

A Strategy for Post 16 Learners in Leicestershire 2027-2030



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Statement of Intent

In Leicestershire, partners work together to ensure there is a commitment to belonging. All our children and young people feel a sense of belonging in Education, so they can live their best lives.

Executive Summary

Education operates within a rapidly changing landscape. The Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, published in November 2025, sets out the Government's ambition to redesign post-16 education, skills, and research into a single, coherent system that drives economic growth while expanding opportunity and inclusion. At its core, the White Paper promotes a growth-focused, employer-partnered, lifelong learning system that raises standards, reduces inequality, and ensures that no person or place is left behind.

Together with the SEND Reform White Paper and Leicestershire's own SEND and Inclusion Strategy and wider Belonging Strategy, this national and local direction provides the policy foundation for the actions required to ensure that post-16 education in Leicestershire prepares all children and young people effectively for their future.

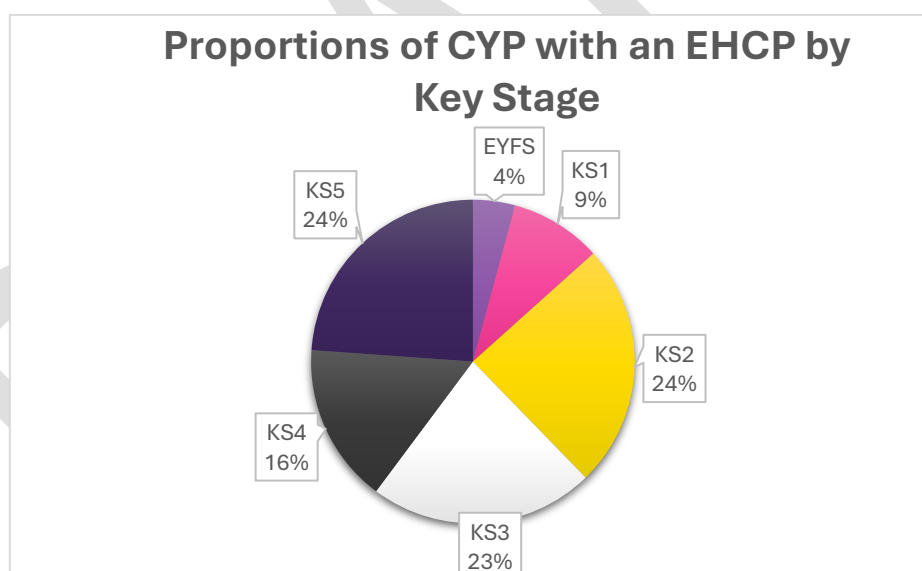
This strategy also responds directly to the key issues identified through a comprehensive review of current data and intelligence, alongside insights gathered from engagement with parent carers and young people. It has been informed by ongoing dialogue with education and training providers, local careers services, colleagues in other local authorities, and partner organisations including NDTi and the Department for Education. The development of the strategy has also been shaped by feedback and professional experience drawn from working closely with key services across Leicestershire County Council that support the delivery of services to residents of Leicestershire.

This strategy Sets out 4 key priorities which provide a blueprint for the effective development of post-16 education in Leicestershire. At a time of change and huge growth in our responsibility for young people with additional needs it aims to encapsulate what is necessary to ensure the future success for all young people.

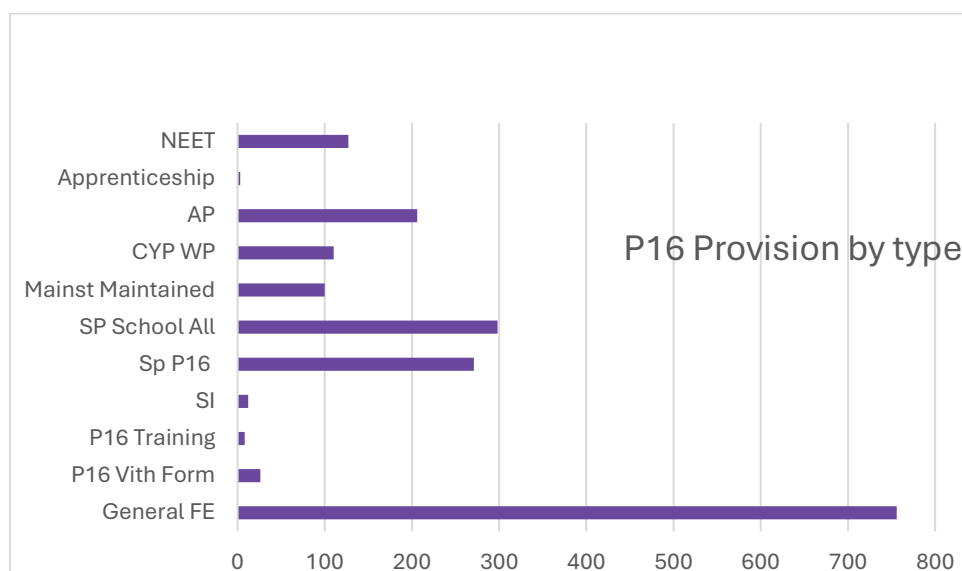
Introduction and the Leicestershire Context

Post-16 learning refers to the education, training and qualifications young people in the UK pursue after finishing compulsory secondary education. This is mandatory for those who are aged 16-18 years old. For those young people who hold an Education and Health Care this means continued specialised support until they 25 to prepare for adulthood, including further education, apprenticeships, or training.

Our post-16 learners access a wide range of provisions and courses at local colleges, sixth forms and alternative provisions. Currently the SENA service has responsibility for almost 9000 EHCPs and their delivery. The breakdown of these by Key stage can be seen below.



Post-16 provision by type can be seen in the diagram below.



Key; NEET – Not in education Employment or training, AP – Alternative Provision, CYP WP - Child or Young person without Placement, SI – Supported Internship

Policy foundation

Stronger Strategic Leadership Role

The proposed legislation has made it clear that Leicestershire County Council will be expected to play a coordinating role in joining up skills, employment, health, transport, and economic development. We will be central to shaping local progression pathways that reflect local labour-market needs and growth priorities. This places us at the heart of place-based skills planning, moving beyond provider-led systems towards locally brokered solutions.

With more responsibility comes greater scrutiny. We will need to demonstrate impact on employment, progression and skills shortages, ensure value for money in commissioned provision, and support providers to improve quality and specialisation.

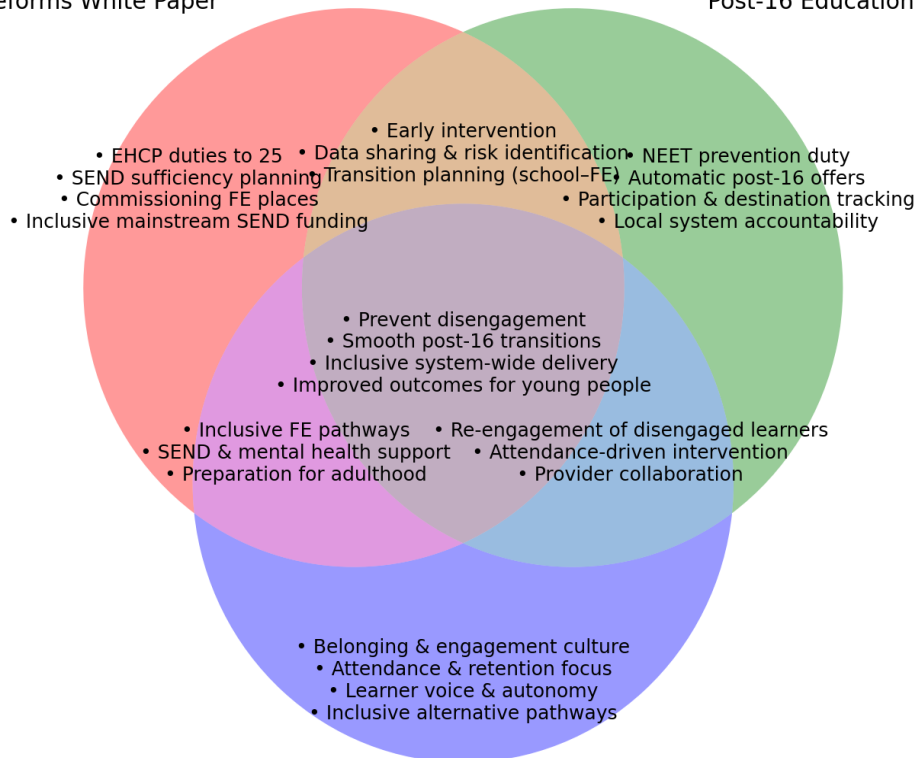
In summary, for Leicestershire County Council, the White Paper represents a shift from influence to leadership. We will be expected to form, integrate, and deliver a locally responsive skills and employment system, aligned to national priorities but grounded in local economies and communities. The Education, Inclusion and Additional Needs Directorate will need to work closely with other services and external partners and employers to ensure that we are part of this formation, integration, and delivery. Crucially our Post 16 Strategy and the actions that follow need to address this new and exciting opportunity to shape the future for our children, young people, and their families.

What do the 3 key strategies identify as key priorities?

Local Authority Post-16 Priorities Across Three Key Strategies

SEND Reforms White Paper

Post-16 Education & Skills Strategy



Belonging in Education Strategy

From this we have drawn some key themes to form our 4 post-16 priorities

Post -16 Priorities

Our 4 priorities will be;

Priority 1 – Engagement, Early Intervention, Inclusive System Wide Provision and Improved outcomes for Children and Young People

Priority 2 - Transitions and Preparation for Adulthood

Priority 3 - Raising quality and accountability across further education.

Priority 4 - Transparency, sharing, and clarity of Data.

Basic Principles of how we will deliver change.

- We will work with our young people, children, and their families to ensure that their voice is very much a part of any developments or decisions that are made.
- We will work in partnership and collaboration with internal and external stakeholders and partners to ensure that whatever we do is communicated to the right people at the right time.

Priority 1 - Engagement, Early Intervention, Inclusive System Wide Provision and Improved outcomes for Children and Young People

Engagement in education does not begin or end at post-16. Patterns of absence, suspension and disengagement often emerge earlier and may reflect unmet need, health, family circumstances or barriers within education. These experiences can have a lasting effect on attainment, progression, employment and wellbeing, so early identification and coordinated support are essential.

National evidence shows a clear association between repeated suspension and poorer outcomes in early adulthood, while sustained attendance is strongly linked to improved attainment. This strategy therefore focuses on preventing disengagement, responding to suspension as an early warning sign and supporting learners to remain in, or return to, suitable education and training. Detailed supporting data is retained in the evidence base rather than repeated within the main narrative.

Engagement in Leicestershire

Attendance figures in Leicestershire sit at both National and regional levels. In Secondary education absence figures show that our pupils are absent from school for over 8% of the time. In Special Schools this is just over 10%. Within this, persistent absence is currently at 21% with persistent absence in Special schools at 29%. These figures may reflect some of the dependence we are seeing on the use of part time timetables to manage behaviour. This year so far Leicestershire students lost almost 55,000 sessions of education, this equates to approximately 200 students a day out of education full time.

Other measures of engagement show our rates of NEET as above both National and Regional figures at 6%. Leicestershire's rates of suspension and permanent exclusion are low in comparison to both national and regional figures. In this academic Year to date 38% of all Permanent exclusions of children have been for those who hold an EHCP and a further 40% are for those who are classified as SENIF and SEN Support.

We will play a critical role in delivering the [Youth Guarantee](#), tracking participation, attendance and destinations, and supporting young people at risk of disengagement through coordinated education, employment and support services.

A breakdown of our NEET data shows us having a 1.2% identified NEET population with a 4.8% Unknown cohort. The DfE considers the Unknowns to be NEET giving us a total of 6% (934 young people) and placing us above both National (5.6%) and East Midlands (5.6%) figures.

P16 provision is a core component of a whole-system approach to children and young people's life chances, not a standalone phase, this was highlighted in the SEND Reform White paper. In addition, the Education and Skills white paper places the responsibility on Leicestershire County Council to play a coordinating role in joining up skills, employment, health, transport, and economic development. We will be central to shaping local progression pathways that reflect local labour-market needs and growth priorities. This places us at the heart of place-based skills planning, moving beyond provider-led systems towards locally brokered solutions.

We will need to demonstrate

- 1) What we have done to prevent disengagement and its impact
- 2) What we have done to reengage those learners who have become disengaged and its impact

Current developments

- Work with EIAN and Adult Learning Services on supported employment, Access to Work and Connect to Work
- Leicestershire County Council will be hosting its first cohort of supported interns in September; this is to demonstrate our own commitment to an inclusive workplace and to act as role model to other employers the benefits of this endeavour to everyone involved.
- Increased visibility and understanding of supported work packages for SEND parents and young people with the creation of the Supported Employment Forum and other key points of contact such as college open days and SEND Roadshows
- We have started the work with providers, bringing together their offers and the pathways available to our young people within the County and identifying gaps in that provision.
- We are in the process of commissioning a pilot of a new pathway with one of our FE colleges focussing on young people who are NEET or at risk of NEET.

- Our new EHCP template will identify Preparation for Adulthood Outcomes for all areas where a child or young person has identified needs from year 9 onwards.
- The EIAN Service have had training in person-centred planning and employability outcomes.
- We are working with local providers to create opportunities for those young people who are currently not in education or at risk of becoming NEET.
- We are working with local employers, training providers and careers services to expand high-quality work-based pathways, with a stronger focus on apprenticeships, supported apprenticeships, supported internships and meaningful work experience. We will improve awareness of entry requirements, reasonable adjustments and the support available so that more young people, including those with SEND, can access and sustain these routes.
- We will develop an apprenticeship pathway with employers and providers, from early careers information and vocational profiling through to application, transition and in-placement support, and will track applications, starts, retention and completion.
- Opening new schools is expensive and not always the best solution. We will use what we know of our young people and their emerging needs to support and coproduce with existing local providers allowing them to be more creative and solutions focussed.

Future Actions

- The creation of a belonging culture using the Belonging Strategy as the basis for all our conversations and work with schools, providers, and stakeholders.
- Establish a coordinated response with schools recognising suspension as a signal that a pupil may need more intensive support.
- Work with partners in other services so that we respond to both in-school and out of school factors including mental health, family circumstances, and parental support.
- Evidence suggests that mental health and parenting support programmes can reduce suspension rate and antisocial behaviour, improving engagement and outcomes.

- We need to strengthen guidance for schools and colleges on how to support students and young people experiencing multiple suspensions.
- We will build a system which is more effective in gathering destination data for our young people in partnership with local careers services, schools, and colleges. This to ensure that we know where our young people are and how we can support them.
- We will develop a package of careers advice and Preparation for Adulthood for those young people with an EHCP not in a provision. Those on an EOTAS Package need this support building into their plans.
- We will identify and maintain contact with young people who are electively home educated as they approach post-16, working with them and their families to understand aspirations, provide impartial careers guidance and support re-engagement into appropriate education, training, apprenticeships or employment with training.
- Data shows that disengagement begins to rise from Year 10 onwards, we will use data to find patterns of disengagement and build provision around that. Including a review of the use of suspensions and part-time timetables to manage behaviour
- We will audit current careers advice and curriculum offer in our schools and provisions continuing our work in developing new P16 pathways with FE providers will be essential, but we will also encourage the development of 14-16 provision where there is already some very exciting work going on in our FE sector.
- We will engage with our secondary schools, special schools, and alternative provisions to understand the need of those at risk of NEET and build provision with them to address those needs.
- The introduction of Vocational qualifications (V'Levels) at levels 1(Grades 1,2 or 3 at GCSE),2(grades 4+ at GCSE) and 3(A'Level) offers Sixth Forms and Colleges the opportunity to extend their work-based programmes. The Introduction of the Post 16 Network will address this new opportunity and allow Schools, Colleges, and Providers to support one another in their introduction. The Post-16 Strategy and Transformation Service Manager will oversee and track this work.

Priority 2 - Transitions and Preparation for Adulthood

We have grouped together these two important elements of our future work as they are intrinsically linked. Good preparation for adulthood leads to successful transitions. How we approach transition is important because, while change can help young people develop resilience and independence, it can also cause stress and uncertainty. Most young people settle within time, but some—particularly those experiencing unplanned or complex transitions—need additional support.

If transitions are not well managed, pupils may struggle with new learning demands, higher expectations, unfamiliar environments, and peer relationships, which can negatively affect wellbeing and engagement.

Effective transitions should be seen as a process rather than a one-off event and require:

- Strong professional links between settings and services involved in the young person's lives.
- Careful planning, clear communication, and secure information sharing
- Enhanced support for pupils with additional needs or vulnerabilities

For our young people with additional needs the four pillars of Preparation for Adulthood are clearly stated in law. The diagram below outlines our duty to deliver this across Education, Health, and Social Care in partnership from Year 9 onwards. Preparation for Adulthood involves us knowing the young person in the plan, their needs, and aspirations and that of their families play a key part in this. As services we need to follow a coordinated approach to each individual to ensure that their journey into adulthood is successful.

In addition to this we need to ensure that there are suitable and sufficient placements or provisions for our young people to transition into.

Preparing for
Adulthood



PfA Outcomes across the age ranges for children and young people with SEND



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Current developments

- We have reintroduced the Preparation for Adulthood Board, all services are involved as well as our parent carers and youth voice, local colleges, schools, and providers.
- Our new EHCP template specifies outcomes for PfA from Year 9 onwards and advice givers are asked to include this information in their input.
- We have gathered opinions from parent carers and our young people who want to see this work developed at pace as they feel that there is a gap in provision for those not in school in particular. They would like to see a package of provision available and written into plans from Year 9 onwards with clear guidelines given to schools as to what they should be providing in this area for their child or young person.
- Our SENA, Inclusion and EP team have received training on person centred planning and writing outcomes for employability.

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Future Actions

- We will continue to coordinate the work of the Preparation for Adulthood Board.
- The Service Manager for P16 Strategy and Transformation will build a preparation for adulthood package in co-production with parent carers and young people. They will form guidelines for settings by working with them, looking at the excellent practice in place already and building on this to make it a consistent offer across Leicestershire.
- We will work with settings and provisions to enable them to use Vocational Profiling from Year 9 onwards in their annual review. For new plans we will seek to ensure that advice writers complete this
- Working with our Education commissioning team we will look at future cohorts using the information from plans and vocational profiling. This will allow us to work with settings so that they too can plan provision and transition for our young people into their settings and be aware of their needs and aspirations. This future planning will provide our young people and their families with confidence and choice at post-16.
- Attendance at College Open days and recruitment evenings where appropriate
- Establishment of a SharePoint for the EIAN team so that they can access College and Provision offers.
- The Local Offer on our website to be developed with improved Preparation for Adulthood information and details of Higher Education, employment options and preparation for adulthood provision for other services linked.

Priority 3 - Raising quality and accountability across further education.

Our Post-16 Settings have felt a lack of strategic coordination from those areas in education they have dealt with in the past. They have welcomed the introduction of the Service Manager in this area.

Quality assurance has historically relied mainly on Ofsted oversight, with input from commissioning and SENA. We will strengthen local accountability by tracking the quality of provision, learner outcomes, destinations and attendance. Although post-16 attendance data has not been collected consistently across all providers, regular participation remains fundamental to learning, wellbeing, progression and future life chances. Our approach will align with Leicestershire County Council's Attendance Strategy 2026-2029, "Every Day Counts", extending its partnership, prevention-first and support-first principles into post-16 education while recognising the different settings and attendance arrangements involved.

Current developments

- The recent introduction of a post-16 commissioning team which is looking at our Independent Sector Commissioning
- We are working with Leicester and Rutland to introduce a funding matrix across all providers to address inconsistencies in funding requests and provide costings for future planning.
- The Service Manager is piloting a new commissioning framework with our mainstream post 16 providers which will lead to a better understanding of what is on offer and where and aid planning for the future. A key area of this framework is the quality assurance element. This will be developed in conjunction with providers in the Post-16 Network.

Future Actions

- Agree a consistent post-16 attendance dataset and reporting cycle with schools, colleges, training providers and commissioned settings, including agreed definitions for attendance, authorised absence, persistent absence, withdrawal and non-participation.
- Report attendance and participation through the Post-16 Provider Network and the post-16 dashboard, with termly oversight of trends, vulnerable groups,

action taken and impact. This will support challenge and shared accountability while keeping the emphasis on the importance of education and helping every learner to belong, progress and prepare for adulthood.

- Use provider-level and learner-level attendance information to identify emerging concerns early, trigger proportionate support and review whether interventions improve sustained participation. Attendance will be considered alongside safeguarding, SEND, wellbeing, transport and destination information, not as a standalone compliance measure.
- The post-16 Service manager will work closely with the areas of commissioning that are pertinent to the planning and sustainability of placements within Leicestershire.
- The post 16 Manager will work with HOS for SENA to oversee and manage the introduction of the post-16 funding matrix.

Priority 4 - Transparency, sharing, and clarity of Data.

Data and evidence-based practice will form the basis of the work we will do within post 16. As such we will need to ensure that the data we are using is as accurate and relevant as possible.

Greater Accountability and Performance Focus

We will need to demonstrate -

- 1) That our work has made an impact on employment, progression, and skills shortages.
- 2) That commissioned provision is providing value for money whilst offering good quality services.
- 3) That we have provided support for providers to improve quality and specialisation.

Current developments

- The recruitment of a Post-16 Service Manager for Strategy and Transformation to oversee data baselining of the measures that we will need to demonstrate progress against measures.
- A post 16 commissioning team is now in place to administer agreements with all our specialist placement and to ensure compliance.
- Creation of and establishment of the Supported Employment Forum
- Greater engagement with Provisions and a clearer understanding of what is offered by Provisions and how our young people can access opportunities.
- The Post-16 Service Manager will produce a baseline data set on all measures. Progress will be tracked on a termly basis.

Future Actions

- We will develop Leicestershire's post-16 attendance approach in partnership with providers and align it with the principles of the Attendance Strategy 2026-2029, "Every Day Counts". Systems will collect consistent attendance and participation information, support early identification of disengagement and

enable timely, support-first intervention. Progress and impact will be reviewed termly through the post-16 dashboard and Provider Network.

- Colleagues in the Education Inclusion and Additional Needs team will work with our colleagues across the authority, in local enterprise organisations such as and with external employers to ensure that we are creating the opportunities to share relevant and timely data.
- The creation of a Post 16 Provider Network including all schools, colleges, and Alternative Provisions to meet once a term and share experiences, receive data updates and access specialist speakers.
- Commissioning Briefs for all P16 provisions to be drawn up with quality assurance benchmarks set monitoring agreements in place.
- We will work with internal colleagues and external providers to ensure that we are sharing relevant demographic data to aid good sufficiency planning.
- Development of a specific post 16 dashboard which allows the use of GIS to aid sufficiency planning.
- We will work with local careers and business organisations, employers and apprenticeship providers to build market knowledge of Leicestershire skills needs and increase the availability, accessibility and take-up of apprenticeships and training. The post-16 dashboard will track apprenticeship opportunities, applications, starts, retention, completions and destinations, including outcomes for young people with SEND and other vulnerable groups.
- We will work with local universities to understand their offer and make sure that we are feeding the pipeline for the priority areas outlined in the Governments Industrial strategy.

Appendices

Table 1

Measure	Location	All figures given are %s			
		Total	Primary	Secondary	Special
Attendance	Leicestershire	93.59	95.34	91.71	89.64
	East Mids.	93.38	94.95	91.84	87.04
	National	93.29	94.82	91.83	87.03
Absence	Leicestershire	6.41	4.66	8.29	10.36
	East Mids.	6.62	5.05	8.16	12.96
	National	6.71	5.18	8.17	12.97
PA	Leicestershire	15.96	10.81	21.42	29.05
	East Mids.	17.75	13.21	22.23	34.82
	National	18.19	13.86	22.36	35.27

[Release home - Pupil attendance in schools - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

[Early-adult-outcomes-for-suspended-pupils-FINAL.pdf](#) - Education Policy Institute