



# Devon Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2024 to 2027



# Where are we now?

For too long, the experiences of many children and young people with SEND and their families, in Devon have not been good. This must change. Children, young people and parent carers have told us what needs to change. We need to act on this and deliver results.

Despite efforts to improve, lots of families continue to express frustration and disappointment, describing their experience as a 'battle' or a 'fight'. Families grapple with bureaucratic hurdles, poor communication and a lack of join up between agencies.

The system for supporting children and young people with SEND in Devon has fallen short of expectations. We acknowledge where we have failed and recognise that our attempts to do better have not been good enough. Families rightly demand real improvements that positively impact their day-to-day lives.

We are working to deliver meaningful change. This change must be driven by the voices of children and young people and their families. We are committed to a change in culture and practice that leads to improved experiences and outcomes for children and young people.

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## Background

Devon local area partnership was inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in December 2018 and was required to produce a 'Written Statement of Action' to address four areas of significant weakness. In May 2022, the local area was revisited by Ofsted/CQC who concluded that no progress had been made. You can read the full reports from [Ofsted and CQC](#).

The Dedicated Schools Grant deficit reached £164m at the end of March 2024. Devon has entered into an agreement with the Department for Education (commonly known as the Safety Valve) to reach a financially sustainable position by the end of the 2026 to 2027 financial year, with the aim of paying off the deficit by the 2030 to 2031 financial year.

We recognise that we need system-wide change to address the challenges the local area faces and to improve the experiences of children and young people with SEND, and their families, in Devon.



# Introduction

In this strategy, we set out a clear vision and public commitment to change.

It is informed by all the information we've gathered over the last two years from various engagement activities with families, schools and other key partners across the local area, alongside a range of data.

One of the criticisms of Ofsted/CQC is that the SEND strategy had not previously been embedded and understood. We are clear that this strategy should not sit on the shelf but should be a 'live' document that can hold the local area to account through robust monitoring and evaluation.

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## Our vision

Our vision is for children and young people to have the opportunity to thrive, with access to the right support in the right place and at the right time, so they can fulfil their potential and lead happy, healthy and productive adult lives.

## Our strategic commitments

- › we will think beyond barriers to support aspirations
- › we will improve how we communicate
- › we will develop better ways of working
- › we will build inclusive communities



## We will think beyond barriers to support aspirations

*“It’s very confusing what you can do after school if you don’t go to a college. Going to work isn’t really happening after school. No one we know has a paid job. You can go to college or a day service where you just hang out and do stuff.” – A young person*

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We are committed to preparing children and young people for each stage (transition) and into adulthood, from the earliest years.

### When this is achieved, you will see:

- that children and young people’s strengths are at the forefront of all discussions about their support needs
- at each stage of learning, children are prepared for new responsibilities, new experiences, new independence and new risks
- planning and support that focuses on the future and positively supports aspirations rather than a focus on barriers

We are committed to providing support, alongside information and advice, so that young people can make informed choices.

### When this is achieved, you will see:

- that young people are given support by a trusted adult to navigate different opportunities, so that they can make informed decisions about their next steps



We are committed to working in partnership with education, businesses and community organisations to create opportunities so young people can achieve their aspirations.

**When this is achieved, you will see:**

- an increase in the number of children able to access educational opportunities that are right for them
- that young people have meaningful and fulfilling experiences in paid employment and the voluntary sector

We are committed to facilitating a network of young people who can inspire others through their own journey.

**When this is achieved, you will see:**

- that there are peer network opportunities for young people with SEND, for example a university alumni network for SEND
- that the local area supports young people to champion their journey so they can inspire others

**We will measure our performance against these commitments using:**

- feedback from children and young people
- feedback from parents and carers
- data showing an increase in the number of children and young people with SEND in Education Employment and Training (EET)
- multi-agency audits of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) showing the child and young person's voice and clear support for their aspirations



## We will improve how we communicate

*“Keep us updated and do what you say you’re going to do. Services may not be quicker but provide reassurance that we are not forgotten. The replies leave you going round in circles not actually achieving anything, you are signposted on to someone else who signposts you back and you don’t get anywhere.” – **A parent***

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We are committed to embedding the ‘communication’ element of the Four Cornerstones approach as standard.

**When this is achieved, you will see:**

- communication that focuses on the relationships between people rather than just the exchange of information
- professionals that are available to families, who listen calmly and respectfully and respond promptly using positive and helpful language
- information for families that is accurate, dynamic and shaped by the views of children, young people and parent carers
- that families feel listened to and receive an individualised response, in an appropriate way to support differing needs
- services that are honest about what they can/cannot do; services do what they say

We are committed to providing clear and accessible information about the services and support available for parent carers and young people in Devon.

**When this is achieved, you will see:**

- that families know where to find information and who to contact if they need to speak to someone



## Devon Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2024 to 2027

- a local offer website which has clear, dynamic and accessible information that has been shaped by the views of children and young people and their families
- information which is available for people who do not have access to the internet or who have accessibility needs

### We will measure our performance against these commitments using:

- feedback from children and young people
- feedback from parents and carers
- data showing an increase in the number of people accessing the Devon Local Offer website
- analysis of satisfaction scores related to 'communication' element of Four Cornerstones



## We will develop better ways of working

*“The right service and support should be provided in a timely fashion and make sure it is flexible to meet the changing needs as the child grows. There should be a range of support for everyone who needs it so that no-one is dismissed because they ‘don’t reach threshold’ or are ‘too complex.’ – A parent*

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We are committed to a more joined up system that doesn’t keep passing children and young people and their families around or referring them on.

**When this is achieved, you will see:**

- that families can navigate the system successfully from early years to adulthood
- every service playing their part in supporting children and young people and ensuring that they don’t just pass on to the next service
- families experience high quality planning and provision from the most appropriate services

We are committed to providing helpful support when children and young people are waiting for a service.

**When this is achieved, you will see:**

- that children and young people and their families know what’s available to support them while they’re waiting for assessment
- an effective parent peer network



We are committed to improving the Education, Health and Care assessment and review process to ensure better experiences and outcomes.

**When this is achieved, you will see:**

- early and proactive action which prevents escalation of children's needs
- good quality and quantified Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) which are clear, easy to understand and are driven by children's voices
- an increase in collaborative working with parents, carers, children and young people to coproduce plans

We are committed to strengthening the partnership with parent carers and professionals, alongside schools and the community so that children and young people's needs are met at the earliest possible opportunity.

**When this is achieved, you will see:**

- that services work together seamlessly to provide support for children and young people and their families
- that schools are effectively delivering Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision (OAIP) that meets children's needs
- that families feedback a positive experience of the system



## We will measure our performance against these commitments using:

- feedback from children and young people
- feedback from parents and carers
- data showing an increase in the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) issued within 20 weeks
- data showing a reduction in complaints received about SEND
- data showing a reduction in appeals to the SEND Tribunal
- data showing a reduction in waiting times for autism assessment



## We will build inclusive communities

*“Ensure there are community groups and services that enable children and young people to socialise. Increase step by step playgroups who are so transformative in terms of helping families come to terms with their children’s disabilities and showing what is possible.”*

**– A parent**

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We are committed to championing the importance of inclusive communities for children and young people with SEND.

**When this is achieved, you will see:**

- that all children feel welcome in their local communities and have opportunities to thrive alongside their peers
- young people who are equipped with the social and practical skills they need to navigate adulthood more independently
- that children, young people and their families can access the places they want to go and the things they want to do, in their local community

We are committed to ensuring that there is good support available through Ordinarily Available Inclusion Provision (OAIP), targeted support and specialist services that meet the needs of families at the right time.

**When this is achieved, you will see:**

- a strong shared understanding and implementation of Ordinarily Available Inclusion Provision (OAIP) across all schools and settings
- that children and young people get the support they need close to home
- that children receive support at the earliest possible opportunity to prevent crisis



We are committed to jointly commissioning place-based services to meet local needs.

**When this is achieved, you will see:**

- collaboration between different agencies and more cohesive support close by which is for families to access collaboration between different agencies and more cohesive support
- that funds are used effectively to benefit children and young people with SEND and improve their educational, social, and health outcomes
- personalised support that is close by and easy for families to access

**We will measure our performance against these commitments using:**

- feedback from children and young people
- feedback from parents and carers
- data showing the number of Devon schools who have attended Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision (OAIP) awareness sessions
- data showing the number of Devon schools that have their implementation of Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision (OAIP) clearly set out on their school website
- data showing an increase in school attendance for children and young people with SEND
- data showing a decrease in exclusions for children and young people with SEND
- data showing a decrease in children with SEND who are electively home educated due to dissatisfaction with school/setting



## The Four Cornerstones

In 2011, Genuine Partnerships (a not-for-profit community interest company from Rotherham made up of practitioners, parent carers and young people working together as equal partners) developed 'The Four Cornerstones' based on research involving children and young people with SEND and their families.

Visit Genuine Partnerships' website at <https://www.genuinepartnerships.co.uk/>

It has been adopted nationally and Genuine Partnerships works with Contact (a charity for families with disabled children) to deliver training in local areas.

Visit Contact's website at <https://contact.org.uk/>

Devon is adopting this tried and tested approach to embed a new culture which focuses on rebuilding trust and positive relationships.

**The Four Cornerstones will underpin Devon's SEND Strategy and will be used to evaluate the progress in changing the culture.**

## Through this strategy we want to improve the way that we:

- › welcome and care
- › value and include
- › communicate
- › work in partnership



## Welcome and care by:

- providing a happy and secure environment or context
- nurturing confidence, wellbeing and self-esteem
- working together with you to build a supportive community
- making sure your voice is heard and valued
- responding with sensitivity
- communicating expectations clearly
- emphasising strengths and achievements

## Value and include by:

- identifying needs early and welcoming involvement at every stage
- having a 'can do' approach
- making sure all practitioners have the right skills and understanding
- sharing information about strengths and needs sensitively
- being creative and flexible to respond in the best way to individual strengths, needs and changes
- involving all relevant partners in decision-making processes
- encouraging all partners to contribute to the development of our values, systems and policies



## Communicate by:

- asking for your views and involvement
- being available when people need to talk and making time to listen
- listening calmly and respectfully
- responding promptly and following up
- reviewing regularly
- providing all the information needed in a timely way, in a form that will be understood
- striving to use positive and constructive language

## Work in partnership by:

- encouraging participation
- valuing your contributions as an equal partner
- working together to develop plans, set targets and create and deliver specific programmes
- involving you in decisions about organisational changes and improvement



# Summary

## Our vision...

For children and young people to have the opportunity to thrive, with access to the right support in the right place and at the right time, so they can fulfil their potential and lead happy, healthy and productive adult lives.

## will be realised by our commitments...

- we will think beyond barriers to support aspirations
- we will improve how we communicate
- we will develop better ways of working
- we will build inclusive communities

## and delivered through the SEND Transformation Programme...

- preparation for adulthood
- embedding strategy
- SEND statutory processes
- financial management and placement value
- multi-agency pathways
- sufficiency
- early help and inclusion



## all underpinned by The Four Cornerstones

- welcome and care
- value and include
- communicate
- work in partnership

