

RAISING AWARENESS OF DISABILITIES AND HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT US



a resource developed by
the SEND Youth Forum





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ABOUT

RAISING AWARENESS OF DISABILITIES AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION



The Leeds SEND Youth Forum is an online network of young people aged 11 to 25 years old with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who live in Leeds or attend school in Leeds.

Members of the Leeds SEND Youth Forum raised that they want professionals they come into contact with to have a greater understanding of disabilities and how to support young people in different situations.



Young people have developed information sheets that explain the challenges they face in everyday situations and what can be done to support them.



The SEND Youth Forum would like services to read about their experiences and suggestions for how to support them and make changes to practices.

If you have any feedback about the resource please share this with us by emailing VIC@leeds.gov.uk



ASSEMBLY AT SCHOOL TIC DISORDER

Tics are sudden twitches, movements, or sounds that people do repeatedly. People who have tics cannot stop their body from doing these things

My journey and how I feel

As I get ready for school in the morning I often feel anxious and worried about the day ahead. My tics happen freely and when I don't expect them.

When I arrive at school and meet my friends I feel happy, my friends help me to feel relaxed, as they do not judge me for my tics.

When I know there is an assembly in school I start to anxious and worried, this makes me tic more. I try to control my tics, but this only makes me tic more frequently.

I am scared of drawing attention to myself in large groups. This makes me feel extremely anxious and paranoid.

What you can do to support me

There are lots of ways I can be supported:

- Allow me to miss assembly and gain the information in an alternative format.
- Ensure that all school staff involved in the assembly are aware of my tics and have a plan in place in case I need to leave the assembly.



WEEKEND JOB SENSORY ISSUES AND ANXIETY

Sensory issues are problems related to processing information from the senses, like sight and sound. Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe.

My journey and how I feel

As I get ready for work I feel anxious and sick thinking about what challenges I may face at work.

When I arrive at work I feel awkward and will look for people I recognise and feel comfortable with.

When I know what the plan for my day is I feel more comfortable and start to relax.

I often feel uncomfortable in situations that involve me having to clean up after others, this can make me feel anxious and I feel the need to have to continuously wash my hands. I am not trying to get out of the cleaning, I feel restless and worried about everything I touch.

Noisy environments can make me feel overwhelmed, and I will often cover my ears. This isn't me being rude, I am trying to drown out the noise around me.

What you can do to support me

There are lots of ways I can be supported:

- Provide me with a plan of my day, so I know what to expect and who I will be working with.
- Talk to me about my needs and the support I need i.e. regular breaks, providing me with cleaning gloves.
- Provide me with a dedicated person I can speak to if I am feeling overwhelmed, someone who understands me and my support needs.



A DAY AT SCHOOL LEARNING DISABILITY

A learning disability affects the way a person learns new things throughout their life. A learning disability is different for everyone.

My journey and how I feel

As I get ready for school on a morning I feel scared about the day ahead and what might happen.

I travel to school on the bus, which I feel OK about as it is the same bus journey everyday.

When I get to school I worry about my lessons, what is going to happen and what will happen if I am unable to cope.

What you can do to support me

It is really important that the staff at my school understand me, my needs and the support I require.

Having plans for each day helps me to understand what is going to happen and where I need to be.

All my teachers to understand the support I need, and how to support me if I am overwhelmed or struggling in the classroom environment.



CLASSROOM LESSONS

DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.

My journey and how I feel

As I get ready for school on a morning I start to think about the lessons for that day, and this can often make me feel worried if I know there are lessons that I am going to have to read and write a lot in.

When I am in the classroom, I often struggle to find my words and to write what I am thinking. This can make me feel stressed and frustrated, especially when I am taking longer than my peers to complete tasks.

When I am given text books and worksheets in lessons I find it difficult to switch my overlay between the two, which means I take longer to read the text. When I see my peers progressing with their work quicker than me I feel slow and stupid.

I often find that I have to 'catch up' on work during free periods, breaks and at home. This makes me feel incredibly frustrated, as I feel I am being punished because of my needs.

What you can do to support me

It is really important that the resources I need to ensure I am able to take part in lessons are available to me, and the teaching staff are aware of my needs and the resources I need to participate in lessons.

Make teaching staff aware of dyslexia, and for there to be dyslexia friendly textbooks in schools.



LEARNING AT HOME

ADHD

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition that affects people's behaviour. People with ADHD can seem restless, may have trouble concentrating and may act on impulse.

My journey and how I feel

Having ADHD means that I cannot focus and have a million ideas in my head. I struggle to concentrate on one task at a time, especially if I have an idea that is more interesting than the task in hand.

Sitting on my own to complete a task often means I don't complete it, which in turns means I don't hand in homework on time. This makes me feel worthless and a failure because I cannot get myself to concentrate long enough to complete the tasks.

What you can do to support me

School staff to understand my needs and what support could help me, for example breaking the task down for me in smaller segments.

A homework club would be really beneficial, as it would mean I would have the support from teaching staff to keep me on task and focused.



A DAY AT COLLEGE AUTISM

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world.

My journey and how I feel

My journey to college involves me catching two buses and then a short walk. This journey is incredibly stressful, if the buses are full I start to feel overwhelmed and anxious. I often worry about buses turning up on time, missing the connecting bus and arriving to college late.

Once I arrive at college I feel incredibly anxious and overwhelmed.

What you can do to support me

When I arrive at college it is often busy, with everyone stood in crowds and rushing to get to lessons. It would be good for me to have a quiet room that I can use first thing on a morning to calm down and relax.

All my tutors to be aware of my situation, and my needs and allow me the time to calm down on arrival in college. This may mean me being late to lessons, but for tutors to be aware of this.



VISITING THE DOCTOR

ANXIETY AND LEARNING DISABILITY

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe. A learning disability affects the way a person learns new things throughout their life. A learning disability is different for everyone.

My journey and how I feel

I always feel anxious when I know I am visiting the doctors. I am unsure what is going to happen at the appointment and I worry about what might be wrong with me.

When I arrive at the doctors I don't find the environment very welcoming. Once I have checked in I sit in the waiting room worrying about the appointment. This can make me fidget, and start to pace around.

Appointments often don't happen on time, this causes me to panic and I worry my appointment has been missed.

When it is my appointment, the doctor talks to me but once I leave the room I often forget what I have been told.

What you can do to support me

When checking in for my appointment it would be useful to know if appointments are running late, and how many people are in front of me.

If the doctor could write down what they have told me and provide me with contact details should I have any further questions.



ATTENDING EVENTS ANXIETY AND LEARNING DISABILITY

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe. A learning disability affects the way a person learns new things throughout their life. A learning disability is different for everyone.

My journey and how I feel

I really enjoy going to events, and being with my friends.

I often don't know what to expect when arrive at events, I worry and panic about queues, where I will be sat, where the facilities are located and what to do in an emergency.

When I arrive at events I am often anxious, panicked and agitated. I may come across rude, but I don't mean to be. I just want to get to where I need to be and in time.

What you can do to support me

When events are taking place, it would be great to have a social story. This would show me through words and pictures what I can expect from arriving at the event, to leaving at the end.

Having a printable map of the venue, with facilities clearly labelled would really help me.



ATTENDING ACTIVITIES AND GROUPS AUTISM

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world.

My journey and how I feel

I really look forward to activities and groups on an evening and weekends, as I get to spend time with friends.

I catch the train or public transport with my parents to get to activities and groups. Prior to leaving the house, I check the times of trains and buses and plan my route. When buses and trains run late, this causes me a lot of stress and makes me anxious, I don't like being late for activities.

When I arrive at the activity or group I am going to, if my journey has been stressful I may come across as unhappy or withdrawn. I find the journey can influence how I feel about the group that day.

What you can do to support me

Prior to me attending your group speak to my parents / carers about my needs and support, for example what I enjoy, what I need when I am feeling anxious and stressed.

When I arrive at the group, ask me how I am and how my journey has been. If I am withdrawn and not responding then allow me the time and a quiet space before I join in the session.



SOCIALISING WITH FRIENDS

HEARING IMPAIRMENT

A person is said to have hearing loss if they are not able to hear as well as someone with normal hearing. It can be mild, moderate, moderately severe, severe or profound, and can affect one or both ears.

My journey and how I feel

Socialising with friends is hard as I am deaf and I struggle to hear when I am talking in a group, especially if it is in a loud environment.

I enjoy seeing my friends, but my hearing impairment causes me a lot of stress and I sometimes get annoyed. I often don't want to talk as I can't hear and this means I don't join in conversations.

What you can do to support me

When I am in groups it would be easier to have a quieter environment without additional noise so that I can hear. When talking to people I need them to speak louder, and repeat what they are saying or write it down on a piece of paper so that I don't miss what is being spoken about.



TRAVELLING ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT HYPERMOBILITY

Joint hypermobility syndrome is when you have very flexible joints and it causes you pain (you may think of yourself as being double-jointed)

My journey and how I feel

Due to my joint hypermobility I have a disabled pass for travelling on public transport, the pass requires scanning by bus drives. Many bus drivers challenge this and say "you do not look disabled and is this yours". I have had times where they have refused to let me on a bus as they think I am scamming them or tell me I have to pay full fare. This causes me alot of anxiety when travelling on the bus.

When travelling I need to sit down as my joints ache and I struggle to stay balanced, passengers often stare at me when I don't give up my seat for others. People sometimes make comments to me, which makes me feel overwhelmed. When I stand up after being sat down I sometimes walk differently due to my joints being stiff, people will stare and make comments.

What you can do to support me

Bus drivers need to be more aware that not all disabilities are visible, and if they hear any comments being made to me challenge them.

It would help if there were signs on public transport that say 'not all disabilities are visible'.

CONTACT US

For more information on the SEND
Youth Forum and the resource
produced email VIC@leeds.gov.uk

