

Inclusion Community of Practice

Case Studies from Suffolk

Specialist Education Services (SES) and
Psychology & Therapeutic Services (P&TS)

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Showcasing:

- Joint Assessment Meetings (JAM) as part of EP Advice towards EHCNA
- Community Inclusion Forums (CIF)
- Solution Circles

Joint Assessment Meetings (JAMs)

What they are: Collaborative, person-centred process led by Educational Psychologists (EPs).

Purpose:

- Bring families, school staff and professionals together.
- Develop a shared understanding of needs, strengths and aspirations.
- Co-create clear outcomes to guide support.

Where they fit:

- Part of EP Advice element of Suffolk's Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) process.
- Suggested when a shared space is useful to gather all views.
- Supported by a short introductory video and information sheets for families and practitioners. [Consultation and assessment - Suffolk County Council](#)

BEFORE THE JAM

- Please ensure you have up to date information about the CYP's strengths and needs in your area of expertise.
- You may wish to bring along any notes, reports or examples that help others understand the CYP, and that are not submitted elsewhere.
- If possible, ensure that the CYP's views are sought prior to the meeting, especially in relation to your area of involvement.

WHO WILL BE AT THE MEETING?

The meeting will be arranged and facilitated by an Educational Psychologist (EP) and will include setting staff, parents or carers, and any other professionals who know the CYP well.

JAM VIDEO



PURPOSE

To shape the advice shared with the Local Authority as part of the EHC Needs Assessment Process by:

- Bringing together the people who know the CYP best. Building a shared picture of their strengths, needs and barriers.
- Setting realistic goals for the future and considering what support will help make progress towards these and towards thriving in education.
- Working in partnership.

Joint Assessment Meetings (JAMs)

PROFESSIONALS INFORMATION SHEET



WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE MEETING?

The EP will use everything discussed in the JAM, alongside any extra information, to write their professional advice for the Local Authority. A copy of this advice will also be sent to the school and family.

DOES THE CHILD NEED TO BE THERE?

We may ask the child or young person if they'd like to attend some or all of the meeting. They don't have to come if they aren't able to, their views can be gathered in another way.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE MEETING?

Meetings are usually at school but can be online. They typically last around two hours. The EP leads the discussion and ensures everyone has a voice. You'll cover the CYP's strengths, needs, concerns and then agree on support strategies to support learning and reduce barriers. JAMs are open, respectful and focused on practical solutions.

FEEDBACK

Help us improve! Share your thoughts on our JAM and your EP experience in our quick anonymous [survey](#). Scan the QR code to respond



Any further questions, please contact the EP or member of P&TS that invited you to the JAM



What did we do?

Context and purpose: This work contributed to an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) for a Year 7 pupil transitioning to secondary school. The pupil had a history of developmental delay and speech and language needs, with emerging social, emotional and mental health needs linked to transition.

Activity and approach: We worked jointly with the Specialist Education Services (SLCN), school SENCo and the pupil’s parent as part of a Joint Assessment Meeting (JAM). Prior to the meeting, I met with the pupil and completed direct work, including observation, dynamic assessment and a Mini-Path, to gather the pupil’s views, strengths and aspirations.

The JAM was **co-produced** with the parent and professionals, ensuring equal voice and shared understanding. The meeting focused on strengths, current needs, and provision that could meet the CYPs needs within the school’s offer, supporting inclusive practice.

How well did we do?

Feedback from our partner professional described the work as “*extremely useful*”, with the meeting characterised as well-facilitated, strengths-focused and genuinely collaborative.

Additional evidence of effectiveness included:

- Clear professional preparation and communication ahead of the meeting
- Positive feedback on confidence, facilitation and clarity of explanations
- Parent understanding actively checked and confirmed throughout
- Clear, immediate next steps agreed, with ongoing monitoring planned by the involved professionals

The co-production approach ensured actions were practical, realistic and embedded within the school context, increasing the likelihood of meaningful impact for the pupil and their family.

What our partners told us

“Co-production made us a team around the pupil, working with school and within the school’s offer and capacity means the actions should actually happen.”

“Between us we could refocus on the positives when needed and connect up information.”

“The process made sure everyone’s voices were equal.”

“The facilitator ensures the meeting progresses and summed up each section.”

“We were able to make sure mum’s understanding was clear at each step.”

What impact did it have?

- Ensured the pupil’s strengths and perspective were central to decision-making.
- Helped translate assessment information into **clear, accessible language** for parents.
- Supported identifying provision that was **already available** within the schools offer, promoting inclusion.
- Strengthened multi-agency collaboration through co-construction and shared ownership of outcomes.

This is the best thing we have done to help towards our child, so I think it's a really good thing, especially doing the PATH.

He has the PATH up in his bedroom. What the EP and her colleagues have done is really positive, you have all been so good at what you've done.

The EP was confident in explaining the process, objectives of the meeting and steering the meeting to make the best use of our time.

JAM VIDEO



Everyone has been so good. They have been caring, thoughtful and trying to help my child as best they can.

It's so nice that someone has made the effort to listen to him and help with his needs at last. It's a crucial time in his life.

It was useful because I feel like talking to people helped me and they're going to help me out and that's useful. I liked doing the PATH. I liked the environment: sitting in a circle, talking and having cookies, the pens and paper, I have kept the PATH.

Joint Assessment Meetings (JAMs)

FEEDBACK FROM
YOUNG PEOPLE AND
FAMILIES

The things in the EP report fit what I need. I think it will help by making me realise what my strengths and weaknesses are.

It will tell the college what I need to help me with my next steps

We did a PATH. Everyone took their time to come. The EP summed up my child perfectly in the report. Her attention to detail is brilliant. Some people have titles but they're not always good at their job, but she really is, and I can't rate her highly enough. How she spoke to him, dealt with him and analysed him. She has put a lot of work and thought into this and gone above and beyond.

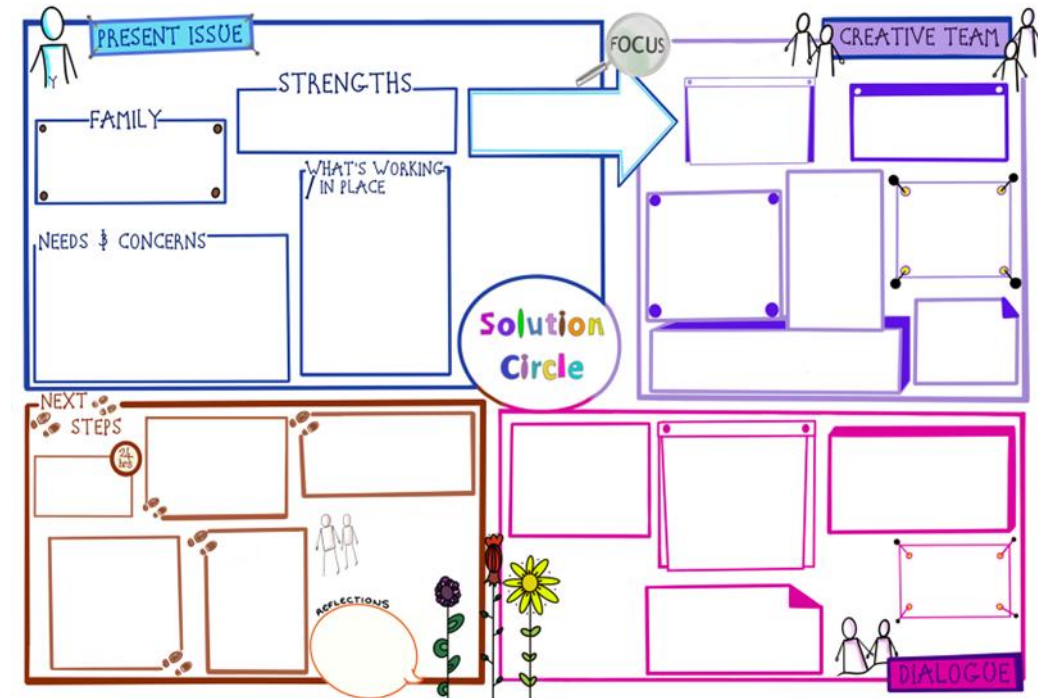


Solution Circles (SCs)

An overview of the online Solution Circle process in Suffolk

What they are:

- A collaborative problem-solving process using structured facilitation (including visual graphic recording) to create a shared space for thinking and planning.
- SCs offer a quick, supportive 30-minute process to generate practical next steps and share ideas and strategies that can be implemented immediately.



Solution Circles (SCs) cont.

Purpose:

- Support the Assess–Plan–Do–Review cycle, particularly when a setting feels “stuck” or would benefit from additional professional perspectives.
- Bring people together early and promote inclusive practice through joined-up thinking and practical, strengths-focused strategies.

Where they fit:

- SC can be used in any situation where collaborative problem solving is needed, including peer supervision.
- In this context, they are used within the early-intervention stage of Suffolk’s Graduated Response. They provide quick access to multi-professional thinking, supporting inclusive practice.

Article

Solution Circles: What do we know about the use of Solution Circles in Educational Psychology (EP) practice and do they work in the context of online collaborative problem solving?

Darwin, Claire | Booker, Roger

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsdeb.2023.1.184.36>



This article appears in:

DECP Debate

Issue 184

“Extremely useful. A Solution Circle around one of our children in Year 2 who we were 'stuck' with. Everything suggested is achievable and realistic in our school resource. The Core Vocabulary approach discussed is going to have an impact on the whole class, not just the individual child.”

“The Solution Circle gave us the reassurance we needed. The following week in school was more successful with one of our pupils who was completely refusing – they now have attended every day the following week. This is a very big step forward.”



Solution Circles: What do we know about the use of Solution Circles in EP practice and do they work in the context of online collaborative problem solving

Find the full study here: [bpsdeb.2023](#)



Aims/Background context



(why did we do it)

This paper explores the use of Solution Circles (SCs) and evaluates their benefits and impact. SCs are undertaken in various contexts, including collaborative problem solving and professional supervision.

A literature review and a staff survey across education settings were conducted. The findings will inform how this approach is embedded within our Local Authority SEND Graduated Response.

[An overview of the Solution Circle process](#)

Design/Methods



(what did we do)

The literature search highlighted the use of SCs with particular attention given to the role of graphic facilitation within the process.

Practice-based evidence is presented alongside a summary of the literature, focusing on how SCs are used within education settings.

It is acknowledged that there are several versions of the SC process, each serving different purposes. These variations were reviewed and offer valuable insights for reflective practice and local adaptation within Suffolk's SEND context.

Results/Discussion/Impact



The findings indicate that SCs are effective in the context of online collaborative problem solving, offering both practical and emotional support while enhancing inclusive practice.

Staff consistently value the structured nature of the SC process, appreciating the time to think and reflect, supported by a team of professionals and skilled process and graphic facilitators.

Survey results revealed **95% of staff found SCs very or extremely useful** and **90% reported increased confidence** in supporting their situation. Staff particularly appreciated the multi-professional collaboration and the opportunity to co-create solutions and next steps. *“I feel very confident, have already started the first step! Having someone make contact within 24 hours makes a difference!”*

Solution Circles – Evidence-Based Impact



- Consistently described as highly useful, supportive and energising, helping staff think differently when they feel stuck.
- Participants value the safe, reassuring space and the skilled facilitation described as empowering, uplifting and incredibly supportive.
- Education setting staff report Solution Circles are helpful, clarifying, informative and supportive, especially because they can hear from a broad multi-professional team.
- Digital graphic facilitation is highlighted for creating clarity and enabling a clear, shared plan.
- Staff leave with realistic, actionable next steps, many of which strengthen wider classroom and whole-school practice.
- Seen as “*one of the most effective offers available*” due to the combination of expert facilitation, multi-agency insight and a structured process that produces a clear, achievable plan.

Community Inclusion Forums(CIFs)

What they are:

Community Inclusion Forums (also known as CIFs) are part of Suffolk's Graduated Response.

- The Community Inclusion Forums meet once every half term in venues central to each community
- Each area forum is chaired by a specialist teacher from the Whole School Inclusion team and an Educational Psychologist from the Psychology and Therapeutic Service.
- 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.[Community Inclusion Forums](#)

Purpose:

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.**

- **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: SEND Statutory 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.

Where they fit:

- Part of Suffolk's Graduated response – Universal offer
- SENCO led agendas - responding to local needs/issues/activity

Supporting Inclusive Practice and Positive Outcomes for Children & Young People

School staff gain practical strategies, expert support, and evidence that strengthens inspection outcomes and improves life chances for children and young people.



The vision, impact, and reach of Community Inclusion Forums across Suffolk.




Meeting Ofsted's Inclusion Priorities



SUPPORTING INCLUSION

Supporting the Graduated Approach in School Settings



ASSESS, PLAN, DO & REVIEW



SHARED LEARNING

Multi-agency

Stay current

Relevant for your community

Community Inclusion Forum



IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR CYP

Progress, Engagement and Wellbeing



SUPPORTING WELLBEING

Create safe spaces and build connection



HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- Contact Suffolk County Council's Inclusion Service for details.
- Join a local CIF or start one in your area.
- Access resources and support through the council's website.

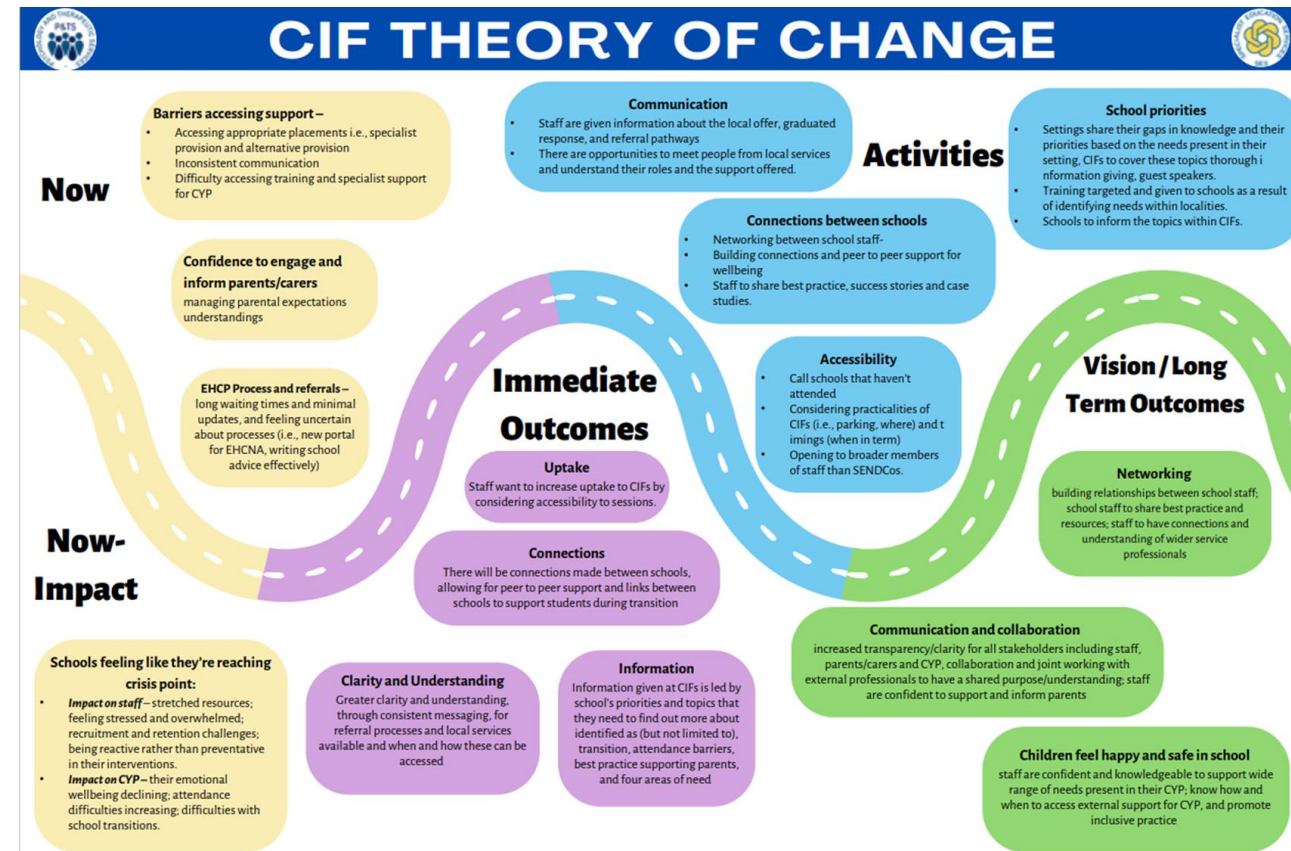


Monitoring the impact of CIFs

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 to keep an ongoing continuous improvement journey as the CIFs evolve.



Immediate Outcomes

Connections: Links are made between schools, enabling peer support and sharing approaches for supporting CYP e.g. during transitions

Information: CIF content reflects school priorities such as transitions, attendance, barriers to education, the four areas of need and ways of supporting parents

Uptake: Staff would like to improve CIF attendance (in the regular meetings) and have identified that accessibility (e.g. session timing, location or format) can affect participation

Clarity and understanding: Shared, consistent messaging helps staff understand referral routes and how to access local services

Long Term Outcomes

Networking: Stronger relationships between school staff; increased sharing of best practice and resources; better connections with wider service professionals

Communication and collaboration: Greater transparency across services and with families; more joint working around shared purposes; improved staff confidence to support and inform parents

Creating the conditions for children to feel happy and safe in school: Staff become increasingly confident and knowledgeable in meeting diverse needs. understand when and how to access external support, and promote inclusive practice

Impact of the CIFs: Data from Survey

Feedback about the CIFs has been positive:

- **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)

THEMES	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>