



23 April 2024

NCC general enquiries: 0344 800 8020
Text Relay Number: 18001 0344 800 8020

Email: sara.tough@norfolk.gov.uk

Dear colleagues,

I hope that your summer terms have started well, despite the very spring-like weather. I wanted to write to you to express my continued appreciation for your dedication and resilience in ensuring that your schools and settings continue to provide high-quality education and support for your communities, as well as to update you on a range of collaborative activities that we are engaged with across the county. It has been heartening to see so many of you willing to participate in shared development, and I am happy that we have such a broad audience reading these updates. I hope that you will find themes relevant to you and your setting, and that a wider view of our collective work is both interesting and useful.

You may have seen that we have appointed Jane Hayman as a member of the Children's Services Extended leadership team. Jane has been at Fred Nicholson for 10 years, with a 30-year career in education. We are delighted to have her expertise and knowledge to support the work of the Local First Inclusion Programme and in particular to further strengthen the partnership working between mainstream schools and specialist settings in Norfolk.

Local First Inclusion

As the Local First Inclusion programme enters its second year, we have completed a stocktake of activity to date and have been working with the DfE to refresh our programme and trajectories. We have been clear with the DfE, and other agencies within the SEND system nationally and regionally, that our Local First Inclusion programme should not be seen in isolation; it must operate within the context of the DfE's own national refresh of SEND through the SEND & AP Improvement Plan, and alongside the Ofsted/Care Quality Commissions revised inspection framework for SEND & AP of Local Areas. LFI must also be complementary to our own Norfolk Area SEND & AP Strategy.

In our discussions recently with the DfE, the Regional Director and the Regional HMI as part of the SEND & AP annual engagement meeting, we have ensured that they are aware of how all of this activity combines within our over-arching approach to SEND & AP strategic improvement.

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Specifically for Local First Inclusion we have been able to confirm to the DfE the following progress:

- 100% take-up of mainstream schools for NCC INDES/IPSEF framework,
- Fully established new School & Community Teams with a focus upon prevention & early help.
- Commitment from secondary school leaders to support a county-wide approach to implementing a new AP model to reduce PEX and support LA managed moves.
- Considerable progress in the roll out of our capital programme and the creation of new specialist resource bases across Norfolk with scheduled growth continuing up to September 2025.

During the summer term we will be publishing our revised Area SEND & AP Strategy for the next five years. In it we will confirm the sequence of new initiatives within Local First Inclusion as we expand our plans, including greater emphasis on SEN Support between schools and the LA, greater inclusion advice and guidance alignment between special schools and mainstream, and how we can work with health colleagues to ensure support around schools and families works more effectively.

As you will be aware, we have committed to developing additional Alternative Provision (AP) in the secondary phase. In response to feedback from secondary school leaders on the Norfolk AP Strategy, we have committed to developing a framework to support consistency of decision-making, practice and expectations for new AP placements created. This work was positively supported by school leaders during workshops in March.

We identified the need for a final session to complete this work, to ensure it has sufficient detail to meet the brief requested by school leaders. We would like to invite secondary headteachers, senior leaders, SENCOs and inclusion leads to a workshop on 7th May 2024, from 9-12pm at The Nest. We would value as many perspectives as possible to inform this framework and hope that as many leaders are able to attend as possible. Please [email us](#) by Monday 29th April 2024 to book a place. Thank you to all leaders who have continued to support the development of this important aspect of provision for young people.

School & Community Teams

As we progress our ambitious plans for local first inclusion, I would like to thank those that have taken part in engagement events regarding plans to develop new approaches to deliver earlier support for SEND. In addition to School & Community Teams, we're eager to develop new ways to support SEND needs earlier by fostering 'team around the school' approaches that provide joined-up support, a new support line for both professionals and parents, and a method to come together routinely with school and families to support SEND provision where required. This term we will be reviewing feedback from our engagement events and putting plans in place to implement this exciting opportunity. Additionally, we would like to update you to about changes to the way that Mental Health support is accessed for children and young people (0-25), as part of the Integrated Front Door approach. Please see [this information](#) via Just One Norfolk to find out more.

We are hoping to engage further with you through a series of events over the summer term; please look out for more details of these.

A Learning Ambition for Norfolk through the Norfolk Learning Collaborative

As you will be aware, the Norfolk Learning Ambition is for Norfolk children and young people to be excited and engaged in learning so that they Flourish within a strong inclusive education system. This is a key part of our Norfolk Flourish ambition. It was inspiring to have so many colleagues from across the system responding to the invitation to join the **Norfolk Learning Collaborative (NLC)**, coming together on the 12th of February to meet as a Collaborative for the first time.

Through what was an extremely valuable discussion, the NLC collectively agreed that their role was to influence and shape the collaborative work which would achieve our shared Learning Ambition for Norfolk. Within this there was recognition that moving forward, there would be clear connection between the recently established Task Groups and the Collaborative.

The Learning Ambition has partnership and collaboration central to its success, and the more voices that are able to contribute to its continued development, the better it can serve the children and young people of Norfolk.

Alongside the work of the Task Groups, there was a real desire within the NLC for the system to come together to address the persistent Norfolk challenge around KS2 results. It was recognised that this would need to begin from the early years and through the primary phase and that secondary and Post 16 leaders would be able to contribute to the challenge as part of a whole system response. This absolutely does feel like the unifying cause for us to focus on together.

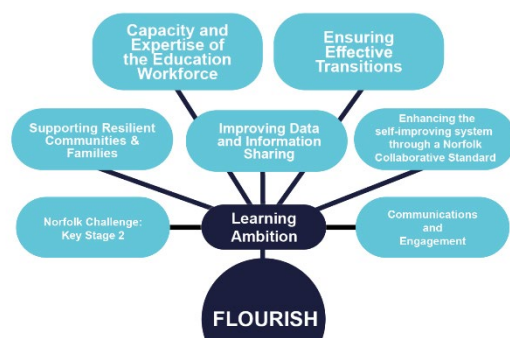
The NLC also gave a clear steer that they would want to build a more detailed evidence base around the KS2 outcomes gap. We are therefore delighted to be working with the Research School to consider how we could build that evidence base and are grateful to them for their support with this piece of work. We hope that we will be able to undertake an initial programme of activity over the summer term which will inform our future work.

The Norfolk Learning Collaborative would welcome colleagues from across the sector joining them. With KS2 emerging as a key priority, it is important the membership of the group continues to reflect the primary phase. If you are interested joining the NLC and adding your voice to the conversation, [please contact us](#). We intend to hold a meeting in June and then in September.

Since my last communication, the **Norfolk Learning Ambition** Task Groups have been established and are now engaged with specific projects. Below are some key updates from some of the task groups:

Task Group 1: Capacity and Expertise of the Education Workforce

As part of the identified need to support recruitment of both teachers and teaching assistants across the county, we are funding two geo-targeted, social media recruitment campaigns in the summer term via Education HR, to promote the benefits of the sector, signpost vacancies and grow the Norfolk Teacher and TA Talent pools.



In response to both the shortage of Teaching Assistants and the need for accessible, affordable TA professional development, we have been working in partnership with Synergy MAT and the Julian Teaching School Hub to generate several case studies exploring the benefits of the apprenticeship route into becoming a Teaching Assistant. Many schools currently use apprenticeships to successfully support the retention of this invaluable part of the education workforce, and there are significant benefits to using the apprenticeship route, such as being able to recruit from a wider field. If you would like to find out more, share your own experiences or join the Task Group, please [get in touch with us](#).

Task Group 2: Ensuring Effective Transitions

The core group of people who will direct this workstream has been identified, recruited and has attended an initial meeting. They represent education institutions across the county, with members from Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Post-16 from both LA-maintained and academy organisations. Identification of short-term project work has started; one piece of work exploring KS2-3 transition and ensuring that pupils are 'high school ready', and another to support Post 16 transition through guided attendance at events. The potential for sharing good practice through creation and sharing of case studies is in the early stages of consideration. To ensure that the work around transitions we undertake really does build on the existing strengths and development needs, we will shortly be calling for information via a short survey that we would like you to share with **pupils, parents and staff**. This information will be collated centrally, and the results shared with you in due course – thank you very much in advance for your help. If you have any questions, please let us know [via email](#).

Task Group 5: Enhancing the self-improving system through a Norfolk Collaborative Standard

Since being established in January, the Task Group has met twice and been busy identifying a focus and programme of activity. We are incredibly grateful for the interest from colleagues across the system in being part of the group and their commitment to driving this task group forward. The group have decided that for this academic year, their priority is to support effective collaboration through establishing a programme of structured school visits. The group recognise that colleagues value visiting other settings and understand how important it is to be outward looking. They are working to invite settings with recognised expertise in an area to host a visit for others, enabling colleagues from elsewhere to learn from their expertise, experience and improvement journeys in order to support their own improvement goals. This group is also looking to invite colleagues from across the education system to share their experiences of things which are working well and are working to publish case studies.

If you are interested in getting involved in the group, hosting a visit, seeing another setting's practice in a particular area or submitting a case study, please [get in touch](#).

Task Group 6 – Communication and Engagement

This task group has been working on improving our communication and engagement with education providers and, in response to feedback from the system, have made some changes to the way that news and updates are shared on the Norfolk Schools website, making them more accessible, timely and easier to share. The next focus for the task group will be on the ways that we engage schools, colleges and settings, and how we can better hear and respond to views from

the wider system. We want to ensure that our engagement is collaborative and inclusive, taking views from as broad a range of voices as possible. We will be exploring different methods and channels to reach out to different stakeholders, in particular methods which do not impact on the workload of system leaders. We will also seek feedback and input from various groups to inform this work and ensure that it meets need; we welcome your suggestions and comments on how we can improve our communication and engagement strategy. Please [get in touch](#) if you have any ideas, suggestions or questions.

New Horizons Conference 16 July 2024

On the subject of KS2 and collaborative working, we are delighted to share with you plans for an exciting event in the summer term. The **Priority Education Investment Area (PEIA) Board** would like to invite you to save the date for the New Horizons- Meeting the KS2 Challenge in Norfolk conference being held at Wymondham College on 16 July. This is a system-led event with fully funded places for Norfolk schools.

Attending the event will offer primary and trust leaders an opportunity to come together and collectively consider how to lead improvement at KS2 in Norfolk. There will be a chance to reflect on the learning from the KS2 PEIA writing project, particularly around leading improvement in writing at KS2, together with a chance to consider national perspectives and how collectively we can achieve our shared Learning Ambition for Norfolk through improving outcomes. Although the session has a primary focus, it may also be of interest to KS3 English leads. Please do save the date; more details will be shared with you shortly.

Attendance

Improving school attendance remains a priority for us locally and we know that schools are working hard to address absence from school which is reflected in recent improvements in attendance rates. In February 2024, the Department for Education published a revised national framework for school attendance which becomes statutory in August 2024. The strategic approach taken in Norfolk, places schools and the LA in a strong position to respond to the changes to the national framework. The Attendance Team will be working in partnership with schools and a range of services throughout the summer term to implement the revised national framework. In order to inform our response to the changes in guidance, we would like to hear from as many education settings as possible and invite you to contribute through completing a short survey **before 17 May 2024**. [You can access the survey here](#).

Safeguarding

The Department for Education launched a 12-week 'Safeguarding Children in Schools and Colleges' call for evidence on 28 March 2024. This invites staff in schools and colleges, and other safeguarding professionals, to share their views and current practice to inform the content of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' for 2025 and help shape the future direction of safeguarding practice. The consultation seeks views on a [wide range of issues](#) affecting children and young people. This is a really important chance to share your views and have the opportunity to influence the direction of national policy, so please do take time to respond to the consultation via [this link](#), ahead of the deadline on 20 June 2024. At a local level, we will be consulting with DSLs and senior leaders within the sector to think about how education is included in our local safeguarding arrangements and how we can strengthen these arrangements further.

Post 16 Education, employment and training

We all know the importance of young people being able to make successful transitions into their education and training Post 16, building on the foundations of their learning which start in their early years and are strengthened throughout their schooling. We have a multi-agency Education Training and Strategy Group (ETSG) which operates with a focus on enabling positive transitions for all Norfolk students from KS4 to KS5 and from KS5 into adult life aligning with the Norfolk Learning Collaborative, Local Skills Plan and Flourish.

Post pandemic, both nationally and locally, there has been an increase in the number of young people who are not in education, employment and training (NEET) and tackling this requires action from across the system. Through the ETSG the local authority, further education providers, independent training providers, the Chamber of Commerce and the DWP are developing a shared view of Norfolk's Post 16 landscape and provision for young people. A 16-19 Sufficiency Position Paper will help us to identify growth areas, understand the gaps in provision, and inform our collective action & priorities to support young people's transitions into Post 16 education and training.

Wraparound Childcare - Funding and support

The first places which have been supported by the Norfolk Wraparound programme are now up and running, with initial expansion (new places and extended hours) being available for the Summer Term.

Funding is available for those who offer (or are looking to offer) wraparound provision for primary aged children. This includes regular before and after school provision that runs 8am until 6pm term time, Monday to Friday, either on a school site or at another local setting. Two types of grants are available for Norfolk providers to [apply](#) for a share of:

- £1.5m - Capital Childcare Expansion – to help cover costs ensuring sufficient wraparound places and the expansion of the 30 hours early years entitlement for working families (**expressions of interest closing date 24th May 2024**).
- £7.4m - Wraparound Revenue supporting set up or expanding provision, covering staffing, training, transport, resources, and running costs while demand builds.

If you would like support or to be kept up-to-date with all things Wraparound, please do [get in touch](#).

Virtual School

The Virtual School continue to work closely with all partners including schools and settings. As you will be aware, the remit has been extended to include children previously in care and children with a social worker, which means they are working with an increasing number of schools and settings from early years to Post 16. The overarching purpose is to promote educational outcomes and the team continue to develop their offer to support this.

The Virtual School now aligns to the locality model with each school or setting having allocated Advisers, and during the summer term they will continue to arrange visits and offer support and advice. There is also a wide range of training available, and the updated offer will be shared with you soon. One date for the diary is the termly trauma and attachment network. The next event will be online on June 19, led by Louise Bomber, a specialist teacher, therapist and DDP certified

practitioner and the founder of the Touchbase Centre. For more details please [email us](#). In addition, applications remain open for the Trauma Aware Practice Grant which is available to settings with the aim of supporting the development of trauma aware practice.

Continuing the theme of funding, the DfE has confirmed the extension of Post 16 Pupil Premium Plus style funding for the 2024-25 financial year. It is intended that the funding will be used to improve education outcomes, in particular the attendance, retention, and attainment of this cohort at Post 16, and enable them to have sustained involvement in employment, education, and training. More detailed guidance will be shared with settings shortly. If you would like to explore opportunities for partnership working in more detail please [email the Virtual School](#).

Practice Week

Finally, I am delighted to share with you the brochure for [Norfolk Practice Week – 20th to 24th May 2024](#) which we would be grateful if you could please circulate within your organisations.

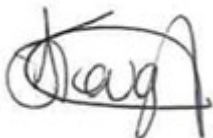
The theme for this Practice Week is ‘Learning’ from our shared Flourish ambition. We have a packed week of learning events, so we are sure they will be something of interest to anyone working to improve the lives of children, young people and families across Norfolk.

The events are open to all and so we of course also welcome children, young people and families who would like to join and take part alongside the workforce. Each of the ‘bitesize’ events are held online on Microsoft Teams so just save the time in your diary and click on the links in the brochure to join. To book your attendance at the conference, click on the link to join via Eventbrite. Resources and video recordings will be published on the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership website after the events.

Our keynote speaker at the online conference on Wednesday is Nina Jackson, Education Consultant and Author who will be talking to us about the opportunities we give children and young people to experience a love of learning, discover the world and be resilient learners for the future. We will also be hearing from young people from the Norfolk in Care Council about their work in overcoming barriers to Education, Employment and Training. It is sure to be inspirational, so do book early to guarantee your place.

We hope you can find some time to join us as these are unique opportunities for us to learn together and share knowledge and experiences, so that we can continue to improve our practice and the lives of the families we work with.

I wish you the best for the term ahead,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara Tough', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval shape.

Sara Tough OBE
Executive Director Children’s Service
Norfolk County Council