

# Service Plan Refresh 2023-25

## (Draft)

### Children's Services

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Executive Director

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# Foreword



Welcome to the Children's Services Service Plan 2023-24. This plan outlines how we are supporting delivery of the Council Plan and provides an overview of the breadth of support to children and families the department provides. Also included are details of the commercial pipeline up to March 2025 and current financial position. We are also proud to introduce the Children's Strategy 2022-25; this has been in development since Spring 2022 and has been co-produced with staff across children's services. The strategy sets out how we will drive the continuous improvement and transformation needed to deliver better outcomes for all children, young people and families in Derbyshire. The ambition set out in the strategy is:

**We will work creatively and collaboratively to inspire and empower children, young people and their families to be the best they can be. Our ambition is that all children and young people in Derbyshire are safe, healthy, happy, learning, and ready for work.**

The strategy is being developed in exceptionally challenging and fast-changing circumstances: the combination of sustained pressure on public finances; rising pressures associated with cost of living; the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic both in terms of immediate impact and emerging pressures which set up challenges for the future; changing legislation and expectations from central government and several important reform agendas affecting significant areas of children's services; all give rise to extremely challenging conditions in which to achieve our ambitions for all children and young people in the county. The priorities and actions set out in this strategy represent the best possible route to achieve our goals.

We have made huge strides in addressing consistency of the experience of children and families working with us across Derbyshire, our quality assurance processes are significantly strengthened in identifying and modelling high quality practice and the revised Quality Assurance Board ensures we are able to quickly follow up where practice falls below our very high standards. As corporate parents, we take particular pride in the amazing achievements of our children in care and care experienced young people who have overcome significant challenges in their lives, and we will be tireless advocates for them to have the same, if not better opportunities and outcomes than their peers.

The work carried out in partnership with schools and families during COVID has given us the opportunity to take learning from new ways of working, and focus on sustainable improvement, partnership planning and data to support the children's strategy. The developing Education Partnership, SEND Strategy, SENDCO network and panel arrangements, linked to a developing new operating model, will help support the children's strategy with children, schools, and families at the forefront of every decision.

*Carol*

# Our Services

The children's services department plays an important role in supporting the council to achieve its ambition to be an enterprising and value for money council, enabling people and communities to thrive. With just over 4,400 appointments (over 2,460 FTEs) and an annual budget exceeding £148 million, the department works collaboratively with a range of stakeholders including local communities, residents, service users, businesses, partners, other local authorities, government and it's agencies to deliver key services and support functions for the council, as set out below.



## **Performance, Quality and Partnerships; Commissioning and Transformation**

Provides a number of strategic enabling services such as: Participation and children's rights; business intelligence; quality assurance; ICT, casework systems and children services websites; transformation, change management strategies and programmes; future service development; process improvement; traded services and music hub partnership. Statutory roles include the child protection service, independent reviewing officers for children in care, advocacy, independent visitors, and complaints management.



## **Early Help and Safeguarding**

Delivers children's social care services including early help, children's social work, children's centres, youth services, careers, troubled families, youth justice, fostering, residential, adoption, specialist services for disabled children, children in care and those with care experience.



## **Schools and Learning**

Delivers services relating to early years and childcare, education improvement, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), alternative provision, the virtual school for children in care, school place planning, the school capital programme, admissions and transport, adult community education, school catering, sport and outdoor education, and access and inclusion.

# Our Achievements 2022-23

The Department has made excellent progress in delivering commitments set out in the Service Plan over the last year. Key achievements are:

- 83% of children's homes are judged good or outstanding
- Provided 70,000 holiday activity and food places to vulnerable children
- Inspection results showing a sustained level of improvement across children's social care and youth justice
- Consistency in social work practice with a focus on addressing outliers through enhanced quality assurance
- Recruitment and retention initiatives have improved capacity and stability; this has contributed to high morale in the workforce
- The use of apprenticeships to increase the number of social workers and develop existing staff
- All but two of our twelve children's homes are judged good or better with five homes judged as outstanding
- A successful supporting families programme has secured our early help development teams through 'payment by results'
- QA activity highlights a strong culture of listening to and involving children, with meaningful direct work and the child's voice evident
- As part of the school readiness work 93 schools and settings have engaged with the 'relationship aware' programme in the early years service

# Children's Strategy 2022-25

## Our Strategic Priorities (2022-25): Strategy on a Page

Council Plan 2022-25 Priorities	Resilient healthy and safe communities	High performing, value for money & resident focused services
	Effective early help for individuals and communities	A prosperous and green Derbyshire

Thrivng Communities: working with our communities to succeed

Enterprising Council: working within and across our organisation to succeed

Vision Derbyshire: working with our partners to succeed

Partnerships and Systems Leadership	Models & Structures that Deliver	Workforce Development	Strategy and Financial Sustainability	Quality, Practice and Performance
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a more effective strategic approach to working in partnership, internally with teams across DCC and externally with our partner agencies</li> <li>2. Strengthen our understanding of the partnership landscape and the issues / challenges which drive our partners</li> <li>3. Strengthen the effectiveness of our coproduction and collaboration with communities in order to improve outcomes for children and families</li> <li>4. Play a leading role in developing effective strategic partnerships which drive systems change, deliver impact on outcomes, and provide a meaningful contribution to issues which we cannot tackle on our own</li> <li>5. Drive strategic and collaborative use of resources across our strategic partnerships</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Structures which deliver our key strategic aims to provide better outcomes for children in a financially sustainable way</li> <li>2. Develop and implement service models which deliver the right help, at the right time, in efficient and sustainable ways</li> <li>3. Integrating our services to deliver better outcomes for children</li> <li>4. Modernising and reforming our approach to traded and commercial services</li> <li>5. Strengthening our change, transformation and improvement capabilities</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement a strategic, balanced and consistent approach to workforce development across the service</li> <li>2. Incorporate and embed workforce development goals and objectives into key strategies and plans</li> <li>3. Set out detailed plans for addressing key skills needs and requirements</li> <li>4. Take a consistent and coherent approach to recruitment and retention across the service</li> <li>5. Linked to Performance: ensure that staff supervisions, appraisals and performance reviews deliver meaningful and measurable improvements in service performance, as well as progress against individual personal development objectives</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure we have a consistent and coherent set of strategies in place to deliver our overall goals for the service, which we monitor and review for effectiveness</li> <li>2. Strengthen strategic programme and delivery support, to ensure Strategies and Action Plans are successfully delivered</li> <li>3. Develop a robust financial model underpinning our delivery – ensuring budgets are set appropriately, need and demand is managed and predicted as far as possible</li> <li>4. Strengthen our monitoring and management of our financial resources, empowering managers at all levels to make effective decisions about spend</li> <li>5. Ensure that our work with strategic partners helps to deliver a meaningful contribution to long-term financial sustainability</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthening our use of data, intelligence and insight to drive effective decision-making at all levels</li> <li>2. Continue to strengthen our approaches to quality assurance, practice improvement and performance management across the service</li> <li>3. Strengthen our approach to contract management</li> <li>4. Ensure a robust approach to satisfying key statutory and regulatory requirements</li> <li>5. Streamline and strengthen our approaches to performance management, governance (including effective risk management practice) and reporting</li> </ol>

# Delivering the Council Priorities

In support of the Council priorities the department has identified specific actions for 2023/24 for each of the priorities as detailed below.

## Resilient, healthy and safe communities

We will:

- Implement key actions to reduce discrimination and tackle inequalities as set out in the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025
- Develop the Council's Thriving Communities Strategy to support the embedding of the refreshed approach across the Council
- Review how the Council delivers home to school transport for children with special educational needs ensuring the most effective use of resources

## High performing, value for money and resident focused services

We will:

- Work with schools so that the percentage of children and young people attending good or better schools improves at a faster rate than nationally
- Provide consistent, high quality early help and safeguarding services for children and families across Derbyshire
- Support a resident-first approach through a range of mechanisms to improve access to online services and customer service performance including implementing a complaints and feedback system
- Implement actions from the review of Modern Ways of Working with a focus on the workstream exploring the future development of County Hall
- Embed the Council's approved People Strategy to deliver the Council's people ambition and the people priorities
- Keep on track to achieve all planned annual budget savings

## Effective early help for individuals and communities

We will:

- Work with partners to promote positive mental wellbeing and improve support for local people, with a particular focus on children and young people at both school and in the community

## A prosperous and green Derbyshire

We will:

- Continue to deliver the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan which sets out priorities to reduce the county's carbon emissions
- Work to reduced carbon emissions from the department's property and vehicles and procurement
- Work with schools and other education providers to implement new strategies and support, to enable children and young people to achieve their educational potential and begin to catch up on learning they have missed due to COVID-19 restrictions



# Delivering Operational Priorities

To support departmental operational priorities, we will also work to deliver the following key actions in 2023-24:

## **Executive Director & Performance, Quality and Partnerships**

We will:

- Further strengthen our partnership working to improve outcomes for children, by speeding up joint decision making with partners and tackling shared issues
- Implement a contract & supply chain management regime across the Council which drives Value for Money throughout the contract lifecycle

## **Early Help and Safeguarding**

We will:

- Help more children in care to return to live with their birth families, or to find other loving, permanent family homes
- Increase recruitment, utilisation, and retention of council foster carers to ensure that more children in our care can benefit from loving stable homes with foster carers
- Improve the quality of our support for children identified as being in need, so that concerns do not escalate
- Develop a holistic domestic abuse strategy and supporting delivery and commissioning plan including addressing issues in relation to violence against women and girls and the new legislative requirements for children and young people
- Agree the council's future offer of early help support and training to partner agencies and developed measures to monitor the effectiveness of early interventions for children and families.

## **Schools and Learning**

We will:

- Help and empowered more young people with disabilities to be independent in their transition to adulthood
- Strengthen the way we work in partnership with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their families, and implement a new local area strategy to assure the quality of the services and support they receive

- Increase the engagement of parents and carers using materials which support school readiness
- Strengthen the way we work in partnership with all education providers to create a clear local area understanding of need and challenges to collaboratively provide solutions

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# Workforce Priorities

The department has a workforce of 4,408 staff (including relief), (2,462.71 FTE) the breakdown by division is as follows:

Performance, Quality & Partnerships / Commissioning and Transformation – 734 (528.88 FTE)  
Early Help & Safeguarding – 1,265 (908.57 FTE)  
Schools & Learning – 2408 (973.26 FTE)

The ambitions set out in this plan can only be achieved by enabling all our employees to deliver their roles in the best possible way. To support our employees, we will work towards achieving the five People Priorities from the Council's People Strategy as follows:

## **Attract and retain the best people in the most effective way possible:**

- Develop a clear and compelling employee offering to attract talent
- Modernise our recruitment approach to ensure greater reach into talent pools
- Grow the culture of mutual trust

## **Promote diversity and inclusion, enable responsive workforce plans and develop credible reward strategies:**

- Implement the internal elements of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to ensure our workforce reflects our communities
- Create and deliver effective workforce plans to meet our current and future needs
- Develop a sustainable financial and non-financial reward offering for employees at all levels to support attraction and retention

## **Engage, nurture and develop our people and our future potential:**

- Embed our Engagement Strategy to 'listen, shape and respond'
- Enable professional and personal development aligned to successfully delivering organisational priorities
- Undertake succession planning for critical roles
- Develop and deploy a Talent Strategy that combines bringing new talent into the Department and growing existing people to achieve their potential

- Expand the performance management pilot to continue to grow a performance culture

**Enable organisational transformation and effective employee relations:**

- Deliver organisational transformation and change in consultation with key stakeholders
- Expert and professional guidance provided to managers to enable them to create a positive Employee Relations environment
- Annual departmental people plan delivered which encompasses all five people priorities and drives strategic change

**Enable and ensure the wellbeing and safety of our people:**

- Reduce sick absence through root cause analysis and implementing mitigating actions
- Promote physical and emotional wellbeing
- Improve health, safety and wellbeing

# Budget and Savings for 2023-24

The department's service delivery is supported by a budget of **£148.851 million** for 2023-24. The departmental budget includes **£1.884 million** one-off funding for service pressures for 2023-24, as set out in the table below:

<b>Service Pressure funding</b>	<b>£million Ongoing</b>	<b>£million One off</b>
<b>Special Needs (SEND) Home to School Transport</b> – Addressing increasing demand	-	<b>£1.084</b>
<b>Elective Home Education</b> - Addressing increasing demand	-	<b>£0.360</b>
<b>Social Workers</b> – Recruitment and retention via market supplement payment	-	<b>£0.400</b>

In addition, **£3,903,263** ongoing budget is held in contingency to support inflationary pressures in children's social care and home to school transport. This is not included within departmental budget figures above.

The department will be managing the delivery of total proposed budget savings for 2023-24 of **£0.500 million** by reductions in spend on children's social care placements achieved by developing an early help and prevention strategy, including: an edge of care service model, a fostering modernisation programme and procurement efficiencies.

# Monitoring the Plan

The ambitions set out in the Plan are supported by a detailed delivery plan which outlines how each of the actions set out in the Plan will be delivered, the details of the departmental budget and the department's forward plan of procurement. As well as monitoring the progress of the actions, the following measures will also be monitored:

## Key Performance Measures

- Equality and Diversity measures to be confirmed
- Achievement of identified annual budget savings (CS dept figures)
- Sickness as a percentage of available working hours (CS dept figures)
- Reduction in carbon emissions from 2009-10 baseline (CS dept figures)
- Spend on agency staff (CS dept figures)
- Carbon emissions from officers using own vehicles for council business (CS dept figures)
- Rate of improvement in the proportion of primary pupils attending good or better schools
- Rate of improvement in the proportion of secondary pupils attending good or better schools
- Proportion of practice areas within reflective case reviews judged to be good or better
- Social work assessments completed within 45 days
- Initial child protection conferences within 15 days
- Early help assessments completed within 45 days
- The percentage of DCC children's homes rated good or outstanding
- Average social worker caseload - children and families' teams
- Social work stability measure - % of social worker vacancies (before agency) (based on FTE counts) -
- Social work stability measure - % of social workers who are agency workers (based on FTE counts)
- Percentage of social worker vacancies (before agency) (based on FTE counts) – front-facing children and families teams
- Percentage of social workers who are agency workers (based on FTE counts) - front-facing children and families teams
- Percentage of children and young people on wellbeing for education recovery programme improving their attendance
- The proportion of children and young people on wellbeing for education recovery programme improving their attendance to at least 80%

- Children and young people on wellbeing for education recovery programme returning to full-time education
- Percentage point gap between children in care achieving a grade 4 or above in English and Maths at GCSE and all pupils (looked after continuously 12 months+ at 31 March)
- Percentage point gap between disadvantaged pupils in Derbyshire and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally achieving a grade 5 or above in English and Maths at GCSE
- Percentage point gap between disadvantaged pupils in Derbyshire and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally achieving the expected standard in phonics in Derbyshire
- Percentage of pupils achieving a grade 5 or above in English and Maths at GCSE (KS4)
- Percentage of pupils reaching the expected level in Phonics
- Percentage achieving the expected standard at Key Stage 2 combined Reading, Writing and Maths
- Attendance at primary school
- Attendance at secondary school
- Secondary school persistent absence rate (10%)
- Rate of permanent exclusions from school
- Rate of fixed term exclusions (suspensions) from school
- Percentage of sessions missed due to overall absence for pupils with an EHCP
- Persistent Absence rate (10%) (primary, secondary, special) for pupils with an EHCP
- Percentage of pupils with an EHCP receiving a permanent exclusion
- Percentage of pupils with SEN support receiving a permanent exclusion
- Percentage of CiC with at least one fixed term exclusion (looked after continuously 12 months+ at 31 March)
- Percentage of CiC classed as persistent absentees (looked after continuously 12 months+ at 31 March)
- Proportion of 16 to 17 year olds NEET and Not Known (3 month average)
- Number of children going missing from home or care (overall total) (rolling 12 months)
- Number of missing episodes (overall total)
- Percentage of children in care leaving through special guardianship orders where it is safe and appropriate to do so
- Percentage of children returning home after a period of being looked after (planned move)
- Number of children living with Council foster carers
- Increasing trajectory from baseline of specialist domestic abuse interventions that continue to completion
- Proportion of adults with learning disabilities who live in their own home or with their family
- Proportion of supported adults with learning disabilities in paid employment

- Percentage of KS5 SEN cohort in any Education or Employment destination in the year after KS5 (sustained for at least 2 terms)
- Percentage of parents/carers who feel that their child's EHCP has the right support in it
- Percentage of parents/carers who feel that their views were listened to during the assessment process
- Percentage of children reaching a good level of development (EYFS)

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