

Voices United long-term plan (2026)



Who are we?

- We are a group of children and young people currently aged 9 to 24 who have additional needs and disabilities.
- We work with Chanika and Amy (co-production officers), who help run our meetings and link us with different services.



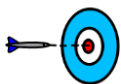
Why do we have a forum?

Voices United provides us, as children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with a platform where our voices are listened to, respected, and valued. It gives us the opportunity to share our experiences, express our views, and contribute to the decisions that directly affect our lives. Being part of the forum helps us to develop confidence, communication, and leadership skills, while connecting with others who understand what it means to have SEND. We take pride in representing not only our own perspectives, but also those of other young people who may not always have the chance to be heard.

Through Voices United, we are able to engage directly with decision makers to help them understand the realities of living with SEND. We want professionals to listen carefully, follow the law, and ensure that plans and support are accurate and effective for every young person. We believe our contributions are helping to bring about positive change by improving awareness, understanding, and attitudes across schools and services. As Voices United continues to grow, we aim to ensure that the voices of children and young people with SEND remain central to all decisions that influence our education, wellbeing, and future opportunities.

Statutory/Legal Duties

1. **Article 12 (respect the views of the child) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989 states:** Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.
2. **Education Act 2002:** Requires schools to have regard to guidance on consulting with pupils about decisions that affect them.
3. **Children's and Family Act 2014 (Part 3).** The Children and Families Act focuses on putting children and young people at the heart of planning and decision making through co-production and person-centered practice. The importance of the child and his or her parent, or the young person, participating as fully as possible in decisions relating to...help[ing] him or her achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.
4. **SEND Code of Practice:** emphasizes children's right to be heard and participate in decisions affecting them, requiring professionals to actively listen to and consider their views, wishes, and feelings. It mentions the right to be heard, to be included in decision making and to have support to express themselves, if needed.



What is our focus?

This shows what we will be working on in 2026. We will keep adding to this plan to explain what we will do and how we will do it.

Our two **main goals** for 2026 are:

1. **To raise awareness and understanding of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Worcestershire through our lived experiences.**
2. **To grow the Voices United forum so more people can share their voices and experiences.**



Why is this important to us?

“We currently focus a lot on feedback and that’s wonderful but the thing missing is educating people. We talk a lot about where schools aren’t succeeding, and the NHS aren’t succeeding, but it’s looking at how we use real-life experience, and experts by experience to talk to people about their experiences. We need to be talking to the staff that are working on the ground.”

“I find a lot of the time I get put in the middle and get shoved between pillar to post as I am not complex enough but not neurotypical enough and not able bodied enough. You then end up belonging no-where and feel really lost.”

“All of my earlier years I have been told I am not enough and not working hard enough even when I am working my hardest. It’s a shared experience that so many of us are slipping through the cracks of the system.”

“Looking at the cohort of Voices United, they are not representative of everyone at the moment.”

“it is important to listen to young people because we don't want to be left out of conversation about our care or support, no decision about us without us because we are the ones who have to live with the consequences of your decisions and if your decisions were not made in our best interest then that can have a detrimental impact on our lives!”



We will achieve focus number 1 by:

1. Sharing our lived experiences in schools
2. Sharing our lived experiences to teacher trainee teachers
3. Creating resources for practitioners
4. Working with hospitals to check if their spaces are easy for everyone to use.
5. Making videos to share what it is like to have additional needs and/or disabilities and talking about times when we have not felt listened to because we do not fit into just one group.



We will achieve focus number 2 by:

1. Tracking data of members in Voices United and Voices network to ensure there are a wide range of perspectives
2. Work with practitioners to understand how they are hearing the voices of all children and young people e.g. with high support/complex needs
3. Encourage schools to display a Voices United poster
4. Encourage surgeries to display a Voices United poster
5. Sharing an article about Voices United and talking on the radio
6. Ordering Voices United branded items
7. Making new leaflets
8. Planning an art exhibition to grow members/network
9. Planning a sports tournament grow members/network
10. Buying flower packets with our name to give out to different places.



Planning details (next steps)

1. Choose which schools to visit.
2. Co-production officers contact people at the university.
3. Set up groups in Voices United to work on different projects.
4. Make presentation materials for schools.
5. Make presentation materials for trainee teachers
6. Get in touch with hospitals.
7. Get in touch with a local radio station.
8. Make videos to help people understand real experiences.
9. Plan when each project will happen, for example visiting a school in March 2026

We invite practitioners to come forward and support our vision and work with us to move these projects forward. By collaborating with experts from a range of fields, we aim to successfully implement these goals.