

Review of Devon Children and Young People's Plan 2006 – 2009
May 2007
Version 5
Draft 23rd May

Introduction

To be written explaining purpose etc.

This is a draft and a work in progress. The areas assessing the Council's contribution and capacity to improve will be addressed at a later stage in the process. The review is arranged around the outcomes of:

- ◆ *Be Healthy*
- ◆ *Stay Safe*
- ◆ *Enjoy and Achieve*
- ◆ *Make a Positive Contribution*
- ◆ *Achieve Economic well-being*

To avoid repetition an aspect which is covered in one place will not be covered in depth elsewhere.

Executive Summary

The services for children and young people are adequate with some good features particularly in making a positive contribution. Devon County Council and its partners plan that provision should be at least good in all areas for the 2008 assessment. Priority areas are, or will be: *(still being developed)*

- ◆ Narrowing the gap for the lowest achieving 20% of the population
- ◆ Addressing the needs of the 12 priority communities
- ◆ Axs Networks
- ◆ Parenting strategy
- ◆ Bullying
- ◆ Transport
- ◆ Thresholds
- ◆ Exclusions
- ◆ Attendance
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Participation
- ◆

The Joint Area Review (JAR) and the restructuring of the six Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) into Devon PCT made a significant impact on priorities during the year. Issues around Stay Safe, which was judged to be inadequate, and consistency around the county in terms of resources and equality of access have been, and continue to be, addressed with vigour. This area is now at least adequate with good capacity to improve.

There is a strong corporate ownership of responsibility of the judgements demonstrated by senior officers and members with additional resources made available which included:

- ◆ external consultants to support the development of the post JAR Action Plan and its implementation

- ◆ the appointment of an interim Assistant Director to lead on social care.

There has been a robust focus on ensuring that the quality of social care provision is sound, consistent and improving. Evidence of significant improvement is detailed in the Stay Safe section of this report.

The formation of one Devon PCT provides a strong basis for tackling longstanding issues of historical variation and access to services. The joint appointment of a Director of Public Health signals the commitment of Devon County Council and Devon PCT to joint working. Priorities for joint commissioning have been agreed and practical steps to take this forward are in hand. The creation of Devon PCT has meant a continuing period of transition which offers opportunity and challenge.

Opportunities include:

- ◆ addressing equality of access to provision across the county
- ◆ a Strategic Review of PCT services
- ◆ aligning and integrating services with Devon PCT and Devon County Council adult services to ensure continuity

Challenges include:

- ◆ Taking forward action in the months whilst a key partner undertakes a fundamental restructuring within considerable resource constraints
- ◆ balancing the need to have a joined up approach with adult services whilst retaining the focus on holistic services for children and young people

Additional risk is created by the potential of a new unitary authority for Exeter which would destabilise much of the work in hand and complicate future plans by destroying the co-terminosity created by the new Devon PCT

Performance management is a strong focus. In addition to standard systems such as appraisals, tools include:

- ◆ performance board meeting monthly for social care
- ◆ deep slice performance meetings evaluating progress and issues across social care with practitioners and managers across Devon
- ◆ external consultants benchmarking practice and outcomes
- ◆ External Support Board with GOSW
- ◆ Devon PCT adopting common statistical neighbours with Devon County Council
- ◆ Project management approach
- ◆ Rigorous monitoring by Corporate Management Board, members and partners

Resources have followed priorities with examples being in additional capacity in social care, senior lead officer leading project on improving achievement and attendance of children in care, developing more local provision for vulnerable children and young people requiring specialist care and the Axes programme.

The Axes programme is Devon's model for developing integrated and preventative support around the needs of children and young people in their communities. Nine pathfinders are being independently evaluated by Newcastle University prior to a whole county approach being implemented to ensure that we learn from the pilots first.

The Children's Trust Partnership continues to be a driving force for improvements for children and young people. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) needs to be refreshed to reflect the learning of the last year and the new plan will operate from April 2008. This review has highlighted future actions and work on these will commence now and feed into the new CYPP.

Background and Process

The development of the CYPP was led through the partnership of the Devon Children Trust. In addition to the needs analysis undertaken through that partnership there was comprehensive consultation through a variety of events which included over 1,000 children, young people, parents, volunteers and professionals with around 60 different organisations feeding in their views.

The review of the CYPP has been undertaken in partnership and at a variety of levels. The JAR and the action plan which followed this developed part of the framework. All partners agreed the importance of knowing ourselves well and of robust scrutiny of the available evidence in order to self-assess and plan for the future. This has taken place in the following ways:

- ◆ Lead officers on the five outcomes and the key enablers within the CYPP were responsible for monitoring and reporting on progress to the Children's Trust Executive on an agreed schedule throughout the year.
- ◆ The post JAR Action Plan established key milestones and performance indicators. These are monitored and reported on for further action by the post JAR Action Plan monitoring group to:
 - Children and Young People's Services Strategic Leadership Group
 - Devon County Council Corporate Management Board (monthly)

They in turn are held to account by:

- Children's Trust Executive and Board
- Executive and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committees

With reports to

- Devon External Support Team Project Board – led by GOSW
- Devon Strategic Partnership Delivery Board
- County Committees

In addition social care areas are addressed through a monthly performance board underpinned by more specific review.

- ◆ Lead officers met 30th March and reviewed all the actions and performance indicators together with the leads on the enablers.

- ◆ 5th April all senior officers in Children and Young People Services (CYPS) met to review their work in the last year against the judgement framework of Every Child Matters.
- ◆ 19th April the Children's Trust Programme Director met with the Young People's Scrutiny Forum to review the priorities within the plan and the effect of the plan so far.
- ◆ 4th May the Children's Trust Board, Children's Trust Executive, the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and invited critical friends reviewed the five outcomes in Devon against the descriptors provided by Ofsted.
- ◆ A draft review summary has been considered and challenged by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Devon County Council.
- ◆ The developing review has been led by Anne Whiteley (Director of Children and Young People Services) with the Strategic Leadership Group of Children and Young People Services of Devon County Council.
- ◆ The Corporate Management Board of Devon County Council, the Joint Chief Officer Group, Devon Strategic Partnership Delivery Board and the Executive Committee of Devon County Council have debated and reviewed the developing hypothesis.

The lead officers have developed an evidence pyramid by collating raw data, using this as evidence against the descriptors and then summarising the judgements and future priorities arising from this in the sections below.

The last twelve months

The plan was well-received and supported and praised in the Joint Area Review (JAR) which followed soon after its writing in summer 2006. This now seems a long time ago. In hindsight it is clear that the plan needed to be more practical and less aspirational focusing on joint resources, responsibilities, indicators and milestones.

The JAR and the reorganisation of the PCTs in Devon from six to one significantly affected priorities for action. Stay Safe required immediate action in several areas and there were 19 recommendations overall. The JAR Action Plan became the major driver rather than the CYPP.

The JAR Action Plan was agreed by the Children's Trust Partnership and Devon County Council. The actions and outcomes are closely monitored by Devon County Council at the highest level and the Children's Trust partnership. Major risks identified were:

- ◆ Governance and accountability
- ◆ Turbulence (through restructuring)
- ◆ Resources

Actions have been put into place to address these risks but they have not been entirely eradicated.

As a result of the learning in the last year, the changing circumstances and the review it has been agreed that the plan will be completely rewritten for April 2008. It will then be aligned with the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and

the Sustainable Communities Plan based on this review and the needs assessment undertaken autumn 2007.

Key Developments

Closing the Gap

The gap between the generally good achievement of children and young people and those who are disadvantaged is being addressed through a multifaceted project approach. Seven areas have been prioritised in resource terms to give additional impetus and in some areas, such as the achievement and attendance of children in care, significant progress has been made in the months the projects have been working. For the first year we know in advance which children in year 11 have been entered for which exam. There will be a lag to increasing results but the cultural and practical changes are being made.

Axs

The Axs pathfinders are based in nine areas of Devon to develop integrated working around communities focusing on preventative, joined up action. Extended services in and around schools are served by these and each area has its own local management board. In addition there is a project board of all partners led by the Assistant Director. This is combined with the Budget Holding Lead Professional pilot, the roll-out of CAF and Contactpoint. Roll out across the county will follow thorough evaluation of the learning. The effect on outcomes is beginning to be seen but remains emergent.

Commissioning

To be written

Integrated Youth Services

To be written

Participation

To be written

Children's Trust Programme

To be written

Key Overarching Priorities

Be Healthy Outcome

Following review of the evidence the judgement is that Devon County Council is making an adequate contribution to be healthy with significant capacity to improve which will be greatly assisted by the formation of one PCT for Devon.

The challenges within the CYPP were:

1. provide parents and carers with access to advice, information and support to promote healthy choices
2. provide a range of services to promote children and young people's physical health
3. develop integrated services to promote the mental health of children and young people

4. reduce alcohol consumption and smoking among young people
5. identify and respond to additional health needs of children and young people experiencing health inequalities due to long-term parental health difficulties or because they are looked after in public care
6. develop services to ensure children and young people with disabilities or long-term health needs receive integrated assessment and responses to their health and development needs

The JAR judgement and recommendations focused work on the key action areas of:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Services for Children with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
- Consistency of resource and service across the County

Significant progress has been made in these areas and they will continue as priorities.

Integration of CAMHS across Devon has been achieved although variation in the provision of CAMHS remains. New referral management systems are being introduced which have reduced waiting times across the last year. First appointments are now within 3 – 4 weeks with the emphasis on brief intervention. Data collection remains challenging in some areas where there is no appropriate IT system. Primary mental health workers are being recruited to link with the Axs network developments and strengthen links with schools. Meeting the national performance (proxy) indicators remains challenging although progress is good:

- 24/7 emergency cover (achieved)
- Interface with hearing disabled services
- Transition to adult services
- Waiting times

Local indicator priorities are:

- ◆ resource allocation
- ◆ the balance of spend against the tiers within the AXS network.

A single Devon service and the place of CAMHS as a first focus for the Joint Commissioning approach across PCT and DCC will aid further progress.

Considerable progress has been made in improving services for children with Learning Disabilities and Difficulties. The Joint Agency Team model has been rolled out across the County. Therapy services are in the top band nationally. New pathways for access should lead to full compliance within prescribed timescale for the approximate 3,000 young people affected. The pathways will be rolled out by Christmas 2007 through the Joint Commissioning Strategy and links to the Fair Access to Carers' Breaks/ Integrated Commissioning around Special Schools project.

The Child Health Promotion programme is addressing the consistency of resource and service across Devon. The new specification is currently out for consultation and service developments are due September 2007. This work links with the new Public Health Nursing strategy also out for consultation

which addresses the national thinking on the roles of Health Visitors and School nurses.

This work addresses some of the resource issues which have also been identified within the CAMHS and Learning Disabilities work.

Good progress has also been seen in:

- Children's Centre roll out – contracts agreed for 16 new centres
- Healthy Schools – targets currently being exceeded
- High quality physical education provision within the primary phase
- Sensible drinking - new alcohol strategy developed with *High Focus Area support*.
- Children in Care – Devon is in the top banding for designated doctors and nurses for children in care

In addition to the above priorities continuing short term (within 3 months) priorities are:

- Health needs assessment – need for an agreed model to inform the Joint Commissioning Function and the refresh of the CYPP
- Devon PCT strategic review commences

Continue the development of services for CAMHS, Learning Disabilities and ensuring consistent access to services across Devon.

Medium term:

- NHS Child specific health targets – improve Healthcare Commission Hospital Improvement Review (HCHIR) grading
- Maternity Services – address issues of accessible services and the extent of genuine choice
- Waiting times – improve accessibility particularly to CAMHS, therapies (occupational, speech and language), sexual health services, children in care accessing specialists, substance misuse.
- Parenting and Child Health Promotion Programme – identify and support the most vulnerable families at the earliest possible stages.
- Healthy Schools – maintain the quality assurance standards of the Devon programme and roll out especially in areas of deprivation
- Teenage Pregnancy - whilst there is an 8% decrease from the 1998 baseline rate the original low baseline a more focussed approach to achieve the 2010 target needs to be implemented.
- Children in Care – strengthen the health improvement interventions that addressing high risk behaviours
- Involving Young People – further the engagement of young people in the commissioning of health services

Stay Safe

Following review of the evidence the judgement is that Devon County Council is making an adequate contribution to stay safe with significant capacity to improve. Swift improvement in the provision of social care has been achieved and is continuing.

The Children & Young People's Plan (CYPP) contained most of the areas which were identified in the Joint Area Review (JAR). The agreed challenges in the CYPP were:

1. Support parents and carers to provide safe homes and stability as their children grow
2. Help children and young people make choices, build their confidence and avoid harm
3. Identify people and circumstances that represent a serious risk to children and young people and respond to such threats quickly and effectively
4. Assist children and families experiencing violence or discrimination (in the home, at school or in the community) to bring about change
5. Identify and safeguard children and young people who are looked after in public or private care settings
6. Encourage communities to create a supportive and stimulating environment in which children and young people can play safely while developing protective skills

The JAR judgement and recommendations focused work on the key action areas of:

- ◆ Improve safeguarding
- ◆ Agree, communicate, implement and monitor use of thresholds to services
- ◆ Increase provision of service to special needs children
- ◆ Improve access to CAMHS (Children, Adolescent Mental Health Service – see Be Healthy)

Concerns underpinning these areas were:

- ◆ Not all children and young people in care were allocated to a qualified social worker with the attendant risk to planning, monitoring and reviewing. This concern was confirmed by examination of case files.
- ◆ Quality assurance of case files and appropriate Criminal Records Bureau processes.
- ◆ Inconsistency of application of thresholds for children in need with high needs leading to appropriate allocation
- ◆ Performance management of statutory visits required for children in care and child protection.

Devon County Council responded swiftly. Some work started as soon as the informal feedback was provided. Consultants, Concorde Associates, were bought in and assessed these prime issues and the implications that stemmed from them. Workshops with staff examined practice and new guidance was issued as a result of the evaluation. The JAR Action Plan development was supported and guided by Concorde Associates.

In conjunction with the DfES there was a tender for further consultants and Outcomes UK were appointed to develop the work further. In addition, two experienced interim managers, including an assistant director, were appointed

from November. There was a specific focus on improving social care as a priority and other work was reallocated to make this possible.

Additional resource and capacity was identified corporately to assist the improvement and close and rigorous scrutiny provided by

- ◆ CYPs Strategic Leadership Group
- ◆ Corporate Management Board
- ◆ Two sets of external consultants
- ◆ External Support Team chaired by GOSW
- ◆ JAR monitoring group
- ◆ Overview and Scrutiny and Executive Committees
- ◆ Children's Trust Executive and Board

In addition there have been very effective peer monitoring methods developed which include:

- ◆ a monthly performance board which goes down to significant detail and targets good and weaker practice
- ◆ quarterly performance monitoring meetings of practitioners and managers on practice and progress (diagonal groups)

Structural changes have also increased clear responsibility and accountability. These are:

- ◆ Realignment of care management to a functional team
- ◆ Renewal and relaunch of Independent Review Unit function as a quality assurance model

Significant improvements have been achieved. Some delays resulted from the structural changes from six Primary Care Trusts to one. The initial impact fell on the development of special needs service for those with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), but significant improvement can be evidenced.

In terms of impact at this stage, safeguarding and threshold concerns have been addressed as follows:

- ◆ All 'Looked After' and Child Protection (CP) cases are now allocated to Qualified Social Workers.
- ◆ Performance regarding Initial Assessment, Core Assessment, Statutory Visits and Statutory Reviews has significantly improved.
- ◆ The management of application of consistent thresholds to social care means that now only two practice managers can authorise access across the county. The Children in Need (CIN) thresholds are being developed by a multi-agency group with consultation planned shortly.
- ◆ The quality of case and staff records is starting to improve with revised systems and regular auditing in place.

The development of performance based culture, rewarding positive contributions has been a significant contributor to the above improvements. It is managed by a Performance Management Board (PMB), which has a multi-professional membership. There is also a quarterly Performance Management Workshop which has a 'diagonal skill' membership. Performance Indicators, policy & procedures and practice are examined to maintain a culture of continuous improvement

The realignment of the core management element of the service has also allowed for proper examination of workload/caseload. Whilst this is early days it is having a positive impact not only on the allocation of work, but also in the analysis of children in need. The service is well-placed for the development of a more integrated approach to working with vulnerable children and young people in Devon over the next 3-5 years.

The Independent Reviewing Service has been reinvigorated to play a strong role in performance management. Quality assurance has a transparency that again is raising standards across the children in care area.

Managers are now much clearer about their responsibilities and decision making is more robust. This is showing in forms of consistency; a significant reduction in the numbers of children going to out of County placements and more innovative and positive approaches.

In addition to this work, the next challenges are:

- Embedding the new departmental structure, maintaining and building upon recent improvements
- Increasing the participation of children, young people and families in decision making
- Assist children and families experiencing violence or discrimination to bring about change
- Ensure best use is made of available resources

Enjoy and Achieve

Following review of the evidence the judgement is that Devon County Council overall is making an adequate contribution to enjoy and achieve. There are areas of good and outstanding practice with good capacity to improve.

The challenges agreed in the CYPP were:

1. support children and young people, their families and communities to have high aspirations and expectations
2. raise achievement for all
3. raise the achievement of vulnerable and underachieving groups, including the lowest attaining 20% of children and young people
4. improve outcomes for Devon's looked after children
5. increase attendance in schools and enjoyment in learning
6. improve access to enjoyable, challenging and enriching opportunities for children and young people, with particular focus on those with special and additional needs and those in disadvantaged and isolated communities

The JAR echoed some of these priorities in identifying raising aspirations through challenging targets and raising the achievement and attendance of children in care. Resources were re-prioritised to support an integrated project approach to address the educational concerns for children and young people in care.

Outcomes for children and young people in Devon continue to improve overall. Most pupils enjoy school and behave well. Support and challenge to schools has formed the cornerstone of the improvement programme, ensuring that schools set and are supported to achieve aspirational targets. The introduction of the SIP programme in Devon secondary schools has received local, regional and national acclaim.

The challenging targets for 2007 are achievable. Support to schools facing the biggest challenge in the most deprived communities is focussed on providing wide ranging, integrated, localised support. Further support is in a self led project using Building Learning Power supported by the council. Evidence of impact on pupil performance is expected from 2008 onwards. An in depth analysis of the distribution of the lowest attaining 20% of pupils identified 21 primary schools and 4 secondary schools where there were statistically significant numbers or percentages. They will receive enhanced support, including individual pupil tracking of progress as a standing item on the SIP/adviser visits. These children and young people remain a priority.

Analysis of the achievement of pupils in the lowest attaining 20% shows that their rates of progress are broadly similar compared with other attaining groups for KS1 to KS2 and KS2 to KS3 but for KS2 to KS4 their progress is not as good as other attainers. Although the Increased Flexibility programmes have secured greater participation of students and thus impacted positively on good NEET figures, Devon identifies that the actual outcomes are not yet good enough. Strategies for the coming year focus on the lowest attaining 20% across all key stages and specifically at KS4 through the collaborative approaches which are seen as critical to improving pupil engagement and outcomes. A newly established second tier post, combining strategic leadership of 14-19 diplomas, the developing IYSS and the formalised school partnerships, including trust pathfinder schools, will ensure these programmes focus on improving the outcomes for vulnerable pupils.

Resources have been targeted to raise the achievement of children in care through a project approach with the secondment of officers from the advisory, the educational welfare, the educational psychology and social care services led by a senior manager. All pupils are now tracked both at school and LA levels. All KS4 pupils have been entered for appropriate exams and support programmes are in place.

We are ambitious for these pupils and an early indication of the successful impact is the reduction in the number of children in care permanently excluded from school and the significant increase in the numbers of children in care with a Personal Education Plan (PEP). The progress made is a

standing item in the Annual Review Visits in primary schools and with the 'Single Conversation' of School Improvement Partners with secondary schools with follow up discussions where concerns exist about school support for these pupils.

Devon schools offer good educational provision, including special schools and pupil referral units. Procedures for monitoring, intervention and challenge are good with low numbers of schools in categories and good improvements rates for those that are. This is a good basis to respond to the requirement in recent legislation to intervene early where standards are causing concern. Currently recommendations arising from a review of the processes of monitoring, support and challenge to all schools, including those causing concern are the subject of consultation.

Overall standards in of attainment in Devon's Primary schools are good. Key Stage 1 (KS1) results showed significant improvement in 2006. The relative position nationally and with statistical neighbours has improved. Key Stage 2 (KS2) results are good. Overall standards in secondary schools are good. At Key Stage 3 performance is in the second highest quartile nationally.

Key Stage 4 results indicate improvement in 5 GCSE A*-C to 57.5% (up 3%) and continues a steady rise. With the inclusion of mathematics and English this figure reduces to around 46%. In some individual schools (including some of the higher performing schools) the gap is wider between the two measures, and the LA is prioritising improvement in the 'with mathematics and English' measure in targeted schools. There are some strong rises in overall GCSE results, including those in some coastal towns.

A further priority arising from the current needs analysis is to improve the progress made by specific black and minority ethnic pupils groups. *More detail to follow*

The outcomes of Ofsted inspections have improved between 05-06 and 06-07 (to present time) so that an 8.3% improvement in satisfactory or better schools, and a 6.9% improvement in good or better schools. These figures are based only on the schools' overall effectiveness grade, and group primary, secondary and specials together.

Schools involve pupils in the recruitment of staff and in strategic and operational decision making. Schools and the Youth Service have established a number of annual opportunities to listen and respond to children and young people. Opportunities to gain feedback from children and young people on school improvement services remain underdeveloped. This is the subject of research and planning currently, particularly focused on learning from projects in local learning communities.

An emerging strength in Devon are pupil outcomes at the end of Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. The impact of the Intensive Support Programme, the investment in the Reading Recovery programme and the focus on pupil tracking and early intervention, together with the continued strength of transition arrangements

within Devon local learning communities have secured improved progress. However, priorities for improvement are to close the attainment gap between:

- the lowest attaining 20% and the median at Foundation Stage.
- girls and boys at KS1 at Level 2 and above in writing
- the progress of the lowest attaining 20% and other attaining groups particularly at KS4

Strategies to reduce numbers of permanently excluded and those on fixed term exclusions are progressing and will be strengthened. Integrated support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), including learning disabilities, will continue apace, building on the recent implementation of the innovative SEN framework.

Improvements to the quality of early years provision will focus on building capacity to identify and offer early support to children with SEN.

Strategies for extended services in and around school are focused on increasing access of vulnerable groups and those in isolated rural areas.

There has been some improvement in levels of attendance across Devon schools and Devon is no longer a DfES priority LA for improvement although this remains a concern in relation to a small group of schools. Improving data tracking in relation to individual schools and vulnerable pupil groups, together with the termly scrutiny of data, are priority actions and will be supported by the appointment of an additional member of EWS staff. The annual review visits to secondary schools will include a focus on attendance targets bringing greater coherence to the target setting process and promoting the priorities within the inclusive education strategy.

The continued integration of EWS with other associated teams working in the most deprived communities, as part of the roll out of the AXS pathways will significantly strengthen the impact of this service.

Permanent exclusion figures have risen to the level of previous years from the very low base in 04/05 achieved through LPSA pump priming money the previous year. This is extremely disappointing and we consider this area to be inadequate at present. There is positive engagement by secondary headteachers in collaborative approaches to managing challenging pupils, some organised around the 14-19 partnerships. Recent data indicate an improvement.

Pupil Referral Units are judged by Ofsted to be at least satisfactory and capacity has been increased through three preventive intervention posts. Reintegration rates are improving because of LA supported reintegration panels and a further decline in numbers of permanently excluded pupils is anticipated by the end of this academic year. A number of schools have very low rates of exclusion, including those in areas of disadvantage. Learning from their practice through case study dissemination will be undertaken in the short term. A key concern is the unacceptably high numbers of statemented pupils permanently excluded – typically over 30% of all permanent exclusions.

A protocol has been designed to ensure rapid joint intervention by LA support services when a statemented pupil is at risk of exclusion. This area is a key priority.

Fixed term exclusions remain too high. The strategies described above, together with improvements in 14-19 curriculum offer, and increased support and challenge in relation to the progress made by pupils from specific vulnerable groups, will bring about improvement. OFSTED inspection data identifies good inclusive practices adding weight to our evidence that the majority of schools can develop greater capacity to meet the needs of pupils vulnerable to exclusion. The feedback from the roll out of the Primary Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) initiative has been extremely encouraging. It will shortly be extended to the secondary sector. *An example of work in hand is the KS4 engagement programme focused on Exeter.*

There is good provision for children and young people not in school but Link Education is used disproportionately to support pupils permanently excluded from school because of insufficient capacity in Pupils Referral Units. This area is the subject of a detailed review and a target has been set of zero permanently excluded secondary phase pupils on Link Education by April 2008.

Two further priorities will focus on strengthening parenting support programmes and increasing opportunities to be informed by the views of children and young people.

Children and young people have good opportunities to engage in recreational, cultural and leisure pursuits with good use made of Devon Music Service, Devon Discovery (Outdoor learning) and DAISI (Devon Arts in Schools Initiative) and impact evident. Access to opportunities for vulnerable pupils is inconsistent across the county with no overall strategy for improving participation and action to address this is a priority.

Numbers of schools offering the full core offer and aspects of the core offer are higher than other south west local authorities. The work to develop local learning communities' capacity to collaborate has progressed well. The development of the Axs networks through nine pathfinders is critical to developing early intervention strategies for swift and easy referral to integrated support.

Admission arrangements are good in Devon and we will increase support to vulnerable groups by improving first choice admissions to identified groups and tracking in year admissions. The recent appointments of choice advisers and the processes established to support their work has been well received and adds significantly to our capacity to support vulnerable families.

Work with parents needs a strategic approach to ensure best use is made of resources. There are many effective strands to this including innovative work in schools and children's centres. There are local and county forums for

parents /carers of children with LDD and work is in hand to improve the Parent Partnership Service.

The implementation of the innovative SEN framework, a tool for provision mapping and planning to meet pupil needs, will bring about more effective targeted work with schools which need the greatest levels of support in improving outcomes. Outcomes for children and young people attending special schools are generally good. Further improvements in the capacity of special schools to meet the needs of pupils with complex needs, with a consequent reduction in the reliance on the independent sector, will enable a proactive reinvestment strategy to be pursued. The integrated commissioning around special schools project which has undertaken a detailed needs analysis will drive this process. A critical aligned strategy is the development of inclusive practice and provision in mainstream schools, including support for the use of P-scales. Outreach from special schools is developing strongly, underpinned by a service level agreement with the LA. This has had noticeable impact in improving outcomes in some mainstream schools.

A key feature of the CYPP is to develop partnerships, including formal federations developments which have a national reputation.

Priorities for Action include:

- attendance of:
 - children and young people in care
 - children and young people in targeted schools
- reducing permanent and fixed term exclusion of all children and young people but particularly those:
 - in care
 - with a statement of special educational need
- provision for those excluded from schools for better outcomes and use of resources including development of the capacity of Pupil Referral Units, to increase numbers of places in the short term and steadily increase preventive work in schools as part of a network of behaviour support
- attainment and achievement of
 - children and young people in care
 - children and young people from black and ethnic minorities
 - lowest attaining 20% of children and young people
 - the 12 priority communities
 - boys in key stage 1 in writing
 - English at level 6 at key stage 3
 - English and Mathematics A*-C in targeted areas
- Early support to children with SEN
- Access to recreational, cultural and leisure opportunities for more vulnerable children and young people
- Participation of children and young people in school improvement
- Parenting strategy development and implementation

Making a Positive Contribution

Overall performance in this area is good; good progress has been made in taking forward important initiatives like participation and volunteering, while key outcomes in achievement and reducing offending for children and young people have continued to improve. There is a good and increasing range of opportunities in schools, colleges and the Youth Service, with successful alternative programmes in targeted localities to meet a range of needs.

Significant improvements for vulnerable children and young people have been made through care plan reviews, with a steep rise in the proportion of children in care with personal plans. The strategic overview of targeted work has significantly improved with the establishment of a commissioning board and plans to give young people more say have been implemented. Work has gone forward to reduce bullying and encourage positive behaviour, with a stronger multi-agency approach. But, while offending has reduced, exclusions from secondary schools have also increased.

The 5 challenges for 'Making a Positive Contribution' identified in the first Devon Plan were –

1. support parents, carers, families, schools and communities to promote positive behaviour
2. encourage children and young people to participate in a wide range of service planning and development activities
3. provide young people with access to a range of safe spaces and facilities in which they can meet and engage in positive activities
4. provide young people with increased opportunities to take up volunteering and community involvement
5. provide children and young people who are at risk of school or social exclusion with access to preventative services that will help them stay out of trouble

The key areas for improvement identified in the JAR were not in this area, with its recognised strengths. There are related areas, however, such as advocacy, access to services for vulnerable young people and targeted provision for young people at risk of disengagement. The development of effective school and school-college partnerships to enhance 14-19 opportunities will also help to address behaviour and participation issues in communities. While there are many good examples of parenting programmes in the County, there is a lack of overall co-ordination of this activity, making it difficult to judge impact.

The voice of young people is well developed in Devon, with links to elected members and the Executive and strong participation in the youth parliament. Six local youth networks have just been established across the county and youth participation workers are already jointly employed by the Youth Service and Connexions. 'Hear by Right' has been achieved at advanced standard. There are strong foundations here for the integrated service in the systematic work done by both Youth Service and Connexions.

The participation of young people in recruitment has been introduced by the NHS and some DCC departments; there are plans to make this all. Young people were involved in choosing the independent chair of the Children's Trust. Consultation on planning for services which affect them is likewise well developed in some areas but will be taken yet further under the auspices of the new Integrated Youth Service, for example in relation to shaping services for the most vulnerable.

The development of positive activities at safe locations is a core strand of the Children's Trust development in Devon for young people, given the significance of partnership with the district councils and with Active Devon to develop leisure provision for young people. Youth service staff are trained in aspects of advice and counselling like mental health. A directory of opportunities for young people will be completed by March 2008 and there is good involvement of the voluntary sector.

Volunteering has increased. Young people have been involved in shaping the voluntary work strategy for Devon, to some effect. Twelve to twenty-five year olds were consulted across Devon and made important contributions on how to increase participation, for example by letting young people try out activities, letting volunteers know the benefits to them and in developing organisational skills. There is an increase in the opportunities provided by Children and Young People's services for volunteering.

Co-operation between agencies in targeting particular trouble spots and groups of young people is generally good. There have been particular successes in reducing levels of anti-social behaviour and increasing participation in healthier life choices such as the case study of the South Hams Youth Nights. Across four towns the Youth Service teamed up with local leisure centres to attract young people into a wide (and in some cases exciting range of activities. As well as reducing anti-social behaviour, which the police report favourably on, the initiative has helped reduce smoking and encourage regular exercise by participants. The lessons from this successful collaboration will be taken to other communities. Despite this criminal damage has continued to increase, by about 8 -10 per cent overall. The 12 schools with the highest rates of criminal damage have been targeted for action.

While effective work on behaviour support networks and managed moves to address exclusions has been taken forward, exclusions from secondary schools have increased, though the most recent data suggests at least a levelling off of this trend. However other indicators, particularly on offending, tell a much more positive story with targets for reduction exceeded for first entry into the youth justice system, for re-offending, as well as a reduction in offending by children in care. A programme of school visits is refreshing anti-bullying policies.

The plan for an integrated youth service has been agreed, which envisages commissioning for targeted work as well as an entitlement to advice across the County. Access pathways for vulnerable children and young people are being piloted in 9 localities. Key indicators for children and young people have

continued to improve. The proportion of young people who are NEET is relatively low (below 5%) and falling, and that of unknowns very low. Achievement by 19 at level 2 and 3 has improved. As detailed above offending has fallen significantly, while substance misuse services have maintained no waiting lists for referrals.

Within 'Making a Positive Contribution' the key short term priority is to support a reduction in exclusions by continuing to improve access to guidance and support. For the medium term –

- Improved co-ordination of the work in support of parents, to enable judgements of impact and so further improvement,
- Establishing access to integrated advice, support and guidance
- Taking the lessons from Youth Nights to other communities across Devon.
- Complete the work to ensure effective anti-bullying strategies in all schools.
- Ensure the participation of young people in all relevant recruitment.

For the longer term, a key priority is to involve young people in shaping the new integrated youth service.

Achieve Economic Wellbeing

Following review of the evidence the judgement is that Devon County Council is making an adequate contribution to achieving economic well-being. There are areas of good practice with capacity to improve.

The challenges within the CYPP were:

1. support families who are dependant on benefits or low incomes to improve their wellbeing and be economically active
2. ensure children are offered the best start in life through Children's Centres and high quality early years and play provision
3. improve transport accessibility and promote sustainable transport solutions for young people in rural areas
4. work with local schools, colleges and employers to create opportunities for all 14-19 year olds to pursue a course of study where they will learn in a style that suits them and in subject areas which motivate them
5. ensure that impartial, comprehensive and high quality information, advice, guidance and support is available to all young people, in proportion to need, to assist them in making successful transitions to further learning and work
6. support homeless and vulnerable young people or families with dependent children to sustain safe, secure and stable accommodation and engage in employment, education or training

The JAR echoed elements of this and recommended action on driving forward the good 14-19 strategy and joined up working on housing needs for more vulnerable young people.

There has been good progress in some significant elements of 14-19 strategy, but the strategy has yet to have a full impact on all consortia of providers and therefore outcomes for young people. The September Guarantee for 14 -19 was in place in 2006 and monitored between Connexions and the Learning & Skills Council. Solutions to address issues of access, particularly to new 14 – 19 provision, continue to be a priority. The development of a co-ordinated rural transport strategy to assist young people to access new 14-19 provision and positive activities is a priority. Its development will be supported by the audit in hand of staffing, skills and expertise which will inform the geographical distribution of demand and provision.

Adequate support is available to young people in Devon to help them access decent and affordable housing. Good support of vulnerable young tenants is available from a fully integrated Youth and Housing Advice Service developed through a range of providers and linked to generic housing advice services. Supporting People grants have been used to strengthen young people's advice/support arrangements and a joint Supporting Young People's/Persons' contract to provide floating tenancy support has been agreed, tendered and let. The statutory homelessness acceptances for 16 and 17 year olds and 18 – 21 year old care leavers have fallen from 30 in quarter 3 2005-06 to 10 in quarter 3 2006-07.

Arrangements to commission Connexions services in 2008 are well developed. Good IAG is available and provided in proportion to need. Access to advice and guidance in rural areas is available through the area-wide prospectus and a variety of statutory and voluntary provision. Young people with complex needs receive good advice, evidenced through the Youth Offending Team inspection and the Youth Service inspection. Quarterly meetings take place to review and plan a response to the EET needs of vulnerable groups such as care leavers and young offenders. Transitions are supported by Joint Agencies Teams for children with special needs are now in place across Devon. Pathway plans are now in place for all care leavers.

Children in Devon are offered a good start in life through a range of childcare and children's centre provision. Childcare is well distributed across the whole of the county in a wide variety of settings in the private, voluntary, independent and maintained sectors. The Early Years profile indicates that childcare places, including places targeted at disadvantaged areas, increased by slightly above the national average and the percentage of applications processed within 12 weeks was also above the national average. Early year's provision is accessed by the vast majority of 3 and 4 year olds (97% in 2007). Almost all looked after children aged 3 and 4 attend early years' provision.

There is a policy in place for health visitors to refer young parents to Connexions for advice on learning and work. In order to ensure that new childcare provision helps deliver economic benefits Jobcentre Plus are involved in identifying areas requiring more childcare provision, contribute to the appraisal panel for new children's centres and liaise with each children's centre. Families were closely involved in the needs analysis and tendering process for children's centres and this has received national acclaim. To

develop provision further a wide spread consultation exercise will be undertaken this year with families (including disadvantaged families), employers and providers to assess needs.

Access to programmes of adult and community learning is adequate. In 2005-06 there were 179 courses in family learning, an increase of 15% from 2004-05 involving 1,573 families. The courses were distributed across the county and delivered through extended schools, children's centres and other community provision. Courses are free of charge and there is support for learners with childcare and crèche facilities available at the majority of courses. The feedback from the families involved show that 96% said they had developed new skills and 97% were more confident in supporting a child's learning as a result of attending a family learning course.

Projects are in place to help families of children with special needs take up benefits. For example, a project in North Devon has received 420 referrals, 259 potential entitlements, 102 successful claims; £423,000 has been gained in benefits. This is now being rolled out to Exeter and Mid Devon.

The children's information systems in Devon are good. The children's information service achieved the NACIS national quality award in 2005 and is working towards renewal in early 2008. Hits to the Devon Information Service for Children (DISC) website have gone up on average 35% per year and to the Devon Information Service for Children Plus (DISC+) website on average 26% per year. Calls to the helpline average around 500 per month. 98% of people surveyed said that they found the DISC service useful. The need to develop the Children's Services directory into a more comprehensive and accessible directory which will integrate the special needs information and other relevant data has been identified.

Devon is good at knowing what its young people are doing. Connexions is in contact with over 99% of 16-18 year olds compared to a national average of 93.4%. 95.2% of 16-18 year olds were in learning, work or personal development opportunity in November 2006 which is adequate when compared to statistical neighbours. The proportion of year 11 school leavers remaining in full-time education has risen from 71.3% in 2003 to 77.7% in 2006. This improvement has been particularly significant in Exeter which had the lowest levels of engagement in the county where the proportion staying on in full-time education has risen from 58.7% to 72.3% between 2003 and 2006. Raising standards in Exeter was a council priority and in a long term project this is evidence of the positive impact of significant strategic planning and investment.

Achievement at both level 2 and level 3 at 19 has improved by 3% and 4% respectively in line with statistical neighbours. Completion rates for apprenticeships have improved from 42.9% in 2004-05 to 58.3% in 2005-06. Engagement of vulnerable groups is in line with similar authorities. A good range of provision has been developed for the most vulnerable young people across Devon including those at school and those who have left full-time education. The Learning & Skills Council and Connexions have secured ESF

funding to provide an innovative range of pre-entry level programmes across the county to help vulnerable young people. For example the “Positive Pathway” programme has helped almost 200 young people over the last twelve months. Support is also available to those young people who have been unemployed for six months or more through the Activity Agreement pilot (132 – starts in the year to April 2007) which performs well compared to other pilots nationally.

A significant minority of young people are in jobs without training although most recent figures indicate a fall. Strategies are in place to engage these young people in learning agreements (190 starts in the year to April 2007) and the Learning & Skills Council are increasing the number of apprenticeships.

Significant progress has been made in the engagement of 19 year old care leavers and it is anticipated that Devon will be in the top category based on the PAF A4 count in 2007.

Future actions

Short term

Further work will take place with employers and Devon and Cornwall Business Council to convert jobs without training to apprenticeships

Medium term

Transport strategy linked to community strategy to support access to education, employment, training, cultural, leisure and physical activities

There will be a roll out of projects to help families claim full benefit entitlement across the whole County

Longer term

Full implementation of the 14 - 19 strategy supported by an integrated youth support strategy