

Dorset's Strategic Alliance Annual Report 2024



Contents

Forward	2
Introduction	3
Overview	4
Updates from the 7-Priority Areas	5
Best start in life – Headlines	6
Best start in life - Impact	7
Young and Thriving - Headlines	8
Young and Thriving - Impact	9
Good care provision - Headlines	10
Good care provision - Impact	11
Best education for all - Headlines	12
Best education for all - Impact	13
Best place to live – Headlines	14
Best place to live – Impact	15
Local family help – Headlines	16
Local family help – Impact	17
Safe at home and in the community – Headlines	18
Safe at home and in the community – Impact	19
Epilogue	20

Foreword

I am delighted to provide Dorset's Strategic Alliance Annual Report for 2024. This report provides an update on our progress made against our ambitious, 10-year Children, Young People and Families' Plan and our vision for the future.

As the new Lead Member for Children's Services, it is an honour and privilege to lead the Strategic Alliance in delivering the partnership's activities that are making a real and positive difference to the lives of children, young people and families in our communities across Dorset.

I pay tribute to my predecessors, who led the partnership from the creation of the Strategic Alliance back in 2020, and all the members of the Strategic Alliance Board that have made our vision a reality. Of course, this has only been possible thanks to strong partnership working and the engagement of our children, young people, families and communities of Dorset. I am always inspired by the passion and power of our communities, and I pledge to continue the amazing work over the next few years.

Our Annual Report sets out some of the progress we have made over the past year and looks ahead to our challenges and opportunities for next year. We hope you find the report as inspiring as I do, and it galvanises our shared desire and ambition in further improving the lives of people of Dorset.



Councillor Clare Sutton, Lead Member for Dorset Children Services & Strategic Alliance Chair

Introduction

Dorset's Strategic Alliance is a partnership bringing together public services and the voluntary community sector to champion the rights of, and improve the lives of, children, young people and families in Dorset. Partners include Dorset Council, the Local Authority, Dorset Police, NHS Dorset, Dorset Healthcare, Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Services, the Dorset Parent Carer Council, representatives from the voluntary community sector, early years and educational providers across Dorset.

Dorset's Strategic Alliance published its [Children, Young People and Families' Plan 2023-2033](#) in June 2023, building on our previous 2020-2023 Plan. Over the past year, we have worked across the partnership to progress the actions and activities we have found that make the most impact on improving outcomes for and the lives of our cherished children, young people and families in Dorset.

This Report provides the context of our local partnership arrangements, changes to national legislation and progress we have made over the last year.



Overview

Our partnership continues to meet, as an executive Board, chaired by our Lead Member for Children's Services, to review the progress and impact our services across our partnership are making with our communities.

The partnership also comes together once a year for the annual summer conference where we share and celebrate the progress and impact of our work and look forward to the future to ensure we are focused on the matters that make the most and positive differences for our families.

In September 2023, the government published its vision to reshape how children's social care is delivered in England, to ensure partners work together to deliver effective, joined-up services that safeguard children and young people in the wider community. This policy is called '[Stable Homes Built on Love](#)'.

In progressing the national transformation, the Department for Education identified 3 local authorities across England to co-produce and develop a new social care model, which all local authorities and partners will adopt in the future. Dorset Council was one of the 3-trailblazing 'pilot' local authorities. We were delighted to have the honour, privilege and opportunity to work across our partnership in further developing our highly regarded 'Thrive' model.

Dorset's approach to supporting children, young people and families puts the family at the centre and work with the family to ensure they receive the right support at the right time. This is only possible working across a strong partnership, ensuring that all partners work collaboratively with a shared vision putting families first. Our local delivery for the pathfinder is called 'Families First For Children'

One of our 7-priorities in our Partnership's Children, Young People and Families' Plan 2023-2033 is 'Safe at Home and in the Community'. Progress and delivery of the Families First For Children Pathfinder is delivered through that priority area. However, all areas of our partnership contribute to delivering the pathfinder and all the priorities in our plan contribute towards improving outcomes and lives for people.

The Strategic Alliance Board oversees the delivery, progress and impact of the Families first For Children Pathfinder, alongside reporting to the Department for Education. We will review the learning and findings of the pathfinder to ensure we are providing effective partnership services to help families receiving the right support at the right time. We will check and adapt our plans and priorities to ensure we deliver this pledge.

Updates from the 7-Priority Areas

The following sections show the progress highlights and impact made against the 99 individual actions within the 7-priority areas of our Plan to date. The 7-Priority areas are:

- **Best start in life**
- **Young and thriving**
- **Good care provision**
- **Best education for all**
- **Best place to live**
- **Local family help**
- **Safe at home and in the community**



Best start in life – Headlines



Co-designed and published the online **Dorset Start for Life Guide** available to all families through the Family Hub network



The Graduated Approach - Dorset Council published online and physical versions available through midwives, health visitors, GP's and Family Hub's.



Strengthened our early years support offer with Best Start in Life Advisors across the County and in the Birth to Settled Adulthood Service



Improved family journeys and pathways of support with health partners



£210,000 grant funding available to VCS organisations to deliver 'Best Start in life' Provision through Family Hubs



Best start in life - Impact

Children accessing 'good and outstanding' early years provision

- The number and percentage of **children accessing 'good and outstanding'** early years provision has increased and children benefit from good & outstanding providers

Dorset Start for Life

- More families are benefiting from being able to find & access services

'Pause Programme'

- Improved outcomes for women who are at risk of subsequent children being taken from their care

Healthy Movers - (physical literacy intervention in early years settings)

- A total of 85 settings involved and 2056 children participating



Young and Thriving - Headlines



Launch of the **Young Commissioners** programme



Increased apprenticeship opportunities in and outside of Dorset Council for care leavers and work experience, including paid placement, and opportunities for support back into work



£200k Dorset Youth Grant distributed across 43 voluntary and community sector groups, including Youth Clubs, young carers support, sports & drama clubs



Youth Worker capacity increased and Level 3 and level 6 apprenticeship in youth work now available



Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services commissioned in localities



Young Carers Service is delivering activity with Dorset Youth Voice and adult services to develop the 'Young Carer Strategy'



Young and Thriving - Impact

Increased opportunities for children & young people to engage and participate

- Young peoples' voice heard & feedback that they feel more involved in decision making & shaping services.

Youth work capacity

- We are reaching and supporting more young people on a one-to-one basis and providing more regular & consistent detached youth work, reducing risk and improving attendance.

Young Carers Support

- Young carers continue to benefit from direct one to one support as well as being able to access positive activities and a break from their caring role

Care Leavers

- More of our care leavers are in employment, education and training, providing better financial independence and career opportunities

Supported internships

- Young people with SEND has increased from 4 (2022) to 13 in the current academic year



Good care provision - Headlines

- Expanded our edge of care service to **Harbour East Outreach**
- Enhanced **Fostering & Kinship Service** Model and 4 established Mockingbird Constellations, with the fifth nearing completion.
- Dedicated **Unaccompanied children and young people Service**
- Birth to settled Adulthood** service fully operational
- New **Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2028**
- Implemented the **'Joint Protocol'** between Children's and Housing to help young people at risk of presenting as homeless
- Increased our **'Short Breaks'** offer
- Launched our local model for **'Family Group Conference'**



Good care provision - Impact

Increased the number of Children's Homes and Care Leaver accommodation in Dorset

- More young people remain living closer to their family & friends in Dorset. Dorset can secure better value for public money, accessing high-quality provision within Dorset

Fostering & Adoption

- £1m fund to enable housing extensions & adaptations to foster carer and adopter homes, expanding capacity. Children & young people have stability in their family lives & can continue to grow & thrive in their community.

Mockingbird Model

- Prevention of resignations, stability support preventing children moving, nurturing relationships between children & young people within the constellations. Recognition of hidden talents within our young people

Increased capacity

- Foster carer recruitment and retention programme, including expansion of Mockingbird has increased our capacity to provide stable homes locally

“

Mockingbird is a place where you can belong and where you will make new friends that you will have for life. You become part of a family.

– Foster child, age 15

”



Best education for all - Headlines



We have **captured student voice** through Key Stage 4 and 5 Student Voice Survey and 'Student Pledge'



Co-produced and published the **Dorset Council Attendance Strategy and Plan 2023 - Dorset Council** and the **Education Strategy 2024-27**



To support the Belonging Strategy the Virtual school have published a toolkit to support schools and educational settings **[virtual-school-belonging-toolkit.pdf](https://proceduresonline.com/virtual-school-belonging-toolkit.pdf)** (proceduresonline.com)



Delivered the **Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) Strategy**



Best education for all - Impact

'Attendance Strategy'

- Attendance has increased, less children & young people are missing out on their right to an education & have improved safeguarding oversight, permanent exclusions have reduced

Local Area of Inspection of SEND

- Secured the best possible outcome

Education Strategy

- Improvement in achievement rates at GCSE
- Maintained number of good or outstanding Personal Education Plans and increased timeliness for completion

Let's Talk Event

- Provided a platform for post-16 parents and careers to share with us and ensure our Post-16 strategy is based on lived experiences



Best place to live – Headlines



Strengthened and improved visibility and take up of our **Summer in Dorset, Holiday Activity and Food Programme**, including securing additional £29k from the 'Arts Council'



Planned and delivered **'Echo Fest' Youth Arts Festival**



Dorset Music Service partnered with regional experts training Early Years professionals and the VCS in Dorset to **enrich the provision in the community.**



Launched **'Wraparound Childcare Programme'**



Chesil Youth Pride – 'See Me' event



Best place to live – Impact

Chesil Youth Pride

- More than 200 children, young people and families attended during the day at the Weymouth college site, more young people reported feeling safe to 'be themselves' in their communities.

Holiday Activity and Food Programme

- HAF Film 2024 on Vimeo working with 65 providers across 80 venues more families were able to access summer activities & food, improving the quality of life for families.

'Echo Fest' Youth Arts Festival

- Accessible activities for young people 11-16 yrs, gave young singers and bands a chance to perform to an audience, improving confidence and skills

Dorset Music Service

- 4277 children had the opportunity whole class instrumental learning, 10 young people supported as 'Young Creative Leaders' – supporting a career pathway



Local family help – Headlines



Family Hubs – 6 dedicated sites, 23 outreach points, Family Hub Online launched



Family Help Teams – building on our existing model we have re-shaped and grown our multi-disciplinary teams, providing more early help and children in need support



Family Networks – strengthened our family network approach, offering financial support paid to people who are not birth parents who can help in some way



Local Alliance Groups – are leading on the development and ongoing delivery of Family Hub approach in their local communities



Local family help – Impact

Family Help Teams

- Early stages expectation is fewer children on child protection plans, fewer children in care, more children supported to stay with their birth families. Increased support through Early Support and Family Help

Local Alliance Groups

- Funding has delivered projects which has improved school attendance, promoted belonging and improved outcomes for children & young people in their community

Family Hubs

- Providing opportunities for children, young people and families to get early support in their communities in spaces which are familiar to them

“My Family Hub has made me feel more connected to my local community”



Safe at home and in the community – Headlines

✓ Co-produced and published an **Extra-Familial Harm Strategy** to expand beyond contextual safeguarding

✓ **Multi-agency training** has been developed and delivered addressing recommendations from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

✓ **Safeguarding Families Together** model expanded to all Dorset localities

✓ Developed and launched the '**Police Child Centred Policing**' strategy

✓ **Hidden Girls, Pineapple Project** expanded to Swanage, Dorchester, and Portland

✓ Developed multi-agency child protection teams with a multi-agency child protection operational board.

✓ Embedding **education as a safeguarding partner**

Part of the
Pathfinder
Programme



Safe at home and in the community – Impact

Safeguarding families Together

- 338 children and their families received help. Out of the 133 children who have closed to Safeguarding Families Together we are now seeing evidence of families successfully stepping down from Child Protection plans or Child in Need plans and sustaining change.

Extra-Familial Harm Strategy

- Partners work more collaboratively to share data & information in identifying & managing risk. Less young people are known to be at risk compared to 2023 figures & those that are, have the right partnership support identified.

Hidden Girls, Pineapple Project

- 8 business and 50 individual community guardians are championing change and creating more safe spaces for women and girls

Improved efficacy of multi-agency practice from Pathfinder

- Operational Boards and multi-agency teams are resulting in more multi-agency decision making, improving the impact of joined-up services



Epilogue

This Report celebrates the success of the partnership over the past year, we hope you can see some areas of your own experience through some of these brief updates. However, we know our work is not done. We continue to be ambitious in improving outcomes for all children, young people and families in Dorset, challenging inequality and celebrating diversity in our communities. Over the next year, we will continue to review the progress and impact of our delivery plan, working with communities to develop our future priorities and report on our progress in 2025 and beyond.

