

Everyone's included: the Leeds SEND and inclusion strategy 2021 to 2026

Making Leeds a child-friendly city for our children and young people with special educational needs, disabilities, and additional needs.

DRAFT v12, last updated **06/10/21**



Foreword from the Leeds SEND Youth Forum

Members of the Forum will put together this foreword with us at a meeting of the Forum on 06/10/21 to describe their wishes for the city and our services, as young people with SEND and additional needs.



Introduction from Val Waite, Head of the Learning Inclusion Service, Leeds City Council: *NB to be replaced with introduction from elected members in final draft.*

Thank you for reading our draft new SEND and inclusion strategy for Leeds.

Leeds City Council and Leeds health services are jointly leading this strategy. We have a shared goal: we want to make Leeds an inclusive, child-friendly city for all our children and young people.

We know that children and young people in our city with SEND may face inequalities. We also know that many face additional disadvantages because of their circumstances, for example children and young people who are 'looked after' (unable to live with their families), children 'in need' (in need of support from a social worker), and those who have experienced trauma. Many will also face extra challenges in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. To be a truly child-friendly city, we must be a city that provides the best support for our most vulnerable children and young people. This strategy sets out our plans to work towards this.

To help us produce this strategy, we have listened to what children and young people with SEND and/or in vulnerable contexts, and their families, have told us about living in Leeds and using our services. They have told us what changes they want to see in our city. We have also been listening to people working with our children and young people. Our work on this strategy has been led by these voices and we will keep listening to them.

Your comments on this draft strategy are welcome! If you want to share feedback, please see the details on the last page.

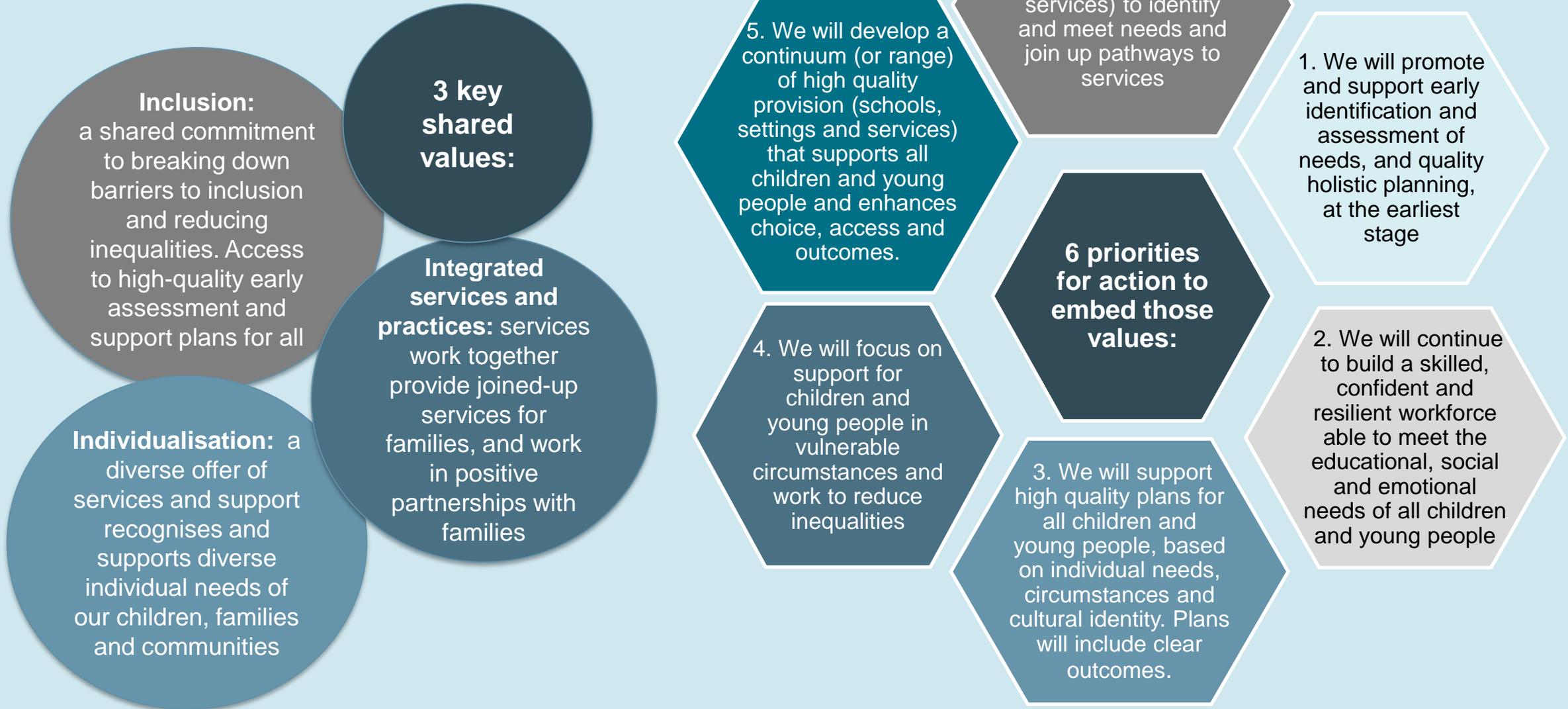
The final version of this strategy will be worked on by designers and checked for accessibility. Please excuse our appearance in the meantime! We are also working to produce a 'quick, easy read' version.

Thank you for reading, and many thanks to all who are contributing to this strategy.



Our SEND and Inclusion strategy in one page:

Partners across Leeds are committed to improving outcomes and reducing inequalities for our children and young people most vulnerable to inequality through:



About our children and young people with SEND and/or vulnerable to inequalities:

189,600 children and young people aged up to 19 live in Leeds (269,500 aged under 25).

Around a quarter of Leeds children and young people aged 0-24 live in the top 10% most deprived areas in the country.

Around two thirds of children in poverty are in a working family.

Around 40% of children in need (children who need support from a social worker) have an identified SEND.

Around a third of learners with SEND in Leeds schools are eligible for Free School Meals.

Over 50% of children looked after by the local authority in Leeds have an identified SEND.

16% of learners in Leeds in schools have an identified SEND. Researchers suggest another 4% may have unidentified needs, making the total 20%: over 137,000 children and young people in Leeds

Leeds has 6 specialist schools; 2 alternative provision free schools; and 260 mainstream schools. Most children with SEND or additional needs attend mainstream schools.

The number of Education, Health and Care plans for those with the most complex SEND needs increased from 2041 in 2014, to over 5000 in 2021.

Why do we need this strategy?

In Leeds we have a bold ambition: we want to be a child-friendly city and the best city in the UK to grow up in.

Partners across Leeds in education, health, social care and youth services, the police force, the voluntary, independent and private sectors, and groups representing young people and families, have all committed to making Leeds child-friendly city. The Leeds Children and Young People's Plan 2019-23 sets out how partners will work towards this.

To be a truly child-friendly city, we must be a child-friendly city for ALL our children and young people. We must be a city with a shared commitment to breaking down barriers to inclusion and reducing inequalities. We must be a city with high aspirations for our children and young people with SEND and work to promote their equal rights and opportunities. We want all our children and young people to be safe and healthy, do their best in learning, have fun, have their voices heard and listened to, and make the best possible start to adult life.

This strategy supports the Leeds Children and Young People's Plan and asks: 'What is it like to be a child or young person with SEND or additional needs, growing up in Leeds? How do we make it better? And how do we support our most vulnerable to disadvantage and inequalities, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic?' It responds to the voices of families who have shared their views and experiences.

Some families have told us about good experiences of living in Leeds and accessing local services:

The support worker is knowledgeable and skilled. She has helped us in so many ways.

We have a really good GP. He really listens. My son is able to talk to him.

The service has been a lifeline...I can't thank them enough.

My teacher listens to me and understands me really well.

The key worker has been brilliant!

The service really care about children and parents.

This strategy is about celebrating, supporting and continuing to build on, the commitment to inclusion and excellent practice that we have in many of our Leeds schools, settings and services.

Why do we need this strategy? Listening to the voices of our families:

Some families tell us about less positive experiences of using services. They have told us what we need to change:

- We need more consistent commitment to inclusion across schools, settings and services:

We've had really mixed experiences of schools, some are great, some make it clear you're not welcome.

At some activities and clubs the staff were keen to be inclusive, but at others we felt unwelcome.

There should be a way for people to learn from the really good SENCos.

Some of my teachers are understanding, but some are not.

- We need more consistency in knowledge, skills, and capacity of our workforce:

The staff were nice, but they didn't seem to know much, or want to learn more, about the condition.

The key worker was excellent and we did the training together, but when she left, nobody else had time to do the training.

All people working with families need to listen and respect us. One SENCo really worked with me as a team and it helped so much

- We need to identify needs and provide support, earlier:

It took 2 years to get the autism diagnosis and we had no support during that time.

My daughter would not have ended up needing (a specialist service) if her needs had been met earlier.

Too many children slip through the net because their needs are not picked up early enough.

- We need a more diverse offer of services, and more capacity in some services:

There are no places available in the special school, so we have to wait.

We need more 'blended' options for learners who are able academically, but not able to manage a typical mainstream environment.

There is no childcare that can support his needs in our area, so I ended up leaving my job.

This strategy is about supporting and enabling all schools, education settings and services in Leeds to work together, and in partnership with families, to provide consistently high quality support for all children and young people, wherever they live. It is about providing the right services for our growing population and for our diverse communities.

Why do we need this strategy? Outcomes for our children and young people in Leeds:

In some ways we can be proud of our outcomes for children and young people in Leeds. For example, we have one of the lowest levels of permanent exclusion in the country. Permanent exclusion from school can have a big impact on a child or young person's outcomes in learning, on their wellbeing, and their ability to thrive long-term in their adult lives.

However, other outcomes in Leeds, like our numbers of fixed-term exclusions and the attendance at school of learners with SEND, are no better to those in other areas. When children are not attending school or another place of learning, not only do they miss out on learning, but also on social experiences, pastoral care, and access to health and care services. They may also become vulnerable to exploitation by other young people and adults.

Our learning outcomes for children and young people with SEND also appear to be less positive than those in other areas. This is something we are still trying to understand, as some unique systems in Leeds may mean we get a slightly misleading picture of this; but it is still a big concern, especially as we know that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and lost time in learning, will be felt more by our children and young people with SEND and additional needs. We must do more to tackle this head-on and provide the extra support that will give our most vulnerable children and young people, equal opportunities to do their best in learning and get ready for a good adult life,

This strategy is working to improve outcomes for our children and young people most vulnerable to less positive outcomes. Our learning strategy for all learners in Leeds focuses on outcomes in the '3As': attendance at school, attainment in learning, and achievement (not just in school, but in activities like sport, the arts, and volunteering too). We will work to reduce the 'gap' in outcomes between children and young people with SEND and their peers. We will provide extra support to make sure ALL our children and young people have equal opportunities to thrive in learning and in wider life in Leeds.

(Referring to national data):

'Children with SEN, those supported by social care and those who are disadvantaged, are all more likely to be excluded from school. Just 7% of children who were permanently excluded and 18% of children who received multiple fixed period exclusions achieved good passes in English and maths GCSEs, qualifications that are essential to succeeding in adult life.'

The Timpson review of school exclusion, May 2019



What do we aim to achieve? The outcomes we will work towards:

What do we want life to be like for our Leeds children and young people with SEND and with additional needs, and their families?

The 5 outcomes we want for all our children and young people in Leeds:

- To be safe from harm
- To do well at all levels of learning and have skills for life
- To enjoy healthy lifestyles
- To have fun growing up
- To be active citizens who feel they have a voice and influence

The 11 priorities in our Leeds Children and Young People's Plan 2019 to 2023:

1. Help children and parents to live in safe, supportive and loving families
2. Ensure that the most vulnerable are protected
3. Support families to give children the best start in life
4. Increase the number of children and young people participating and engaging in learning
5. Improve achievement and attainment for all
6. Improve at a faster rate, educational progress for learners who are vulnerable to less positive outcomes
7. Improve social, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing
8. Encourage physical activity and healthy eating
9. Support young people to make good choices and minimise risk-taking behaviours
10. Help young people into adulthood, to develop life skills, and be ready for work
11. Improve access to affordable, safe, and reliable connected transport for young people

The '3 As' at the heart of our learning strategy for all children and young people in Leeds:

Attainment: children reach their full potential in learning

Attendance: children need to attend school as much as possible for them, not just to learn, but to be safe and build friendships

Achievement: all children have the opportunity to take part in positive activities in their local community such as sports, the arts and volunteering. This helps them to make friends, enjoy new experiences and learn valuable qualities such as team work

The outcomes we will achieve through our SEND and inclusion strategy:

Children and young people in Leeds with SEND and/or other additional needs have equal rights and opportunities to thrive in the same way as their peers and to be safe and in their best possible health; to have fun; to have a voice; to attend, achieve and attain in education; to meet their personal development goals; and to make the best start to adult life.

Inclusion

Every child and young person in Leeds can access inclusive, high quality services and support.

All schools, settings and services in Leeds welcome children and young people with SEND and/or other needs, remove barriers to their inclusion, and have aspirations for them to achieve their best possible outcomes.

Additional needs are identified and met at the earliest possible stage.

Integration

Services across education, health and care work together well and share information so that services and plans are joined-up.

Families only need to share their stories once.

The child and family are always at the centre of conversations, decisions and plans that affect them: 'nothing about me without me'.

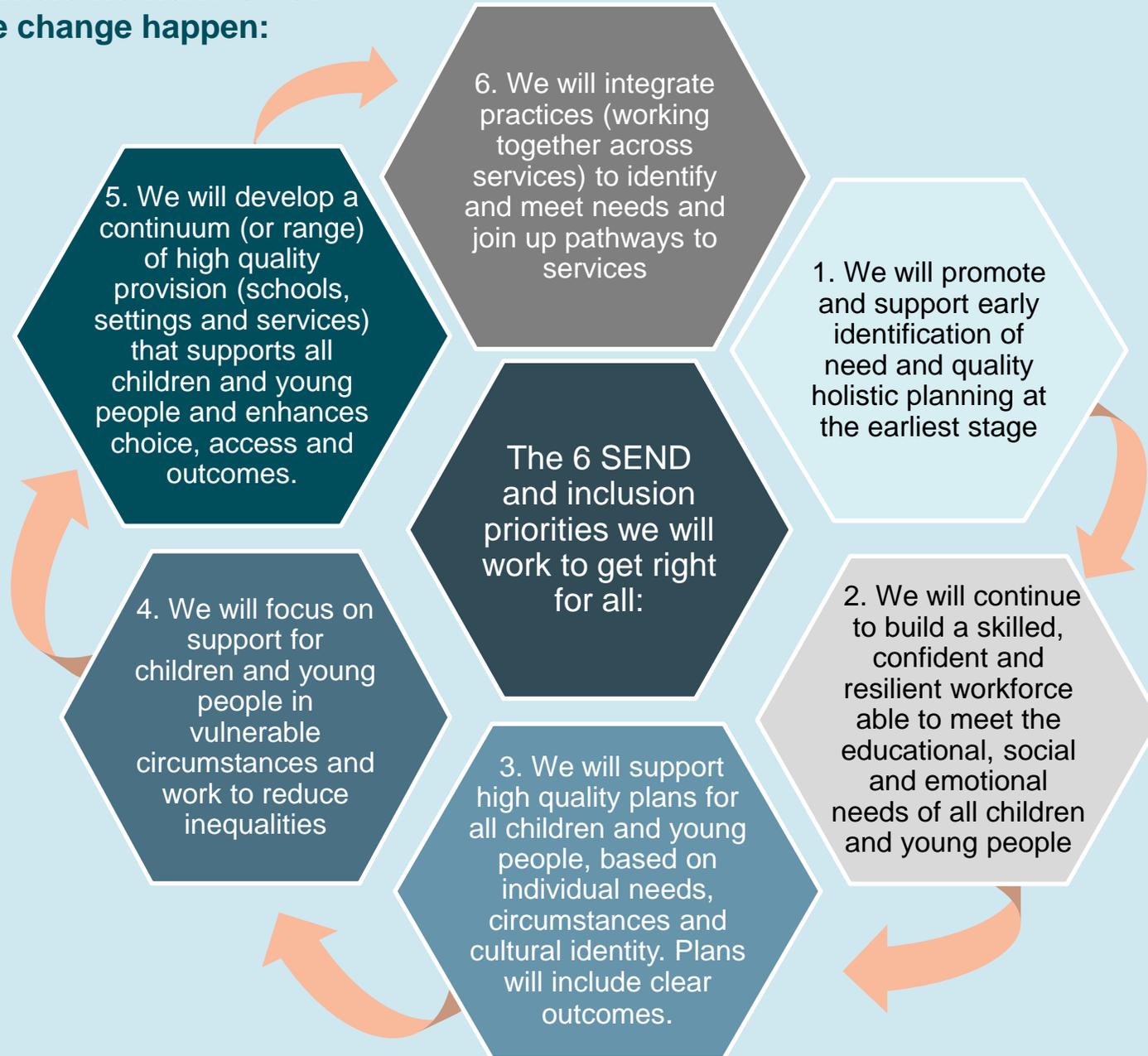
Individualisation

Support and services are personalised and recognise children and young people's individual needs, cultural backgrounds, and goals. We offer a range of high quality specialist services and support for different needs. Families have choices and control in the services they access.

CYP with the highest level of needs have a bespoke quality offer which enhances and improves choice and access.

We reduce the impact of inequalities, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our most vulnerable to disadvantage

**How do we get to where we want to be?
6 priorities to make change happen:**



Phase 1 and Phase 2 of this strategy:

We believe that improving what we do in Leeds across all of these areas, is vital. We also recognise that we are still in a live global pandemic with a significant impact on many of our children and young people with additional needs, their families, and those working with them.

For each of these priority areas, work which responds most to the impact of the pandemic, will be in Phase 1.

Some work to support these priorities will be more effective if it happens when we start to move beyond the recovery process, in Phase 2.

How do we work as partners with shared commitments and behaviours? 6 cross-cutting themes in all we do:

6 'golden threads' that will run through all the work partners do, to support all our priorities:

We consider the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and work to reduce the impact on our children, young people and families.

We work with families as partners and support children and young people to have a voice. We empower and enable them to influence change in the services they use and the city they live in.

We support children from their earliest years and we support young people to get ready for adult life from the earliest opportunity.

Personalisation: we always think about a child or young person as an individual, and personalise our offer of support to recognise their unique needs, culture and goals. We have a diverse local offer of services and support that can meet diverse needs.

Joint commissioning: we work together across education, health and care to identify the services we need to offer and the best way to deliver them. This makes services more joined-up for families and help us to use money wisely.

We make good use of quality data and information to plan the right services for our city, and make sure that our work makes a real difference to children and young people and families.

Making it happen: so what are we actually going to do?

Key actions to support our priorities and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- A shared action plan sets out in more detail the work that partners across education, health, care, and youth services will co-deliver and how we will monitor our progress and evaluate it with partners, including our young people and families.
- This is a 'dynamic' action plan that changes on working basis as we continue to respond to the demands of a really changing context, due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Our first priority in our first phase of work must and will be the protection of our most vulnerable to disadvantage and inequality as the pandemic continues, and as we move into a recovery phase.** We have to accept that we are working with some 'unknowns' as we move forward and prioritise carefully.
- To support this **we will put children and young people with SEND and/or in vulnerable contexts at the heart of our local delivery of the national 'Wellbeing for Education Return' offer, which responds to the impact of the pandemic.** We have already delivered training and resources for all schools and in Leeds in phase 1 of this project. In phase 2 we will make sure that every school in Leeds has continued access to the training and resources, and can access a free offer of case-based practice development to help them support children and young people returning to education. Our Educational Psychology Team will lead this to make sure that their expertise in supporting those with additional needs is at the heart of the offer.
- **In phase 1 of this strategy we will also work on a number of other 'main actions' that will support our priorities and make the most difference to the most children and young people, most quickly** – especially in the context of the pandemic. The following pages tell you more about these main actions and how they support our priorities – and the difference they will make to our children and young people, families and workforce.

Making it happen: key actions that will support our 6 priorities:

14

We will co-produce and launch the new Leeds SEND and Inclusion practice framework:

This is one of our most key developments to promote, celebrate and embed inclusion and aspiration with all our Leeds schools and education partners – and in time, wider services too. The framework aims to:

- Enable and empower all Leeds schools and education settings to be confident they are delivering best practice in early identification, quality, holistic assessment of needs, and quality plans to meet needs. The majority of our children and young people with SEND will access support through this offer, in line with national policy and evidenced based best practice.
- Provide a framework of practical tools, resources and learning, brought together in one place, to help practitioners build on their practice and articulate the shared vision for inclusion in a Child Friendly Leeds.
- Support practitioners to navigate wider Leeds systems, such as requests to services or applications for funding, efficiently and using quality plans already in existence rather than duplicating – making sure children and young people's needs are understood and met as rapidly as possible, and reducing the workload for practitioners wherever possible.
- Celebrate, recognise and share best practice in our schools and settings.

The Framework will align with the legal framework of the SEND Code of Practice 2014, local best practice principles and our wider Leeds system of Early Help, and recent research. It will bring all these aspects together with practical tools to empower and enable the workforce to deliver best practice.

'So what?' What difference will this make to our children and families?

Identifying and meeting needs earlier will improve children's outcomes in learning and their well-being, and the well-being of their families. Teachers will be better supported in understanding their duties under the Code of Practice. If our workforce can save time in paperwork and avoid inefficiencies, they can spend time supporting learners instead. We can also reduce the impact on specialist services, as children and young people's needs are identified and met at an earlier point, avoiding escalation or crisis points as a result. **All of this is more crucial than ever in the response to the pandemic.**

1. We will promote and support early identification of needs and quality holistic assessment at the earliest stage

2. We will continue to build a skilled, confident and resilient workforce able to meet the educational, social and emotional needs of all children and young people

3. We will support high quality plans for all children and young people, based on individual needs, circumstances and cultural identity. Plans will include clear outcomes.

Making it happen: key actions that will support our 6 priorities:

We will work with partners to develop our systems for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

Numbers of EHCPs for learners with highly complex needs have risen dramatically in Leeds in recent years. The number of active EHCPs increased from 2041 in 2014, to 5006 at the time of writing in 2021. This increase is likely to continue and we need to expand our capacity and develop our systems and teams to manage increased demand.

Some partners have asked if we are trying to reduce numbers of EHCPs in Leeds, and instead focus on assessments and support plans led by schools and education settings. This is not the case. We expect to deliver more EHCPs in the years ahead, not less. However, in line with national policy, the majority of our children and young people with SEND will access assessment and support plans led by their school or setting, not via an EHCP. We want to work on both, and embed quality plans across the whole system.

We will work with partners across education, health and care to make sure all contributions to EHCPs are timely and manageable. We will also work with partners who support other types of specialist plans, to make sure plans are integrated or aligned as much as possible. We will monitor the quality of EHCPs and how well they are actually delivered within schools, settings and services. We will also work with families to make sure their voices and experiences influence changes in our systems for EHCPs

'So what?' What difference will this make to our children and families?

Doing this work will help us to keep producing and reviewing EHCPs in timely way and avoid delays to accessing the vital support provided through EHCPs. Monitoring the quality and delivery of EHCPs will make sure we have consistently high quality plans for all, and that EHCPs do improve outcomes in learning, development and getting ready for adult life as they are intended to do. All of this is vital in meeting the needs of our children and young people who may be most likely to have lost time in education, due to the pandemic.

2. We will continue to build a skilled, confident and resilient workforce able to meet the educational, social and emotional needs of all children and young people

3. We will support high quality plans for all children and young people, based on individual needs, circumstances and cultural identity.

6. We will integrate practices (working together across services) to identify and meet needs and join up pathways to services

Making it happen: key actions that will support our 6 priorities:

We will trial and develop new partnership approaches to working together to more pro-actively identify, assess and meet the needs of those who may be vulnerable to inequalities. We will:

- Building on our partnership work with West Yorkshire Police's Violence Reduction Unit to better identify, assess and meet the needs of young people who are involved in, or at significant risk of, criminal activity or criminal exploitation, and support them to stay engaged in education and supportive, positive relationships with services. This has been effective, and we will develop wider work based on the learning from it.
- Build on our supportive partnerships across schools and services and pilot new approaches to more pro-actively identifying learners with multiple fixed-term exclusions. This suggests that they may have unmet needs and may be at risk of disengaging from education, permanent exclusion, anti-social activity, exploitation and/or other less positive outcomes. Many will have identified or unidentified SEND needs. We will work together to trial new approaches to identify, assess and meet the needs of these learners rapidly and support their long-term inclusion and regular attendance in learning.
- Developing new opportunities for partners across services to come together to share learning and best practice in supporting our most vulnerable to inequalities, using a themed, case-review approach to see what is working well to break down barriers to inclusion, raise awareness of key issues, and embed our learning in our practice and systems across services.
- Key in all this work will be our innovative Area Inclusion Partnerships (AIPs), partnerships of Leeds schools across 5 areas of the city who work together and with teams in Leeds City Council to promote inclusion in Leeds schools. We will keep working to enhance their offer of support to schools and prevent children and young people from losing time in education and the protective factors education provides.



4. We will focus on support for children and young people in vulnerable circumstances and work to reduce inequalities

'So what?' What difference will this make to our children and families?

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the vulnerability of many of our learners to less positive outcomes that can have a life-long impact on them and their communities. Now more than ever we need to work together to keep our children and young people in learning, rapidly identify, assess and meet unidentified and unmet needs, and enable our workforce to keep supporting our most vulnerable through a time of extra pressures and challenges

Making it happen: key actions that will support our 6 priorities:

We will continue to **develop more education provision for learners with SEND**. We will increase the places at an existing specialist school from 350 to 500, in 2021. We will open a new specialist free school in 2023, offering 200 new places and also 50 new 'partnership' places in local mainstream schools, for those who benefit from aspects of both mainstream and specialist provision.

We will embed inclusion in our wider process of planning ALL school places and in post-16 education provision. Plans for all new schools and settings will consider how they will meet the needs of those with SEND and promote inclusion.

We will promote and provide **supported internships for young people with SEND** in Leeds City Council.

We will consider **possible digital options to enhance and develop our current offer of remote learning**. For some learners, like those with complex health needs that affect their ability to attend school, this is vital to help them avoid missing education.

We will work to **improve the quality and accessibility of information about local services for families** and increase our **provision of support for parent/carer and youth participation**. We will develop new opportunities for parents and carers and young people to play a role in governing this strategy and holding services to account.

We will establish a **new work group to develop 'places to go, things to do, and spaces to play'**. Young people and families have told us how important this is to them. We need to do more to promote equal opportunities to access activities that help young people build their social skills, learn new things, and make friends.

'So what?' What difference will this make to our children and families?

Having a more diverse range of education provision will better meet diverse needs and offer more choices. Quality information will help families to access services, and to understand local and national systems and advocate for themselves. Providing more opportunities for families' voices to influence changes locally will empower families, and help services to get their offer of support right.

5. We will develop a continuum (or range) of high quality provision (schools, settings and services) that supports all children and young people and enhances choice, access and outcomes.

Making it happen: key actions that will support our 6 priorities:

Families and other partners have told us that waiting times for autism assessment are too long and there is not enough support for families during the wait. We will work across partners in local health services and Leeds City Council to **review the pathway to autism assessment and diagnosis**, aiming to reduce waiting times and offer more support while families wait for assessment.

We will also co-lead a **new city-wide approach to trauma-informed practice to support the workforce** to identify trauma and the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on our children and young people, and respond to that impact, rapidly.

Both of the above will be led under the ***Future in Mind: Leeds*** strategy for supporting children and young people's social, emotional and mental health (SEMH), which closely aligns with this strategy and is also a strategy co-produced by local health agencies with Leeds City Council, and are part of our joint commissioning arrangements.

We will also work to embed our re-structure of services in Leeds City Council which has brought together all teams working with learners who may be more vulnerable to inequalities, into one Learning Inclusion Service. This will help us to provide more joined-up support for our most vulnerable.

6. We will integrate practices (working together across services) to identify and meet needs and join up pathways to services

4. We will focus on support for children and young people in vulnerable circumstances and work to reduce inequalities

'So what?' What difference will this make to our children and families?

Improving our pathway to autism assessment and diagnosis will help families access support in good time, and prevent children and young people from losing valuable time in their learning and development because it takes too long to get the support they need.

Our city-wide approach to responding to impact of trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) will support consistent skills and knowledge across our whole education, health and care workforce in understanding and responding to trauma. It will help us to deliver support for those who have experienced trauma as early as possible and reduce the impact on their health, well-being and learning. This will be really key in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic because evidence suggest an increase in some ACES such as experiences of domestic violence.

Making it happen: reporting progress and keeping us accountable:

- **Our SEND Partnership Board** has oversight and governance of this strategy. It makes all high-level decisions about the strategy and holds the people delivering it, to account. The Board includes representatives of parents and carers, young people, voluntary and community services and partners across education, health, care and youth services for both children and adults.
- We are also developing some **new ways to give children and young people with SEND, and their families, more of a role in holding services to account and governing the strategy**. They told us they wanted more opportunities to take part in this, and place to come together and talk about what they can do together in their communities. We will have a new forum for parents and carers, and a group for young people which will be part of our new SEND Youth Forum for Leeds.
- If you are interested in these opportunities, please get in touch! Contact details are on the last page.
- **Our SEND practice improvement group** brings together partners from all the services responsible for delivering all the work in the strategy happen. This includes services across education, health, care and youth services. The practice improvement group will provide regular reports on their progress to the SEND Partnership Board and to our new forums for children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers.
- We will also work closely with the Board managing the ***Future in Mind: Leeds strategy*** supporting children's social, emotional and mental health (SEMH). Many of our learners with SEND will have SEMH needs so we need to make sure our work joins-up and/or aligns. Find out more about this on the MindMate website: <https://www.mindmate.org.uk/>
- We will also post **regular updates on progress** on our Leeds Local Offer for SEND site: www.leedslocaloffer.org.uk



Find out more and get involved:

- Find out more about services in Leeds for children and young people with SEND and/or additional needs: www.leedslocaloffer.org.uk
- For impartial and confidential information, advice and guidance for parents and carers in Leeds: Leeds SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SEND IASS): <https://sendiass.leeds.gov.uk/> 0113 378 5020 (Monday to Friday, 10am to 3pm. Outside of these hours, you can leave a message using a 24-hour answer-phone service).
- Find out more about the Leeds SEND and Inclusion strategy, or ask us about opportunities to support it: contact the Learning Inclusion Service, Leeds City Council via our Leeds Local Offer email address: LLO@Leeds.gov.uk It would be helpful to include 'SEND and inclusion strategy' in the title of your email so it can be quickly sent on to the right person.
- Find other opportunities to have a say about services in Leeds: <https://leedslocaloffer.org.uk/#!/directory/33458>

Many thanks to all the young people, parents and carers, and partners in services of all kinds, who helped to shape this strategy.

Thanks for reading!

