

Alternative Provision Strategy

2020 - 2024

Vision

The Alternative Provision Strategy contributes to the vision, outcomes and priorities for children and families in Lancashire agreed by the Children and Families Partnership Board by seeking to ensure that:

Children and young people achieve their full potential in education, learning and future employment

This will be achieved by:

Providing children and young people with a good quality education and learning opportunity which matches their talents, ambitions and aims and enables a positive transition to adulthood.

Key principles

The Alternative Provision Strategy has been developed to be consistent with the principles underpinning the SEND Sufficiency Strategy and the Strategy for Managing Behaviour in order to:

- increase the number of children and young people supported in mainstream provision
- reduce the number of exclusions from schools
- address the rising number of young people receiving home tuition
- stop off-rolling, leaving young people without education
- halt the increasing use of specialist provision
- ensure specialist provision is in the right locations
- increase the number of young people in education, employment and training

Key challenges

Permanent exclusion rates and the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training are much higher in Lancashire compared with national averages for England.

Levels of engagement in education, employment and training between the ages of 16 and 18 are much lower for young people previously placed in alternative provision.

Overcoming adverse performance and financial incentives for mainstream schools to include or reintegrate pupils with additional needs.

The considerable variation in the use of alternative provision across the county. Increased availability of alternative provision has resulted in increased demand.

Nationally, the average spend on high needs has increased and high needs block allocations fall short of existing levels of expenditure.

Despite increasing budgets and the transfer of funds from the schools block of the dedicated schools grant to the high needs block, the net deficit continues to rise. Estimates indicate a potential national deficit of between £1.2 and £1.6 billion by 2021.

Lancashire has undertaken its own preliminary financial forecast. This forecast is based on the trend over time for places, as a result of this it is estimated that there will be a potential shortfall of about £42 million by 2023/24, within a possible range of £30 to £50 million.

Strategic priorities

The priorities for ensuring sufficiency of SEND provision in Lancashire over the next five years are based upon the principles and challenges identified above and build upon the framework agreed by the cabinet in August 2019. These are as follows:

1. **Identify children's needs much earlier;** building on and sharing strategies which support development, learning and improved behaviour to promote inclusive practice
2. **Develop shared agreements about roles and responsibilities;** these could include individual and collective responsibility for the outcomes and destinations of individual pupils, the fair and equitable access to alternative provision and the oversight and quality assurance of this provision
3. **Work with partners;** implementing a consistent and coherent approach between alternative provision and other parts of the local system, including mainstream education, special educational needs provision and services, early help, social care and local health services
4. **Co-design and develop intervention support and local provision;** increasing the capacity of schools and the local area to provide a greater range of intervention support and ensuring equitable access to support that could include appropriate support options and pathways, outreach, turn around and longer term placements
5. **Co-design alternative Key Stage 4 and post-16 programmes;** thinking creatively so that we prepare young people for the next stage of their learning and for adulthood
6. **Develop the role of alternative provision;** identifying a clear strategic plan for inclusion and clear roles for all alternative provision providers so that they are responsive to local needs within the whole system
7. **Agree outcomes;** developing collective agreement about the systems that are put in place and performance measures that are aligned to strategic priorities across the local area
8. **Provide education for children and young people without a school place;** improving monitoring systems and developing more flexible packages to meet individual need

9. **Share information and data openly**; informing decision making and improving practice, to include financial and other resources available to schools and the local area
10. **Refine and develop funding arrangements**; using funding flexibly to incentivise inclusion and support strategic priorities, ensuring that consideration is given to the impact on the high needs block and bench marking data when decisions are made.

Local context - numbers

- **0.19%** of children and young people were permanently excluded from Lancashire schools; this equates to 393 children and young people. The permanent exclusion rate in England is 0.1%.
- **7.0%** of young people aged between 16 and 17 years were not in employment, education or training in February 2020; this equates to 1,784 young people and places Lancashire in the lowest 20% for this performance indicator nationally.
- **30.0%** of young people aged between 16 and 18 years not in employment, education or training in 2019/20 had special educational needs.
- **63.0%** of young people aged between 16 and 18 years not in employment, education or training in 2019/20 have had some previous social care involvement
- **118** alternative provision places are available per 10,000 of the secondary age pupil population; in England there are 88 places per 10,000 of the secondary age pupil population.
- **7.8%** children and young people attending alternative provision in Lancashire were reintegrated back into mainstream education. Nationally almost two thirds of primary age pupils and key stage three pupils are reintegrated into mainstream. In key stage four 53% of year ten pupils are reintegrated into mainstream and 10% of year eleven pupils.
- **70%** of children and young people with education, health and care plans attending alternative provision live in the south area of the county.
- **£12.9 million** is the predicted cost of alternative provision this financial year.

Local context - places

The number of alternative provision placements that have been commissioned from state funded alternative provision providers over the last three years is presented in the table below.

	2017/19	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of commissioned places	807	925	885	861

The main providers of alternative provision in Lancashire are:

Primary alternative provision	Location	Secondary alternative provision	Location
Stepping Stones Short Stay School	Lancaster	Chadwick High School	Lancaster
Golden Hill Short Stay School	Preston	MCKee College House	Fylde
		Coal Clough Academy	Burnley
		Oswaldtwistle School	Accrington
		Larches High School	Preston
		Shaftesbury High School	Chorley
		The Acorns School	Ormskirk

The total number of alternative provision placements for primary aged pupils was 93 in 2019/20.

The total number of alternative provision placement for secondary age pupils was 813 in 2019/20.

83 alternative provision placements were commissioned from independent providers, including some post-16 providers.

The demand for alternative provision placements has increased in 10 of the 12 local areas over the last 3 years and all of these have more alternative provision places per 10,000 of the secondary age population than the national average.

Ribble Valley has the fewest number of young people attending alternative provision (24 places per 10,000 secondary age population). Burnley has the most young people attending alternative provision (198 places per 10,000 of the secondary age population).

Areas with more alternative provision places tend to have higher exclusion rates.

More affluent areas tend to have lower permanent exclusion rates and fewer alternative provision places, although there are some exceptions to this for example Rossendale and Chorley.

Short-term actions

1. Establish an Alternative Provision Governance Group to consult with the sector and support the implementation of the Alternative Provision Strategy.
2. Consult with headteachers to support the development of a shared agreement about roles and responsibilities that includes individual and collective responsibilities for outcomes and destinations of individual pupils, the fair and equitable access to alternative provision and oversight and quality assurance of this provision.

3. Review the criteria and processes for admission to alternative provision, to create a needs led approach that ensures the local authority fulfils its duties to ensure the provision of suitable education for children of compulsory school age who because of illness, exclusion or otherwise would not receive a suitable education.
4. Establish robust systems for monitoring alternative provision, that include everyday performance measures such as attendance, placement uptake and funding requirements as well as outcome measures such as mainstream reintegration rates, progress and attainment and destination data.
5. Establish systems for reporting and publishing data relating to everyday performance and outcome measures regularly and more widely.
6. Create an alternative provision provider and services directory.
7. Strengthen and extend the Early Help offer to families at key transition points, and which could include transition into alternative provision and reintegration back into mainstream education.
8. Establish and maintain an approach that supports and complements the work being undertaken to promote engagement in education, employment and training across the county.
9. Establish better partnership working across key agencies and services, to include youth offending and complex safeguarding teams for example.

Medium term action

1. Undertake more preventative and early intervention work through the schools' locality networks, bringing education and children's services teams together to support inclusion of children and young people within local mainstream schools.
2. Co-design, and develop a shared understanding of, high quality intervention support across the system to include school to school support as well as that provided by external services and providers.
3. Create knowledge and understanding of what good alternative provision looks like for example by investigating and exploring the feasibility of different models of alternative provision that have been implemented by local authorities who are statistical neighbours with low exclusion rates.
4. Undertake consultation with young people who are, or who are at risk of becoming, not engaged in education, employment and training to identify the requirements of alternative provision and pathways to employment and training and inform future decision making and commissioning arrangements.
5. Undertake a gap analysis of alternative provision within the local area.
6. Develop and refine commissioning arrangements for alternative provision, this could include for example trialling different approaches with groups of schools and/or external providers to create more responsive and flexible packages of support.

7. Explore the possibility of creating champions/advocates/ coordinator roles in collaboration with schools forum to provide support for young people at key transition points and over extended periods of time as this is required.
8. Develop a quality assurance framework for alternative provision for use with a range of different settings including mainstream settings.

Outcomes

The Alternative Provision Strategy will:

- Support improved outcomes for children and young people at risk of exclusion by identifying need earlier and targeting preventative support.
- Support a needs led approach so that children and young people are supported more flexibly and innovatively with a reduced dependency on full time placements in Alternative Provision.
- Redress the unsustainable budget pressures associated with the current level of demand.