

Thurrock Council

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Pupil and Student Engagement Strategy 2021-23

Introduction

This strategy helps us to understand what is in place to empower children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to have their views heard and to be valued partners in the decision-making process.

It will also support us to understand who's who within the council and where participation sits locally.

Our vision

Our vision is for all children and young people with SEND to be offered the opportunity to have their say and be a part of the decision making process within the services that they use.

Our mission

Our mission is:

- to hold regular events and activities that support the inclusion of children and young people's voice
- to enable children and young people to be a part of their own plans
- to engage with as many children and young people as we can through one-to-one meetings and focus groups, using face-to-face and virtual methods
- to encourage decision-makers to listen and act upon young people's feedback
- to celebrate achievements

Our values

We are determined to work alongside children and young people to create a strong partnership, to co-produce services and activities together.

We are committed to building an open and honest relationship with children and young people.

We embrace change and find creative and adventurous ways of engaging children and young people in a joint effort to drive changes forward.

Our priorities

Our 4 main priorities are to:

- work collaboratively with children and young people to co-produce
- organise a series of events and activities to encourage participation at both primary, secondary and post-16
- celebrate success in the positive changes that have been made
- embed children's and young people's feedback in all areas of service delivery

As an outcome of this plan we aim for children and young people to be able to:

- become more involved
- be able to question and give feedback
- find out how their voice has changed things – 'you said, we did'

Why we do this

We gather views from children and young people who use services and activities to find out what else they may need or would like.

It will help us to improve:

- health
- education
- social interaction
- having fun
- relationships
- being an active citizen

Who it's for

The plan is for:

- children and young people who have a learning difficulty or disability and live in Thurrock
- those who work alongside us
- services and organisations interested in what children and young people have to say

What participation and engagement means

Everyone's responsibility

We all have a responsibility to consult with children and young people about areas of our work, asking questions like 'does this make sense?' and 'how do you think we can make things better?'

Wider organisation

All teams will share examples and feedback from children and young people to help shape future decisions. This will be done by gathering the information through:

- feedback weeks
- statements from engagement events in primary, secondary and post-16 settings
- tools like the Mind of My Own portal
- the Young Inspectors programme
- Youth Cabinet
- Children in Care Council
- digital forums
- Pupil Voice project

Ways of working together

Way of working	Type of work	How we work
Co-production	Doing with	In equal and reciprocal partnership
Co-design		
Engagement	Doing for	Engaging and involving people
Consultation		
Informing		
Educating	Doing to	Trying to fix people who are passive recipients of service
Coercion		

Youth Cabinet

Thurrock's Youth Cabinet is an elected group of young people, who work to make Thurrock a better place for all children and young people in Thurrock.

It was set up to give the children and young people of Thurrock a voice to help shape and influence decisions which are made on their behalf. Their members meet at regular monthly meetings to discuss campaigns, community action, and to consult with those who want to listen and act on children and young people's views.

The Youth Cabinet attends overview and scrutiny meetings to report and update on their work and are able to contribute and discuss agenda items.

Opportunities to be involved, aimed at 11 to 25 year-olds

Youth Cabinet

Youth Cabinet meetings take place every month. They are attended by officers, councillors, service providers and guest speakers, but most importantly by young people.

Being members of the British Youth Council, the Youth Cabinet represents Thurrock nationally and attends 3 conventions each year, plus an annual sitting.

The Youth Cabinet works hard to ensure all young people's groups and schools are represented

Young Inspectors

Young Inspectors is a programme that provides young people with 2 days' training to become an 'inspector'. This involves carrying out inspections of plans, services, proposal, and so on, and giving feedback from a young person's view.

Campaigns

A 'Make Your Mark' campaign takes place each year. This is a national campaign that results in a ballot for young people to decide which 2 topics to focus upon in the following year.

Pupil Voice project

Pupil Voice is a project co-produced with Treetops School, Beacon Hill Academy and Thurrock Sensory Service to capture the thoughts and feelings of children and young people. Feedback is collected each term and again at the end of the year to measure the journey travelled.

The project focuses on the following 5 methods of engagement:

- creativity
- case studies
- lockdown stories
- virtual focus groups
- online engagement using the portal

School councils

Special schools that work with primary, secondary and post-16 students all have school councils. These are another means of engaging and capturing children and young people's views.

Children looked after

For those who are children looked after or care leavers, there are additional ways for voices to be heard and to be involved in decision making:

- Children in Care Council
- quarterly feedback weeks
- consultation sessions
- Care leavers drop in sessions
- Mind of My Own express app
- events to attend throughout the year – outdoor activities plus other fun events which have been designed following the feedback received from children and young people

Preparing for Adulthood team – post-16 engagement

The Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) team works with other agencies to deliver Thurrock Council's vision that all children and young people with SEND aged 16 to 25 across the local area access outstanding support in their early years, school, college and at work that enables them to fully achieve their potential and have happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.

PFA case workers will:

- support SEND learners to access education, employment or training
- support the Learner Support team to commission provision for the SEND learners across Thurrock
- support transition arrangement for SEND learners
- work in partnership with educational providers to ensure SEND learners are accessing appropriate pathways to learning
- provide information where required to support funding decisions
- provide high-quality career education, information, advice and guidance on all aspects of education, training, employment and citizenship issues to young people and their parents/carers – individually and in groups – to enable them to make and implement effective decisions in the areas of learning, employment and personal development
- lead and act as an advocate for SEND young people to ensure they get the help they want and need
- assess and identify the support needs of individual clients through the use of a range of assessment tools and by attending annual reviews
- work with local employers to generate employment, work experience and internship opportunities for young people and to be aware of the local labour market through contact with employers and training providers
- attend annual reviews, complete and write education, health and care (EHC) plans
- receive continuous feedback from young people about their experience of working with a careers adviser and SEND personal adviser to make sure we are constantly improving our service to the young people

The Inspire Skills team introduces formal reviews of the Return Home Interview service and Head Start Housing to improve the service. After each missing young person interview, the young person, parent, carer, placement receive a text asking them to rate the service using a selection of interactive tools. The team and children's social care review this quarterly.

Virtual work placements for young people seek feedback on their experience.

The participation officer for children looked after works closely with the Disabled Children's service and Inspire Youth and Careers teams to promote participation within the service.

Work has begun with our primary age children. The SEND service ran five engagement sessions with primary school children with SEND and their parents in their schools. These sessions will continue once visitors are welcomed back into schools. The sessions focused on children's aspirations, views on their schooling and what they would like to change.

Evaluation and quality assurance

An implementation plan has been developed to ensure that clear goals are set in accordance with our strategies and mission and that we achieve our vision for children and young people.

Thurrock Council's vision – an ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

Useful links:

- Youth Cabinet – www.thurrock.gov.uk/youth-cabinet
- Local Offer – www.thurrock.gov.uk/local-offer