

Strategic Alliance Strategy for Children and Young People 2017-2020



Foreword

This strategy for children and young people in Dorset comes at a time of unprecedented challenge for all services that work with and for children, young people and families. Financial pressures coupled with increasing demand mean that all services are looking at how they remain focused on improving outcomes through working more efficiently and cooperating wherever possible. The Alliance remains committed to make the experience of childhood and early adulthood a good one. The Alliance partners want every child to have the opportunity to be confident in their relationships, achieving personal success as they grow into adulthood. We believe that by working together as organisations and with families and communities we will achieve this.

The strategy contains the broad ambitions that the Alliance has for services and their users. The Alliance knows the places where children, young people and families connect with our services. The strategy focuses on how we can measure the success of those contacts in keeping children and young people safe and on track and when a greater level of intervention is need, it happens at the right, time and in the right place and is proportionate

The plan also makes clear the important role of parents and carers, supporting them where necessary, to undertake their responsibilities to shape the experience of their children and young people. The Alliance needs parents, carers and communities to work with them to build aspirations and resilience, creating environments where children thrive.

The Alliance is a true partnership where all members are focused on making a real difference. This strategy sets out what success will look like for children and families and it is against these criteria that the work of the Alliance will be judged.



Introduction

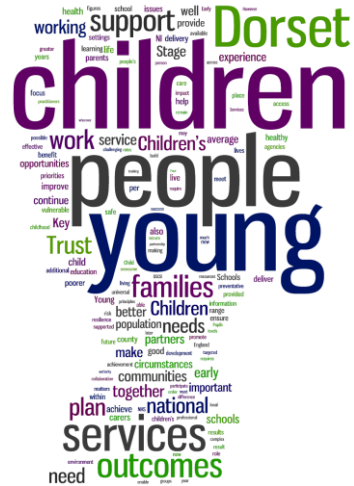
This strategy is about bringing together partners that provide services for 85,690 children and young people who live in Dorset County. The majority of these do well, but some experience poorer outcomes as a result of their vulnerability, family circumstances and sometimes because of where they live. These disadvantages can have lifelong consequences leading to disengagement from education and training, becoming a young parent or having unresolved emotional health and wellbeing issues. As such, we want everyone to commit to working together across the whole system to bring about change particularly in the emerging family partnership zones.

All services need to make sure that they intervene as early as possible, taking the right level of appropriate action to meet emerging needs. By doing this we can also contribute to reducing the need for more costly and intensive intervention. We are making the most of Dorset being an Early Intervention Pioneer Place so that we are able to introduce with others, approaches that answer the needs of children and young people through early help and action. We have high expectations and want the very best for all children and young people. To achieve this, we must use information to understand what the important issues affecting children and young people in the county are.

The five pillars that underpin the strategy come together to ensure that what we do are the things that matter. We all need to do more to find ways to make sure we place the right amount of effort and resources to make a positive difference. New models of working will be based on services, practitioners, families and communities working together to meet the needs of children and young people.

5 Pillars of Alliance Work				
Information and Knowledge	Early action and help	Priorities that matter	New models to deliver services	Whole family working
<p>Knowing our communities well</p> <p>Knowing where and to whom our services must be directed</p> <p>Knowing through measurement the difference we are making to individuals, groups and the whole population.</p>	<p>Promoting the role of universal services in being preventative.</p> <p>Intervening at the right time, to the right groups, with the most appropriate approach.</p> <p>Promoting the use of assessment to meet needs with the least intervention first time.</p>	<p>A relentless focus on improving the lives and experiences of vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Maximising the evidence base</p> <p>Changing the way we do things so that we achieve more.</p>	<p>Work with communities, parents and carers to meet the needs of children and young people</p> <p>Work with all sectors to develop cost effective services that meet the needs of Dorset Citizens</p> <p>Approach complex issues through a whole systems approach making the most of integration, coordination and cooperation by service providers.</p>	<p>Support partners to develop whole family approaches to secure better outcomes for children and young people.</p> <p>Work together to secure investment in whole family approaches that improve family functioning and reduce costs</p> <p>Champion whole systems change to enable whole family change</p>
Participation and engagement as the foundation for all service delivery				

The principles that inform our work



When we plan to create solutions to meet the needs of children and young people we will promote a range of principles and values that can be recognised by those who use our services. How we deliver our services is as important as what services we deliver.

The Strategic Alliance partners recognise and promote:

- The crucial importance of early years on shaping outcomes in later life.
- A rights based ethos that ensures children and young people will be involved and listened to in matters that affect them.
- That the stereotype of children and young people is an issue for them and needs to be challenged by celebrating their contributions to society.
- The right that children and young people have to enjoy their childhood
- The diversity of our 0-25 population through inclusive and personalised services.
- The important role that healthy self worth and resilience has in improving the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people
- That raising aspirations of individuals, families and communities is a recognised factor in improving the life chances of children and young people.
- That our services need to overcome the issues that prevent children, young people and families from accessing and gaining the benefit from them
- That children and young people growing up in poverty experience poorer outcomes and that an economically active family is important in improving life chances.
- Good relationships are important and are the foundation to parental and child wellbeing

Overall ambitions for children, young people and their families in Dorset

We know that many of the complex issues that some children, young people and their families face cannot be solved by one person, organisation or sector. The purpose of this strategy is to bring together organisations to work as a collaborative alliance with a shared sense of purpose to improve the lives of children and young people. This will require smarter services that create a culture of independence rather than dependence and make possible new ways of addressing some of the most challenging problems that children, young people and families face. We will work with children, young people, families, carers and communities to achieve the following ambitions:

- We will make sure Dorset is a good place to grow up and the wider opportunities for learning and living within the county continue into adulthood
- We will support parents and carers in their role as educators and role models, recognising that it is not who parents are or where they live but what they do makes the difference.
- We will make sure children and young people in Dorset enjoy and take up opportunities for learning at every stage and are supported to make the most of education and training made available to them once they are 16, so that they are qualified to take up their employment opportunities.
- We will work with others we will make sure more young people have access to a wide range of positive activities and are supported to access. We will promote children and young people's access to the natural environment in Dorset for learning and enjoyment
- We will continue to develop a culture of active participation with children, young people, families and communities in shaping the services which are important to them.
- We will strengthen early action in all the services that work with and for children and young people preventing the need for more specialist services.
- We will challenge young people's risk taking behaviour through better information, advice and support so that negative impacts of those behaviours is reduced
- We will support children and young people to become more resilient in coping with difficulties, to be able to take their active part in the economy and life of the county and to achieve their personal aspirations
- We will support families dependent on benefits and living on low incomes by working with a range of partners to identify potentially negative impacts and ways to mitigate these.

We want to improve the lives of all children, especially those who are more vulnerable. Poverty matters because, at its worst, it limits aspiration and creates individuals who have less resilience to challenge the effects of a range of circumstances that we can all face from time to time. The ambitions contained here aim to challenge that outcome by working together so that everyone has the opportunity to gain the most from living, learning and working in the county.

What are our the alliances strategic aims to make sure children and young people are safe, healthy, become independent and are prosperous

We together will encourage and help partners in places such as early years settings, schools and health services to make prevention a key part of their activity

Most children and young people access education and health care close to where they live. Through these places we need to help children and young people to be resilient and able to overcome some of the challenges they face from time to time. Resilience and aspiration are important aspects of how well children and young people achieve in every aspect of their lives. We need to work with communities to make sure that children, young people and families accumulate the 'resilience' factors that we know are highly significant for good outcomes. We also want to make sure that from the earliest opportunity children and young people are supported to develop aspirations for themselves, to be the best they can be. Family Partnership Zones are places where this level of co-operation and joint working will deliver differently to secure the necessary outcome.

Together we will commission and promote services that are proportionate to risk and are carefully targeted to those more disposed to poorer outcomes

Early action, both early in life and also early in a challenging episode for a child, young person or family is the most cost effective way to address emerging issues. For the child and young person getting things right early means that their prospects moving forward are better than they would have been without some form of intervention. We need services to respond proportionately. Services need to make sure they provide a targeted intervention according to need and that service users receive personalised packages of support. This will ensure that we efficiently provide the right amount of service to bring about change. We need to commission the right services, delivered at the right time and in places where people can use them and family partnership zones are integral to making this happen.

We will work together to make the experiences of children and young people in and leaving care, those who are disabled and those with enduring needs a good one.

For some children we know that we have to work in ways that enable them to overcome some of the challenges they face as they grow up. We are committed to make the experiences of those children and young people with more enduring needs as good as it can be and that children and young people are supported to reach their highest potential. For children and young people in more challenging circumstances support will be further enhanced through or commitment to make the most of the service reforms and policy initiatives that guide our efforts in this area.

We will through the integration of services around families solve whole family issues

The importance of whole family working to meet the needs of children and young people is recognised by the Alliance. It is one of the five pillars of the Alliance activity and members will build on the learning from Dorset Families Matter to influence how we work in the future. In every contact we should make sure that all services ask 'and what about the children' to make sure that children are safe, healthy and able to achieve. This will only be achieved through effective partnership working across all services that work with families.

Closing the Gap in Outcomes

All those who work for children and young people are committed to ensuring that they experience the best outcomes possible. However for some children and young people the circumstances of their lives can impede their progress towards the same level of achievement and outcomes as their peers. This may be because of where they live or because of other reasons such as poor school attendance, not participating in learning after they are 16, offending behaviour, becoming a parent in their teenage years or being in economically inactive households. Evidence also suggests that those with an education health and care plan, in the care of the local authority or receiving free school meals can also experience poorer adult outcomes. Collectively we all need to continue to promote strategies and plans that further embed integrated approaches to service delivery. We must make sure that those children and young people who find it more difficult to achieve, are identified and supported, so that the gap between them and their peers is constantly closed.

Fundamental to this approach is the development of Family Partnership Zones. The vision is that by focusing on prevention and early action we will improve outcomes and reduce reliance on a range of services. The prevention strand of this work will be about strong local provision based upon effective partnership working with universal services. These will include schools, health, police, housing providers and the voluntary and community sector.

This work will be focused on outcomes across the whole population of children and young people. It will develop the resilience of families and help them to identify relevant support in their community. It will support innovative partnerships to create and build on firm community foundations. It will pay attention to key milestones in the journey through childhood. We recognise that the successful delivery of early help can empower families and build independence and resilience. This will prevent the need for many families to come into contact with statutory services and reduce need for higher level interventions in the future.

The early action strand of this work is the reason for the creation of 'Family Partnership Zones'. Children's Services has aligned staff and services, including Children's Centres, Family Teams and Targeted Youth Support workers around seven geographical areas of Dorset loosely based upon school pyramids.

Making voices count

Children and young people have told us that they want service providers to listen to them on matters that affect them and we have a good track record of making this happen. This strategy has evolved through capturing the perspectives and views of children, young people and their families and we continue to make sure we listen to them. It also incorporates the knowledge that schools, service managers, front line practitioners and our colleagues from the District and Borough councils possess about the issues facing children, young people and their families. We hope that all those who have contributed to the development of this strategy can see their contribution to the priorities and principles that are the focus of our work over the next two years.

Young children have been consulted through Children's Centres. Young people have provided valuable insights through a variety of mediums including the work of our young inspectors and young researchers. Parents have been consulted about what support they require, enabling them to ensure their children are healthy, safe, happy and supported to achieve. Practitioners have provided information about what matters in particular areas.

This strategy is for the children, young people and families of Dorset and every effort has been made to make their voices count now and into the future.

Early Help and Prevention

In the current financial climate much of the work being undertaken by those who deliver services to children, young people and families has to be focussed on managing demand for higher cost, more intensive services. There is an important role for universal services to play in the delivery of early help and prevention and we need to continue to find an effective way to walk the line between user led co produced services and evidence informed practice. Our knowledge about the types of interventions that can prevent poorer outcomes for some children and young people is growing all the time, as is our awareness of the cost savings that can be accrued as a result of preventative action.

Through Family Partnership Zones we will seek to develop a model of prevention that begins in the first years of life and through universal services, where support is effective, at the earliest stage if problems do arise. This will contribute to the need to reduce spending on more intensive and costly services.

This strategy places at its heart the need for early action and prevention. We will orientate services towards acting early when issues arise and building resilience, good self worth and positive attitudes from the early years onwards. Many of the priorities rely on the effective delivery of the Early Help and Prevention Strategy that ensures that delivery and resources are coordinated to achieve the savings that result from working early and working together.

Workforce development

Working together requires confident, motivated and skilled workforces who are able to participate in multi-agency whole family work. We need a workforce that is committed to the principles stated in this strategy. We also need an innovative workforce that will embrace different ways of working. We want a workforce that is able to weave a different type of intervention where individuals, families and communities come together to solve the common issues that affect them.

Keeping children and young people safe

Currently The Dorset Safeguarding Children's Board (DSCB) is a statutory mechanism for agreeing how organisations in Dorset work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. The work of the DSCB aims to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people.

It is responsible for co-ordinating activities of partner agencies including:

- Developing policies and procedures
- Quality assuring child protection services
- Promoting good working practices
- Raising awareness in the community

The DSCB is not responsible for the delivery of services in partner agencies but will provide advice, support and guidance to agencies delivering safeguarding services.

Children and young people need to feel safe in all aspects of life. The DSCB safeguard all children from harm. In order to do this, the Board consider their impact on:

- All children e.g. those who attend school and receive standard healthcare.
- Vulnerable children needing extra support such as traveller children or children who are disabled
- Children who are suffering (or at risk of suffering) significant harm.

The DSCB continually monitors the effectiveness of its work, so that all children and young people remain safe and are cared for.

This strategy acknowledges the role the board has in securing outcomes for children and young people.

Keeping children and young people well

We know that children and young people's health and wellbeing is important if they are to achieve and become positive and productive adults. The Alliance sees great opportunities for further integration to support the aims of prevention, early action, responding promptly when needs arise with personalised support for those with more enduring needs. The Special Education Needs reforms are delivered in Dorset through a positive collaboration of partners, including health services and has facilitated change for the benefit of those with greater needs.

This strategy recognises the role of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Clinical Commissioning Group for Dorset has in maintaining and where appropriate improving upon our record of health and well being indicators. This will include making sure that all children and young people grow up in environments where they can thrive and are protected for the negative impacts of domestic violence, parental substance use and mental health issue, all of which can impact on their health.

Schools

Schools and Academies in Dorset are doing an excellent job. All children are required to be educated. Almost all go to school. Standards in relation to schools remain good. We need to make sure our relationships with schools and academies are positive and rewarding both for the school community and the learners who attend them. For some children, schools need to call on the support of other agencies and services. Whatever the level of support required, the school will still be in greater contact with the child, young person, or family than the support agency. For these reasons, schools are at the heart of this strategy. By working in partnership with schools we are able to support the raising of levels of achievement, and bring about improvement across the range of outcomes identified in this strategy.

The ambition in this strategy is to work with schools and academies to strongly support the generation of economic wealth and together we will ensure that young people of Dorset have clear pathways that enable them to contribute to, benefit from, and be competitive in the local economy.

Co-producing better outcomes

Better outcomes are achieved when professionals and practitioners work closely and constructively with those who use their services, be that in universal settings or through targeted and specialist services. We need a renewed focus on how children's services professionals and families can work together to create improved outcomes. This changes the role of the professional to encouraging service users to become – co producers of the outcomes and not just the recipient of a service, a consumer. The priorities and outcomes outlined here places service users as central assets in co-producing the type of service that meet need more effectively. Individuals, families and communities have a key role in creating a better world for all children and young people. Together we will make the ambitions in this strategy come to life.

Measuring impact

Actions that are intended to change the lives of children and young people need to be measured. We want to know that we are making a difference. Decisions relating to the commissioning of services for children and young people need to be firmly rooted in evidence about what works. It is also important to build the evidence base about interventions and innovative approaches to meeting needs. Through our involvement with the Early Intervention Foundation we are getting better at knowing what we are achieving through our efforts and what future costs we are avoiding.

A focus on outcomes will drive decisions about available resources. We need to ensure we do all that we can to support vulnerable children and protect them from experiencing poorer outcomes. This strategy places outcomes as the measure of our success and we will measure how much we do, to what quality, and who is better off as a result of our efforts.

Our approach to outcomes based accountability ensures that we are able to clearly and succinctly measure how much we are doing to what quality and ensure that we are improving lives and circumstances of children and young people. We want to know that our actions are providing the right skills and knowledge, the development of attitudes and behaviour that keep children and young people safe and healthy so that they grow up in environments where they are able to thrive.



Making a difference

We have established a number of clear priorities and actions that will ensure success for children and young people in Dorset. The Alliance is focused on making a difference and knowing what that difference will look like for children, young people and their families.

What will success look like for children and young people?

Children and young people will:

- Be safe wherever they are and know what it is to be healthy and adopt lifestyles that promote it.
- Enjoy positive relationships and have a good awareness of their personal strengths and qualities, knowing that their voice is heard and listened to on matters that affect them.
- Be confident and successful learners who can also achieve personal success as they grow into adulthood

What success will look like for parents and carers?

Parents and carers will:

- Be actively involved in their child's learning and development, supporting health lifestyles, and the happiness of their children.
- Take up the services that benefit them
- Be knowledgeable consumers of the services available to them and be able to make informed choices.
- Know that they are partners in the shaping, delivery and evaluation of services directed to their children and families.

To ensure we are making these differences we will talk to children, young people, their parents and carers to assess how far we have met these success criteria.

Concluding thoughts

In these financially challenging circumstances we need to remember that childhood matters. Childhood sets in place the scope of opportunities later in life, it fashions the nature of later experiences and determines the degree to which an individual has resilience to achieve what he or she aspires to.

This strategy sets the ambitions that we have children and young people and the need to work together to raise children's and young people's aspirations and foster self worth from their first contact with services until they arrive at adulthood equipped wherever possible to participate productively in the life of the county. The importance of cooperation and collaboration in securing outcomes for children and young people is highlighted against the recognised back drop of reducing budgets and resources.

Together with others, we will continue to work towards making sure Dorset is a good place to be when young and that the wider opportunities for learning and living within the county continue into adulthood. The future is inexplicably bound up in our children and young people's futures. This strategy is about making that future good for all.

