

THE BUZZ



Made with the North Somerset SEND Children and Young People's Council

In this edition:

- Introduction to the SEND Council and 'The Buzz'
- SEND Student blog: This is me
- Hints and tips for changes in routine at Christmas
- Support, clubs, and activities
- SEND student drops ins

Some of the work the SEND Council have worked on:

- The North Somerset SEND Strategy and Coproduction Charter
- A hidden disabilities video featuring Student Council members
- The two sided guide for Annual Reviews

To join the SEND Council or find out more information, email:

engagement.participation@n-somerset.gov.uk

Hello!

Welcome to the first ever North Somerset SEND Council newsletter: '**The Buzz**'!

This newsletter is made with the SEND Council, which means everything you read has been chosen or written by students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). It will be sent to schools every term so you can hear about what matters to them and it will be full of useful things for all students in our schools.

What is the SEND Council?

The SEND Council is a group of students from different schools and year groups in North Somerset. They meet members of North Somerset Council every month in school time to share the voice of other pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

V

Voice: express their opinions, advocate for others, and share their concerns or ideas

O

Organise: help North Somerset Council on projects and events to make sure we listen to students with SEND

I

Influence: have a say in decisions which impact their lives

C

Coproduce: work directly with senior leaders and professionals to agree how we should work together and achieve the right goals

E

Empower: lead with the power to make changes that help people and improve the lives of people with SEND



More about The Buzz newsletter

The Buzz is made with the SEND Council and all ideas and contributions are welcome. Each newsletter has an introduction, a blog written by a SEND Council member, activities and events, advice for other students with SEND, and anything else the students want to include.



In this edition, the students chose to include some useful hints and tips to cope with changes to routines at home and in school during the Christmas period. We hope you enjoy the first edition of The Buzz and for feedback or to contribute, please email:

engagement.participation@n-somerset.gov.uk

SEND Student Blog: This is me



Hello, I am a student with SEND at one of the bigger secondary schools in North Somerset.

This school is MASSIVE and when I say its MASSIVE, I mean that it's a lot to get used to. The amount of people can be overwhelming, although I did get more used to it as the years went on.

I'm a very anxious person and my time in secondary school has sometimes been difficult because of that. When I started secondary school, I felt so excited. I faced new challenges as time went on. Some people were unkind about the way I looked in Year 8 and that gave me anxiety about my body image. Certain subjects, like Science and Maths, have been very difficult for me to understand.

"I feel that I'm more creative than academic and the demands of my school life were often difficult for me to live up to."

I started having depressive episodes and felt like I was superglued to my mattress or a heavy weight was pushing me down.

At the start of year 9 I was diagnosed with ADHD and, looking back, realise that affected a lot of things before then. As an example:

"I would often think to myself why should we have to wear blazers? I get that the school want to look smart and good in terms of reputation but it's a little bit out of date. I felt uncomfortable, stressed, anxious when I have to wear uniform. Sometimes that stopped me going to lessons because I'm afraid people are going to make fun of me or say unkind words. I think what brings me down also is the fact I feel I'm going to be trapped in a hot classroom full of people. There was a time when I was so down on myself and felt no one was there for me. I was so lonely and, to be honest, I gave up on myself. It wasn't at all what I wanted my time at secondary school to be like."

It didn't stay like this though! I started taking ADHD and anxiety medication which helps loads.

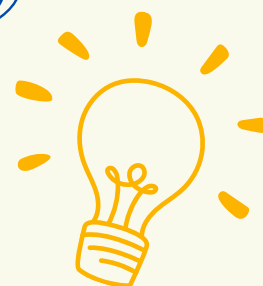
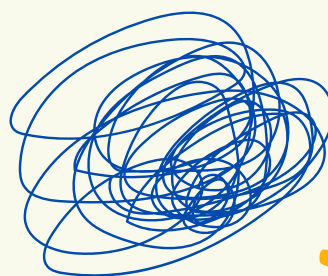
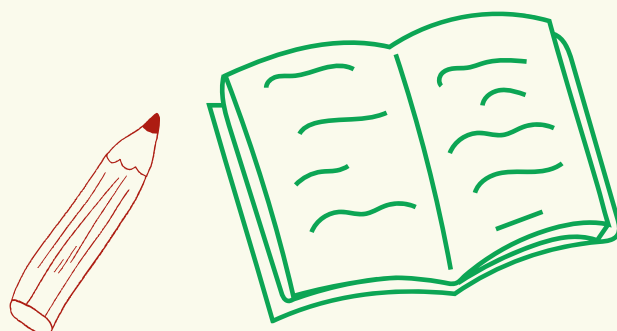


It has been tricky finding the right dose but it has made positive changes to my life. It helps me learn more because I zone out less and it helps me engage in the lessons more. You can tell immediately if I've missed a dose. I get angry, stressed and disorganised and cry a lot!!!! When I take my anxiety tablets, I feel more free, more confident in myself and much more relaxed. Some days I find it tricky to take my medication, I think it can be a sensory thing but sometimes it doesn't feel right to take them.

My mum has always been my biggest supporter. She fought so hard to get the school to understand my needs and I would never have gotten as far as I have without her. Getting an EHCP last year has improved things a lot. It went from the school helping a little to getting all the support in the world!!! But I do still find it hard to attend school and worry about how much school I miss. I think the more schools can listen to us, have a little faith, and be flexible with our learning, the better this will be for us. Someone else who has really helped me is my key worker. She is brilliant and always brings a smile to my face in school. Having a trusted adult and my EHCP has made such a difference to the way I get to learn but I still have a lot of progress to make.

I have a passion for performing arts and my school has great support for that. I like to always have a goal to motivate me and think about all the great and exciting things that are coming up. For example, I would love to go to The Big Act and one day perform on a stage in the West End.

This makes me want to try and work harder. The teachers of SEND do so much for young people like me and make it possible for me to improve at school when I otherwise couldn't. Even though I have struggled and still struggle today I will always try to have a cheerful mindset, a smile on my face and to never ever stop singing!

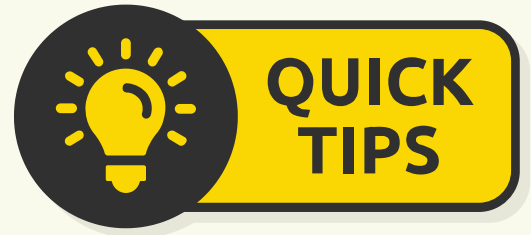


HELPFUL HINTS AND TIPS

From Sirona Care and Health

Christmas can bring change. For some children and young people, change or uncertainty can cause anxiety. So here are some tips:

- Make yourself a Christmas calendar/timetable, with any different events that will be coming up. Also, add all the things that you usually do. Check with your family what is happening at home over this time too, so you have a full picture of Christmas events
- If your class are going to watch a school concert or show, ask teachers or parents to let you know in advance where it will take place, how long it lasts, and how many people will be there. Ask if you can sit somewhere you prefer, for example, near an exit
- If helps to know in advance what food, activities, and people will be at an event you can ask parents, teacher, or friends to let you know before the event
- If you are feeling overwhelmed, talk to someone at school or at home. They can help you to decide what you can do or what strategies you can use to cope
- If the change to how the house looks with all the Christmas decorations is stressful for you, ask your family if there can be at least one room with no decorations, or maybe they could put up the decorations gradually so its not an instant change
- Shops are often busy, noisier, arranged differently. Check if any local shops have quiet hours or Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) friendly hours



Support for young people's mental health



[The Off The Record website](#)

Mental Health social movement by and for young people aged 11-25.



Bristol, North Somerset
and South Gloucestershire
Integrated Care Board

[North Somerset Mental Health and Wellbeing service directory](#)



[The YoungMinds website](#)

Activities



[Sign up for 'quiet sessions' at AirHop Trampoline Park](#)



[Icescape quiet sessions available](#)



All Stars Sports Stars: Specialist sessions available by telephone: 01934 263 911



Hollywood Bowl

[SEND sessions and prices available on the Hollywood Bowl website](#)

65 High Street

[Nailsea 65 High Street - Inclusive clubs for children and young people](#)





SEND Clubs and Activities service (SENDCAS) - For short breaks and activities

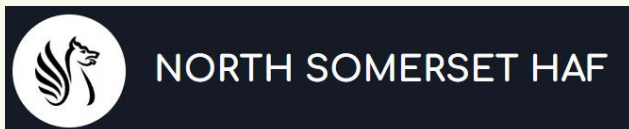
Children in Care Council food and games evening

The next Children in Care Council will take place on the 20th of December in The Stables Games Room, Weston-super-Mare.

The session will run from 4:30pm-6:00pm and is an opportunity to play some games and meet some other care experienced young people.

Free activities for families accessing benefits-related free schools meals

If you receive benefits-related free school meals, have a additional need or SEND requirement, or you are a child in care, you and your family can attend one of our free family or individual sessions at Icescape Tropicana or Clip 'n' Climb.



<https://eequ.org/northsomersethaf>



SEND student school drop-ins

SEND school drop-ins are currently being arranged with schools to start in Spring 2024. Shelly Smith, the Engagement and Participation Officer, is arranging the opportunity so children and young people can talk, find out about information and updates in the local area, and participate in North Somerset Council projects.



Thank you!

If you would like to provide feedback or write an article for this newsletter please email: engagement.participation@n-somerset.gov.uk

[Check out the SEND Hub \(Local Offer\) to find out what support is available for children and young people with SEND.](#)

