

Delivery Plan for Devon's Children's Services

DRAFT December 2016

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The future of Devon rests with its children and young people. Devon's future prosperity, success and ultimate sustainability depends upon the education, health and wellbeing of our children and young people today. Children, young people and families are therefore at the heart of the ambitions of the Devon Children's Alliance. It is only by working together effectively that we can realise the potential of our children and young people and build a sustainable future for Devon.

1.2 We have high ambitions for our children and young people and high expectations of schools, colleges, settings and services. We want all children in Devon to have the best start in life and, as they grow into young adults, we want them to have good routes into education, employment and apprenticeships that enable them to stay in Devon and lead fulfilling and happy lives.

1.3 The purpose of this document is to outline the delivery plan for Children's Services in Devon 2017-2020. The delivery plan details how the strategic vision set out in "[My Life, My Journey](#)" will be operationalised in Devon. The delivery plan also underpins the "Children and Young People" priority in the [Wider Devon Sustainability and Transformation Plan \(STP\)](#).

1.4 This draft is the responsibility of the Devon's Children's Alliance.

2. THE CASE FOR CHANGE

2.1 Devon must find a new way to deliver children's services. The need for children's services has increased significantly as has the complexity of need. Simultaneously the resources available to meet need have reduced significantly.

2.2 We must change the way we do things in order that we can continue to meet the needs of children and families in our communities effectively and sustainably. We do not intend to lower our aspirations. We intend to deploy the very significant resources we have at our disposal purposefully to maximise the impact we are able to achieve.

2.3 We want children, young people and families in Devon to experience professionals who are working with them to find solutions that build on their strengths and that deliver the best outcome for the individual child, young person and family. We want children, young people and families to experience professionals that intervene when needed before problems have escalated and crisis has set in. We want to move away from episodic care to a responsive, committed model that focuses on getting the right outcomes for individual children and young people. Through this delivery plan we are setting the direction of travel for all work with children, young people and families in Devon and thereby ensuring that the whole system, seamlessly, is pulling in the same direction.

2.4 There are five key shifts we need to make. The first of these, which we will implement via this delivery plan, is **a strengthening of our Early Help system** in Devon. Our current system is out of balance. Too many children come into the children's statutory system. We see this in social care, in Special Educational Needs and in CAMHS. There is good evidence to show that it is detrimental for families to be escalated into a statutory system when they don't need to be.

2.5 Strengthening Early Help will result in more children, young people and families being supported at an earlier stage and consequently a reduction in children that are escalated into statutory services. For this to happen higher levels of complexity, risk and need will be managed within the universal and targeted parts of the system than is currently the case. Our commitment to strengthening Early Help extends the first objective of the Early Help Strategy 2013.

'The overall aim of Early Help is to build resilient families who are able to find their own solutions to challenges and create a happy, healthy home' is extended to include 'and to prevent unnecessary escalation into statutory service'

In order to achieve this, we have to THINK FAMILY and understand that the key to the child achieving good outcomes is very often held by the parents (the younger the child, the more that this is so) and it is only by working with parents that we can lever change for children

2.6 The second key shift that needs to happen in Devon is a **locality based model** with integrated services rooted in the community. When needed, we want expert resources available where the family is, joining the team of professionals around the family and child. In this way we intend to build capacity, competence and confidence. As a partnership we have agreed¹ that local partnership working is at the core of a strong and effective children's services system. We are taking steps to restructure our services around 4 locality footprints.

2.7 The third shift that needs to happen is **an integration of services**. We want our whole system to be joined-up and we want services and functions to be delivered by co-located, or virtually co-located, locality-based teams. This is particularly important for children and young people (and their families), who have special educational needs and/or are disabled. We want children and their families to be able to access support that responds to their specific situation rather than them battling the boundaries of separate services that address their issues partially and in a piecemeal fashion. We don't want children and their families to experience that the different parts of the system they interact with are unable to communicate and cooperate. Concretely this will mean that functions (currently delivered by Babcock, Virgin Care Limited and other providers as well as DCC and other statutory partners) will in future be integrated and delivered through locality based teams and partnerships.

2.8 The fourth key shift that needs to happen is **bespoke and personalised services**. We want services to be responsive, flexible and agile. This means that services will be less shaped by specifications and traditional professional demarcations and more by family needs. We want Devon children and families to experience that services are co-produced with them and creative solutions are sought to fit their particular situation. Where appropriate this will mean using individual budgets.

2.9 The final key shift is **asset or strengths-based practice**. For too long we have been focused on what people can't do, not on what they can. We have had a paternalistic approach that assumes experts know best and which has been over-focused on risk, without sufficient attention to strengths and assets.

A volunteering strategy will be developed alongside this delivery plan with the aim of releasing new capacity to be focused on the partnership's top priorities.

2.10 These key shifts build upon the Alliance Principles. They reflect deep cultural change and a transformational approach to service delivery and outcomes for children; marginal improvements will not be sufficient to achieve our ambitions.

The key shifts are designed to enable us to deliver services in a responsive and flexible way that ensures no child falls through the gaps that have historically existed between different organisations and defined service areas. We intend to empower our workforce to work with families to get the right outcomes by doing the right things.

3. CONTEXT

3.1 There are approximately 160,000 children and young people in Devon and this is set to rise to 171,000 by 2037. On average Devon children and young people are doing well when measured against national benchmarks such as physical health, exam grades and crime levels. However, this average masks inequalities that some children and young people in Devon live with. Many do not enjoy the high quality of life for which the county is renowned;

¹ Devon Children, Young People and Families Alliance Executive meeting on the 19th July 2016

parts of the county experience much higher rates of poverty and ill health than others. Rates of anxiety and depression and self-harm are high, and many children are at risk of harm or neglect². Many young people do not see a prosperous future ahead of them in Devon and feel that their access to good jobs, public transport and affordable housing is limited³.

3.1.1 Approximately 13% of the local authority's children are living in poverty, and the proportion of children entitled to free school meals is as follows:

- in primary schools is 12% (the national average is 17%)
- in secondary schools is 10% (the national average is 15%).

Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 4% of all children living in the area, compared with 22% in the country as a whole. The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are Mixed and Asian or Asian British. The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:

- in primary schools is 3% (the national average is 19%)
- in secondary schools is 3% (the national average is 14%).

3.1.2 In addition Devon's coastal areas have a transient population due to seasonal work and this is echoed in the agricultural areas of the county. There are a significant number of children from other authorities who are looked after in Devon⁴.

3.1.3 Based on the full population analysis in the [JSNA Devon Overview Report 2016](#) the Children's Partnership has identified the following key priorities:

- **A good school for every Devon child, and every child ready for school**
Devon already has a very high percentage of children attending a good or outstanding school or early years setting and Devon children achieve a good level of development pre-school and achieve well in primary and secondary school. Very successful strategies have been embedded to achieve this. However, there are groups of children, whose needs are less well met, pre-school and in school; these are often children with emotional, behavioural, social and/or communication difficulties. These groups of children will be our priority in this plan
- **Significant improvement in the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people**
Nationally, a third of children and young people are reporting symptoms of anxiety and/or depression. Around one in 10 children in Devon has a mental health disorder but only a small proportion are in contact with mental health services. The rate of self-harm admissions for 10 to 24 years olds is higher than for similar local authorities and is much higher in deprived areas of the County.
Devon has put in place Early Help for Mental Health with universal on-line access for children and young people and targeted face to face services. Progress has been made to strengthen access to specialist CAMHS and to implement an assertive outreach approach to prevent acute admissions.
The Children, Young People and Families Alliance has committed itself to implementing a Resilience Model across Children's Services
- **End domestic violence and sexual abuse**
Domestic violence and abuse affects many families in Devon with children and young people present in 36% of incidents reported to police in 2013-14. The consequences can be profoundly harmful for children and this issue alone drives a huge amount of activity in all public services. Risks of harm to children are compounded when domestic violence is accompanied by mental ill-health and or alcohol/substance misuse and/or parental learning difficulties. Survivors of childhood sexual abuse intra

² Taken from the "My Life, My Plan" Children's Alliance Plan 2015-2020

³ The Community Insight Survey 2015 highlights job opportunities, public transport and housing as key areas where the satisfaction is absolute lowest. BUT not great response rate among under 25year olds

⁴ [Ofsted Inspection report 2015](#)

or extra-familial, are over-represented in homelessness, incarceration, mental health services, drug and alcohol services, domestic violence and so on. The DSCB prioritised sexual abuse. The implementation of the plans developed in 16/17 is a priority for 17/18

- **Achieve good outcomes for children and young people with SEND**
An SEND peer review in November 2016 confirmed our self-assessment. There is some outstanding and innovative frontline practice in settings, schools and services but the whole system is not sufficiently joined up. We have the SEND Improvement Board in place and our SEND strategy is out for consultation.
- **Ambitious routes into employment, education and training, strengthening transitions so vulnerable young people don't drop out, building a strong and effective apprenticeship offer**
A job and a sense of positive prospects offer huge security and resilience for young people. Most young people, with support from their family, friends, school and college will transition successfully into adulthood without any additional help. Vulnerable young people need some scaffolding in place to support that transition and it needs to be in place early enough and with enough consistency to tolerate some missed opportunities and false starts. A strengths-based practice culture that supports independence, choice and control rather than dependence needs to be strengthened in Devon
- **Develop a multi-agency assertive outreach response to teenagers at the threshold of care**
Our response to teenagers in difficulties needs to be further strengthened and this depends upon managing risk and complexity in the community, deploying the expertise of a multi-agency assertive outreach function into the team around the child to achieve the required outcomes ensuring a sustainable support system around the young person and family is in place
- **Achieve good Children's Services (early help, children in need, child protection, children in care and care leavers)**
In 2015 Children's Services were judged to require improvement to be good and services for care leavers were judged inadequate. Improvement plans are underway. A self-assessment has been completed and a mock unannounced inspection has been commissioned. These will provide the platform for the next phase of the improvement journey

3.2 GOVERNANCE

3.2.1 Devon has a Children's Alliance which is responsible for delivering the children's services outlined in this delivery plan. The Alliance has an independent monitoring/scrutiny/quality assurance function and incorporates our statutory responsibilities to have a Local Safeguarding Children Board. We are early adopters of the Wood's review and will use the greater flexibility given to local areas to streamline partnership working in Devon, to do away with overlapping structures. Three key partners the local authority, the police and health are identified in the Wood's review to drive multi-agency arrangements across the three domains of well-being, safeguarding and protection.

3.2.2 The Children's Alliance consists of a central Commissioning Executive that drives forward the delivery of this strategy, an Expert Reference System (including Experts by Experience) that will set the yearly priorities for the partnership as well as an independent Quality Assurance function that will scrutinise the delivery of services at the frontline to test the impact on outcomes and the experience of children and families. The Commissioning Executive, the Expert Reference System and the Quality Assurance function are founded on a strong locality structure organised into the following 4 locality footprints:

- Northern Devon (North Devon & Torridge)
- East/Mid Devon
- Exeter
- Southern Devon (Teignbridge/West Devon & South Hams)

The partnership will continuously be sense-checked against the lived experiences of Devon children, young people, their families and carers who will give their views through an Expert by Experience structure.

3.3 THE POLITICAL CONTEXT AT A NATIONAL LEVEL

3.3.1 The national political context for children's work is one of change and uncertainty. All statutory partners working with children are faced with significant change to the legislative framework they operate within, including:

- * Major reform of the statutory framework for education with significant implications for schools and local authorities,
- * Major structural change of the local health and care landscape being implemented through Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STP),
- * An anticipated restructure of the local duty to cooperate with clear leadership responsibilities assigned to the police, local authority and health.
- * Children's Social Care reforms that will have implication for how children's social services are delivered in the future.
- * SEND reforms
- * Significant resource constraints

Furthermore, a number of cross-cutting agendas such as devolution, benefit reform and a new apprenticeship scheme will also have implications for local statutory partners.

3.3.2 Added to this is the uncertainty brought on by the UK referendum on EU membership. The new Prime Minister and her team of ministers are yet to fully set out the direction, focus and pace of reforms in the children's area, including confirming whether they will continue with all reforms announced prior to the referendum. Uncertainty also surrounds the future of major agendas such as devolution and the government's commitment to fiscal restraint. The implications of the UK referendum on EU membership on the UK economy, on the government's future budget and on the workforce are currently unknown, but thought be significant, and all will in turn have implications for the context within which Children's Services are delivered at a local level.

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