

Draft Preparing for Adulthood Strategy (14–25) 2026-2029

Statement from the Lead Member/Director/ PCF

Introduction

Leicester is committed to supporting all young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), children looked after, care leavers, and others who may need extra support, to live healthy, independent, and fulfilling adult lives.

This strategy covers young people aged 14–25 and brings together the previous Preparing for Adulthood and Transitions strategies into a single, joined-up approach. From an early age, it ensures that young people receive coordinated support from education providers, health services, social care, and adult services, helping to avoid gaps when moving from children to adult services, including during health and education transitions.

Vision

Our vision is that all young people in Leicester, including those with SEND, care-experienced young people, and others who may need additional support, can live healthy, independent, and fulfilling adult lives. We will do this by planning early, working together across services, and making sure young people have access to the right opportunities in education, work, and their communities.

Scope and Purpose

This strategy explains how Leicester will support young people aged 14–25 to live healthy, independent, and fulfilling adult lives. We want to make sure that young people get the right support from education providers, health services, social care, and the wider community, so there are no gaps when they move from children to adult services.

Plan early and share information

Young people and families will receive clear information about the support available. We will explain options and help them take part in planning for the future, so they feel informed and confident about the next steps.

Coordinate support across services

Education providers, health services, social care, and community organisations will work together to make transitions smoother and personalised to each young person.

Focus on what matters most

Support will be tailored to the goals, needs, and preferences of each young person and their family.

Key Areas for a Successful Transition to Adulthood

To help young people succeed in adult life, the strategy focuses on four main areas:

- **Health and wellbeing**
Supporting young people to stay healthy, feel good, and enjoy life.
- **Education, work, and training**
Helping young people learn, gain qualifications, and access work or training opportunities.
- **Community inclusion**
Encouraging young people to join clubs, groups, and local activities, and build friendships and networks.
- **Independence**
Helping young people develop the skills and confidence to live as independently as possible.

Policy and Legislation

This Preparing for Adulthood strategy is shaped by national legislation and statutory guidance, which set out expectations for local authorities, schools, health services, and social care. These laws provide the legal framework for planning, assessing, and supporting children and young people as they move into adulthood.

- Children and Families Act 2014 – Requires local areas to provide education, health, and social care support so that young people with SEND can achieve the best outcomes. It also emphasizes planning for adulthood from age 14 onwards through Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans.
- SEND Code of Practice (0–25 years) – Provides statutory guidance on how the SEND framework should be applied.
- Care Act 2014 – Sets out adult social care duties, including transition assessments for young people likely to need support after age 18, promoting wellbeing, prevention, and links with health and housing.
- Mental Capacity Act 2005 – Protects and empowers young adults in decision-making, supporting them to make their own choices wherever possible and ensuring best interests are considered where capacity is limited.
- Children Acts 1989 and 2004 – Outline duties to safeguard and promote welfare and to plan for transitions for children in need, children looked after, and care leavers.
- Equality Act 2010 – Requires services to anticipate and remove barriers, make reasonable adjustments, and actively promote equality of opportunity for disabled young people moving into adulthood.

Growing up in Leicester

Leicester is a vibrant and diverse city with many children and young people, some of whom need targeted, coordinated support as they prepare for adulthood.

The city also has higher levels of deprivation than the national average, which can make it harder for some young people to access education, work, independent living, and community opportunities. These factors highlight the importance of a coordinated, inclusive, and proactive approach to preparing young people for adulthood.

By linking education, health, social care, and community support, Leicester aims to ensure that all young people can achieve independence, meaningful opportunities, and full participation in their communities.

How Many Young People Need Extra Support

- Approximately 1,900 young people aged 14+ have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. The number of plans has grown in recent years, reflecting both increasing identification of need and growing complexity.
- Leicester supports over 600 children looked after and over 600 care leavers are eligible for advice and assistance up to the age of 25, many of whom require targeted support to secure stable housing, continued learning or work opportunities, and wellbeing support as they move into adulthood.
- An increasing number of young people currently accessing children's social care are expected to continue requiring adult social care support.

What Our Children, Young People and Families Tell Us

We have worked closely with children, young people, and families to shape this strategy. Here's what they've told us:

Young people want:

- Travel training available for everyone
- Help with money management and budgeting skills
- Support to complete forms and paperwork
- More shops that are wheelchair-friendly
- Opportunities for meaningful work experience and volunteering
- Employers and workplaces that understand and support disabilities
- The chance to live independently, either alone or with others

Parents/carers want:

- The right support at the right time
- A keyworker to help them navigate the transition process and share information about next steps
- Places where young people can learn to live independently with support
- Early information about transition pathways to help with planning
- To be kept informed about changes and progress during transition
- Suitable and relevant opportunities for their young person to engage in the community
- Short breaks after age 19
- Safe spaces in the community
- Assistive technology to support independence

Alignment with Local Strategies

This strategy aligns with Leicester's wider policy framework, ensuring that Preparing for Adulthood work complements other local plans and priorities. Key strategies include:

- Leicester SEND Strategy and Local Inclusion Plan – promoting inclusion, co-production, and improved outcomes across education, health, and social care.
- Supported Living and Extra Care Housing Strategy 2021–2031 – guiding housing options that support independence for young people as they transition to adulthood.
- Looked After Children's Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2026-2027

Key Area Aims

Good Health and Wellbeing

Aim: To support young people to achieve and maintain positive physical and mental health, enabling them to live well and fully participate in education, work, and community life.

Education, Employment, and Training

Aim: To enable young people to access meaningful learning, skills development, and employment opportunities, preparing them for sustainable careers and independence.

Community Inclusion

Aim: To ensure young people can participate fully in their communities, build social connections, and feel included in local life.

Increasing Independence

Aim: To equip young people with the skills, confidence, and opportunities to live as independently as possible and make their own choices about daily life.

Strategic Priorities and Actions

This strategy focuses on supporting young people to achieve positive outcomes in adulthood across the four key areas. To achieve this, Leicester will:

- Ensure young people's move into adulthood is planned, coordinated, and personalised, centred on what matters most to them and their families.
- Work together across education, health, children and adult services to prepare young people for adult life from an early age.
- Minimise gaps as young people move from children to adult services, including health, education, and social care.
- Ensure timely information sharing and provide guidance for young people and families to plan and prepare for changes in support.
- Develop and maintain clear processes, systems, templates, and tools to support coordinated planning and improve ways of working across services.

Priority Area 1: Good Health and Wellbeing

Strategic Aim

Young people in Leicester experience positive physical and mental health outcomes into adulthood, supported by early, planned and joined-up moves between children's and adult health services National NHS England Transitions Framework. NHS England and NHS Improvement is developing a national framework for transition, and their ambition is that by 2028, no child or young person will become lost in the gaps between children's and adult health services. Their experience of moving between services is prepared in advance; children and young people and adult services work together to plan moves to adult services, and they are safe.

Why This Matters

Stakeholders consistently told us that health transitions, including mental health, are a major contributor to the "cliff edge" experienced at key transition points. Gaps between children's and adult services, differences in the support and service offer, assumptions about independence at 18, and poor communication between services can all significantly impact young people's wellbeing and family resilience. Young people and families may experience confusion or anxiety when moving between services that operate differently, highlighting the need for early, coordinated, and planned moves to ensure continuity, safety, and confidence in managing health needs.

Our Priorities

- Early, coordinated and planned health moves – including a lead for both children and adult services working together:
 - Health planning begins early and is aligned with EHCP reviews from Year 9
 - Changes in health services are anticipated rather than experienced as sudden cut-offs
 - Health planning is coordinated with education, care, and living arrangements
 - Clear communication of progress to families
- Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
 - Improved continuity between children's and adult mental health services
 - Targeted support at key transition points (16–18, 18–25)
 - Recognition of the emotional impact of change on young people and families
- Supporting Independence in Health
 - Young people are supported to understand and manage their own health needs over time
 - Use of accessible information, health passports, and preparation tools
 - Avoid assumptions about autonomy based solely on chronological age; support decisions based on individual level of functioning, understanding, and, where relevant, the Mental Capacity Act
- Joined-Up Pathways and Communication
 - Clear, accessible health pathways for young people and families
 - Improved data sharing and communication between services
 - Stronger partnerships between health, education, and care

What Success Will Look Like

- Gaps in health provision during moves are anticipated and addressed, measured through fewer delayed or missed appointments and smoother handovers.

- Young people demonstrate increased confidence and ability to manage their own health needs, evidenced by uptake of health passports, self-management tools, or personalised health plans.
- Improved continuity of mental health support for 16–25-year-olds, with reduced drop-offs in service engagement during key ages.

Priority Area 2: Education, Employment and Training

Strategic Aim

Young people in Leicester are supported to achieve meaningful education, employment, and training outcomes that reflect their aspirations and prepare them for adult life.

Why This Matters

Limited access to work experience, inconsistent careers advice, and late planning can reduce aspirations and lead to poor post-16 and post-18 outcomes. Without the right support, some young people are at risk of becoming not in education, employment, or training (NEET). Strong pathways are key to independence, wellbeing, and long-term life chances.

Our Priorities

1. Raising Aspirations Early
 - High aspirations embedded from Year 9 onwards
 - Early exposure to careers, employers, and role models
 - Support for families to understand options and pathways
2. Meaningful Pathways and Preparation
 - Inclusive education and training opportunities across all stages
 - Access to work experience, supported internships, and apprenticeships
 - Skills development linked to real employment opportunities
3. Strong Moves Between Education and Training
 - Clear support for young people at risk of becoming NEET
 - Timely planning and handovers between schools, colleges, and providers
 - Support with applications and next steps at key stages
 - Reduced reliance on courses without clear outcomes
4. Employer and System Partnerships
 - Stronger links with employers, training providers, and universities
 - Joined-up careers advice and guidance across services
 - Accessible information about opportunities and support

What Success Will Look Like

- More young people move into and sustain education, training, or employment.
- Increased participation in meaningful work experience and apprenticeships.
- Young people and families feel informed and confident about their options.
- Stronger partnerships with employers leading to more opportunities.

Priority Area 3: Community Inclusion

Strategic Aim

Young adults are supported to take part in their communities in ways that are meaningful to them, helping them build connections, confidence, and a sense of belonging.

Why This Matters

Being part of a community supports wellbeing, independence, and identity. However, barriers such as accessibility, confidence, or lack of opportunities can limit participation. Without the right support, young people may feel isolated or excluded.

Our Priorities

1. Increasing Participation
 - Support young adults to take part in community activities, including clubs, sports, volunteering, and local groups
 - Ensure opportunities reflect individual interests and aspirations
2. Building Confidence and Social Skills
 - Support the development of relationships, friendships, and social networks
 - Build confidence to access new environments and opportunities
3. Safe and Inclusive Communities
 - Promote safe use of community spaces, including online environments
 - Work with partners to improve accessibility and inclusion across services and settings
4. Working with Partners and Communities
 - Collaborate with local organisations, providers, and services to remove barriers
 - Support families and young adults to manage changes and challenges

What Success Will Look Like

- Young adults are actively involved in their communities in ways that suit them.
- Increased confidence, independence, and social connections.
- Young people feel included, valued, and able to build a sense of identity and belonging.

Priority Area 4: Increasing Independence

Strategic Aim

Young people in Leicester are supported to develop the skills, confidence, and opportunities to live as independently as possible, with choice and control over their daily lives, relationships, and future living arrangements.

Why This Matters

Developing independence is a key part of preparing for adult life. Young people and families have told us they want earlier conversations about future options, practical support to build everyday living skills, and clear information about housing, support, and community opportunities.

Without the right preparation and support, young people may face barriers to independence, including limited access to information, reduced confidence, or uncertainty about available support. A personalised and strengths-based approach helps young people develop independence at a pace that is right for them and their families.

Our Priorities

1. Early Preparation for Adult Life

- Support young people to prepare for adulthood from an early age and at a developmentally appropriate stage
- Embed preparation for independence within transition planning and Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) reviews from Year 9 onwards
- Encourage early conversations about future aspirations, housing, daily living skills, and support needs
- Encourage confidence in communities removing barriers appropriately from a young age

2. Developing Life Skills and Confidence

- Support young people to build practical skills such as travel training, budgeting, communication, and self-care
- Provide support that develops skills in the community that balance safety and adventure
- Promote opportunities that build confidence, decision-making, and problem-solving skills
- Ensure support is personalised and focused on individual strengths, goals, and aspirations

3. Choice, Control, and Access to Support

- Provide accessible information about housing, support services, and community resources
- Support young people and families to understand the options available as they move into adulthood
- Strengthen access to professional, family, and community networks that promote independence and wellbeing

What Success Will Look Like

- Young people feel informed, confident, and supported to make decisions about their future
- More young people develop the practical skills needed for greater independence in adult life

- Young people and families have a clearer understanding of housing, support, and community options available to them
- Support plans reflect young people's individual goals, strengths, and aspirations for independent living
- Young people feel greater choice, control, and confidence in their daily lives and future plans

Governance, Accountability, and Monitoring

Governance and Accountability

Oversight of this strategy will be provided by multi-agency boards that bring together education, health, children, and adult services. All partners are responsible for making sure planning is coordinated, personalised, and focused on what matters to young people and their families.

To support delivery, workstreams will be set up for each of the four key areas. These will include internal and external partners such as training providers, employers, colleges, health professionals, voluntary organisations, and the Parent Carer Forum. Workstreams will:

- Coordinate actions, monitor progress, and identify any challenges or gaps.
- Propose solutions to address issues.
- Report regularly to the main governance boards to ensure smooth support across services.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Progress will be tracked through the workstreams, focusing on outcomes across all four key areas. Monitoring will check that support is planned, timely, and coordinated, and that it meets what young people and their families say is important.

Findings from workstreams and boards will guide improvements, making sure the strategy continues to meet the needs of all young people. Special attention will be given to key handovers between children's and adult services, minimising gaps and ensuring seamless support.

Conclusion and Next Steps

This strategy sets out Leicester's approach to helping young people aged 14–25 move into adulthood successfully. By bringing together the previous Preparing for Adulthood and Transitions strategies, it provides a single, clear framework for coordinated, person-centred support across education, health, and care services.

Next Steps

- Partners will put the strategy into action, making sure support is coordinated and centred on what matters most to young people and families.
- Workstreams will develop delivery plans for their areas, with clear actions, responsibilities, timelines, and measures of success.
- Progress will be monitored across all four key areas, with lessons learned used to improve future practice.
- A focus on collaboration, early planning, and closing gaps between services will remain central, helping young people move confidently and independently into adulthood.

This strategy provides a clear framework for partners to work together, ensuring every young person's move into adulthood is as smooth, supportive, and effective as possible.