



Leicestershire
County Council

SEND reforms

Leicestershire local offer
accessibility strategy



The **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (2015): 0 to 25 years** outlines that local authorities need to provide a local offer that is ‘accessible for all’:

4.62 - Local authorities must make their local offer widely accessible and on a website. They must publish arrangements for enabling those without access to the internet to get information. They must also enable access for different groups, including disabled people and those with different types of SEND.

Introduction

This strategy seeks to outline our approach in ensuring that this is the case, and to complement the Leicestershire County Council accessibility strategy as well as the corporate equality, diversity and human rights strategy.

Accessibility can be defined as:

“Providing alternative means (formats or options) to access what’s on offer if the ‘standard’ offer is not accessible”.

Background

The SEND Code of Practice (2015) emphasises the following three points:

1. Accessibility for all

The local offer needs to be accessible to all families with a child or young person with SEN and/or disabilities (SEND), not just to those with a computer and access to the internet. This ensures that reasonable adjustments are made in line with the [Equality Act 2010](#) by providing information in an alternative way.

Developing a condensed paper copy of the local offer available in a variety of places has been suggested. However there are challenges in keeping printed information up-to-date. Professionals will be encouraged to support families to use the local offer, as well as encouraging families to utilise the support provided by the [SEND Information Advice and Support Service \(SENDIASS\)](#).

2. Widening usage

Families do not just need to be technically able to access the local offer; they need to be aware of its existence and understand the benefits of accessing it. Whilst pilot areas have taken some steps to ‘launch’ their local offers to parents, it is acknowledged that in Leicestershire, more needs to be done to raise awareness of the local offer. Raising awareness amongst professionals is considered to be key to facilitating wider usage amongst children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers.

3. Ensuring sustainability

Ensuring the local offer remains up to date is crucial in order for it to be useful (and used) by parents/carers, children and young people and professionals. The ongoing maintenance and updating of content on the local offer will require continued resource.

Throughout the development of the local offer, solutions have been sought to ensure the accuracy of information provided on the local offer so that it becomes a trusted and useful resource for all who access it. Feedback regarding “gaps in provision” will inform our commissioning strategy to ensure provision meets the needs of children and young people with SEND.

Leicestershire County Council website and Leicestershire local offer conforms to the best practice accessibility guidelines (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines - WCAG), recommended for all UK government websites and is in line with the approach used by Gov.UK. Further details can be found at www.leicestershire.gov.uk/accessibility

Improvements have been made to the website in terms of ease of accessibility for its intended service users; with the assumption of the following - it will:

- offer a dynamic search facility, searchable by postcode or via key word. Research will be completed with service users to establish “key tasks” search terms and potential scope.
- provide links to other existing Leicestershire County Council services as well as other nationally and locally recognised websites such as GOV.UK and NHS choices etc.
- link to the Family Information Directory (FID) which holds:
 - information on a range of services and provision across Education, Health and Social Care, and leisure, covering both mainstream and specialist provision across Leicestershire.
 - national information supported by SENDirect and links to the Local Offers of our neighbouring authorities.
- explore potential for the development of a joint database of service with Leicester City and Rutland.
- be compatible with a range of with a range of smart phones and tablets and popular assistive technology software packages.
- support easy read formats and web based resources such as YouTube or other video based formats.
- be written in plain English, with some content also provided in easy read formats.

Needs analysis

The young people and families who will access our local offer are likely to have a wide range of different needs (i.e. visual impairment, hearing impairment, mobility difficulties, learning difficulties, health conditions) and therefore will have different access requirements.

The population of Leicestershire is diverse and multi-cultural; and therefore it is important that information is accessible to individuals for whom English is an additional language.

Outcomes and benefits

Ensuring information is accessible is essential to providing equal opportunities to all. The local offer seeks to enable families to ‘self-serve’ and access provision that meets their individual needs; enabling their social, emotional resilience and capacity.

If information is not accessible it is likely that families may:

- be unaware of the range of opportunities/services, available to them. Some of these services or opportunities may provide young people and their families with a positive impact on their health and wellbeing.
- be denied of the opportunity to “improve” their health and social wellbeing.
- be denied the opportunity to access service provision (specialist and universal) that could support their needs or requirements.
- respond to only some of the information provided.
- require further information which may reduce the usefulness of the local offer.

Our approach

The SEND Code of Practice (2015) requires local authorities to publish their local offer in one place; this will be the [Leicestershire County Council](#) website.

As the local offer is designed to support young people with SEND, it is particularly important to ensure information is presented in an accessible way.

In line with recommendations made through Leicestershire County Council equalities and communication champions’ we have taken the following steps:

1. Completed an equality and human rights impact assessment in relation to the local offer.
2. Established that the needs of our families are individual and therefore a personalised approach is required. This will involve commissioning customised or adapted resources, (for example, Pearl Linguistics for interpretation and translation, British Sign Language and Braille), upon request, to meet individual need.
3. We have published an accessibility statement to ensure families know how to obtain information in alternative formats. *“If you require this information in an alternative version such as large print, Braille, audio or help in understanding it in your language, please contact 0116 305 6545”*

4. We will deliver a number of service user workshops to help establish families requirements and inform wider development opportunities in terms of producing communication documents in alternative formats; such as:
 - a. Producing information in larger fonts for people with visual impairments
 - b. Offering call back or hold face to face discussions to help respond to queries/concerns to explain required information in the most appropriate and informative way.
5. People without internet access can request publications in a printed format. Please telephone 0116 305 6545 or email Leicestershirelocaloffer@leics.gov.uk.

Information we will adapt as standard:

The SEND Code of Practice (2015) suggests that information relating to personal budgets and the education, health and care (EHC) plan conversion strategy should be provided in alternative formats. At a local offer work stream meeting in November 2014 we consulted with parent representatives' regarding items that should be produced in alternative formats; here is a synopsis of discussion feedback:

- Gain permission to utilise existing videos produced by other authorities i.e. Birmingham council have produced a film about EHC plans using cartoons.
- Explore opportunities to produce local SEND information video clips with groups of Leicestershire's young people to include topics such as:
 - What is the Local Offer?
 - How the Local Offer has helped me
 - How my SEND Support Plan has helped me
 - What I intend to spend my personal budget on
 - What are the eligibility requirements for personal budgets?
 - What sport opportunities and activities are available?
- The group suggested a variety of mediums for providing information in alternative formats – Video materials using “signing” interpreters, Easy Read, speak over – talking pages, Sym writer – symbols and Widget, use of colour on website.

Action plan

1. Utilise and link to existing easy read documents produced by external agencies (i.e. Mencap and Department for Education (DfE).
2. Produce and publish “local” Easy Read documents including:
 - Leicestershire conversion strategy
 - Personal budget strategy.
3. Gain permissions from Council for Disabled Children to upload a number of YouTube clips:
 - What you need to know about the Local Offer
 - Making Decisions about SEND Support
 - What are Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans?
 - What you need to know about SEND Reforms for Post 16 Support.
4. To fulfil our requirements to co-produce documents with children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers. Decisions regarding which documents will be produced in which format will be established through:
 - Evidencing proportionate need
 - Conducting user needs analysis workshops
 - Completing targeted service user consultations i.e. face to face at engagement events, e-surveys and service user “testing” workshops etc.
 - Reviewing information currently held on our local offer and analysing any “gaps” in information provided.
5. To enable greatest impact and widen accessibility for a range of service users, ensure any locally produced video clips are further enhanced through commissioning:
 - A British Sign Language interpreter
 - Video subtitles provided, including options to cover a range of languages to support our families who have English as an additional language.

For further information or to provide feedback on the contents of this strategy please contact

Leicestershirelocaloffer@leics.gov.uk