Parent Carer Support Group Network Event
Next Steps for SEND in Leeds

Thursday 15th October 2026
10 till 12.30
Pudsey Civic Hall, Stanningley, LS28 5TA

The Leeds Parent Carer Forum and Voice, Influence & Change Team at Leeds City Council host three parent carer support group network events a year (February, June & October).

The events are an opportunity to:

- Hear about the top issues raised by parents and carers in Leeds.
- Hear from services about their responses to the issues raised and next steps.
- Network with other parent carer support groups.

The event

The parent carer support group network event took place on Thursday 15th October 2026 at Pudsey Civic Hall. 27 parent cares booked to attend, with 17 attending on the day. There was representation from Sunshine and Smiles, Lotus Links, Neurostars, SNAPS, Stronger Together.

The event covered:

- SEND Reforms
- SEND Inspection
- Priority Action Plan

Leeds Parent Carer Forum

The Leeds Parent Carer Forum (LPCF), represent the voices of families of children and young people aged 0–25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

They work closely with:

- Leeds City Council
- Schools and education services
- Health services
- Social care teams

Your experiences help them challenge, influence and improve services.

They know things can be difficult right now, and many families are facing challenges. That's why it's so important that they hear from you - whether your experiences have been positive, negative, or mixed.

Padlet

The LPCF have started using 'Padlet' to gather feedback from families across Leeds. It has given parent carers a space to share their experiences honestly.

There are three feedback Padlets:

- What is working well
- What is NOT working well
- Suggestions- How could it be better

How your voice is shared

All feedback collected through our Padlets is shared directly with the Leeds SEND & Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Board.

This board has recently undergone a restructure and now has an independent chair who has committed to using this feedback to support improvement work across services.

After each meeting, the LPCF will receive a response from the board which will be published on their website.

Next Steps for SEND in Leeds

Presented by Amber Burton, Leeds City Council
Amber is a consultant who has been working in Leeds for the last 6 months, Amber has been working on the local SEND Reform plans.

Back in April the Area Partnership had their Ofsted/CQC inspection - a comprehensive 3-week process. In Leeds, the report confirmed that a lot of issues need to be addressed. The inspectors were fully informed via the Leeds Parent Carer Forum of issues being experienced by parents and carers.

As a local area, being told there are a lot of things that we are not doing well, systemic weaknesses or failures, is not easy. However, it means there is a lot of focus on SEND because an inspection outcome like this makes everyone sit up and take notice. It brings lots of scrutiny from councillors and external bodies such as DfE, Ofsted etc.

In Leeds, we fully accept the findings of the inspection and accept that the result reflects the situation in Leeds. Now, there is a lot of focus on putting things right.

SEND Reforms: proposals
These are about changing the whole system. Because the existing system is not working for any stakeholders.

The SEND reforms have come up with lots of proposals. They did a lot of work with the Council for Disabled Children to understand issues.

The Government published a White Paper in February 2026. They were asking what people thought about proposals. They haven't yet published their response to the consultation.

The Leeds Parent Carer Forum contributed and fedback via the consultation survey.

The Voice, Influence and Change Team developed a consultation for young people which was delivered in schools and feedback shared.

The discussion focused on concerns about proposed SEND reforms, with Leeds City Council welcoming the intentions but remaining cautious until more details are available. Council representatives reassured families that improvements to the current SEND system, including EHCP processes, will continue and that findings from the recent SEND inspection remain a key priority.

Parents and carers raised concerns about school accountability, complaints processes, and the treatment of families by professionals. In response, council officers emphasised the importance of parent feedback through the Parent Carer Forum, the need for staff training informed by families' experiences, and plans to strengthen support and oversight of schools.

The new Experts at Hand model, which will invest in specialist professionals such as Educational Psychologists, Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists to support schools and settings. The aim is to provide an additional level of SEND support between universal provision and EHCPs, with Leeds expressing confidence that recruitment plans will enable the service to be developed.

Inclusion Bases
Individual Support Plans (ISPs) are a key part of the proposed SEND reforms and would provide a guaranteed baseline of support for all children and young people with SEND. However, many details remain unclear, including the legal protections attached to ISPs, how they will be monitored, and how parents will be able to challenge decisions.

Council representatives confirmed that EHCPs will continue to exist and that families will retain the right to request assessments, although changes to the system are expected. Rising demand for EHCPs was discussed, alongside significant pressures on SEND services, with Leeds currently working to increase capacity, reduce caseloads, improve communication with families and address waiting times.

Parents raised concerns about delays, accountability, tribunal waiting times and the lack of detail around the reforms. In response, officers acknowledged these challenges and emphasised that the current legal system remains in place, improvements to SEND services will continue, and further information about the reforms is still awaited from government.

There will be no changes until at least 2030.

Schools have been given a small amount of funding to support preparation for reforms.

Ofsted and CQC Area Inspection
The inspection report identified priority areas for improvement.

You can read the full inspection report online.

All of these things are just as important. When they come back in 1 year (from now), the inspectors will look at the priority actions. However, the council/ICB is focusing on all of the areas for improvement, too.

The issues raised today have come loud and clear through the inspection process and through the PCF reporting vocally because they are at the table for all the important boards. We are clear that coproduction needs a lot of work.

SEND and AP Strategic Plan (Priority Action Plan)
When they come to review, they will review the data to ensure performance has improved. They will also want to hear that parents and carers are feeling that things have changed/improved.

SEND and AP Reform Plan
While we have all the proposals for the reforms, the reform plan is about making things better now and preparing for the reforms. All of the things mentioned this morning are covered by this.

It's about listening, understanding the needs of CYP and families, and understanding why leaders and services are doing things and why things need to be different. The voice of parents and carers has to come through the PCF.

The discussion highlighted ongoing frustration from parents and carers about delays in the SEND system, particularly lengthy EHCP waiting times, the impact on children's education and mental health, and the significant effect on family finances and wellbeing. Council representatives acknowledged these concerns, recognised that current improvements are not happening quickly enough for many families, and outlined plans to increase SEND capacity, reduce backlogs and improve specialist provision.

Parent Carer Forum representatives stressed their role in holding services to account, gathering feedback from families and ensuring concerns are raised with local and national decision-makers. An action was agreed for the Council and PCF to provide clearer communication on how the EHCP backlog is being addressed, while families were encouraged to continue sharing experiences through PCF feedback channels to help drive improvement.