

Leicestershire Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-2028

Introduction

Our Leicestershire Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-2028 sets out our vision for supporting children and young people attending alternative provision through our commitment to working with a range of stakeholders to ensure that when alternative provision (AP) is used to support a child or young person, there are high quality, suitable placements available locally that can meet their needs and support them to achieve successful outcomes. Our local area partnership is focused on a shared aim to enable all children and young people, regardless of their background and needs, to live their best lives.

Aims

Our aims are to enable children and young people in Leicestershire to:

- access an inclusive education system which provides appropriate support and interventions at the earliest opportunity, to enable them to access a broad and balanced curriculum.
- access high quality alternative provision which forms part of a robust plan for their education
- learn in their local community through provision which meets their needs
- use theirs and their families' voices to inform decision making about alternative provision use

How will we measure success?

- By tracking the number of permanent exclusions across Leicestershire. We aim to achieve a 10% reduction year on year due, in part to appropriate use of AP. (Benchmark data January 2026 and assess January 2027)
- By tracking the number of CYP with clear learning outcomes on entering AP. We aim for all children and young people to have this in place by July 2027.
- By tracking the number of CYP with clear transition support plans in place to enable them to return to full time mainstream education. We aim for all children and young people to have this in place by July 2027.
- By tracking the number of placements made where schools have sought child and family voice. We aim for all children and young people to have this in place by July 2027.
- By building a clear picture across Leicestershire of the numbers of CYP in AP and monitoring this over time.

Legislative Basis: The National Context and Local Authority Statutory Duties

[Section 19 of the 1996 Education Act](#) states that local authorities must arrange suitable and (normally) full-time education for children of compulsory school age who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not receive suitable education without such provision being arranged.

The Government's 2022 [SEND Review](#) proposed an overhaul of the SEND and AP systems and placed emphasis upon the need for regulation and monitoring of alternative provisions and greater consideration of the planned outcomes for children and young people placed within them. The right support, right place, right time mantra of the review is intrinsic to Leicestershire's approach to the use of alternative provision.

In February 2025 the Department for Education's publication [Arranging Alternative Provision: A guide for Local Authorities and Schools](#) outlined the duties placed on Local Authorities in providing sufficient, local suitable alternative provision that is quality assured and keeps children and young people safe. Local Authorities should devise a multi-year strategic plan to meet these duties and the serve the best interests of the children and young people who live or are educated within their borders.

What is Alternative Provision?

Alternative provision (AP) can be provided by Local Authorities, schools (e.g. to support behaviour or attendance), independent providers, pupil referral units, hospital schools and FE colleges.

Alternative provision refers to education arranged for pupils of compulsory school age who are unable to attend mainstream or special schools for reasons such as:

- Permanent or fixed-term exclusion
- Illness or medical needs
- Other significant barriers to accessing standard schooling
- Alternative Provision can also be used children and young people on a suspension or for those directed offsite.

Children and young people who are provided with in-school curriculum adaptations or internal provision, elective home education (EHE), EOTAS (Educated Other Than At School) packages or post-16 provision are not in receipt of alternative provision.

AP must provide suitable full-time education (18-25 hours per week) unless a child or young person's particular needs determine that part time provision is more appropriate.

AP should be tailored to an individual's needs and can include various types of provision such as including behavioural support, therapeutic interventions, and vocational training.

For a visual representation of the types of AP, see Appendix B.

Alternative Provision in Leicestershire

The children and young people of Leicestershire have access to particular types of alternative provision, dependent upon their individual needs.

Tuition

Children with medical needs (CME) who are unable to attend school through mental or physical illness have tuition arranged for them by The Inclusion Service. The number of hours and subjects is dependent upon the individual's needs and their capacity for learning. Tuition can be offered remotely or face to face, dependent upon the child's needs. Their education provision is reviewed at regular intervals with the aim being reintegration into mainstream school.

Leicester Children's Hospital School

For children with needs that require a longer-term provision, the Children's Hospital School in Leicester has 5 bases from which they deliver education. Willow Bank Hospital School which is based in Leicester City is a day school providing education to Key Stage 4 pupils. Willow Bank offers personalised learning with a mix of core, foundation and vocational subjects, whilst taking account of a young person's health and emotional needs. The Magpie Learning Centre offers provision to young people in Key Stage 3 as well as those in year 10 who are finding it difficult to access school due to their physical or mental health. The centre offers both full and part time provision which is tailored to the needs of individuals. The Phoenix Learning Centre provides education to young people in Key Stages 3 and 4. The offer is designed to provide early intervention to children and young people who are struggling to access mainstream education. The hospital school also works with children and young people from ages 4 to 18 who are in-patients at the Leicester Royal Infirmary, keeping them engaged in education and securing progress while they are unable to attend school. The final hospital school provision is based at Glenfield Hospital in Leicester. Specialist staff from the school teach young people aged between 12 and 18 who have been admitted to the Beacon CAHMS unit to support their mental health. Personalised education is offered to young people as soon as they are well enough to engage.

Children and young people with additional learning needs

Children with an Education, Health and Care (EHCP) Plan have funding that follows them into their school, whether mainstream or special. As part of the Annual Review process, a family may request alternative provision, and this request will be considered where it aligns with section F of the child's EHCP. Through an Annual Review, settings are also able to commission AP where this meets needs, outlined in section B of the EHCP.

Excluded Pupils and Prevention work

Children who are at risk of exclusion or who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream school access alternative provision through Oakfield,

Leicestershire's short-stay school. Oakfield consists of a primary school which is based on two sites in the county: one in the north and one in the south. Children attend the provision on a full-time basis if they have been permanently excluded from their mainstream school. The school also has an outreach programme working with all county primary schools to support them in dealing with challenging behaviour.

Oakfield also have four locality bases offering secondary provision to young people who have been permanently excluded. Currently this offer consists of two days at the Oakfield base and three days in alternative provision. The Oakfield offer is under development to enable the school to provide more bespoke provision to the pupils on roll. A dual registration arrangement is also in place for young people who are at risk of permanent exclusion. The pupil attends Oakfield for 2 days a week and their mainstream school for the remaining 3 days. Oakfield Secondary also has an early intervention outreach offer to schools in order to prevent the need for alternative provision and keep young people in their mainstream school with support.

Unregistered Alternative Provision

Many schools in Leicestershire, along with services within the local authority, commission unregistered alternative provision to meet the needs of children and young people where a blended package would be beneficial to them. In order to support schools and services, we have worked with Leicester City Council to establish a programme of quality assurance measures to enable schools to commission alternative provision with confidence. The measures are as follows:

AP Directory

Local authorities and schools acting as the commissioner must assure themselves that the setting is operating appropriately and provides a safe and healthy learning environment for the children and young people attending. Leicester City and Leicestershire County Councils have developed an alternative provision directory which is available to schools.

Safeguarding and Health and Safety Audits

All providers in the directory are subject to Health and Safety and Safeguarding audits. Leicester City and Leicestershire County Councils have jointly commissioned a provider to carry out these audits on their behalf. These audits are rigorous and involve the examination of paperwork as well as visits to providers to hold conversations with learners and staff.

Quality of Education Audits

In addition to the compliance checks, a team of centrally employed teachers from both local authorities have developed an audit tool to assess the quality of education in the provisions in the directory. In-person visits to providers are carried out to determine the quality of the provision on offer and to establish whether there are any concerns. The audit tool also considers the admissions, support and guidance policies and

procedures in place as outlined in the Voluntary national standards for non-school alternative provision.

In-school Alternative Provision (IAP)

To meet the needs of children and young people who are finding classroom learning challenging, increasing numbers of primary and secondary schools across Leicestershire are developing their own alternative provision on site. This helps to retain a sense of belonging in school when an alternative to mainstream is required. It also removes some of the additional costs that transport and visits to external providers generate. To support schools with their work in this area, we have developed two IAP networks; one for primary and another for secondary. These networks consist of termly in-person meetings and provide schools with the opportunity to share good practice and worries as well as the opportunity to update on the latest research and publications around IAP.

Transition Planning

It is expected that all children attending alternative provision will be supported to return to mainstream provision where it is reasonable to do so and in the best interests of the child. We will work with schools to ensure that they have clear aims and a reintegration plan when they commission AP for a pupil. Schools are required to notify the LA when they have decided to place a CYP in AP by completing [this form](#). A referral form should be used to set clear targets, review dates and intended outcomes when commissioning AP. Appendix A can be used for this purpose. The referral forms will also ensure that the voice of the pupils and their families are heard and listened to in the commissioning process. In addition to this form, any documentation with pertinent information about children and young people's needs (e.g EHCP, IHCP etc) should be shared with the provider. In having the intention of using AP as a time limited intervention with clear targets, and the involvement of the pupils and their families in the process, the commissioner will be better able to assess the impact and efficacy of the AP, thus enabling them to make changes where required to secure the best outcomes for children and young people.

A Multi-Agency Approach

A multi-agency approach to AP is important to ensure that pupils accessing AP receive the support that they need to thrive. Agencies that could be involved in supporting a child are:

- Specialist Teaching Service
- The Inclusion Service
- Social Care
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS)
- Youth Offending Teams

- The Virtual School
- SENA Service
- Health Services

The services involved in supporting children and young people at risk of exclusion should work collaboratively through joint planning and information sharing. The early identification of those at risk allows for early intervention which is almost always more impactful than reactive work. Coordinated approaches towards intervention will make this more effective still. Multi-agency support plans for children and young people in AP should outline the role of each agency in support the child or young person. These plans should include approach towards supporting reintegration back into mainstream education. The APST (Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce) in Leicestershire will adopt a multi-agency approach to supporting children and young people at risk of exclusion as well as those who have been permanently excluded from their school.

Funding for Alternative Provision

The Government's 2022 SEND Review suggests that there should be a unified SEND and AP system as the current AP system is failing many children and families as well as being financially unstable. The publication of the schools' white paper, once available, will provide details to enable us to consider this in greater detail.

Currently, funding for alternative provision is from the High Needs Block (HNB) which is part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). There is no separate funding for the delivery of alternative provision in Leicestershire. The HNB block funding allocation is used to support provision for 0-25 year-olds with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The increasing numbers of children and young people with social emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH) has put the HNB under increased financial pressure as there is no increase in the HNB funding to reflect the increased number of children and young people requiring support and attending alternative provision as a result.

The HNB grant is dependent upon the number of pupils in special schools. Leicestershire County Council's High Needs Block for 2025-26 financial year is overcommitted with a forecasted deficit.

In Leicestershire, the way that alternative provision is funded is as follows:

Requirement for Provision	Commissioner	Type of provision	Funding streams and sources
Child with medical needs	Local authority	Tuition (online or in person)	LA operates a recoupment policy with schools to claw back AWPU for the time spent in receipt of tuition. Additional costs are absorbed by the HNB
Child with medical needs	Local authority	Hospital School (Inpatients)	DFE Hospital Education funding (via City HNB)

		Leicester Royal Infirmary / Beacon CAMHS unit	
Child with medical needs	Local Authority	Hospital School (Long term consultant-led)	DFE Hospital Education funding (via City HNB) 28 places available free of charge. Daily rate applies to any additional places.
Child with medical needs	School	Hospital School (Short-term early intervention)	Daily rate applies, payable by school.
Child with an EHCP	School	Unregistered AP	School use their notional SEND budget/funding from the EHCP to cover the costs of alternative provision.
6 th day provision (perm ex)	Local authority	Oakfield Short Stay School	LA operates a recoupment policy with schools to claw back AWPUP for pupils who have been permanently excluded. Additional costs are absorbed by the HNB
Child on the roll of a mainstream school at risk of perm ex/absence	School	Unregistered AP	School utilises their notional SEND budget. They may also apply to the LA for SEN Intervention Funding from the HNB
Child on the roll of a mainstream school at risk of perm ex/absence	School	Internal alternative provision (based on the school site)	School funded

Key Priorities

- Benchmark data January 2026
- Comparative data to be gathered January 2027

Priority	Action	Success Criteria
Maximise attendance of CYP whilst accessing AP	• Ensure robust monitoring of part-time timetables. • Continue to embed the LA quality assurance processes to evaluate the suitability of provision on offer • Work with schools to encourage early calls for support from the Inclusion and Attendance Teams when CYP are not attending school/AP	• Attendance for children and young people attending AP is above national comparators • Attainment of children who have been supported through AP is improved to ensure they leave school with the best possible results
Growth of IAP in county schools	• Development of IAP networks to deliver support and advice as well as peer support	• A reduction in the number of children and young people accessing external AP to support their learning
Development of a high-quality outreach service for SEMH to reduce reliance on AP	• Oakfield short stay school to secure funding to build develop a sustainable alternative provision specialist taskforce (APST) that serves all county schools • Training offer to mainstream schools to deepen understanding of SEMH needs and how to meet them • Early intervention offers to schools – introduce clinics and develop the existing advice forums to make them more effective for schools	• Reducing trend in the number of suspensions • Reducing trend in the number of permanent exclusions
Transitions from AP back into mainstream school or onto Post - 16 provision are positive and sustainable	• Ensure that the voice of CYP and their families is central to the transition process • Provide settings with support and advice in transitioning a CYP back into mainstream education • Appoint a Careers Lead in Oakfield Short Stay School to lead a programme of careers events to raise the aspirations of CYP in AP	• Low numbers of re-referrals for CYP requiring further access to AP • Reducing trend in the number of suspensions • Reducing trend in the number of permanent exclusions

CYP experiencing difficulties accessing their mainstream school will have timely support in place to help minimise disruption to education	• Work with LCC Education Services and schools to provide suitable offers to CYP in this position • Work with families and CYP to encourage take-up of offers	• Reduction in the number of severely absent pupils
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Governance

Day to day oversight of alternative provision is overseen by the Education and SEND Leadership Team within the Local Authority. Any queries regarding Alternative Provision should be directed to them in the first instance.

Oversight

Oversight is provided by the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board which involves the range of local area partners working with children and young people.

Appendix A: Example AP Referral Form

Alternative Provision – Placement Sheet

If the child or young person has relevant documentation such as an EHCP, it must be attached to this referral

School Name	
Pupil Name	
Pupil date of birth	
School key contact name, role and contact details	
Attendance at time of referral and details of any interventions	
Details of SEND needs	
Details of health needs	
Details of any support in place for the family	
Information required in order to keep the CYP safe (e.g. have they ever tried to abscond?) Details of any risk assessments should be added here.	
Name of alternative provision	
Number of hours child/young person will be attending per week	
Proposed start date Proposed end date	
What are the learning outcomes / success criteria for the placement?	
How will success be measured?	
What is the exit strategy in place?	
CYP and family voice	

Details of any other AP in place	
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Please ensure that you are using a B code for any students being educated in alternative provision

Appendix B

The 3-Tier Model for Alternative Provision

Tier 3: External AP – Placements with AP Providers for students who need support to move on to a new mainstream school, specialist provision or sustained post-16 destination.

Tier 2: External AP – Short-term time limited placements with external AP providers to address pupil needs with the expectation of their return to mainstream school

Tier 1: Internal support in mainstream

Tier 1B: A bespoke curriculum offer, delivered in school but away from the mainstream classroom, possibly within Internal Alternative Provision (IAP) for more than 45% of the day. May include outreach / intervention from external providers

Tier 1A: A bespoke curriculum offer, delivered in schools, within and away from the mainstream classroom, for between 25% and 45% of the day. May include intervention delivery by external providers

Mainstream Offer: Inclusive mainstream practice in classroom using Best Endeavours and Reasonable Adjustment (BERA) and SEND Support Services

