



Leicestershire Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy

2017 - 2020

“ Our vision in Leicestershire for children with special educational needs and disabilities is the same as for all children and young people – for them to achieve well in their education, to be cared for in safe and supportive families, participate and be involved in their communities and lead happy, safe and fulfilled lives. ”



Forward

Leicestershire County Council, West Leicestershire and East Leicestershire and Rutland Clinical Commissioning Groups are pleased to present this Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy which sets out our vision, aspiration and priorities for developing support and provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their families.

The vision, aspiration and priorities are set within the context of a changing national policy environment and local needs. The work plan to deliver the vision and priorities therefore needs to be dynamic and responsive to national and local changes in policy and evolving local needs.

We would like to thank all those engaged in supporting children and young people with SEND and their families in Leicestershire. The introduction of the SEND reforms outlined in the Children and Families Act (2014) provides an ideal opportunity to improve how we do this. This strategy, in outlining our response to these reforms, is also designed to reiterate our continuing commitment to high quality services.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this strategy is to set out the vision, aspiration and priorities in Leicestershire for developing support and provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

In September 2014 the Children and Families Act 2014 came into force. Part 3 of the Act is entitled Children and Young People in England with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). In the Act, Local Authorities and CCG's have a number of new duties they are required to meet.

This strategy therefore sets out how partners across Leicestershire plan to support children and young people with SEND aged 0-25 to achieve their best possible outcomes, in line with the reforms and in light of our current local position and other local developments. It has been developed in close consultation with a number of key partners, professionals and parents. It sets out our priorities for the period from 2017 to 2020, and is underpinned by a strategic plan setting out how these priorities will be achieved.



There is strong commitment in Leicestershire for every child and young person with SEND (including children with complex health needs and/or limiting conditions) to be supported to reach his or her potential. In order to achieve this, the strategy is underpinned by these key principles:

- **Early Intervention:** Support, assessment and intervention at the earliest possibility.
- **Personalisation:** A shift towards personalisation and empowerment.
- **Inclusion:** A continued commitment to promote inclusion across all services and sectors.
- **Integration:** The development of a coherent joined up service system, increased joint commissioning and integrated delivery.
- **Transition:** Recognition for the need to plan for transition throughout key education stages and transfer to adulthood.

2. Scope and definition

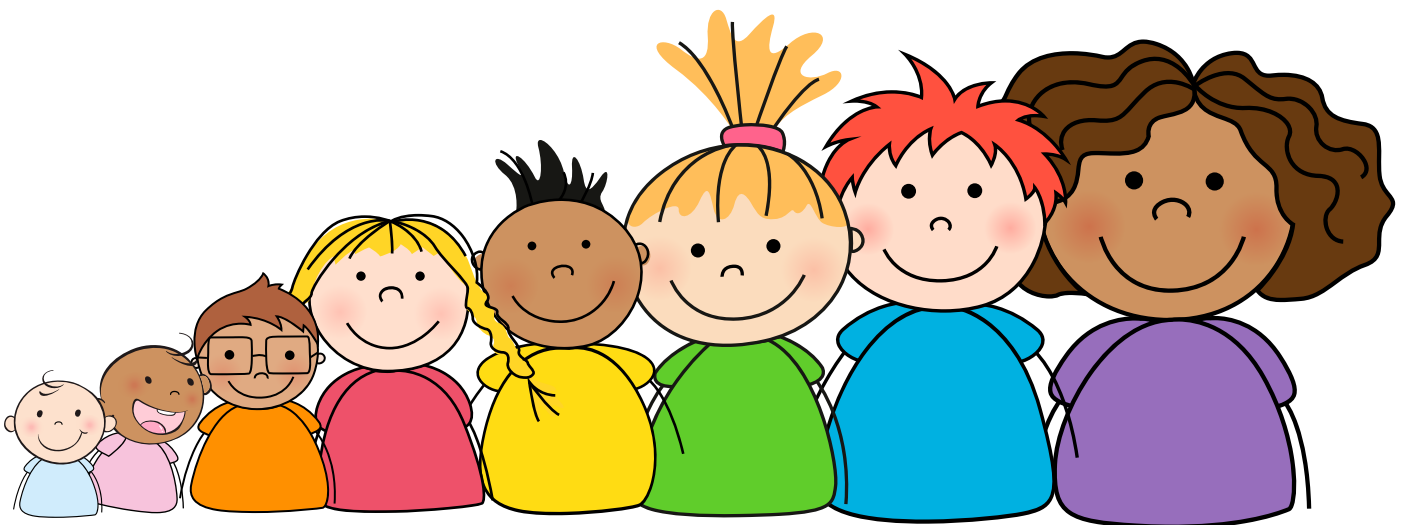
This strategy applies to all partner agencies in Leicestershire who have responsibilities for commissioning and providing services to children, young people with SEND and their families.

Equality legislation uses a broad and inclusive definition of disability. The definition of disability under the *Equality Act 2010* is a *physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on the ability to do normal daily activities; substantial is more than minor or trivial and long-term means 12 months or more.*

In respect of disabled children, *The Children Act 1989* definition is that *a child is disabled if he is blind, deaf or dumb or suffers from mental disorder of any kind or is substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or congenital deformity or such other disability* (section 17, 10).

Children are defined in the *Education Act 1996* and *Children and Families Act 2014*, as having special educational needs if they *have a learning difficulty that calls for special educational provision to be made for them.*

There are also different ways of understanding disability. This strategy is informed by an understanding of the *social model of disability*, which uses the term disability to describe the effects of prejudice and discrimination rather than the *medical model*, which focuses on impairment or functional limitation. Social factors create barriers; deny opportunities and dis-able people. Children's impairments can create difficulties in their lives but many of the problems they and their families face are due to negative attitudes, prejudice and unequal access to the things necessary for a good quality of life.



3. Context and background: the national picture

In respect of children and young people with SEND, the key changes in the *Children and Families Act 2014* are:

- **Replacing Statements of SEN with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans:**
EHC Plans are extended to young people aged 25, where necessary, to support young people into adulthood;
- **Personal Budgets:** Parents of children with an EHC Plan can request a personal budget for their support;
- **Services Working Together:** Children and young people with SEND need well-coordinated support across education, health and social care to help them achieve their agreed outcomes. Under the new Act, key organisations are required to link up and jointly plan and commission services for disabled children and young people;
- **Local Offer:** Every council is required to publish a detailed directory of what local support there is available for children and young people with SEND – called the Local Offer;
- **Engaging Parents, Children and Young People:** Local authorities and CCG's must ensure that parents, children and young people are involved in discussions and decisions about their care and support;
- **Resolving Disputes:** Local Authorities and CCG's must make clear how disagreements will be resolved and how complaints will be dealt with.

Significant reforms also took place in 2013 to arrangements for funding for schools. A new system for funding for SEND needs was established:

- Local Authorities are given a budget for children and young people with higher level needs. This budget is called the High Needs Pupil Block and will fund all additional provision across early years, schools and post-16 education and training;
- Mainstream schools are generally expected to spend up to £10,000 out of their existing 'base' budget to meet SEND needs before the Local Authority provides additional 'top up' funding out of the High Needs Pupil Block;
- All state funded special schools will be funded for a set number of places at £10,000 for each child. Local Authorities who wish to name that school in a child's statement or EHC Plan must agree the 'top-up' amount for each child.

4. The local context in Leicestershire

Leicestershire has developed a 'Local Offer' of services to children and young people with SEND and their families.

Support for children with SEND in their early years: Leicestershire has 376 private and voluntary sector early education and childcare settings and 591 child-minders. All are expected to deliver a 'core' offer of support. Settings can access support from the Local Authority's Early Years Team.

Mainstream Primary and Secondary Schools: Many children and young people with SEND can achieve within a mainstream school. These children and young people may or may not have an EHC Plan. All mainstream schools provide a 'core' offer of support to children with SEND.

Specialist Provision: There are five area special schools in Leicestershire, all of which are either good or outstanding. All of the Area Special Schools support pupils with significant learning difficulties and other complex needs from aged 2 or 3 to 19. Maplewell Hall School at Woodhouse Eaves is a County Wide provision for pupils aged 11 to 19 years with moderate learning difficulties and has a provision for secondary aged pupils with higher functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder.

There is a variety of resource base provision across the County: Seven primary and one secondary base for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties, one primary and two secondary bases for Autism Spectrum Disorder, a primary and secondary Speech and Language unit and two secondary bases for Hearing Impaired pupils.

Support for young people with SEND post 16: The five local FE Colleges and two Independent Specialist Colleges; have developed their curriculum offer to meet the needs of SEND learners and high needs in particular. There is an explicit focus in securing a positive progression into adulthood particularly into sustainable and supported employment and into facilitating independent living. Prospects, on behalf of Leicestershire County Council, offer independent and impartial careers information, advice and guidance to SEND learners aged 16 to 19 to enable and ensure they are in employment, education or training (EET).

Local Authority SEN Services: The Local Authority 0-25 SEND Services includes the Educational Psychology (EP) Team, the Special Educational Needs Assessment and Commissioning Team (SENA) and the Specialist Teaching Service (STS). The Educational Psychology Team undertake holistic assessments of children and young people to identify barriers to learning to support them to achieve their academic potential in and outside of school. The Special Educational Needs Assessment and Commissioning team is responsible for the administration and co-ordination of the SEN Assessment of Need and Education, Health and Care Planning process and the Specialist Teaching Service supports children with physical, hearing, visual, specific learning and communication difficulties attending mainstream and special schools and children accessing preschool provision. Outreach Support to mainstream schools and settings for pupils with learning needs is managed by the area special schools. Oakfield Primary Pupil Referral Unit and the Behavior Partnerships support pupils at risk of permanent exclusion to, as far as possible, stay in or return to mainstream education.

Leicestershire SEND Information, Advice and Support Service: The Information, Advice and Support Service (formerly the Parent Partnership Service) is a source of independent information, advice and support, provided to parents and/or carers and young people.

Transport: Support with transport to educational provision is provided where appropriate.

Disabled Children's Service: The Disabled Children's Service includes Social Workers, Family Support Workers and an Occupational Therapy Team. They provide a range of services for children with disabilities who are in need, children who are looked after and where there are identified safeguarding issues. The availability of services is subject to the completion of an assessment of need and there is close working with partner agencies to ensure that needs are met appropriately. There is a range of commissioned services such as home care and short breaks available to support children and young people with disabilities and their families.

Early Help Services: Early Help Services are increasingly focused on supporting children and young people with a range of vulnerabilities, including those with disabilities. They can provide information and advice in respect of financial matters, support access to voluntary and community sector groups and services, Early Help short breaks and parenting support, including managing family routines.

Health Provision: The East Leicestershire and Rutland and the West Leicestershire Clinical Commissioning Groups, Leicestershire County Council Public Health and NHS England commission a range of health care services which deliver universal, targeted and specialist provision that maintains and improve outcomes for children and young people, including those with SEND. Children's Health Services are delivered through a number of commissioned providers: Acute care services are delivered by the University Hospital of Leicester NHS Trust and Community Health Services are delivered via the Leicestershire Partnership Trust, Private Organisations and the Voluntary Sector.

Services are delivered from a range of specialities including: Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Audiology, Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) Learning Disability, Medicine and Surgery. Within these specialities skilled staff assess and care for children and young people with conditions such as cerebral palsy, autism, eating and drinking and communication difficulties. A range of services are also commissioned offering support for those children and young people who are looked after, within the youth offending provision, travelling families, and those with continuing care needs.

Financial Context: The Councils 2017/18 Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out a challenging financial position for Education, Social Care and Early Help all of which have a growing call on resources and challenging savings targets. For SEND pupils, a key priority is to deliver services for pupils within the grant received from central government.

5. What our data tells us

In January 2017, approximately 134,800 children and young people under the age of 18 years were living in Leicestershire; 20% of the total population in the area. Approximately 11% of the children were living in poverty¹ with the proportion of children entitled to free school meals at 9% in primary schools, (the national average is 17%), and 8% in secondary schools (where the national average is 15%).

Children and young people from minority ethnic groups accounted for 12% of all children living in the area, compared with 22% in the country as a whole. The largest minority ethnic groups were Asian or Asian British and Mixed. The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language: was 8% in Primary schools, where the national average is 20% and 7% in secondary schools with 16% being the national average.

In January 2017 of the 103,002 pupils in Leicestershire schools, 12,504 or 12.2% of pupils had special educational needs split between:

- Pupils with statements/EHC Plans, 2,845 or 2.8%; and
- Pupils in receipt of SEN support, 9,659 or 9.4%

For pupils in receipt of SEN support or with a statement or EHC Plan, a *primary need* is collected. Locally, the most dominant primary need amongst pupils with a statement or EHC Plan is severe learning difficulty at 23.1%. Across England it is autism – 26.9%. However, amongst pupils in receipt of SEN support, the most common primary need is moderate learning difficulty at 39.5% (25.2% across England).

The percentage of pupils with a statement or EHC Plan attending special schools nationally has increased each year. In 2010, 38.2% of pupils with statements attended maintained special schools and this has increased to 43.8% of pupils with statements or EHC Plans in 2016. The percentage of pupils with statements or EHC Plans attending independent schools has also increased between 2010 and 2016, from 4.2% to 5.8%.

In Leicestershire, in the 2016/ 2017 academic year, there were 3,350 pupils with a statement or EHC Plan, 34% of pupils attended a special school in Leicestershire, and 35.7% a mainstream school. 298 pupils attended an independent school, 8.8%, which is significantly above the national average. Leicestershire has a high percentage of pupils in resource provision, 8.9%, which is double the national average. By January 2018, 3631 pupils had a statement or EHC Plan. Attainment of pupils with Special Educational Needs in Leicestershire (mainstream and special) Schools has been below national levels in recent years, with the exception of pupils with a statement or EHC Plan at Key Stage Four. Pupils with SEN Support have consistently performed below national levels, often in the lowest quartile of Local Authorities, at all key stages. Attainment of pupils with a statement or EHC Plan has been more variable. In 2016, Key Stage Two performance was amongst the lowest of Local Authorities whilst Key Stage Four attainment was in the top quartile of comparators.

1 The current child poverty measure is defined as 60% of median income

Special Educational Needs are more prevalent in boys than girls. Nationally, 14.7% of boys are at SEN support compared to 8.2% of girls, 4.0% of boys have a statement or EHC Plan compared to 1.5% girls. In Leicestershire, 12.2% of boys are classed as SEN Support and 6.6% are girls, whereas for those with a statement or EHC Plan, 3.6% are boys and 1.6% are girls.

Pupils with SEND are proportionately far more likely to be excluded either permanently or on a fixed term basis in Leicestershire. In 2015/16 42% of permanent exclusions involved children with an identified SEND (8 pupils). The proportion for fixed term exclusions in Leicestershire was the same; 42% involved SEND pupils (1,132 pupils). The proportion of pupils with any SEND in Leicestershire is approximately 12% meaning that SEND pupils are significantly over represented in exclusion data.

Local Authorities now have joint responsibility (along with the Education and Skills Funding Agency) for funding students with high needs in Further Education (FE) Colleges. There are approximately 280 Leicestershire young people with high needs in the 16 to 25 age group who attend local or specialist FE colleges.

The number of children with open cases to the Children with Disabilities Social Care Service in Leicestershire in January 2017 was 380. Of these 38, (10%), were looked after children.

A recent evaluation of Early Help case work identified a noticeable grouping of families where SEND issues were having a significant impact on family function; of 300 of the most complex cases, in 87 or 29% of these, SEND was a prominent feature requiring support.

Based on the 2011 census, the Office for National Statistics estimates that 27,225 young people aged 0-19 are living with a long standing illness or disability; approximately 15,076 boys and 12,149 girls. There is significant evidence that health outcomes for children and young people with SEND are significantly poorer than in the general population and this continues into adulthood.

The number of children on NHS caseloads in Leicestershire fluctuates depending on referrals and discharges; however in 2017 there were 3,220 referrals to Speech and Language Therapy with 7,783 active cases, 1,034 referrals to Occupational Therapy with 1,511 active cases, 395 referrals to Physiotherapy with 897 active cases and 7,068 referrals to CAMHS with 3,754 active cases. National waiting times for referral to treatment and referral to assessment and treatment are monitored monthly by the Clinical Commissioning Groups for Children and Young People. There are concerns in respect to waiting times for CAHMS and community paediatrics.

6. Voices that matter

Children and young people with SEND and their families, and those front line practitioners working closely with them, are the best source of information about their needs.

Consultation with parents and carers and young people

In Autumn 2016, consultation took place with parents of disabled young people in the 14 to 25 age range as part of a wider consultation about the Leicestershire *Whole Life Disability Strategy*. In Spring 2017, SEND *Pop Up Voice* events were attended by over 70 parents and children and young people and during Winter 2016 and Spring 2017, the Leicestershire Parents' Forum was re-established and a SEND Family Participation post recruited. The Participation post holder sought feedback from over 100 parents and 100 young people with SEND in various settings during the Summer of 2017. In addition, an on line survey was undertaken during October 2017. Through these media, parents and young people expressed their views about the services and support that worked well for them; what it was about those services that made them successful, what did not work so well and the type of services and support they would like to see developed in the County. This information has been used to inform the priorities in this strategy.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL:

Parents said they appreciated working alongside practitioners who listened to them and provided helpful advice, particularly in respect of managing behaviour, and providing information about services. When families have a key worker or lead practitioner involved, their experiences are more positive:

“My keyworker was amazing and made a real difference, it wasn't until she became involved that things happened and got co-ordinated.”

In respect of educational provision, parents believed there should be a range of provision and although mainstream school does not work well for every child, special units attached to mainstream can work well. They reported some positive experiences of mainstream provision where an informed and committed SENCO and training were key factors:

“The setting my child is going to be attending are very knowledgeable about SEN including Autism. They are very adaptable and flexible to ensure inclusion for my son.”

Experiences with special schools and nurseries were more confidently recounted; the individual needs of children were met and the family offered a network of support. Parents also valued parent support groups and sessions and online social media groups.

Young People very much enjoyed the specialist youth provision: They spoke about being understood and feeling safe when they attended.

“I go to Winning Wednesday's because it's a place where I take refuge in and where I can be myself without being judged for it.”

Most young people felt school was working well for them and talked about their relationship with teachers playing an important role in their overall experience at school:

“School is working really well. School feels really safe because of teachers and friends. I have a one to one worker now who knows my signs which gets me in less trouble.”

They spoke about work experience in school or college being positive and some young people had part time jobs. Developing Independent living skills such as travel and shopping was also important to them. Although some young people had concerns about transport, others said they enjoyed the journey to school and felt the time in the bus was just right.

WHAT'S NOT WORKING WELL:

A significant issue raised by parents was confusion about what services were available. They felt there was a lack of signposting by other agencies and information could be easier to find:

“The Local Offer website needs to be more accessible, I tried to find information on transport - autism friendly taxis - and it isn't there.”

Parents' reported difficulties in respect of SEND needs being identified and diagnosed and then assessments not being well coordinated. They were particularly frustrated about not being able to access support from Social Care unless they were at risk of family breakdown and from CAMHS due to waiting lists. They felt they shouldn't have to pretend their situation was worse than it was before they were offered help.

In respect of the transition to adulthood, parents stated access to employment, even for those with moderate learning difficulties was difficult.

“My son would be able to hold down a job but has had no offers of employment. He has an NVQ in business administration and computer qualifications.”

For those with more severe disabilities in particular, parents' realised employment would never truly be available due to the level of support needed. Many spoke about the metaphorical *cliff edge* that their children fall off when they turn 18.

“It's not as big as it once was but it's still there.”

For young people, mainstream education was not always a positive experience and some spoke about being put in isolation for significant lengths of time and staff not having the training to meet their needs. Transport to school could also be a cause of stress when it was late or noisy. A small group of young people felt that their journey to school was too long.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

“I want my son to get the help he needs, for my children to be safe and happy and learn. We all want to have a happy life and good memories.”

Families asked for more groups for children and young people with SEND to attend, safe opportunities for them to network with others on social media and equal access to after-school care for disabled children. They wanted the Local Offer of services and access to information to improve: They asked for information in a number of mediums and for the Local Offer website to be more accessible. Several suggestions were made in relation to having a centralised system where services and departments were joined up better, flow charts, eligibility criteria and *what to expect leaflets*.

Families believed that an earlier response to their requests for help and support would have made the biggest difference to their journey. When asked what they would have changed, many parents responded with comments such as:

“If someone had listened and believed me earlier.”

Similarly, although parents understood procedures, many said until they had a diagnosis they were unable to access further services or support.

Parents and young people and professionals stated very emphatically that teachers and professionals should have a better understanding of SEND and more training should be delivered particularly around Autism and ADHD. They also felt that there should be consistency in the offer of support schools provide, especially to children with SEND. To prepare for adulthood, families asked for more educational sessions on life skills i.e. budgeting, and more consistent support from year 9 onwards.

Consultation with frontline practitioners

During the Autumn Term 2017, consultation also took place with front line practitioners across Education, Health, Social Care, Early Help and the Voluntary and Community sector. They were asked, in respect of SEND, what worked well in Leicestershire and why, what did not work so well and what could be done to improve this. Responses were received from a wide variety of practitioners. Key themes from the consultation are:

WHAT'S WORKING WELL:

- A number of services are providing good, responsive support to families and schools;
- There is evidence of better trained staff in schools and pockets of really innovative good practice;
- The changes from a statement to EHC Plan has been really efficiently done and a high number of EHC Plans are issued in timescale;
- SENCO NET keeping SENCOs informed;
- The work taking place around Voice is strong;
- When it 'works well' it works well i.e. Health, Social Care and SEND talk to each other
- A named Public Health Nurse for SEND for each locality within Leicestershire;
- A real sense of progress and a drive towards integration of services led by the Local Authority with a determination to tackle many long standing issues;

WHAT IS NOT WORKING WELL:

- Mental Health and Well-being support for children and young people;
- Schools want more support when applying for an EHCP, improved multi agency input into the EHC process and reviews managed in a timely manner;
- Too many children educated away from their communities;
- Transition into schools from early years is not strong enough;
- Early Help need more robust interventions to support SEND;
- Needs have to be extreme to gain support from social care - short break opportunities seem harder to get;
- Poor communication across services, different systems and lack of joined up working;
- Finding out about services and training is difficult;
- Health capacity and timescales;
- Multiple referrals are made to different panels – time consuming;
- Diagnostic dependency in order to get the support;
- Bullying issues within schools;
- Transport issues and rising costs to transport students to educational settings;
- Lack of employment opportunities for young people with SEND and inclusion in FE college.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN?

- Further work to understand the needs of young people with SEND at a population level;
- Further work with health at a strategic and operational level to address issues and plan for how limited resources can be used to meet needs;
- Better communication between health, education and social care services ;
- Fewer referral routes through clearly defined pathways;
- Locality working with professionals from each service working closely together and multi-agency team around the child meetings;
- More joined up thinking and working between children's services, transitions and adult social care to reduce the risk of people falling through the cracks;
- A stable workforce with a clear vision for the future;
- All services to have a clear criteria and time frame for children being seen;
- Improve inclusion in Early Years and the transition into school ;
- More specialist school places – develop educational provision for those with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and ASD difficulties who require specialist support;
- Review the criteria for top-up funding and Statutory Assessment in line with legislation from 2014 and develop step by step guides for the applications;
- Better information for schools and parents;
- Support provided pre-diagnosis;
- More support from Early Help and Social Care into homes when families need it;
- Work with employers to develop more opportunities for young people with SEND;
- Focussed liaison with local colleges to establish a smooth process for transition to FE for SEND students;
- More support to families and young people who find it difficult to get out to appointments.

