

# Spreading the word



## Welcome...

Hello. I am pleased to introduce the spring 2019 edition of the Local Offer newsletter 'Spreading the Word'. The previous five editions are all available on the Local Offer webpages and are building up into a library of useful articles to complement the information on the Local Offer website.

Many of you will know that the county council is currently consulting on our plans to develop our specialist provision, to include local 'resourced provisions' alongside mainstream schools, as well as expanding existing provision and building new special schools. The new provisions will have a particular focus upon Communication and Interaction (including autism) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH).

As I write this I have attended five or six consultation events around the county. We have been delighted by the

consultation response to date. Key messages include the importance of early identification and support – especially during the pre-school years, working with health and other agencies, and getting SEN support right in mainstream schools so that as many children as possible can attend their local community school with the help and support they need.

You have also told us that it is important to provide the right training to staff in schools and to provide the right support, including through an EHC Plan where needed. Parents and carers want access to information; about their child's needs, about what support is available and about the range of possible schools. Regarding the design of new provision, you have told us about the need to get the access and the car parking right; wide, accessible entrances and corridors; good acoustics and lighting; toilet and care facilities and modern technology. And class sizes and overall pupil numbers that support children to learn effectively.

The consultation events have been a real reminder that whilst there are some general themes (eg about the needs of children with autism) every child is unique and they and their parents and carers can have different views about what is important.

My hope is that we can build on these events to harness this enthusiasm to work together to deliver a bright, dynamic and creative Local Offer for Leicestershire children and young adults.

Please see [www.leicestershire.gov.uk/send-consultation](https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/send-consultation) for further information about our plans and how to contribute.

Tom

Tom Common, Head of SEND

## The Local Offer

Our 'local offer' brings together details about local health, education and social care services in one place for children and young people aged 0-25.

The 'one-stop-shop' is a useful online resource for children, young people, parents, professionals and people who provide services.

You can also use the site to tell us about your experiences of services and facilities, register a service or suggest one to be added.

The 'local offer' was launched following national reform, ours can be found at

[www.leicestershire.gov.uk/local-offer](https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/local-offer)



Look out for the links to resources, email addresses and useful websites that feature throughout this newsletter.



Join our Leicestershire Local Offer on Facebook, visit our page and like us to receive regular updates.

Visit the Local Offer at

[www.leicestershire.gov.uk/local-offer](https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/local-offer)

[leicestershirelocaloffer@leics.gov.uk](mailto:leicestershirelocaloffer@leics.gov.uk)

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# Meet the team ...

## THE DISABLED CHILDREN'S SERVICE



The Disabled Children's Service is a county-wide service and is based at the Coalville Office. Within Leicestershire Children's Services, children with additional needs and disabilities are supported by all teams.

The service provides specialist support for children who experience severe or profound disabilities. To be eligible for support a child's disability will have been formally diagnosed and will be permanent or long term.

There are three teams, an Occupational Therapy Team and two teams with Social Workers, Child Care Support Workers and Direct Payment Workers; each team has a Manager and a Senior Practitioner. We are assisted by a Social Work Co-ordinator from the Business Support Service. One social worker is on a secondment in the Special Educational Needs Assessment Service helping to deliver effective practice in developing and reviewing Education, Health and Care Plans.

We work closely with disabled children and their families, and the other agencies supporting them. Parenting a disabled child does require a high level of care and attention to ensure that the disabled child's needs are met. Support for disabled children and their families is arranged through 'Short Breaks' which give children opportunities for their personal and social development. At the same time parents, carers and families have a break from caring. More information on our short breaks service, including information on eligibility, and the types of breaks we offer for disabled children, can be found on our website.

Some families choose to have directly commissioned services and others have Direct Payments to arrange their own services. Direct Payments are now administered through 'Direct Payment Cards.'

At different stages of life disabled children, young people, adults and their carers need different levels and types of support. Making 'Transitions' can create anxieties for young people and their families, we are working with young people and their families, Adult Services and colleagues from agencies including health and education to develop a 'Pathway to Adulthood' and alongside this the council is preparing to launch its 'Whole Life Disability Strategy'.

As a specialist service we have provided placements for Social Work Students and Occupational Therapy Students.

Hope to meet you at future events we attend in the community.

*Vivienne Atter*

Service Manager.

[www.leicestershire.gov.uk/short-breaks-for-disabled-children](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/short-breaks-for-disabled-children)

# New Children and Families Wellbeing Service to launch

The new-style 0-19 service will focus on supporting the most vulnerable families in Leicestershire, including families of children and young people with SEND.

This new service will bring into one, the four previous service areas (Supporting Leicestershire Families, Children's Centres, Youth Offending Service and Early Help Information Support and Assessment). This new integrated service will be delivered from 21 family wellbeing centres across the county.

**This new service will provide targeted support to families in need in a more joined up way; making the most of our staff and resources and bringing down costs by avoiding duplication.**

*Ivan Ould, Leicestershire County Council cabinet member for children and families*

For more information visit:

[www.leicestershire.gov.uk/news/new-children-and-families-wellbeing-service](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/news/new-children-and-families-wellbeing-service)



If you have been concerned by hearing that some Children's Centres had closed, find your nearest or alternative centre, by visiting

[www.leicestershire.gov.uk/childrens-centre-update](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/childrens-centre-update) or alternatively email: [CFSWellbeingService@leics.gov.uk](mailto:CFSWellbeingService@leics.gov.uk)

If you would like to make a referral to the Children and Families Wellbeing Service please complete the 'Request for Service' form found at <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/family-wellbeing-service-referral>

If you would like advice before making a referral please call **0116 305 8727**.

If you have an immediate concern for a child or if you feel you need to raise a concern please contact Leicestershire First Response Children's Duty Team on **0116 305 0005** (24 hour phone line) in the first instance or email:

[childrensduty@leics.gov.uk](mailto:childrensduty@leics.gov.uk)

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2019



**LEICESTERSHIRE PARENT CARER FORUM**  
Informing Involving Improving

Leicestershire Parent Carer Forum - Information Hubs			
<b>Monday</b> 8 Apr, 13 May, 10 Jun	North West Leicestershire	Agar Nook Community Centre, Belgrave Close, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 4TN	10 – 11am
<b>Wednesday</b> Dates TBC	Blaby	Brockington Community College, Blaby Road, Enderby, Leicestershire LE19 4AQ	7 – 9pm
<b>Thursday</b> 23 May, 27 Jun	Hinckley & Bosworth	Newbold Verdon School Community Lounge, Dragon Lane, Newbold Verdon Leicestershire LE9 9NG	9:30 – 11:30am
<b>Thursday</b> 4 Apr, 2 May, 6 Jun	Charnwood	Tesco Shelthorpe Community Room, Park Road, Loughborough LE11 2EX	9:30 - 11:30am
<b>Wednesday</b> Dates TBC	Blaby	Brockington Community College, Blaby Road, Enderby, Leicestershire LE19 4AQ	7 – 9pm
<b>Friday</b> 5 Apr, 10 Jun	Central – 360 Play*	360 Play, Meridian Leisure Park, Lubbethorpe Way, Leicestershire LE19 1JZ	7:15 – 7:45pm

\*Please note that this session will only be available to customers of the 360 Play SEN Session for which there is a charge

You can find out more about our Leicestershire Parent Carer Forum on page 8. For more information about the information hubs, please email [info@leicestershirepcf.org.uk](mailto:info@leicestershirepcf.org.uk)

WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU. Which services do you use? How do you feel about the support? What would you like to see in future newsletters?  
Contact [leicestershirelocaloffer@leics.gov.uk](mailto:leicestershirelocaloffer@leics.gov.uk)





# A letter from the chair

It has been almost a year since the Leicestershire Parent Carer Forum was newly constituted and the Steering Group voted in. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Steering Group and our representatives, all volunteers, who have worked hard to ensure the forum continues to grow by gaining influence with service providers and gathering more parent voice.

The hub model we adopted last year has been an effective means, along with social media, to connect with as many parent carers as possible. Our hubs are going from strength to strength and are also starting to join forces with other groups such as Supporting Leicestershire Families and ADHD solutions, meaning we can keep even more of our parent carers informed and involved.

We have recently seen the launch of our new website:

[www.leicestershireparentcarerforum.org.uk](http://www.leicestershireparentcarerforum.org.uk)

and email system and are currently in the process of setting up an official database of membership so we can keep everyone better informed of the voice and co-production activities.

Over the past year we have worked tirelessly in establishing the forum in its role as a critical friend to our local authority and service providers. We continue to sit on the Local Authority's SEND board where we update the board on issues raised by our members and the work we have been doing with service providers. We also sit on a number of focus and working groups at the local authority, including those around Preparing for Adulthood, Short Breaks and The Local Offer. We are currently in talks around improvements to the Special Educational Needs Assessment Service (SENA) and Special Needs Home to School Transport Service. If you'd like to be involved in representing parent carers at these important meetings, or would just like to find out more about being a forum representative, please get in touch. We value and support all our Reps and are keen to have representatives from all over Leicestershire with a diverse range of skills and experience.

This year we participated in a co-production opportunity with SENA, facilitated by the Council for Disabled Children, around the inclusion of social care advice and outcomes in Education and Health Care Plans.

Although progress in this area has not been as rapid as we would like, co-production is ongoing and we will continue to work on this in the next year.

We have had opportunities to provide parent voice on the provision of short breaks and how the process is experienced by parent carers. We continue to be involved in this and are co-producing communications to parents about short breaks and how to access them.

We continue to co-produce the Local Offer website, the directory of services is undergoing an overhaul as well as the look and feel of the site and the information it provides or signposts to.

A big project that began this year was 'Preparing For Adulthood' previously named 'Transition'. We have contributed to the development of the new Pathway

document and have attended meetings regarding the service, providing feedback and experience of Parent Carers.

One area we have worked hard to develop this year is our link with schools. We started the year by introducing ourselves at the SENCo Net (a network of the Schools' Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators). We explained what the forum did with a presentation, and we will continue to attend these meetings creating a communication channel and to be aware of the local, regional and national updates members of the Network receive.

Both Tom Common (Head Of Service: SEND) and Jane Moore (Director of Children and Family Services), have demonstrated their support and desire to work with and hear from the Parent Carer Forum and we look forward to this continuing relationship.

We look forward to meeting more parents and carers over the next year and we continue to share your voice.



**Anna Bromley**  
Chair of Leicestershire  
Parent Carer Forum

Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire is the independent consumer champion for health and social care services in Leicester and Leicestershire. Our job is to champion the interests of those using health and social care services across Leicester and Leicestershire and give local people an opportunity to speak out about their concerns.

We will listen to your views, concerns and suggestions about services and use that information to help shape and improve them. We can provide information to help you make choices about the services you use. We hold meetings and events, gather views through surveys and carry out Enter & View visits. We share your issues of concern, your views and experiences to those who run, plan and regulate local health and social care services.



## Get involved and help us to make a difference!

- You can become a volunteer to help us with carrying our Healthwatch duties.
- You can take part in surveys and consultations.
- Sign up to our newsletter and receive regular updates on our work.
- Participate in our engagement meetings and events held around the City and County.

Contact us for information, signposting, volunteering and to let us know your views and experiences of health and social care services in Leicester and Leicestershire.

Telephone: **0116 251 8313**

Email: [enquiries@healthwatchLL.com](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchLL.com)

Website: [www.healthwatchLL.com](http://www.healthwatchLL.com)

Tweet: [@HealthwatchLeic](https://twitter.com/HealthwatchLeic)

Address: **Clarence House, 46 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, LE1 3PJ**

## Location of new SEND bases announced

Fifteen new 'enhanced resource bases' for children with SEND will open in mainstream schools across Leicestershire within the next two years.

They will either cater for pupils with communication and interaction needs (C &I) or social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH), which includes ASD.

They will be situated in areas such as Loughborough, Hinckley, Wigston, Syston and Ashby would either have existing space refurbished, or extensions built.

It is expected that the first of the new bases could open this September, and the others would follow next year.

The plans form part of our commitment to investing up to £30m in improving SEND provision in the county.

In March, The Department for Education announced it would fund the building of a new special free school at the Iveshead campus in Shepshed.

We are also proposing to expand five of our six special schools.

More information, including a full list of where the bases will be situated, is available at: [www.leicestershire.gov.uk/news/details-of-new-send-provision-to-be-considered](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/news/details-of-new-send-provision-to-be-considered)

Feedback from our consultation, which focused on the new bases should look, feel and operate alongside mainstream and / or special schools, is set to be considered by the council's cabinet later this spring.



# Get ready for



The summer holidays will be here before we know it and it's time to get prepared. With a little forward planning using our guide, the long summer break can be less daunting and easier on your pocket!

## Don't get caught short!

Have you considered a day out, but worry about how you will meet the personal care needs of your child or young person? Did you know that there are now over 1200 Changing Places toilets installed in many places you may want to visit throughout Leicestershire and the UK including theatres, shopping centres, tourist attractions, parks and even supermarkets and motorway service stations? These toilets have been designed to meet the needs of every disabled person allowing far more space than the average disabled toilet, height adjustable changing benches and hoists.

Find out more about Changing Places toilets by downloading the [Changing Places Practical Guide](#) and search for locations of Changing Place on the [Changing Places](#) website. There's a [Facebook Page](#) for all the latest news. Also look out for the [Mobiloo](#), the mobile Changing Places toilet which will be at many community [events and festivals](#).



## Radar Keys

Many disabled toilets including Changing Places toilets require a Radar Key. These keys can be used throughout the UK and are to protect the facility from improper use and vandalism. Keys can be obtained from all district council offices except Melton. You will need proof of residency in that district, ID and proof of the disability (e.g. disability benefit award letter or Blue Badge).

Alternatively, keys are available on Amazon or the Disability Rights online shop: <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/>

## Community Inclusive Summer Playschemes

Nervous about considering an inclusive playscheme for your child? Unsure where to look and wondering if the staff will have the skills and experience to support your child?

Read our guide to inclusive playschemes and open up a world of opportunities!

The summer holidays can leave children isolated, with limited social opportunities. Many parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are discovering that their local community schemes, many of which have Local Authority approval, offer great quality support near to home giving their child opportunities to be part of their local community, make new friends, have new experiences and develop confidence and life skills.

Most playschemes recognise and value the importance of being inclusive and welcome and support children with a wide variety of special needs and disabilities.

## Guide to Choosing a Summer Playscheme

The Information and Support Directory part of the Leicestershire Local Offer holds a list of many schemes around the County giving details of their experience, training received, accessibility and the size of their groups etc. Not all schemes will be listed, so also ask around your community.

Contact the scheme and talk to them about your child's needs, the support they will require and how they will meet those needs. Use our list of 'Questions to Ask a Playscheme'

If the scheme feels that they may need extra resources in order to support your child, then they can apply for Inclusion Funding from the Local Authority. The Early Years, Inclusion and Childcare Service Duty desk can help: 0116 305 8767 or [childcare@leics.gov.uk](mailto:childcare@leics.gov.uk)

## Summer holidays on a budget? Take a look at these free or low cost activity ideas...

Libraries offer lots of children's activities over the summer. Ask your local library for more information, or visit the Leicestershire Libraries [Facebook Page](#)

[Leicestershire Museums](#) and [Leicester Museums](#) hold children's activities right through the school holidays.

Some softplay centres hold relaxed sessions just for children with SEND. Consider the following:

Market Harborough: [Mini Mischiefs](#) on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month 8.30-9.30am

Leicester City: [360 Play](#) on the 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of every month 6.30-8.30pm

Wigston: [Two Steeples Wacky Warehouse](#) (last Wednesday of the month 4-8pm)

Donisthorpe: [Jungle Madness](#) on Mondays 4.30-6.30

Nuneaton: [The Bermuda Play Centre](#) (see website for dates)

Local parks and playgrounds some of which have been designed to be inclusive to all ages and abilities, for example [Sarah's Wood](#), [Moirs](#), [Oakfield Park](#) in [Blaby](#), [Welland Park](#) in [Market Harborough](#) [Queens Park](#) in [Loughborough](#) and [Argent's Mead](#) in [Hinckley](#)

Mountsorrel Memorial Hall has a disco for children with SEND every Monday 4-5pm (£2 per child)

The Attenborough Arts Centre in Leicester has an [Inclusive Youth Arts Programme](#)

[Leicester Wheels for All](#) hold regular fun inclusive bike sessions

[Bamboozle Theatre](#) offer children and young people with profound multiple learning disability or who are on the Autistic Spectrum, free multi-sensory theatre experiences.

Free swimming is available in some leisure centres if your child is in receipt of DLA or PIP. Contact your local leisure centre or visit their website to see what they offer.

For events in your area over the summer visit our What's On Page: <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/whats-on>

We've had some enquiries regarding play schemes this summer for children with SEND. So, to clarify:

- Families with support packages in place don't need to do anything. If you have a Family Support Worker or a Social Worker and a support plan is in place, they will discuss your summer support needs with you.
- Any families who received support last summer, but do not otherwise have a package of support in place, should contact us using the early help request for service form, available at <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/family-wellbeing-service-referral>, or call 0116 305 0005. This also applies if you have not applied for a summer playscheme before.

All decisions will be made by the short breaks panel.

## Useful websites

[skybadger.co.uk](http://skybadger.co.uk) leisure ideas and grants to pay for holidays and equipment

[walkswithwheelchairs.com/](http://walkswithwheelchairs.com/) wheelchair accessible walks in the UK

[Rough Guide To Accessible Britain](#) the best inclusive and accessible days out. ( includes hidden disabilities)

[meru.org.uk/what-we-do/travelchair/](http://meru.org.uk/what-we-do/travelchair/) support to hire a postural support travel chair for a standard airline seat

[www.accessable.co.uk/](http://www.accessable.co.uk/) information about accessibility of restaurants, cinemas and hotels

[www.did-card.co.uk/index.php](http://www.did-card.co.uk/index.php) apply for a National Disabled Identification Card to confirm that the person has a recognised disability even if hidden.

Organisations which offer family support to include Summer holiday activities and other social opportunities

ADHD Solutions:

[cmsms.adhdsolutions.org/](http://cmsms.adhdsolutions.org/)

Leicestershire Autistic Society:

[www.leicestershireautisticsociety.org.uk/](http://www.leicestershireautisticsociety.org.uk/)

Vista: [www.vistablind.org.uk/](http://www.vistablind.org.uk/)

# Making flying an easier option

After being awarded a family fund grant in late 2017, my husband and I decided we would add some money and have our first holiday abroad with our two children, both of whom have additional needs.

We thought very carefully about where and when we would go and decided to book a lovely resort in Turkey that had all the amenities and plenty of new opportunities.

Our daughter, Sophia, takes numerous medications for ADHD and epilepsy and as the holiday got closer, I started to consider the logistics of our trip and became increasingly anxious about how my children would cope in the airport and on the flight. I was worried about taking my daughter's medication on a plane and through customs too. Not only is one of her medications a controlled drug but her epilepsy medication is in liquid form and would need to be in our hand luggage.

I was advised to ring operator Thomas Cook and they reassured me that the medication would be allowed on the flight - that it would just need to be scanned first in a special machine. They told me that a copy of my daughter's prescription would be suitable for customs and they pre-booked our seats on the plane, arranging for us to get on the plane first so the children could be seated before the rest of the passengers boarded. They also told me that East Midlands Airport offer assistance through the airport and that I could contact them separately to arrange this.

I emailed East Midlands Airport and was told about their 'Try Before You Fly' experience, designed to help passengers with hidden disabilities gain familiarity with the airport before travelling. Unfortunately, the experiences prior to our flight were full.

However, Chris Drury, Passenger Services Duty Manager offered to give us a tour of the airport himself, one week before our holiday. It was ideal as our children needed enough time before the holiday to process the experience, but not too long to start getting concerned and anxious. Chris arranged for us to have free parking and met us in Departures.

Upon arrival we completed some forms and were given lanyards. Chris escorted us around the airport, patiently answering the children's questions, pointing out and explaining the different areas and why procedures took place.

We were able to experience the check-in desk, where the girls were given the explanation of the suitcases being weighed and then going on the conveyor belt to the aeroplane. We then went through security, placing our bags in the trays to be scanned and walking through the metal detectors to get our bags on the other side. I was searched further, whilst the girls were reassured that this was fine and nothing to worry about. Once we arrived at the gate, Chris arranged a bus to collect us and drive us slowly via the stationary planes for a closer view and then drop us off at the arrivals side of the airport so that the girls could experience the baggage reclaim area for after our flight.

This tour of the airport before our holiday was a fantastic experience and it made our actual holiday travel arrangements an enjoyable experience due to the children not being worried or scared of the airport and its procedures.

*Helen Cuttle*

A Special Needs Mum



**"We have put a lot of hard work and focus into developing our assistance service for passengers with non-visible disabilities over the past couple of years, so I was very pleased to be able to help the Cuttle family get away for their first ever family holiday to Turkey.**

**The public are not always aware that our service exists, or that we are able to assist people across the whole spectrum with both visible and non-visible needs. Access to our service is entirely free of charge, and can be booked in advance via your airline. Benefits of using the service include access to our dedicated 'quiet rooms', reduced queuing at security, immigration and check-in, priority boarding, and a shorter route through the retail areas of the departure lounge.**

**In addition to this, East Midlands Airport offers a 'green lanyard' scheme which acts as a discreet signal to airport staff that the wearer may require additional time, care and understanding when journeying through the airport. There is also an 'assistance passport', an 'airport awareness guide' and of course our popular 'Try Before You Fly' scheme.**

**There is lots of information available on our website, and I encourage anybody to get in touch with us if they have any questions, so that we can help more families like the Cuttles make air travel a little smoother, and ensure everybody can enjoy their well-earned breaks".**

Chris Drury  
Passenger Services Manager,  
East Midlands Airport

**Ria has a diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy and is a wheelchair user. She has a severe scoliosis, suffering with spine seizures, migraines and fatigue. Despite this, 16 year old Ria remains bright; looking forward to life as an independent young woman.**



"I remember being quite sad when I was at primary school. It was a mainstream school and whilst the teachers tried to involve me, I often felt alone and hurt when I felt I couldn't join in ... it made me feel a failure, and no-one likes to feel like that. I have an older brother and he always looked out for me, whilst I was so grateful for that; I just felt alone and helpless. In the classroom, sometimes I didn't quite 'get' the school work, and if I had been off school for a bit because I was ill it made me feel worse... I sometimes felt I was being set up to fail. With my school work starting to suffer, my anxiety kicked in – sometimes it got so bad, it made me physically sick. It wasn't long before Mum and Dad started to think of moving me to a different school, a specialist one. I can remember thinking to myself having listened to Mum and Dad talking about a "Special School" I didn't know what all the fuss was about, what made a school special – surely it was just another school? At this a young age I didn't understand my disability and just wanted to 'team up' and be part of a team. Even today I hate to see anyone being left out!

Looking back now, I think this is why I have got involved with the LCFC Community Mentor scheme. It's great, I have learnt new skills and taught different games and activities that help develop inclusiveness through sport. I have spoken to my PE teacher with some ideas I am hoping to trial at school around Eastertime. If all goes well, I hope these activities will become part of this year's sports day!

When I was 8, I moved to the special school I am at now. I remember in the early days I was really anxious. My wheelchair is quite big and bulky and I can remember for maybe the first one and a half years, I was worried that I might run someone over....of course I never did! My other anxiety was making friends with other SEND children, learning to communicate in other ways like 'signing'. I really didn't need

to worry; I have made some lovely friendship groups. For the first time I felt like I was starting to succeed; my attendance record also improved from 33% to 89% in the space of a year!

I am a very caring person and I have got a lot of patience. I love to read and I was soon asked to go and read to some of the children in primary. This past Christmas I also helped out my step brother, with his reading task. He had been told to read a new book - it was a Horrid Henry one - he found it really challenging at first pronouncing "Henry". Reassuring him, telling him he was 'really clever' and that he could do it, we managed to get through a few pages before bedtime. It just took time and patience which is what I was able to give him.

**"I am 16 now, and I have got my own aspirations. I would like to go to college and take a childcare course, especially having seen the little kids' progress – it is so rewarding when you can see the confidence grow in their eyes, in the knowledge that I have been a part of it."**

Yes, I know I look different – I also know I can still achieve my goals, it just might take me a little longer. I realise that qualifications are important, but they don't always come straight away – it might take a couple of goes. For myself, I know that due to needing an operation on my back, I will be held back a year, and after Easter I will be getting a

catheter. It will make my life so much easier and more accessible, as there are simply not enough changing places toilets. At the moment, I have to wear pads and have a stoma bag. So, after Easter I will be looking forward to being able to wear the clothes I want to like any other teenager.

I hate to see disabled people get disrespected and bullied – no matter who you are, of what age and access – you can and do have the right to speak up!"

Ria is very passionate about changing places toilets and ensuring people have their voice heard. Ria often advocates on behalf of her friends, especially those who have no voice.

Ria has also recently been given the opportunity to try out Flat 108 with one of her best friends. They go into town to buy food, learn how to cook and clean and keep safe, under the watchful eyes of their teaching assistants and support staff from Flat 108.

"Being able to try out independent living with your best friend is great. I am less frightened or anxious about going into town now."

Ria explains about her cerebral palsy, and that her fine motor skills have been greatly improved by a Baclofen pump which delivers the drug, a muscle relaxant, directly into her spinal cord through a catheter. "It's been a life saver, I don't need to wear wrist splits anymore, enabling me to write better and apply my make-up. "

The pump is soon to be replaced; quite an invasive and tricky operation. Asked if she gets anxious about surgery Ria simply replies "Yes, I do a bit – especially the closer it gets, but I read and know the risks. I do get a little emotional too ...after all I am a teenager!"

On leaving, Ria explains that she just wants to "make a small difference". Watch this space; this remarkable young lady is likely to make big changes, for herself and for others.



CYCLe is the name of the County Youth Council for Leicestershire. It has a membership that is made up of young people aged 11-18 who live, go to school or use services in Leicestershire. The aim of the group is to discuss and tackle important issues and to make effective change.

The young people who sit on CYCLe volunteer their time to represent other young people from across the seven borough and districts of the county and provide a route for them to have their say on issues that affect them in their community.

Also sitting on CYCLe are the three Leicestershire Members of UK Youth Parliament, who take the voice of young people from the local to the national level. These young people are the elected element of youth council, who hold office for two years and support the work of CYCLe. These young people run the Make Your Mark ballot, the largest consultation for young people by young people in this country - last year 13,932 young people voted in Leicestershire and nationally 1.1 million.

This year's main campaign is 'Put an end to knife crime', which came through as the top issue in Leicestershire from the Make Your Mark ballot. Previous campaigns have been 'Make public transport cheaper, better and accessible for all';

'A curriculum to prepare us for life' and 'Mental health services should be improved with young people's help and should be available in schools', which CYCLe tackled last year by launching their own Emotional Wellbeing curriculum pack that was distributed to all secondary schools in Leicestershire.

For the last two years CYCLe has worked closely with the seven Leicestershire County Council SEND groups to ensure they take part in the Make Your Mark ballot, they have supported the groups to run projects on issues and involved them in consultations run by partner agencies, such as the Healthy Teens Website.

CYCLe is non-discriminatory and non-party political and all young people are welcome to attend and join in the meetings.



To find out more about the group please contact:

**Jane McCormick**  
Family Voice Worker

Phone: 0116 305 5720 Mobile: 07946 867 488

Email: [jane.mccormick@leics.gov.uk](mailto:jane.mccormick@leics.gov.uk)

Address: Room 500 - Rutland Building, County Hall,  
Glenfield, Leics. LE3 8RF

Remember, this is *your* newsletter...

If you would like to submit an article, or you have a suggestion for an article, please email [leicestershirelocaloffer@leics.gov.uk](mailto:leicestershirelocaloffer@leics.gov.uk)

It is estimated up to 1.5 million people in the UK have a learning disability and only 6% of people with learning disabilities are currently in employment, with the majority of these working part-time.

Many people in work with a learning disability, with the right support, can be hard-working and reliable employees. However, getting and holding down a job has traditionally been an enormous challenge for people with learning disabilities.

# Breaking down employment barriers for people with learning disabilities



The written job application process and interview intimidate many. If they do manage to secure a job, retaining it can be a real challenge if they are not appropriately supported. They may have difficulties learning new skills and coping independently with everyday tasks.



Adjustments for an employee with a learning disability include:

- altering the recruitment process to allow work trials instead of formal interviews
- using supported employment providers to offer in work support to help learn a role
- providing information in accessible formats
- offering direct interviews and removing the application process
- accepting video CV's as opposed to written ones

Employers need to adopt a creative, positive and solutions-focused approach to making any adjustments that meet both the needs of the business and the person with the learning disability.

They need to provide practical ways that will enable people with learning disabilities to work and accommodate people's personal abilities.

One approach which often proves helpful in employing people with a learning disability is called job carving. Instead of fitting a person into a rigid job description, it can be much more effective to identify different tasks that a person with a learning disability can do, and 'carve' out a job from these different tasks.

This might involve freeing up the receptionist from doing the mail distribution or freeing up the office manager from stuffing envelopes and data entry. All the tasks should be genuine business needs for the employer that the employee with a learning disability could usefully do.

Whilst attitudes towards disabled people in recent years have changed, employers still have many stereotypical perceptions, misunderstandings and prejudices in how much care disabled people need and how productive they are in the workplace.

The [Leicester Employment Hub](#) at the Leicester City Council are working hard to break down the challenges individuals with disabilities face in entering paid employment. By promoting the DWP's [Disability Confident](#) initiative with employers in Leicester and Leicestershire, organising recruitment days that offer direct interviews, and offering employers in the city and county a [Grant](#) of £2,500 if they recruit an individual with a disability, they hope to encourage more employers to open their minds and doors to individuals who can and want to work and are just waiting for someone to give them the opportunity to shine.

# Useful contacts

## Local Offer

Email: [leicestershirelocaloffer@leics.gov.uk](mailto:leicestershirelocaloffer@leics.gov.uk)

Web: [leicestershire.gov.uk/local-offer](http://leicestershire.gov.uk/local-offer)

## Leicestershire First Response

### Children's Duty Team

Phone: 0116 305 0005

(24 hour phone line)

Email: [childrensduty@leics.gov.uk](mailto:childrensduty@leics.gov.uk)

## SENDIASS

Phone: 0116 305 5614

(Monday to Thursday 9am to 4.30pm,

Friday 9am to 4pm)

Email: [sendiass@leics.gov.uk](mailto:sendiass@leics.gov.uk)

## SEN Assessment Service (SENA)

(SENA oversee Education Health and Care Plans)

Phone: 0116 305 6600

Email: [senaservice@leics.gov.uk](mailto:senaservice@leics.gov.uk)

## Specialist Teaching Service

Phone: 0116 305 9400

Email: [STS@leics.gov.uk](mailto:STS@leics.gov.uk)

## Children and Families Wellbeing Service

Phone: 0116 305 8727

Email: [CFSWellbeingService@leics.gov.uk](mailto:CFSWellbeingService@leics.gov.uk)

## Leicestershire County Council

County Hall, Glenfield

Leicestershire LE3 8RA

Phone: 0116 232 3232 (reception and switchboard)

Monday - Thursday: 8am - 5pm

Friday: 8am - 4.30pm

## Leicestershire District and Borough Councils

### Blaby District Council

[www.blaby.gov.uk](http://www.blaby.gov.uk)

Phone: 0116 275 0555

### Charnwood Borough Council

[www.charnwood.gov.uk](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk)

Phone: 01509 263151

### Harborough District Council

[www.harborough.gov.uk](http://www.harborough.gov.uk)

Phone: 01858 828282

### Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

[www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk](http://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk)

Phone: 01455 238141

### Melton Borough Council

[www.melton.gov.uk](http://www.melton.gov.uk)

Phone: 01664 502502

### North West Leicestershire

[www.nwleics.gov.uk](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk)

Phone: 01530 454545

### Oadby & Wigston Borough Council

[www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk](http://www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk)

Phone: 0116 288 8961

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'Spreading the Word' is now produced each term to view online and is emailed to those who have signed up. You can read it online at [Leicestershire Local Offer](#) and on our [Facebook page](#)

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