

Practice guide

SEND & Alternative Provision

Preparation for Adulthood - Flourish FE, Knowsley

Background, purpose and rationale

Flourish FE was established in direct response to a gap in local provision identified through consultation with Knowsley Borough Council and a small group of dedicated parents. At the time, there was no specialist Further Education (FE) setting in-borough that could meet the complex needs of young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) transitioning beyond the age of 19. As a result, learners were routinely travelling out of borough — a daily round trip of approximately 36 miles — to access appropriate provision.

What we did to improve children's experiences and outcomes

We co-produced the solution with parents and carers, keeping lived experience at the heart of the design.

Following detailed discussions, a business case was developed, outlining both the financial viability and the potential positive impact on educational outcomes. It was agreed that a cost-effective 19+ high-needs FE provision could be created locally — one that would also offer far greater relevance and opportunity for real-world application of the *Preparing for Adulthood* outcomes.

This new provision aimed to tackle a key challenge: transitions. Young people placed out of borough often face a difficult re-entry into their own communities after completing their education. By offering education within borough, Flourish reduces this disruption and enables young people to build lasting community connections while continuing their learning journey.

Flourish FE saw refurbishment of a local authority-owned building to meet the bespoke requirements of a specialist high-needs FE setting. We recruited expert staff with knowledge and experience across complex needs, further education, and curriculum design. In September 2019, Flourish FE opened its doors — becoming Knowsley's first specialist 19+ provision for young people with complex needs who otherwise had no local alternative.

What was the impact?

- Every learner accesses a bespoke, individualised curriculum, covering educational, social, emotional, health, and care needs.
- Learners consistently achieve their EHCP outcomes and gain meaningful qualifications.
- All learners successfully transition to adult services, equipped with skills and confidence to lead fulfilling adult lives.

- Strong, trust-based relationships have developed with families, fostering greater openness and enabling wider support beyond the classroom.
- Integrated, multi-agency working (with adult social care, health, and education) ensures each young person and their family is holistically supported.
- Education delivery is cost-effective: Flourish is operated by an existing provider (FACE), avoiding the need for additional Individualised Learner Records (ILRs) or duplicate awarding body arrangements.
- Transport costs are significantly reduced: Flourish operates its own fleet and staff-run transport service, easing pressure on the local authority transport budget.
- Health input is more efficient: Flourish works in partnership with the council's own disability health services (Speech and language, Occupational Therapy), avoiding the higher costs of independently sourced professionals.
- Stronger links with social care: Each learner has an allocated social worker, and EHCP reviews consistently achieve 100% attendance from relevant professionals.

[Find out more](#)

Vicky Bolster

victoria.bolster@knowsley.gov.uk

High Needs Section Leader - Flourish FE

Education Improvement and Inclusion

<https://flourishfe.com/>