

## The new Leeds SEND and inclusion strategy 2021 - 2026

### Making Leeds a good city for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

#### Full Report

This report was written by Natalie and Kayleigh. We work for Leeds City Council. We work with lots of different services for children and young people in Leeds, like schools and colleges, health services, and care services.

All these services are working together on the SEND and Inclusion strategy. This is a big plan of the things we will do, to make Leeds a better place for children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).



We believe that young people with SEND should have a say about our strategy and the plans we make. So, in July 2021 we asked young people with SEND in Leeds:

#### **What are the most important things for our new strategy to work on?**

We also told young people about some ideas for our new strategy. We asked:

#### **Do you agree with these ideas for our new strategy?**

This report talks about the things that young people told us. It also tells you what we are going to do differently, because of the things young people told us.

#### **How many young people told us their views?**

29 young people with SEND living in Leeds shared their views with us. To invite them to talk to us, we:

- Asked schools, colleges, and youth groups to have sessions on Zoom or Teams with young people. 24 children and young people talked to us this way.
- Shared a survey on our website. We sent the survey to schools, colleges, youth groups, and parents and carers. We asked them to share it with young people. 5 young people used the survey to tell us their views.

The youngest person we talked with was 12 years old. The oldest person we talked with was 19 years old.



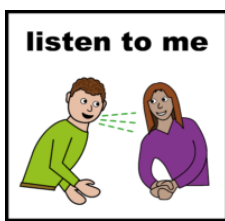
We want to say 'thank you' to:

- The teachers who had sessions for young people at their schools.
- The Leeds SEND Youth Forum. Their invited us to a meeting to talk to their members.
- The parents who helped young people to have a talk with us.

We would also like to say 'thank you very much' to the young people who took part.

### **What did young people tell us?**

*Young people said: all the people who work with us need to respect us and listen to us. They also need to understand what we need, and how to help us.*



These are some of the things they said. We have just used their initial, instead of their name.

- E said: 'this is the most important thing to me'. She told us about a time when her teacher was annoyed because she needed some extra things. He said something mean in front of her class. It made her feel bad. Other young people told us about things like this happening to them, too.
- K told us about her dance teacher. The teacher would change things in her classes, so that K could do them. She would change things for everybody, so K did not feel singled out, or different. K really liked this.
- B said that when he and his mates are out on the streets, they get stopped by the police a lot. The police think they are doing something wrong, but they are not. They just have nowhere else to go. It makes him upset and angry.
- S told us about a health worker taking his blood sample. S is scared of needles. He needs help to stay calm. He tried to tell the health worker about this, but they did not listen to him. S found it very hard to stay calm
- D said: 'it is important for teachers to know when I am just messing about and they need to be firm with me, or when I am upset and actually need help.'

*Young people said: we need more fun, safe things to do in our local area.*



This what they told us about this:

- BA said: 'I have to go out on the streets with my mates because there's nowhere else to go'. He had tried a local youth club, but it was just one room with toys for little kids, so it was not fun.
- D said his local park is not very good, so he hangs out with his friends outside the supermarket. He also said the park was not safe for young children, because older people smoke, or break the rules about using the playground.
- T said that the skate and bike park in his area is not safe. He said 'it is old and full of holes'. He saw people get hurt because the park was not safe. T wished that Leeds could have 'community bikes' like the ones in London.
- Some young people were worried about being near people who are smoking or drinking alcohol. One student said: 'When people are drunk, they get hectic and scary'. Another student said: 'it is hard get away from smoke in crowded places'. They also said that shops sometimes sell young people alcohol, cigarettes and energy drinks, even though it is against the law. They thought this was wrong.
- Most off the young people did not care much about Leeds City Centre. They liked to stay in their local area.

*Young people said: we need more safe, clean, accessible toilets in Leeds. Some young people said that toilets in public places need to be better.*

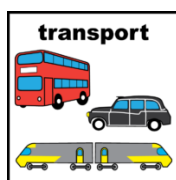


Young people said:

- There are not enough public toilets in places like parks.
- When there are toilets, they are not always accessible (suitable for people with extra needs) and safe.

- Sometimes there are accessible toilets, but they are locked and there is nobody there with a key. The teacher helping with one of the groups told us that before any school trips, he has to go and check the toilets at the place they are going to, to make sure they are open.
- Sometimes you have to pay to use a public toilet. You also have to have the right change. Young people don't always have the money, or the right change.
- Being able to use the toilet is a very basic thing. Everyone should have a right to use a suitable toilet. Nobody should have to wait because there is no toilet, or the toilet is locked.
- One of the young people talked about needing the toilet in a hurry, because of their medical needs. They said: 'if you are worrying about finding a toilet, it is hard to have fun or concentrate on things. You don't want to go anywhere and you can get really down about it'.

### ***Young people said: we need better public transport***



Here are some of the things they said:

- They feel quite safe on buses because they can sit near the driver. If they need help, they can ask the driver. They don't feel as safe on trains, because they can't see the driver.
- They said Leeds City Centre train station is clean and has a lot of staff. It has quite good toilets. But smaller local train stations can be dirty and there are no staff to help you. Sometimes you have to walk through a tunnel and it can be scary. There are usually no toilets at local stations.
- Buses feel safer, but young people don't like to sit upstairs on the bus, because they can't see the driver there. Sometimes other young people sit upstairs and shout or bully people.
- Some young people were worried about trains and buses not being clean. Some of them had stopped using buses or trains because of Covid-19.
- B said that some cities have free buses for young people. He thought Leeds should have this too.
- J said he thought it would be really good to have quiet areas on transport.
- E said that timetables are too complicated. They really need to be easier to understand.

## **Three ideas for making Leeds better for children and young people with SEND**

We also told young people about other people's ideas about making Leeds better for children and young people with SEND.

There were 3 main ideas that people have told us about.

### **We asked young people: do you agree that these 3 things are important?**

**Number 1: Inclusion:** this idea says that:

- Every child and young person in Leeds should be able to get good support for their needs.
- All schools, colleges and services in Leeds should welcome children and young people with SEND.
- Everyone who works with children and young people in Leeds should know how to support SEND.

All the young people agreed with this. These are the some of the things they said:

- J said that this was very important because everybody should be able to get what they need.
- K said her new school has an inclusion unit, but her old school did not. She thought that all schools should be the same, so it is fair to everyone going to school.
- E said that having teachers who understand her, and know how to support her, is really important. She also talked about some course requirements being unfair. These are the grades you have to get, if you want to study things like 'A' levels or a BTEC. These requirements don't always recognise that some students will have SEND. E finds this unfair. Other young people agreed with her.

**Number 2: Joining things up and working together.** This idea says:

- Different services should work together. They should join services up more. If services are joined up, young people and their families don't have to go to lots of different appointments or deal with lots of paperwork.
- Children and young people should get to have a say about the help they need. They should be able to have a say about the services they use.

Most of the young people felt this was important. Here are some of the things they said:

- J said he agreed. 'Less paperwork would also save the trees.. I am a very curious person, and adults have a lot of 'private' conversations about me. I like to know what is going on. '
- J also said it would be good to have multipurpose places so you only have to go to one place.

- E said: 'Definitely agree, children and parents should be involved in decisions and conversations more than they are. You need to ask the child if they want to be involved though, as they may not want to.'

2 of the young people were not sure. They didn't like the idea of people talking about them. But they did want to have a say about the help they need and be able to make decisions about the services they use.

**Number 3: Being treated as an individual:** this idea says that:

- People who work with children and young people should respect them as individuals. They should respect that everyone has different needs and different ways that they live their lives.
- There should be a range of different services and schools for children and young people with SEND and additional needs. This gives young people more choices.

All the young people agreed that this is important. Here are some of the things they said:

- J said: 'A BIG yes to this! My school treat me as an individual.' J said he really likes his school.
- K said: 'Yes I agree'. Her mum helped K to tell us about her dance teacher. The dance teacher makes sure all the activities suit everyone's individual needs. Everyone gets to enjoy themselves and take part in everything.
- E said: 'This is important, schools need to understand the individual as a person. My experience is mixed, some teachers are really supportive, others are not. I can speak to some teacher about my struggles but not all of them. It is really important that people to see me first, not just my disabilities.'

### **Other comments and feedback**

We also asked if the young people wanted to say anything else about inclusion in Leeds.

Here are the things they said:

- **We need more learning about SEND in schools:** Some young people wanted schools to have more talks or lessons about SEND. E said: 'Sometimes people do things which make life harder for me, but not on purpose. They just don't understand what I need. More understanding would help us all.'
- **Respect for young people with SEND is important:** J said: 'If I could speak to the Prime Minister, I would say: make sure teachers and health workers listen to young people and treat them with respect. My teachers treat me with respect and understanding. Every teacher should be like that.'
- **Information should be easy understand:** J also pointed out that in some of our information we say that information should be easy to understand. But the words we use to say this, are quite complicated! J said young people could help check information. Information that is easy to find and understand helps everyone.

- **Education and understanding is important:** E said: 'I am sometimes made to feel different in a bad way, or like I'm an inconvenience. I want to be seen for me, not just for my disabilities. Professionals need to understand the consequences of their words and actions on young people with SEND'.
- **People should speak out about discrimination against people with SEND:** E said she sees people supporting equal rights in social media, but not many of them talk about people with SEND. It would be good if people like footballers would speak out more about SEND, because they are role models for a lot of people.

## What Next

Now that we have heard young people 's views, we will work on the things they told us about.



*Young people said: teachers and other people who work with us need to understand SEND needs. They need to know the best ways to help children and young people with SEND.*

We will work on a big set of training and learning for teachers and other people working with children and young people in Leeds. It is called 'the SEND Practice Framework'. This will tell them how to help children and young people with SEND do their best in learning, be as healthy as they can, and enjoy life. It will also help them to get extra help for a child or young person if they need it. This will save time. We will share the new Framework with all schools and learning places in Leeds.

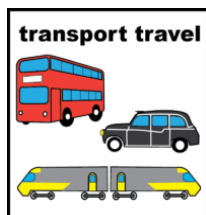


*Young people said: we want to have a voice. We want to have a say about decisions that affect us. We want to take part in plans to make Leeds a better city.*

We will help schools and services in Leeds to give young people with SEND a say about things that affect them. We will help them find good ways for young people with SEND to take part in making decisions. We will set up groups for schools and services, so they can work on this together.

We will also work on our information about services. We will make sure it is easy for young people to understand. This will mean they can find out about services in Leeds, and find things to do in their area.

We will also work with our new SEND Youth Forum for Leeds. This is a way for young people with SEND to get together, share their views, and have a say about changes to services in Leeds. We hope more young people will join the Forum. Find out more at the end of this report!



*Young people said: they need more fun, safe places to go and things to do. They need safe transport to get to places. They need more places to have toilets they can use.*

We will start a new work group with people who work in services like parks, outdoor activities, and clubs and people who run clubs and groups for young people. We have asked them to work together to make sure young people with SEND can take part in fun things to do.

We will not have a lot of money to spend on things, because Covid-19 has cost us a lot of money. So we might not be able to do everything young people want us to do, quickly. We will include young people in making decisions about what we do work on.

We will also ask transport services to work with us. Young people with SEND at a school in Leeds are working to make their local train station better. We hope we can learn from this, and help other schools and groups to do things like this.

We will also work on making it easier to find out about fun things to do

If you would like to know more about any of these plans, or get involved, please contact us!

### **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](http://www.leedslocaloffer.org.uk)
- Find out more ways for young people to have a say about services in Leeds: <https://leedslocaloffer.org.uk/#!/directory/33458>
- Get in touch to find out more about our new SEND Youth Forum: email [LLO@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:LLO@leeds.gov.uk)
- Get in touch to ask any questions about this report: email [LLO@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:LLO@leeds.gov.uk). Please put 'SEND and Inclusion strategy' in the title of your email. This will help us to reply more quickly.