

Lincolnshire County Strategy for Post 16 Learners with Learning Difficulties and or Disabilities



At the centre of this work are all the young people in Lincolnshire who have a learning difficulty and/or disability and whose future lives will be influenced by this development. This strategic plan formulates the mechanisms we can put in place to ensure that each individual has the best opportunity and support so that as far as possible they can succeed in their future lives and become active members of their local communities.

This strategy is designed to respond to the needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities Post 16 and builds upon the Review of Special School and Mainstream Unit provision adopted by the County Council in March 2011.

In adopting this strategy the County Council is seeking to ensure a continuity of high quality provision and training opportunities that are available to meet the very diverse needs and aspirations of learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities Post 16.

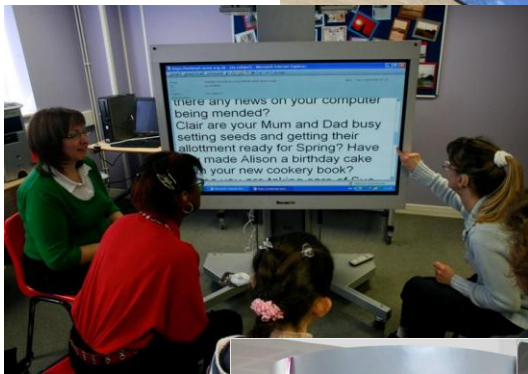
The County Council recognises that there is much excellent provision already available in the county to support learners' needs and aspirations, and through the adoption of this strategy is actively supporting initiatives to develop existing practice more widely. This will be achieved through a partnership between the council, schools, independent training providers, the further education sector and where appropriate independent specialist providers. The County Council is confident that this approach will further improve the pathways available to learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, providing individualised learning and training opportunities. This will result in better outcomes and improved opportunities for individuals so that they are more able to lead a more independent life and contribute to the community in which they live in so far as they are able.

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1. Mission

To bring about a coherent strategic approach to providing Post 16 learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability (LLDD) with high quality local opportunities for learning skills that are relevant to their individual needs and aspirations for their future lives.

2. Vision

There is a choice of high quality post 16 provision across Lincolnshire to meet the individual learning and support needs of young people 16-25 with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities and individual requirements. The provision offers the appropriate environment, curriculum and support to enable learners to achieve their full potential and move onto their adult lives within their own communities.

3. Challenges and Opportunities

There are many drivers for change in provision for Post 16 LLDD from a national, local and provider specific perspective. These are some of the key initiatives that impact on this strategic plan for improvement and development:

3a. National Policy Context

The Coalition Government continues to pursue an agenda of reform emphasising the requirements to make cost savings and this is having a major impact on all local authority spending. However the government's goal to create an inclusive society with opportunity for everyone is evident in a number of recent reports that will have a significant impact on the development of this strategy.

3b. Department for Education

Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability.

The Green Paper was published in March 2011 and sets the agenda for change with regard to young people in this country who are disabled or identified as having a special educational need.

The report states that 'Children and young people with SEN don't achieve as they could – by the time they leave school these young people are more than twice as likely to be out of education, training or employment as those without. This is wrong'

'A central piece of the jigsaw is the capacity and commitment of the education system to give every child and young person the chance to succeed'.

'Schools and colleges play a key role in helping young people make successful transitions to adulthood, but young people also need wider opportunities and support to make the most of their future and give them the best chance of a fulfilling adulthood with employment, good health and independence.'

To deliver on the Green Paper aspiration it is essential that the LCC Post 16 LLDD Strategy addresses the following:

- To put in place a radically different system to support better life outcomes.
- Work in partnership with parents/carers to give each child support to fulfil their potential.
- Join up education, health and social care to provide families with a package of support that reflects all their needs.
- For local authorities and other services to set out a local offer of all the services available.
- Establish a clearer system so that professionals from different services and the voluntary and community sector can work together.
- Extend the freedom and flexibility with which funding can be used locally.
- To establish local pathfinders to demonstrate the best way forward through innovative and collaborative ways of working.

National Audit Office report - Oversight of special education for young people aged 16-25

This report published in November 2011 examines how effectively information is used to help secure value for money from 16-25 special education in England.

One of the key findings is the indication of overall value for money that can be achieved if special education is delivered effectively and properly focused.

‘Achieving the Department’s objectives of greater independence and employability through special education could benefit individuals and reduce longer-term support needs. We estimate that the cost to the public purse of supporting a person with a moderate learning disability through adult life (16–64) is £2–3 million at today’s prices. Equipping a young person with the skills to live in semi-independent rather than fully supported housing could, in addition to quality-of-life improvements, reduce these lifetime support costs by around £1 million. Supporting one person with a learning disability into employment could, in addition to improving their independence and self-esteem, reduce lifetime costs to the public purse by around £170,000 and increase the person’s income by between 55 and 95 per cent. If properly focused and effective, therefore, investment in special education should provide long-term returns. However, 30 per cent of young people with Statements at 16 are not in education, employment or training at 18, compared to 13 per cent of those without special educational needs.’

3c. Ofsted

Progression post 16 for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

This report was published in August 2011 and sets out the findings from a survey to evaluate the arrangements for transition from school and the provision in post-16 settings for LLDD up to the age of 25. The messages from the report should clearly steer our thinking when developing Post 16 provision for LLDD in Lincolnshire.

The opening statement in the report is very clear in setting the size of the challenge.

‘Too few young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress from school to complete programmes of learning in post-16 settings which develop greater independence, lead to further study, supported or open employment, or provide skills for independence.’

'Insufficient provision was available locally for learners with the very highest levels of need, and varied locally for specialist needs. The current local authority placement process resulted in significant inequities in types of provision offered to learners with similar needs. Criteria for assessing social care needs varied between local authorities.'

'Transition at age 19 to different services created barriers for learners when they encounter different criteria for funding.'

The report sets out recommendations for the DfE and the DfBIS, for local authorities and for providers that must be taken account of in this strategic plan.

For example the report states that:

The local authority should:

- Build on the expertise within the post 16 sector and the third sector, to improve local capacity, particularly for learners with the most profound and complex needs.
- Improve the arrangements for transition from school to the post 16 sector.

Providers should:

- Offer programmes which provide an appropriate level of challenge and prepare learners for progression to the destinations that match their long term goals.
- Explore ways to provide job coaching and internships to prepare learners for open or supported employment and apprenticeships.
- Work in partnership with other providers and third sector organisations to maximise the specialist resources in the locality, and increase the range of options for learners with the most complex needs.

The report raises concerns and cites examples of good practice. The theme highlighted throughout the report is the necessity to significantly develop local capacity so that learners have a wider range of options, including working with third sector organisations.

They found that 'sending learners out of the local area only postponed the issues, as they still required specialist provision when they returned and in some cases had to be taught skills of independence again'.

4a. Legislative Basis

The local authority has a statutory role to ensure that provision 0-25 for SEND groups is in place.

This is backed up by the provision in the 1996 Education Act (as a key driver), the ASCL Act 2009, particularly Section 15ZA and Section 139a and the appropriate Social Care and Health related legislation.

In this context the local authority has an increased responsibility to champion the rights of children and young people.

4b. Raising of the Participation age

From 2013, young people will be required to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17. From 2015 they will be required to continue until their 18th birthday. Young people will be able to choose how they participate, which could be through full-time education, an apprenticeship or part-time education or training if they are employed, self employed or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week.

RPA is aimed at ensuring all young people have the opportunity to participate and reach their full potential.

5. Local Policy Context

5a. The Review of Post 16 Provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties and /or Disabilities in Lincolnshire reported on in May 2011, was driven by the decision to carry out a Review of Special Schools and Mainstream Unit Provision formally reported on in November 2010.

Previously most of the initiatives regarding Special Educational Needs and Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities by Further Education (FE) colleges were undertaken without reference to any countywide school and/or special school strategy.

Increasingly special schools are showing a greater interest in working with FE colleagues in the interests of young people. These emerging relationships have the potential to ensure that good quality provision can become available locally, through extending choice, sharing resources and specialist skills.

Over the past year the FE colleges have started to make further alterations to enhance their provision and to begin to cater for learners that in the past they would not have been able to include. They are enthusiastic to continue to develop their provision to meet the diverse needs of these learners.

A number of recommendations are outlined in both reviews:

- Effective partnership working.
- Planning for and providing a comprehensive programme of suitable education, employment and training in each of the 7 district council areas.
- Working with special schools with residential provision to create suitable opportunities in the county for those young people who historically have had to live elsewhere to have their ongoing educational needs met at 19.
- To improve transition arrangements at 16 or 19 ensuring that the most appropriate learning environment to support the young person is identified – this aspect of the local work stream is being directed by the Transitions Board.

5b. In March 2011, the Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP (Secretary of State) wrote to the Chair of the Young Person's Learning Agency (YPLA) with regard to their remit. This extract from the letter outlines the proposals for funding for these young people from 2012.

'The YPLA has worked closely with local authorities to improve access for learners with learning difficulties, whilst reducing costs and this has resulted in financial savings. The YPLA must continue to work innovatively with local authorities and other partners on both these fronts during 2011/2012 to contribute to work on reducing bureaucracy and improving efficiency. I also expect you to work with local authorities to develop proposals for handing over responsibility for the commissioning of provision for high cost learners with a learning difficulty assessment aged up to 25, with the aim that this transfers for 2012/13'.

If this proposal is taken forward it will provide a real opportunity for the local authority to ensure equitable funding for learners and the development of appropriate local learning opportunities.

5c. Outcomes of the Getting a Life pilot

This was a national 3 year programme set up to discover why young people who have a learning difficulty and are eligible for adult social care support do not go into work when they leave school or college. Lincolnshire was one of 12 local authorities involved in the project.

With the main focus on paid work, the programme sought to:

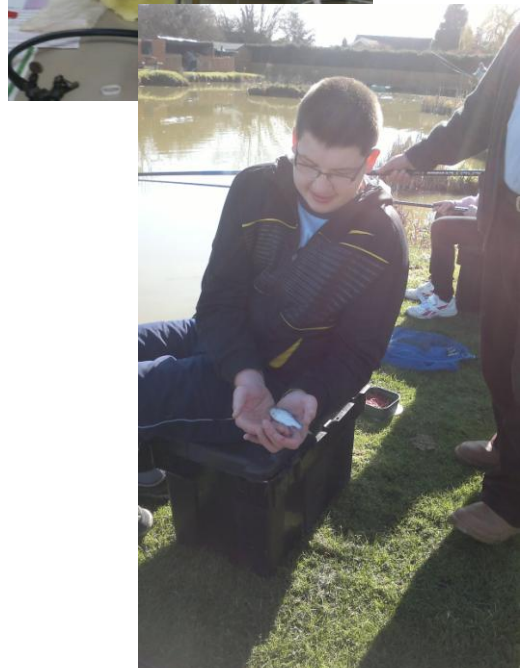
- Raise aspirations.
- Look at what system changes need to happen.
- Create a clear pathway to paid work.

Through the evaluation of the pathfinder, key messages evolved that need to be taken account of in the development of this work.

Next Steps

The key factors driving this work forward are set out in the 8 strategic priorities set out in section 6 of this document. For these priorities to be successfully implemented will require General Further Education colleges, special schools and mainstream units provision, independent training providers, voluntary and community providers, Children's Services, Adult Social Care and health to play a full role in the development and delivery of a coherent, offer of a range of planned provision across the county to meet the diverse needs and aspirations of post 16 LLDD. This will be augmented by the use of residential and or out of county provision which will remain an option to Lincolnshire County Council in meeting the individual needs of young adults between the ages of 16 – 25 years.

Throughout this document reference is made to 'local provision'. This is the provision that is considered to be the most appropriate provision to meet the learner's individual needs and aspirations and is as close as is possible to where the learner lives.



6. Priorities

To develop a countywide strategy to meet the on-going education, care and independence, and preparation for employment needs of young people aged 16-25, for whom the Local Authority has responsibility.

- 1. To establish a clear working relationship between the range of agencies involved with the funding/commissioning of services and provision for young people aged 16-25 who have a learning difficulty and/or disability, leading to creative, joint planning and funding of the most appropriate services for each individual to enable them to make the transition to adult life in their own community.**

Actions

- Engage effectively with Children's Services, Adult Social Care and health to establish an agreed protocol for joint working with regard to communication, development, practice and funding.
 - Share knowledge of provision available for LLDD 16-25 across agencies in each local area and explore the possibility of linking the Post 16 LLDD Directory (currently being developed) with other existing websites to publicise a joint local offer.
 - Ensure all agencies are represented on and contribute to the work of the local working groups.
 - Establish a named contact person for each agency within each local area.
 - Ensure transition planning begins at the earliest opportunity and no later than in year 9 and all relevant agencies are involved throughout the process.
 - Pilot multi agency, individual packages of provision for some learners requiring joint planning, funding and evaluation.
 - Develop new provision, as required through multi agency cooperation.
- 2. To establish a system of data capture and analysis which indicates projected needs as early as possible when a young person is making a transition from one provider to another up until the age of 25, allowing maximum opportunity for putting appropriate resources in place.**

Actions

- Analyse the current system of collecting data about young people leaving special schools and LLDD making a transition from one post school provider to another up to the age of 25.
- Establish a system that fully captures the data needed to ensure a young person leaving school moves onto the most appropriate provision with the required support in place.
- Create a single transition plan for each learner capturing their education, social care and health needs, owned by the learner and transferred with the learner through each future placement.
- Explore the use of technology, in terms of a web platform to capture individual learner information and establish a data sharing protocol.
- Establish a system that captures destination data post school and ensures that LLDD can be tracked up to the age of 25, reducing the percentage of LLDD becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).
- Establish an agreed timeline for notifying young people, their parents/carers with regard to future placements.
- Embed the systems into providers' Quality Assurance Frameworks.

- 3. To develop a clear knowledge of the provision available to Post 16 LLDD within each local area including the offer from colleges, schools, independent training providers, social care, health and the voluntary and community sector and develop a system to share this information in the most appropriate way with the young person, their family/carers and other professionals and interested parties involved in supporting the young person.**

Actions

- Research the provision available for LLDD 16-25 across the county and near the county borders including the offer from colleges, schools, independent providers, ISPs, Children's Services and Adult Social Care, health and the voluntary and community sector.
- Consult with local groups re provision and gather opinions on the most appropriate ways of presenting the information.
- Seek advice with regard to the most appropriate way to present the information for LLDD.
- Work with design and production teams to develop an appropriate "Directory of Provision for Post 16 LLDD" in the first instance and explore the development of web based information as part of 'a local offer'.
- Create effective channels for distributing the directory to all relevant people and explore other ways of raising awareness of available provision, e.g. open events, roadshows, local shows etc.

- 4. To plan for and develop the range and capacity of provision across Lincolnshire to meet the identified needs and aspirations of Post 16 LLDD within their local area, ensuring the learner can access the most appropriate provision and receive the required support and guidance to make this placement successful.**

Actions

- Analyse the needs of young people at the earliest opportunity and no later than year 9 in preparation for them leaving special schools.
- Analyse and record the needs of LLDD leaving college/training providers.
- Through the establishment of local working groups identify the gaps in post 16 provision for LLDD. Identify the requirements with regard to locality, environment, curriculum, support for employment, support for independent living, specialist support and facilities and transport.
- Plan and coordinate the development of existing and new post 16 provision for LLDD to meet identified need.
- Develop pathfinders to trial a new approach to delivering multi agency, jointly funded, relevant and high quality local provision.

- 5. To ensure that post 16 learning opportunities prepare young people for their future lives in for example: work, sheltered/supported employment, volunteering, independent/supported living or day/residential care. This should be achieved through individual learning programmes incorporating measurable outcomes focused on retention, achievement and destination, captured and analysed through a robust, reliable information management system.**

Actions

- Ensure that all Post 16 LLDD have an individual learning plan clearly focused on a relevant and realistic end goal and incorporating measurable outcomes.
- Ensure that programmes and courses focus on preparation for adult life and are a progression from the learner's baseline assessment completed at the start of the course.
- Ensure that where appropriate learning prepares learners for real work, supported employment or volunteering in line with their current local labour market and involves local employer input, job coaching in the work place and/or enterprise/self employment activities rather than just classroom based learning.
- Collect and analyse data from post 16 providers with regard to retention, achievements, qualifications and post placement destinations.
- Deliver impartial careers advice and guidance that supports the young person to make realistic, informed choices and decisions.

- 6. To undertake a skills audit to identify the range, nature and location of existing skills. Implement a programme of training and development and a skills sharing strategy across the county to ensure that providers are able to meet the needs of the young people within Lincolnshire.**

Actions

- Undertake a skills audit across special schools and providers of post 16 learning and support for LLDD.
- Analyse the findings with regard to range, nature, level and location of skills.
- Implement a programme of staff training and development to address the identified skills shortage in each local area where practically and financially possible.
- Implement a programme of skills sharing and cross provider training and development in each local area.
- Ensure the training and development meets the changing needs of young people coming up through the special schools through enhanced opportunities for awareness raising and learning between school and post school providers.

7. To create appropriate channels for the sharing of information between providers and other agencies and develop clear, transparent, timely lines of communication with young people, their families and/or carers.

Actions

- Analyse current information sharing protocols between schools, post 16 providers and other agencies.
- Develop enhanced information sharing protocols if and where required.
- Analyse the current lines of communication between the local authority, providers and other agencies with young people and their parents/carers when the young person is making a transition from one provider to another between the ages of 16-25.
- Develop agreed timelines of communication during transition so as young people and their parents/carers are kept informed throughout the process.
- Include information sharing protocols and communication strategies in any new policies.

8. To ensure that the Local Authority continues to meet its legal obligations in relation to 16-25 provision for LLDD.

Actions

- The local authority meets its legal obligations with regard to the detailed requirements of the Education Act 1996 (Part IV) - this takes account of a number of assessments and clearly highlights transition processes.
- The local authority fulfils its duty under section 15ZA of the Education Act 1996 in respect of education and training for persons over compulsory school age, i.e. a local authority must secure that enough suitable education and training is provided to meet the reasonable needs of: persons in their area who are over compulsory school age but under 19; and persons in their area who are aged 19 or over but under 25 and are subject to a learning difficulty assessment.
- The local authority fulfils its duties as they relate to the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning (ASCL) Act 2009.
- The local authority disseminates statutory guidance made under the Education Act 1996, and section 139a (7) of the Learning and skills Act 2000, with particular emphasis on Learning Difficulty Assessments.
- The local authority ensures the development of updated policies, procedures and communication strategies.
- The local authority fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- The local authority fulfils its duty under section 10 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, to promote participation in education or training of young people in their area who are subject to the duty to participate under section 2 of that Act.
- The local authority fulfils its duty under section 18a of the Education Act 1996 for local authorities with relevant youth accommodation in their area to secure that enough suitable education and training is provided to meet the reasonable needs of children and young people in the youth justice system who are held in those establishments.
- The local authority responds appropriately and timely to new initiatives and government recommendations e.g. Ofsted - 'Current provision and outcomes for 16-18 year old LLDD in colleges' and 'A statement is not enough', National Audit Office - 'Report on post 16 special educational needs' and Government SEN and Disability Green Paper – 'Support and aspiration; A new approach to special educational needs and disability'.

