

Our lives with COVID-19 and what next

Children and Young People's Plan Reset for 2020 to 2021



The impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on children and young people

With significantly lower rates of infection and severe illness from the virus rare among children and young people, **lockdown was a huge sacrifice on their part** for the health and wellbeing of the rest of the population.

Almost overnight, **their education was disrupted**, they were cut off from their support networks and isolated from their friends.

With restrictions easing and life slowly reopening **we are seeing the profound effect the lockdown has had** on our children and young people, with particularly acute impacts on the most vulnerable.

While the nature of the pandemic and lockdown has meant that some families have been affected more than others, every child and young person in Devon has felt an impact on their lives in one way or another. While additional services will be targeted at those who need it most, a firm foundation in universal support for all young people will be crucial for the recovery and transformation of communities, localities, Devon and the UK as a whole.

Our **renewed commitment to the priorities set out in our Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2023** is vital as we continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Combined with a '**reset**' of our **priorities for 2020-2021**, our focus will firmly be on the most pressing needs and issues which have the most significant longer-term impact on children and families in Devon.



The right to be heard

Listen

Children and young people in Devon have told us that they feel the **government has not considered or represented** them during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hear

Continuing to **listen, hear and understand** the views of children and young people, their parents and carers and the community and voluntary sector **is vital to our ongoing response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic**. By determining our priorities, developing services and agreeing resources together we are more **resilient in our response and recovery**.

Understand

Young people and parents have **led a series of conversations** in addition to forums and follow up groups and are **fully engaged in our recovery plans**, including economic, skills work and training as well as the arrangements for the Local Engagement Board of the Local Outbreak Management Plan.

Feedback from children and young people

The first workshop heard the views of representatives of care leavers, Devon Youth Parliament, Parent Carer Forum Devon, advocates for children with SEND, young carers, UASCs and LGBTQ young people.

Emotional health & wellbeing

Lockdown has increased the pressures on young people's **emotional health and wellbeing** and instantly removed some of the key support mechanisms in their lives.

Communication & Engagement

Young people felt that the **information and advice** from local and national services was often unclear and inconsistent.

Future Prospects

COVID-19 will have lasting impacts on the **future employment, training and education prospects** for children and young people.

Vulnerable Households

The pandemic has created and worsened physical, mental and financial strains on **vulnerable households**, directly impacting the safeguarding of children and young people living there.

Feedback from parents and carers



Communication & Engagement

Clarity of communication has been vital for parents and carers during the lockdown. The Maternity Voices Partnership and Parent Carer Forum Devon played key roles in providing this for those they represent.

Service changes

Changes to the way services have been delivered during the COVID-19 lockdown have brought both opportunities and challenges for the increased engagement of parents and carers. As far as possible, positive opportunities for further engagement should be continued.

Future Prospects

Parents and carers will play an important role in ensuring children and young people are able to catch-up on the **education they have missed**. Partners can support them in this by helping reduce anxieties around the return to school, early years settings and extra-curricular activities.

Vulnerable Households

Many parents are facing significant pressures on their **mental health**, as well as on **household budgets**. They need to be supported in order to support their children and young people.

Our lives with COVID-19 and what next

Second conversation: Hidden harm and poverty



For the second workshop, we were joined by representatives from the community and voluntary sector, Incident Management Team Leads for Early Help, representatives for vulnerable children and children with SEND as well as colleagues from Devon County Council's Economy and Communities Teams.

Key messages

- The significant need in families is seen and understood by some communities
- The coordinated local, community efforts have moved quickly and were responsive. Connected to our locality partnership and Early Help triage response.
- The experience of children is very different dependant on local capacity in school and community, broadband and access to tech. and resources.
- The impact of lock down on the most vulnerable and the most disadvantaged is acute. Significantly widening the inequality gap.
- The economic impact will be significant and long lasting. Some of the worst is yet to come.

Children and Young People's Plan re-set 2020-21



We believe that every child in Devon should have the **best possible start in life** and the **opportunity to thrive**



Focused response priorities 2020-2021



Our re-set ensures our focus on the most pressing need and issues which will have the most significant longer-term impact:

Preventing hidden harm and exploitation

Preventing **Hidden Harm** and **exploitation**; working effectively on a cross-agency, cross-partnership basis to safeguard children, with focus on the significant vulnerability of infants and the changing nature of criminal exploitation of young people.

Whole family working

Protect all children by building on the **whole family working** achieved in response, continuing to focus on domestic abuse, substance misuse and adult mental health.

Emotional health& wellbeing

Offer extended services to support **emotional wellbeing and mental health** and recovery for children wrapping around schools and colleges.

Understanding local vulnerabilities

Understanding local vulnerabilities to target family support and early help where economic impact can lead to increased pressure in families.

Focused recovery priorities 2020-2021



Our re-set ensures our focus on the most pressing need and issues which will have the most significant longer-term impact:

Supporting return to learning

Supporting the return to learning for ALL children, with support for vulnerable children with additional needs.

Extended offer into work and training

Extended offer for all young people into work and training particularly for Care Leavers and children with SEND.

Combat inequalities

Combat the inequalities that have been exacerbated by COVID-19, strengthening our diverse communities.

Climate emergency

Put the voice of young people at the heart of the response to the climate emergency in Devon County Council, NHS Devon CCG and Devon and Cornwall Police in response.

Hidden harm and exploitation

Across the world, the COVID-19 lockdown has had a significant and harmful impact on the most vulnerable children.

In the UK, reports by Unicef UK, SCIE, ChildLine and the NSPCC have highlighted this impact, with both ChildLine and the NSPCC reporting a significant increase in demand for their services since the beginning of the pandemic. Ofsted have reported a 50% rise nationally in the reporting of Serious Incident Notifications (SIN) for infants under 12 months.

Young people expressed to us their concerns over the **hidden abuse and neglect of children** that has happened during lockdown. They highlighted the **pressures that many vulnerable households have been under** as a result of poor mental and physical health and the diminished ability of some parents to provide for their basic everyday needs.

A letter to DCS's (22 May) from Ministers expresses the importance of Safeguarding Partners **working effectively together to identify and respond to multiple vulnerabilities**. The complex nature of hidden harms and the changing nature of exploitation requires robust multi-agency planning across the DCFP, SDP, CSPs and DSAP.

The Partnership will aim to prevent further hidden harms and exploitation and **respond together effectively** to any increased demand for services.

Whole-family working

We are committed to working with the whole family to identify and build on their strengths to help and support them to find long term solutions of their difficulties and develop skills to manage future challenges. We will build on this and ensure it is a key principle in our response to domestic abuse, substance misuse and adult mental health.

The COVID-19 lockdown has resulted in many more children and young people being in households, for prolonged periods of time, where there is abuse, neglect, substance misuse and mental health issues. These harms have profound effects on the family as a whole and it is important that the impact on children is fully understood.

Adult and children's services will work closely together with the whole family to strengthen relationships and resilience. Work with the family will address immediate safeguarding concerns as well as build longer-term protections against forms of abuse and harm.

Emotional wellbeing and mental health

A national survey by YoungMinds found that **67% of parents and carers** were worried about the long-term impact on their child's mental health and **80% of young people** said that the pandemic had made their mental health worse.

All the young people we spoke to* expressed the **importance of their mental health and wellbeing** when providing feedback on their experiences of lockdown, saying they missed being able to meet up with friends and spend time outdoors and that these activities provide important respite from school, work and home life.

While the increased social isolation has had impacts on every young person, for some the lack of face-to-face support networks, coupled with the additional pressures of lockdown, have led them to **engage with services for the first time** in their lives.

The Partnership will **meet the increased demand for mental health support services** from not only our most vulnerable young people, but from wider groups who display new vulnerabilities. This will require a multi-agency approach, wrapping around schools and colleges to identify and respond effectively to demand.

*UASCs, LGBTQ young people, young carers, care leavers and members of Youth Parliament.

Local vulnerabilities

Devon has one of the highest rates of furlough take-up in the UK and the county is experiencing the biggest ever disparities in youth unemployment.

The economic impact of COVID-19 varies greatly across sectors of the economy and population. As a result, there are large disparities across a county of Devon's size. The economic impact across regions of Devon are represented in the graphic on the following slide.

Devon, and the South West in general, have a heavier reliance on the service sector, including tourism and hospitality, than other parts of the UK. As a result, we are already seeing higher than average rates of furlough take-up and increasing unemployment.

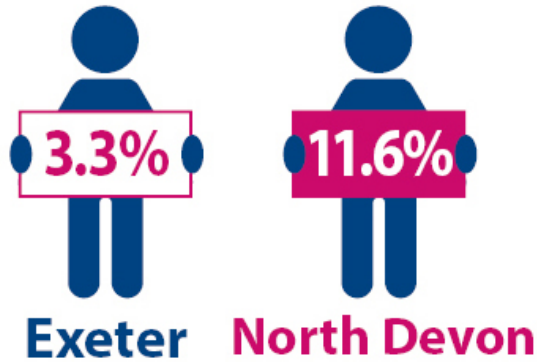
Nationally, young people and women are disproportionately affected by these shifting grounds in the economy. According to government figures, 17-year old girls are the most likely demographic to be placed on furlough.

Partnership horizon-scanning will therefore need to take into account these differential economic impacts on parts of Devon and the finances of vulnerable households. Support can then be targeted to the areas it is needed most in order to minimise the knock-on impacts on children and young people.

Economic impact of CV19 on households in Devon



Devon has one of the highest rates of furlough take-up in the UK
(July 2020)



Biggest ever disparities in youth unemployment across Devon
(July 2020)



Unemployment Claimant Count
(July 2020)



Return to learning

Many children and young people have told us that they are looking forward to returning to school and college to see their friends and restore purpose to their lives.

The return to schools and colleges in September will form the foundation of all children and young people's return to structures, routines and some familiarity in their lives. Schools, colleges, early years settings and extra-curricular activities offer far more than just academic learning.

The return to face-to-face learning is especially important for vulnerable children, including children in care, children with SEND and those who have lacked adequate technology and resources to learn at home. Closing any attainment gaps effectively will be crucial for young people's future prospects.

Education providers will require multi-agency wrap-around support in responding to additional safeguarding concerns, any rise in mental health issues and supporting vulnerable children through key transitions.

Partners also have a role to play in helping ease any anxieties that parents and carers have around sending their children back to school and ensuring that any children needing to self-isolate in future have the necessary learning support in place from day one.

Employment and training

A study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) found that the pandemic ‘has severely dented the career prospects of young people and threatens to have a prolonged negative economic impact on them as a result.’

Children and young people face a very challenging jobs market over the coming years.

They expressed to us their anxieties around the impact of their missed learning and the almost overnight drop in employment and training opportunities.

In response, the Partnership will extend the offer of employment, training and Higher Education opportunities to our most vulnerable children, including children in care, care leavers and children with SEND.

The Partnership will advocate for increased opportunities for the wider population of young people in Devon’s economy and encourage the take-up – by young people and local employers alike - of the national kickstart scheme, traineeships, expanded national careers service, new apprenticeship funding, high-value courses for school and college leavers and extended DWP youth offer announced by national government in July.

Equality and diversity

Young people in Devon have explicitly called for more to be done to address racism, discrimination and inequality across our communities.

There are many factors that reduce people's access to opportunities, including poverty, where you live, your readiness for education or the health of your family. Often, these factors are directly linked to race, ethnicity, disability, gender, age and sexual orientation.

COVID-19 has led to **worse health outcomes for many ethnic minority communities across the UK**, exacerbating existing inequalities in standards of housing, employment and levels of mental and physical health.

This has also come at a time of deep pain and anger about injustice crystallised in the death of George Floyd reflected back in the Black Lives Matter movement.

Our LGBTQ young people also **highlighted the unique challenges that many have faced during lockdown**; living in difficult home environments and lacking vital support networks. Prior to the pandemic, LGBTQ young people faced worse mental health outcomes compared with the wider population. As a group, this leaves them particularly vulnerable to the impacts of the lockdown.

We want to narrow the gap in health outcomes and life chances between different groups of children and young people living in Devon. **No child should be condemned to cycles of poverty and disadvantage.**

Climate Emergency

Young people are at the heart of the fight against the climate emergency and their voice will guide our response throughout.

Our young people have been loud and clear about the need for **climate action now**. The pandemic has given us all an opportunity to reduce our environmental impact and **build back better**.

While the short-term impacts of COVID-19 on our vulnerable children and families are at the forefront of our immediate response, **the long-term safeguarding of the lives of children and young people is also important**.

Action on climate change is therefore a key priority for the Partnership. Our three core partners have already signed up to the [Devon Climate Emergency Project \(DCE\)](#), working with other public, private and voluntary sector organisations to **make Devon net-zero** and help the county adapt to a warmer world, but we can do more as a Partnership.

What are we going to do?

- Ensure the **voice of young people is heard** within the DCFP and the DCE response group
- Make **environmental factors explicit** in the impact and risk assessments of partner agencies
- Work with young people and schools on the **Greener Devon Week** in October
- Reduce the **direct environmental impact** of the Partnership's activity



Our overall priorities continue

We believe all children and young people in Devon have the right to:



Life Chances	Be Healthy and Well	Feel Safe	Be Protected from Harm
achieve their potential with the opportunities to thrive.	have the best start in life, stay well and thrive. With good information and specialist help when they need it.	be protected from neglect and supported when vulnerable.	be protected from harm, abuse and exploitation.



Continued commitment to our purpose:

To ensure children and families get
the right support, at the right time, and in the right place.



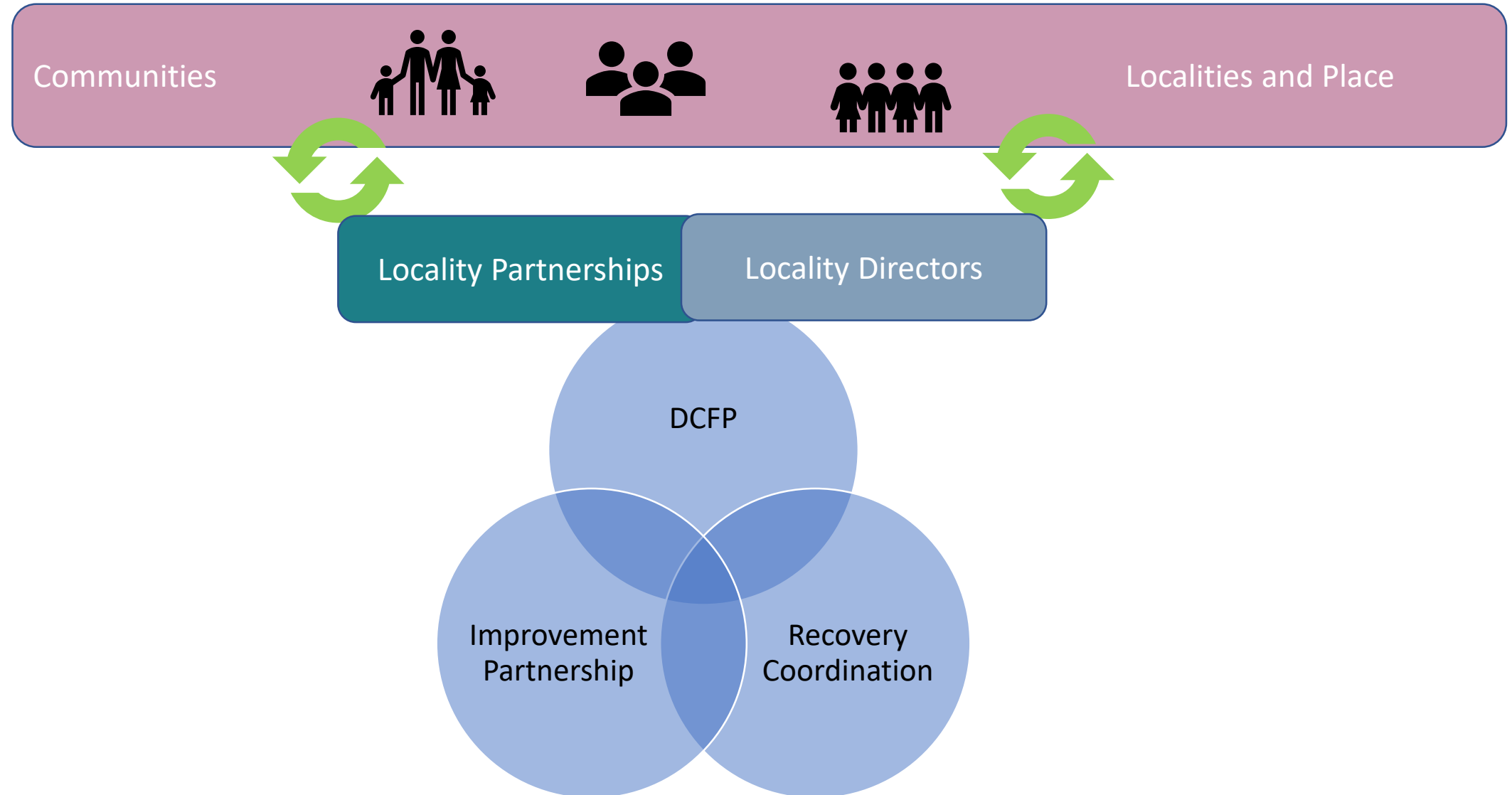
And in response to the COVID-19 pandemic we will ensure all children **particularly the most vulnerable are connected to** learning, friends, community and to **build back better.**

What we will continue with

What are we proud of from our response that we will continue with for the next year as an enhanced approach:

- Joint-working and information-sharing
- Early Help Triage
- Joint planning for adults with a mental health need and impact on children
- Clinics and training to staff from domestic violence and sexual abuse (DVSA) services
- Vulnerable pregnancies group expanded
- Virtual and digital offer for children and young people
- Continued face to face support
- Multi-agency wrap around care and support in residential and fostering settings to prevent disruption
- Flexibility in joint work, response and interventions
- Less assessment, more support

Communities transforming lives of families



How the Devon Children and Families Partnership works



Children and Families

