

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 27TH SEPTEMBER 2023

POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE CABINET LEAD MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Family Hubs

Over the last 5 months I am pleased to share that we have opened 9 out of our 25 Family Hubs across Leicestershire. The opening events have welcomed parents and carers and members of the community into the Hubs for us to share the range of services and support on offer. The Leicestershire Family Hub offer is both wide and extensive, offering a 'one stop shop' for parents and carers with 0 to 19 year olds or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

The Family Hubs are a mixture of physical and virtual spaces, where people will have easy access to a range of family advice, support services and guidance on issues such as social care, education, and mental and physical health.

We are particularly pleased to be working with our colleagues in library services to help extend the reach of the Family Hubs concept. Leicestershire Libraries have always been buildings that welcome children and families and so are a natural partner in this programme. This partnership is enabling us to create Family Hub areas in libraries with resources for families to borrow, and use of public access computers to support with the digital poverty agenda.

Change Programme Partnerships SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Social Care Authorities and the Integrated Care Board have been selected in the East Midlands region to pilot a range of changes, set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan. The SEND AP Improvement Plan Sets out the Government's plans to change the SEND and AP system in England. There are nine change programme partnerships across the country that will be piloting and testing the reforms.

The main areas of testing during the programme, running from September 2023 to August 2025, are a set of national standards, developing Local Area Inclusion Partnerships, working with stakeholders to deliver a standard digitised Education, Health and Care Plan template with supporting processes and guidance, improving information available to families and providing a tailored list of suitable settings informed by the Local Area Inclusion Plan. The partnerships will also work with schools and further education colleges to develop a three tier AP ladder of intervention and an Early Language Support for Every Child programme will be rolled out jointly, through NHS England and Department for Education resourcing, to support Speech and Language therapy.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

The Children and Family Services Department continues to provide support to children and young people who arrive in Leicestershire as unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Over the last year the Department has seen a significant rise in children arriving unaccompanied both through the National Transfer scheme and through spontaneous arrivals in the County. The department is responsible for assessing unaccompanied asylum seeking children's needs and arranging a suitable placement for them to live, alongside providing support to access education and other services. The Department is fully committed to supporting children who arrive in the County, unaccompanied, however the increase in numbers arriving is placing significant pressure on the Department's budget.

Story Book

And finally, I wanted to share a lovely book that has been written by 9 year old Amaya. Amaya has autism and is very passionate about the planet. In April this year she wrote a book 'The Adventures of Boo: Save the Sea Animals', which has been published and is available for people to buy. Amaya says: "I am really proud of this and if it educates one person then I have achieved something. To date I have sold nearly 50 books." Amaya is looking to write more books in the future.