

“Best Place”

Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025

Progress Report - September 2023

The Council approved the “Best Place Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025” in December 2021. The Plan has six overall priorities:

- Making Devon greener.
- Making a children friendly Devon.
- Supporting recovery and growth.
- Tackling poverty and inequality.
- Improving health and wellbeing.
- Supporting people and communities.

The Plan also describes the authority’s commitment to being a trusted, inclusive and innovative Council.

This report provides some examples of progress to date towards the priorities and commitments in the Strategic Plan.

The “Best Place Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025” is available on the Council’s website at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/strategic-plan/>

Priority: Making Devon greener

Responding to the climate emergency

We will continue to work with partners and people in Devon to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the county to net zero.

Best Place Strategic Plan commitment	Progress to date
<p>Support a green recovery from COVID-19 which means we will support a low carbon economy and rebuild in a way that is sustainable for the future and reduces climate risks.</p>	<p>Covid-19 had a significant impact on the Devon economy, its businesses, communities and workforce. Devon’s economy shrank by almost 10% in 2020: roughly in line with the UK average. Since the pandemic, the global economy has been uncertain but economic activity in Devon is slowly recovering to the pre-covid rate.</p> <p>The Council’s support for economic recovery, includes skills and workforce development, infrastructure investments, regulatory services, business support and working with partners on the Devon, Plymouth and Torbay devolution deal. External funding includes the Community Renewal Fund, Future Farm Resilience Fund, Multiply and One Public Estate and partnership support for the Plymouth & South Devon Freeport.</p> <p>Of particular note are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The £750k Green Innovation Fund that funded six projects. The projects covered a range of areas including a zero-emission heating system, a service to support business with reducing their energy usage and costs, and assistance for farmers to transition to regenerative and wildlife-friendly agricultural models. Combined, the projects are expected to save around 100,000 tonnes of carbon over the next ten years.• The £300k Community Energy Fund supported six projects to create new energy companies, deliver additional training places,

	<p>and engage communities in the energy transition to generate more renewable energy and make homes warmer and healthier.</p> <p>Adults over 19 who want to advance their skills into higher paid employment are benefiting from free Train4Tomorrow Skills Bootcamps. The training lasts for 16 weeks and guarantees the learner an interview with a local employer upon completion. Specialisms covered include Devon’s fastest-growing sectors such as regenerative farming, digital marketing, electrical vehicle maintenance, data analytics, green construction and software development.</p> <p>Further information https://www.devon.gov.uk/navigation/economy-and-enterprise/</p>
<p>Ensure resources are used more efficiently by waste reduction, re-use and recycling.</p>	<p>Devon is one of the highest performing waste disposal authorities in England achieving a recycling rate of 55.1% in 2021/22 and, retaining its position as second highest performing county local authority. The Council continues to lead the behavioural change work under the banner of RecycleDevon. Campaigns have included Get Composting, Metal Matters, and food and plastic waste reduction and recycling.</p> <p>The Authority has supported Exeter City Council to roll out food waste recycling in the city.</p> <p>Community Action Groups (CAG) Devon, funded by Devon County Council, supports community groups in Mid-Devon and Teignbridge with establishing share sheds, surplus food larders, swap shops and community composting, amongst others. It provides free insurance, guidance, training and opportunities for networking and skills sharing.</p> <p>Further information https://www.devon.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling/waste-management-strategy-for-devon/</p>

<p>Prioritise sustainable travel and transport with more opportunities for cycling and walking.</p>	<p>£2.1m of Active Travel grant funding is being used on projects in Exeter, Newton Abbot, North Devon and Torridge that will enable and encourage more people to walk and cycle. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans have been completed for the Heart of Teignbridge (covering Newton Abbot, Kingsteignton and Kingskerswell) and Barnstaple with Bideford and Northam, and Exeter. Over the last 17 years more than 100,000 children have participated in Bikeability cycle training.</p> <p>Okehampton and Marsh Barton railway stations have been opened.</p> <p>Heavitree low traffic neighbourhood is being piloted.</p> <p>Further information https://www.traveldevon.info/cycle/cycle-training/ https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/funding-awarded-to-support-walking-and-cycling-routes/</p>
<p>Help people adapt to climate change by providing helpful resources and guidance.</p>	<p>The Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Climate Adaptation Strategy helps everyone understand risks that communities might face and how to respond to climate change. The Council responded to the consultation on the draft strategy in July 2023. The climate emergency was featured on the Devon County Council stand at the County Show.</p> <p>Devon County Council has been successful in securing funding as part of the national Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme. The project focusses on rapidly responding catchments in a predominantly rural area, and seeks to identify a range of replicable low-cost resilience actions that can be delivered and funded by local authorities or/and local communities of different sizes/settings where traditional flood defences are shown not to be appropriate or cost beneficial.</p> <p>Through its statutory role as the Sustainable Drainage Systems Approval body, Devon County Council provides advice and guidance to developers and district authorities on the flood risk implications of major planning</p>

	<p>applications.</p> <p>Further information https://www.climate-resilient-dcios.org.uk/#adaptation-strategy https://www.devon.gov.uk/floodriskmanagement/flood-and-coastal-resilience-innovation-programme-fcrip/</p>
<p>Help wildlife and landscapes to recover.</p>	<p>Devon County Council facilitates the Devon Local Nature Partnership. The Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy is being prepared for Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. The LNP Conference hosted a conference in June 2023 that focused on the development of the Strategy. As part of this, a Nature Recovery Network will map and join-up important places for wildlife that are currently isolated and allow us to identify areas where wildlife is abundant or scarce, and crucially where nature needs to be put back.</p> <p>More than 16,500 trees were planted in the winter of 2022/23 through the Emergency Tree Fund initiative, granted by The Woodland Trust. Devon County Council has delivered 150 free tree packs, each containing 45 native broadleaved whips, to landowners who applied. A further 9,820 trees were planted on the County Farms Estate.</p> <p>Through engagement with planning teams in district authorities, specialists at Devon County Council provide ecological and landscape support and advice on major planning applications.</p> <p>Further information https://www.devonlnp.org.uk/our-work/local-nature-recovery-strategy/</p>
<p>Take opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of homes and buildings to reduce their carbon footprint and reduce costs.</p>	<p>Under the banner of 'Energy Saving Devon', the Authority is leading a countywide programme of retrofit activity in partnership with District Councils, including the coordination of Home Upgrade Grants to address carbon reduction and fuel poverty, supported by the establishment of a new dedicated call centre advice service.</p>

	<p>Decarbonise Devon has been launched by EPConnect with support from the Authority's Green Innovation Fund. The project aims to support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to get their energy reduction plans off the ground by identifying which measures are appropriate for each individual business and ensuring high standards of installation work. As of July 2023, the project is looking for further funding.</p> <p>Further information https://www.energysavingdevon.org.uk</p>
<p>Encourage sustainable lifestyles by engagement, awareness-raising and supporting low carbon initiatives.</p>	<p>The Authority facilitates the Devon Climate Emergency project which has strong social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIN. It also has a monthly e-newsletter. Total following, including the newsletter is 10,000, and growing every month.</p> <p>The project has attended local environment events as well as 'pop up' engagement activity, such as in the Forum at Exeter University.</p> <p>Community Action Groups (CAG) Devon, funded by Devon County Council, supports community groups in Mid-Devon and Teignbridge with establishing share sheds, surplus food larders, swap shops and community composting, amongst others. It provides free insurance, guidance, training and opportunities for networking and skills sharing.</p> <p>The Authority supports the Devon Community Energy Network of community energy organisations that assists with the delivery of the Energy Saving Devon initiative and engage local people on energy issues.</p> <p>The Council continues to lead the waste and recycling behavioural change work under the banner of RecycleDevon, including the offer of workshops in schools and tours of the Exeter Waste Recycling facility.</p> <p>ActiveDevon promotes people adopting healthier lifestyles by being more</p>

	<p>active – including active travel. Every year it joins forces with the Devon Local Nature Partnership to promote Naturally Healthy May – getting outdoors in nature to be active.</p>
<p>Support the transition to low emission vehicles whilst realising that this shift may not be achievable for large parts of rural Devon.</p>	<p>Partnerships with district councils and Torbay and Plymouth to install the first of 160 charging sockets across 38 public car parks across Devon to the value of £1.4m public finance. A further £9m from the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure fund is being spent on electric vehicle charging from 2023.</p> <p>Innovations in on-street rapid charging through the Rapid Charging Devon project. Whilst this provided substantial learning points for future projects, this has made us a leader in the availability of the technology.</p>
<p>Continue to reduce carbon emissions across all our services including the use of innovative low carbon materials in our highways, low-energy streetlighting and supporting remote working and other practical measures to address climate change.</p>	<p>The Council’s corporate Environmental Performance programme implements the Environmental Policy. Quarterly updates cover buildings, renewable energy, street lighting, transport, procurement procedures, waste and resources, ash dieback action plan, and carbon offsetting. The annual Carbon Footprint report describes the greenhouse gas emissions produced by Devon County Council’s activity.</p> <p>The Council is trialling innovations to decarbonise highway infrastructure through the £3.7m Live Labs project.</p> <p>Measures have included retrofitting nine buildings with energy efficiency measures and renewable energy technology; solar panels on highways depots; integrating 18 electric vehicles into the vehicle fleet; and part-night operation, LED upgrade and dimming of street lighting.</p> <p>Further information https://www.devon.gov.uk/environment/our-environmental-performance/environmental-performance-progress https://www.devon.gov.uk/environment/our-environmental-performance/environmental-performance-progress/carbon-footprint</p>

Priority: Making a child friendly devon

Being ambitious for children and young people

We want every child in Devon to have the best outcomes, to live an independent and healthy life and to achieve their full potential.

Best Place Strategic Plan commitment	Progress to date
Ensure children and young people have the best possible start in life, good health and emotional wellbeing.	<p>A project is underway to improve services so that better support is provided to young people in Children's Services to transition to adulthood.</p> <p>The Best start in Life Board brings together all elements of planning for early years to ensure there is a coordinated approach. This is feeding into the ambition to move towards a family hubs model.</p> <p>The Early Years Partnership Board has been established to review the observations of the Early Years Health Needs Assessment to develop and implement a Shared Early Years Strategy. The purpose of the Early Years Partnership Board is to ensure that strategy, service development and commissioning activity is approached jointly to deliver the best possible early education, health and wellbeing outcomes for children five and under and their families in Devon. The Board has representation from across the early years system.</p> <p>The Devon Public Health Nursing Service was rated 'Good' by CQC in Nov 2022 (report published Jan 2023).</p>
Promote high standards in all schools and help to address any areas of weakness.	<p>Standards in schools are monitored by the Devon Education Forum through a performance framework covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attendance• Exclusions• Elective home education• Children missing education

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative provision • Ofsted outcomes
Continue to close the attainment gap for vulnerable groups and ensure children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities achieve the best possible outcomes.	Strengthen inclusion in mainstream schools by inviting expressions of interest from suitable maintained schools and academies to develop resource bases or (in alliance with your local special school) satellite classes.
Make sure there are more apprenticeships and better access to employment and learning, including digital skills.	<p>The Council's "Next Step" apprenticeship programme gives members of staff the opportunity to complete apprenticeship qualifications as part of their career development.</p> <p>Procurement opportunities list linking with Care Experienced children's aspirations stated in pathway plans.</p>
Improve children and young people's mental health including strengthening support for those at risk of emotional or mental health problems.	<p>The Devon Schools Wellbeing Partnership website will go live for the start of the new academic year. The website will provide a universal health and wellbeing digital resource to support schools in creating an environment where pupils and staff can thrive. One of the core topics of the programme is emotional health and wellbeing, along with others of food, being active, PSHE, staff wellbeing, and health protection.</p> <p>Mental Health in Schools Support Package: We have commissioned Devon Inclusion Service to provide supervision to staff in schools, where a Mental Health Support Team are not in place, to build capacity of school staff, and to support their own wellbeing and those of their students.</p> <p>Qwell is a free, anonymous, digital mental health and wellbeing service aimed at adults aged 18+. Qwell has been commissioned via a partnership of NHS and Plymouth, Torbay and DCC Public Health Teams. The online service offers peer-to-peer support via moderated discussion forums and self-help through reading or submitting content. Qwell also gives people the opportunity to access online counselling from qualified counsellors who are available from midday to 10pm every week day and from 6pm to 10pm at weekends.</p>

	<p>Connect 5 training is part of our core Public Mental Health training offer. It is free for the wider communities and organisations across the DCC footprint to attend. Connect 5 training aims to improve population mental wellbeing by changing the way we have conversations about mental health & wellbeing. It is open to a wide range of non-specialist staff, volunteers and others supporting their community who work with, or have contact with, people at risk of poor mental wellbeing. We are also exploring the potential to offer the Children & Young People version of Connect 5 locally as well.</p> <p>Reviewing the section 75 with CAMHs to ensure this covers the full pathway of options for children and young people social, emotional and mental health needs. Exploring this spanning from edge of care, through children in care, to care experiences children and young people</p>
<p>Understand and support children and young people where their mental health is suffering including strengthening support for those at risk of emotional or mental health problems.</p>	<p>Community Suicide Awareness, and Emotional Resilience training are free to attend across the DCC footprint (as well as Torbay and Plymouth and are funded through NHSE Third Wave Suicide Prevention monies)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Suicide awareness – understanding myths, stigma and barriers and how we can challenge these, as well as prevention of suicide and the importance of compassion • Emotional resilience – this self-care course increases participants ability to cope with emotional distress, or stressful life events by knowing more about wellbeing, emotions, and how to build our resilience <p>Grant funding via our Public Mental Health and Suicide Prevention workstreams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities: Local Action for Suicide Prevention (CLASP) funding – grants allocated will directly contribute towards the aim of reducing the number of preventable deaths across the county in line with the Devon-wide Suicide Prevention Strategic Statement, and the DCC Suicide Prevention Statement and Action Plan, and previous grants have been awarded to those working with CYP.

	<p>Grant funding for future allocations is being agreed at present, and criteria to be determined - we are exploring having a round of funding specifically targeting projects working with CYP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support the Supporters funding – for initiatives that promote the wellbeing and resilience of staff and volunteers, who provide support and services for others. We are exploring having a round of funding specifically targeting projects working with CYP. <p>DCC Suicide Prevention Statement & Action Plan 2023/24 includes a focus on children and young people, with actions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to support the development of a PostVention resource for education settings – for use when there is a (suspected) suicide that impacts an education setting.• Contribute to the Devon Schools Wellbeing Partnership – online resource for schools to access information, good practice and signposting on range of health and wellbeing topics.• Scope out need for Young People Connect 5 training offer and implement if agreed.• Continue to promote suicide prevention, emotional resilience and Connect 5 training to workforces supporting CYP.• Utilise suicide prevention grant funding to support CYP targeted initiatives – CLASP funding (Communities: local action for suicide prevention).• Utilise ‘support the supporters’ grant funding to support initiatives for those caring for CYP.• Ensure links to DCC suicide prevention web pages to and from relevant CYP websites.
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Priority: Supporting recovery and growth

Investing in Devon's economic recovery

Supporting the county's hardest-hit sectors is paramount if Devon's economy is to recover successfully.

Best Place Strategic Plan commitment	Progress to date
Support training providers and employers to increase the number of traineeships and apprenticeships for young people and for people to upskill to reflect changes in employment opportunities.	Average of 24,000 young people engaged with over the course of a year, with around 3,000 provided with 1-2-1 support around choices and vocational opportunities. Specific support has been added over the last two years to assist 250 young people from the most vulnerable backgrounds to access apprenticeship / higher education provision, including wraparound support to apply for vocational pathways through our colleges / universities. Work is also ongoing internally around specific activity linked to corporate parenting.
Work with at risk sectors to widen skills and support business development.	Work on at risk sectors across the authority has tended to focus upon two core aspects; joint working with skills partners around the development of the Local Skill Improvement Plan, the statutory skills plans for the Devon, Plymouth and Torbay area; and provision of the Skills Bootcamp programme, the Government's primary skills support for fast track training into high demand employment areas. Over the past three years, the Authority has benefitted from over £10m of funding from the Bootcamp programme, supporting over 6,000 Level 3 qualifications across key sectors including skills for health, engineering, digital roles and net zero occupations.
Develop the Skills Hub to promote information and support around careers, employability, upskilling and reskilling.	Work ongoing around the development of the employment and skills hub approach, with the Youth Hub / Exeter Works providing an initial pilot approach. Providing a physical hub for a range of shared and partner services, and working in conjunction with the areas' shared Skills Launchpad digital resources, the hub provided support to over 300 young people and adults in the 6 months to July 2023, with around 75% being assisted into work and learning. More widely, the Launchpad website provided signposting and advice to over 5,000 individuals in the same period.
Promote Devon nationally and internationally to attract new inward investment.	Working as a joint partner in the Plymouth and South Devon Freeport to land high quality marine, defence and low carbon focused long-term business leads at a range of sites (includes Langage and Sherford area in the South Hams). Holding events for potential supply chain businesses focused on the offshore renewables sector in the Bristol Channel, jointly with North Devon and Torridge Councils and HotSW LEP.

	<p>Maintaining an ongoing relationship with the UK Government Department for Business and Trade (DBT), as a key investment channel into the County.</p> <p>Working jointly with regional and local partners to drive live inward investment enquiries in the Sustainable Aviation, Net Zero (including energy) and Agritech sectors, including working with Government to develop sector propositions.</p> <p>Ongoing handling of live inward investment enquiries into Devon – DCC, plus jointly with District Councils.</p>
<p>Secure investment in transport infrastructure to stimulate economic growth, improve accessibility, increase travel choices and improve road safety.</p> <p>Maintain and, where necessary, improve our highway network and improve sustainable transport options to help generate and sustain economic growth, improve air quality and provide better places for people to live.</p>	<p>Recent and current transport infrastructure schemes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queen Street and Iron Bridge enhancement scheme, Exeter • Magdalen Road, enhancement scheme, Exeter • Tiverton urban extension Phase 1 • North Devon link road • A382 Drumbridges – Newton Abbot corridor • Houghton Barton Link • A39 Heywood road roundabout • SW Exeter Infrastructure <p>Further information https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/traffic-information/transport-planning/</p>
<p>Deliver £500 million Council capital investment programme over five years.</p>	<p>The capital programme of investment across Devon is supported by external capital grants, contributions from developers and maintained schools and income from the sale of surplus assets. Investment schemes in the last two years include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Okehampton Special School • North Devon Enterprise Centre Phase 2 • Marsh Barton railway station • Rock Park bridge, Barnstaple • Long Lane scheme, nr Exeter Airport

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pinhoe Station interchange on the Exeter to Waterloo railway • Houghton Barton Link Road, Newton Abbot • North Devon Link Road • Bideford library • County Farms Estate enhancements • DCC ICT replacement and renewal programme <p>Further information https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/s45660/Outturn%20Report%20-%202022-23.pdf https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/b14037/Revenue%20and%20Capital%20Outturn%202021-2022%2008th-Jun-2022%2010.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=9</p>
<p>Ensure financial resilience of the Council in the face of growing demand, tightening funding and an increasingly complex and unpredictable financial environment.</p>	<p>The Council avoided a significant overspend in 2022/23 through an organisational-wide response that resulted in a rigorous in-year savings programme. Since October 2022, an eight-point financial sustainability plan has been in place covering and travel, training, venue hire, catering and building maintenance. There have also been restrictions on recruitment and the appointment interim, consultants, agency and temporary staff.</p> <p>A recruitment approval process on all posts, except for apprenticeships including those for looked after children and care leavers, was introduced in August 2023.</p> <p>Further information https://inside.devon.gov.uk/news/working-together-to-save-council-money/ https://inside.devon.gov.uk/news/working-well-together-for-a-financially-sustainable-council-introducing-our-new-recruitment-approval-process/</p>

Priority: Tackling poverty and inequality

Tackle poverty and inequality

We will continue to work with local support networks and communities to support people that are experiencing hardship.

Strategic Plan commitment	Progress date
Develop local support networks to reduce food and fuel poverty and support people that are experiencing hardship.	<p>Since 2021, Team Devon County, District and voluntary & community sector partners have worked together to deploy just over £25m from the Household Support Funds (Government funded). They have identified and supported households struggling financially to meet their immediate essential needs such as food, energy, water and other essential items.</p> <p>In addition, DCC continues to support the work of Citizens Advice Devon, which has achieved the following for Devon residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• £17,325,460 – Income gains through assessment and benefit checks• £ 2,679,684 – Debt rescheduling and write-offs <p>Further information https://www.devon.gov.uk/cost-of-living/cost-of-living/benefits-money-and-debt/household-support-fund-hsf4-devons-approach/</p>
Promote services that increase resilience, self-reliance and independence.	<p>The “Annual Report for Adult Social Care in Devon for 2022” provides a comprehensive picture of the performance of services for adults showing the progress made in many areas.</p> <p>There remain workforce recruitment and retention pressures resourcing the assessment of people's needs and arranging and providing for them the care and support they require.</p> <p>Recent reforms to adult social care include the introduction of the</p>

	<p>assessment of local authority adult social care functions by the Care Quality Commission. (Reforms relating to relating to charging are currently paused.)</p> <p>In preparation for this the council commissioned the Local Government Association to conduct a Peer Review and we are now acting on its findings.</p> <p>Further information https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=44402 https://www.devon.gov.uk/promoting-independence/ https://www.devon.gov.uk/lga-peer-challenge/</p>
<p>Prioritise the delivery of our domestic violence and abuse strategy.</p>	<p>In 2021 the Council took on new responsibilities under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, to deliver domestic abuse support to victims of abuse and their children who are in safe accommodation after fleeing abuse. As required by the new Act, the Council carried out a needs assessment and published a new strategy to deliver the responsibilities using new government funding. The Council formed a new Local Partnership Board to guide and support the delivery of the strategy. The Council has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensured the continuing sustainability of a domestic abuse refuge and enabled the development of new types of family support. - Funded and further developed support and accommodation for highly vulnerable women with complex needs experiencing domestic and sexual abuse. This has enabled “Brave Spaces” a new collaborative support project in Northern Devon and Exeter. - Designed, introduced and funded a new therapeutic intervention service to address the trauma caused by domestic abuse and help those abused to take steps to recovery. <p>Further information https://www.devon.gov.uk/dsva/document/strategy-for-delivering-domestic-abuse-support-in-safe-accommodation/</p>
<p>Promote community cohesion including reduction of hate crime by improving awareness and response.</p>	<p>The Council is collaborating with Libraries Unlimited to create a network of inclusive work clubs across Devon. The Refugee Employment and Enterprise project website will include a portal where refugees can share</p>

	<p>their CVs directly with local employers.</p> <p>The Council has provided funding and support for the Exeter Respect festival and other community events that celebrate diversity and challenge inequality and prejudice. A directory of organisations representing ethnically diverse communities has been produced.</p> <p>The Council has facilitated the set-up of free, volunteer-led English classes by recruiting volunteers and by providing advice, resources and funding. Officers work closely with other partners, particularly Devon and Cornwall Police to identify, respond and mitigate key risks around extremism.</p> <p>The Council has supported the Homes for Ukraine Scheme as part of a Team Devon approach, including safeguarding checks and sponsor recruitment.</p> <p>Devon supported over 250 people evacuated from Afghanistan placed by the Home Office in bridging hotels as part of Operation Warm Welcome. Both of Devon’s bridging hotels closed during August 2023. The Council has worked with families and with statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure good outcomes for all involved.</p> <p>Further information https://www.devon.gov.uk/refugees-in-devon/</p>
Develop a coordinated approach to address child poverty.	<p>The percentage of children (under 16s) in absolute low-income families in Devon is 13.6% (2021/22 data). This is statistically better than the England average of 15.3%. No comparisons can be made to the previous reporting year due to changes to the indicator’s definition. Most Devon districts are statistically better compared to the England average; no districts are statistically similar; North Devon (16.3%) and Torridge (18.0%) are statistically worse.</p> <p>The “Healthy and Happy Communities: Devon’s Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020 – 25” highlights the inequalities in child poverty neighbourhood level in Devon. With the highest level being in Forches (Barnstaple) (33.3%) and the lowest Teignmouth Road (Dawlish) 1.1%.</p>
Consider the findings of the Race Equality Audit and implement its	Devon County Council is taking steps to become an organisation which

recommendations.

enables its ethnically diverse staff to feel safe, included and welcomed. The Race Equality Audit Action Plan includes a progress report that is regularly updated. In July 2023 the Council was given Bronze Trailblazer status by Race Equality Matters for its work on anti-racism.

Further information

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/equality/our-commitment/anti-racism-framework>

Priority: Improve health and wellbeing

Improving health and wellbeing

We will continue to work with partners to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.

Strategic Plan commitment	Progress and outcomes to date
<p>Continue to deliver the COVID-19 Outbreak Management Plan and tackling the longer-term impacts of COVID-19.</p>	<p>Outbreak management planning brought Team Devon councils and voluntary/community organisations together to protect communities and support the successful roll-out of vaccines. Public Health Devon would step up local outbreak management planning should there be another pandemic.</p> <p>Further information https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/</p>
<p>Build a sustainable care system for Devon through the “Lovecare” programme including an economic assessment of the value of social care and health, the case for greater government investment in adult social care, and promoting value and esteem in the workforce through discussions between system leaders and care workers.</p>	<p>Over 26,000 people work in adult social care in Devon, all but a few hundred of them in the independent and voluntary sector. A comprehensive workforce development offer has been established working with the Provider Engagement Network and countywide bodies such as the Devon Care Homes Collaborative and Devon Integrated Social Care Alliance. The proportion of the adult social care workforce with a relevant qualification has increased from 46% to 51% in 2022, many acquired on the job.</p> <p>The feedback from the July 2023 Local Government Association Peer Challenge of Adult Social Care highlighted that having grown the care provider workforce through overseas recruitment, there is a recognised need to consolidate to ensure that the market remains sustainable and high quality.</p> <p>Further information https://www.proudtocaredevon.org.uk/</p>

<p>Recognise the importance of carers in Devon and supporting them to manage their caring role and look after their own health and wellbeing enabling young carers to learn and develop alongside their caring role.</p>	<p>An estimated 130,000 provide unpaid care in Devon, many of whom suffer physical ill health or feel lonely or socially isolated. The May 2023 “Caring Well” strategy for adult carer of adults identifies priority areas and actions. The priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling carers to take the breaks they need and the person they care for to have a positive experience. • Promoting ways of providing replacement care, test and spread innovative and complementary services meeting need informally. • Seeking effective means to tackle carer isolation and improve their quality of life. <p>Further information https://www.devon.gov.uk/promoting-independence/caring-well/</p>
<p>Give people greater opportunities for walking and cycling to increase their physical activity.</p>	<p>The Council is the accountable body for Active Devon whose “Devon Moving Together” strategy seeks to reduce inequalities and make movement a positive part of people’s lives.</p> <p>Further information https://www.activedevon.org/</p>
<p>Improve mental health by improving access to mental health and wellbeing services and strengthening support for young people at risk of emotional or mental health problems.</p>	<p>Children and Family Health Devon provides children’s health services across Devon: an NHS providers alliance led by Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust.</p>

Priority: Supporting people and communities

Helping communities to be safe, connected and resilient

We will continue to work with partners to support strong, resilient and safe communities.

Strategic Plan commitment	Progress and outcomes to date
Continue to support our vibrant community and voluntary sector.	<p>The Growing Communities Fund, launched July 2022, has been supporting local communities; especially through the cost-of-living crisis. More than £530,000 has been awarded to 300 different local projects. Grant awards are typically between £500-£1k (Max.£3k) to support proactive, effective, measurable, and sustainable actions to enable individuals and communities to tackle local issues, such as reducing food and fuel inequalities, building self-reliance and esteem, reducing loneliness & isolation, community connections and resilience, and improving the environment, health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Further Information https://www.devon.gov.uk/communities/growing-communities-fund</p>
Work with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations on shared plans and aspirations around recovery.	<p>Grant funding of £40,000 has assisted the development of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Assembly.• A new Community Support Plan (originally used under Covid response) to assist VCSE mobilisation in future emergencies.• A cross sector Food Insecurity specialist prototype hub.• Community Led Wellbeing Development specialist prototype hub, focusing on reducing health inequalities.• <p>DCC also continues to support the work of the Devon Association of Local Councils as well as the community development work of Devon Communities Together.</p>

<p>Tackle social isolation, particularly among older, younger and disabled people, and those with a long-term illness.</p>	<p>In 2022 the Council was awarded funding from the Department for Transport’s “Tackling Loneliness with Transport” scheme. A series of partners delivered a program of innovative transport schemes targeting young people aged 16-24 and the over 55’s who are most at risk of loneliness, including people living in rural areas, or those with physical or mental health problems.</p>
<p>Enable a range of transport options, including public transport to improve access to services and jobs and to tackle social isolation</p>	<p>The Government £2 fare cap scheme was launched in January 2023. The scheme, which runs to October 2023, supports bus operators to implement a £2 cap on eligible single tickets for adults.</p> <p>The Dartmoor Line from Okehampton to Exeter reopened in November 2021 following more than £40m of Government investment through the “Restoring your Railway” initiative. There were over 250,000 journeys during the first year of operation.</p> <p>The Marsh Barton railway station in Exeter was opened in July 2023.</p> <p>Further information https://www.traveldevon.info/</p>
<p>Work with communities to enable them to come together to tackle shared challenges to connect, and to celebrate culture and diversity.</p>	<p>See above under “tackling poverty and inequality”.</p>
<p>Do whatever we can to make it easier for key workers and people on low incomes to find affordable homes.</p>	<p>In December 2021 the Council declared a housing crisis and resolved to assess the potential for it to offer accommodation to new social and key workers to attract them to work for Devon County Council.</p> <p>The Devon Housing Task Force is focussing on tackling homelessness and improving the availability of affordable housing in Devon.</p>
<p>Work with Team Devon to tackle homelessness and improve the availability of affordable housing in Devon.</p>	<p>The University of Exeter and Devon's 11 Local Authorities have established the Devon Housing Commission to make the case for a change in social and housing policy. The Commission has invited anyone with an interest submit evidence about housing issues and solutions.</p> <p>The Devon Housing Task Force, currently chaired by the Leader of West Devon Borough Council, is tackling the supply and demand side issues contributing to the Devon housing crisis in the social, affordable and</p>

	<p>private housing markets and considering the potential solutions.</p> <p>The Council provides financial support to organisations helping people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Contracts with providers run to the end of March 2024. The Council and the eight district councils are working together to agree a way forward that ensures ongoing homelessness support across the county.</p> <p>Further information https://www.exeter.ac.uk/business/southwestregion/devonhousing/</p>
<p>Engage directly with people in meaningful ways and encourage participation in decisions that affect them.</p>	<p>The “Have Your Say” webpages provide information about current and past consultations on: adult social care, children & families, democracy & transparency, economy & enterprise, education & schools, environment, health & wellbeing, libraries & heritage, planning & development, public rights of way, traffic regulation orders, transport & roads, and waste & recycling.</p> <p>The Provider Engagement Network enable providers of adult health and social care services to engage with Devon County Council and the NHS in Devon.</p> <p>The Devon Children in Care Council, “Stand Up Speak Up”, gives children in care a voice for opinions and ideas on the services they experience.</p> <p>The Parent Carer Forum is an independent organisation of parents and carers of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.</p> <p>Champions for Change is a group of children and young people with special educational needs.</p> <p>Further information https://www.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay/ https://www.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay/adult-social-care-and-health-engagement/ https://www.devon.gov.uk/providerengagementnetwork/ https://www.standupspeakup.org.uk/ https://www.parentcarerforumdevon.org/</p>

How we will work

We are committed to being an effective, efficient and adaptable council that serves local people well.

Strategic Plan commitment	Progress date
<p>Transform, develop and improve our children’s services.</p>	<p>The Devon Improvement Partnership Board was established by the Department for Education in 2020 in response to an Inadequate rating from Ofsted for Children’s Social Care Services. The role of the Board is to direct, prioritise, measure and hold accountability for the Improvement Plan and the Devon improvement journey.</p> <p>In March 2023, the Board agreed to reset its focus and approach to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify and create shared understanding of the role and purpose of the Board, particularly with new system leaders and Board members. • Create the condition for Board meetings to focus on key outcomes and associated actions. • Create partnership priorities, outcomes and actions to become part of the Devon Children’s Services Improvement Plan. <p>The strategic Improvement Plan incorporates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s Services Action Plan • DCC Corporate Services Action Plan • Partnership Action Plan. <p>The Improvement Plan sets out priority outcome areas for Children’s Services, at a strategic and operational level, namely: Change, Leadership, Engagement and Workforce.</p>
<p>Respond to demographic pressures and future workforce challenges.</p>	<p>A structured approach to strategic workforce planning has been completed with several service areas to date and the remainder will be completed within the next 12 months. The purpose of workforce planning is to identify the future workforce challenges both at service area and organisation level to be able to respond in a proactive and robust way. The creation of the HR workforce dashboard which is now live in a first iteration will help Directors and their senior leaders to monitor the demographic changes within their workforce to make</p>

	<p>informed decisions and interventions.</p> <p>With the number of people aged 85 or over projected to grow by a third over the next decade and those with life limiting illnesses or conditions by a quarter our 'Promoting Independence' Vision and 'Living Well', 'Ageing Well' and 'Caring Well' strategies outline how we can only meet people's needs and ensure a workforce sufficient to meet them by promoting people's independence, working with them to find solutions at home in their communities wherever possible and making better use of short-term interventions and new technologies in doing so.</p>
<p>Embrace the positive benefits of a diverse workforce and create an environment that is inclusive and safe for all staff.</p>	<p>Having accurate data relating to the diversity of the workforce is a key requirement to understand how we can best develop, support and create a safe environment for staff to thrive. The Belonging theme within the people strategy identifies actions we will take to improve the disclosure rates for employee sensitive data to better understand the make up of our workforce. By having greater disclosure we can then tailor support and opportunities be ensure DCC is an inclusive place to work.</p> <p>Within DCC there are already a range of staff networks that provide safe space to share experiences and provide support. There are plans underway to extend the range of staff networks to create greater opportunities for staff to meet those with similar lived experience. There are additional actions within the people strategy to ensure when HR policies are reviewed the lived experience of the workforce are incorporated into policies to ensure they reflect the needs of the workforce.</p> <p>Our Principal Social Workers and Principal Occupational Therapist are leading an Unleashing Potential programme that links workforce development and practice improvement to our equalities work.</p>
<p>Make best use of data and intelligence to help inform what we do and understand its impact on the people of Devon.</p>	<p>The creation and implementation of the HR dashboard is a key development in making workforce data available in real time and on a desk top self service basis. The ongoing development of this to include engagement survey and exit interview intelligence is an example of how we are incorporating workforce data to help inform decision making.</p> <p>Smarter Devon is helping the Council to be an evidence-led authority, ensuring that data and information is used to make intelligence-based decisions. Recent projects include:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseload management – Adult Social Care • Streamlining Reporting – Children’s Social Care • Trading Up Reporting Standards • School Attendance Reporting • Measuring Up – National Child Measurement Programme <p>The Devon Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Report monitors progress against the priorities identified in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.</p> <p>Further information https://www.devon.gov.uk/smarterdevon/how-we-work/case-studies/ https://www.devonhealthandwellbeing.org.uk/jsna/health-and-wellbeing-outcomes-report/</p>
<p>Transform the way we work to make us more resilient and adaptable and helps reduce our carbon footprint.</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>Invest in digital solutions to help us work more effectively and make us more responsive.</p>	<p>Within the people and culture service area the creation of a digital platform to host a new “People hub” has created a more effective and interactive approach to providing key information and guidance for employees and managers. This covers the entire lifecycle of the employee from recruitment through to retirement. Key decisions that are made by SLT can be considered and delivered into guidance and actions for managers to make use of within a shorter timeframe.</p> <p>The HR dashboard is a significant digital solution that has been delivered to support the availability of key workforce data to senior leaders. Not only does this mean real time data is now at their fingertips, it also reduces the need to submit a request and wait for a HR analyst to receive that request and deliver the report. This has been a significant efficiency and will in the future mean that we can be more responsive.</p> <p>The replacement of the care management system (CareFirst) and finance management system (FINEST) is underway.</p>
<p>Increase discipline and rigour around decision making.</p>	<p>The Council’s governance is being reviewed. The first phase of work has focussed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member engagement • Standardised reports and checklist • Delegated member and officer decisions

- Public participation
- Local member protocol

Further information

<https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/s45362/Governance%20Review%20Final.pdf>