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SEND NEWS

Spring
2023

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Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire

Virtual TSIL System Engagement Event

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A warm welcome to the new edition of SEND News

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Commissioning
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Council



Dear parents and carers,

As we head towards the easter break, I wanted to share with you some of the work going on within Children and Family Services over the past few months.

▶ This month, the government also gave the go-ahead for a new SEND school in Quorn. The 90-place school, funded from the DfE's Special Free School programme, will be for children who need support with communication and interaction.

In February it was announced that Leicestershire County Council would be one of twelve authorities to secure funding to transform the way that services are delivered to families. Family hubs will be launched across the county and will act as a 'one stop shop' for parents and carers to get advice and support for families.

This issue of SEND News also focuses on some of the improvements we are starting to see across the department as part of the Transforming SEND and Inclusion for Leicestershire (TSIL) programme. For example, increasing Educational Psychologist support, improving early years transitions and trialling a new case management system. ■

Leicestershire Short Breaks

Leicestershire County Council is currently looking at the Short Break offer and process following parental concerns around the current system.

Having had conversations with the Leicestershire SEND Hub (Leicestershire's Parent Carer Forum) the Council recently sent a survey to parents/carers who are in receipt of a Short Break Service. Responses from this survey will enable the Council to establish what is working well and if there is any opportunity to change or improve the offer to better meet the needs of families across Leicestershire.

The council is currently considering the feedback from this exercise with representatives of the SEND Hub and will share updates and further information in due course.

Apply for your school transport

The application form is now live on the website to apply for assisted transport for the upcoming academic year.

▶ Nursery aged children and anyone in post 16 education need to reapply each year for transport, this includes for both council organised transport and a personal transport budget (PTB).

Compulsory school aged children do not need to apply for assisted transport unless one of the following applies:

- They are applying for transport for the first time
- They move address
- They change school or school campus/site
- Their child's needs change and this might affect their risk assessment or transport arrangements

If you are applying for transport for a 16-18 year old, you need to do so by 31 March 2023. Nursery, school aged children and 19+ applications need to be submitted by 31 May 2023.

Parents should apply for transport assistance only when they have received the final EHCP for the school they are applying for.

We will endeavour to arrange transport for the start of the new academic year for all applications received by the respective closing dates with the following exceptions:

- Incomplete applications that require clarification from parents
- Applications that require further information from parents in order to determine eligibility to transport
- Applications where school places are yet to be confirmed
- Applications received after the closing date will be processed as soon as possible in order of date received but there is no guarantee that transport will be available for the start of the school year.

The council provides SEN transport assistance to around 2600 children. Each year, the council reorganises transport according to all children who either move schools, move school site, move home, start school for the first time or indeed leave school. As a result, this task requires as much time as possible to assess eligibility, complete transport risk assessments and plan efficient transport arrangements, to make sure these are confirmed in time for the start of the school year.

It remains impossible to plan and arrange transport if school places have not been confirmed to us.

You can find more information on the **school transport section of the website.** ■



TSIL update: Inclusive practice

Stakeholders from across the system have come together to understand how to develop inclusive practice within education settings in Leicestershire.

▶ From early on it was quite clear that it was felt inclusive practice across schools is inconsistent and we could be doing more to learn from the schools that are doing it right.




Two groups were set up, a design group and a trial group. They decided to focus on three key areas:

1. Supporting individual children and young people
 - Producing a toolkit that provides clear expectations about what a school should be doing to meet the needs of CYP with SEND, and where they can get additional support
 - Peer to peer networking opportunities
2. Supporting transition expectations and planning
3. Giving data to schools that will allow them to know where they can develop their inclusive practice

As a result, work has begun to trial a toolkit and peer to peer network across a group of ten schools with the ambition, if successful, to roll this out wider. So far, opportunities have been facilitated for peer networking and sharing ideas. This has led to schools forming new relationships with other schools who have resources that could help them or have faced similar problems in the past.

Louise Engels, parent and co-chair of Leicestershire SENDHub:

 “This has been a really good group that has been well facilitated and feels like it is making a difference”

Jen Goode, SENDCO at Fleckney Primary School:

 “It feels like we are actually being listened to. It’s good to be heard and empowering to be part of the change that is so badly needed” ■

Early years transitions

Within the Inclusive Practice workstream there is a focus on early years. Every person who was spoken to during the diagnostic stage of the programme said there is a lot of fear and stress around transitions. Twenty percent of EHCPs happen in transition from nursery to primary school as a result of this, two design groups have been set up to explore this issue further.

▶ In these design groups, five key requirements of a good transition to primary school for children with SEND have been identified, this has been built into a transition document. This transition document is currently being trialled to identify concerns around individual children’s transition and share information about their strengths and needs.

We have also been working with early years providers, primary schools, parents and other professionals to design and implement ways of improving communication and inclusivity through the primary transition.

The majority of children with SEND will be transitioning with this document in September, making the process more transparent, less stressful and more consistent.

The transition document and guidance will be sent out to all SENCOs at the start of the summer term. The document will support SENCOs and early years providers in the successful transition of CYP with SEND.

If successful, we will seek to adapt this transition document for the primary to secondary transition. ■



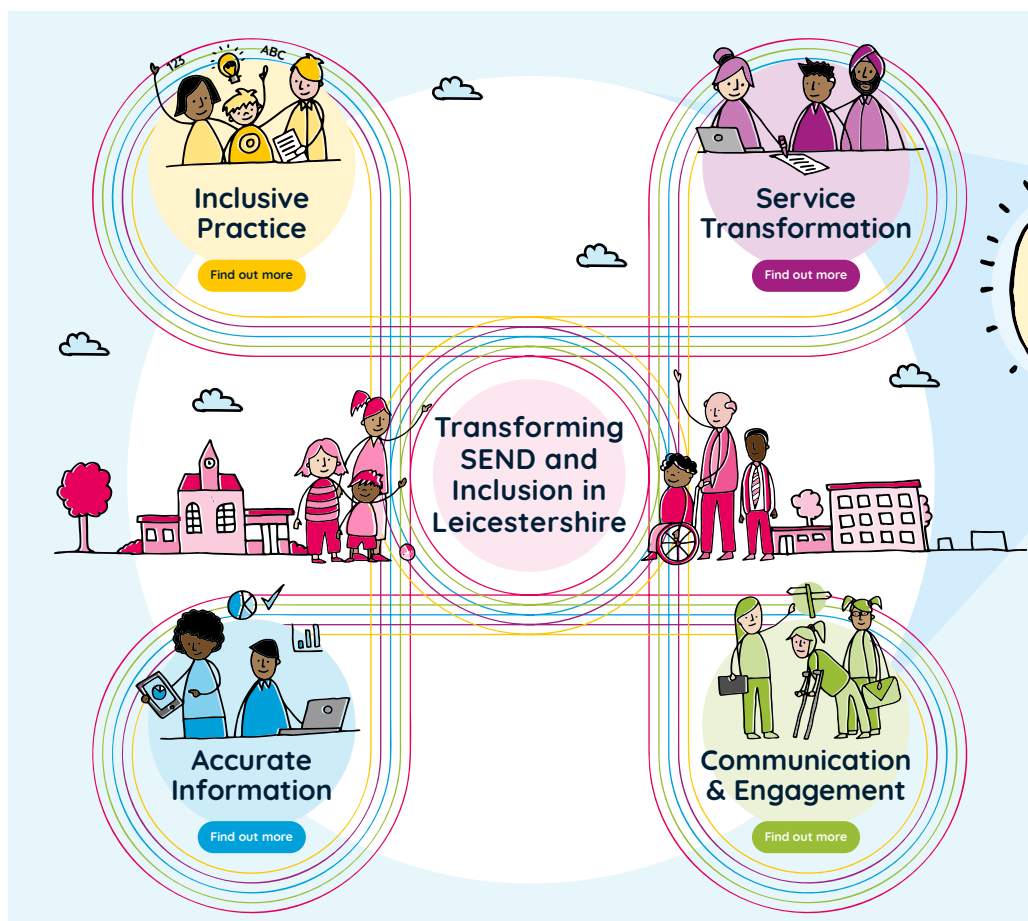
Virtual TSIL System Engagement Event

Stakeholders from across the system have been busy designing improvements that will make a difference to the experience children and young people and their families have with the SEND system in Leicestershire.

▶ You are invited to attend the **TSIL System Engagement Event on Thursday 23 March 4-5pm,**

where you will find out what's been happening since the programme started, the green shoots we're starting to see and the exciting work that is on the horizon.

Change can't happen overnight and given the scale and complexity of the challenges the SEND system faces, it's still too early to say the experience is improving for all. However, we hope the green shoots we'll share during this session will inspire us to all continue to work together to make much needed improvements.



If you have any immediate questions that might help shape the content on the day, please share them via the TSIL mailbox transforming SENDI@leics.gov.uk before **Friday 17 March**. We won't be able to address every question in the session but will provide FAQs on the website via the Local Offer page following the event.

Please **register your attendance here** ■



Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire



Synergy trials underway

Within Children and Family Services a programme of work is underway to replace existing data system (Capita) with new system, known as Synergy.

▶ The aim of the programme is to introduce a system that brings together information about a child or young person from a variety of sources (for example, SENA, School Admissions, Youth Justice, Children and Family Wellbeing Services, and Free School Meals) in to one place – enabling practitioners to have an overarching view of the child, their support network and input from other professionals and agencies. We want our practitioners to be spending their time helping families rather than simply putting data into systems and doing administrative work.

Synergy has the ability to have portals within the system for stakeholders such as schools and parents and carers to look at relevant information for their child or young person. This has the potential to allow those with access to the portals to ‘self-serve’ by being able to track the progress of cases.

In February 2023 we invited a couple of schools to begin testing the school’s portal. This trial, which will run until Summer 2023, will allow us to work with SENDCos and school practitioners to address any technical issues with the portal, to understand how it can best be used and improved to ensure schools can access case-specific documents, and improve communication between professionals and council services such as SENA. We will also work with the schools involved to explore how useful access to the portal is for SENDCos to share information with parents. Our aspiration is to be able to fully launch the school’s pilot to all schools and Academies in Leicestershire by September 2023.

There are plans to test the potential for a parent portal in Synergy later in the year, the technical work on this element is currently in progress. ■



▶ **Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire**



Holidays Together

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) is a free and exciting holiday programme for children aged 4 to 16, living in Leicestershire and in receipt of benefits-related free school meals. It is funded by the Department for Education.

▶ Leicestershire County Council is working with Active Together to co-ordinate the Easter 2023 programme, which will be delivered at venues across the county by schools, voluntary and community organisations, childcare providers and sports clubs.

Eligible children and young people can access up to four holiday club sessions each, free of charge.

The sessions will offer a variety of fun activities, including sports, music, arts, and other opportunities to learn and develop new skills, alongside a nutritious meal each day.

Find out more about Holidays Together for Easter 2023 and how to book your free place on our **“Enrolling children and young people in free holiday clubs”** webpage. ■



Family support hubs to be established in Leicestershire

A network of 'family hubs' is to be established in Leicestershire.

▶ The county council will create 'one-stop shops' where parents and carers can access family advice and support services, following an announcement of a nearly £1m government investment.

They will be a mixture of physical and virtual spaces, where people can have easy access to a range of guidance on issues such as social care, education, debt management, and mental and physical health.

The detail follows the news that the council is one of 12 local authorities which secured a slice of a £12m pot of grant funding to transform the way services are delivered for families.

The scheme will benefit families with 0-19 year-olds (or 25 for young people with special educational needs or disabilities).

The details of the roll out of the family hubs for the county are still being finalised, but the physical hubs will be in existing buildings

such as libraries, and children and family wellbeing centres, where staff will be specially trained to offer and signpost to the right support.

It is envisaged that information, advice and guidance will also be available at the time families need it through outreach, a catch-all website with a long term ambition of adding virtual support such as video calling.

The county's family hubs are set to be up and running by spring 2024. ■

Increased funding for Educational Psychologist support

Leicestershire County Council is investing in extra Educational Psychologist resource in order to reduce backlog and time taken within the assessment process.

▶ As highlighted in the recent government SEND paper, there is a national shortage of educational psychologists (EPs). Two thirds of councils are reporting that they struggle to recruit to this position. Leicestershire is no different, there is currently only 6 full time EPs and for the last few years have had to rely on agency staff as we can't recruit to the vacant posts.

The advice stage of the assessment process, which is the part specific to EPs, should take approximately six weeks to

complete. This is currently lasting 20 weeks, more than three times longer than it should. Leicestershire EPs are working tirelessly to try and progress applications but simply cannot keep up with the demand.

The council has secured some temporary resource in order to bring these wait times down. The new resource is going to land in the spring, with the impact being felt within the next few months. By six months the wait time should have decreased from 20 weeks to 10 weeks.

There is also a long-term goal to sustain lower wait times without having to rely on more temporary resource. The TSIL programme is undertaking a full review of processes looking at developing frameworks, templates and performance measures to reduce the time spent on each assessment. The programme is also looking at how we can use and leverage reports and exploring recruitment initiatives to bring in more permanent full-time resource to fill existing vacancies. ■

Government go-ahead for new SEND school in Leicestershire

The county council says it is delighted that the Department of Education (DfE) has approved its application for a 90-place school for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), in Quorn.

▶ Set against the backdrop of increasing demand in the county for SEND school places, the county council has been successful in its bid for funding from the DfE's Special Free School programme.

The school is set to be built on county council-owned land off Farley Way, Quorn, close to the A6, and will serve both the local community as well as the neighbouring Melton and north-

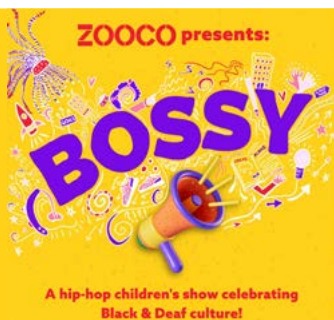
west Leicestershire areas.

In line with the Government announcement of a wider package of support earlier this week, the council sees the development of the Quorn facility as an 'inclusion hub' to support children and young people to access mainstream education.

When opened, the school will have pupils from Key Stages 2-4 on its roll and will specialise in helping

to meet the communication and interaction needs of children. It is also planned that the school will support pupils into post-16 progression.

The council has also outlined that plans for the school will need to be approved through the local district council's planning process before any work can begin, along with the selection of an academy trust to run the school. ■



Multi award-winning Zoo Co presents:

Bossy at Century Theatre, Coalville

Enjoy a hip-hop children's show celebrating Black and Deaf culture!

Friday 14 April, 11am and 1pm

Tickets £8 - £10 - Guidance: all ages

** Relaxed performances ** **Performed in BSL and English **

Beth is confident, clever and wants to become the world's best leader – but people keep calling her bossy! When Beth decides to run for Head Girl, she must embark on a quest to find out who she really is, what she stands for. On a hunt to find a role model she can call her own, she finds herself bopping with pop stars and mingling with

mermaids. She soon realises that what's really important might be found in her roots, a little closer to home.

Featuring a Caribbean soundtrack, you'll leave this show feeling pumped up and powerful!

Century Theatre is a creative venue in the heart of the Coalville community.



Further information and tickets:

Online:

centurytheatre.co.uk/whats-on

Box Office: **01530 278444**

Accessibility:

centurytheatre.co.uk/your-visit/access/