

SENCO Forum

7th May 2025

Agenda SENCO Forum

Time	Item	Lead and contact
4:00	Welcome and intro	Becky Salmon
4:05	TA network	Abigail Joachim
4:15	Kooth updates	Eloise Pilcher
4:30	SENCOs being Prem aware	Bethany Stevens
4:45	Co-production	Sophie Cook
5:00	CIF Feedback	Holly Robertson
5:15	PFA intro	Leeann Ling Josie Finch

SES Support for EYFS in Primary Schools



Common themes for support:

- Communication, including supporting pupils who are non-verbal
- Creating sensory-supportive environments
- Transition into Reception or Year 1
- Curriculum access, monitoring and assessment
- Is my classroom accessible?
- Emotional Regulation

SES Support for EYFS in Primary Schools



How can SES help?

Inclusion Support Meetings (ISMs) for quick, easy-access advice via Teams

CPD Menu – [SES-CPD-Offer-24-25.pdf](#) but look out for the new 25-26 menu!

School Support referral – specialist teacher support for a focused piece of work in your setting around a particular theme

Funded places for schools

• shared approach •
• consistent language •
• assessment & analysis •
• teaching learning & behaviour •
• growing independence •
• promoting positive self identity •
• growing internal motivation & regulation •
• prioritising wellbeing of children & adults •

THERAPEUTIC THINKING

Book your
training on
Suffolk CPD
here

SCAN ME



<https://www.suffolkcpd.co.uk/login>

Free place on 3 day
Tutor Course HT and
one other

Tutors can then train
any staff in their
school- 1 day
training.

Free place on
refresher

Free access to web-
based analysis and
planning tool. (Data
impact assessment pending)

The Suffolk TA Network

Abi Joachim

Suffolk TA Network Coordinator



What is the Suffolk TA Network?

- Promotes and supports the work of pupil-facing support staff across Suffolk through a range of training and networking opportunities
- Funded by Suffolk County Council as part of the Graduated Response to SEND

Membership

- Free membership for all pupil-facing support staff in Suffolk
- Members receive a half-termly newsletter by email and access to a programme of training and networking events
- More information on Suffolk Learning



Summer Term 2025 Training Offer

- **An Introduction to the Engagement Model for Teaching Assistants**
afternoon session – Monday, 9 June 2025 (14.00-15.00) or twilight session – Thursday, 12 June 2025 (16.30-17.30)
- **Maths Difficulties and Language**
afternoon session – Monday, 23 June 2025 (14.00-15.00) or twilight session – Tuesday, 24 June 2025 (16.30-17.30)
- **Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) specialist network**
Theme: Maths – Supporting memory for students with maths difficulties - Wednesday, 2 July 2025.
9.30-10.30 for secondary colleagues and 13.30-14.30 for primary colleagues
- **Communication and Interaction (C&I) specialist network**
Theme: Supporting Girls - Thursday, 3 July 2025
9.30-10.30 for secondary colleagues and 13.30-14.30 for primary colleagues

To book colleagues onto a session, email
suffolktan@attrust.org.uk

The Prem Aware Award

Bethany Stevens

BA (hons) Primary Education
Ambassador for The Smallest Things



Introduction

The Smallest Things is a registered charity supporting the needs of premature babies and their families following neonatal intensive care.

It is run entirely by volunteers who have had premature babies themselves, the charity is dedicated to making the world a better place for premature babies and their families.

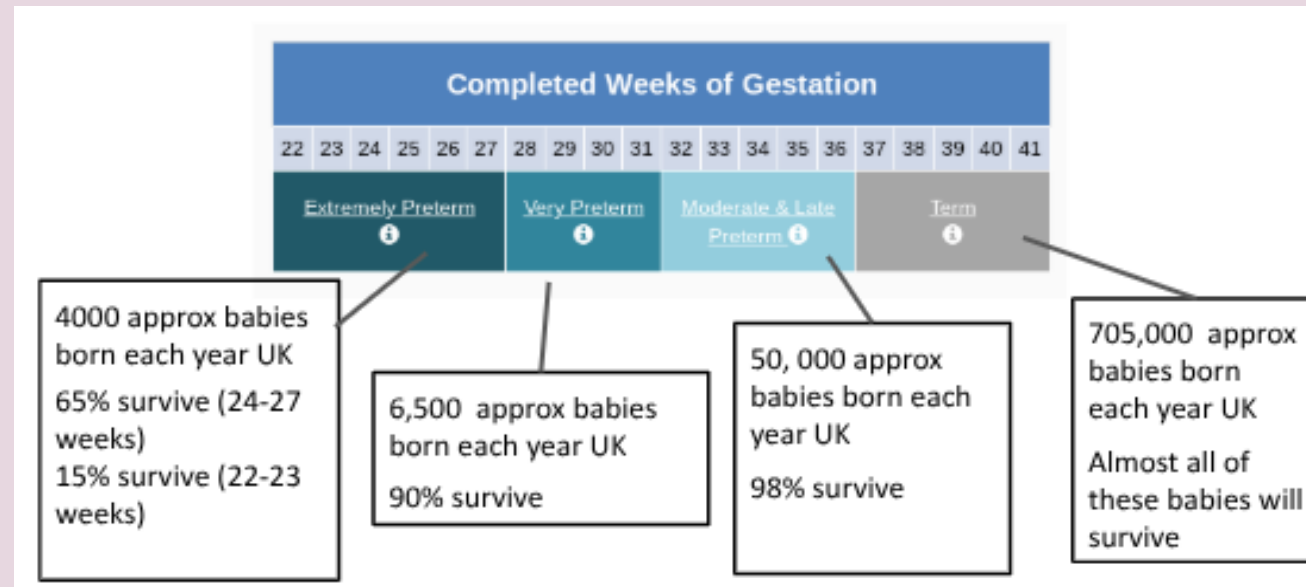
The charity introduced the Prem Aware Award in 2020 believing all children born prematurely must have the opportunity to achieve their best possible long-term outcomes and that the needs of premature children must be met when they start their school journey.



Premature Birth

Every year 37,000 babies in the UK are born premature (prior to 37 weeks' gestation). This is around 7% of births.

Preterm or premature birth is where a baby is born before 37 completed weeks of gestation. The earlier a baby is born, the more medical care they need around the time of birth. Preterm births are categorised into groups depending on the week of gestation in which they are born.



A lasting journey

Maternal mental health

- 63% of mothers report experiencing anxiety following discharge from neonatal care.
- 44% of mothers had flashbacks to their time in neonatal care.
- 61% of mothers reported feelings of guilt following premature birth.

Ongoing medical needs

- 48% of premature babies were re-admitted to hospitals after discharge from neonatal care.
- 46% of children have ongoing medical difficulties following premature birth.

Special educational needs

- 44% reported that their school age child had additional learning needs.



Increased risk of Special Educational Needs

The journey for every child is different and while a child born prematurely has an increased risk of SEN it is important to recognise that it a risk and not all children born prematurely will have a SEN need.

In every average size primary school class 2 or 3 children may have been prematurely.



Parent voices

In early 2020 The Smallest Things asked 426 families about their experiences of SEN support for their children born prematurely.

- More than 90% of parents told us they think there should be more awareness and understanding of the educational needs of children born prematurely.
- Less than half of parents felt that school staff understood their child's learning needs, with 29% unsure of this.
- 28% of parents said that school staff did not understand their child's learning needs.
- Just over a third of parents felt that their child's educational needs were being met in school.



Awareness in schools

Research has shown that many teachers are not aware of the issues pupils born prematurely **may** face.

"Our initial research identifies that teachers have limited training about the difficulties children born prematurely might face and how to support these children at school. However, when teachers used out e-learning resource their confidence in how to support a preterm child increased significantly, so much so that 97% of teachers in the study said that they would recommend it to others."



E-learning for education professionals

Preterm Birth Information for Education Professionals

Welcome to the Preterm Birth Information for Education Professionals home page. These five learning resources have been developed to improve your knowledge and confidence in supporting prematurely born children in the classroom.

Please navigate through the resources by selecting each image below.



1. What is preterm birth? ➔

(opens in new window)

Learning outcomes:

- To define preterm birth
- To understand that the more preterm a baby is born, the greater the risk of developmental problems later in life



2. Educational outcomes following preterm birth ➔

(opens in new window)

Learning outcomes:

- To understand that children born preterm are at risk of special educational needs and poor academic attainment
- To identify which school subjects children born preterm are most likely to struggle with



3. Cognitive and motor development following preterm birth ➔

(opens in new window)

Learning outcomes:

- To understand that children born preterm may have difficulties with IQ, processing speed, working memory, and hand-eye coordination
- To understand how these difficulties may impact on learning



4. Behavioural, social and emotional outcomes following preterm birth ➔

(opens in new window)

Learning outcomes:

- To understand that children born preterm may be withdrawn, anxious, and have difficulties developing relationships with their peers
- To understand that children born preterm don't tend to be disruptive so their needs may be overlooked in the classroom



5. How can education professionals support preterm children? ➔

(opens in new window)

Download this poster to let others know about this resource ➔

(English and Welsh versions available below)

(opens in new window)

- ✓ **Free to access**
- ✓ **5 modules to improve knowledge and confidence**
- ✓ **Interactive, multimedia format**
- ✓ **Real-life testimonials**
- ✓ **Practical classroom strategies**

Why should you become a Prem Aware School?

- To improve awareness and understanding of the lasting effects preterm birth can have on education and learning.
- To reassure parents that your school is aware of and compassionate to the potential needs of children born prematurely.
- To enable teachers to have the skills and knowledge to best support children in their class who were born prematurely.
- To support early intervention and timely support improving the long-term outcomes for children born prematurely.

1. Training:

Senior members of your staff team to complete the FREE PRISM e-training "**Preterm Birth Information for Educational Professionals**".

2. Awareness:

- Encourage parents to share **details of birth history**, including neonatal stays and preterm birth, through your school's **admission forms**.
- Where information is made available, teachers are to be aware of **which children in their class were born prematurely**.
- Display a **PRISM poster**.

3. Feedback:

Please **seek the views of parents** and carers to review and inform the Special Educational Needs support provided.



REMEMBER

Being premature is a RISK FACTOR.

It is a risk factor to why a child may face difficulties in learning and attainment, it **does not** mean that they **will**.

It is important to think of prematurity the same way we think about SEND need, EAL, PP etc.

Just because a child does fall into one of these categories it does not mean that they will have difficulties because of it, but it is something that we can bear in mind.



“We now have a greater oversight of any children joining us that may have associated challenges and the training to be able to remove or address these barriers specifically and as part of our Quality First Teaching Strategy”

Headteacher of a Prem Aware School

[Support your premature child at school — The Smallest Things](#)

[Teachers making a difference - How to support your premature child at school \(youtube.com\)](#)

“The training was very useful and will impact our everyday practice. We are now equipped to support those born prematurely with the strategies suggested.”

Primary Academy Early Years Leader



Any questions?

Find out more:

thesmallestthings.org/prem-aware-award

My contact details:

bethany.hay@outlook.com

[07517009889](tel:07517009889)



Home to School Travel – co-production

Opportunity on co-production to hear the voice of children and young people on home to school travel to be included in training for staff and our transport operators.

[Schools Expression of Interest: Involvement in coproduction of new training resources](#)

[Home - Independent Travel Toolkit](#)

Who to contact:	Team
Entitlement and policy questions (Who can apply, how to apply, who needs to pay)	Policy & Entitlement team transport.service@suffolk.gov.uk
Operational issues (Day to day issues, route enquiries, operator information)	Operations team transport.serviceops@suffolk.gov.uk (Mainstream) transport.servicespecialised@suffolk.gov.uk (Specialised transport)
Parental agreements (Entitlement, reimbursement)	Policy & Entitlement team ptuparentalagreement@suffolk.gov.uk
Safeguarding (Concerns over an operator or member or travel staff, issues regarding student welfare on transport)	Contract Compliance team transportsafeguarding@suffolk.gov.uk
Independent travel training (Information on the scheme, referring a student, next steps to gaining independence)	Senior Travel Training Officer transporttraveltraining@suffolk.gov.uk
School travel appeals (The process, how to appeal, what is needed to appeal)	Policy & Entitlement team Transport.review@suffolk.gov.uk
Customer services (General enquiries on school travel, updates, contact with relevant officers)	Customer Services team comments@suffolk.gov.uk 0345 6066173 (option 1)

All information on transport and journey planner	www.suffolkonboard.com
5-16 and 16-19 Travel policies	www.suffolkonbaord.com/policies
Application for mainstream travel	www.suffolkonboard.com/optin
Application for SEND Travel	www.suffolk.gov.uk/transportform
5-16 DfE Home to School Travel Guidance	Travel to school for children of compulsory school age (publishing.service.gov.uk)
Post-16 DfE Travel Guidance	Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training (publishing.service.gov.uk)
Information on 16-19 Bursaries	16 to 19 Bursary Fund: Overview - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Nearest School Checker	Nearest School Checker - Suffolk County Council
Independent Travel Toolkit	Home - Independent Travel Toolkit

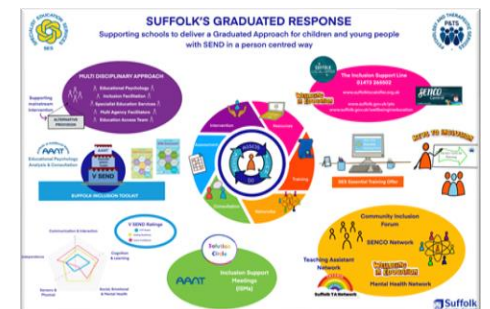
TRANSPORT CO PRODUCTION

The MS Form survey discussed re the taxi/ minibus training coproduction item at SENCO forum is linked below
SENCOs supporting with children and young people's completion of this to inform the new training resources
would be much appreciated

- [Do you use school transport \(taxi or mini bus\) to get you to school or college?](#)

Holly Robertson

May 2025



What are Community Inclusion Forums?

- Community Inclusion Forums (also known as CIFs) are part of Suffolk's Graduated Response.
- CIFs were initiated in response to **feedback from SENCos and inclusion staff** who wanted more opportunities for networking and to share good practice.
- The forums provide opportunities for staff across the sector to be empowered to meet children and young people's needs, through the **sharing of effective practice and providing peer support**.
- The forums **began in November 2023** in localities across Suffolk on a half termly basis. All SENCos in Suffolk schools have been invited to take part in the forums as well as anyone with a pastoral or inclusion remit within a school. Forums are hosted in council buildings or schools depending upon the preference of those in each forum.
- Each area forum is chaired by a **specialist teacher from the Whole School Inclusion team and a Senior Educational Psychologist** from the Psychology and Therapeutic Service. Other Specialist Education Service staff will also attend, along with representatives from Early Help and Health services.

What have we done so far?

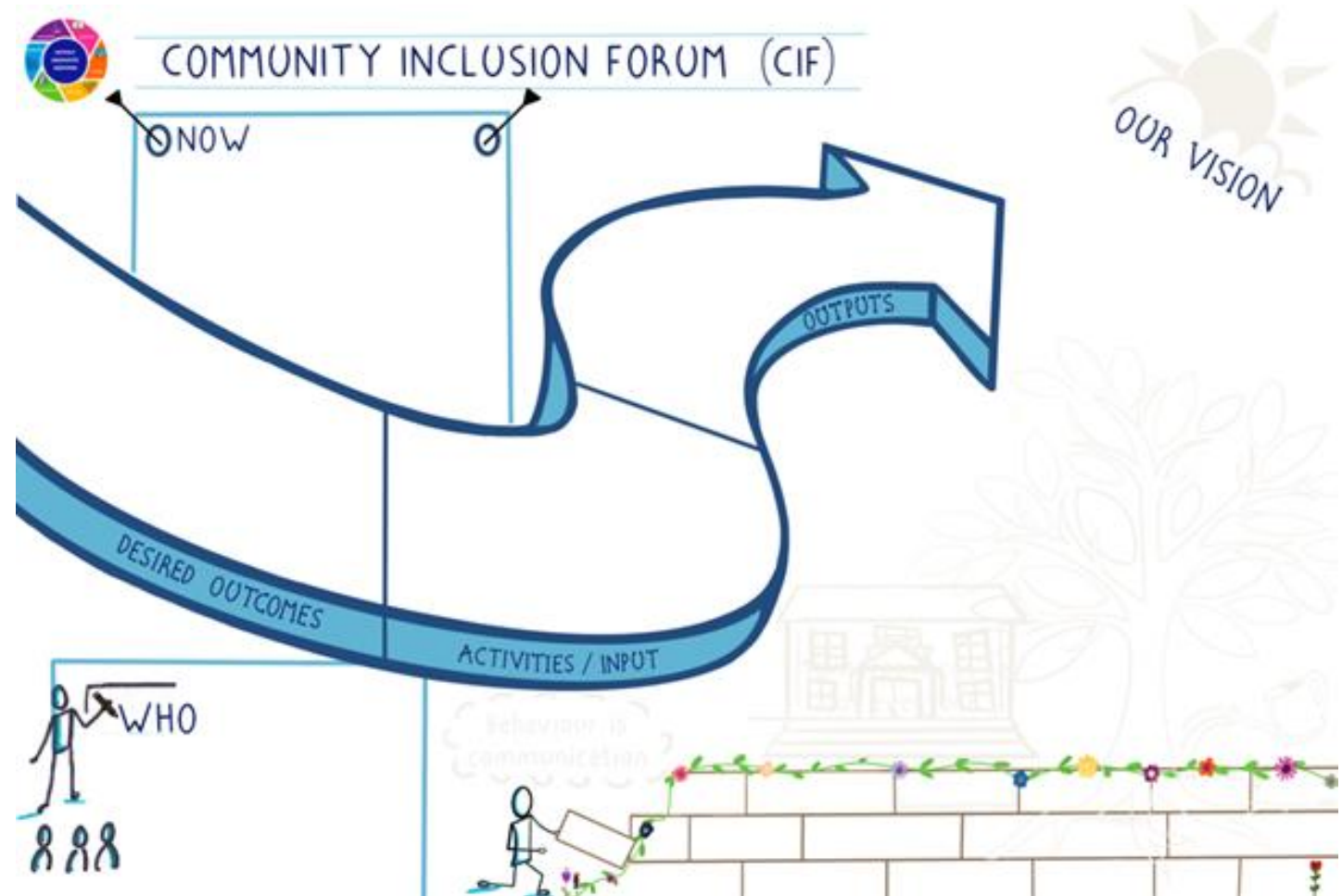
- Topics covered have been mostly **suggested by the CIF community** and have varied based on the needs of CIF members in each area.
- For example, some CIFs have undertaken activities around school transitions including working towards a Suffolk countywide 'pledge'
- All CIF meetings so far have included elements of **sharing good practice** for children with SEND including **strengthening our application of the Graduated approach**; Universal Provision; Alternative Provision Pathways; early intervention; and reducing permanent exclusion.
- CIF meetings have also included updates from a **range of services and projects** such as: Family Services; the Mental Health in Schools team; and the Delivering Better Value project.
- Another key activity during CIFs so far has been **sharing research and resources**, for example, on Staff Wellbeing; therapeutic approaches; and emotionally based school avoidance.

How have we monitored impact?

To measure the impact of CIFs and evaluate their usefulness, early on we gathered the views of attendees using a **'theory of change'** activity to understand what staff wanted to gain from these spaces and what they hoped to take away.

We worked together to identify the vision for CIFs and a set goals to clearly monitor progress over time.

We also have a session-by-session survey measure.





CIF THEORY OF CHANGE



Now

Barriers accessing support –

- Accessing appropriate placements i.e., specialist provision and alternative provision
- Inconsistent communication
- Difficulty accessing training and specialist support for CYP

Confidence to engage and inform parents/carers

managing parental expectations understandings

EHCP Process and referrals –

long waiting times and minimal updates, and feeling uncertain about processes (i.e., new portal for EHCNA, writing school advice effectively)

**Now-
Impact**

Schools feeling like they're reaching crisis point:

- **Impact on staff** – stretched resources; feeling stressed and overwhelmed; recruitment and retention challenges; being reactive rather than preventative in their interventions.
- **Impact on CYP** – their emotional wellbeing declining; attendance difficulties increasing; difficulties with school transitions.

Immediate Outcomes

Uptake

Staff want to increase uptake to CIFs by considering accessibility to sessions.

Connections

There will be connections made between schools, allowing for peer to peer support and links between schools to support students during transition

Clarity and Understanding

Greater clarity and understanding, through consistent messaging, for referral processes and local services available and when and how these can be accessed

Information

Information given at CIFs is led by school's priorities and topics that they need to find out more about identified as (but not limited to), transition, attendance barriers, best practice supporting parents, and four areas of need

Communication

- Staff are given information about the local offer, graduated response, and referral pathways
- There are opportunities to meet people from local services and understand their roles and the support offered.

Activities

Connections between schools

- Networking between school staff-
- Building connections and peer to peer support for wellbeing
- Staff to share best practice, success stories and case studies.

Accessibility

- Call schools that haven't attended
- Considering practicalities of CIFs (i.e., parking, where) and timings (when in term)
- Opening to broader members of staff than SENDCos.

School priorities

- Settings share their gaps in knowledge and their priorities based on the needs present in their setting. CIFs to cover these topics through information giving, guest speakers.
- Training targeted and given to schools as a result of identifying needs within localities.
- Schools to inform the topics within CIFs.

Vision / Long Term Outcomes

Networking

building relationships between school staff; school staff to share best practice and resources; staff to have connections and understanding of wider service professionals

Communication and collaboration

increased transparency/clarity for all stakeholders including staff, parents/carers and CYP, collaboration and joint working with external professionals to have a shared purpose/understanding; staff are confident to support and inform parents

Children feel happy and safe in school

staff are confident and knowledgeable to support wide range of needs present in their CYP; know how and when to access external support for CYP, and promote inclusive practice

Long term outcomes	Immediate outcomes
<p>Networking – building relationships between school staff; school staff to share best practice and resources; staff to have connections and understanding of wider service professionals [need for information/collaboration connection]</p>	<p>Connections: There will be connections made between schools, allowing for peer-to-peer support and links between schools to support students during transition [connections; networking; need for information]</p>
<p>Communication and collaboration - increased transparency/clarity for all stakeholders including staff, parents/carers and CYP, collaboration and joint working with external professionals to have a shared purpose/understanding; staff are confident to support and inform parents [comm and collab; parents are supported];</p>	<p>Information: Information given at CIFs is led by school's priorities and topics that they need to find out more about identified as (but not limited to), transition, attendance barriers, best practice supporting parents, and four areas of need [parents are supported; need for info; staff confidence; training]</p> <p>Uptake: Staff want to increase uptake to CIFs by considering accessibility to sessions. [accessibility and buy in]</p>
<p>Children feel happy and safe in school - staff are confident and knowledgeable to support wide range of needs present in their CYP; know how and when to access external support for CYP, and promote inclusive practice [staff confidence; need for info]</p>	<p>Clarity and understanding: Greater clarity and understanding, through consistent messaging, for referral processes and local services available and when and how these can be accessed [services; communication; collaboration; equity; EHCP processes]</p>

Impact of the CIFs: Data from Survey

So far, we've had lots of positive feedback about CIFs.

- 98% of attendees who responded to our survey agreed that the purpose of the Community Inclusion Forum was clearly stated and met during this meeting.
- 96% agreed that the content was **engaging and presented clearly**
- 92% agreed that the **information and discussions were beneficial to their job**
- Other said that they were **'really useful', 'something to look forward to', 'helpful', and 'very valuable'**

Impact of CIFs: Data from Theory of Change research (activities & focus group)

Theme	Quotes
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>"Networking, communication and collaboration is good"</i>• <i>"Senior leaders should be encouraged to attend so they can understand"</i>
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>"Practice can be shared... compare it with ours and see what our next steps might be"</i>• <i>"There's always some kernel that you didn't have before you went, that you've come away with"</i>
Connectedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>"Sometimes it can be a really lonely job. Now that locality meetings are starting up again and I think that's really useful"</i>
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>"I would think about that approach she took and try and, you know, do something similar"</i>

Next steps and contact details

- We are continuing to gather feedback about CIFs, and have already acted on what attendees told us they by starting earlier to allow more time for networking.
- We will also continue to develop the CIF webpages, so that they also become a useful source of information and resources.

To find out more, or if you'd like to be invited to the next CIF in your area, please contact us using these email addresses.

Contact details for each community:

BuryCentralCommunity@suffolk.gov.uk

CoastalCommunity@suffolk.gov.uk

IpswichNECommunity@suffolk.gov.uk

IpswichSWCommunity@suffolk.gov.uk

LowestoftWaveneyCommunity@suffolk.gov.uk

WestCommunity@suffolk.gov.uk

Find out more information here:

[Community Inclusion Forums – Suffolk Learning](#)



SENDSational Futures

A speedy overview

Delivered by

Josie Finch – Work Inspiration and Careers Lead

Leeann Ling – Supported Internship Development Officer



SENDSational Futures

Why Careers Matter—Especially for SENDCOs

- Careers education isn't just job talk—it's life talk.
- It motivates essential skills (communication, independence).
- Starts early: never too soon to talk about futures.



SENDSational Futures

Statutory Duties in a Nutshell

- SEND Code of Practice (2015): "preparation for adulthood from earliest years."
- Gatsby Benchmarks: statutory guidance, not optional.
- Long-term planning is vital; Year 9 is too late to begin.

SENDSational Futures

Careers Work = Futures, Not Just Jobs

- Careers guidance is planting seeds—everyone grows differently.
- Vocational profiling: strengths, interests, barriers, and supports.
- Maintaining aspirations while exploring realistic pathways.



SENDSational Futures

Exploring the Breadth of Options

- Supported Living
- Further Education (A Levels, T Levels, Vocational Education)
- Apprenticeships
- Supported Internships
- Higher Education
- Employment (including supported roles)



SENDSational Futures

Bringing Adults on the Journey

- No decision without them—and no decision without you!
- Importance of involving parents, carers, and educators.
- Early buy-in transforms outcomes and support networks.



SENDSational Futures

Want More? Let's Dive Deeper

- Today is a teaser—careers for SEND deserves deeper exploration.
- Tailored training available: vocational profiling, detailed pathways, internships, and more.
- Let's connect—make this a priority as everyone deserves a sensational future.



SENDSational Futures

Q&A and Next Steps

- Any immediate questions?
- Let's continue this conversation!

Josie.finch@suffolk.gov.uk and leeann.ling@suffolk.gov.uk

