

Lambeth SEND Youth Forum Consultation

Introduction

Lambeth is aiming to set up a SEND Youth Forum, providing young people with a platform to have their voices heard across service design and local decision-making. Our goal is to ensure that the forum is youth-led and set up in a youth voice centred way. To achieve this, it is crucial to consult with young people about their vision for the forum, allowing us to collaboratively shape its direction. This report outlines the consultations conducted so far with young people during two recent SEND Youth Voice events.

The first event was held at Streatham Space Project on **4th June 2024**. 23 students attended from three schools, 3 from Lansdowne School, 10 from Elmgreen School and 10 from Dunraven School. The students were between the ages of 11 and 15. The second event was held at Elm Court School on **19th June 2024** for Elm Court 6th formers between the ages of 16 to 18. Nine students attended this workshop. The students at both events had a range of SEND including, ADHD, Autism, hearing loss, SEMH needs and SLCN. Food and drink were provided at both events.



Aims:

To design the forum together by hearing from students about:

- When they would want to meet, where they would want to meet and who they think should be involved.
- How we should encourage young people to be involved in the forum.
- What activities they would like to do at the forum.
- What skills they would like to gain.
- Ideas for logo designs and names for the forum.

Both workshops were run by the SEND Youth Involvement Coordinator with support from three facilitators:

Lulu Pinkney – SEND Youth Involvement Coordinator

Dan Oakley – Preparing for Adulthood Lead

Georgina Barrett – Senior Strategic Area SENCo

Ziyad Elkhawad – Graduate Management Trainee



Activities:

Both events were centred around activities at workstations which the young people rotated around in their groups. Each activity focused on a different topic within the above aims. Each group of students had a Lambeth facilitator and support from school staff.

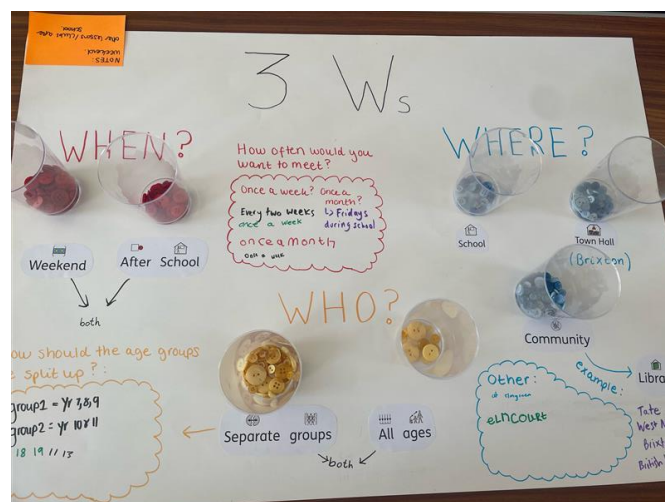
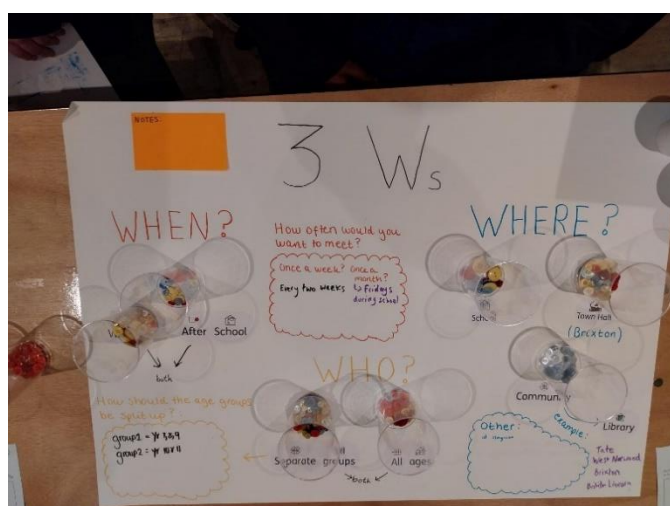
Symbols were used on questions and prompts for the activities. All activities had opportunities to contribute via writing, drawing, using symbol cards or using counters (buttons and corks) for voting. On 4th June we had support from the Dunraven School SALT to help with SLCN.

Please see Appendix 1 for event agendas.

Workstation activities

1. 3 W's – Where, When and Who?

This station looked at the logistics of setting up the forum - Where should we meet? When should we meet and who should be involved?



Responses:

- When? – The votes were quite evenly split across meeting on the weekend and after school, with slightly more votes for the weekend. Some students commented that they have existing commitments after school, for example clubs or prearranged travel plans. They also mentioned that they are often tired after school and want to go home. In terms of how often the young people want to meet, again, there was a range from once a week to once a month.
- Where? – Again, the votes were spread quite equally with Town Hall and ‘meeting in the community’ being slightly more popular. Students, however, did discuss that meeting at school is somewhere they know and are familiar with.
- Who? – Having separate groups was more popular, splitting up young people by their age.

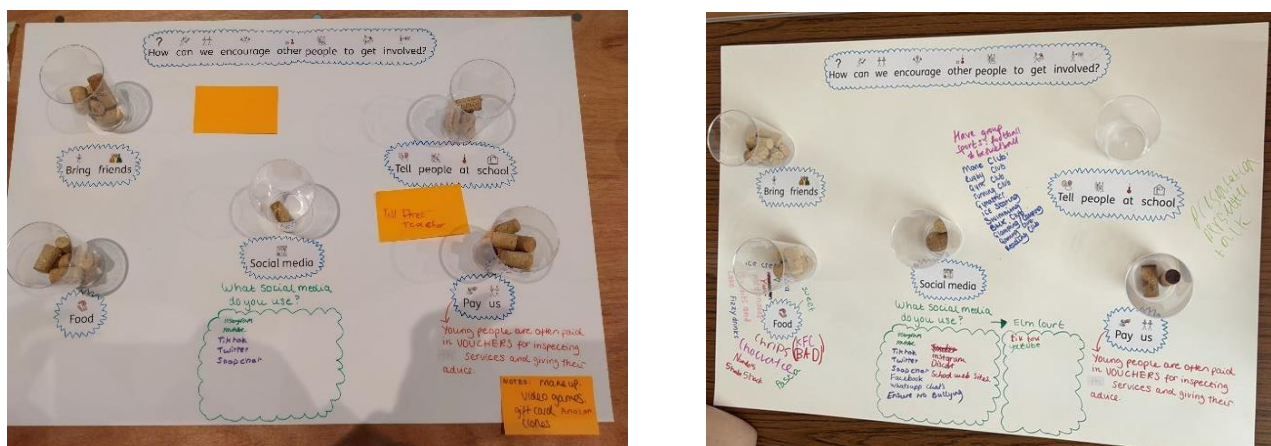
Reflections:

- There is potential to alternate meetings between afterschool and weekends, similar to the approach used by Tower Hamlets SEND forum, Our Time.
- Holding meetings at a school is only familiar to the students who attend that school. Using a neutral space, such as the Town Hall or a community centre may prevent a power imbalance between students.
- Logistics and resources must be considered when setting up separate groups. Although children may feel more confident in a school-setting with children of their own age groups, outside a school setting, they interact more freely as their age differences are not emphasised.

- Some teachers raised safeguarding concerns and avoiding any inappropriate behaviour as a reason to separate younger and older students.
- For project work and consultations, it is beneficial to have a mix of ages represented, therefore it is important to find ways for students of all ages to collaborate effectively.

2. How can we encourage other people to get involved?

This station looked at how we attract young people to join the forum; how we can spread the word and how we can compensate them for their time and expertise.



Responses:

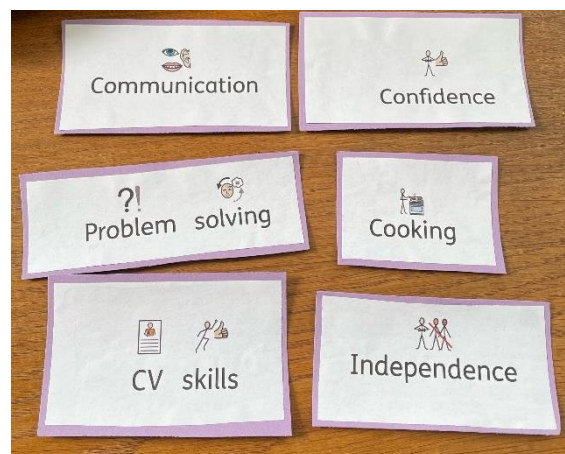
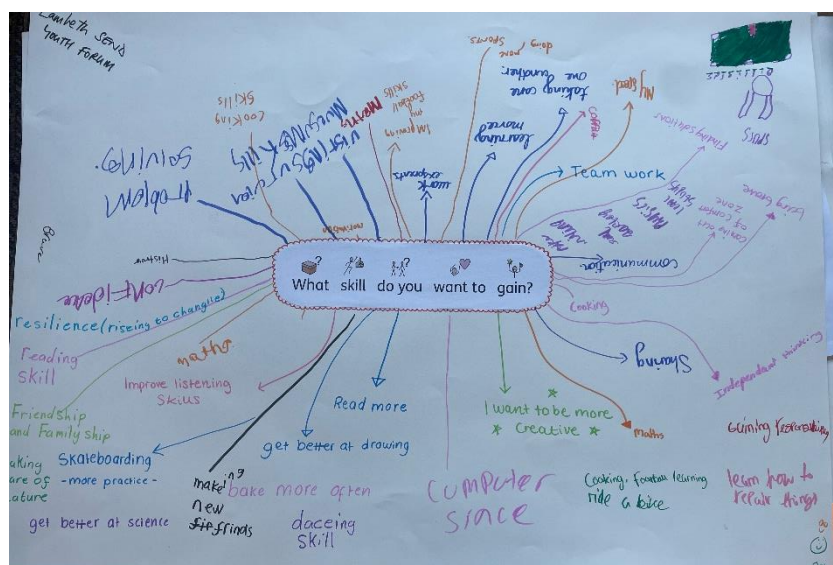
- This question had more varying responses between events.
- Bringing friends and providing food were the most common ways of encouraging other people to come along to the forum.
- Paying us was a more popular option at the first event.
- Social media wasn't very popular overall.

Reflections:

- Bearing in mind the age of this cohort, it is interesting that social media wasn't a very popular way of promoting the forum.
- Food was a very popular form of compensating/attracting young people, this is reflective of the positive response to the food supplied at both events!
- In terms of being paid for consultations, being rewarded with trips came up in discussions quite often across both events and more generally when thinking about what the young people would want to do at the forum.
- Another way to encourage young people to get involved could be the promotion of upskilling.

3. What skill do you want to gain?

This question helps us understand how the forum can be utilized by young people to develop specific skills. Symbol cards were used as prompts for thinking about what skills the young people might want to gain.



Responses:

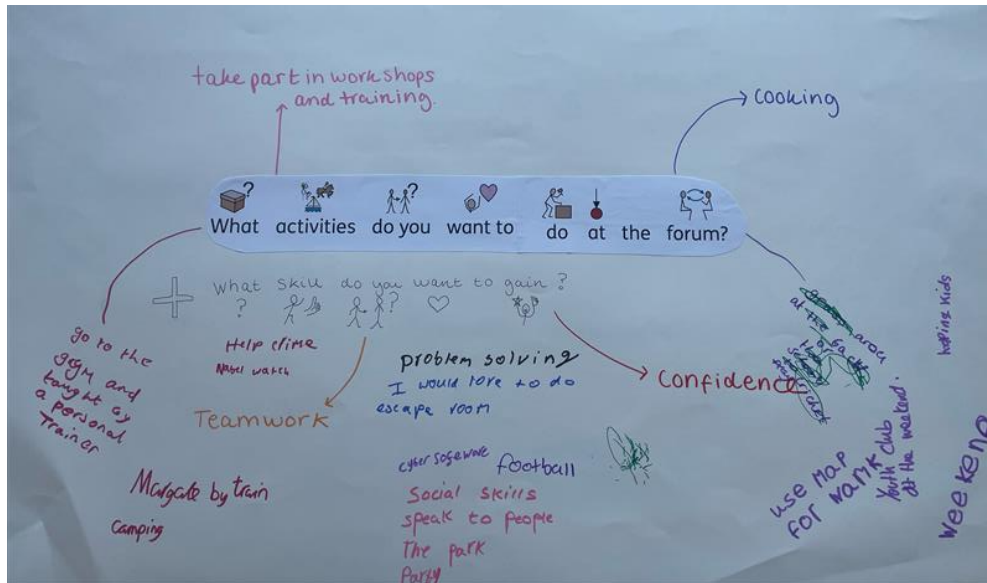
- Transferable/soft skills: confidence, resilience, communication, independence, gaining responsibility, sharing, taking care of one another, being brave, gaining motivation.
- Practical skills: cooking, learning to repair things, computer science, learning to ride a bike.
- Accessing work experience was suggested as a way to develop certain transferable and practical skills.

Reflections:

- It is important to think about how we can provide the young people with both the development of transferable skills and specific practical skills.
- Working on projects and consultations should equip young people with skills like teamwork, communication and gaining responsibility.
- Trying new things, whether this be working on a consultation or learning to ride a bike, will make the young people feel more confident, resilient, and brave.
- It is clear that young people want to develop specific practical skills as well, so it is necessary to have a balance of fun, social and developmental activities as well as involvement in consultations.

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For the second event on the 19th, we combined the skills question with "what do you want to do at the forum?". This decision was based on the overlap in responses, as many young people expressed an interest in learning practical skills as one of their desired activities.



Elm Court

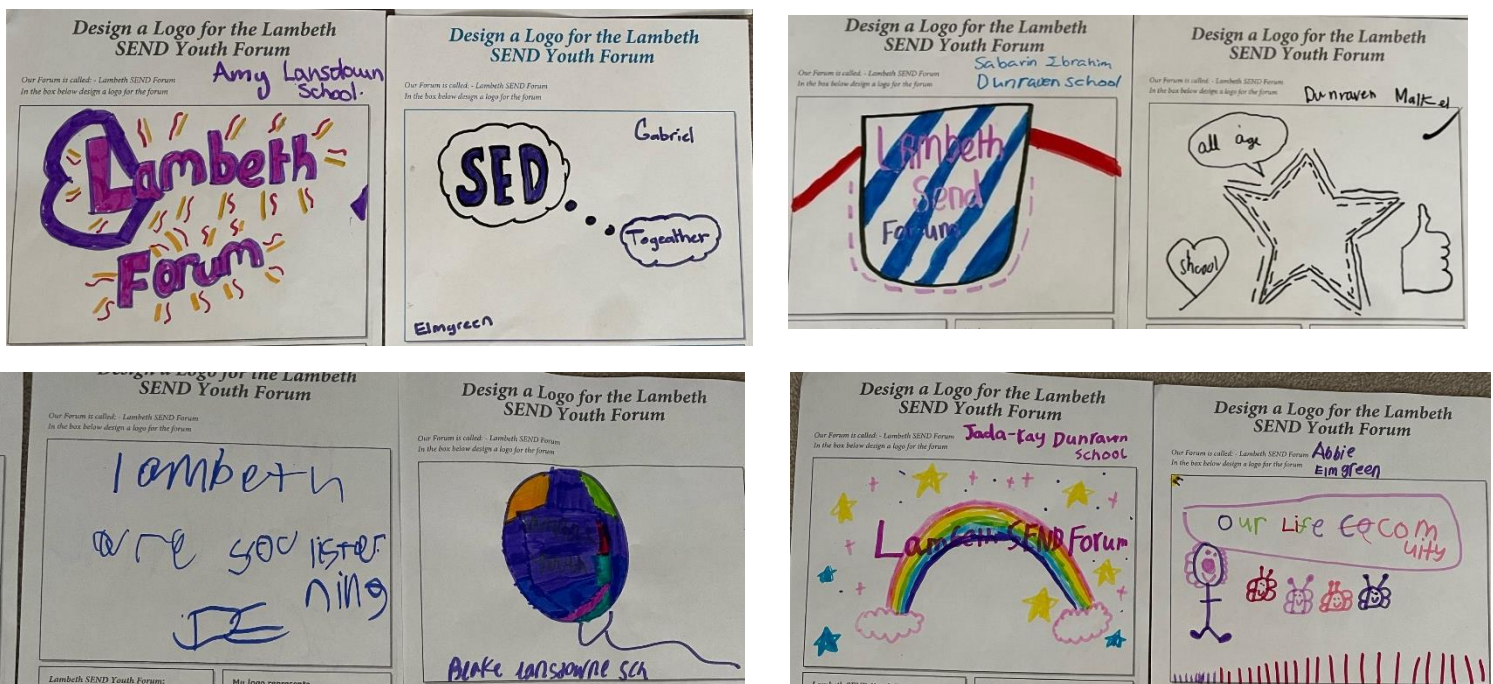
Responses:

- For this cohort, trips and experiences came up again as something the young people want to do, for example, go to Margate by train, go on walks, go camping and go to the gym and be taught by a personal trainer.
- Interestingly, escape rooms came up again as well as developing social skills, gaining cyber software skills, helping others, and helping to reduce crime.

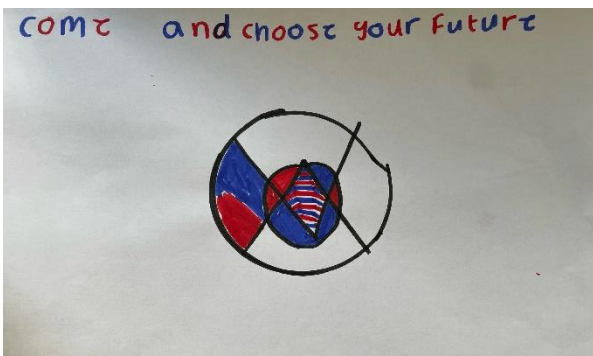
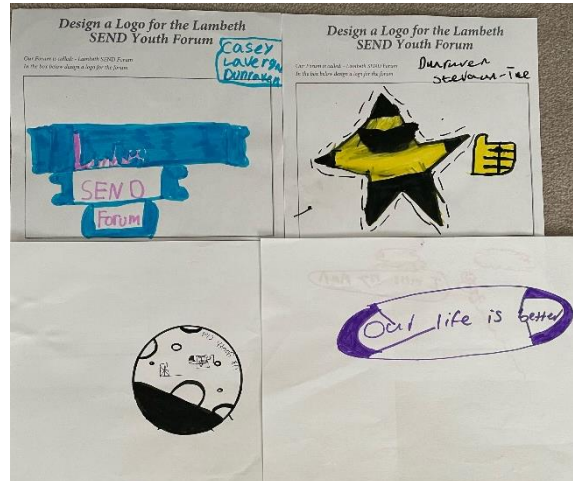
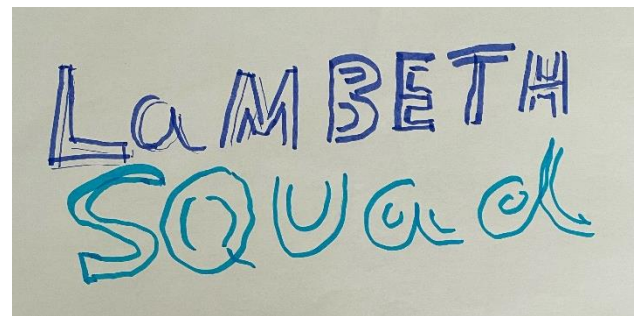
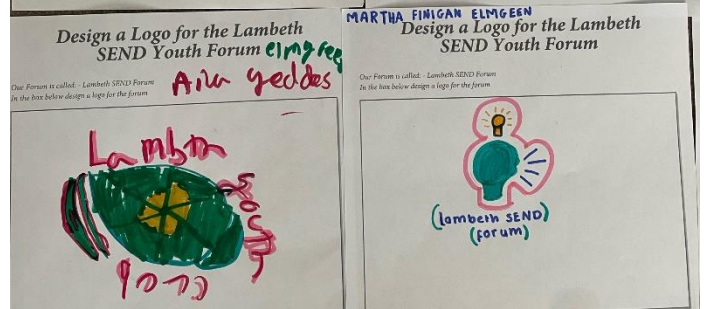
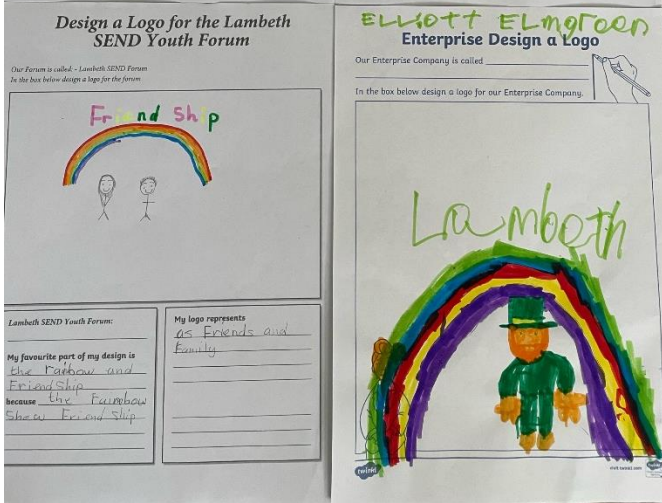
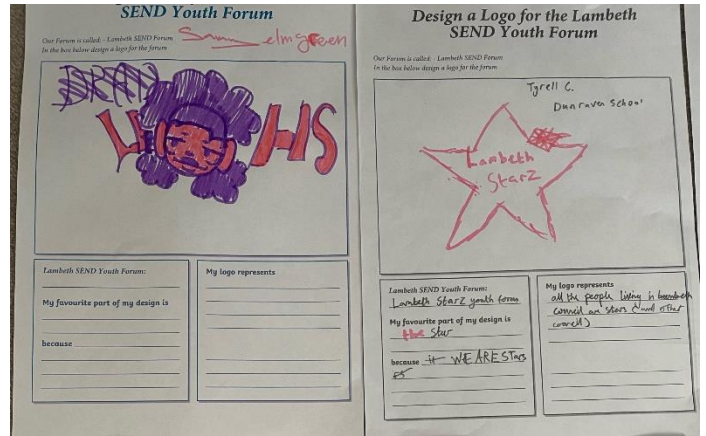
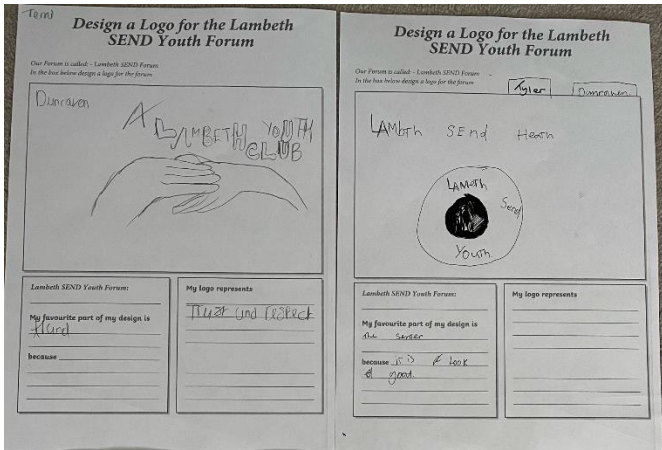
Reflections:

- Again, there were not many specific references to getting involved in projects which may be for reasons similar to those mentioned above.

Designing a logo



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Conclusion and Next Steps

Conclusion:

There were no clear preferences for the questions focused on the logistics of setting up the forum, which is reflective of individual preferences and pre-existing commitments. Teachers noted that it can often be challenging for students to envision what they would want something to look like in the future if they haven't experienced it yet. It's often best to start with a basic structure and then adjust the when, where, and who as the group evolves. This approach ensures that the young people who regularly attend the forum get to make these decisions as they experience them.

Similarly, when encouraging children to get involved with decision-making, we need to consider how to attract them and make them feel empowered. Initially, the group may focus more on providing a space for socializing and building confidence. Once the children are comfortable in the group and are aware of potential projects to be involved in, they may become more enthusiastic about participating in decision-making opportunities. As mentioned previously, this is the approach Our Time forum took, they noted that their thriving SEND forum looks very different now to when it started up 7 years ago.

Trips and experiences were frequently mentioned as activities the young people wanted to pursue. These could be other ways of compensating the young people for their hard work and may often be preferable to paying them in vouchers, as young people may not have the capacity to organize group trips themselves with appropriate supervision. Additionally, trips and experiences provide valuable opportunities for skill development.

There didn't seem to be a big difference in responses between students of different ages. This could support the argument that the young people don't need to be split up based on age as they have similar goals, aims and interests.

Overall, whilst we need to make the purpose of the forum clear, a place where young people with SEND can be involved in local decision-making and ignite change, from the feedback from the young people, it also needs to be a place where young people can socialise, have fun, try new activities, and develop soft and hard skills.

Next steps:

- More consultation needs to be done with young people who are already involved in local decision-making and service-design consultations to hear from them about how to encourage other young people to get involved.
- During the upcoming school summer holidays, there will be a good opportunity to go into youth clubs to carry out further consultation work on setting up the forum. Events so far have only included children from the schools invited along.
- Continue to speak with other SEND Youth Forums in London and across UK to share best practice around setting up a SEND Youth forum.
- Work with KIDS and the Making Participation Work Programme to recruit members for SEND Youth Forum and support launch at the beginning of the Autumn term.

Appendix 1 – Agenda for events

Time	Activity
10am – 10.50am	Arrive and set up! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 groups of tables - Refreshments station
10.50am – 11am	Students and staff arrive, snacks and drinks available, sit in groups of approx. 6, mingle with other schools, write on their name labels and can decorate.
11am – 11.15am	Introduction with PowerPoint SEND Youth Voice event 4th June ppt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why are we here today? - What is the purpose of a SEND Youth Forum? - Go over activities for the session including pizza at the end! - Each group to be with a facilitator (LP, DO, GB and ZE) who will go round the stations with them
11.15am – 11.45am Around 7/8 minutes each Signify it's time to move on to next station by putting hands on our head	Workstations: 4 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 3Ws <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where do you want to meet? - When do you want to meet? - Ages? 2. How can we encourage others to get involved? 3. What skills would you like to gain at the group/forum? 4. What do you want to do at the forum/group?
11.45-12	Coming up with a logo: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are given templates to draw logos. - Examples are on the board to help with designs - Overview of event: how we will use their feedback, next steps...
12	Pizza!

4th June Streatham Space Project

Time	Activity
9.15am – 9.45am	Arrive and set up! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 groups of tables - Refreshments station
9.45am – 10am	Students and staff arrive, snacks and drinks available, write on their name labels and can decorate.
10am – 10.05am	Introduction with PowerPoint SEND Youth Voice Elm Court 19th June ppt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why are we here today? - What is the purpose of a SEND Youth Forum? - Go over activities for the session - Each group to be with a facilitator (LP, DO and ZE) who will go round the stations with them
10.05am – 10.15am	Icebreaker (cup game)
10.15am – 10.45am	Workstations: 3 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 3Ws <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where do you want to meet? - When do you want to meet? - Ages? 2. How can we encourage others to get involved? 3. What do you want to do at the forum and what skills do you want to gain?
10.45am – 11am	Coming up with a logo: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are given templates to draw logos. - Examples are on the board to help with designs - Overview of event: how we will use their feedback, next steps...
11am	End (break time for students)

19th June Elm Court School

Appendix 2 – feedback from teachers and members of staff

4th June Streatham Space Project

‘The students really enjoyed it and look forward to further involvement’ – **Lansdowne School**

‘The students really enjoyed it. They loved taking part. Thank you so much for including them’ – **Elm green school**

‘Many thanks for organising this event, which the students really enjoyed. Of course, the pizza was a particular highlight, but they were very enthusiastic about everything! They also all said how much they liked you.

Our students seemed to be most keen on future events taking place at schools, rather than in more official Lambeth buildings, and I guess that the sound insulation may be better in some school environments.

The only other thing that I'd add is just as a SaLT bringing students with quite a lot of language needs, so that I'm particularly aware of their needs, and how much they miss when people speak with them.

Probably the biggest thing that I think would help them is to really slow down (so that it feels unnaturally slow) and chunk information in to very short utterances (eg. a 2 or 3 stage instruction would be broken in to chunks of one stage per utterance, with a couple of seconds delay between each utterance, to give them a chance to process), and using as high frequency vocabulary as possible. Even after I tried to do this for them on the 4th, they still said that they didn't understand a lot of what was said.

I realise that not all the students may have language difficulties, but I wondered if this might help with most of the students... I also had to help them to recall and explain what we had done last week to another student, and most of them had missed the bigger picture, and got mired in detail (a very common problem). I do realise that this is all so much easier said than done, even after 20 years of working as a SaLT! And none of it is meant as any kind of criticism or judgement, as this is just the daily bread of SaLT advice for group teaching and learning, especially with 2ndary students, where the content is so much more complex, abstract, and there is such limited time in which to cram all of it in! And our students understood the activities soon enough and joined in, as they were really nicely laid out and explained by you and the whole team.

Thanks so much again, to you and to the team, for organising such an enjoyable and worthwhile event for our students; I greatly appreciate it, as did they.’ – **Dunraven School**