



SEND and Inclusion Strategy

▶ 2025 - 2028



Leicestershire
SEND

Foreword

We are incredibly proud that we have taken the opportunity to work together to redesign how Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) in Leicestershire will be, as this is a subject that is truly close to our hearts.

Children are our future, and they deserve the very best that we can give them. We know that we have to get it right so that all children can flourish, thrive and live their best lives. We are committed to working with all our partners to improve outcomes; children, young people and their families, those across education, health, social care, the voluntary sector and our local employers.

We are all here because we care. We are all here because we are determined to make positive change happen.

We will all work with transparency, honesty, and openness and we will hold each other to account. We will all deliver the changes that need to be made to improve the lived experiences of our children, young people and their families.

We are committed to developing and evolving detailed plans for each of the six priorities identified through co-production. This will be done together and will focus on the positive impact we have on children and young people's lives.

We want to personally thank everyone who has been part of developing this strategy and for your ongoing commitment to supporting our journey of improvement.

We look forward to working with you all in "Shaping the Future" for SEND in Leicestershire.

Jane Moore,

Director of Children & Family Services, Leicestershire County Council

Caroline Trevithick,

Chief Executive, Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Integrated Care Board



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1. Introduction

In Leicestershire, SEND is everyone's responsibility. Children and young people achieve better outcomes when we have a clear focus on working together. Whilst there is significant pressure and challenge, our vision is for all children, including those with SEND to thrive, fulfil their potential, belong, and live their best lives within their communities.

This Strategy is set at a time of unprecedented and growing demand for support across the SEND system which exceeds funded capacity across all local area partners. This is clearly an unsustainable position. The draft SEND and Inclusion Strategy sets out a shared commitment from the SEND and Inclusion Partnership for partners to work together to tackle the challenges facing the SEND system, including a specific focus on improving inclusion within mainstream educational settings.

The purpose of this strategy is to set out the vision and priorities in Leicestershire for developing support and provision for children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND. Our strategy will be delivered through our five overarching SEND principles which have been co-produced by the Leicestershire SEND and Inclusion Partnership following an evaluation of what is working well and current barriers to achieving our vision for children and young people with SEND in Leicestershire.



Building trust and strong relationships with parents and carers and children and young people with SEND will run as a theme through everything we do

Principle 1

The child and family are at the heart of what we all do

Principle 2

We will have an accurate understanding of the needs and lived experiences of children and young people with SEND

Principle 3

Children and young people with SEND are prepared for successful transition throughout their life

Principle 4

Leaders across the SEND partnership will work together to plan, deliver and quality assure Leicestershire's offer

Principle 5

We will provide timely and effective support to enable children and young people with SEND to thrive and belong in their communities

We are committed to making positive change happen. We know there is history where children and families have felt let down and feel that promises have not been fulfilled. We are determined to change this. We also know that this will take time, but we will work diligently, co-produce quickly and effectively to make positive change happen.

Our SEND strategy demonstrates the collective commitment and responsibility between our parents, community, Local Authority (LA) education and social care support services and settings, including health services across the spectrum of health provision. Parents and the voluntary sector have a shared commitment to the strategy and are partners in ensuring that it meets the needs of our children and young people.

Co-production and partnership working with families is at the core of SEND service development and delivery across education, social care and health.

This strategy sets out our ambitious vision, aims and priorities to ensure that we effectively identify and meet the needs of the children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) age 0 to 25.



Children and young people achieve better outcomes when we have a clear focus on working together.

This strategy for 2025-2028 sets out our commitment to delivering consistently better outcomes for children and young people with SEND. We will ensure children with SEND across Leicestershire have access to the right support at the right time enabling them to thrive and succeed.



2. Leicestershire context

The following sections provide a high-level summary of the numbers of children and young people with SEND in Leicestershire, support provided from partners across the County and the impact this is having. More information is available through the Leicestershire Local Area Inclusion Plan.

Children and Young People in Leicestershire

Leicestershire is a large urban/rural County located within the East Midlands region of England which surrounds the city of Leicester. Leicestershire's population was 712,336 at the latest census in 2021, a 9.5% increase to the county's population over the last 10 years. This makes Leicestershire one of the fastest growing areas in the country in terms of population (national average 6.6%). Understandably, this has placed added pressures on services for Children and Young People in the County. The County has approx. 201,250 children and young people aged under 26 years (29% of the total population). This is expected to grow to 234,329 by 2033.

Population of Leicestershire	2023 estimate	2033 estimate
Total population for Leicestershire	722,155	806,906
Total number of children and young people aged under 26 years	210,255	234,329
Percentage of children and young people aged below 26 against the total population	29.1%	29%
Split across SEN2 age bandings:		
0 to 4	36,160	39,982
5 to 10	48,762	51,466
11 to 15	41,981	44,661
16 to 18	24,470	29,340
19 to 25	58,882	68,880

There are 107,413 children and young people educated in Leicestershire schools (aged 3-18). Children and Young People from minority ethnic groups account for 23.6% of all children living in Leicestershire, compared with 37% in the country as a whole. The largest minority ethnic groups are Asian or Asian British and Mixed. Many children and young people with EHCPs are educated in mainstream schools or special schools. It is the Local Area's ambition that the majority of children with EHCPs can be included and educated in mainstream schools, or resourced provisions within a mainstream context, where they can learn in their local communities and with their peers.

From our School Census in January 2024, we know that:



Total number of pupils in Leicestershire schools **107,413**

Percentage of Black Asian and other ethnic communities of the total school population (excluding unclassified) **23.6%**



Total number and percentage of EHCP's for Black, Asian and Ethnic groups

Asian/Asian British **3%**

Black/African/
Caribbean/
Black British
0.8%

Mixed/Multiple
ethnic groups
4.7%

Other ethnic
groups
0.5%



Percentage of pupils that have English as an additional language **8.6%**



Total number of looked after children (March 2023 903 return) **681**

Total number of looked after children as a percentage of the total population aged 0 to 17 years **0.48%**



All pupils eligible for free school meals **15.5%**

SEN support pupils eligible for free school meals **12.9%**

EHCP pupils eligible for free school meals **32.5%**

As at August 2024, Leicestershire has 317 schools across the County, which include 252 mainstream Primary, 80 mainstream Secondary and 8 Special Schools. The County also has 32 SEN Units or Resource Bases, most of which are attached to mainstream schools.

In terms of Early Years provision, Leicestershire has 4 specialist EY settings within the County.

There are 7 mainstream and 1 specialist Post 16 education providers supporting young people with EHCPs in Leicestershire.

Children and Young People in Leicestershire with Special Educational Needs

The latest School Census, which includes all pupils on roll at a school within Leicestershire (aged 4 to 16 years), reports that there are now 13,983 pupils on a SEN Support plan and 6,377 with an Education, Health and Care Plan. SEND pupils account for 17.2% of the Leicestershire school population.

During the last few years Leicestershire has faced significant challenges in responding to the increasing demand for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs) like many Local Authorities nationally. We know that within Leicestershire there is an increasing trend for requests for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs) resulting in Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) which increased 18% between 2022 and 2023, however growth in EHCPs issued, while still significant, has slowed somewhat in comparison to national and regional trends since 2020 after a period of considerable growth between 2016 and 2020. As a result of increased demand, capacity of services, and national shortages of Educational Psychologists, Leicestershire has been unable to keep within statutory timeframes of 20 weeks. As a result this has impacted on children, young people and families who have had to wait longer for an EHCP, and subsequently any additional support required or a specialist school placement where this is needed.

	Number of EHCP's					
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Aug 2024
England	390,109	430,697	473,255	517,049	575,963	
	47.6% increase between 2020 – 2024					
East Midlands	27,104	30,500	33,402	36,950	41,806	
	54.2% increase between 2020 – 2024					
Leicestershire	4,751	5,288	5,813	6,201	6,377	6,887
	34% increase between 2020 – 2024 and 45% increase between 2020 and August 2024					



The age differences for intervention to support pupils amongst health, social care and education appears to create some barriers which need addressing within EHC Plans and when ensuring effective earlier SEND support
School Leader 2024



It is difficult to hear the same message around national issues when this has been known for some time
School Leader 2024

Education

Education attainment and progress for children and young people with an EHCP is generally good and is just under or around the national average across most key stages but is above the national average for KS4 (GCSE). For those pupils on SEN support, attainment and progress are below the national average except at KS4. A high proportion of children and young people with SEN go on to higher and further education. The Local Area recognises the need to make improvements across all reported attainment years.

Longer term outcomes for adults with SEND in Leicestershire are good, with the proportion of those living in the own home or with family significantly higher in Leicestershire than the national average. They are also significantly more likely to be in paid employment, at nearly double the national average rate.

School attendance rates for children and young people with SEN in Leicestershire are generally good, with data from the Autumn term for 23/24 better than national average for Primary and Special Schools and the Oakfield Pupil Referral Unit across all attendance indicators. Attendance at Special schools and Oakfield are particularly good as compared to the national attendance picture for similar settings. Secondary attendance rates are slightly above the national average.

Permanent exclusions for children and young people with SEN in Leicestershire are significantly lower than national average and fixed term exclusions are also below national average, especially for those with EHCPs, which demonstrate the Local Area's commitment to inclusive education for all children and young people. This work with schools continues to be a key focus for the Local Area, with a focus on building capacity in schools, additional support, advice and guidance from the Local Authority to further strengthen early identification and offer excellent SEN Support through the provision of new tools such as the recently developed Inclusive Practice Toolkit and training for staff in school settings. This is continually being improved based on feedback from schools.

Children at risk of exclusion receive support through Leicestershire's Secondary Education and Inclusion Partnerships (SEIPs) which provide multi-agency inclusion forums and also provide support and reassurance around transition to secondary settings, or from Oakfield Short Stay School which provides support for primary school age children prior to starting at a new school. The Specialist Teaching Service works closely with



The inclusive practice toolkit has been really helpful in supporting teachers
SENCo 2024

Health, Social Care and other services such as CAMHS. The Autism Outreach team also offer all schools a support package as well as pupil-specific support. The attendance team works with individual schools and pupils to prevent suspensions and permanent exclusions and support children and young people back to regular school attendance.

Setting specific planning from the Inclusion team ensures support for schools is targeted to those in greatest need.

Support for early intervention and efficacy of SEND provision by Early Years settings, mainstream schools and colleges is generally good. Additional support is in place to improve consistency of inclusive practice in ordinarily available Early Years settings.

The proportion of Electively Home Educated (EHE) children with EHCPs is slowly increasing, in contrast to the national position, although numbers are still small. Support for EHE children is in place from the Inclusion service of the Local Authority. Partners do not have consistent knowledge of children who do not access education at all or who access on a part time basis. We need to work together better, to address the underlying reasons behind this and build inclusive communities that can support their reintegration holistically.

Despite the number of children and young people with SEN accessing transport to educational settings increasing 87% since 2015/16, the local authority does not have any specific challenges with sufficiency. However, 55% of pupils in transport use taxis and there are some localised difficulties commissioning private transport services.

Health

Most children and young people benefit from early and effective identification of additional needs. Health visitors consistently deliver mandated checks through the Healthy Child programme which provides a universal support offer for 0-19 year olds. Health services to meet children's physical and mental health needs are provided through a range of targeted and specialist services. Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust health services work in close partnership with Early Years settings, schools and local authority specialist services to jointly assess and meet identified needs. The timeliness of health advice going into EHCPs is good and is consistently meeting the 6-week target.

Consistent with the national picture across England, some children and young people are waiting too long for specialist health assessments against national guidelines, leading to delay in appropriately assessing and supporting needs. This is particularly for those waiting on the neurodevelopmental pathway, child and adolescent mental health services, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy which all have demand exceeding funded capacity and considerable waiting lists.

Children, young people and families in Leicestershire can expect to wait more than 2 years for an assessment as part of the neurodevelopmental pathway. Whilst waiting for an assessment, families are directed to a range of digital, charitable sector and system support, including LPT's Health for Kids and Health for Teens websites, Autism Space, ChatAutism, the National Autistic Society and ADHD Solutions. Pre and post diagnosis, children and young people are referred to any other relevant health service to support and

meet needs such as Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Community Paediatrics, Mental Health Support Teams and CAMHS for assessment and intervention.

The Teen Health 11-19 service provides preventive early intervention support, as part of the universal service for young people of secondary school age and up to the age of 25 years for young people with SEND. Teen Health is a Public Health commissioned service integrated within Leicestershire County Council's Family Help service. Based within schools and the community, the service promotes healthier lifestyles and supports children and young people to grow up to be healthy, stay safe and be able to achieve their potential.

Demand for health advice and support for children and young people with SEND continues to increase. In April 2024, 2,954 children and young people were registered with the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Unit with an active plan. The breakdown by age is shown in the table below. The children that are supported have a variety of often complex physical and mental health needs.

Age group	0 - 5	6 - 11	12 - 16	17-20	21-25	Total
Number of children registered	296	1042	962	564	90	2954

Care navigators help in coordinating a child's health care and provide information around local support networks available in the area. Requests for care navigation in Leicestershire increased substantially in 2022/23 to 2,036, up 37% on the previous year.

Social care

There were 726 children and young people looked after by Leicestershire County Council as at 31st March 2024. This represents 0.5% of the overall Leicestershire population under the age of 18.

In Leicestershire, 27.5% of looked after children in 2022/23 (the latest published figures) were on SEN support, compared to 27.3% nationally. 33.2% of looked after children in Leicestershire have an EHC Plan, compared to 30.8% nationally. Nationally, 21.8% of Children in Need are on SEN support and 28.2% have an EHC plan. In Leicestershire, 23.7% of children in need are on SEN support and 23.8% of children in need have an EHC plan.

The proportion of children in need with a disability recorded has fallen over the last 6 years in Leicestershire and is now below both regional and national averages. In 2023/24, 8.8% of children in need also had a recorded disability.

A dedicated team for children who are disabled provides specialist intervention for children with complex needs relating to their disability, undertakes assessments and provides support to families to develop a plan that will assist the child or young person. The team also work with children with disabilities where there are safeguarding concerns or where they are in the care of the local authority. Children's social care works closely with the young adult's disability team to consider transitions and ensures young people moving into adult services have the right support at the right time.

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Social workers provide support to parents and carers about how to support emerging needs. Social Care is working hard to improve the advice and support provided for children and young people with SEND through 2 recently appointed Dedicated Social Care Officers (DSCOs). The DSCO role is focused on improving the quality of Social Care advice for EHCPs and providing training for Social Care staff to improve the consistency of support offered.

Due to capacity, there are sometimes long waiting times and limited access to overnight short breaks. Work is underway to develop a number of creative opportunities to grow short breaks provision in coproduction with parents, carers and children. This includes piloting a short breaks scheme which aims to give parents more choice and independence and give opportunity for families to acquire a payment to purchase local offer services themselves for short breaks. Further exploration of other opportunities to jointly commission overnight breaks with Health for children with complex health care needs. For residential provision, we will be utilising our partnership with Barnados and have been successful in a funding bid for the DfE to open a residential home for complex care.

Our Local Offer

Awareness and engagement with the Leicestershire Local Offer is good, and increasing over time. There is excellent engagement through the Local Offer Facebook page which in July 2024 had 4.3k followers. The Local Offer webpage regularly features in the top 5 search items and most visited pages on the Local Authority's website. The Local Offer is constantly being improved through coproduction with the SEND Hub and incorporating survey findings. We are using feedback from those attending to continuously improve our Local Offer, improving navigation and ensuring it meets the needs of children and young people and their families. Regular Local Offer Roadshows are well attended and receive good feedback from attendees. Children and young people's voices have also contributed to the review of the local offer.

**4.3k
followers**
on the Local Offer
Facebook page in
July 2024

Local Area SEND Inspection

Leicestershire's Education, Health and Social Care services are jointly inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to see how well they meet their responsibilities towards children and young people with SEN and disabilities. In February 2020 following the most recent Local Area SEND Inspection, Leicestershire received a Written Statement of Action. We are currently working with the Department for Education (DfE) to monitor improvement progress through an Accelerated Progress Plan.

The Leicestershire local area was subject to a SEND re-inspection in November 2022 to consider the progress made by the local area on the two areas included within Leicestershire's Written Statement of Action:

- ▶ Lack of a joint commissioning strategy
- ▶ Quality of EHC plans

A joint commissioning strategy is now in place, and the report highlighted the significant progress we have made and recognised improvements that have been made since the initial inspection in 2020. However, local partners accept findings that identified that whilst EHCP quality has improved and includes the views of parents and carers, improvements still need to be made, including the implementation of quality assurance of EHCPs which is now in place through a multiagency audit panel.

This is something that we are working on – inspectors acknowledged we have made a focused plan to bring about the necessary improvements to EHCPs. We aim to make the improvements as quickly as possible and have developed a recovery plan which targets the timeliness of EHCNAs and EHCP reviews, and improvements in the quality of EHCPs through targeted multiagency quality audits and training. The most recent update on our progress can be found here www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability/send-service-developments/local-area-send-inspection.

Improving local services for children and young people with SEND in Leicestershire

This strategy has been developed when there is a lot of change happening both locally and nationally. The Leicestershire SEND and Inclusion Partnership is committed to improving services for children and young people with SEND in Leicestershire and a number of change initiatives are in progress along with our Accelerated Progress Plan and recovery plan set out above.

Changes in demand, for example, increasing numbers of children with anxiety related non-attendance, emotionally based school absence (EBSA); increasing numbers of children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs across our services, as well as an increase in need for much younger children, have led to increasing numbers of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP's) and underperformance against our statutory timeframes. In response to this increased demand, Leicestershire has invested significantly



in a change programme, Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL) which has been pivotal to change across the system.

The TSIL Programme was established with partners across the SEND system in recognition of the rising demand for SEND support through Education, Health and Care plans and specialist provision; with the aim of ensuring we have a sustainable system for the future. The diagnostic evidence gathering and work with partners identified four key areas where positive improvements can be made: Inclusive practice, Service transformation, Accurate data and information and Communication and engagement. The Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire programme has reshaped the SEND services within the Local Authority and introduced improvements to processes, support inclusive practice and ensure more joined up working across the system.

The TSIL programme has now moved into a Continuous Improvement phase, supporting embedding of the changes made during the programme and continuing to work with system partners to improve the experience for children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers. In order to support continuous improvement of SEND services, Leicestershire County Council have introduced a new Education Quality & Performance team who will monitor the sustained improvements in performance and drive through new areas of improvement, the DSCO role within Social Care, and a Children and Young Person SEND and Personalisation team has been introduced through the ICB.

The Specialist Provision in Leicestershire (SPIL) document co-produced with the Leicestershire SEND hub through the TSIL programme sets out available education provisions for children and young people with SEND, supporting parents to make informed choices on suitable placements.

Leicestershire is part of the Leicester City, Leicestershire and Rutland local area partnership who are collectively taking part in the national Change Programme Partnership for SEND and Alternative Provision reforms. The Change Programme Partnership was launched by the Department for Education (DfE) in September 2023 to test and deliver reforms to SEND and Alternative Provision with a small group of local area partnerships (add appropriate link for more information)

Leicestershire is also an early adopter for the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) program (now also part of CPP) and has commenced engagement with a selection of local primary schools to test models of support to enable neurodivergent children and young people to remain in mainstream education.

The Early Language and Support for Every Child programme (ELSEC) also being managed through the CPP is focusing on early identification and support for children and young people with Speech, Language and Communication needs, with the aim of reducing the rate of referrals, increasing workforce capacity and improving the join up between Health and Education



In addition, Leicestershire is also part of “Delivering Better Value in SEND programme” aiming to support local authorities to improve the delivery of SEND services for children and young people while ensuring services are sustainable. www.dbvinsend.com/participating-local-authorities

Through our innovative work within localities, we have been listening to children, young people, families and our partners across Education, Health, and Social Care through co-production events, to find out exactly what needs to change. The Shaping SEND futures project (#ShapingSEnDFutures) is piloting this approach across two areas of Leicestershire – Hinckley & Bosworth and North West Leicestershire. The project is working to bring the SEND strategy to life, building on the voice of children and young people and their families to pilot improvements across system partners.

3. What our children, young people and families tell us

Our Parent Carer Forum – Leicestershire SEND Hub

The SEND Hub is well established and provides on-going feedback from families on their experiences of having a child or young person with Special Educational Needs and/or a Disability into local partners through their role on the Leicestershire SEND and Inclusion Board. This role is formalised through a partnership agreement. The Leicestershire SEND Hub Youth Forum is developing, partnering with Children's Social Care and Family Hubs.

Partners work closely with the SEND Hub to co-produce changes to processes and service offers, for example through the Transforming SEND and Inclusion programme, Shaping SEND Futures project and PINS programme. SEND Hub representatives are valued members of working groups on a wide range of change and improvement initiatives, such as ongoing work on development of needs descriptors and CPP workstreams focused on EHCP moderation and quality assurance. Regular survey and feedback work with parents, carers and children and young people is coordinated through the SEND Hub.

Feedback is helping us to improve our services

Improving the capture and use of the voice of children and young people is an ambition for the partnership, particularly ensuring this is consistently included in EHCPs and annual reviews.

Key themes from engagement and consultation with children and young people and their families highlights the areas we need to improve:



Joint working across Education, Health and Social Care to develop an easier to navigate system

Partners understand that many parents and carers feel powerless and feel they do not have a voice in a complex and hard to navigate system. We do not offer joined up solutions and approaches across the Local Area Partnership resulting in age becoming a barrier to accessing services, and processes and systems are not clear enough. Families tell us of performance issues across partners, particularly with waiting times, and of difficulty finding information to help them identify the right services to support their children and young people. We acknowledge that while we actively seek feedback, we could do more to capture views about experiences of the system as a whole, and to use the feedback we are receiving to improve our services and the journey of children and young people with SEND through the system.



Since changing to the new ways of working for SENA it has made everything much harder we don't have a person to call we did before

Carer 2024

Delays in assessing and supporting children and young people's needs

Parents and carers note that waiting times for assessments and specialist services are an area of dissatisfaction and frustration, including a lack of communication around progress. The waiting times for EHC needs assessments and for allocation of a caseworker are a concern; there are also often very long waits once a referral has been made to an initial appointment, and between appointments for specialist support services. Parents and carers also report that it takes a long time to be able to receive a diagnosis and that more information needs to be made available whilst waiting for an assessment and services to support whilst awaiting diagnosis. As noted earlier this is an area of focus for partners through the recovery plan associated with the Accelerated Progress Plan. We know when we get these right partners are able to provide the right support at an early stage for children and young people and their families. We note the ongoing pressures on the SEND system and long waiting times for some specialist services makes this challenging. Parents and carers report there are barriers with the capacity and criteria for access for these services meaning some children and young people do not qualify as their needs are too high or not high enough.



We have had to wait over 3 years to be seen by CAMHs how is this fair?

Parent 2024



The school really helped me to understand my son's needs following his diagnosis. They talked me through each process and I felt really supported –

Parent 2024

EHCP review timeliness and plan updates

Parents and carers report they are concerned that annual reviews of their child or young person's EHCP are not always being reflected in an updated plan, with plans becoming increasingly out of date where reviews have not been processed and concerns around unmet needs leading to children out of school. This is a clear priority for parents and carers, particularly for those whose children are due to transition to a new key stage or setting to ensure that needs are appropriately understood and documented. We know there is a significant task to recover timeliness and performance around annual reviews due to the number of EHCPs but are committed to making significant improvements in both areas. This area is also being addressed through the recovery plan associated with the Accelerated Progress Plan.



A lot of reviews are out of date and on old formats, some are 4 years out of date

SEND Hub 2024

Transitions between educational settings

Feedback from children and young people and their families suggests that transitions between settings and services could be made smoother with additional support required to manage and reduce the impact of change. During the design phase of the TSIL programme, partners engaged with parent/carers and young people around their experience of transitions and how these may differ at different transition points. What was consistent was the concerns around managing change and how we can reduce the impact of the change on the children and young people. This was felt by parents/carers and CYP at all key stage changes. The parents and carers were able to draw out examples of where school experiences had worked particularly well. This included examples of good provision in mainstream schools and where their child's needs were being met, especially in the primary phase. What was apparent was how some schools/provisions approach transition differently, and how this can drastically affect the experience and engagement in transition. TSIL has worked to improve the consistency of transitions for those children moving from early years settings into Primary Schools. Ongoing work is planned through the Shaping SEND futures project to identify and consider how to overcome transition barriers that exist at other key stage transition points. Support for Transitions is a key priority for the partnership

Support for inclusion of children and young people with SEND in mainstream schools

Feedback from children and young people and their families suggests that whilst mainstream educational provision is working well for many children and young people, this is not universally the case. A continued focus is required to ensure all mainstream schools in Leicestershire are able to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND where this is a suitable educational setting. Significant support for inclusion has been developed, but a shared understanding and additional capacity building is crucial to further improvements. Feedback suggests that early support is not effective for all children and young people and there is more support we can offer to support children and young people back into school.



My teachers really struggled to help and understand me
pupil Y9 2024

Availability of school places for children and young people with SEND

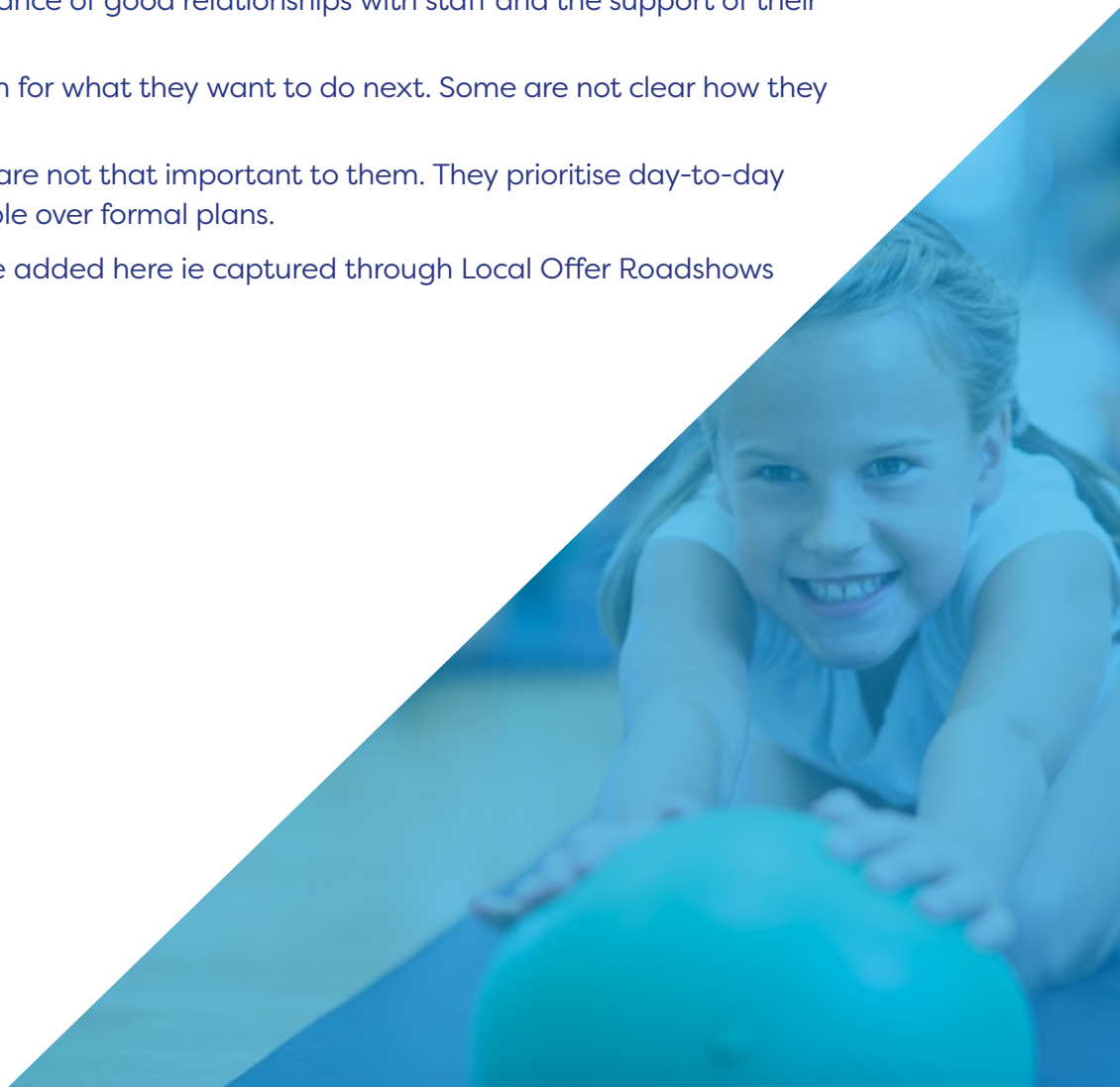
We know that there are insufficient special school places available within communities, and this results in our children and young people being transported across the county or outside, sometimes being placed in an expensive independent educational provision or offered Education Other Than at School (EOTAS). We hear from parents and carers that this can cause stress for children and young people who spend considerable time travelling and can mean they are not ready/fit to learn on arrival at school. These families would like their child to be able to attend an educational setting closer to their home. Access to specialist educational provisions that meet complex needs can be challenging due to a lack of places and securing an appropriate place can feel daunting.

Young Researchers Young Voices

We are supporting the Young Researchers Young Voices Project, an innovative three-year project that investigates the views and experiences of children and young people with SEND across the East Midlands www.derby.ac.uk/research/centres-groups/educational-research-and-innovation/inclusion-and-special-educational-needs-research-cluster/action-research-and-lesson-study-for-isend/. The project team have recently published their year 2 findings which we will use to help shape practice improvements across the local area partnership:

- ▶ Children and young people find their SEND support suitable and beneficial.
- ▶ Their SEND support meets their needs and fosters important learning and development.
- ▶ They feel their opinions are valued and listened to.
- ▶ Many of them are consulted or involved in decisions about their support.
- ▶ Some were hesitant to ask for changes to their support in case the support is removed or the changes they ask for had a detrimental effect on their support.
- ▶ They want the support to be given only if they need it, recognising the importance of independence.
- ▶ They place value in the community around them and strive to support others to achieve their goals.
- ▶ They stress the importance of good relationships with staff and the support of their families.
- ▶ They often have a plan for what they want to do next. Some are not clear how they will get there.
- ▶ In many cases, EHCPs are not that important to them. They prioritise day-to-day support from key people over formal plans.

Recent voice work can be added here ie captured through Local Offer Roadshows



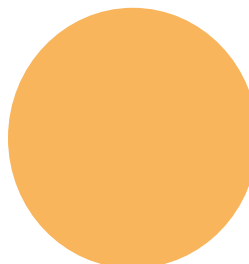
4. Our strategy for ensuring sufficient appropriate educational places for children and young people with SEND

Current position

The demand for SEND educational provision continues to grow through increases in EHCPs and demand for specialist school places, which continues to rise faster than capacity. Leicestershire has 5 maintained special schools and 3 specialist academies within the County offering 1,768 places in September 2024. There are also 304 primary places and 224 secondary places in SEN units or resourced provisions attached to mainstream schools. In addition, 48 primary and 219 secondary aged children and young people were in a placement at an Independent Special School (ISP) in November 2023.

The local area is currently unable to meet the demand for Special School places despite a significant increase in places during the last academic year. A capital programme overseen by Leicestershire County Council is working to develop provision across the local area.

In 2023/24, 217 specialist places have been created as well as additional support for mainstream schools. In addition, informal provision has been developed for at least 28 pupils in four primary schools where children who might otherwise have taken a specialist place have been supported in a mainstream setting. A new SEMH provision (Bowman Academy) opened in September 2024. The DfE has also agreed a free school with a further 80 places.



We know that there is a deficit of around 430 specialist placements at November 2023, based on pupils placed in independent special schools, those without a placement and those with EHCP issues who were awaiting a placement. In addition, we anticipate an additional 470 places will be required by 2028 based on projected population growth and housing needs assessments. There is a clear growing demand for specialist places in Leicestershire overall, and many children who do have a specialist place attend a specialist provision that is not local to them.

Sufficiency planning principles

In planning to meet the needs of children with SEND we are committed to the following principles:

- ▶ We aim to meet all children and young people's needs through an inclusive approach, embracing, supporting and treating all children and young people equally and ensuring all children and young people have equality of opportunity.
- ▶ We aim to meet the significant majority (almost all) of children and young people's needs within their locality
- ▶ We will ensure schools and settings are fully supported and resourced to meet the needs of children with additional, challenging needs
- ▶ We will utilise data insights to inform sufficiency planning and organise provision based on evidence, educational principles and a strategic understanding of demand.
- ▶ Proactively set up a diverse range of provisions at all key stages to maximise children and young people's chances of positive educational and social development
- ▶ Understand and promote the offer from state funded provisions and proactively collaborate with them to develop and adapt their offer to close identified gaps and meet needs.
- ▶ We recognise that each child or young person is different and will benefit from unique interventions. We will work with each to find the most suitable level of support for them
- ▶ We recognise and plan provision around the four areas of SEND (Communication and Interaction; Cognition and Learning; Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties; Physical and/or Sensory Needs) mindful of the co-concurrence and complexity of need.
- ▶ We will aim to ensure a sufficient and sustainable childcare (0-14) and market is operating with a high-quality workforce enabling all children to have access to an inclusive provision



Future priorities for school place development

Future priorities set out in the SEND capital programme include expansion of existing special schools (especially at Secondary level where there are less places but high demand across the County); new accommodation for the Oakfield South Short Stay School; phase 1 of an area special school in the Harborough district where there are very few specialist places to meet demand from local children and young people; development of informal specialist provision in mainstream schools and an unallocated capital sum to respond to new and emerging needs.

Additional places will not address the issue of sufficiency in isolation; there is insufficient resource to create enough places to meet the rising demand and there is finite capacity within the Local Authority to deliver additional projects quickly. A partnership approach focusing on improving early assessment and support for children and young people with SEND along with our ongoing work with schools and families to improve inclusive practice in mainstream educational settings and support for attendance will also be important as part of an overall plan for ensuring sufficiency.

The proposed priorities for school place development set out below targets resources to local areas and provision types where there is highest demand and highest likelihood of meeting a wide range of needs.

Expanding Special Schools

A number of schemes to increase the capacity of existing special schools have already been progressed. Due to constrained sites there are limited opportunities to expand these schools further. Further scoping work around special school satellite provision is underway.

Oakfield Short Stay School (South)

Oakfield (South) is currently operating from a temporary base at Newlands in Earl Shilton but a longer-term location with opportunity to expand provision is required. Negotiations are taking place in regard to a site and alternative options.

Phase 1 of a new Area Special School in Harborough district

There is insufficient capital currently available to deliver a full area special school, however it is proposed to deliver the first phase of what will later become a larger area special school in the Harborough area. This will initially focus on secondary aged (with potentially some upper Key Stage 2 provision), ambulant children with communication and interaction and/or cognition and learning primary needs. Phase 1 will work to accommodate around 100 children and young people without complex physical needs, which will be the focus of future phases of school development. A potential site has been identified and negotiations with property services are underway. Once this is confirmed, feasibility and then design work can take place and the school can be established under the free school presumption process, which means that the LA will recommend a MAT sponsor to the DfE.

Identification of and support for informal specialist support in primary schools including informal specialist bases and SEN inclusion adaptations

Special Schools are already beyond capacity, meaning limited ability to offer additional places for early years children with SEND starting school. We are working closely with schools to enable informal (not designated as specialist) provision to be established at some primary schools. From a capital perspective this involves minor adaptation and refurbishment to existing accommodation. We are working to identify a number of schools where this can be achieved with limited wider capacity impact for future basic need cohorts. This allocation can also be used for improvement of SEN and nurture provision with the ambition of keeping children in mainstream provision longer where budgets allow.

Responding to opportunities that arise

The SEND capital programme will ensure on an annual basis that an unallocated amount of capital is held back to respond to needs and opportunities as they arise. This may include taking advantage of opportunities such as vacant property, unused primary classrooms, bids etc, particularly where this would allow a new school to open early. We will also pursue any opportunities for additional capital allocations or grants that are made by central government which would enable faster capacity development.

5. Our Local Area SEND and Inclusion Development Plan

In Leicestershire, inclusion means that all children and young people are welcomed and accepted in their local communities, schools and other services that support them. True inclusivity is where differences are seen as a benefit, and where perspectives and differences are shared, leading to better decisions, services and life experiences for children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities and their families. At the heart of inclusion is being and feeling included, ensuring everyone is treated with equity and dignity and has fair access to resources and opportunities.

Work on our improvement journey has already begun. We know we need to make changes that will have lasting effects, and we are committed to working in partnership to provide high quality services that achieve positive outcomes and improve the lives of our children and young people with SEND and their families. We have set out how we intend to achieve the improvement priorities within the strategy below. A detailed plan setting out responsibilities and timelines for delivery will support us to plan and implement changes over the life of the strategy.



Improvement Theme	Actions
Principle	
We will provide timely and effective support to enable children and young people with SEND to thrive and belong in their communities	
Identification and assessment of needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Improve the timeliness of EHCNA assessments and EHCP reviews in line with statutory requirements. This is a key focus for the partnership and subject to a recovery plan focusing on clearing backlogs and ensuring sustainable processes and staffing arrangements to meet the need from a high and increasing number of EHCNAs and EHCPs. ► Improve the quality of EHC plan writing through robust moderation and quality assurance of EHCPs to ensure consistent good quality ► Reducing waiting times for services across the partnership so that early interventions and universal support are enablers not barriers for outcomes
Attendance and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Co-produce and implement an Alternative Provision strategy with transparent decision-making, funding, planning, purchasing and monitoring of provision. The Strategy will ensure that needs are met for young people in Alternative Provision and support reintegration into mainstream schools where possible. ► Consider additional support that can be offered to manage social, emotional and mental health and neurodevelopmental needs across the partnership, particularly for children and young people waiting for services and focusing on inclusion in mainstream educational settings. ► Trial new ways of working to better identify and support children with speech, language and communication needs in early years and primary schools. ► Develop a shared understanding of inclusion across all partners and share good practice of inclusion through ordinarily available provision across settings within Leicestershire so that all children and young people can thrive and achieve in their community. ► Work with provisions to reduce the number of suspensions and permanent exclusions for pupils with SEND.
Commissioned services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► A school place Sufficiency Strategy set out within this document will identify current and future needs for school placements and ensure more access to appropriate provisions are available. ► More work is being undertaken around commissioning of sufficient short break provision to meet service demand. ► Making best use of joint commissioning arrangements across the partnership.

Improvement Theme	Actions
Principle	
We will have an accurate understanding of the needs and lived experiences of children and young people with SEND	
Engagement, coproduction, feedback and voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Continue to improve our Local Offer to ensure it is easy to use, accessible for all and meets the needs and wants of local communities. This will ensure that young people and their families can access clear information about services and support available, including post-16 education options along with building independence, housing, good health, developing friends and family relationships and participating in society. ▶ Co-produce multi-disciplinary training across the partnership to ensure quality and consistency for children and families so that services know the child, and their voice is represented in EHCPs. ▶ Consider how to capture feedback from a wider group of children and young people, and their parents and carers, particularly around their experiences and journey across the system and how we can best support transitions and preparation for adulthood.
Principle	
The child and family are at the heart of what we all do Leaders across the SEND partnership will work together to plan, deliver and quality assure Leicestershire's offer	
Strategic Leadership and Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ensure all local partners have an accurate and shared understanding of SEND. Ongoing activity through TSIL CI and CPP to develop needs descriptors will ensure more consistent understanding and application. ▶ Continue to develop banding and funding aligned to needs descriptors in order to ensure funding is used efficiently in a needs-led way with a transparent process for allocation. ▶ Develop a new SEND data dashboard to share performance information across the system, enabling system leaders to support and challenge, and to monitor the impact of improvement activity to ensure it is making a difference ▶ Review, develop and refine processes together openly and honestly, to make sure local services are consistent and the offer to children and young people and their families is more cohesive and easier to navigate ▶ Ensure there is capacity within services and provisions, which are jointly planned, and deliver high quality provision, so children and young people can stay within their local communities wherever possible. ▶ Identify, invest, and provide a rolling program of evidence-based training for everyone, including practitioners, families and carers, so that children and young people with SEND receive the right support, in the right place and at the right time within their community. ▶ Improve the coordination of support for children and young people who have had traumatic experiences.

Improvement Theme	Actions
Principle	
Children and young people with SEND are prepared for successful transition throughout their life	
Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Support successful well-planned transitions from the earliest stages through to transitioning to adult services, working collaboratively to provide joined up support across partners ▶ Developing robust processes and support for transitions across the local partnership through the Shaping SEND Futures project so that children and families know what to expect and the support they can receive
Outcomes for children and young people with SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ensure all partners have a rolling programme of evidence-based training to secure a shared understanding of what is needed for young people as they prepare for adulthood. ▶ Ensure that Preparation for Adulthood pathways are clear and accessible and that planning for this starts from Y9. ▶ Support young people to successfully prepare for employment by developing and delivering Supported Internships, Traineeships and improving accessibility of Apprenticeships. ▶ Develop Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) and the Supported Internship (SI) project



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6. How will we know we are making a difference?

- ▶ Parents and carers will report high levels of satisfaction throughout the process. This will include timeliness for statutory assessment, a reduction in waiting times across services and children feel safe and heard. Families know what services are available and how to access them - the right services are in place at the right time and this reduces frustration within the system.
- ▶ Our families will feel empowered to meet their children's needs independently and in their local community wherever possible.
- ▶ Children and young people will have a clear pathway to achieving their goals and who will help them on this journey. They feel safe, valued and equal to their peers and belong and are educated within their communities.
- ▶ Children and young people will have the right support, will not be disadvantaged by age or locality and will have an active voice in their education, health and care.
- ▶ A shared system that stores information in one place will be available across the partnership that informs the commissioning of provision and services.
- ▶ Our workforce across education, health, and care is committed to local area partnership "team around the family" approach, with the right skillset to deliver services to our children and young people at the right stage of their development.
- ▶ The % of CYP whose needs are met locally (for both EHCP and SEN Support)
- ▶ The % of CYP views are recorded effectively in the EHCP Plan
- ▶ Learning is taken from complaints and these are reduced across the partnership
- ▶ The average time children and young people wait to access health care services across CAMHS, Therapies, Diagnostic Pathways eg ASD/ADHD is below 12 months
- ▶ Overall absence levels and absence for pupils with SEND remains below national levels including fixed and permanent exclusions
- ▶ The gap between pupils with SEND and those without working at the expected level in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2 is reduced, more pupils achieve expected outcomes
- ▶ There will be an increase in % of pupils with SEND attaining a standard pass at the end of Key Stage 4 and those attaining a strong pass (Attainment 8) and an increase in % of pupils with SEND making expected progress at the end of Key Stage 4 (Progress 8)
- ▶ An increase in successful post 16 transitions into Further Education and a reduction in NEET (not in employment education or training) for children and young people with SEND
- ▶ Through our innovative approaches "Shaping the Future" programme there will be established local SEND communities of practice and local strategic plans in place to implement local SEND priorities.

7. Who will monitor our progress?

The SEND and Inclusion Strategy will be monitored by the Leicestershire SEND and Inclusion and Health and Well-Being Boards. This will ensure accountability across the Local Area Partnerships and drive improvements.

Updates around our progress will be provided twice a year on our Local Offer page so that everyone can be kept up to date with our progress.

This strategy will be formally reviewed in 18 months from publication to ensure that our priorities are on track, progress is being made and is having a positive impact on children and young people with SEND across Leicestershire.

SEND system governance

