

Thurrock Council

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Communication and Engagement Strategy 2020-23

SEND strategic vision

Our vision is all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities across the local area can access outstanding support in their early years, school, college and work. This will enable them to fully achieve their full potential and have happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.

Communication and engagement in Thurrock

Thurrock Council is committed to ensuring that we listen to children, young people, parents, carers and wider stakeholder groups. We recognise the importance of co-production and ensuring our SEND children and young people have a voice in the design, delivery and monitoring of services.

SEND strategic priority areas around communication and engagement

Developed through a process of stakeholder mapping and co-production with children, young people, parents, carers and wider stakeholder groups to fulfil our shared vision for around communication and engagement, our strategic priority areas are:

- 1. ensure children and families are aware of the local offer**
- 2. ensure we host engagement events throughout the year to gather pupil voice**
- 3. develop continual feedback systems**
- 4. develop the key messages around 'you said, we did'**
- 5. develop a whole-system approach to communication and engagement**
- 6. develop key messages around key transition points**

Introduction

Our Education and Skills service, in partnership with health and social care, is working to ensure we have clear communication channels around special educational needs in the borough. Our six key priorities will enable us to develop key messages and ensure our local offer is seen as the first point of reference for families who have a child or young person with additional needs.

Our commitment to ongoing evaluation and review has led to the identification of the six key priority areas. As with any working document, however, this will be reviewed and monitored on a yearly basis to ensure they remain the key strategic priorities of our communication and engagement work.

Putting families first is the key strand of our work and these priorities have been shared with children, young people, parents and carers to ensure they are placed at the centre of our work.

Working with our youth team, we have developed a pupil/student communication and engagement strategy, which forms an appendix to this overarching document. This work has been co-produced by young people for young people.

Key priorities for 2020-2023

Key priority area 1 – ensure children, young people and families are aware of the local offer

To achieve this, we will:

- produce a communication action plan that outlines how we are going to raise the profile of the local offer, using the council's communication channels and the services key networks to promote this
- gain feedback from all stakeholders around the content of the local offer to inform its ongoing development and refresh
- ensure the local offer is in plain English and simple to understand and navigate, offering easy access
- ensure the information is current and reviewed on a regular basis

Key priority area 2 – ensure we host engagement events throughout the year to gather pupil voice

To achieve this, we will:

- host a minimum of 4 engagement events a year with the Cabinet portfolio holder and the Assistant Director of Education and Skills
- develop a range of engagement events for parents and carers
- host a minimum of 6 events a year for children and young people with our wider stakeholder groups
- host an annual conference for key stakeholders to further promote and develop greater understanding around special educational needs

Key priority area 3 – develop continual feedback systems

To achieve this, we will:

- review the key questions on the council's engagement portal to ensure they capture what is important to children, young people and parents
- ensure the annual report from the local offer clearly identifies the 'you said we did' message
- routinely monitor feedback from complaints and compliments
- implement a structured, systematic quality assurance framework that supports continuous improvement

Key priority area 4 – develop the key messages around 'you said, we did'

To achieve this, we will:

- share a quarterly update with parents, carers and other key stakeholder groups
- work with a range of stakeholders to capture key messages from all partners and feed these back into the system to ensure continual improvement around services

Key priority area 5 – develop a whole-system approach to communication and engagement

To achieve this, we will:

- develop a new parent/carers forum with the support of the national infrastructure group
- work with an engagement and participation group to review the communication plan and offer any feedback around the key messages
- ensure our children and young people's engagement strategy is co-produced and developed for young people, by young people

Key priority area 6 – develop key messages around key transition points.

To achieve this, we will:

- ensure we have key messages around transition points – at years 9, 11 and 13
- provide a range of information brochures to support key transition points
- listen to young people around what they need as they prepare for adulthood