

Ambition for Every Child

A Children and Young People's Plan – Working Together to Make a Difference for Every Child in Westmorland and Furness

Introduction

Our ambition is for Westmorland and Furness to be a great place to live, work and thrive; a place where there are opportunities for children and young people to live happy healthy lives, safeguarded from harm in the place they call home and within their community.

We are ambitious for our children – we want to provide the right support for them to start well, to both learn and train well in excellent local settings, with the aim of young people becoming confident adults contributing to society as tolerant global citizens.

Every child is unique and precious; our role is to value and advocate for all our children, working in partnership with their families so that together they play an active part in the decisions that affect their lives.

It is our belief that we are more effective when we work together and through a more holistic approach across all sectors to make things happen more quickly for the common good.

As leaders and service providers we are committed to delivering consistently good statutory services, despite the increasing complexity and challenging context of doing so. To achieve this, we will make sure we have the capacity to deliver what we say we will do, by aligning our resources and working through our collective structures.

This is the first Children and Young People's Plan since becoming a new council in April 2023 – the plan provides a framework for our work together over the next five years. It will be updated every eighteen months to reflect our progress and new aspects of our work.

Councillor Sue Sanderson

Lead Member Children's Services

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Director of Children's Services

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Principles and Approach

We will continue to be inclusive of the whole system, entrusting others to lead work on our behalf and respecting both our collective responsibility and individual accountability.

We will work with energy and courage, to make a difference for our communities and their children. Through our collective leadership, shared passion, and commitment we **will**:

- Be proactive, innovative, and collaborative
- Reflect our diversity and uniqueness
- Provide equity and equality
- Learn from each other and share what works best.

To ensure our strategic approach is coherent, we will align our priorities and actions with those captured in other key strategies and plans including:



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Children and Young People's Views

Through regular surveys and direct work with children and young people they have told us that their priorities are:

- Feeling safe in their communities and in their homes
- Doing well at school, with help to progress into training or work
- Receiving support earlier for their health and wellbeing
- Taking part in activities or visiting places that are inexpensive

They feel worried about bullying online and on school buses, achieving at school without the support they need and the risk to their health by vaping.

They would like to feel more comfortable approaching the pastoral support in schools, see a more flexible curriculum for those struggling to cope full-time, education as early as possible about the dangers of vaping and access to multi-purpose spaces for 11–18-year-olds.

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Our Strategic Priorities for the next five years

Improving the life chances of children and young people by:

- strengthening the voice of the child in all our work
- promoting and supporting regular attendance at school
- developing the confidence of every child as a reader
- increasing educational achievement, especially in the early years and for the most disadvantaged
- ensuring high quality inclusive provision for all phases of education

Caring for and keeping children and young people safe by:

- providing help and support for children as early as possible
- securing consistently good social work practice
- supporting families to stay together
- providing stable homes for all our children

Ensuring access to services and provision by:

- developing provision to meet a range of needs for children to learn locally
- improving services available to support children's emotional health and wellbeing
- making sure there are enough places for those in need of our care

Working in partnership to manage our collective resources effectively by:

- providing a more efficient and cost effective home to school transport service
- maximising the efficiencies in our High Needs funding for SEND
- working with parents and carers of our children with SEND

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Action from April 2024 to December 2025

Over the following eighteen months we will be taking action to ensure progress towards the achievement of our strategic priorities.

Improving the life chances of children and young people by:

- designing and delivering an Early Help offer which meets national requirements and is focused on prevention
- developing and implementing a strategy for the Early Years
- establishing a strategic alliance with our providers focused on improving learning outcomes
- developing a model attendance policy for schools
- improving council wide support for children who are cared for, and care experienced
- agreeing a council wide approach to secure improved attendance

Caring for and keeping children and young people safe by:

- implementing the Children and Families Social Care improvement plan
- embedding the new National Social Care Framework
- delivering our cared for and care experienced strategy
- delivering a relationship based, trauma informed practice model
- evaluating the improvement in practice for those children living with domestic abuse and neglect
- developing a programme of work with North Yorkshire to improve practice and outcomes for young people who are care experienced
- determining our strategy for children's residential care following an independent review
- developing our response and quality assurance for unaccompanied asylum seeking children

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Ensuring children, young people and families can access services and provision by:

- implementing the education sufficiency strategy and organisation plan
- developing and extending local SEND and Alternative Provision
- reviewing and consulting on school admission processes and changes
- reviewing the effectiveness of our short breaks homes and offer for families
- developing a model to ensure early help services are delivered in community settings
- improving availability of services to support children's emotional health and wellbeing

Strengthening our partnership work by:

- securing the engagement and participation of children, young people and their families
- developing our working arrangements with parent carers who have children with SEND
- implementing the new arrangements for Working Together to safeguard children
- reviewing our arrangements for the Children's Safeguarding Partnership
- implementing a SEND Continuous Improvement Plan
- establishing a Regional Adoption Agency with Cumberland Council
- defining our approach to and developing a social work academy
- preparing collectively for SEND and Social Care inspections

Managing our resources more effectively by:

- implementing Home to School Transport Transformation Plan - Phase 2
- reviewing the schools Traded Services offer and strategy
- establishing rigorous monitoring process for hosted services (fostering, adoption, residential and edge of care)
- delivering the DfE Better Value in SEND programme of activity

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Governance and Accountability

Progress on this plan will be monitored regularly and reported to the Children's Programme Board. There is alignment with the work of the statutory and local partnership boards and their plans as illustrated in the diagram above. The appendix attached describes the role of each group and the interdependencies between them.

We will use internal and external quality assurance processes, including the views and feedback from children and young people to assess the impact our action is making for children, young people and their families.

The performance and impact of services will be considered using statutory measures and locally determined priorities, including those in the Council Plan:

Improving the life chances of children and young people

- Children attending an outstanding or good school
- Good levels of development achieved
- Attainment for all children including cared for, SEND, disadvantaged
- Overall absence for all children including those cared for and with SEND
- 16-17 year olds Not in Employment, Education or Training including care experienced and SEND
- EHCPs issued within timescales

Caring for and keeping children and young people safe

- Rate of children subject to a CP Plan per 10,000 population 0-17
- Referrals within 12 months of a previous referral (rolling 12 month)

Ensuring children, young people and families can access services and provision

- Permanent exclusions in relation to the number of pupils in all schools
- Children living in placements within 20 mile radius from home
- Care leavers in suitable accommodation (any age)
- Cared for Children living in the in same placement for 2 + years
- Children with EHCP educated in local provision (mainstream and special)

This plan will be updated annually - the next revision is due in September 2025