool in helping to resolve an otherwise difficult situation for the CYP.

One example is when a CYP felt their school was not listening to them when they raised their concerns. The situation had led to a breakdown in communication with the school where the CYP had almost given up hope of resolving the situation, feeling too intimidated to meet with the school. The CYP had working memory and processing difficulties and struggled with confidence. The Jamboard was used before the meeting to help the CYP pull their thoughts together and then as a reference during the meeting.

Following the meeting the CYP explained they felt the meeting was very positive and the Jamboard had helped them feel 'strong'.

The service has seen a different CYP join a meeting and state 'has everyone seen my Jamboard?' before wanting to continue with the meeting.

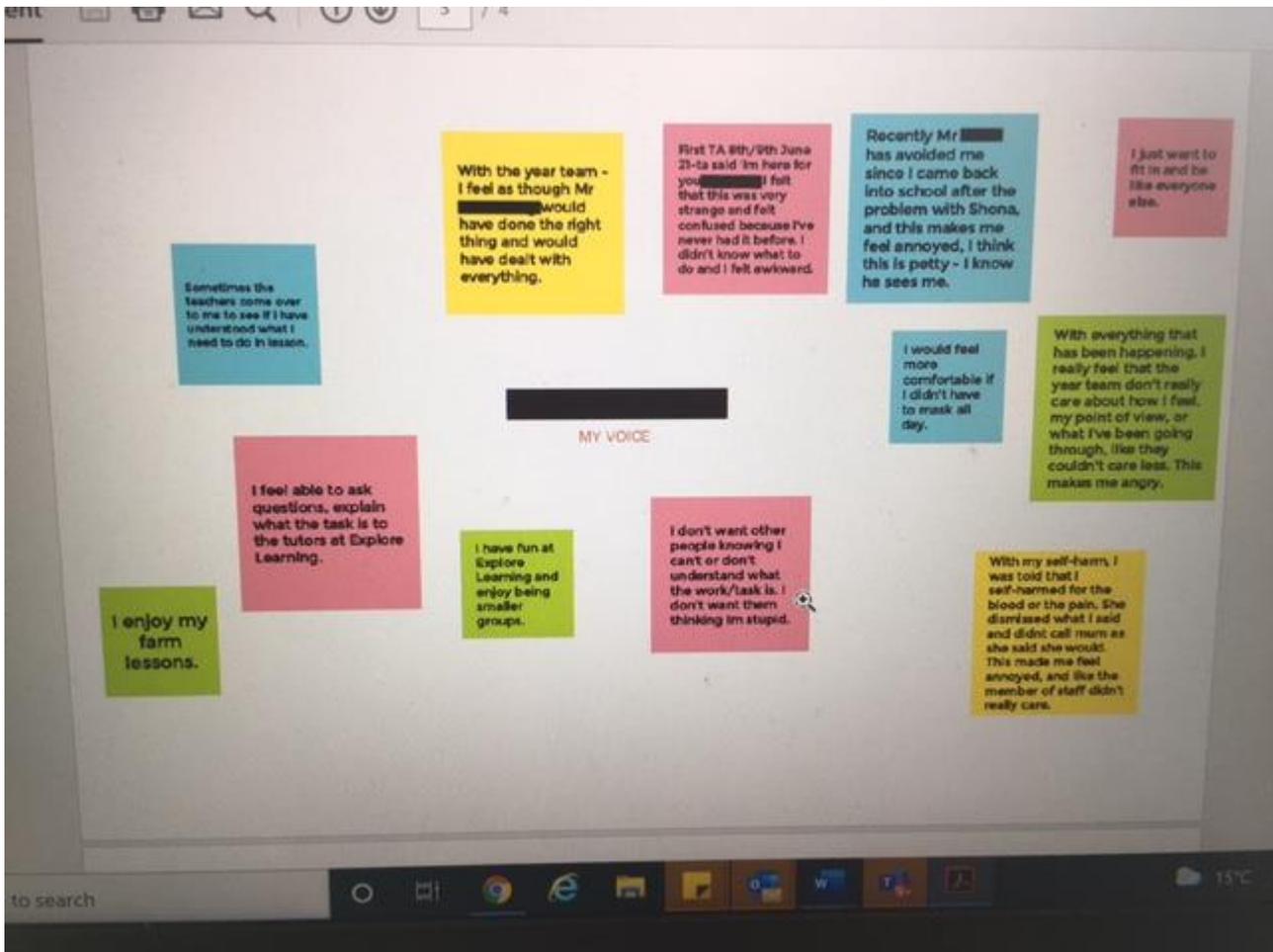
The pictures below are an example of a Jamboard.

WHAT I STRUGGLE WITH

- have been moved to sit next to a girl that doesn't talk. I might as well sit next to a brick wall. Teacher asks us to talk about the topic/answers, she doesn't talk. Feel isolated, lonely, being punished, no different than me sitting on my
- struggle with understanding about my self-harm and suicidal thoughts.
- Relationships, making and keeping.
- My old maths teacher used to call me Ashley, which annoyed me as she would have a go at me if I didn't respond to her - but this isn't my name.
- When I go back to school on Monday, most of my teachers change because of year 9 options, I might find this difficult as I like consistency.
- Focusing, day to day, moods, other people expectation.
- Like the Maths that we worked on the day before, I don't feel I can put my hand up to ask the teacher because then everyone is going to be looking at me. I don't ask the person next to me because I don't want them think
- annoys me when the year team just send me home, rather than asking why or what's happened, or trying to help me, and I don't think this is the right thing to do sometimes - if you don't deal with the problem it will likely
- Anxiety and stress
- Non-routine
- Reading and spelling.
- I find it hard to say what works for me because I don't know as I've never had the help to see what works.
- Needs, movement and visual changes are distracting
- Communicating
- Trusting people.
- Emotional difficulties.
- I can't wait until I'm 16 and can leave Redbourne - I've never liked this school.
- one word to rewrite the sentence, my hand aches, hand writing is messy, can't keep up with the teacher, lose concentration, causes my anxiety to get worse, feels like everyone is staring at me cause I'm the only one sitting there while
- Teachers that don't understand me or try to help me.
- WHAT I STRUGGLE WITH
- When a teacher says she/he going to do something and then doesn't.
- Knowing what I want to say but can't get it down on paper.
- Sensory with clothes.
- Unable to stay focused.
- I don't like when a teacher shouts/looks or expression at me as it makes me feel anxious, defensive, angry and then I shut down and stop listening.
- I get tired easily.
- Teachers that don't understand me or try to help me.
- Remembering / forgetfulness.
- Having to mask all day.
- I don't have confidence.
- I find it hard to talk about myself.
- Being asked lots of questions.
- School makes me feel annoyed, angry and anxious and sometimes I feel like dropping out of school
- I can't cope when things change, teachers, lesson rooms.
- Organisation.
- I don't have confidence.
- I find it hard to talk about myself.
- Being asked lots of questions.
- When I was been talking to Mrs [redacted] and I ran over into 4th lesson she said she would email Mr Armstrong to verify how why I was late, she didn't which then I got detention because of this. My mum had to email them.
- move seats because of 664/22 studying - dirty looks/shouting at me. Why am I always the one that has to be made to move. It annoys me because it feels like they always get away with stuff and I get punished by being to
- My Cooking Teacher saying she is going to report me and it's my fault I can't read black on white. It annoyed me because it's not my fault and she don't want to listen why I couldn't read black on white.
- I have two English teachers, one understands me and the other annoys me - she just seems to have a go at me.
- Not listening to my side of the story.
- It annoys me when I have my hand up and no teacher answers me and I know they have seen my hand.
- I struggle to talk to the pupils but feel better with adults.
- part of me thinks that none of the year team actually care about me, how I feel, what matters to me or what's going on for me.

WHAT COULD MAKE THINGS BETTER

- Not having so much pressure.
- Having practical learning.
- Teachers speaking calm and nicely and not rude.
- I think having some time away from Redbourne would really help - like going to seeds of change for a bit to do my English and maths, and get some therapy around what I've been through and my needs.
- If my teacher didn't change all the time.
- I don't feel like know what support could help me at Redbourne because I don't feel I've been supported enough to know what helps.
- Having a TA that I can ask if I get stuck on reading.
- Being able to sit quietly when anxiety and stressed.
- Extra time to help me understand my work or tasks.
- Help with my ASD.
- If I didn't have to mask all day at school.
- Explaining things better to help me understand.
- Time out to have a rested.
- Teacher saying the same thing.
- Help with my Mental Health.
- Not being put on the spot to answer questions in class.
- Help with my Social & Emotional skills.
- Working on a computer so I don't have to worry about my spelling.
- Teachers that understand me, want to help me and I get on with.
- Help with my ADHD.
- Help with my Dyslexia.
- Time away from school - to break the school week up.
- Smaller groups and getting on with my tutors at Explore Learning.
- To be able to use a laptop instead of writing or where I can speak and it translates it into writing.



The link below will take you to Jamboard to explore the tool:

<https://jamboard.google.com>

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