

Leicester
City Council

**MEETING OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION
SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

DATE: TUESDAY, 3 MARCH 2026

TIME: 5:30 pm

**PLACE: Meeting Room G.01, Ground Floor, City Hall, 115 Charles
Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ**

Members of the Committee

Councillor Batool (Chair)

Councillor Bonham (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Barnes, Cole, Gregg, Dr Moore, Singh Sangha and Westley

Members of the Committee are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed overleaf.

For Monitoring Officer

Officer contacts:

Ed Brown (Governance Services) Edmund.brown@leicester.gov.uk and Julie Bryant (Governance Services) Julie.bryant@leicester.gov.uk or E-mail: Governance@leicester.gov.uk Address: Leicester City Council, City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

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Further information

If you have any queries about any of the above or the business to be discussed, please contact: Ed Brown or Julie Bryant, Governance Services on Edmund.brown@leicester.gov.uk or Julie.bryant@leicester.gov.uk. Alternatively, email governance@leicester.gov.uk, or call in at City Hall.

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PUBLIC SESSION

AGENDA

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1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To issue a welcome to those present, and to confirm if there are any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Appendix A

The minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People, and Education Scrutiny Commission held on Tuesday 20th January 2026 have been circulated, and Members are asked to confirm them as a correct record.

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair is invited to make any announcements as they see fit.

5. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

Any questions, representations and statements of case submitted in accordance with the Council's procedures will be reported.

6. PETITIONS

Any petitions received in accordance with Council procedures will be reported.

7. FAMILIES FIRST PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

Appendix B

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help submits a report to update on the Families First Partnership (FFP) programme and the pilot launched in South Leicester.

8. SCE PRIORITIES AND PERFORMANCE REPORTS 2026/27 **Appendix C**

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education submits gives a presentation on the fourteen agreed priorities for the Social Care and Education department for the 2026/27 financial year alongside performance ambitions which will be reported on periodically to track progress.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT **Appendix D**

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education submits a report setting out the Social Care and Education Department's improvement ambitions with regards to equality and diversity over the 2026-27 year.

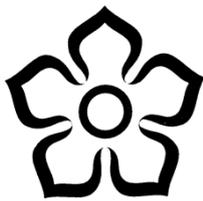
10. HNB REPORT **Appendix E**

The Chair will provide an update on the HNB report, outlining the amendments made in response to the January Scrutiny meeting.

11. WORK PROGRAMME **Appendix F**

Members of the Commission will be asked to consider the work programme and make suggestions for additional items as it considers necessary.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS



Leicester
City Council

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Minutes of the Meeting of the
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2026 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Batool – Chair
Councillor Bonham – Vice Chair

Councillor Dr Moore
Councillor Westley

Councillor Singh Sangha

* * * * *

Joycelin Eze-Okubuiro – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

Also Present:

Benjamin – Youth Representative
Councillor Pantling – Assistant City Mayor for Education

188. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies.

189. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have had in the business to be discussed.

Cllr Moore declared that a relative was a member of a protected group and previously worked for Leicester City Council and still accessing Council services. She felt she shouldn't take part in the discussion of the budget of the Revenue Account and left the room for this item.

190. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

1. That the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission held on 28th October 2025 be confirmed as a correct record.

191. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were made.

192. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

193. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

194. DRAFT GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2026/27 AND DRAFT THREE YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2026/27

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the City Mayor's proposed Draft General Fund Revenue Budget for 2026/27, and a report on the City Mayor's proposed Draft Three-Year Capital Programme 2026/27. Both items were taken together.

The Head of Finance (Education and Social Care) gave an overview of the reports, key points to note were as follows:

- The Draft General Fund Revenue Budget sets out the budget for 2026/2027 and the medium term financial strategy for the next two years. It was based on the government's Fair Funding consultation which ran over the summer, results were awaited but a budget gap was still forecasted. Hence the five strand strategy from last year would continue as follows:
 - To deliver budget savings
 - Constrain growth in areas such as Social Care and homelessness
 - A reduction in the Capital Programme
 - Releasing one off monies
 - A programme of property sales
- The budget built in growth to meet ongoing costs in social care, homelessness and housing benefits. The scope for additional investment was limited but some provision was made, particularly in areas previously funded from grants no longer received.
- Items relating to children's services included significant investment in future years as the growth forecasts are refreshed annually.
- There would be increased in house provision with an improved quality of accommodation and we expect that this will lead to lower rates of placement breakdowns.
- Attention was drawn to paragraph 6.1.3 of the Draft General Fund Revenue Budget which noted the position on the Dedicated Schools Grant, known as the DSG. The cumulative deficit was forecast to be £44.8m by the end of the financial year. The High Needs deficit for children with SEND was due to insufficient funding. The Government had indicated that future deficits may be centrally funded from April 2028, but there was no clarity currently on how existing deficits would be

addressed. Any remaining deficit may fall to the Council to fund from its resources.

- The Draft three year capital programme 2026/27 was worth £129m, fully funded from council resources, government grants and borrowing.
- A three year budget was better for planning, especially for capital projects running across several financial years.
- Specifically for children's services, £12.9m was provided to continue the School's Capital Maintenance Programme.
- Two new children's homes were planned for 2027, jointly funded by the DfE (not included in the Capital report but referenced in the Revenue report)
- Both of the papers would be updated and presented to Council in February and would include updated figures following the finance settlement.

The Chair invited questions and comments from the Commission. The following key points were discussed:

- Any underspends were transferred to general reserves.
- In response to a question from members on the draft Capital Programme (Appendix 5), it was explained that the £1m allocation in 2026/27 related to school buildings and was based on condition and maintenance needs. The DfE's funding formula meant this was considered an increase despite appearing lower than projections in later years. The methodology used by the DfE was not known to the council but would take age and condition of the buildings into account.
- In terms of key risks to the budget and related mitigations it was noted that risk assessments were completed. A highlighted risk involved the complexities of placements and the subsequent impact on budget. Potential growth was built into the budget.
- The DSG deficit was another known area of risk.
- In response to Member questions, it was noted that although increases in numbers of looked after children could be relatively small, associated costs could be high. Budget projections were as robust as possible, informed by previous years' data, local market conditions alongside ongoing preventative work. The Family Help model would help to reduce the numbers of children in care. A corporate contingency is also available if risks materialise.
- Regarding the High Needs Block Deficit, significant work had taken place to reduce EHCP numbers over the previous 18 months. This was helping to manage costs, but the deficit would remain.
- Funding was flexible for Early Help and targeted across the city to meet local need and reduce demand for child protection plans. Early pilot findings were expected shortly and were positive so far.

Agreed:

- 1) That the reports be noted.

Cllr Dr Moore left the meeting for these items due to a Declaration of Interest.

195. LEICESTER SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP YEARLY REPORT 2024 - 2025

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submitted the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report to the Commission on the activity Safe Guarding Partners have undertaken in a 12 month period.

- The LSCP Independent Scrutineer presented the report. The following was noted:
- The report had been delayed from its usual summer publication date and provided a retrospective overview of the partnership's activity.
- The report responded to statutory requirements and set out key achievements and challenges. It was highlighted that the reporting year had seen significant national change, with the context and drivers for those changes detailed throughout the report.
- Priority areas had been triangulated using feedback from children, families and practitioners, with practitioner voice playing a key role in shaping the work. The priorities for the coming year were set out at the end of the report.

Key Achievements:

- Formed a new Education Subgroup, which promotes and strengthens the role of local schools, colleges, early years and childcare settings in safeguarding arrangements
- Expanded the reach and membership of the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Voluntary and Community Sector Forum to strengthen engagement with this sector
- Quickly addressed and started to implement any learning required as a result of national reviews published by the Child Safeguarding
- Practice Review Panel
- Delivered high quality and well-attended large scale training events alongside our regular training programme

Key Challenges:

- Implementing the changes required as a result of Working Together 2023 and ensuring that the measures agreed were suitable and proportionate
- Progressing our Transitions Business Priority. The issues faced have been addressed and for 2025-26 there will be new vigour and focus to this work
- Having the capacity to fulfil our audit schedule, in light of competing priorities linked to the Joint Targeted Inspection programme. As a result of the issues faced, for 2025-26, the work of the Assurance and Audit Group will be split and taken up by two separate subgroups - the Performance Group and the Audit Group

In discussion with Members, the following was noted:

- Members welcomed the proposal to recruit a young person to the partnership and sought clarity on how individuals would be selected and supported to ensure they were able to participate meaningfully in the role.
- Officers explained that benchmarking and research had been undertaken with other areas where similar approaches were already established. Consideration had been given to balancing education commitments with participation, with the focus placed on the 16 to 18 age group. The role had been advertised widely to ensure fairness and accessibility, supported by a clear role description and skills profile. A shortlist had been agreed and interviews were due to take place, with the process being held online to improve accessibility. That while many young people already had relevant experience, the process had been designed to avoid excluding those who had not previously had similar opportunities.
- Members raised safeguarding concerns in relation to children's use of mobile phones, recognising this as a nationally prominent issue. Officers confirmed that this remained an ongoing area of focus for the partnership and formed part of its core business. The education group was identified as being well placed to help drive this agenda forward, supported by partnership policies and procedures.
- It was noted that there was extensive guidance and research on the risks associated with social media use, including situations that could not always be anticipated and might require support from family workers. In relation to looked after children, officers explained that mobile phone use was managed through risk assessment, with recognition that in some cases not having access could present a greater risk.
- Assurance was provided that safeguarding arrangements in this area would continue to be discussed and developed, including learning from international approaches.
- Members discussed the governance structure set out in the report, noting the number of groups within the partnership and seeking clarification on whether these were recent developments. It was explained that the structure reflected statutory partnership requirements, with additional groups introduced since 2023, including the education group, to respond to new expectations. Ongoing engagement was in place to ensure effective communication and alignment across the partnership.
- The Commission considered the financial position of the partnership, noting changes in income and increases in costs. It was noted that the partnership was made up of independent organisations, with rising salary costs contributing to financial pressures.
- A review of financial requirements was underway across children's and adults' boards to ensure delivery in a cost effective way. It was clarified that partners participated as part of their substantive roles, with no additional payment for involvement, although there were crossovers between groups. Membership included senior representatives across local authority, health and education, working collectively to support

child welfare.

- Members sought assurance regarding accountability and legal responsibility within the partnership, it was confirmed that all activity was governed by statutory Working Together arrangements, providing a framework for assurance and mutual challenge between agencies.
- Further discussion focused on the partnership's budget, including previous underspends and the small overspend in 2024/25 that had been supported by reserves. It was advised that planning for 2025/26 was underway, noting that recent increases such as national insurance had added pressure and that commissioning activity could vary across financial years. This had prompted a deeper review to identify efficiencies and ensure the most cost effective operating model.
- Members commented on the safeguarding case studies and resources included in the report, raising concerns about low engagement figures relative to the resources required to produce them. Difficulties in locating content on the website and broken links were highlighted, alongside questions about value for money and how promotion could be improved.
- Officers acknowledged the feedback and confirmed it would be taken forward as part of ongoing work, including exploring opportunities for greater collaboration to reduce duplication and increase reach. The importance of sharing good practice through professionals such as teachers was also emphasised.
- Members asked about the key safeguarding risks identified and the preventative measures planned for the coming year. Officers referred to the priorities set out in the report for the next 2 years, informed by national reviews and evidence, including risks associated with hidden harm and neglect occurring behind closed doors. A strong focus on belonging and lived experience was highlighted, with these priorities to be addressed through a structured programme of work.

AGREED

1. The Commission noted the Annual Report for 2024 to 25.
2. Officers were asked to take away members' feedback and suggestions, including promotion and accessibility of safeguarding resources, as part of ongoing partnership work.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Officers to consider how safeguarding resources and videos could be more effectively promoted and accessed, including reviewing website functionality and links.
2. Officers to continue work on reviewing partnership costs and governance arrangements and ensure value for money is demonstrated.
3. Officers to keep safeguarding priorities, including mobile phone use and online safety, under review and report progress through the partnership's future work programme.

196. SEND TRANSPORT UPDATE

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education submitted a report providing an update to the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission regarding the Post 16 Transport service, including the latest policy implementation.

The Assistant City Mayor for Children and Young People introduced the item and thanked the team for their exceptional work and significant engagement with the families.

The Director of SEND and Education reminded the commission that the update had come to scrutiny as requested after the recent policy changes. The following points were noted:

- A lot of hard work had gone into providing individualised responses to families.
- Over 200 cases had been reviewed with a wait time of under 5 days and typically within one day.
- Of the 215 Post 16 SEND school children supported, over 74% had received Council arranged transport, 25% had PTBS and enhanced PTBS.
- There had been 15 appeals, 4 of which went to stage 2. Only 2 appeals were rejected, due to insufficient evidence.
- The individualised approach was considered to be sustainable.
- Work would include making the package more efficient with a travel training element. Other Local Authorities with this experience were consulted.
- There had not been an increase in NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) figures.
- There was an upcoming annual consultation with a view to keeping the current policy in place.
- Matters pertaining to the last change of policy had been well scrutinised with suggestions taken onboard.

In response to member discussion, the following was noted:

- Members noted that they had not received any complaints or requests for assistance from dissatisfied families.
- The new policy meant that costs could be controlled whilst safeguarding and meeting the needs of the children.
- IT routing systems would play a key role during the growth in the SEND population.
- Post-16 school transport was not a statutory requirement, although needs still had to be addressed appropriately.
- Members discussed complaints relating to reliability. It was noted that there were inbuilt checks for taxi providers. A recent complaint had been dealt with swiftly and the family had been reassured.
- During the change of policy, the commission had made two

recommendations relating to the Exceptional Circumstances element of policy (7.1). Members requested that these two remain embedded:

- 1) *Where the circumstances mean that practically and or financially it is not possible for parents or carers to make arrangements for transport despite their best efforts.*
 - 2) *Where a parent or carer supporting the student with their journey is not reasonably practical whilst continuing in employment, or a reduction or flexibility in hours of employment would cause financial hardship as described.*
- The upcoming year's policy would be published on time to allow for planning.
 - In response to a question surrounding sustainability, it was noted that this would depend on the growth of the SEND population. Travel training and the computer programme will help. Also, early work with schools from year 9 onwards would be beneficial.

AGREED:

- 1) To note the update.
- 2) Members would email The Director of SEND and Education regarding the two points on exceptional circumstances.

197. HNB TASK GROUP REPORT

The Commission received a presentation led by the Chair providing an overview the findings of the High Needs Block Task Group and answered questions from members and answers.

It was noted that:

- The Task Group had benefited from strong engagement from officers, councillors and schools, with a significant amount of information shared to support the review.
- Members also met with young people, whose feedback provided valuable insight into their experiences.
- Members reflected that this Task Group had taken a different approach to previous reviews, with officers leading the drafting of the report, and welcomed the thoroughness of the final document.
- It was suggested that councillor led investigations, including site visits, observations and reflections, should be more clearly and visibly embedded within reports, to reflect the work undertaken by members.
- Discussion highlighted the importance of early intervention and investment at primary school level to support inclusion and manage demand on the High Needs Block.
- Members shared examples of effective practice observed in schools, including positive behaviour management approaches, staff training, rewards and recognition, and incentives designed to promote engagement and positive behaviour.

- The importance of relationships was emphasised, with examples of consistent daily interaction between teachers and pupils helping to build trust and improve behaviour outcomes.
- Members reflected positively on visits undertaken as part of the Task Group, noting strong inclusive practice and a clear focus on making children feel part of their school community.
- It was recognised that improvements in behaviour and outcomes required clear leadership, consistency and sustained effort over time.
- The importance of reinstating protocols for councillor visits to schools in different wards to ensure appropriate communication and transparency.
- Members sought clearer information within the recommendations on access to services, waiting times, delays and family engagement, including average waiting times where available
- Officers outlined ongoing work to support the sharing of good practice across schools, including regular secondary networks, engagement with academy trust leaders, and established professional networks to promote collaboration and learning.
- Members received an update on the recent Ofsted SEND inspection and noted the overall positive outcome, alongside areas identified for improvement.
- It was confirmed that a post inspection action plan would be published by 30 January and that work would continue to address all identified areas for improvement.
- Members noted that a national SEND White Paper was expected shortly and suggested that this be considered alongside the Task Group's findings at a future meeting, prior to submission to the Executive

AGREED:

1. The Commission noted the High Needs Block Task Group Report and the work undertaken.
2. Officers to respond to questions raised following the second Task Group meeting, including those referenced within the report.
3. The report to be updated with responses to questions raised be on the agenda at the next meeting, prior to submission to the Executive.
4. Councillors' Task Group notes to be published alongside the meeting minutes.

198. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2024 / 2025

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education submitted a report providing an overview of the activity and performance of the Fostering Service from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help introduced the item noting that the Fostering Service was a regulated service with an obligation to produce the annual report. The report also went to the Corporate Parenting Panel. As well as recruitment, supporting foster carers and the young people

was key.

The Head of Service Corporate Parenting gave an overview of the report. Key points to note were as follows:

- Most of the Leicester City looked after children (LAC) resided with foster carers and remained within or within a 20-mile radius of the city. This allowed for continuity of family networks and for children to continue to go to local schools.
- There were a small number of private foster carers, 43 kinship carers and also respite carers providing short breaks.
- Key areas of focus included recruitment, carer support and safeguarding.
- Regarding recruitment, there was a national shortage of foster carers. Many long-term carers were now leaving due to retirement. Going forward, unique selling points would need to be considered. Foster carers of all backgrounds and ages were required with flexibility of hours being available.
- The Kinship Strategy enabled extended family arrangements and Corporate grandparenting.
- The Council website now had an inbuilt micro site for the fostering offer, promotional communications had gone out and fostering champions were in place
- Ofsted had noted that the foster carers spoke very positively about being carers under LCC.
- There was an increased complexity of needs coming into the service and tailored support was necessary alongside longevity of support for carers.
- The service had been impacted by the cost of living crisis and the need to remunerate carers appropriately.
- In terms of benchmarking, the ratio of numbers of breakdowns compared well to national figures and numbers remained stable for placements.
- There were increasing numbers of sibling groups, sometimes large in number.
- A small number of foster carers were referred to LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer). For the vast majority no further action was taken. Three concerns were substantiated.

In response to member discussion, the following was noted:

- The proportion of children with three or more placement moves was 5%, the national benchmark was 11%. Some children required residential provision and that schooling considerations were important.
- Extra support layers had been created to deal with complex needs. Enhanced Foster Carers with at least 3 yrs experience working with complex needs and in receipt of additional training were engaged. Additional support came through agencies such as CAMHS. SEND

- needs might need more tuition.
- The CFST (Children and Family Support Team provided therapy to children displaying harmful sexual behaviour and other issues.
- Members were encouraged to attend the Celebrating Success events.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) For members of CYPE and also Adult Social Care Scrutiny to be invited to the Celebrating Success events, including a lunch on the 12th February 2026.

199. CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE (APRIL-SEPTEMBER 2025) AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education gave a presentation to the Commission on the Children, Young People and Education Quarter 2 Performance from April to September 2025 and quality assurance.

The following was noted:

- Data was presented up to September 2025, with it noted that the performance dashboard was currently under revision and would improve as it became more established.
- Current areas of risk were outlined, including a rising number of children subject to child protection plans. It was emphasised that this reflected an increase in need rather than specific practice concerns, and benchmarking showed similar trends nationally.
- An Independent Assessment had been undertaken to provide assurance that the position was not the result of local practice issues.
- Workforce pressures were highlighted, including social worker vacancies and difficulty recruiting to 4 newly established posts.
- Work had been undertaken across Overview Select Committee and Adult Social Care to reinvest available funding in order to support a wider overall workforce.
- Positive performance was reported in several areas, including lower re referral rates within 12 months compared to neighbouring authorities.
- The proportion of assessments completed within 45 working days was reported as 79 percent, with performance improving and recovery work ongoing.
- Care plan completion rates were above average.
- Education, Health and Care Plan completion performance was also noted.
- Unregulated placements were reported as low, with 6 children currently placed in children's homes without Ofsted registration, compared to a total of 520 children in care.
- The quality assurance framework and national performance data were outlined, with an emphasis on providing boards with clear information to

understand system position and trends.

- Next steps for quality improvement were set out, including a review of underlying methodology to ensure learning activity was focused and effective.
- A common methodology was being introduced to improve consistency, supported by a 6 month programme of work.
- Team managers would be supported through reflective workbooks and 3 mandatory sessions to embed learning into practice.
- Work on diversity and inclusion was outlined, including rolling out plans over the next 12 months, the establishment of a decision making forum, and the inclusion of staff with lived experience.
- A maturity matrix had been issued to the workforce, with responses being used to inform future development.
- Alignment with Local Government Association work and wider departmental activity was also noted.

In discussion with Members, the following was noted:

- Members welcomed the update and thanked officers for the work undertaken.
- Further discussion focused on the children's services performance and analysis framework, which had originally been developed following Ofsted work several years ago and was now maintained on a rolling monthly basis. Members welcomed the use of measures that provided early warning of emerging themes and enabled links to be made between different parts of the system, including demand, safeguarding and service change
- Members discussed demand trends, noting an increase from 309 to 485 within the analysis tool, with further increases anticipated once the latest data was available. It was recognised that the service was significantly busier than 6 months earlier, and members queried whether the increase in activity reflected appropriate levels of intervention and support for families. It was confirmed that artificial intelligence was not currently being used, and that future platforms would need to ensure sensitive data remained securely contained.
- Clarification was sought on referrals resulting in no further action. It was explained that definitions and measurement varied between authorities, and that the most recent figures were now balanced at around 3 percent, compared to a national average of 4 percent. It was noted that refresher work on thresholds and practice had supported this improvement, with an emphasis on advice and guidance where appropriate.
- Members highlighted positive Ofsted feedback in relation to contact with care leavers, noting performance above the national average.
- Members asked about emerging risks for Quarter 3. Officers confirmed that child protection numbers continued to rise, with an increase in looked after children during November and December. While numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children remained minimal, there had been an increase in babies entering care, with mitigation work undertaken but most cases resulting in care placements within a 4 week

period. Overall numbers had increased from 619 to 640 in one quarter, reflecting a larger rise than previous quarters, although consistent with the broader trend.

- Members emphasised the importance of timely availability of performance information, noting that data should be available within 6 weeks of the end of each quarter. It was confirmed that the next update would be presented at the March meeting in line with the work programme.

Agreed

1. The Commission noted the performance and quality update.
2. A further update be provided in line with the work programme.

200. WORK PROGRAMME

Members of the Commission were invited to consider content of the work programme and were invited to make suggestions for additions as appropriate to be brought to future meetings.

201. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no other business, the meeting closed at ---.

Minute Item 197

Notes on task group visits by Cllr Bonham and Cllr Moore

Visit 1 – Samworth Academy – 29 April 2025 – Part of Tudor Grange Academy Trust

A faith school

We were greeted, offered refreshments and ushered into room with Principal, SENCO, Deputy Head (?) and Neil Tansley (chair of Advisory Board?? – not a trustee)

The Head gave a talk about the school, acknowledged its catchment area has significant social disadvantages. The school is now full and has a waiting list of children with diagnosed ASD (11%) and ADHD (47%). There has been an increase from 7 to 30 children with EHCPs in a year. 14 children on role are currently awaiting special provision, with an alternative provision proposed. A significant number of students are recently arrived immigrants (mainly Ukrainians and Africans (from Nigeria and Zimbabwe) and some Eastern Europeans. All are well integrated. There is also an increasing number of students with SEMH and neurodiversity.

Special provision arrangements and monitoring

- Mentoring team offers interventions e.g. for bereavement, has training from THRIVE. Monitoring is reviewed regularly.
- Children can approach staff if feeling anxious
- The school has zones of regulation, separating year groups for transitions, with staff stationed in corridors as a deterrent for running, jostling, bullying etc
- School nurse offers drop in sessions
- SPA discussion (management education?) every Thursday afternoon
- Targets from EHCPs are on school computer network so teachers could immediately access targets for individual children during lessons and RAG-rate progress towards achievement. This was started initially with Y7 students at the beginning of the year and is now being rolled out across all years. It has received good feedback from staff. It identifies those children where provision isn't bringing about progress, so they receive small group tuition in an outdoor environment (Forest School) working towards behavioural targets. Travel training is included as targets if indicated in annual reviews of EHCPs.
- The Trust holds disadvantage committee meetings, which break down data on progress.
- There are staff briefings which highlight the key SEND concerns and any home/school dimensions, which are then discussed by SENCO and college leaders
- Children have 20 minutes reading time daily. There is very low avoidance of this.
- Children in Y11 are supported into employment or college.

HNB pays for mentoring, school nurse and TAs.

Data collection

We were given printed information on cost of provision per pupil, with average cost compared to average impact.

Attendance data is used as an additional index of impact

Exclusions

There have been four this year, three of whom have EHCPs, 2 in Y8, 2 in Y10, All are now attending the alternative provision at Carisbrooke. The exclusions were for violent behaviour, threatening to staff and other children. The risk to the child by exclusion is assessed. The number could be higher but the school has invested a big proportion of its budget in preventing social exclusion.

Observations

We were able to watch corridor behaviours during transition between lessons. We watched a group of 19 children in a physics lesson on energy as part of revision for end of year exams. The children were from low ability bands. The teacher used a whiteboard display with good graphics. Attention from most of the children was good but a small group of four talked and fidgeted. The teacher ignored this behaviour but at one point indicated that he wanted quiet.

We were given a tour of the deciduous woodland as part of the school site (Forest School). This had numerous wooden structures for shelter, climbing, etc.

We then met with five Y8 students without a member of staff present, two of whom had SEND (one physical disability, the other ASD). Four of the five spoke readily and with confidence. They rated the school highly, praised the mentoring being offered and the low incidence of bullying with staff intervening effectively to prevent. But as the conversation proceeded, they confided that there was disruptive talking in all classes which teachers didn't interrupt, and which they found disturbing and irritating, as it interfered with concentration and opportunities to get on with work.

Overall we were impressed with the following:

- Good recording of performance data, particularly the cost of implementation
- The lack of antisocial behaviour in corridors during transitions
- The enthusiasm and energy of the new SENCO in introducing a system for awareness of targets in classes and tracking of progress.

Visit 2- Stokes Wood Primary School. 30 April 2025

When we arrived at the school, we were greeted by the SENCO who gave us some information about provision: the school has a nursery which offers weekly sessions of support. It has many children from abroad who have no English when they arrive.

Special provision arrangements and monitoring

A designated special provision works every afternoon with children with EHCPs towards their targets. At present, it accommodates Key Stage 1 children in a class with a capacity for 11 (The Rainbow Room), all of whom have EHCPs or are waiting for the process to be completed; and are non-verbal. They are following a sensory-based curriculum. Seven are in Reception, of whom two access inclusion in the Reception class. lunchtimes and afternoon; three are in Y1. One child with multiple SEND attends for mornings only and is supported in a separate room with two adults, such is the level of his challenging behaviour. There is no extra funding for this particular child. The school expects to admit a further 17 children from their catchment area into the Rainbow Room. One child on role is attending full-time at a pupil referral unit. One is in alternative provision.

The space formally used for the school library is being adapted to create small rooms to offer 1:1 teaching support.

The school receives support from the SEND team via a link teacher as well as the Learning, Communication and Interaction team, the Mental Health Support team, the School Nurse and a long-term family support worker. Educational Psychologists visit in connection with individual children and will attend annual reviews of EHCPs if involved. The SENCO has frequent meetings and telephone contact with parents.

Observations

We were able to watch a movement activity in the hall with half a dozen SEND children, all with ASD, each with a TA (TA), being helped to carry out movements on a mat as a sensory activity. We were told that another group was having supported reading at this time.

We were then taken to observe a class of 21 children, with three adults (class teacher, 2 TAs). The lesson was about protected characteristics and was well-planned with frequent changes of activities: listening to the teacher talking from a white board and flip chart, some written recording, conversations with a partner, standing in two lines one facing the other, taking turns to talk and listen. The TAs were seated near target children and talked to them to support them. The class teacher also approached and talked to the SEND children, and chose one to answer a question put to the class. There was a calm working atmosphere with

good positive management e.g. the teacher counted down from 3 to 1 to gain the classes attention after a talking activity. However, three of the SEND children showed disengagement, self-stimulating, fidgeting, yawning. The SENCO agreed that it was a big challenge to offer inclusion within the constraints of the National Curriculum in a mainstream class. This raised the question as to whether this was inclusion in name only. However, we then went into another class, where two boys with ASD were being accommodated by each having their own desk, rather than sitting on tables with other children. This offered them stability without the distraction of other children moving and invading their personal space, an arrangement which had caused anxiety and meltdowns after school at home.

We were given a tour of the school's Forest School which is well equipped with equipment for outdoor play and learning.

Overall we were impressed with the following:

- The use of funding to set up what is in effect a small special school in the Rainbow Room for children with severe SEND from ASD.
- A firmly-child centred approach is assessing and providing for individual needs
- Clever use of strategies and support staff to attempt inclusion for children with communication difficulties with the teacher actively involved in their teaching.

Visit 3- Crown Hills Community College 30 April 2025

At the start of the visit we joined a meeting with the SENCO and Deputy Principal who gave us information about the school. Its overall aim is to keep students in lessons. Information on each child is given to teachers as to how to adjust the school's behaviour management policy for individual needs, together with a photograph of the child and the features of each specific learning difficulty. There is also online information for teachers for each child who has an EHCP, which lists the desired outcomes.

The school has many children who have English as a second language, with Asian languages predominant as the home language. There are some children at KS4 who are unaccompanied, including asylum seekers from Afghanistan. A teacher offers ESOL lessons.

Children are withdrawn from mainstream lessons daily for small group teaching on literacy, using a variety of approaches including Read Write, a phonics programme with three levels, plus activities to improve comprehension (but not at present paired reading which aims to improve whole word recognition). These groups accord with three levels of ability, rather than year groups. All are making good progress. If not, they would be referred on for specialist advice. The groups visit the school library for one lesson per week. Targets are set for each child, with badges for achievement. We were given paperwork on this curriculum.

High needs block funding helps with employment of TAs, and providing equipment for SEND: Chrome boards (tablets?) and specially-adapted laptops for the four children with visual impairment.

Older children are taken to offer support to the community, such as food banks, visits to elderly persons' homes and litter picking.

There is a mentor on the staff for 13 children with SEMH and mixed ethnicity. A teacher We heard about two children with ASD, a girl who was high functioning but masking in school then showing extreme exhaustion at home; and a boy who was attacking his mother at home and showing extremely challenging behaviour in school. The staff received support from the LCI team and the child was given a card with a five point scale for spotting and de-escalating his level of anger. This had been successful in helping him to self-regulate.

There is as much communication with parents as possible, with coffee mornings, talks on social development, reading, strategies to use with children with ASD, and opportunities to talk. They are involved in reviews.

Observations

We were taken to a PSE lesson for Personal and Social Education. The topic being covered was Islam. The children were seated in rows and each had an A3 sheet, scaffolded to record information. All attended to the teacher, including one student who has ASD. There was no potentially disruptive behaviour,

We then went to a Y9 nurture group of around a dozen children, supported two LSAs. All the children had just eaten a breakfast which they had cooked and were clearing up as we entered the room. There was a range of equipment to support activities. They were all completely engaged, in a warm and relaxed atmosphere.

The lead LSA, a long standing member of staff, who had set up the group, provided information on how it functioned. The group offers training in independence skills: gardening, cooking, clearing up; as well as thinking and conversational skills. We were told that the group currently includes two students who have EHCPs. Other children also had special needs (most with moderate learning difficulties, others with visual impairment, hearing impairment and ASD).

We were then taken to see the Forest School, again a valuable resource for some recuperative activity, away from the pressures of the classroom for vulnerable children.

We met with the Head of Pastoral Care, who described his development of the school's behavioural policy, drawing on his own experience in two city community colleges as Head of Science, as well as his study of research into positive behaviour management, which had led to the formation of his vision in addressing the criticisms of the Ofsted inspection in 2016 which judged that children's needs were not being met. He wanted to do what was right for children.

Finally, we met with two students with ASD who spoke very positively about their experiences and the support they were receiving, with no criticisms to be made.

School's behavioural policy

When beginning work in the school, the Head of Pastoral Care had realised that interventions on a rising scale of sanctions, leading to detentions and suspensions, was not effective in curbing undesirable behaviours. He also recognised that special needs were individual to each child, and that challenging behaviours were often the result of missed and/or unrecognised needs.

His first change, imposition of an immediate and predictable sanction of detention for disruptive or disrespectful behaviour in class, to give students clear and firm boundaries, was not popular with staff so that he met with stiff resistance and some staff left the school. It did, however, improve behaviour. Alongside this, he looked at pastoral roles and realised that mentors were missing needs. He introduced a system by which each Head of Year and Assistant Head plus one

non-teacher had more time to liaise with families and offer children a safe space, with time to think and rest breaks as necessary. He also introduced once-a-week staff meetings to discuss key children who were especially vulnerable, to avoid exclusion. Staff were given training in positive behaviour management. In addition, he introduced zones of regulation to keep year groups apart throughout the school day, so younger children were protected from jostling or bullying during transitions. He encouraged staff to focus on acceptable behaviour, however slight, and to publicly notice and praise them. A post box was provided for pupils to report any friends who were in pain, or to self-report. As a long-term reward, a Christmas Success Fete (a film and pizza) was held for those students who had shown particular commitment with golden tickets for children who were struggling socially. Additional funding was used to employ a temporary TA to prevent one child (see above) being excluded: he came into school for 2 hours daily and was supported in a separate building in the grounds, then gradually reintegrated into mainstream class, accompanied by his TA. The school was successful in its bid for one year funding for this.

The overall scheme had now been operating for five years and had produced a significant change, both in children's behaviour and in staff morale with everyone much happier, and with the result that the school had an outstanding rating from Ofsted in January 2025. There had been no exclusions in the current year and no students had been referred to pupil referral units.

Funding which came with EHCPs, together with High Needs block money, was used to employ a mentor and to train an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) who could drop into lessons as a safe adult for children to approach, also to get children into school. Children who were eligible for exam concessions, but reluctant to accept them were now receiving interventions to familiarise them with what was involved and overcome embarrassment. It had also funded work with school leavers; a pupil with visual impairment had received training to catch the bus to college and had now been offered a place at De Montfort University to study computer graphics. Within the REACH programme, the school is being partnered with city organisations, to offer work experience to KS4 students.

In general, High Needs Block funding paid for TAs and was considered to be an investment in interventions, nurturing and support for children with ASD.

Overall we were impressed with the following:

- The use of funding to offer cleverly-tailored interventions for children with SEND, particularly those with high ability and ASD.
- A firmly-child centred approach, assessing and providing for individual needs

- A highly successful and effective programme for managing challenging behaviour which had brought about a positive change in the school culture and in teacher attitudes and skills
- The passion and commitment of key members of staff to the project of meeting children's needs

Crown Hills School Visit

11-16 age range

1500 on roll

200 SEND

19 EHCPs

Inclusive ethos – try to keep SEND in Mainstream

Use BERA = Best Endeavour Reasonable Adjustments to keep SEND in mainstream.

10 TAs in lessons, 2 in Nurture

1 SEMH funded by HNB – included ELSA Training and 121 mentoring

Outline of strategies linked in with teaching.

Shortened version of EHCP & profiles available to all teaching staff.

Number of asylum seeking children arriving unaccompanied – significantly affecting KS4.

70% of children speak English as a second language.

13 Intervention students.

HNB funding pays for TAs

LCI coffee mornings with all parents invited – Learning Communication & Interaction

ESOL support available for parents who don't speak English

Be Ready To Take On The World scheme prepares SEND children for life – social skills, food banks, skills for independent living.

2019 OFSTED = Good, now at Outstanding in all areas. Attributed due to pastoral support put in place which had lead to significant staff restructure.

HNB funding impacted on low exclusion rate due to support available.

HNB paid for:

TAs, Interventions, SEMH Mentor, specific ASD support, Counsellor based in school – alleviated stress on school overall.

HNB Task Group for CYPE Scrutiny

Tudor Grange Samworth Academy notes on visit 29/04/25

- School places are full.
- Immigration has impacted, with 80 different languages being spoken within the school. Many of the teachers are multilingual.
- Internal Alternative Provision (IAP) proposal in place for a unit to support increasing numbers of students with complex Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) challenges. 14 students are currently awaiting specialist provision and the unit would allow them to remain at the school.
- 69% percent of pupils are on the SEN register.
- HNB funds mentoring, Forest School, School Nurse, interventions & 5 Thrive practitioners.
- Significant work had gone into improving Annual Reviews for EHCPs.
- EHCP targets are logged for all to see and work on, with a RAG system in place.
- 4 permanent exclusions had taken place in the last year, 3 of which were children identified with SEND but not having an EHCP.
- Bid put in to create IAP (Internal Alternative Provision) unit. 14 students awaiting specialist provision – unit could allow them to stay within the school.
- Mentoring team onsite with specialist Bereavement service.
- Thrive support to assist with emotional regulation
- Forest School
- School nurse – drop in sessions for sleep and anxiety
- HNB funds: mentoring, Forest School, Nurse, interventions
-

Lead director: Damian Elcock
Families First Partnership Programme

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Helen Sheppard
- Author contact details: helen.sheppard@leicester.gov.uk, 0116 454 1170
- Report version number: v1

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Families First Partnership (FFP) programme is a national initiative introduced by the Department for Education (DfE) in March 2025. It aims to transform children's social care by promoting early, coordinated and family centred support.
- 1.2. The FFP programme will support safeguarding partners to bring together targeted early help, child in need and multi-agency child protection into a seamless system of help, support and protection. This includes services and workforces, such as family support workers, social workers and other specialist and alternatively qualified practitioners, coming together to support families.
- 1.3. Progress is being made in relation to the three core strands of the Families First Partnership Programme: Family Help, Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams and Family Group Decision Making.
- 1.4. Since November 2025 a pilot of the Family Help model has been running in the south cluster (based in Eyres Monsell and Saffron Family Hubs). The learning from this will inform the wider rollout of Family Help in the remaining five clusters within the city. It is anticipated that this wider rollout will take place from Spring 2026.
- 1.5. Multi-agency strategic discussions across the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland footprint are underway to begin to shape expectations around a Multi-Agency Child Protection Team, which will need to be developed and in place by March 2027.
- 1.6. Investment is being made within Leicester's family therapy team to support expansion of Family Group Decision Making offer. This will support fully embedded, system-

wide approach accessible across Early Help, Family Help, Child Protection, PLO, court proceedings and reunification.

2. Recommended actions/decision

2.1. To note the details shared in the report and accompanying presentation.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

3.1. The Young People's Shadow Board meets on a bimonthly basis, offering opportunity for young people to play an active role in shaping decision making. For example, members have recently had input on revising consent forms to be used within the Family Help service.

3.2. The governance for the delivery of the Families First Partnership programme ensures that staff are given opportunity to shape delivery (including both through workstreams and membership of the practitioners' forum). Divisional briefings have been carried out with the wider workforce to communicate key updates and offer the opportunity to feed back.

3.3. The IMPOWER team has taken the lead on engagement with partners, building on foundations of partnership work established in the multi-agency IMPACT Board and through seconded health and police roles.

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

Families First Partnership Programme Overview

4.1. The Families First Partnership Programme is focused on shaping a system in which practitioners from social work, police, health, education and beyond work together to promote the wellbeing of children and keep them safe from harm.

4.2. The programme places a strong emphasis on early intervention to prevention crisis as well as utilising a whole family approach to ensure the needs of the adults in the household are also important.

4.3. There are three key components of the Families First Partnership model: Family Help, Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPT) and Family Group Decision Making.

Family Help

4.4. The DfE's vision for Family Help is to bring targeted early help and child-in-need services together into multidisciplinary, locality-based teams that provide proactive, early intervention to prevent escalation.

4.5. Following co-design with 60 representatives from health, police, education, the voluntary and community sector, a locality-based Family Help model has been developed, moving away from centrally delivered services.

4.6. This model is currently being piloted in the south cluster. The pilot has brought Children in Need and Early Help staff together in a Family Help team based at Eyres

Moncell and Saffron Family Hubs, using a test-and-learn approach to trial co-location, workflows, cluster structures and impacts at the front door and for children, families, communities and partner services.

- 4.7. Early indications show improved joint working, increased referrals to partners, clearer multi-agency roles and stronger relationships, with co-location enabling more consistent decision-making and a shared “one team” ethos.
- 4.8. The Family Help pilot will be evaluated in April 2026 to shape the rollout of the model in the remaining five cluster areas. Capacity and demand analysis will guide how social workers are allocated to clusters so they can settle into new localities and build strong teams ahead of implementing new pathways and processes.
- 4.9. While the long-term vision is for the case management system to fully support the Family Help model, significant development is required as the current LiquidLogic system does not align with the desired workflows.

Multi-Agency Child Protection Team

- 4.10. The DfE’s vision for Multi Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs) is to create co-located, multi-agency teams that work together to protect children, led by a dedicated child protection practitioner and tailored to local needs.
- 4.11. Although Leicester does not yet have a formal MACPT structure or defined pathways with LCPP and Family Help, strong multi-agency safeguarding practice is already in place.
- 4.12. Leicester’s existing conference processes, virtual strategy discussions and relational, child-centred practice provide a solid foundation for future MACPT development.
- 4.13. Work is underway with safeguarding partners across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to shape a shared vision for the MACPT model. A workshop was held in January to begin to define the future model and understand the resources required to implement a model that meets each area’s local needs and fully considers health services resources and pressures.
- 4.14. Following the initial strategic visioning workshop, further work is underway to refine the models discussed, enabling a robust SWOT analysis to inform a partnership-wide decision on the preferred direction of travel. MACPTs are expected to be fully embedded by March 2027.

Family Group Decision Making

- 4.15. The DfE’s vision for Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is for families and their wider networks to play an active role in decisions about a child’s care, with support to help children remain safe and thrive at home.
- 4.16. Family network meetings are already well-established in child protection, pre-proceedings and court work, with growing use in kinship assessments, adolescent cases and placement stability.

- 4.17. Signs of Safety provides a shared practice framework for safety planning, though confidence in distinguishing meeting types varies, existing guidance is lengthy, and updates to LiquidLogic forms are needed for consistency.
- 4.18. Although network meetings currently occur mainly at higher levels of need, their use within Early Help and Family Help is increasing. To support this there is leadership commitment to making FGDM a mandatory offer for all families receiving support, reflected in recent investment in the Family Network team.
- 4.19. Leicester’s family therapy team is expanding its dedicated FGDM capacity, and Initial Viability Assessment (IVA) workers regularly support meetings by explaining kinship expectations and long-term implications.
- 4.20. As capacity grows, work will focus on creating a clearer, more structured FGDM process across Family Help, child protection, pre-proceedings and court, supported by a concise end-to-end framework. A dedicated FGDM facilitator role and new service specification will follow recruitment.
- 4.21. Improving timeliness remains a priority, particularly ensuring FGDM happens within the first four weeks of PLO. Referral criteria will be refined without limiting access, and a strengthened reporting framework will track demand, outcomes and system impact.

5. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

This report provides an update on the Families First Partnership (FFP) programme only. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Signed: Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance

Dated: 3 February 2026

5.2 Legal implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report, which is provided for information purposes only, from a childcare law perspective. However, it is positive to note the introduction and intentions of the Families First programme, which are consistent with the ethos and objectives of the Public Law Outline.

Signed: Sonali Unka, Principal Solicitor (social care and safeguarding- childcare)

Dated: 9 February 2026

5.3 Equalities implications

Our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires us to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010 (sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, age) and those who do not. The Council also has an obligation to treat people in accordance with their Convention rights under The Human Rights Act, 1998.

This report summarises the progress to date on implementing the Families First Partnership programme within Leicester children’s social care and sharing good practice from the Family Help model pilot. The programme aims to ensure we take a co-ordinated and inclusive approach to supporting families. We need to ensure equality considerations are embedded within the programme at Leicester and the city’s demographic profile is taken into account.

It is recommended that Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are undertaken as appropriate, for example when reviewing provision or commissioning services. The EIA process is iterative and should be reviewed throughout the decision-making process. It should be updated to reflect any feedback or changes arising from consultation/engagement, where relevant. EIA findings should be shared with decision- makers at each stage to inform their considerations and to support assessment of whether the aims of the PSED are being met.

Signed: Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

Dated: 5 February 2026

5.4 Climate Emergency implications

There are no significant climate emergency implications directly associated with this report. As service delivery by the council and partners generally contributes to the council’s carbon footprint, any impacts could be considered within delivery of related projects, such as encouraging the use of sustainable travel options, using buildings and materials efficiently and following the council's sustainable procurement guidance, as appropriate and relevant.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246

Dated: 4 February 2026

6. Background information and other papers:

n/a

7. Summary of appendices:

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?

No



Families First update

Family Help pilot

South cluster Family Help team



Initially 14 staff from Early Help and Child in Need; developing plans with partners to think about their role in the pilot

South cluster Family Help locations



Eyres Monsell and Saffron Family Hubs

1 FFPP pilot visioning workshop with workstream leads

2 south cluster co-design workshops with partners

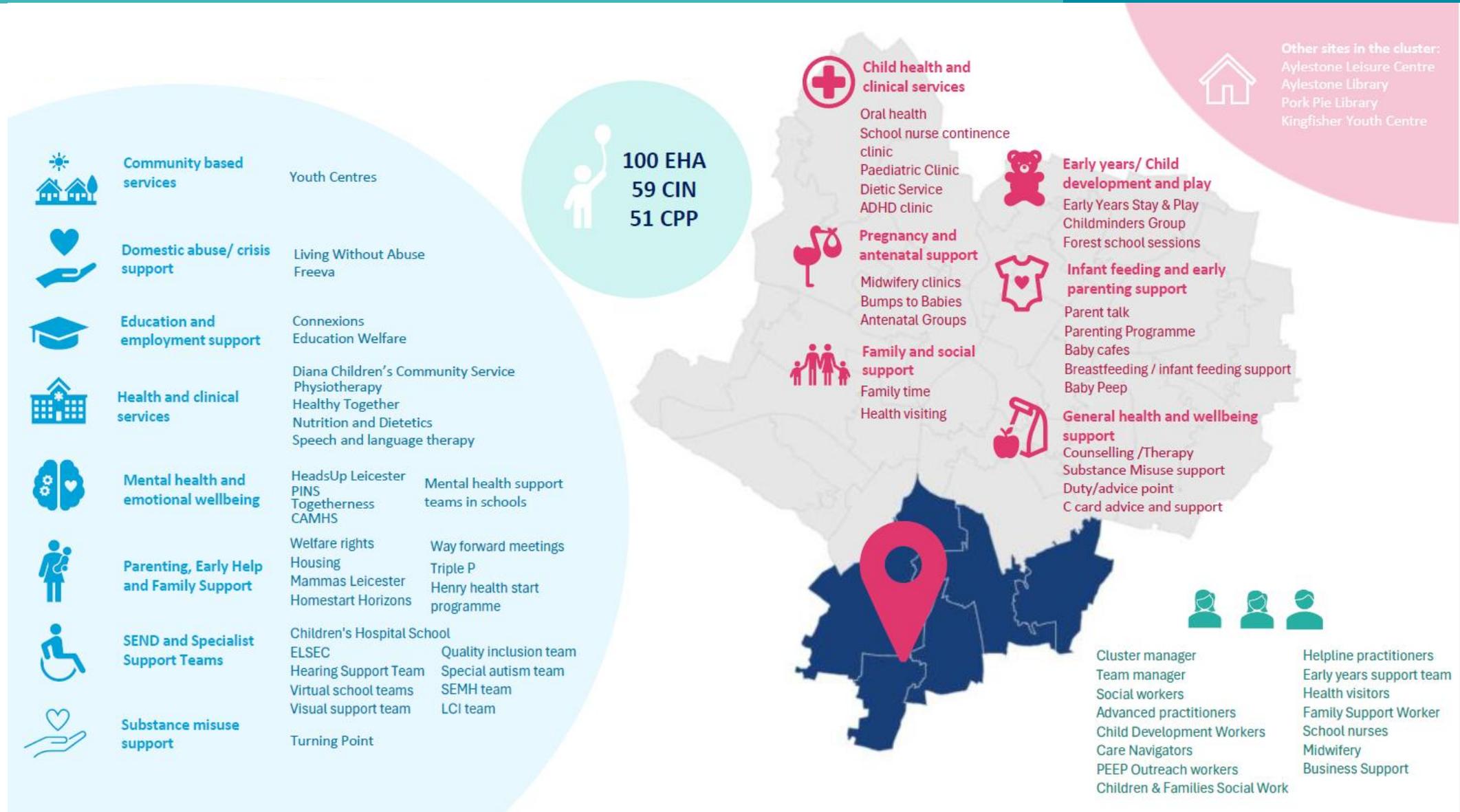
3 SMT sessions to co-develop a FFPP outcomes framework

5 reflective huddles with pilot managers facilitated

Weekly 1:1s with FFPP leads to drive forward plans

Family Help cluster map

35



Family Help pilot feedback

Student social workers shadowing health colleagues and vice versa

The positivity from the partner co-design workshops and desire to work more closely together

Everyone meeting face to face for the pre-launch coffee morning

36

Knowledge exchange has improved

“One team” ethos

Strong, collaborative relationship between team managers across both teams

Smoothing out minor IT equipment practicalities (right wires etc.)

Maintaining connection across CIN teams

- Social workers have found it helpful to find out about universal offers and the offer from Family Hubs
- Team managers have been able to allocate joint working cases
- Threshold discussions and strategy discussions have taken place in a timely manner within the cluster
- Joint home visits are taking place
- Early help practitioners have found it useful to discuss scenarios on the workloads with the advanced practitioner in the cluster

37

Living Without Abuse has received 9 direct referrals from the south cluster in the three weeks since the pilot started, compared to 13 direct referrals in the previous 7 months

Key feedback

- Shared hot desking spaces
- Cross team meeting visits
- Networking breakfasts/informal meet ups
- Feedback spotlight
- Clarifying referral routes
- Make TAFs and other meetings face to face
- Shared workspace or intranet page
- Cross-agency toolkit
- Shared agreements
- Joint training days

Test and learn

- Exploring how partner agencies can be more effectively incorporated into the Family Help model without the need for them to be permanently based within the centre – particularly in relation to mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse.
- The learning will help identify what works well, where barriers exist and how partnership input can best support frontline practice across the city.

Family Help next steps

39

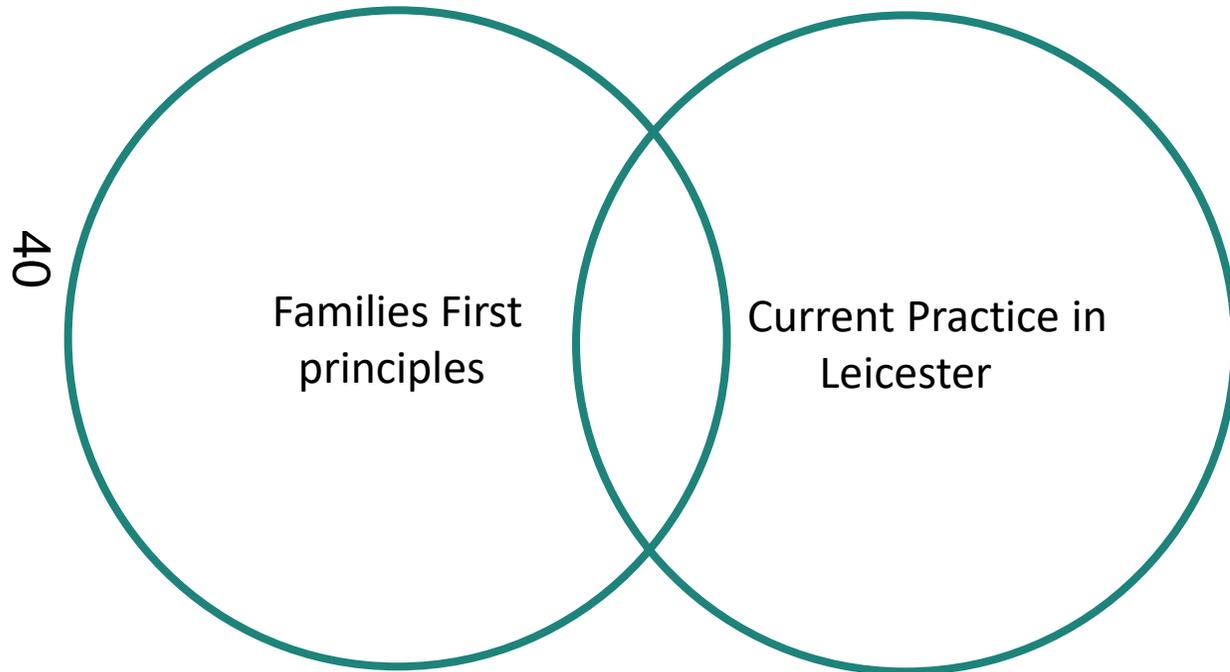
Allocation of
social work
teams to
clusters

Pilot evaluation

Phased
transition to
locality-based
delivery

Training and
team
development

Implementation
of new pathway



Strong multi-agency safeguarding practice

Close working with Police (CAIU), Health and Education

Independent Chairs provide robust challenge and QA

Team Managers chair strategy discussions and oversee s47 enquiries

30+ conferences per week managed effectively

MACPT next steps

41

Data analysis

Multi-agency
strategic
visioning
workshop

Threshold
review

Clarify LCPP
role

Pathway design

Foundations



- Family network meetings well-established in child protection, pre-proceedings and court processes
- Growing use in cases involving kinship assessments, adolescents and placement stability/breakdown
- Expanding team capacity within the Family Therapy Team
- Signs of Safety supports consistent use of network meetings for safety planning and sustainability plans

Development required



- Confidence in distinguishing types of network meetings
- Consistency in guidance being applied
- Consistency on forms on LiquidLogic
- Clearer, more structured FGDM process across Family Help, child protection, pre-proceedings and court proceedings

43

Recruitment

Updated IVA
guidance

FGDM
process
refined

FGDM
facilitator role
established



SCE Priorities and Performance Reports 2026/27

Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny
Commission

Date of meeting: 03/03/2026

Lead director: Laurence Mackie-Jones

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Laurence Mackie-Jones
- Author contact details: laurence.jones@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: 1.1

1. Summary

The presentation attached to this report displays the fourteen agreed priorities for the Social Care and Education department for the 2026/27 financial year alongside performance ambitions which will be reported on periodically to track progress.

2. Recommendation(s) to scrutiny:

Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission are invited to comment on the priorities and plans for measuring performance ambitions during 2026/27.

3. Detailed report

3.1 The presentation attached to this report displays the fourteen agreed priorities for the Social Care and Education department for the 2026/27 financial year alongside performance ambitions which will be reported on periodically to track progress. This will include reporting to relevant scrutiny commissions as well as the City Mayor's Education, Health and Care Board. These measures replace the previous dashboard and focus on a smaller set of outcome-based measures either with a numerical target figure, direction of travel or narrative description.

3.2 Trial reporting, based on quarter 4 of 2025/26 and using these priorities and measures is expected to be available by mid-May. It is anticipated that reports will be available 6-8 weeks past the end of a quarter once data has been gathered, finalised, checked and analysed. Where possible benchmarks with regional or other similar authorities (statistical neighbours and other similar cities) will be included.

4. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report however financial implications should be sought for the various reports mentioned in the presentation prior to submission.

Signed: Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance

Dated: 18 February 2026

4.2 Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications to this report and the attached Priorities and Performance Ambitions.

Signed: Amy Owen-Davis, Principal Solicitor, Children Social, Legal Services

Dated: 18 February 2026

4.3 Equalities Implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have statutory duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires them, in exercising their functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Protected characteristics under the Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This report presents the Social Care and Education Department's priorities and performance ambitions for 2026/27 and is expected to support fair access and improved outcomes for adults, children, young people and carers, many of whom have protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

Where specific service changes, new programmes (including the use of new technologies such as artificial intelligence tools) or commissioning decisions arise from these priorities, proportionate Equality Impact Assessments should be undertaken to ensure that equality implications are fully considered, potential adverse impacts are identified, and appropriate mitigating actions are built into decision-making.

Signed: Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

Dated: 18 February 2026

4.4 Climate Emergency Implications

There are no significant climate emergency implications arising from this report. Implications arising from specific initiatives should be given consideration as and when the relevant reports are submitted for decision.

Signed: Philip Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246

Dated: 18th February 2026

4.5 Other Implications

Signed:

Dated:

5. Background information and other papers:

6. Summary of appendices:

Social Care & Education Department

2026-27 Priorities and Performance Ambitions



Leicester
City Council

Priority 1

- **Delivery on the improvement plans following the Ofsted ILACS, Adult Social Care CQC, HMIP Youth Justice and Area SEND Inspections**
 - Post-Ofsted ILACS Improvement Plan
 - Post-Adult Social Care CQC Improvement Plan
 - Post-HMIP Youth Justice Improvement Plan
 - Post-Area SEND Inspections Improvement Plan
- Reports to LMB and EHC Board in May and October 2026
- Reports to scrutiny Commissions in June and November 2026

Priority 2

- **Developing Leading Better Lives into a programme delivering early action across the city with cross council support and closely aligned to and supporting the delivery of neighbourhood health plans**
 - Agree the LBL “road map”
 - Develop a Leading Better Lives Board reporting to the Health and Wellbeing Board
- Report on the Road Map and establishment to of the Board to LMB and EHC Board in March 2026
- Report to Health and Wellbeing Board on progress by May 2026

Priority 3

- **Delivering locality Family Help across all six clusters and having Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams in place**
 - Establishment of six Family Help Teams by June 2026
 - Establishment of MACPT(s) by January 2027
- Reports to LMB and EHC Board in May and October 2026
- Reports to scrutiny Commissions in June and November 2026

Priority 4

- **To continue our financial grip on finances and seek opportunities to deliver best value and reduce growth whilst pursuing excellence in service delivery**

53

- Develop and track proxy measures such as NHS income, placement and package cost, agency spend, high needs block deficit etc.
- Report to Learning and Improvement Board by April 2026, August 2026 and November 2026

Priority 5

- **To develop a maturity matrix for our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work and to deliver on a clear plan to advance our growth**
- Report to Learning and Improvement Board by April 2026, August 2026 and November 2026

Priority 6

- **Having a clear school place sufficiency and SEND Capital Programme in place with Executive agreement**
 - Development of a capital strategy
- Review by strategic Directors in April 2026 (and then quarterly)
- Report to City Mayor by May 2026

Priority 7

- **Having clear medium- and long-term strategies in place for children's residential provision and adult supported living**
 - Revised sufficiency strategies in place by May 2026
 - Engage in regional conversations about Regional Care Consortium developments
- Reports to LMBs and CMB in July 2026
- Reports to scrutiny Commissions in September 2026

Priority 8

- **Deliver a programme to develop a performance culture across the department**
 - Deliver “Leading Performance” programme between January and June 2026
Reports to LMBs and CMB in July 2026
- Review of programme outcomes to Learning and Improvement Board in August 2026

Priority 9

- **Developing a consistent methodology to underpin our quality assurance processes across the department**
 - Develop revised quality assurance methodology by April 2026
- Sign off by Learning and Improvement Board in April 2026

Priority 10

- **Making technology including artificial intelligence tools available to all practitioners to help manage workload and improve efficiency**
 - By April 2026 tools available to:
 - Support easier running record keeping in liquid logic
 - Support writing and quality assurance of assessments, plans and reports
 - Minuting meetings and supervision and support sessions
 - By Sept 2026 staff confident in using these tools to support practice and reduce administrative burdens
- Reporting to Learning and Improvement Board bi-monthly from January 2026

Priority 11

- **To review our partnership plans around SEND to deliver on the new government strategy once this is clear**
- Reports to LMB and scrutiny once timeframes are clearer

Priority 12

- **To develop and officially launch our Social Care Academy and our wider approach to recruitment, retention and continual professional and leadership development**
- Launch of Social Care Academy by June 2026

Priority 13

- **Refine and begin to deliver our plans on preparing for adulthood and transition to adult services**
 - Develop, engage and launch PFA Strategy by April 2026
 - Develop implementation plan with key milestones
- Reports to LMB and EHCB Board on progress in June and December

Priority 14

- **Begin to prepare for Local Government Reorganisation**
- Outcome expected late spring / early summer 2026

Performance Ambitions

- **Simplified high level “ambitions”**
- **Will form our high-level reporting to EHC Board, CMB, Scrutiny commission etc from Q1 2026-27 (but aim to have a sample / draft report in mid-May for Q4 2025-26)**
- **Will replace the existing dashboards**
- **Adult ambitions have already been to ASC Scrutiny in November 2026**

Adult Key Performance Ambitions – To be measured at November 2026

- **Assessing Needs**
- **Reduction in median and longest waiting times for assessments and reviews**
 - median wait for a Care Act assessment across all teams reduced from 135 days to 90 days
 - for reviews: proportion of people overdue for a 12-monthly review by more than 6 months falls from its current level (706 median delay) to less than 10% of cases.
- **Equitable waiting times across teams / client groups**
 - The disparity between locality teams and specialist teams in waiting times should narrow to less than 5%.

Adult Key Performance Ambitions – To be measured at November 2026

- **Care provision, integration and continuity**

- **Increased uptake of direct payments**

- Increase the uptake of personal budgets from 45% to 50% and to reduce the number of people ceasing direct payments for avoidable reasons (e.g. administrative issues) to nil.

Adult Key Performance Ambitions – To be measured at November 2026

- **Supporting people to live healthier lives**
- **Improved accessibility and responsiveness of information, advice, and guidance (IAG)**
 - 90 % of users report (via survey) that they can “easily find information and advice about support in a way that suits me (language, format, channel).”
 - All core care planning, assessment, and safeguarding documents should routinely be available in easy-read and the top 5 local non-English languages (or as requested) within 7 days of request.
 - Corporate web pages should be capable of easy digital translation

Adult Key Performance Ambitions – To be measured at November 2026

- **Stronger prevention, early intervention, and support for non-eligible needs and for Carers**
 - Measurable increase in “prevention contacts” (e.g. care navigators, minor adaptations, self-help referrals) used before more intensive support is needed.
 - A reduction in new referrals to long-term support where earlier intervention could have avoided escalation.
 - A rising proportion of people supported to avoid entering higher-cost packages (e.g. hospital readmissions, institutional care) through reablement or enablement.
 - Increase the % of Carers accessing support groups or someone to talk to in confidence from 18.52% (SACE 2023/24)
 - Reduction in the % of Carers facing financial difficulties and an increase in the % of Carers in paid employment

Adult Key Performance Ambitions – To be measured at November 2026

- **Safe pathways, systems and transitions; Safeguarding**
- **Better safeguarding process performance and oversight**
 - All safeguarding alerts should have an initial outcome decision within 5 working days with full enquiry closure within 3 months (unless complexity and multi-agency involvement dictates otherwise).
 - Governance and audit mechanisms ensure 100 % of safeguarding enquiries are routinely reviewed and lessons logged, with “no cases left without oversight.”

Childrens Services Performance Ambitions – To be measured at March 2027

- **Looked After Children and Edge of Care**
- To ensure our unregulated placements do not exceed 1% of all children in care across the financial year
- The average number of placement moves decreases year-on-year
- Number of children entering care to have reduced by 8% by 2028 (from the 2024-25 baseline) based on rates per 10,000 of population
- **Children Subject to Child Protection Plans**
- Number of new CP Plans – to have reduced by 8% by April 2028 (from the 2024-25 baseline)

Childrens Services Performance Ambitions – To be measured at March 2027

- **Attainment and NEET**

- The number of 16-17 years olds classified as NEET / Not Known to have reduced by April 2028 (from the 2024-25 baseline)
- The proportion of children in Leicester City Council achieving a Good Level of Development at the end of the 2027/28 academic year is at least 72.0%; and
- b) Disadvantaged children have benefitted at least equally from this improvement; that is, that the
- proportion of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and achieving a Good Level of Development at the end of the 2027/28 academic year is at least 63.7%ii
- The attainment of looked after children to have increased by September 2027

Childrens Services Performance Ambitions – To be measured at March 2027

- **SEND**
- EHCP initial timeliness to improve by 15% by April 2027 (based on the 2024-25 baseline)
- EHCP Reviews to be improved by 25% by April 2027 (based on the 2024-25 baseline)

- **Quality of Childrens Social Work / Family Help Practice**
- Case audit quality – by Q2 2027-28 85% of overall cases audited to be good or better



Equality and Diversity Development

Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny
Commission

Date of meeting: 3 March 2026

Lead director/officer: Laurence Mackie-Jones

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Laurence Mackie-Jones
- Author contact details: laurence.jones@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: 1.1

1. Summary

This report sets out the Social Care and Education Department's improvement ambitions with regards to equality and diversity over the 2026-27 year.

2. Recommendation(s) to scrutiny:

Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission are invited to comment and make any recommendations with regards to the department's plans.

3. Detailed report

3.1 The Social Care and Education Department has fourteen priority areas for the 2026-27 year. These are:

- Delivery on the improvement plans following the Ofsted ILACS, Adult Social Care CQC, HMIP Youth Justice and Area SEND Inspections
- Developing Leading Better Lives into a programme delivering early action across the city with cross council support and closely aligned to and supporting the delivery of neighbourhood health plans
- Delivering locality Family Help across all six clusters and having Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams in place
- To continue our financial grip on finances and seek opportunities to deliver best value and reduce growth whilst pursuing excellence in service delivery
- To develop a maturity matrix for our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work and to deliver on a clear plan to advance our growth
- Having a clear school place sufficiency and SEND Capital Programme in place with Executive agreement
- Having clear medium- and long-term strategies in place for children's residential provision and adult supported living
- Deliver a programme to develop a performance culture across the department
- Developing a consistent methodology to underpin our quality assurance processes across the department
- Making technology including artificial intelligence tools available to all practitioners to help manage workload and improve efficiency
- To review our partnership plans around SEND to deliver on the new government strategy once this is clear

- To develop and officially launch our Social Care Academy and our wider approach to recruitment, retention and continual professional and leadership development
 - Refine and begin to deliver our plans on preparing for adulthood and transition to adult services
 - Begin to prepare for Local Government Reorganisation
- 3.2 Equality and diversity is a golden thread that runs through all of these priorities but priority five sets out a specific goal around planning progress in this area.
- 3.3 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan sets out the Social Care and Education (SCE) Department's commitment to strengthening its anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice over the period 2025–2027. The plan focuses on meaningful staff engagement, organisational self-assessment, capability building, and embedding inclusive values into everyday practice.
- 3.4 A central element of the plan is a department-wide consultation with staff. During 2025, staff were invited to respond to the question: *“If the SCE Department at Leicester City Council was the best version of an anti-discriminatory and anti-racist organisation in the country, what would have changed?”* This question was published through the SCE newsletter and there have been over fifty individual and group responses. The findings will be analysed by independently by an organisation called Mission Diverse and will be used to inform the department's audit framework and provide a staff-led evidence base for improvement activity.
- 3.5 Building on this consultation and existing audit tools, the department will develop a bespoke version of the maturity model being adopted corporately to benchmark its current position on equality, diversity and inclusion. This work will involve collating established maturity frameworks, cross-referencing them with staff feedback, and producing a tailored model that reflects the SCE context. By March 2026, this maturity model will be used to develop a clear, prioritised action plan to support continued improvement over the next two years.
- 3.6 The department will also continue to articulate and reinforce its core beliefs and values in relation to equality and diversity. These values affirm a commitment to dignity, respect, inclusion, and recognition of the structural nature of discrimination. They emphasise the importance of ongoing reflection, challenge, and empowerment so that all staff feel heard and able to thrive. These beliefs have already been published in the SCE newsletter and will be actively promoted and reinforced through further communication and engagement opportunities. They also form part of the consideration of the Value Based and Ethical Leadership” module on the departments “leading Performance programme” which is mandatory for all managers during the first half of 2026.
- 3.7 In order to strengthen inclusive leadership, the department is committed to ensuring that all managers complete training in active bystander intervention, unconscious bias, and reasonable adjustments. By March 2026, an assessment will be undertaken to identify training completion levels, and a robust system will be established to monitor ongoing uptake. Progress will be overseen through the Learning and Improvement Board, with the aim of achieving full coverage by September 2026. Whilst awareness training exists on unconscious bias we are

investigating at self-testing to help people be aware of how their own biases may impact on their decision making.

- 3.8 Inclusive decision-making remains an established and ongoing priority. The department will continue to support staff participation in inclusive decision-making forums and will develop a forward plan to identify areas where consultation is required. This work is already in place and will continue to be embedded as part of routine practice.
- 3.9 The plan also includes the development of a community of practice focused on anti-racist practice. This will be shaped by staff feedback and aligned with existing Social Care Academy and Evidence into Practice initiatives. The intention is to create a sustainable space for shared learning, reflection, and practice development, with a planned launch in November 2026.
- 3.10 In relation to external scrutiny, the department will continue to actively engage with inspection and peer review bodies to ensure that review teams are representative and have an understanding of unconscious bias. This approach has already been undertaken during the ASEND inspection and will be reinforced through ongoing dialogue, including the Ofsted annual conversation.
- 3.11 Finally, the department will deliver the *Diverse By Design* workforce and communities baseline assessment. This assessment will support targeted action planning and provide a clearer understanding of current strengths and areas for development, with delivery scheduled for October 2025.
- 3.12 Together, these actions provide a structured and transparent approach to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion across the SCE Department, ensuring that progress is informed by staff experience, supported by evidence, and embedded into leadership, culture, and practice.

Regional Work

- 3.13 The Leicester Director of Childrens Services (DCS) is the current lead of diversity and equality for the Regional Improvement Alliance of local authority children's services. The third Diversity in Leadership conference will take place on the 26th March in Nottingham.
- 3.14 Leicester has had five participants in eth regional development programme for global majority manager, Beyond Barriers. This initiative is aimed at colleagues from the global majority, particularly those who exhibit promise and potential for senior strategic leadership roles in children's services. The regional Directors of Children's Services (DCSs) recognise that individuals from diverse backgrounds face numerous barriers to making career progress. This programme is designed to address and surmount some of these obstacles and challenges.

Expected Outcomes

- 3.15 Implementation of this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan will support sustained cultural and practice improvements across the SCE Department. The planned activity is expected to result in:

- Increased staff engagement and confidence that equality, diversity and inclusion issues are actively listened to and addressed.
- Increased confidence of global majority staff to develop in managerial and leadership roles
- A clear, evidence-based understanding of the department's current position in relation to anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice, supported by a tailored maturity model and action plan.
- A better understanding of differential outcomes for different demographics within the city
- Improved leadership capability through increased completion and monitoring of training on unconscious bias, active bystander intervention, and reasonable adjustments.
- More consistent and inclusive decision-making, underpinned by structured consultation and staff involvement.
- Improved organisational readiness for inspection and peer review, including greater awareness of unconscious bias and the importance of representative review teams.
- A stronger foundation for continuous learning and improvement through the development of an anti-racist community of practice and alignment with existing workforce development initiatives.

4. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Signed: Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance

Dated: 16 February 2026

4.2 Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications in respect of this in respect of plans being progressed.

Signed: Susan Holmes

Dated: 16th February 2026

4.3 Equalities Implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have statutory duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions they have to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

This report summarises the Social Care and Education Department’s plans to strengthen equality and diversity during 2026-27, focussing on 14 priority areas. Progressing the work identified within these priorities is expected to deliver positive outcomes for people who use our services, representing a wide range of protected characteristics. The implementation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan will help to improve cultural and practice improvements for staff via training and development.

In delivering services, it is essential that the city’s demographic profile is considered. Monitoring service uptake will help the Council to ensure it is reaching a broad range of groups, particularly those most at risk, and will assist in identifying any gaps or areas of concern so that appropriate mitigating actions can be implemented. Where service changes are proposed, Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) should be undertaken to ensure equality considerations are addressed and due regard is given as part of the decision-making process.

Signed: Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer

Dated: 17 February 2026

4.4 Climate Emergency Implications

There are no significant climate emergency implications arising from this report.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246

Dated: 16th February 2026

4.5 Other Implications

Signed:

Dated:

5. Background information and other papers:

Equality and Diversity Plan 2026-27

6. Summary of appendices:

SCE Diversity Action Plan 2025 / 2026

Commitment	Actions / Milestones	Timescale	Owner	Status
<p>We will consult with all staff across the department on the questions</p> <p>“If the SCE Department at Leicester City Council was the best version of an anti-discriminatory and anti-racist organisation in the country, what would have changed?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publish question in Nov SCE newsletter - Analyse responses - Feed analysis into the audit framework 	January 2026	Laurence Jones	On track
<p>We will use the result of that consultation and existing audit frameworks to build a maturity model against which to benchmark ourselves and make a plan of action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collate existing maturity frameworks - Cross reference with staff question responses - Build maturity framework - Create plan to advance maturity 	March 2026		Not yet commenced
<p>We will reiterate our beliefs and values in relation to equality and diversity :</p> <p>“We believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every individual and we are committed to fostering a culture of respect, equality, and inclusion. We celebrate diversity in all its forms recognising that our relationships enrich us. We recognise that discrimination and equality can be structural and it takes continual, often uncomfortable, reflection and perseverance to challenge this. Everyone must be</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publish beliefs and values in the SCE newsletter - Find opportunities promote and reinforce our diversity statement 	September 2025		Published in newsletter

SCE Diversity Action Plan 2025 / 2026

heard and valued and empowered thrive”.				
We will ensure that over the coming year all managers have undertaken active bystander, unconscious bias and reasonable adjustment training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By March 2026 to have assessed which managers have completed the training and to have in place a way of monitoring up take - Use Learning and Improvement Board to monitor progress 	By September 2026		Not yet commenced
We will continue to develop our model of Inclusive Decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to support release of staff for these meetings - Create a forward plan of areas for consultation 	Ongoing	Kate Galoppi	In place
We will develop a community of practice around anti-racist practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop parameters of COP based on staff feedback - Work this into our Social Care Academy and Evidence into Practice initiatives 	Launch November 2026		Not yet commenced
We will ask that any peer review or inspection team for Leicester is representative and understands the challenges of unconscious bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active communication with inspectorate ahead of and at the point of inspections 	Ongoing	Laurence Jones	Undertaken for ASEND inspection and will be reiterated in Ofsted annual conversation.
We will deliver Diverse By Design, improving our workforce and communities baseline assessment through targeted action planning		October 2025	Kate Galoppi	



Leicester City Council Scrutiny Review

HNB Task Group - Report and Recommendations Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission

Contents:

	Page
1 Acronyms	1
2 Participating Commission Members	2
3 Evidence to the Commission was provided by	2
4 Foreword – Chair	3

5	Executive Summary	4
6.1	Aims and Outcomes.....	4
7.1	Report.....	4
7.2	Scrutiny Rationale.....	4
7.11	Scrutiny Approach.....	5
8.1	Overview.....	7
9.1	Evidence	8
	Case Studies.....	10
	School Visits	
	Benchmarking	
	Summary of Task Group conclusions	
	Recommendations	

1. Acronyms:

AP – Alternative Provision
ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder
BERA – Best Endeavour Reasonable Adjustments
CIPFA - Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
CYPE – Children, Young People and Education
DBV – Delivering Better Value
DfE – Department for Education
DSG – Dedicated Schools Grant
DSP – Designated Special Provision
EHCP – Education and Health Care Plan
ELSA – Emotional Literacy Support Assistant
ESFA – Education and Skills Funding Agency
ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages
HNB – High Needs Block
LA – Local Authority
LCC – Leicester City Council
LGA – Local Government Association
PA – Personal Assistant
SEN – Special Educational Needs
SENDCO - Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Coordinator
SEND – Special Education Needs and Disabilities
SENDIASS - Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service

2. Participating Commission Members:

Councillor Batool (Chair)

Councillor Bonham

Councillor Moore

3. Evidence to the Commission was provided by:

Amy Smith - Head of Service Early Help & Disabled Children's Service

Jessica Nicholls – Head of Service – SEND Support Service

Dr Joycelin Eze-Okubuiro - Co-opted member of CYPE

Lucy Synclere – Leicester City SENDIASS Manager

Shelley Piercy – SEND Inclusion Transformation Manager

Sophie Maltby – Director of SEND and Education

Schools:

Beaumont Leys School - Andy York (Deputy Head Teacher)

Babington Academy - Fiona Laywood (Head Teacher)

Crown Hills Community College - Louise Glasby (SENDCo)

Imperial Avenue Infant School - Libby Smith (Head Teacher)

Netherhall Mead Academy - Sarah Naylor (Principal)

Stokes Wood Primary School - Megan Williams (Assistant Head Teacher) and Liz Christensen (Headteacher)

Tudor Grange Samworth Academy - Jemma Cox (SENDCo), Cathy Robinson (Associate Principal), Stacey Nicholls (PA to the Principal), Neil Tansley (Chair of Governors), Anika Collins (Head of School Primary Phase), Aiden Bannon (Principal)

Local Implementation Unit | Local Accountability and Improvement Division,
DfE - Paul Cunningham

4. Foreword – Chair

Chair’s Foreword

The Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission identified the need for an in-depth evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the SEND High Needs Block (HNB). This review has taken place within a challenging national context. The SEND system has been widely acknowledged by the National Audit Office, CIPFA and the Department for Education as financially unsustainable, with demand significantly outstripping funding. Most local authorities now carry High Needs Block deficits, and Leicester’s position reflects this national picture rather than isolated local failure. The extension of the statutory override to 2028 provides short-term relief, but does not remove the need for urgent, long-term reform.

While financial pressures are significant, the Task Group was clear that the focus of this review must remain on outcomes and experiences. Evidence gathered from schools, council officers, SENDIASS, families and young people highlighted persistent challenges, including delays in diagnosis and specialist placements, pressure on mainstream schools, limited local capacity and an increasingly adversarial culture around tribunals. These issues not only place strain on budgets but also undermine confidence in the system and risk poorer outcomes for children and young people.

At the same time, the review identified clear examples of good practice and innovation across the city. School visits demonstrated how early intervention,

inclusive behaviour approaches, bespoke provision and strong partnerships can improve attendance, reduce exclusions and deliver better outcomes while making more effective use of HNB funding. Initiatives such as internal alternative provision models, Designated Special Provision units and culturally responsive, family-centred approaches show what is possible when support is tailored to need.

The Task Group also recognised the positive progress being made through Leicester City Council's SEND Transformation Plan and its work with the Department for Education's Change Partnership Programme. The commendation received from the DfE reflects a strong commitment to collaboration, innovation and improvement, although members acknowledged that many reforms would take time to evidence impact.

The recommendations set out in this report are intended to be constructive, realistic and forward looking. They focus on improving transparency around HNB funding, prioritising early intervention and prevention, expanding local specialist provision, strengthening mediation and parental engagement, promoting inclusive practice in mainstream schools, and learning from best practice nationally. Together, they aim to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND while addressing the significant financial and operational pressures facing the system.

I would like to thank the members of the Task Group, all the schools and services that contributed evidence, and the parents, carers and young people whose voices informed this review. I also acknowledge the work of council officers and partners who contributed evidence openly and constructively.

It is my hope that this report will support informed decision-making, strengthen trust, and contribute to a more inclusive, resilient and financially sustainable SEND system in Leicester, one that places children and young people at its heart while recognising the realities faced by schools, families and the local authority alike.



Councillor Misbah Batool Chair, Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission

5. Executive Summary

I am pleased that Scrutiny have decided to review the High Needs Block and SEND provision across the City.

The aim of this report is to provide detail on a scrutiny-led review of High Needs Block provision. The report centres on processes and systems within Leicester City, whilst recognising the national challenge faced around SEND and the High Needs Block. It has been recognised by the government, National Audit Office and CIPFA that there are significant challenges and systemic failings in the SEND system, meaning most of the Local Authorities nationally are recording deficit budgets for their High Needs Block. Currently the deficit in Leicester City is around 75 of 150 Local Authorities nationally.

5.1 Aims and Outcomes

5.2 **The overall aim is underpinned by the following objectives:**

- Understanding the allocation and utilisation of HNB funding.
- Evaluating tribunal costs and external consultant expenses.
- Assessing the sufficiency of provision within mainstream and special schools.
- Examining the effectiveness of the HNB recovery plan.
- Identifying potential improvements to enhance resource distribution and sustainability.

5.3 **The outcomes the Task Group aim to achieve include:**

- Improved transparency in resource allocation.
- Enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of the HNB.
- Better understanding of stakeholder perspectives and experiences.
- Development of actionable recommendations to improve the HNB framework.

6. Report:

6.1 a) Scrutiny Rationale

- 6.2 There have been increasing numbers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). which has resulted in increasing demand for provision in schools and for special school places. This is a national concern. In January 2024, the National Audit Office estimated that there were 1.9 million children and young people aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- 6.4 It is the local authority's responsibility to ensure that all children and young people with SEND receive appropriate support. This includes children and young people with an EHCP. An EHCP is a legally enforceable entitlement, unlike SEN support. The number of EHCP's has increased 140% between 2015 and 2024 (*National Audit Office 2024*).

- 6.5 The High Needs Block (HNB) is part of ring-fenced funding called the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which local authorities receive from the Government. The HNB funding is for the additional support required in schools by children with SEND. Increasing demand has put pressure on school budgets, particularly the High Needs Block as demand has significantly outstripped the funding received.
- 6.6 The result of these increases has been that the SEND system has been declared financially unsustainable by the National Audit Office.
- 6.7 Deficits in the HNB are currently held in a ring-fenced reserve. This reserve is held separately due to the Government's statutory override which was recently extended until March 2028.
- 6.8 There is widespread concern that once this is removed it could lead to the issuing of Section 114 notices for many councils.
- 6.9 As well as the clear financial strain placed upon local authorities and schools, there is a lack of confidence in the SEND system from families and the children with a sense that the provision falls short of expectations. This can be evidenced in a lack of consistent improvements in outcomes for children and young people with SEN since 2019 (National Audit Office 2024). Many parents have felt there is a battle for support, long wait times and children may not be in the most appropriate settings (Department of Education 2023). This adversarial nature is further adding to the financial strain of the HNB and DSG, with many decisions requiring mediation or going to tribunals as parents feel they need to fight for the support their children need.
- 6.10 There are other organisations that impact the SEN experience such as health partners, however that is outside of the scope of this Task Group.

7. Scrutiny Approach

- 7.1 It is relatively commonplace for scrutiny commissions to request further detail on particular topics. This can result in additional information being provided to subsequent commission meetings or through informal scrutiny meetings.
- 7.2 The Chair of the Children, Young People and Education scrutiny commission requested that a scrutiny Task Group be formed to consider the topic of the High Needs Block further. Questions were raised in the scrutiny commission around transparency of the HNB funding, tribunal costs and external consultant expenses, the sufficiency of provision within schools and the effectiveness of the HNB recovery plan.
- 7.3 The principal aims of the Task Group were therefore to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the HNB funding, ensuring it

was appropriately allocated to best support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This includes giving further scrutiny to current spending, tribunal costs and analysing sufficiency in mainstream and special schools. Additionally, the Task Group would benchmark comparable local authorities to identify best practise which could be implemented in Leicester.

- 7.4 This method of informal scrutiny allows discussion and evidence as well as reflection and further enquiries between the sessions. As part of the evidence gathering to aid the scrutiny process, school visits would be undertaken to understand the utilisation of the HNB and the impact on outcomes for children and young people. The Task Group would also hear from stakeholders including the children, parents, carers, professionals and schools. Evidence would be provided in the form of discussion, presentations, case studies, school visits and desktop research to benchmark other local authorities.
- 7.5 The sessions and visits took place between March and May 2025. The data in this report reflects this time scale. [Appendix 4]
- 7.6 The first session provided the Task Group with a detailed overview in the form of a presentation [Appendix 1] which gave a breakdown of the funding and the allocation and utilisation of the HNB. It provided tribunals data that the SEND held and gave a run through of the HNB recovery plan and dashboard.
- 7.7 The site visits were to four schools - Tudor Grange Samworth Academy which had a high number of permanent exclusions, Stokes Wood Primary School which had mainstreamed alternative provision and adapted teaching, Crown

Hills Community College which had low permanent exclusion rates and Spinney Hills Designated Special Provision unit.

- 7.8 At the second session, stakeholders were invited to provide evidence of their utilisation of the HNB and their views and experiences on the effectiveness of the HNB. The Task Group received evidence from Babington Academy, Beaumont Leys School, Imperial Avenue Infant School, Nether Hall School, SENDIASS Leicester and Leicester City Council's (LCC) Early Help and Disabled Children team and the SEND support service team. Members of the Task Group also received anonymised case studies [Appendix 3] ahead of the meeting and a video on the support from the local authority to parents and children in their own voices.

- 7.9 A final session was intended to discuss the evidence and conclusions; however, this was cancelled due to Members unavailability.

7.10 a) Overview

- 7.11 It is worth noting that SEND provision is consistently in the national rhetoric due to the widespread acceptance that the current system is not working. It has been acknowledged that the system was financially unsustainable and national level interventions are required as demand continues to outstrip funding everywhere. Over half of councils will become insolvent when the temporary override ends in March 2026 (*LGA 2025*).
- 7.12 Due to the concern around this issue, it should be noted that there have been several papers addressing the system including the National Audit Office report '*Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs*' (2023) and The Department for Education's *Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan* (2023). Reforms are expected to the system from the Government but so far these have not been announced. Coverage includes: [Westminster Hall debate, Dedicated Schools Grant, 23 April 2025 | Local Government Association](#) Local Government Association 09 Jun 2025.
- 7.13 In Leicester, it was estimated that children and young people with an EHCP had increased to 4.6% in 2024/25, and the percentage of pupils with SEN but no EHCP had also increased to 12.3%. The increase is in line with the national trends, but Leicester's rates sit just below the national average of 5.3% and 14.2% respectively.

8. Evidence

- 8.1 The Task Group's first session was an overview from the Leicester City Council SEND team to provide a deeper dive into the HNB [Appendix 1]. The team has undergone changes to tackle the issues faced efficiently and a new post was recruited to support the initiatives and it is hoped this will shortly be evidenced.
- 8.2 The cost of tribunals had not been recorded efficiently since the records began in 2020. As of December 2024, when the new manager was in post, it became a priority to robustly monitor tribunal costs and to introduce a new model of staffing for tribunals which would be more supportive for parents. The data has suggested that the numbers of tribunals is increasing, which is in line with the national picture and the 'adversarial tone'.

- 8.3 The SEND team are working with the Department for Education (DfE) through the Change Partnership Programme on the SEND Transformation Plan and the High Needs Block Recovery Management Plan. It is important to note that many of these initiatives will take time to evidence their impact. The DfE have commended the team on their innovative work in addressing the challenges faced and have commented:

Jointly leading the department's Change Programme in the East Midlands alongside Leicestershire and Rutland, Leicester City have played a key role in strengthening local partnerships and enabling collaboration between the Local Authority, Health (ICB and LPT), school leaders, parents, carers, children and young people.

These partnerships have collectively delivered the aims of the programme at a regional and local area level, including the testing of new and creative approaches, acting as a trusted partner to provide feedback to help shape policy thinking, and driving local innovative inclusive practice to improve outcomes and experiences for children and young people.

Colleagues across Leicester City have identified opportunities, engaged and collaborated with key stakeholders and partners, driving positive change across the City and the three local authorities covering the ICB footprint, sharing best practice and lessons learnt across the East Midlands, and will continue to do so up to March 2026 and beyond.

Paul Cunningham, Local Implementation Unit | Local Accountability and Improvement Division, DfE.

- 8.4 The SEND Transformation Plan has identified areas of development to support more efficient use of the HNB funding. These include:
- Aim 1: New DfE Reforms – The SEND and AP Change Programme
 - Aim 2: Developing Ordinarily Available offer: LA, Schools, Settings & Colleges
 - Aim 3: Local Authority Process reforms & Sufficiency
 - Aim 4: Increase confidence for parents and carers
 - Aim 5: Placement reforms
 - Aim 6: Stakeholder Engagement

- 8.5 The SEND team have been working closely with stakeholders as part of the drive to make more effective and efficient use of the HNB. Evidence was provided by Babington Academy, Beaumont Leys School, Imperial Avenue, Netherhall School and SENDIASS [presentations in Appendix 2] on how they

- have innovatively used HNB to best support SEND children and young people and their experiences working within the system.
- 8.6 Stakeholders emphasised the positive experience they have had working with LCC. The honest and transparent relationship that has been built around the HNB been crucial and has allowed working groups to be formed where sharing of best practise and the development of strategies that have a positive impact within the schools and for the families can occur. Stakeholders highlighted that it is very important for the issues facing children and young people to be addressed at a much younger age.
- 8.7 A huge challenge facing the schools was that for education to be truly inclusive for all abilities, provision must be bespoke. An example cited was the Designated Special Provision (DSP) unit at Babington Academy has 10 children who have to be grouped together, but they have hugely different abilities.
- 8.8 Members heard how one model is not suitable for all schools or children. For example, in some schools a one-to-one model worked well for yet at others it could leave children and staff frustrated. This further emphasises the above point and the need for bespoke support.
- 8.9 A recurring issue Members heard about was the limited spaces for supporting children and young people with SEND. This has meant children are being sent out of the city to be educated at a high cost to the local authority. To help mitigate this issue, Beaumont Leys School and LCC have been working together on a 2-year pilot. Additional funding was provided for a 10 place provision. The school created internal alternative provision to help address students' needs and prevent escalation or the need for an EHCP. Although money was spent earlier as an intervention, it prevents further costs and shows signs of saving costs. The school has seen improved attendance for the students and no permanent exclusions in 3 years, as well as a reduction in behavioural incidents.
- 8.10 Members heard from SENDIASS Leicester who provide advice and support to families navigating the system, but particularly if things are not going well. The service is funded by LCC but has helped prevent cases going to tribunals through mediation and support. The service is increasingly being contacted via social channels. SENDIASS emphasised the importance of good relationships with the SEND Teams in resolving concerns and supporting families.
- 8.11 The Family Hubs programme was highlighted by the representative from LCC Early Years Help as it has the SEND Local Area Partnership. This is part of a co-production offer working with the Change programme where a designated social care officer works proactively to encourage co-production between services and families. It is hoped there will be more social care input into EHCP's.

- 8.12 The Task Group was shown a powerful video from LCC and the Big Mouth Forum which captured the voices of young people, parents and carers and their experiences of the SEND support. It was highlighted that these communications would be even more powerful if shared more widely and the role of social media was raised.

9. Case Studies

Challenges and Opportunities in SEND Provision Overview

The case studies highlight systemic challenges in meeting the needs of children and young people (CYP) with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Delays in accessing special school placements are creating significant pressures on mainstream schools, which are often required to implement temporary solutions to support children and young people. Whilst some support, training and resource is available from the Local Authority this is not always sufficient to effectively meet need. These delays can in some cases negatively affect pupils' mental health, learning, and behaviour, and increase safeguarding risks.

Whilst there are examples of effective interventions particularly through the SEND Support teams and multi-agency collaboration the system remains overly reliant on short-term interim measures and informal arrangements. The High Needs Block (HNB) Focus calls for stronger long-term planning, expanded specialist capacity, strategic workforce development, and greater support for families. There is also a clear need for culturally sensitive approaches, active family engagement, and inclusive peer environments.

Feedback Identified in visits:

1. **Delays in Special School Placements** ○ CYP remain in less suitable mainstream settings for extended periods.
 - Consequences could include deteriorating mental health, disrupted learning, and behavioural challenges.
 - Mainstream schools may have to utilise ad-hoc provision.
2. **Pressure on Mainstream Schools** ○ Insufficient expertise, staffing, and funding to support high-need pupils.
 - Risks could include staff burnout, potential safeguarding concerns and negative outcomes for pupils.
3. **Over-Reliance on Informal Provision** ○ Schools improvising internal SEND units without formal structures or sustainability.
 - Reflects wider systemic gaps and lack of government support.
4. **Delays or Barriers in Diagnosis** ○ Parental hesitation and cultural factors contribute to delays in autism and other neurodevelopmental diagnoses.
 - This results in missed opportunities for early intervention.

5. **Positive Impact of Joined Up, Culturally Sensitive Support** ○ Case studies (e.g. AH) show that culturally responsive, family-centred approaches can lead to significant progress.
6. **Transition and Post-16 Gaps** ○ Lack of clear pathways for CYP with ongoing needs, especially at the Key Stage 4–Post 16 transition.
7. **Inconsistent Use of Communication and Sensory Tools** ○ Evidence-based tools (e.g. Colourful Semantics, visual aids) are effective but not consistently adopted.
8. **Effective use of High Needs Block funding** ○ The LCI team (and other SEND Support teams) play a pivotal role in supporting schools but are overstretched, raising questions about longterm sustainability.
9. **Variability in Parent Partnerships** ○ Outcomes improve where schools actively engage parents, but practice is inconsistent.
10. **Recognising the Strengths of CYP**
 - Emphasising pupils' talents and achievements enhances inclusion, self-esteem, and wellbeing.

Strategic Challenges

1. Rising demand for special school placements.
2. Need for formal, funded interim provision within mainstream settings.
3. Delays in diagnosis and early identification.
4. Increased risk of exclusions due to unmet SEND needs.
5. Further requirement for specialist staff and training in mainstream schools.

Examples of Good Practice

- SEND Support Team interventions preventing exclusions and improving behaviour.
- Structured approaches such as Colourful Semantics and Attention Autism.
- Peer inclusion models (e.g. Ethan's case) demonstrating strong outcomes.
- Culturally sensitive, family-centred approaches (e.g. AH) resulting in transformative change.

Questions and Strategic Recommendations

The task group formulated the following questions which were answered by the SEND Education Team:

1. What is the current average wait time for special school placements?

Waiting times vary significantly depending on a range of factors, including a child's age, their individual needs, the type of specialist provision required, and the availability of suitable places. For example, demand and capacity pressures can differ between early years, primary, secondary and post-16 specialist

provision, and between different types of special schools such as those supporting autism, social, emotional and mental health needs, or profound and multiple learning difficulties.

- Each placement is considered on an individual basis, and officers work to secure the most appropriate provision for the child as promptly as possible, within the constraints of available provision. Officers are also able to report on statutory timescales within the process and continue to work to improve oversight of placement timelines.
- Work is ongoing to strengthen sufficiency planning and improve placement oversight, particularly in areas of higher demand.
- SEND Support teams offer bespoke support to children and young people waiting for specialist placements.

2. How is the council supporting mainstream schools accommodating complex needs pupils?

The council support mainstream schools accommodating children with complex needs through a graduated approach, encompassing a wide range of approaches and a multi-agency response, with the child at the centre.

*A continuing priority for the SEND Support Service is to support schools, colleges, and settings with **implementing the Best Endeavours and Reasonable Adjustments (BERA) guidance** for children and young people with complex SEND and/or at risk of mental health difficulties.*

Best Endeavours and Reasonable Adjustments:

The council advocate the use of the Best Endeavours and Reasonable adjustments (BERA) frameworks, a set of need specific documents which guides schools around inclusive provision and practice. It highlights what should be 'ordinarily available' mechanisms of support, to help with understanding need, consistency of provision and shared responsibility. It assists in expanding support to ensure specific interventions and practices are implemented at the right time, based upon need. The framework has been co-developed, alongside schools.

SEND support Services:

A strong SEND support services approach is evident, comprising of six teams (City Educational Psychology Service, Social Emotional Mental Health, Learning Communication and Interaction, Early Years, Hearing Support, Vision Support and the Virtual School). All Maintained, Academy and Free Schools in the city have named link professionals within teams, ensuring a key, consistent person. Additionally, SEND support teams also provide advice, monitoring, and practical, meaningful recommendations to Designated Specialist Provisions and Units, within mainstream schools, as well as to many of the Internal Alternative Provisions.

All teams work in a variety of creative ways alongside schools and provisions, both strategically, at whole school level and individually, by holding caseloads of children and young people who have been referred to the services. Each team offers bespoke support, advice, guidance and interventions based on the needs of the children on caseload including those children who are waiting for specialist placements .

Joint planning and review with school leaders

The named Educational Psychologist & Specialist Teachers for each school/setting plan their work with the headteacher & school SENDCO / setting managers through 6-monthly planning meetings. These meetings are usually held in September/October and January/February. Work for the 6-month cycle will normally be agreed at these planning meetings. For these meetings to be effective, the school/setting prepare relevant information about the school/setting and individual pupil's with more complex SEND and wellbeing needs to be discussed. These meetings involve discussion of policy and practice as well as individual and groups of children.

The link members of SEND support staff are alongside school to support across a range of areas within schools, for example, working with the child, key adults at school (TA, pastoral team, SLT), scaffolding relationships with families – joining together each element.

Graduated support and early intervention are key – working to ensure the right support at the right time. Needs are assessed through a variety of means, for example, observations, key adult discussions, child voice work – this may be 1:1 or as part of a group intervention, formal and informal assessments, work alongside families and support agencies, analysis of data. Support is always child centred, strength based and solution focused. Work with schools and families is a partnership.

A comprehensive evidence-based training offer is available for schools to access for their staff, based upon areas of SEND and wellbeing need, but also designed around training needs within schools to ensure that training is not only relevant but also presented in ways that strength based and meaningful to key adults within school, for example, EBSA training will not only give evidence based information and strategies to support children, but will also inform and empower key adults in a range of different roles and responsibilities.

Funding and resource allocation:

The council have several multi-agency panels that will consider applications for additional funding or specialised advice and guidance for schools and settings. Locally we have provision of meaningful emergency and early intervention funding which schools and settings can apply for when a child's needs require additionality above BERA. The council value and support early intervention and choose to provide non-statutory funding (Element 3 & SEN Inclusion Fund) to support the graduated approach.

3. Can SEND Support be expanded to meet increasing demand?

Support for SEND can be expanded as demand increases. As part of our sufficiency planning we are planning to increase the numbers of DSP places to make specialist support available whilst pupils can maintain a place in their local mainstream schools. We are also increasing our IAP's which offers another route to mainstream support for pupils with SEND who have a need for higher levels of specialist support.

4. What action is being taken to address diagnosis delays and workforce shortages?

1. The Leicester SEND inspection action plan outlines LPT actions to address waiting times and workforce redesign on pages 26 and 27 of the final plan attached here:



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- Implement a skill-mix staffing model to increase autism assessment capacity within the LPT Paediatric Autism Assessment Team, including speech and language therapists and clinical psychologists.
- Redesign ADHD workforce model to include specialist neurodevelopmental nursing roles for autonomous leadership of ADHD assessment.
- Implement digital contacts / reviews for ADHD medication, releasing clinical capacity to support diagnostic assessment activity.
- Deliver MHST ND inclusion training through the LLR Local Inclusion Support Offer (LISO). Embed MHST expertise in the ND profiling tool and mobilise consistent use across MHST workforce.
- Co-develop ND practice in schools through a combination of training, coaching and consultation.
- Recruit to ND Inclusion post funded through SEND and Inclusion Alliance. Contribute to profiling tool development, pilot implementation with PINS schools, and develop training/competency framework for system roll-out.

2. In addition, these improvement actions sit alongside 3 other areas of LPT improvement work as follows;

- Mobilise a new diagnostic pathway for under 5s requiring single diagnostician rather than a paired approach (ie compliant with NICE guidelines).
Weekly demand and capacity analysis of available resource to ensure full utilisation of appointment slots.

5. How are family engagement and cultural responsiveness being embedded across provision?

Educational Psychologists and Specialist Teachers in SEND Support Services promote a relational and welcoming and inclusive culture challenging discrimination. Our work in partnership with children and families and their education setting ensures quality of pupil experience and a commitment to achieving positive outcomes Design and evaluation of our involvement is increasingly drawing on pupil and parental voice.

SEND Support Services work promotes the partnership between home and school/education settings for meeting changing pupil profiles and regular evaluation of quality and progress. This is evidenced in the assessment reports and record of visit records, attendance at parent/carer evenings at schools and workshops for parent/carers on important topics such as **emotionally based school non-attendance, parenting teenagers.**

Parents can access training delivered by LCI to support their child/young person:

CUES (Coping with Uncertainty in Everyday Situations): A parent-led (and school-supported) intervention based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) principles to help autistic children manage anxiety related to uncertainty.

Autism Parent workshops: delivered in English and Hindi.

Neuroinclusive parent workshops: delivered in English and Hindi for parents with children on the ND pathway, to provide additional support while waiting.

Through **Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS)** collaboration between the schools and the Leicester City Parent Carer Forum enables parents to be supported and reassured around the anxiety of being on the ND waiting list. Parents are supported to understand the work that school are doing in order to develop inclusive practice across school to meet children's needs. The core message of PINS is that the child does not need a formal diagnosis to receive support.

Early years provide locality based Living with Autism workshops across the city in family hubs and schools, working with families who have a child diagnosed with autism or on the pathway. These have been delivered in Gujarati, Hindi and Bangla

Early Years also provide weekly stay and play session for families on caseload based on PEEP principles at the Family hubs to help families connect with each other and be supported in another setting

Dedicated ND specialist teacher and Senior Practitioner Educational Psychologist, in collaboration with health, working closely with schools, PCFs and families to explore, develop and embed meaningful inclusion.

Access to training for staff to focus on the key role of being alongside families, which includes understanding wellbeing, culture, success and lived experience from their perspective. This allows a developing and working understanding of

strengths and barriers. This also forms an important part of advice and support when working alongside provisions; utilising relationship first, sensitive, strength – based and collaborative working.

Relationally focused, embedded informal sessions, eg, coffee mornings or drop-in sessions around specific areas relating to SEMH.

Parent / Carer / child targeted support sessions, for example, Theraplay Informed time together. Co support sessions for child and parent / carer, which focuses upon coaching not correction, amplifying strengths, connection and play.

Cultural responsiveness is further enhanced by the work of our community cohesion team in City Psychology Service - SEND Support Service. All staff are required to promote Equity Diversity Inclusion (EDI) as part of their work with children and families. This includes a **Bilingual Teacher Consultant** and **Bilingual Support Assistants** who speak several community languages and can support Educational Psychologists (EP) in their work with children and parents/carers from diverse cultural backgrounds. They have a particular role in supporting children and their families who speak English as an Additional Language who are referred to the service. This support is accessed by the named EP for the school.

International New Arrivals Educational Psychologist (EP): The service has an EP who has dedicated time to provide a responsive approach with school admissions and special education service to support the welcome of children and young people newly arrived in the UK who are likely to have significant special educational needs. The EP helps to identify, assess, and support their special educational needs in cooperation with their families and school staff so that they can be included in our local Leicester schools.

6. Are schools being trained and resourced to implement evidence-based interventions and inclusive practices?

Schools are supported using a tiered approach from whole school training, school based needs training and coaching / training to implement evidence based interventions for specific needs. Below are just some of the offers to school and settings:-

Autism Support:

Whole school training sessions support inclusive practice, this includes **Autism Education Trust (now Neuroinclusive Education Network, NEN)** training for school staff including senior leaders. All schools must undertake this training every 3 years at least.

Other training offered is linked to evidence based interventions and inclusive practice:

Speech and Language Support:

Elklan Training: Evidence-based courses for Teaching Assistants and Teachers to support pupils with SLCN in Primary and Secondary settings (often accredited at Level 2 or 3).

Cognition and Learning Support:

Dyslexia & SpLD Training: training to support with recommended interventions such as literacy gold, Lexia, Inference Training, Toe by Toe and Accelerated, Accelewrite

Maths support -

Numicon Breaking Barriers: Key Stage 1 curriculum support designed for older pupils.

Numicon Big Ideas: programme for pupils aged 9-12.

Developmental Coordination Support:

Big Moves : The BIG MOVES Developmental Movement Intervention Programme is aimed at pupils whose delayed physical development is a very real barrier to listening and concentration, learning success and appropriate behaviour. A floor-based movement to develop core strength programme for small groups delivered daily for 20 minutes.

South Warwickshire Fine Motor skills programme: Programmes to develop fine motor skills and handwriting delivered in three 20-minute sessions per week for up to 6 weeks. Includes assessment and tracking information.

Social Communication and Interaction Support:

Play Interaction: A structured approach for Early Years and Primary pupils to develop foundational social communication and joint attention.

Social Stories: Training staff to write and use personalized stories that help pupils understand social situations and expectations.

Visual Systems: Implementing "Structured Teaching" (based on TEACCH principles), using visual timetables, work systems, and "now and next" boards to reduce anxiety and build independence.

Circle of Friends: A peer-support intervention designed to build a support network around a vulnerable pupil to improve social inclusion

Wellbeing and Mental Health:

The **ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) programme** provides a comprehensive training course for teaching assistants and pastoral staff, developing skills to understand and respond to emotional and social needs in children and young people.

Emotion Coaching training workshops – Emotion coaching is a relational approach, which helps children and young people to understand the emotions

they experience, why they occur and how to handle them. The course covers the theory and practical applications of emotion coaching. Emotion coaching can support the development of positive relationships and academic attainment through consistent and helpful responses to difficult behaviours and feeling.

Attachment & Trauma-Informed Practice: Trauma-informed training equips staff with the knowledge and strategies to understand how adverse experiences affect behaviour and learning, and to respond in ways that promote safety, regulation, and relationship-based support. This is part of ongoing coaching

Shame sensitivity training (part of the tiered, evidence-based offer for schools following Trauma Informed practices work): Develops recognition of how shame affects children's relationships, engagement, view of the world and behaviour. Increases understanding of ways to respond that preserve dignity, reduce defensiveness, and promote emotional safety, which can lead to fewer behavioural incidents and a measurable reduction in fixed-term and permanent exclusions.

Relational Policy and Positive Behaviour strategies: trains staff in restorative practice, emotion coaching, and graduated SEND responses, supported by policy review, data systems, leadership coaching, and protected reflection time. This approach shifts schools away from sanction-heavy systems toward consistent relational practices, reducing repeat behaviour incidents and improving overall emotional regulation.

SEMH specific areas support: City wide, as well as bespoke, school specific training covering a range of areas, for example, anxiety, EBSA, emotional literacy, co-regulation. These can be whole school or targeted workshop sessions. Training not only develops key adult understanding and support options, but also helps children develop social, emotional and mental health understanding and vocabulary, strengthen peer relationships, and reduce dysregulation. This also includes nurture groups.

Cognitive Behavioural Approaches: Evidence based programmes for supporting children and young people experiencing anxiety and low mood. The impact includes developing strategies to support emotional regulation skills and reduce the risk of EBSA.

DfE Change Programme

Through the change Programme the Primary school Internal Alternative Provision network have accessed free training including attention autism, Curiosity programme, makaton, engagement model, AET training for LCI, sensory processing through EYs, PECS. This academic year a Secondary Internal Alternative Provision network has been developed and training is being sourced.

The Local Authority values CPD and opportunities for development for schools and settings. The Local Authority host three in person SENCO Network days each academic year along with three virtual sessions. Relationships are key and each school and setting has named SEND Support links providing individualised advice, support and training.

School Visits

The schools visited were chosen to allow consideration of low exclusion rates, inclusion in mainstream classrooms, adapted teaching and high numbers of permanent exclusions. This would contribute to the scope of the task group by identifying what has been done well in schools and where additional support and resources may be required to meet demand.

Tudor Grange Samworth Academy

The school has experienced high levels of permanent exclusions which they are hoping to address through the development of an Internal Alternative Provision unit. 69% percent of pupils are on the SEN register and there was an increase from 7 to 30 children with EHCPs in a single year. 14 students are awaiting specialist provision, and the development of this unit could allow them to stay within the school.

Significant work has gone into improving the annual reviews for EHCPs including digitalised plans and targets that teachers can access readily and to help ensure progress is being made for the children.

The school trust holds disadvantage committee meetings, which break down data on progress and there are staff briefings which highlight the key SEND concerns and any home/school dimensions, which are then discussed by the SENCO and college leaders.

There were 4 permanent exclusions in the last year. The risk of exclusion to the child is assessed ahead of the decision. The number of exclusions could be higher, but the school has invested a large proportion of its budget into preventing exclusion now. There is a mentoring team onsite with a specialist bereavement service, thrive support with emotional regulation and a school nurse provides drop-in sessions for sleep and anxiety. The HNB funding covers the cost for the mentoring for students, Forest School, a School Nurse, interventions & 5 Thrive practitioners.

Stokes Wood Primary School

This school was chosen as a good example of mainstream inclusion and adapted teaching to the Task Group. The school currently has 30 children with an EHCP. The school has creatively created a 'constructive holding' for children who are not suitable for the mainstream classrooms as there is no suitable provision for the children elsewhere. This is called the Rainbow Room and follows a sensory

curriculum. The classroom capacity is now full at 11. All of the children in this room have EHCPs or are waiting for the process to be completed; and are non-verbal.

The school are expecting another 6 children that will need to be in the Rainbow Room with the intake in September so urgently require space. Each child within this provision receives funding from the HNB and the school have pooled the funding together to provide a group provision to maximise the efficiency of resource. The HNB funding currently covers a teacher, teaching assistants to run this alternative curriculum.

It was noted that the Rainbow Room provides specialist provision for children with SEND and is incredibly impressive. It is an example of the creative practice that our schools are demonstrating in this challenging climate.

As part of the adapted teaching, the school uses strategies and support staff to enable inclusion for children with communication difficulties with the teacher actively getting children involved. The children have short breaks for movement or alternatives before returning to the classroom on a rota so as not to be disruptive for other students. The adapted teaching was noticeably child centred, with different children having particular focuses to assist their learning.

Crown Hills Community College

Crown Hills Community College was chosen due to the low rates of exclusion. There are 1500 children on role with 200 SEND and 19 EHCP's.

The staff use BERA which is 'Best Endeavour Reasonable Adjustments' to keep SEND children in mainstream education and to promote inclusivity. Information on each child is given to teachers so they can consider how to adjust the school's behaviour management policy for individual needs, together with a photograph of the child and the features of each specific learning difficulty. There is also online information for teachers for each child who has an EHCP, which lists the key outcomes. The children are withdrawn from mainstream lessons daily for small group teaching. Children who were eligible for exam concessions, but reluctant to accept them are receiving interventions to familiarise them with what was involved and overcome embarrassment. It had also funded work with school leavers.

The funding which came with EHCPs, together with High Needs block money, was used to employ a mentor and to train an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA). The High needs block funding helps with the employment of Teaching Assistants, and providing equipment for SEND children.

The school provides as much communication with parents as possible and parents are involved in reviews and ESOL support is available for parents who don't speak English. There are once-a-week staff meetings to discuss key children who are especially vulnerable, to help avoid exclusion. Staff have also been given training in positive behaviour management. The result of this approach by the school was that there have been no exclusions in the current year and no students had been referred to pupil referral units.

Spinney Hills Designated Special Provision unit

The Designated Special Provision (DSP) Unit provides places for 10 Children from year 1 to year 6. The children all have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). The children likely to be offered a place are children with communication difficulties and children with an autism diagnosis or who are on the ASD pathway. The DSP is unable to cater for children with complex sensory, physical and medical needs.

This type of provision means children have been able to interact and form friendships outside of the unit, and where appropriate they can attend mainstream classes. This form of provision is an effective use of HNB funding where children may need more support but not a special school.

a) Benchmarking

The Task Group considered other local authorities and national policy to compare the approach in Leicester. It is clearly widely acknowledged and accepted that the HNB funding is a national issue as mentioned in paragraph -.-.

It has been well evidenced in national reports that the HNB deficit is not due to poor management but instead is predominantly the result of the failure of funding to keep up with the demand. This does not mean that there are not best practises which can be identified through scrutinising the current landscape to improve services and efficiency though.

Most local authorities have reported a deficit budget for the HNB and over half would be insolvent if the HNB was brought back into the main budget as is intended March 2026. The DfE introduced 2 national programmes as a result of the financial pressures faced by local authorities – the Safety Valve programme and Delivering Better Value. In the research by the DfE for the Delivering Better Value programme, they found that increasing numbers of EHCP caseloads were driving up expenditure.

All local authorities with deficits to the DSG budget were required to submit a HNB management recovery plan in order for the DfE to assess their level of intervention. The initial draft management recovery plan was discussed with the DfE in August 2023 and has so far enabled LCC to avoid entering the Delivering Better Value or the Safety Valve intervention programmes. This plan has been scrutinised and accepted by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The team now meets 2-3 times a year with the ESFA to discuss the progress of this plan.

In order to benchmark against other local authorities, deficit ranking information was reviewed through desktop research. HNB deficit figures provided by The Institute for Government analysis of DfE, 'LA and school expenditure', 2022/23 were used as the primary source. A range of Local Authorities with varying ranking scores were examined to provide a balanced comparison. The following local authorities were selected as comparators for benchmarking purposes:

LA Deficit Ranking

Birmingham	16
Liverpool	32
Tower Hamlets	77
Bristol	6
Leicester	87

Birmingham City Council is part of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme. Implementation for the programme began in Spring 2024. However, it is important to clarify that there are strict conditions attached to the grant, and the funds cannot be used to cover school deficits. There are 12,108 children with EHCPs. They have 2 new free special schools with 500 places and the surplus in the HNB is confirmed at £38 million. Several factors have contributed to Birmingham's reserve being built up over the past few years including a review of payments in 2023-24 from the HNB which resulted in some services being correctly charged to the General Fund.

Liverpool is on one of the steepest trajectories for increasing EHCP's. The numbers have doubled since 2020 to Jan 2024, and by a further 17% for just 2023-24. They had 2884 ECHPs January 2020 and 5820 in January 2024. They have not been placed in the DBV programme though. A high needs working group was set up in May 2024, with the purpose to work in partnership to ensure appropriate steps are taken to address the financial position of the local authority. This entailed developing strategic solutions to mitigate the deficit and to make recommendations which achieve the best possible provision for 'high needs' pupils from within the 2025/2026 financial envelope. The membership of the group consists of key stakeholders such as headteachers, private, voluntary and independent sector for early years, health partners, council officers, trade union, and the Parent Carers forum.

Tower Hamlets has significant overspend and SEND support is on a five-year improvement journey. There is a projected overspend of £5.2 million on the HNB. There are now steps are in place to reduce the steep trajectory of requests for statutory assessment and the resulting EHCPs as this has contributed to the overspend.

Bristol saw a sustained 32% increase in initial requests for EHCP needs assessments received in 2024, compared to the same period in 2023. Bristol has been taken to court with the claim that the council should have consulted parents about the effect of the Safety Valve Agreements on their children, as the deal came with strings attached, including to support more pupils in mainstream schools rather than costly specialist ones.

Analysis of DBV data returns showed that the primary driver of growth in expenditure is growth in EHCP caseload, accounting for 90.7% of the overall growth in expenditure.

Of the benchmarked local authorities, Liverpool had the highest trajectory for EHCP growth. Birmingham held a surplus, despite a high EHCP count, which was accredited to having a strong financial oversight and clearer funding separation. Preparatory action had been implemented in holding funds back for the DBV. It is important to note that the surplus is ringfenced so cannot be used to offset wider school funding pressures.

f) Summary of Task Group conclusions:

Schools often had high levels of deprivation and inequalities, there is a well evidenced connection with SEND.

Imperial Avenue School and Beaumont Leys were good demonstrations of more bespoke funding models being trialled to support inclusion and reduce the demand for special school places, which helps reduce overall costs for the Local Authority.

There seemed to be confusion from schools over what the HNB funding covered and how this was broken down.

It was clear that schools favoured preventative measures addressing issues from a younger age.

Concerns were raised over how early EHCP plans are given and whether preventative measures could address the raising demand for these.

Schools such as Crown Hills and Beaumont Leys which had changed their behaviour policies seemed to be having greater success reducing exclusions. This approach helps address confidence of children and young people and allows them to build positive relationships.

g) Recommendations:

Introduction

Following extensive evidence gathering between March and May 2025, the High Needs Block (HNB) Task Group has reviewed the pressures, practices, and outcomes associated with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) funding in Leicester.

This document outlines a set of strategic recommendations arising from the visits made, the observations of task group members; and data provided by schools and the council to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and long-term sustainability of the HNB, with the aim of ensuring better outcomes for children and young people with SEND, while addressing growing demand and financial pressures.

Summary of Recommendations Improve Transparency of HNB Funding Allocation

Develop a clear, accessible funding guidance document for schools on the national guidance outlining what HNB can and cannot cover, with practical case study examples - Feedback indicated confusion among schools regarding HNB usage. Improved clarity will support better planning, equitable distribution, and accountability.

- Publish clear and accessible summaries of HNB spending, including tribunal costs, consultant fees, the percentage of the HNB funds used to fund support services and provision categories.
- Ensure clear access for the public and schools to the annual public report on HNB allocation, outcomes, and value-for-money analysis.

Prioritise Early Intervention and Prevention

Scale up early intervention models such as the Rainbow Room (Stokes Wood) and Beaumont Leys' pilot internal provision - Preventative approaches help avoid EHCP escalation, reduce long-term costs, and improve inclusion outcomes.

- Continue to allocate a proportion of HNB to fund early intervention strategies that prevent escalation of needs.
- Updates on the long-term savings and impact of earlier support to continue.

Support Bespoke Support Models Across Schools

Facilitate and fund locally tailored support models in schools to better meet student needs - Evidence shows a "one-size-fits-all" approach is not effective. Bespoke interventions have led to improvements in attendance, behaviour, and cost efficiency.

- Continue to offer training to schools on cost-effective inclusion practices and alternative provision models.
- Increase support for parents and carers to navigate the EHCP process and access support earlier.

Promote Inclusive Practice in Mainstream Education

Encourage sharing of best practice between Leicester Schools, including positive behaviour policies such as those at Crown Hills and Beaumont Leys Schools that adjust behaviour policies and provide SEND-focused staff training have seen reduced exclusions and better student engagement.

Strengthen Tribunal and Mediation Services

Maintain robust monitoring of tribunal related costs and outcomes. Expand support for early mediation services and SENDIASS Mediation is cost effective and reduces adversarial conflict. SENDIASS has demonstrated success in resolving disputes early and supporting families through the system.

- Implement a formal review mechanism for tribunal outcomes to understand root causes and reduce future litigation.
- Set criteria for appointing external consultants to ensure costeffectiveness and impact assessment.

Increase Designated Specialist Provision (DSP) Capacity

Invest in expanding DSP units in mainstream schools across the city - Demand for specialist places is growing. Local DSPs reduce out-of-city placements, improve inclusion, and are a more cost-effective use of HNB resources.

- Use current and projected demand data to assess sufficiency of SEND provision across Leicester.
- Prioritise investment in local capacity (e.g. SEN units in mainstream settings, targeted interventions) to reduce reliance on out-of-area or independent placements.

Enhance Co-Production and Parental Engagement

Embed parent and carer voice more formally in strategic planning, through Family Hubs and the SEND Local Area Partnership - Co-production leads to services that better reflect need. Stronger communication channels will also increase public trust in SEND provision.

- Create an advisory group including parents, young people, headteachers, SENCOs, and finance leads to review HNB pressures and advise on allocation decisions.
- Use this forum to promote co-production and community accountability.

Promote Best Practice and Success Stories

Create a communications strategy to showcase successful models and outcomes (e.g., Rainbow Room, Big Mouth Forum video) via websites and social media Sharing good practice helps build confidence and encourages other schools to replicate successful models.

Embed Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

- Introduce clear KPIs to monitor the impact of HNB-funded provisions on learner outcomes and well-being.
- Review outcomes annually and feed insights into future planning cycles.

Promote Integrated Working Across Services

- Strengthen links between education, health, and social care teams to ensure joined-up support and better use of pooled budgets.
- Use joint commissioning approaches where possible to achieve efficiency.

Prepare Financially for the 2026 Statutory Override Expiry

Develop a clear post-2026 financial contingency plan, including modelling of deficit scenarios and options for service continuity. The override's removal poses a serious budgetary risk. Proactive planning can help mitigate the potential for drastic cuts or Section 114 notices.

- Ensure recovery strategies are informed by long-term needs planning,.

Following completion of the report, it had been confirmed that this had been extended to 2028. Please see the below resources.

[SEND deficits override extended until 2028](#)

[Autumn Budget: what is the government doing to improve outcomes for children with SEND? – The Education Hub](#)

Continue Benchmarking and External Learning

Regularly review progress in comparator local authorities and explore opportunities for collaboration on shared challenges - Examples from Birmingham (financial oversight) and Liverpool (multi-agency working groups) provide valuable learning for Leicester's ongoing improvement.

- Continue benchmarking practices with statistical neighbours and highperforming councils to adopt proven models.
- Explore participation in regional SEND networks or improvement partnerships

Conclusion

The recommendations above seek to address the dual pressures of increasing demand and finite resources. By continuing to prioritise transparency, early intervention, local solutions, and co-production, Leicester can build a more resilient, inclusive and financially sustainable SEND support system.

These recommendations are intended to support strategic decision-making in preparation for the anticipated reforms and the financial landscape post-March 2026.

Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

4.1 Financial Implications

Demand for SEN support has begun to outstrip the available resources due to an increase in the number of agreed Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The cumulative DSG deficit was £22.2m at the end of March 2025. The High Needs Block element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is £88.6m for 2025/26. Although the service has put in place a range of strategies, described in this report, to mitigate the cost impact of the growth in demand and complexity of SEND support, the forecast for the current year is that the cumulative deficit will be £44.8m by March 2026. Due to a special Government 'override' we can maintain this deficit separate to the other local authority reserves until March 2028. The cumulative deficit could be as high as £78m by 2027/28. The government is currently considering reforms to the funding for SEND and children's social care but it is not completely clear how they will resolve (or centrally fund) DSG

deficits.

Signed: Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance

Dated: 09 January 2026

4.2 Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations summarised in this report. However, it is recommended that legal support is obtained on any proposals to implement the strategic recommendations as they are developed.

Signed: Julia Slipper, Principal Solicitor (Education & Employment)

Dated: 12 January 2026

4.3 Equalities Implications

Public authorities are subject to an ongoing Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This requires them, when carrying out their functions to give due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. In addition to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), local authorities have specific statutory obligations toward children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The report focuses on the High Needs Block (HNB) and SEND, the most significant implications relate to the protected characteristics of age and disability.

The report notes a 140% increase in Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) since 2015. The inability to meet this demand risks "poorer outcomes" and "lack of confidence" in the system, potentially disadvantaging disabled children compared to their nondisabled peers. It highlights that while Leicester is struggling with a budget deficit (like most UK councils), local schools are being highly innovative to keep children in education and avoid exclusions. The strategic recommendations set out arising from the visits made, the observations of task group members; and data provided by schools and the council to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and long-term sustainability of the HNB, aim to ensure better outcomes for children and young people with SEND, while addressing growing demand and financial pressures. There is a link between poverty and the need for SEND support. HNB funding is a vital investment in the future of Leicester's children. By targeting early intervention toward the link between deprivation and SEND, the HNB funding can be used as a tool to ensure that children in deprived areas of Leicester have the same life chances as those in wealthier areas.

Signed: Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

Dated: 9 January 2026

4.4 Climate Emergency Implications

Service delivery generally contributes to the council's carbon emissions, impacts can be managed as part of any commissioning through measures such as encouraging sustainable staff travel behaviours, using buildings efficiently and following sustainable procurement guidance, as applicable to the service.

Where the council provides transport to school for SEN pupils, the resulting carbon emissions are included in monitoring of the council's own carbon footprint. In 2023/24 SEN transport is estimated to have generated approximately 1200 tonnes of carbon emissions, representing between 7% and 8% of the council total.

Prioritising early intervention and prevention may help to minimise near-term increases in SEN transport and could reduce transport demand in the long-term as more local solutions are found for SEN pupils. In addition, there is the potential for contribution towards reduced future SEN travel through bespoke school support, promoting inclusive practice in mainstream education, increasing DSP capacity and improving parental engagement.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246

Dated: 12th January 2026

5. Background information and other papers:

6. Summary of appendices:

Appendix Number	Appendix Title	Attachment
1	Session 1 Presentation	 CYP Scrutiny March 25.pptx
2	School and SENDIASS Presentations	 Netherhall presentation.pptx  Babington Academy HNB Scrutiny.pptx  BLS Graduated Approach LA Meeting.p
		 Powerpoint Imperial.pptx  SENDIASS QA Presentation April 25.p

3	Case Studies	 <p>SEND case study waiting well SSP.pdf</p>  <p>SEND case study EYST.pdf</p>  <p>SEND case study DSP.pdf</p>  <p>S QAR case study.pdf</p>  <p>QAR case study.pdf</p>  <p>Case study Y1 child waiting a SS.pdf</p>  <p>Case Study LCI T support for SSPupil se</p>  <p>Case Study LCI support for SSP Prima</p>  <p>Case study E.pdf</p>  <p>Case Study DP Y6 waiting for special.pdf</p>  <p>Case Study - Small group of students awa</p>
		 <p>SEND case study_EYST.pdf</p>  <p>SEND case study EYST March 2025.pdf</p>

4	Councillor Notes on School Visits	 Notes on task group visits by Cllr Bonham a  Spinney Hill Sch Visit.odt
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**Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission (CYPE)
Work Programme 2025 – 2026**

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
18 June 2025	<p>Overview of CYPE</p> <p>Families First Programme</p> <p>Social Care and Education Performance Dashboard</p> <p>Children's Social Care, Early Help and Prevention Improvement Plan</p>	<p>That regular updates on the progress of the Family First Programme would come to the commission.</p> <p>The improvements be an agenda item at a future meeting.</p> <p>Quarterly updates be added to the work programme.</p>	
23 September 2025	<p>SEND Transport Update</p> <p>Children's Services Finances</p> <p>Edge of Care</p> <p>Youth Justice Plan</p>	<p>Members to be notified and details circulated once white papers are released.</p> <p>Update to come to the commission on the outstanding 200 children</p> <p>DSG/ high needs recovery programme added to the work programme.</p> <p>School planning added to the work programme</p>	

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
28 October 2025	<p>Verbal Ofsted update/ Children's Social Care, Early Help and Prevention Improvement Plan</p> <p>Children Seeking Safety</p> <p>Families First Programme</p> <p>Early years extended entitlement</p>	<p>To include impact monitoring on the Fostering Service microsite launched on the Council website which includes the fostering offer.</p> <p>Presentation</p> <p>2 years offer take up</p>	

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
20 January 2026	<p>Budget</p> <p>Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report</p> <p>SEND Transport Update</p> <p>HNB Task Group Report</p> <p>Fostering Annual Report</p> <p>Performance Dashboard</p>	<p>Outcome specifics gathered on Travel Training, applications, appeals and outcomes.</p> <p>To include costs relating to Customer Relationship management tool, the Ofsted thematic report, information on family finding events and more detail on advertising techniques for recruitment.</p>	
3 March 2026	<p>Families First Programme</p> <p>Performance Dashboard</p> <p>Equality and Diversity Development</p> <p>HNB Report</p>	<p>To include an update on the pilot launched in South Leicester.</p> <p>With answers to questions raised.</p>	

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
14 April 2026	<p>Corporate Parenting Annual Report</p> <p>School age childcare</p> <p>Early Work Multi Age Child Protection – Families First Programme</p>		

Forward Plan Items (suggested)

Topic	Detail	Proposed Date
YPC Survey Findings	To go to first meeting of 2026/27 municipal year.	
Impact of Recruitment Work	Requested at OSC – to include caseloads for Social Workers.	
Early Years Extended Entitlement Update	To come early in the 2026/27 municipal year.	
Children from Abroad Seeking Safety	6-monthly report.	
Youth Services - overview		
Academies – Performance Report		
Needs Assessment in Relation to Families in the City		

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Children not in state-maintained schools e.g.: Academies, Independent, Faith schools		
Multi-Academy Trusts - Overview		
Update from local DfE Officer		
Fostering Annual Report	Fostering Service microsite launched	
Fostering Community Champions update	Deferred from 26 March 2024	
Corporate Parenting Update	Annual report.	
Fostering Service – Marketing Strategy		
SEN support and funding		
Pupil Place Planning (Primary and Secondary)		
Early Years Childcare Sufficiency Report		
Children in Care Council/Care Leavers		
School Holiday Activity and Food Provision		
Education Govt reports e.g.: white paper / green paper		
Ofsted Inspection reports		
Children’s Social Care – Recruitment Issues		
Mental Health impacts on children	Likely to be examined jointly with other commissions	
Informal Scrutiny on DSG High Needs Block	To commence following the full report to the Commission.	
Leicester Children’s Services – Self Evaluation		
Covid impact and response to early childhood development		
Families First Programme	To remain on work programme.	

Children's Social Care, Early Help and Prevention Improvement Plan		
SEND Transport	Update to come to the commission on the outstanding 200 children in January 2026.	
DSG/ high needs recovery programme		
School Planning		
Sufficiency in Mainstream and Special Schools	Add Homefield info (following Special meeting May) as an appendix with the report.	
Sufficiency for CLA and Care Leavers		
Early Years Extended Entitlement	A further update to come to the Commission April 2025	