



# Collective Get T★gether

## Inclusive Classrooms

The Collective Get Together was held Friday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025, with this session being delivered in person to 29 young people, representing all regions of England, that attended in Nottingham.

Within this session young people took part in creative activities looking at solutions for the current reported issues in the SEND system.

Young people looked at classroom pictures that were created with AI. The prompts were points from sessions at Collective Get Together 2024 and Youth Voice Matters Conference 2024, looking at the areas that young people find inaccessible and cause difficulties.

Themes young people identified as resolving the issues included:

- Changes to the environment and its contents
- Staff training and practices
- Access to and use of both assistive technology and general equipment (e.g. interactive whiteboard)
- Techniques to support learning for all

Full information shared by young people can be found in appendix 1. Additional activity gathering positive and negative lived experiences is in appendix 2.

We are creating a fabric patchwork quilt together to signify working together to build “a better SEND System”. Young people shared their wants and ideas on patches. A write up of what can be seen on the patches can be found in appendix 3.



Moving forwards, we should learn from the ideas and experiences shared by young people, working together to replicate good and where needed, to ensure change is put into practice and embedded into the culture of education provisions.

## Appendix 1.

<p>Creating Inclusive Classrooms</p> <p>At last years collective young people told us about their school experiences. You'll see these large classrooms that show some of the issues that were mentioned. We want your help to come up with solutions!</p>	<p>Notes from plasters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reducing bright lights</li> <li>- Celebrating neurodiversity awareness week</li> <li>- Having library of assistive technologies for people to borrow</li> <li>- Higher aspirations for careers</li> <li>- Language plain and simple</li> <li>- Sat apart is good and less likely to be distracted</li> <li>- Time out spaces</li> <li>- Less over stimulating environment: dimmed lights, less shouting, silent clock (not ticking)</li> <li>- Don't use long words</li> <li>- Teacher to stay calm</li> <li>- Address the child directly who might be overstimulated in a private space. Get attention away from them and give them options</li> <li>- Wheelchair accessibility with tables that support</li> <li>- Keep calm and ask for extra support from the teacher, ensure they aren't getting angry quick</li> <li>- Less students in the class</li> <li>- If one room is too small remove some posters and make the room more airy</li> <li>- Teacher should speak to the children outside of the class instead of shouting in front of everyone</li> <li>- Use inside voice and listen to both sides of the story</li> <li>- Give better training to teachers</li> <li>- Support staff to help students. Have things broken down into smaller chunks have a step by step guide</li> <li>- Have smaller classroom sizes</li> <li>- Improve the environment, too crowded, overstimulating from sound and overcrowding and lighting</li> <li>- Control noise levels</li> <li>- Explain jargon words</li> <li>- people are tired or demotivated</li> <li>- answer questions</li> <li>- Have desks in classrooms that are adapted for wheelchair users</li> <li>- Should not be forced to sit for extended periods of time</li> <li>- Use interactive whiteboards</li> <li>- Be mindful to people who are visually sensitive</li> <li>- Avoid yelling, should say what they did wrong in a constructive way</li> </ul>
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## Appendix 2.

<p>Gold Stars (to gather positive experiences)</p>	<p>Gold Stars</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SENCo at our secondary setting really supports us</li> <li>- Good support staff and tutors that really guide through situations</li> <li>- Having support staff with me in lessons who understand my needs and get me in situations</li> <li>- An art teacher defended me when my toxic friend at the time made me cry</li> <li>- Being able to make friends that accept me for me</li> <li>- Happy when I am with friends and talking at playtime</li> <li>- School nurse, Mrs Wren, always made her office a welcoming place where I could come for a chat in confidence and she would always advocate for me</li> <li>- Plain space is good, less to be distracted by</li> <li>- Having reasonable adjustment menus for young people to choose the reasonable adjustments that are needed. It can be hard to know what reasonable adjustments are needed.</li> <li>- My online college have been extremely helpful and accommodating of my needs. My SENCo in particular advocated really well for me in my EHCP review. She really listened to my opinions and advocated for what changes needed to be made in my EHCP review. She has done an amazing job at setting me up for university and has made me feel like my future goals can be a reality, regardless of my disabilities.</li> <li>- Mr Peveritt when I didn't want to do work, he would listen</li> <li>- My SENCo teacher was amazing and helped me in one to one English lessons</li> <li>- I can leave the room if I need to.</li> </ul>
<p>Bins (to gather "rubbish" lived experiences of the classroom)</p>	<p>Bins</p> <p>"I would have liked to attend in-person education; however, my college could not cope with my access needs due to my disability. All I wanted was a normal education but instead I felt excluded, unwanted and like I couldn't fit in and didn't belong anywhere leading to a mental health crisis. This included a relapse in my anorexia that I feel would not have happened if I felt included and was able to work towards my future. This cost the government significantly more as I required specialist support and hospital admissions."</p> <p>"I currently access online education funded by my EHCP as in-person college is not an option to me. I am worried that without being in a mainstream or special school my education would be jeopardised if EHCP's are scrapped. (continued below)"</p>

ON top of this, I live in Gosport (near Portsmouth) and have to travel all the way to Wimbledon for my exams. As I am not in in-person education I cannot sit my exams in school. There are a few closer places, however they do not accept wheelchair users or additional access needs such as extra time, due to my chronic fatigue I have to stay overnight in a hotel. My EHCP funds travel and accommodation, but it is still incredibly tiring."

"I got placed in a special needs school because I have learning disabilities and autism, but they held me back. My first year of college held me back too. My first year of catering I got bullied as staff and students did not understand me. They said that they would help me with reading and spelling but I still can't do it. They were going to help me get to the same level as everyone else."

Teachers calling/singling a student out when they were clearly struggling

Not being listened to in school and not having 1 to 1 support accessing my needs and feeling overwhelmed with too much information.

Less support in mainstream colleges they should more assessments to do maths.

Teachers didn't take the time to get to know me and understand me and my needs. This led to me getting kicked out with no real way of fixing things before it got to this point.

For 5 years had some teacher and he shots doesn't understand me or about me. My info needs updating.

Don't put more that 2 young people with disabilities in one class. Being forced to go back to class when someone was struggling

About substitute teachers...

(Context: this student was a menace everyone was scared of her and she got excluded 1 year later) A substitute was teaching the class but we were doing a sticking and cutting activity, she tried to cut my hair with her scissors. I moved away then she followed, and I ran of course. And she ran and chased me with scissors. This was year 9 secondary. She was not special needs she was just mean, the teacher told me off for running and to me to not bother her.

### Appendix 3.

#### Quotes shared on the fabric patches:

- More regional locations to take exams for those who do not attend mainstream educational settings and who have additional needs/access arrangements
- Learn from other countries; adopt practices from Finland
- Listen and learn from individuals with lived experience
- Give people space if they need it
- In theory an EHCP but in practice not so much!
- More accessibility and individual learning plans
- More training for SENCO Teachers
- Person centred
- Personalised support- help everyone!
- Making a difference
- We must have a say in all decisions that affect our lives
- More funding for short breaks services
- Therapy Animals!
- Promote disabled joy find your tribe
- Keep our EHCPs
- Make our NHS better
- Listening to us young people with SEND we are young change makers get our voices heard and valued in co-production to make a better inclusive world!
- Do what is asked
- Instead of telling us, help us
- Take action!
- Everyone to be included
- Neuro-affirming
- Keep EHCP's
- Ensure that SEND departments have enough funding but also that they are spending it correctly rather than giving it to other departments. Talk to the individual young people and help them reach their life goals rather than statistics for the school and grade. Allow integration options for people with SEND rather than isolating people as this will help with normalising it, making friends and developing social skills.
- Stop pushing only STEM subjects
- Teach about disability
- Person centred or needs focused approach
- Involve students in decisions
- Green spaces
- Mental Health Support