

Dorset Strategic Alliance for Children and Young People

Annual Report 2020-21



Dorset
Council

Foreword - Councillor Wharf

Welcome to the first annual report for our Children, Young People and Families' Plan 2020-2023. It is fair to say that our Plan was created and launched in an unprecedented time in all of our lives, a time that will be remembered through history.

In creating our Plan we set out to make Dorset the best place to be a child, where communities thrive, and families are supported the best they can be.

Establishing the Strategic Alliance Partnership & working with children, young people, families and partners across Dorset during the Covid-19 pandemic to co-produce our plan is an achievement in itself. However, the fantastic work to drive the plan forwards in making Dorset the best place to live for our children, young people & families has continued at pace. I am proud to share our progress & impact over the first year of the plan and identify our challenges & plans for the future.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Wharf". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Peter Wharf

Chair of the Strategic Alliance and
Deputy Leader of Dorset Council

Introduction - Executive Director Children's Services

Theresa Leavy

In this, the first annual report for our Children, Young People and Families' Plan 2020-2023, we must recognise the amazing efforts and contribution our cherished children, young people & families have made during a very tough year.

We are delighted that children, young people and families have continued to thrive but recognise we must always be ambitious in our plans to close the gaps in inequalities of outcomes. Over the past year, our partnership has worked together to improve the quality of services we provide through our Strengthening Services Plan.

Partners from across Dorset have come together to drive forwards our vision in the Plan, living our shared values. We continue to share and celebrate these messages every week in our Partner communications.

I am proud of what we've achieved in this difficult year and look forward with hope and ambition that we'll grow our partnership even further, improving the communities where our children and young people live in across Dorset.



Overview

This is our first Joint Annual Report on Dorset's Children, Young People and Families' Plan 2020-23 and covers the period September 2020 to May 2021. The aim of this report is to demonstrate how well the Partnership has progressed our priorities and look ahead to the future to further develop our services for children, young people and families over the length of the Plan.

Our partnership has taken an evidence and strength-based approach to delivering our Plan with a focus on our underlying priorities of the plan which include.

- 1 **Best Start in Life**
- 2 **Young and Thriving**
- 3 **Good Care Provision**
- 4 **Best Education for All**
- 5 **Best Place to Live**
- 6 **Delivering Locally**

We'll report on our impact against these later in the document.

In delivering our Plan, we remain committed to our shared values,

- Always putting children and families at the heart of everything we do including in how we develop and shape services
- No child or family left behind - we will strive for equity of outcomes for our children, young people and their families
- Focussing on early intervention and prevention aiming to help early in the life of a problem and provide a graduated response to need - the right help, in the right place at the right time
- Working restoratively, doing things with families instead of to them, for them or doing nothing
- Thinking Family and working together so that children and families receive a joined-up response and good transitions
- Focussing on strengths within families and communities, understanding the lived experience of children
- Staying with families until outcomes are delivered, embedded and change is sustained
- Being inclusive - we want our children and young people to be able to get the help they need in the county that is their home
- Empowering young people and families to use the information we give them to make decisions for themselves
- Delivering best value for money - spending the Dorset £ in Dorset on the things that get the best outcomes for children and families

Our Children, Young People and Families' Plan is ambitious. This report highlights what we have already achieved, and sets out what we still need to do.



Our Board

Although Covid-19 restrictions have changed the way in which partners can work together, we have continued to meet online every quarter reviewing the progress of the priority areas, impacting on achieving the outcomes of the Plan.

We have also worked across our partnership to improve our services for children, young people and families through our “Strengthening Services” and Pan-Dorset Health and Wellbeing Boards, ensuring that our children and young people remain safe through our partnership working in the Safeguarding Board.

In July 2021, representatives from across our partnership and leading figures from mental health and restorative practice organisations gathered at Dorset’s bold and ambitious “Centre of Excellence” to celebrate our progress and share our vision for the future at our Annual Conference.

Over the first year of our Plans we have further embedded our “Thrive” model of locality working. We have developed services delivered in and for the people of the locality they are in. To support our Thrive model, we’ve implemented a performance Management Framework to help partners monitor progress.

We’ve also published our Early Help Strategy [Early Help Strategy](#). The Early Help Strategy provides the vision and strategic direction for embedding a culture of early help in Dorset. It unites agencies and underpins the successful delivery of the Dorset Children, Young People and Families Plan 2020 - 23.

Bold and ambitious plans/Impact

We’ve continued to improve our services for children and young people with special educational needs with the Department for Education formally recognising these improvements in the spring of 2021. We have commenced a bold and ambitious programme to create a Centre of Excellence for children and young people with special educational, health and care needs at the former St. Mary’s School in Shaftesbury. This will offer a wide range of services to offer a wider range of services to support our children, young people and families such as short breaks, care leaver services, outdoor education and many other valuable services over the coming years.

Through the Holiday Activity Fund, we have supported over 1,500 families supplying and delivering food parcels over Easter.

Attendance rates at schools has remained high with early years, schools and further educational settings offering a safe, stable place for our children and young people to continue their education. Our focus on inclusion remains a key focus in ensuring that every child and young person has the best start in life and best education for all. We’re celebrating our success to date and sharing our vision for an inclusive future at our Education and Inclusion Conference on 9th July at St. Mary’s Shaftesbury. We’ll bring leaders, local, regional and national stakeholders together, along with representatives from children and young people to plan and co-produce how we promote inclusion for all and champion equality and diversity.

Voice of Children and Young People

During the development and delivery of the priority plans, we've continued to engage with children and young people who have co-produced some elements of the plans. We are particularly pleased that 23 young people aged 13-21 engaged with a month of activities in the "Takeover Challenge" participating and running meetings, workshops and helping to improve our delivery plans.

Due to COVID - 19 restrictions, Takeover Challenge became an online event this year. Instead of face-to-face, young people joined Decision Makers on their Microsoft Teams calls. Before young people started attending meetings with decision makers, they were invited to attend a Confidence Building Workshop to help them identify the skills they would need to get the most out of Takeover Challenge. They were also given a starter kit which gave them tips to take with them to their meetings. After Takeover Challenge we had a fun and interactive evaluation workshop with decision makers.



My voice

"Decision makers listened and took my ideas on board."



Impact

"I actually made a difference at the meetings."



Cameras on

"Loved seeing young peoples faces and engaging with them."



Reflection

"Decision makers realising there needs to be more meeting with young people to get their insight."



Support

"Feeling welcomed and supported by the decision makers."



Confidence

"The remarkable way in which young people managed a room of decision makers."



Dorset Police

Dorset Police are proud of the strong partnership that as seen excellent development in the first year of the Children, Young People and Families' Plan.

The last 12 months in a pandemic has been challenging for us all and the strong partnership ethos has allowed us to help deliver improved service to the people of Dorset. We are particularly proud of some of the excellent initiatives which have taken place over the last year including:

Operation Encompass - Worked with Schools and embedding to provide support to children and young people at risk of exposure to domestic abuse.

Working closely with the Strengthening Services Board to drive forward improvements to Dorset's Children's Services.

Police are an active participant at the Safeguarding Board, ensuring children and young people are safe and protected from harm.

The delivery of a new operating model meaning closer alignment of resources with partners to deliver service to the community.

Over the next 12 months we anticipate new and emerging threats resulting from the pandemic such as online exploitation and abuse. The Strategic Alliance and the Children, Young People and Families' Plan gives us a strong foundation to build on and collectively meet the challenges.

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Services

Dorset and Wiltshire FRS provides a range of community safety, education, and engagement activities across Dorset. Working in partnership through the Dorset Strategic Alliance is a priority for the service, as we recognise the importance of linking services across a range of organisations to help ensure we give young people the best start in life.

Our Service aims to support communities by helping to make safer and healthier places to live. The Children, Young People and Families' Plan has helped us to work in partnership to shape, deliver, and improve the services available to young people across Dorset.

We believe safety begins at home and perform thousands of free 'Safe and Well' visits a year, fitting free smoke alarms and making families aware of the potential risks to their health and well-being. The Service also works closely with partners to improve safety on our roads. We co-ordinate the Safe Drive Stay Alive Roadshow which is delivered to over 5,000 young people across Dorset each year.

We also deliver a range of education and intervention programmes designed to support children, young adults, and families. This helps them to live safe and healthy lives and achieve their full potential. Our school's education programme targets children of all ages with practical lessons on fire, water, and road safety. In addition, we also offer programmes that encourage young people into further training, education, and employment. The courses aim to support vulnerable young people through education and positive experiences, inspiring them to make good choices.

Over the next year it is more important than ever that organisations link their services to support young people and families. The true cost of the pandemic is still unknown, but we will continue to support the Alliance to ensure we are there to support our partners, the communities we serve, and be there when people need us most.

Partner updates

Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group

A key objective of NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is to ensure that services across Dorset deliver sustainable health services for children and young people that are closer to home and are part of integrated pathways bringing services together with communities across physical and emotional health.

A few of the key highlights for 20/21 include the ongoing commitment of NHS Dorset CCG to develop a culture of co-production and partnership to strive to improve outcomes for Children Young People, their families, and carers by developing joint commissioning pathways for our children and young people who have multi layered needs that would benefit from a partnership approach. We have also:

- Collaborated on the All-Age Autism Care Pathway review project to deliver a care pathway that results in service improvements.
- Focussed on the Speech, Language and Communication Transformation Project, a system level project that has progressed with clear next steps for action including recovery and reset post COVID-19.
- Ensured that services commissioned for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) meet statutory requirements and the needs of the local area by delivering an effective, high quality integrated pathway. This has included partnership involvement in Statutory inspections and a financial commitment from the CCG towards the development of the Information and Advice Service for SEND
- Worked in partnership within the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure ongoing accessibility to health services and offer a range of options for CYP, their families and carers such as virtual assessments and face to face contacts for those in crisis or in urgent need.
- Completed a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Needs Assessment
- Agreed a Children and Young Person's Mental Health Strategy with a business case under development
- Developed the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Gateway Service with the intention to deliver this Pan Dorset.
- Developed the Mental Health Support Teams in schools with an opportunity to increase the coverage up to approximately 50% of schools having access to the service.

Following the publication of Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018, all three statutory partners, Local Authority, Health and Police have a shared responsibility for the safeguarding of children and young people. Throughout 2021/22, the three statutory partners have worked closely together across all levels from strategic to frontline to ensure the safety of the most vulnerable in the population.

A joint agency communications group was established to ensure consistent and relevant messages were shared with children and young people on how they could still contact safeguarding staff whilst in lockdown at home. Social media campaigns were established regarding on-line abuse, grooming, sexual abuse, alcohol and parenting and the prevention of childhood accidents including safe sleeping advice.

In addition, the partners have collaborated in the development of a contextual safeguarding toolkit, a domestic abuse toolkit and pathways for young people with complex physical and mental health wellbeing needs.

The Designated Nurse for Children in Care has worked closely with Local Authority staff to improve notification of children coming into care and obtaining consent, which has improved significantly, and work is ongoing to sustain this. Safeguarding staff have also contributed to The Harbour Project (No Wrong Door).

Partner updates

Work has commenced in 20/21 in developing a multiagency inequalities dashboard linked to safeguarding, although this work is evolving there is already indicators of how this will support a population health-based model in tackling inequalities and managing safeguarding practice.

During 2021/22 NHS Dorset CCG will commit to have an ongoing pledge to partnership and system thinking with a spotlight on the Children, Young People and Families plan 2020-2023 and the commitments set out in the NHS Long term plan to:

- Integrate services for children and young people.
- Improve the quality of care for Children and Young People with long term conditions, specifically obesity and asthma.
- Include Children and Young People in developments to ensure that services are designed to meet the needs of Children and Young People
- Identify and deliver local system level priorities based upon a population health needs view.

Addressing health inequalities in Children and Young People will underpin these priorities.

Public Health

The Covid-19 Pandemic has had a significant impact on many families, children and young people and the professionals and services who support them. The year presented new and emerging needs, but services responded commendably, working more closely in partnership to ensure families could still access support they needed.

- Frontline Public Health services (including; Drugs and Alcohol; Sexual Health, Community Health Improvement and children and young people's Public Health) adapted quickly to the challenge and embraced opportunities to deliver services differently and safely in communities and included new digital models at scale. Close working relationships particularly between maternity, health visiting, and early help practitioners provided a strong foundation for timely information sharing within our localities which ensured the most vulnerable families were prioritised for face to face, home visits and/or targeted support.
- The Public Health Response team worked in collaboration with school leaders and staff, to manage infection prevention and control, and local outbreaks. By taking a proactive and risk based local approach, attendance at school remained high. In January the team supported schools with the national roll out of Lateral Flow Device testing in schools and latterly home testing. Strong relationships have been built across the health and education sectors, which remain and offer opportunities for more collaboration on public health outcomes.
- Mental Health through the pandemic has been a key focus and the Children and Young People's Service provided support to parents and young people. For Peri-natal mental health the Service signed up additional PNMH champions, provided ParentTalk sessions including with Dads; and additional practitioners were trained to offer Video Interaction Guidance, all with demonstrable improvements for participants, particularly in improving attachment. For middle and secondary age young people, the Chat Health web-based text offer responded to over 2,770 contacts, predominantly providing advice and support on emotional health and wellbeing concerns.

For the future, Public Health remain committed to continuing to work with our partners through the Strengthening Services Board, Strategic Alliance and Local Safeguarding arrangements, including the Quality Assurance Group, to ensure the positive lessons learned and improved ways of working, informs our future delivery of services and best meets the needs of our local populations; especially our children, young people and families.

Partner updates

Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service

One of our priorities in the last year has been to see the young people we work as children rather than as offenders, in line with the Youth Justice Board's 'child first' principle and in keeping with Dorset's commitment to prioritising the voice, views and experience of our children. Linked to this, we changed our service name from being a 'youth offending service' to Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service (YJS).

Our focus on the child is also reflected in our practice priorities of understanding communication needs and the impact of their past experiences. All children who receive a court order or second youth caution receive a speech, language and communication assessment which helps us adapt how we work with the child. Last year we completed whole service training in trauma-informed practice. Our Psychologist leads multi-agency formulation meetings for children with particularly complex needs and risks and our YJS Nurses provide trauma-informed case consultations and assessments for other children engaging with our service. The role of our seconded health staff and the way we share information with partner agencies illustrates the importance and strength of partnership working in Dorset.

The Covid pandemic required significant changes to how we work, such as remote or virtual contacts with children, by video or phone, and our court officers participating in court hearings by video link. Some of these innovations can continue in future but only alongside sufficient in-person contacts with children and in settings like court and the police station to build relationships and meet the rights and communication needs of the children we work with.

The Youth Justice Service is overseen by a strong multi-agency Partnership Board, chaired by Theresa Leavy and attended by senior leaders from Dorset Council, BCP Council, Dorset Police, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, National Probation Service Dorset, Dorset NHS CCG, Dorset HealthCare and HM Courts and Tribunals Service. This also gives us strong links with other local boards to make sure that our priorities and practices are aligned. A good example of this alignment is our successful work with Dorset Police to reduce the number of children entering the justice system for the first time. This work integrates with the wider commitment to provide effective early interventions which help children reach their potential and reduce their involvement with statutory services.

Schools Forums

The first year of the plan has made excellent progress and there is now a far reaching and comprehensive strategy in place that puts the child at the very heart of all we do.

The last year has been a difficult one for schools and their students, but by working together, and supporting each other, Dorset schools have ensured that 'lost learning' has been kept to a minimum and that our students have stayed safe.

The education sector has learnt a lot from remote learning and the challenge now is to harness and utilise the very best elements to ensure that we emerge from the pandemic with even better pedagogy. A task I know that schools are ready for.

Partner updates

Local Alliance Groups

The first year of the new Children, Young People and Families' plan has helped the Local Alliance Groups (LAGs) to refocus the way we work what we are achieving and how we support the Plan.

The LAGs moved with relative ease to virtual meetings and for some, this way of working together has made attending meetings easier as they no longer had to fit travel time in. The improved and refocused LAGs started with the Chairs of the different localities coming together agreeing the Terms of Reference. They collectively showed a real commitment for the groups to become more than a talking shop but a proactive group that will help to improve their locality for the benefit of the children, young people and families living there, linking with the plan's objectives. To ensure that the right people were part of the group the membership was also reviewed making sure the relevant sectors and supporting agencies had a voice.

The 0-25 VCS forum identified representatives to sit on each of the localities to enable communication between the different sectors. The commitment to children, young people and families was reinforced through the development of a pledge which is signed by the individual LAG members.

Each locality receives specific data to support the area they are working and to help prioritise local needs. This data is then supported by the members being able to reflect on their own experiences and evidence of working in the local community. This has led to individualised locality priorities and action plans to start to be produced. Each priority has a named lead from the membership who is supported by others from the group who have particular focus or strengths in that area enabling true ownership of the work at a local level.

As we move forward into the next year the LAG's will continue to develop the action plans and begin to see the actions implemented. Membership of the groups will be reviewed and adjusted as trends and needs are identified.

Dorset Parent Carer Council

We have been reflecting on the first year of the Children and Young People and Families' Plan and what has been achieved to date. We are proud to represent families with children and young people who have additional needs or a disability at the Strategic Alliance Board and the Strengthening Services Board, working with the wider partnership to drive forward improvements for all children and young people in Dorset.

Our key highlights this year has been involvement with partners to shape future specialist education provision and to work with health on the All Age Autism Review project.

As we enter the second year of our Plan, we look forward to working with partners on a number of key priorities like reducing health inequalities for people with a learning disability, avoiding hospital admissions and ensuring Dorset young people are prepared well for adult life.



Children, Young People & Families' Plan Priority Area Updates

In our Children, Young People and Families' Plan 2020-23 we identified 6 key priorities:

Best Start in Life, Young and Thriving, Good Care Provision, Best Education for All, Best Place to Live and Delivering Locally.

The following section identifies some of the activity and progress we've made and celebrates the impact these plans have had for our children, young people and families. We also look ahead to our second year of our Plan and improving outcomes for our communities in a year of hope as we come out of a national lockdown.

The Best Start in Life

Introduction

Getting a good start in life and throughout childhood, building resilience and getting maximum benefit from education are important markers for good health and wellbeing throughout life. Children living in households in the lowest socio-economic groups have significantly worse health outcomes than other children. Strengthening our local services is vital to tackling health and educational inequalities, some of which have been exacerbated by the pandemic

What have we done?

- Developing intensive support for women who have had multiple children removed from their care.
- Developing the local maternity system through place-based work and prevention offers including immunisations.
- Sharing learning and feedback from families.
- Developed skills and approaches needed to work effectively with families, including the graduated response for children with special educational needs and support for children moving into nursery or school.

Achievements

- Steering Group has been formed, with meetings developing the next steps in our three-year plan.
- Partners are developing a shared workforce development plan, with an initial focussed on skills required when working in the antenatal period.
- Teams from across the partnership are reviewing school readiness information with professionals and parents.

Next steps for 2021/22

- Strengthen the Peri-Natal Mental Health pathways and implement workforce development plans.
- Deliver evidence-based interventions to improve speech, language and communication, and School Readiness.
- Implementation of the Removal of Care Support project pilot.
- Explore the opportunities and development of Family Hubs, where people of all ages can get help and support from a range of professionals.

Young and Thriving

Achievements so far

- Delivery of a reconfigured 'Takeover' event during February with multiple workshops to engage young people and leaders from across the partnership with some strong feedback on how best to deliver key aspects of the Children and Young People's Plan.
- National Citizen Service programme will go ahead in Dorset over the summer with good sign up from our schools and support from Locality teams.
- Changes to the financial support provided to voluntary and community sector organisations and a new grant scheme which has already benefited 15 organisations to a total value of more than £70k.
- Targeted Youth Work offer written and published. [Targeted Youth Work Offer](#)
- Detached and outreach youth work is being delivered in all six of our Localities and co-ordinated through the Youth at Risk Meetings which have been established to identify and support young people at risk of exploitation. In each Locality, Targeted Youth Workers are working together with voluntary and community sector organisations, with support and liaison with Dorset Police.
- The Harbour Project is operational, supporting our most vulnerable young people. Key partners are signed up including two police officers working in the team. There is a model of intervention and plans for the residential dimension are well advanced.
- Our Care Leaver offer has been significantly enhanced including a clear framework for Care Leaver finance and the allocation at the age of 16 of a Personal Advisor for children in care. We've seen a significant reduction in the number of Care Leavers in Unsuitable Accommodation and additional support to support Care Leavers to enter employment, education and training.
- Purchase of St Mary's in Shaftesbury, with significant planning for a better offer for supporting young people with SEND.
- Significant work to align different programmes to support the emotional health and well-being of young people.
- Mechanism in place for Dorset Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Locality Teams and the Youth Justice Service to work collaboratively to support young people on the periphery of crime through Youth Justice orders and a range of diversionary programmes.

Impact so far for children and families

- A report on the impact and next steps of our "Takeover Challenge" has been presented to the Strategic Alliance Board with recommendations to embed the learning in the development of our Delivery Plans.
- Increase in the number of Care Leavers in Employment, Education and Training from 50% in July 2020 to 56% in April 2021
- 40 young people are currently being supported by the Harbour with good feedback for young people, families and professionals -K (young person) 'Excellent - these sessions have built mine and my mum's relationship up'; Professional 'Excellent work began immediately, enabled family to remain stable'; Family 'Excellent - very helpful and understanding - have a very good relationship'. Significant reduction in the number of missing episodes for those that are being supported.
- Youth Justice Service have continued to reduce the number of young people entering the Youth Justice system for the first time, even from a very low base in the previous year

Young and Thriving

Next steps for 2021/22

- Develop and embed a new model for young people's voice, including those from Children in Care, Care Leavers, Young Carers and those at risk of exploitation. This work will also include how young people co-produce services with us.
- Development of the Youth Grant Scheme to the value of £100k in 2021-22 and strengthening of the links between Targeted Youth Work and voluntary youth and community organisations. This will sort alongside work to enhance our digital offer to young people.
- Establish a new Care Leavers Delivery Group reporting to the Corporate Parenting Board to take forward our ambition to implement the Care Leaver Covenant. This will expand our offer to Care Leavers beyond our statutory responsibility and involve partners and the community in supporting care leavers with access to better housing, work and training prospects and sports, leisure and culture opportunities. Alongside this, we will recruit a Care Leaver as an apprentice within the Care Leaver team.
- Evaluate the Targeted Mental Health Offer in schools and expand this into all areas of Dorset to provide early intervention to support young people's emotional well-being.
- More work is planned to support our children in care and Care Leavers with their mental health and emotional well-being.
- Implement the early intervention programme led by the Safer Schools and Communities Team in Dorset Police to support young people on the periphery of crime.



Good Care Provision

Achievements so far

- Harbour (Children's Home) brings together a team of professionals from different agencies to support young people who are on the edge of care (this means they're in and out of care) and those where young people need additional help to support placement stability
- First new Dorset Council children's home registered
- Exit strategy completed for unregistered provision with new provider seeking registration
- New organisational structure in place for services for children in care and care leavers
- Fostering improvement plan launched
- Fostering recruitment brought in house
- Foster Carers Association established
- Improvements in line of sight and decision making by managers
- Family Group Conference provision retendered
- Stronger links between leaving care team and housing colleagues - housing officer embedded in team.
- Model established for new Keeping In touch service and change process started
- Corporate parenting training offer rolled out for members, officers, and partners.

Impact so far for children and families

- Reduction in the number of children in care living in unregistered or unregulated placements
- Reduction in the number of care leavers living in unsuitable accommodation
- Increase in the percentage of children in care who achieve permanence
- Improvement in timeliness of initial health assessments
- Improvement in timeliness of Personal Education Plans

Next steps for 2021/22

- Soft launch of Harbour and registration of additional children's homes
- Development of Mockingbird model in Dorset (Fostering model)
- Tendering of supported accommodation and development of care leaver accommodation at Kirtleton Avenue
- Develop care leaver employment opportunities
- Launch Keep in Touch service and wider offer
- Develop the preventive offer through the use of family group conferences

What have we done?

- Developed and published the Dorset graduated approach policy. Graduated approach is a 4 stage cycle that helps the school learn more about the pupil and what helps them make good progress
- Regular contact with headteachers through our locality hubs.
- Embedding the quality assurance process of Education, Health and Care Plans.
- Completing and analysing the results of a SEND survey to our Dorset families.
- Holding our first Educational and Inclusion Conference.
- Developing an updated Outreach model for Dorset educational settings.
- Creating the Dorset Centre of Excellence and new SEND school as part our sufficiency plans.
- COVID response and support to our educational settings and Dorset families.

Achievements

- The steering group has been formed, with representation from educational settings, parents and health colleagues. Meetings have been held and we have an agreement of the next steps in our three-year plan.
- Question and answer sessions have been held with Dorset SEND families to involve them in future SEND plans. These have been well received and more are planned.
- Dorset Council has invested £40k to support the need for more SEND provision to meet the needs of the existing cohort. We have identified sites for expansion, creation of future provision and purchased St Mary's School in Shaftesbury. The Dorset Centre of Excellence has been registered and the creation of the new SEND school is underway with an established commissioning group, a Chief Operating Officer is in post, two internal Directors have been appointed and recruitment of key staff is underway. The facilities on this site will be developed over the next three years.
- Throughout COVID the Corporate Director for Education and Learning led weekly touchdowns with headteachers alongside HR and Public Health colleagues to support the education sector in the response to emerging issues during the pandemic. These were more regular around the time that schools were asked to open testing stations. The council supported schools with managing the DFE provision of laptops to students and coordinated supplies of PPE to schools as this became available. Co-ordinated transport to school remained in place throughout term time, with reduced student numbers. This included SEND transport. Additional grants were provided by the DFT to support enhanced levels of school transport when students returned to school full time so that no school populations were mixing on buses.
- Our Early years settings were able to remain open during the summer and winter periods. There were challenges during lockdown periods with staffing availability. During the winter and early spring there were a number of settings where finances became difficult and some uncertainty over national funding formulas being applied on the basis of reduced numbers. However, Dorset Council were able to support settings with emergency funding and no setting permanently closed.
- Dorset schools were able to remain open to students and continue education for all children during the autumn and spring terms. Whilst there were periods when the number of students physically attending was restricted the majority of schools had a successful transition to remote education for those students who were not able to attend.

Best Education For All

- School attendance in Dorset was strong throughout the pandemic period with Dorset ranking in the top 25 of all councils nationally. The tracking of vulnerable students continues and the locality response to supporting students has meant that where students are not attending when required there is rapid and productive contact made.
- Statutory school admissions and SEND planning work continued throughout the pandemic. High levels of first preference admission to school were sustained by the admissions team. Adherence to the timescales for SEND work during the pandemic was good and remained consistently above the national average. Improvements in plan quality were seen and revised systems and process were implemented. A higher number of complaints were received during the times when people were working from home and this has meant an increased number of tribunals.
- Relationships between the council and schools and wider education providers in early years and FE have strengthened over the last 12 months.
- Schools and Early Years settings in Dorset have now returned to a business as usual operating model, with some adaptations remaining in place to support operating a Covid-19 secure site.

Next steps for 2021/22

- Build on the relationships with our educational partners to encourage and support them to embed inclusive practice across all Dorset educational settings. Reduce the need for alternative provision, out of county placements and reduce the costs to the high needs block.
- Deliver our sufficiency plans for the best education for children and young people to ensure local provision.
- Develop in collaboration with our commissioning team, educational settings and engagement with current Alternative Provision colleagues a robust Alternative Provision framework and policy aligned to ensure quality, effective, impactful, short term intervention.
- Working with our health colleagues to enable opportunities to strengthen pathways and reduce barriers for our families to access health care provision such as ASD and Speech and Language therapies.
- Review and develop our Post-16 offer with our further education settings and Adult Services.
- Address the causes of inequality and deprivation to improve educational outcomes using business intelligence tools, provide support for eligible families to register for Free School Meals and ensure equitable access to education through a digital offer.
- Strengthen the localities delivery model to recognise local community rights, needs, difficulties, challenges and our partner relationships.
- Strengthen communication and working together enabling the success of our children and young people by updating professional meeting processes to ensure they are timely, owned and effective and using the Local Offer to communicate our plans.
- To continue to work with our Dorset SEND families to ensure that children and young people with additional needs achieve their outcomes.

Best Place To Live

Dorset's Best Place to Live Priority was the area of the Plan identified by children, young people and families as part of the Summer in Dorset programme in 2020. Best Place to Live co-ordinate a range of services, activities, plans and strategies across Dorset Council and its partners to make Dorset the best place to live and grow up. Our children and young people will live in thriving communities, where they can safely live, learn, and play and where all voices are valued and respected.

Our young people want to be able to get to and participate in positive activities and for us to work together to actively protect the natural environment.

Achievements so far

- Public consultation and publication of our Climate Emergency Strategy [climate-and-ecololgical-emergency-strategy.pdf](#)
- Waste and recycling improvements
- Things to do, places to go - County Park Ranger Activities
- Commitment to a Pilot Programme promoting Rights of children and young people in Bridport ahead of a wider roll-out. www.realisingrights.org.uk
- Dorset Wildlife Trust's engagement with children, young people and families and Public Health in co-producing a series of events. These included Stepping into Nature, a Mental Health Awareness Week (10th-16th May) which promoted the importance of "getting out in nature" as well as establishing a young journalist programme providing experience and skills in producing podcasts, blogs and social media posting.

Next steps for 2021/22

- Expand on the Realising Rights Pilot
- Co-produce a range of activities for children, young people and families publishing them in an accessible media.
- Expand and integrate nature activities and social prescription.
- Continue to secure improvements in recycling rates.
- Reduce the level of plastic and pollution in Dorset.



Delivering Locally

Achievements so far

- Steering groups established and included a “takeover” day with Young People leading session.
- The locality model for Dorset Council staff has been in place since September 2020 and our teams report they can access a range of expertise more swiftly, in order to meet a child’s needs.
- Partners also report finding the new model more helpful
- A wider range of partners have accessed Early Help training including police, secondary schools, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), foster carers, primary schools and early years providers
- Local Alliance Groups have been re-established and strengthened with a revised approach to meetings, Terms of Reference and Member Promises
- Each Local Alliance Group has an independent chair and membership across partners has been increased to include Department for Work and Pensions, voluntary and community membership in each alliance
- Priorities are being agreed by each alliance for this year
- An [Early Help Strategy](#) has been published.

Impact so far for children and families (e.g. outcome data, feedback)

- There was an increase in early help involvement requests: April 2020 - 317, requests peaked in September 2020 at 455 and for March 2021 there were 364. This means more people are seeking support for children at an earlier point.
- Example of feedback; Early help training in March 2021: participants reported finding it useful, inspiring, thought-provoking and informative. 100% said it met the objectives and outcomes; all participants reported that their knowledge and confidence had improved; comments included: “fab advice”. This means these practitioners are more likely to initiate early help or support to initiate early help for children and families.

Next steps for 2021/22

- Continue to deliver and develop plan through steering group.
- Continue to strengthen local alliances.
- Develop more local alliance groups to represent smaller geographical areas.
- Ensure effort is not duplicated but complemented so that families reap the benefits of a range of services that are accessible from where they live, work and learn.
- Continue to strengthen partner and families positive experiences of the locality model. There is more to do with partner and parent confidence in the model supporting children with SEND.
- Develop locality information and performance data to measure impact in all areas for children, young people and families at locality level.

Do something
amazing

Dorset
teenagers
need
Foster
Carers

Call us on 01305 225568

A young man with glasses and a yellow shirt is sitting outdoors, smiling. He is wearing a backpack. The background is a blurred green landscape.

Summer
in  **Dorset**

A group of children are playing at an outdoor summer event. They are sitting at a table, and one child is standing and playing with a string. There are colorful bunting flags in the background.

 Dorset
Council

