



# ***Achieving Excellence***

**A Three-Year Strategic Plan to develop, sustain and embed good and outstanding practice for all children, young people and families in Plymouth.**

***Progress Against Milestones  
2024-2025***



# ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE – REVIEW OF PROGRESS IN 2024-2025 Draft v0.1

Strategic Priority 1: Early Help		
<b>Vision:</b> A strong and effective early help offer which reaches children, young people and families who need it when they need it and improves outcomes and destinations for all children and young people and families.		
Agreed Milestones for 2024-25	Progress Highlights During the Year	Impact
Develop & implement Early Help Strategy & governance. Implement Family Hubs & review Children's Centre offer.	Robust strategy with key stakeholders, collaborative frameworks established. 11 Family Hubs developed, 2-year continuation contracts announced. Satellite sites in development. Increasing targeting of vulnerable groups.	Continue to extend across the City. 22,000 families part of the Family Hub network. Offer over 300 sessions per week. Deliver over 4000 weekly drop in sessions per year. Deliver over 100 courses per year. Supported over 600 families with 1:1 work. Supported over 220 Dads and Male carers. Supported 150 EAL Families.
Develop citywide database & implement Outcomes Star	Staff trained in Outcome Star. Being used to show family growth and progress.	Improved tracking of family outcomes and evidence of impact of interventions on key outcomes for priority groups (see case study).
Implement PSCP strategies in priority areas of neglect, CSA, Safeguarding adolescents, domestic abuse	Focused work across the partnership to implement partnership practice guidance and toolkits in identified areas.	Improved identification and multi-agency collaboration. Quality assurance evidence some improvement in use of toolkits (e.g. GCP2) but not yet evidencing consistently good practice.
Implement guidance on Ordinarily Available Provision	Co-production approach to develop. Resource launched in June 2024 with 80 partners, RISE partnership support for launch and implementation.	320 partners and families attended the OAP sessions. Over 80% reporting they feel that the resource will improve practice and understanding. An Increased percentage of schools are delivering a consistent universal approach. The EP team is reporting an improvement.
Implement SEND early help funding offer to schools	Targeted funding and mainstream banding proposal approved at School's Forum, 20 early adopter schools. Application window for targeted funding published and Panels established for April 2025.	Developed our targeted offer with the introduction of the expanded special schools' outreach and the targeted funding model. By September 2025 up to 30 mainstream school non EHCP internal provisions supporting 300 children in the city to access education. Targeted funding supporting up to 750 children without an EHCP to be successful in mainstream school.
Codesign local offer website with parent carer forum	Co-produced Graduated Approach to Inclusion website launched January 2025.	Over 2000 visits to the platform in its first month. Feedback from families and wider partners about the effectiveness of the resource. Reduced application for EHCNA (-25%) and increased engagement with early identification and targeted support including outreach.
Complete trials of early language development programme	A comprehensive training programme related to PEEP is being used across Family Hubs. Increased focus on ensuring that parents/carers have access to high quality information and support to develop home learning environments to help them be effective communicative partners for their children and provide	During 2024/2025, Plymouth Family Hubs successfully delivered 127 evidence-based courses, focusing on key areas such as attachment, home learning, early language development, school readiness, SEND support, and parenting skills. These courses reached and engaged approximately 1,000 parents and caregivers, providing them with practical tools, confidence, and knowledge to better understand, support, and connect with their baby or

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	conducive environments for language and communication development.	child. This offer forms a core part of our early help approach, ensuring families are supported to give their children the best possible start in life.
Develop support for vulnerable pupils to stay in education	EHE Prevention Pilot, early identification data used to work with small cohorts. FHs providing outreach. Improved support to children with SEND,	91.1% of young people SEND are in EET, an increase of 19% compared to January 2023 (72%). Numbers EHE have increased. Impact expected during 2025/26 as a result of refocused approach through Belonging Framework.

## Early Help: Examples of improved experiences of and outcomes for children and families

### Family Hubs providing early help and prevention to vulnerable families;

Concern: Parent needing support with behaviour strategies, child's emotional well-being/emotional regulation and mum's mental health.

Intervention: Incredible Years Home Coaching for managing emotional regulation and VIG for improving quality of attachment.

Impact: The child is now receiving frequent quality interactions with their parent which has been observed during the shared reviews. This will increase the child's sense of safety, security, and stability. Outcomes Star shows +4-5 across health, how I feel, keeping my children safe, friends and community, children's behaviour and routine.

Feedback: "At first I was nervous. However, as the sessions have gone on they have empowered me in ways I cannot believe. Thank you so much. You are awesome."

**Implementation of Ordinarily Available Provision;** A leader from the Council for Disabled Children has said: "That is gold standard, isn't it?! absolutely couldn't fault this...superb!". **A parent said:** "The site gave me tools to engage in a more equal conversation with the school about my child's support."

**Skills Launchpad:** A young person with a challenging home life, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and a young carer has been given a bus pass through to next march, and money to buy appropriate clothes so they can begin college in September and remain in education.

Father said "Thank you for the help and support to R through the funding and the work experience. It had made a big difference, R is now a lot more confident to do stuff on his own and taking control, like sending emails for information etc. and thank you so much for sorting payment for Ms Construction Skills Certificate Scheme (CSCS) card."

"I can't thank the funders enough for all the hairdressing equipment they have provided. Their support means the world to me and has really set me up for success in my career. I am so excited to start college with all my new gear and I feel more than ready for it!"

## Key Milestones for 2025-26

- Further develop our universal provision, Family Hubs and partnership early help in communities to better meet need in local areas and reduce the need for statutory interventions with families.
- Develop shared data and analytics to identify and reach vulnerable families early to provide early help support and prevent more complex needs.
- Increase number of assessments and interventions provided at the early help phase and reduce rates of statutory assessment.
- More families receive early help support and Outcomes Star evidences improved outcomes.
- OAP Guidance and best practice embedded, well understood and implemented by schools and settings - fewer children requiring statutory assessment.
- Local offer GATI website providing easy and accessible information fully utilised and effective implementation of targeted funding for schools.
- Evidence-based universal early language development programme in place across the city and evidence of more children accessing appropriate intervention.
- Fully implement Belonging Framework, identify and support vulnerable pupils to be in full time education reducing rates of EHE, part time timetables, exclusions and absence.
- Evidence-based packages of support are reducing rates of NEET in groups of at risk of young people.

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Strategic Priority 2: Targeted Help		
<b>Vision:</b> Practices which build family and community networks and support more children to remain safely in their families. Reshaping the Targeted Help offer to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and reduce the number of families receiving statutory assessments. Develop and implement clear pathways between early help, Targeted Help and statutory social work. Targeted approaches to improved educational attendance and attainment for vulnerable groups.		
Agreed Milestones for 2024-25	Progress Highlights During the Year	Impact
Continued delivery of an effective MASH response. Review criteria for 'MASH' response and develop as a single point of entry.	QA including SLIP evidence an effective 'front door'. Implementation of an Integrated Front Door model for multi-agency decision making on help and protection.	March 2025 - 70% of MASH contact decisions were made within one working day and 99% were decided within two working days. The number of referrals was sustained at a lower level - 255 in March compared to 443 in Jan 2024, as families receive earlier help (see case studies).
Extend Targeted Help offer. Develop clear and agreed pathways between services,	Family Hubs developing more targeted approaches. Targeted Help teams working closely with MASH and Children's Social Work Teams.	Refocused offer - Targeted Help Teams working closely with the MASH to identify families needing more help, 380 families receiving support from non-statutory services in March 2025 compared to 235 in May 2024.
Refocus Edge of Care to identify and support at-risk families.	Use of evidence based and relationship-based interventions working intensively to prevent young people from coming into care.	Supported 186 children this financial year; 72 homeless children - 12 were accommodated. One has been reunified, two have reunification plans.
Offer family-led support and focus Family Group Conferences (FGC) on all vulnerable families.	Increased FGC team resources and targeting of FGCs earlier; implemented guidance and training for social workers on use of Family Network Meetings.	336 children benefited of which 39% of interventions reached families as part of an early help intervention and 61% were part of a children's social care led intervention. Of the 45 families where intervention ended in one quarter two children were reunified, 12 remained with their families and 16 were placed within extended family networks.
The Virtual School ensures that the needs of children who have ever had a social worker are clearly identified, understood, and addressed	Enhanced educational outcomes and inclusion for children with a social worker (CWSW) through improved targeted support, data visibility, and strategic collaboration between the Extended Role Consultant, social work teams, schools and partners.	Early signs of positive impact, particularly in reducing exclusions and attendance for CiN (attendance +1.5% since 2023/24). Attendance within the Ever 6 cohort stable at 89.6% over the same period. Attendance for children subject to a CPP declined by 3.9%. Exclusions among children with a CiN plan reduced from 15 to 7, and for CPP decreased from 15 to 13.
Reduce repeat referrals	Focused work by managers to improve the quality of assessment and ensure support to families is sustained.	QA evidence some improvement in quality of assessment and the rate of re-referrals has reduced in March to 15.4% being within 12 months.
Improved approaches to improve school attendance particularly for vulnerable learners.	Our Place-Based Plan is focused on inclusion and belonging and is system-led by our schools, with multi-agency engagement in the plan. Strong partnership focus on priority vulnerable children including Electively Home Educated Children, introduction of Vulnerable Pupils Panel.	Overall attendance: Plymouth 1% below national. 0.3% improvement since 23/24. Primary 94.8% (National 94.8%). Secondary 90.0% (National 91.7%). Special school attendance 87.9% (National 87.1%). Persistent absence higher than the national average, +2.7% since last year. Primary persistent absence +1.5% since last year, +3.5% in secondary. Rate of severe absence increasing in secondary schools and special schools. Between 1st September 2024 and 30th April 2025 -10% in the rate of suspensions for

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		children with SEND compared to the same period in 2023/24. -33.5% permanent exclusions. Suspensions of children requiring SEN Support have fallen by 18% and suspensions of children with EHCPs by 26%. Vulnerable Pupils Panel has prevented 13/14 children from being permanently excluded.
<b>Targeted Help: Examples of improved experiences of and outcomes for children and families</b>		
<p><b>Concern:</b> Concerns about young person's identity, self-esteem and the impact of domestic abuse and drug use in the family.</p> <p><b>Intervention:</b> Working as part of a focused, persistent and well-planned Team Around the Family including FSW, Family Hub, school, Harbour, Housing.</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> improved school attendance, self-esteem, stable housing, reduced DA, family relationships. Engaged with support services to sustain changes.</p> <p><b>Concern:</b> Concerns about DA and placing young person placing themselves at risk. At risk of care.</p> <p><b>Intervention:</b> Assessment completed including using Graded Care Profile 2 including impact of DA. Referral to young people's substance misuse service and for a FGC.</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> school attendance has increased from around 35% up to 60%. Remains at home supported by grandparents. Improved home environment and relationships.</p> <p><b>Feedback:</b> Mum said it had been difficult to engage at the start, but she was very grateful for the help and was more confident for the future.</p> <p><b>Concern:</b> Family crisis affecting YP behaviour and her relationship with her Nan's (where she was living). At risk of care.</p> <p><b>Intervention:</b> Assessment included wider family where things escalated affecting the YP's mental health and trauma. Team Around the Family put in place with a plan for direct work with the family, including wider family network, school, CAMHS, Family Matters. FGC planned to develop family plan.</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> relationships and school attendance improved. Stable home arrangements.</p> <p><b>Feedback:</b> Grandmother said the support had helped her to understand teenagers better and to rebuild her relationship with her granddaughter.</p> <p><b>EHE case study;</b> 16 year old boy who suffers with poor self-esteem and mental health subject to a child protection plan as a result of concerns about neglect and education needs not being met through EHE. He was bullied in school so didn't want to attend. Through the work with health, Children's Social Care, mum and the EHE Team his mental health improved and he grew in confidence. As a result, the child protection plan ended. He is now attending college and his mental health is much improved.</p>		
<b>Key Milestones for 2025-26</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalise the partnership review of Building Support threshold document to ensure families get the right help at the right time.</li> <li>Fully implement the <b>Families First – Children's Service</b> so that more families access earlier family help.</li> <li>Ensure support enables families to make sustained change reducing the % of families experiencing re-referrals.</li> <li>Extend the use of family decision making models so that the right children are subject to child protection and increasing the use of connected carers when care is needed.</li> <li>Further development of family help interventions to reduce the number of children and families requiring statutory interventions.</li> <li>Development of evidence-based interventions to further reduce the number of children entering care in an unplanned way.</li> <li>Fully implement Extended Virtual School CPD offer across services, schools and settings.</li> <li>Children at risk of poor attendance identified at the earliest point, targeted support put in place leading to a reduction in children with persistent or severe absence.</li> <li>Further develop approaches with partners to increase the number of children with SEND benefiting from inclusive approaches.</li> <li>Develop approaches so that more disabled children benefit from access to short breaks in inclusive universal settings.</li> </ul>		



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Strategic Priority 3 – Timely and Effective Social Work Practice		
<b>Vision:</b> A good assessment, planning and endings for every child and young person which supports needs being met in a timely way. High quality supervision and evidence of the impact of management oversight for all workers/children. Improvements in priority areas; Out Of Hours, LADO, Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, Children's Disability Team.		
Agreed Milestones for 2024-25	Progress Highlights During the Year	Impact
Improved approaches in priority areas post Ofsted; LADO, OOH, UASC, CDT.	Improved practice arrangements implemented in all areas through accelerated improvement plans.	Strengthened practice evidenced in QA and SLIP reviews.
Timely and consistent quality of assessment & response in Initial Response.	Implementation of Performance Surgeries, workforce development programme and improved management oversight and quality assurance.	In March, 82% of referral visits were made within 5 working days and 96% within 10 working days. Audits are identifying more 'good' and 'outstanding' elements in assessments. At the end of the year 90% of assessments had been completed within 45 working days.
Maintain caseloads within agreed ranges.	Additional capacity agreed when needed.	Caseloads maintained at 19.4 children per worker.
Assessment, planning, and endings in line with practice standards.	Implementation of workforce development and close oversight of transfers and closures.	At the end of March, 92% of children in need, 89% of children on child protection plans and 99% of children in care had an up-to-date plan. 100% of CP and 94% of children in care reviews were on time.
Unborn baby practice and assessment tool.	Panel meetings throughout the year and development of updated pre-birth assessment tool kit.	Better early assessments and decision making. More babies supported to remain with families or experience timely decision making where this is not possible (see case study).
High quality supervision and management.	Focused attention by managers.	84% of supervision across the service on time at the end of the year.
Timely PLO practice and earlier permanence planning.	Focused tracking, oversight of practice and work with court partners.	40% experience timely pre-proceedings and 35% are within the 26 week target timescale. Focused work with partners in response.
Revised Academy offer focused on core priorities/teams.	Updated training delivered to all practitioners and managers on assessment, care planning and toolkits developed on direct work.	Quality assurance evidences some improvement in the quality of practice in key areas following training but not yet consistent for all children.
Impact of Independent Chairs on planning and outcomes.	Delivery of development programme with SLIP support to improve evidence of impact of IRO.	Increased evidence of IRO's utilising escalations to drive improved outcomes for children.
Early permanence planning with close tracking.	Best practices from SLIP and focus on matching and SG.	More children matched with long-term carers.
Support to care leavers in custody.	Improved approaches with partners.	Improved Pathway Planning includes improved support where needed.
Accommodation & EET outcomes for care leavers.	Strengthened individualised planning with partners for young people at risk of poor outcomes.	Over 93% in suitable accommodation, 10 in unsuitable reduced from 18 in May 2024. EET improved to 46%.
Timely and effective social work practice – Improved experiences of children and families:		

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**Unborn baby** commenced Pre-Proceedings well before baby's EDD due. Older siblings were already within Care Proceedings given considerable concerns about parental capacity and impact of substance misuse. Team ensured all assessments gave consideration to the capacity of parent's in also caring for the unborn baby in addition to as well as separately from the other children. The team were able to achieve separation at the first hearing and looking for a Fostering for Adoption placement.

**Child entered into Pre-Proceedings** which concluded in 14 weeks. A parenting assessment was completed alongside demonstrating that the parent's had recognised the safeguarding concerns surrounding their alcohol misuse. A Family Plan was developed setting out how the child was to be cared for safely when parent's used alcohol. This child was diverted away from care proceedings due to effective use of PLO and Family Plan.

**Child subject to Care Proceedings** previously and placed with her Father. Concerns now raised about her father's criminal activity placing the child at risk. The Father gave his agreement for her to come into care with her Grandmother. Care Proceedings were initiated and the social worker worked well with the Fostering Team to conclude proceedings within 18 weeks with a Special Guardianship Order being granted.

**Care Leavers in EET; working intensively to engage young people in personalised plans and interventions, supporting them to re-engage in EET.**

Young person had become NEET following experiences of harm and trauma in her family environment. She built a relationship with the Youth Outreach Coordinator and has enrolled onto a **Level 3 Business course at Discovery College** and settled in well. The College's Student Liaison Officer continues to support her with college life.

Outreach Coordinator supported young person to take part in a **1:1 DJ tutorial session through On Course South West** funded by the Virtual School. Attended an **Employer Expectation session** with the Youth Hub, completed a CV, an interview workshop and signed up for a **Get into Music Production and Djing course**.

## Key Milestones for 2025-26

- Implement the Families First Partnership reforms with partners, so that more families benefit from a stable workforce, earlier family help and a confident child protection response when it is needed and the right children are subject to CIN, CPPs, the PLO and in care at the right time.
- Implement seamless pathways between Early Help, Targeted Help and Statutory Support to ensure families are better supported when statutory teams no longer need to be involved and ensure that change is sustained.
- Implement the 'Rethink Formulation' practice model to support focused workforce development with managers and ensure assessment, planning and supervision supports reflective and focused interventions for children.
- Ensure effective family decision making models ensuring Family Network Meetings are held with all families at an early point, and Family Group Conferences when needed, to ensure that family and community resources are maximised in the family's support plan.
- Fully implement the tools developed by our Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership to improve partnership approaches when concerns are identified about child sexual abuse, neglect, domestic abuse and adolescent exploitation.
- Implement practice arrangements so that disabled children receive high quality assessments, plans and reviews which ensure they receive the right support.
- Further develop approaches so that children in care and care leavers experience good health, accommodation, education and employment outcomes.
- Refocus the One Children's Service leadership and management development programme for TM/SM/HoS to improve confidence in and application of practice standards and embed the changes being made to leadership behaviours, strategic planning and improvement.

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Strategic Priority 4 – The Right Homes for Cared for Children at the Right Time		
<b>Vision:</b> Use of tools and assessment to support children ready for step down from residential. Foster For Plymouth recruitment and retention and increased use of connected carers. Local market growth. Permanence for children including through reunification and support to Special Guardians and kinship carers.		
Agreed Milestones for 2024-25	Progress Highlights During the Year	Impact
Evidence-based assessment for children to step-down from residential to fostering.	Utilised BERRI tool to identify children for fostering, support planning and placement finding.	Five children progressed step downs to fostering, eight in introductions, 20 searching for foster carers.
Improved placement request forms to support improved placement finding, matching and stable care.	Training and support implemented. Strong focus on stable care in workforce development including work with Dorset.	Some improvement noted in QA. Placement finding remained very challenging due to a national shortage of foster carers and an increase in the number of children in care to 530 at the end of the year. including 18 UASC. However, most children in care continue to experience good placements stability, 10.9% have experienced three or more placements within a year and 72.7% of children experience good long-term stability.
Foster carer recruitment.	Increased recruitment activity including through SW Hub.	117 households offering 241 placements compared to 104 households offering 212 placements in April 2024.
Implement commitments from Fostering Summit.	Implemented commitments including increased support, training and Council Tax Exemption.	Increased recruitment (see above) and foster carer satisfaction.
Implement first Mockingbird constellation.	Implemented in November 2024 with plans for two more progressing well.	No placement breakdowns from foster carers within the Mockingbird.
Implement High Support foster care model to support children to step down from residential.	Developed and implemented including enhanced financial package and support. Launched to carers.	Four Foster for Plymouth carers considering becoming High Support carers. One achieved successfully realizing savings.
Implement Special Guardianship Support Team and improved support to SG carers.	Team in place, comprehensive offer to SG and kinship carers developing.	An increase in contact with Special Guardianship and kinship carers during the year.
Increase supported lodgings provision.	Included in updated Sufficiency Strategy and a refreshed market development plan.	Good sufficiency of provision for young people ready for supported living 16+.
Implement Emergency fostering model.	Model agreed, recruitment to the scheme is underway.	Emergency carers not yet identified. This is a priority for marketing plans in 2025-26.
Expand residential provision in Plymouth.	Business cases developed, capital agreed for four homes. Properties being purchased to progress agreed models. Plan for young people involvement.	First children's home to open in 2025-26.
Children in care experience improved education provision.	Virtual School service improvement plan included strong focus on ensuring children are in school.	Improved quality of PEPs and access to tuition. Improved joint working between education and SWs, and support from Virtual



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		School and Access and Attendance Officers. Reduction in number of children without a school place.
<b>Experiences of Children and Families:</b>		
<p><b>Child in Year 11 (aged 15)</b> and has no EHCP. Missing education since the end of September 2024 when they were placed out of area to a residential setting. <b>The Virtual School</b> immediately gave information to the social worker regarding appropriate schools and applications were made to local, mainstream schools. Whilst awaiting a school place, the Virtual School organised two hours of daily, online English and maths tutoring. Since starting the school at the beginning of December 2024, he has made a positive start, and the school are supportive of their needs. The school is aspirational about him achieving GCSEs and are confident that he will gain English and Maths.</p> <p><b>Reunification;</b> Over 6 months Reece’s reunification to Ashley’s care progressed. From May 2023 Reece started to have overnight stays with Ashley and Sharon. This went well and Reece was determined he wanted to move to live with his Dad. Over the summer Reece stayed with Ashley and Sharon more often. After thorough assessment, careful thought and consideration, Reece’s wish was achieved! Ashley has provided his views of their journey: <i>“Having Reece finally able to live with us means the world to us, we can’t believe we are finally here at the end. Being able to give Reece a secure safe and loving family environment has always been our top priority and thanks to you all we can now give that to him. On a personal note, we’d like to thank you Lucy for getting us to this point. Your hard work has not gone unnoticed, it’s been a pleasure having you as Reece’s social worker.”</i></p> <p><b>I am “L”, I am 15.</b> I came into care after my SGO broke down; my grandparents struggled to understand my needs and sometimes they hit me. I have lived in a lot of places since coming into care. My social worker said some of my homes were “unregistered” but behind the scenes she had found a new home for me. When it was sure I could move, my social worker spoke to me and for once I knew about this before it happened. The staff from the home came to meet me first and I got to see information about the home before I moved there which was great. I asked if my Nan would be able to be there on the move day and this was arranged too. I am settling in quite well so far.</p>		
<b>Key Milestones for 2025-26</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further develop provision for children at risk of care to further reduce the number of children who come into care in an unplanned way.</li> <li>• Further strengthen placement brokerage to maximise placement opportunities within the external market.</li> <li>• Further strengthen stable care arrangements for all children in care, including focused work for children at risk of unplanned placement moves.</li> <li>• Support a further cohort of children to step-down from residential care to a family setting in accordance with their agreed plan.</li> <li>• Increase the number of children experiencing successful reunification.</li> <li>• Deliver an effective marketing approach and achieve a net gain of at least 20 Foster for Plymouth foster carers offering placements to all age groups.</li> <li>• Increase sufficiency of foster placements for priority groups, including UASC, sibling groups and short breaks for disabled children.</li> <li>• Embed Mockingbird and implement further constellations.</li> <li>• Further extend the High Support and emergency foster care models.</li> <li>• Embed special guardianship and kinship carer support offer.</li> <li>• Take forward agreed approach to extending residential provision in Plymouth and develop the external market in priority areas in accordance with our Sufficiency Strategy.</li> </ul>		

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Strategic Priority 5 – Sufficient Provision which meets Local Needs		
<b>Vision:</b> Ensuring sufficient high quality provision and take up. The development of a responsibility-based model for Alternative Provision. SEND provision that meet need and emerging need.		
Agreed Milestones for 2024-25	Progress Highlights During the Year	Impact
Improved approach and timeliness for children needing an Education, Health and Care Plan.	Additional capacity and training in team. Improved processes and decision making within team providing more timely response. Implementation of improved consultation for specialist and mainstream schools. Development of targeted support funding model to improve additional support for children with SEND. Effective operation of specialist panel. Improved engagement with parents.	EHC needs assessment timeliness improving to 90% in March 2025 compared to 44.1% in March 2024. Clear plan in place for completion of outstanding plans and reviews and good progress being made each month and progress is currently above target. Through the introduction of infographics, face-to-face forums and video feedback families report feeling heard and well informed about the local improvements.
Strengthened Alternative Provision (AP) offer, governance and support arrangements	New Alternative Provision Framework to ensure that children and young people are well served by their alternative provision when it is needed. New contract monitoring model in place for ACE Schools Plymouth. Children with EOTAS provision tracked by 0-25 SEND Team.	Improved tracking and support for children with additional educational needs.
High-level costed sufficiency proposals and implementation plan for specialist SEND and AP provision	Sufficiency plan for SEND in place and development of capital programme.	£13m high needs capital allocation agreed to deliver a new SEND Sufficiency Plan to increase special school places by 88, and to increase resourced provision across the city to enable more children with an EHCP to be educated in their local mainstream school.
Review and develop plan for increased capacity for identified needs across the city	Resources provision reviewed and monitoring improvements made. One additional resourced provision identified. SEND capital programme in motion	Increased capacity for specialist resources and provision available in line with need.
Effective processes for allocating specialist resources and exceptional provision	Full monitoring processes, visits schedule and audits in place. Improved understanding of quality of provisions.	Better allocation and oversight of specialist resources.
Review current short breaks provision and develop appropriate local offer	Full review completed, plan in place to improve clarity on eligibility and monitoring of provision including planned increased investment in inclusive universal provision.	There has been an increase in demand for short breaks from 246 in 2022-23 to 320 in 2024–25, and an increase in commissioned residential hours from 3744 in 2022–23 to 5616 in 2024–25. Good inspection of Downham House residential short breaks provision.
<b>Experiences of Children and Families:</b>		

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**Ofsted Inspection of Downham House Short Breaks Home:** “Children really enjoy their short breaks at this home. Parents describe their children’s excitement when they go to the home. One parent described the managers and staff as an extended part of their family. During the inspection, staff were happy to see the children when they arrived, and their interactions were nurturing.”

**Feedback from parents about the new SEND provision resource in mainstream schools:** *"Since the group started, I have noticed a positive shift in his confidence, and engagement with the school. The nurturing environment made possible by small group size, enables the staff to be able to begin working on helping him understand and express emotions in a way that simply isn't possible in his classroom. The provision is able to cater for the unique challenges for each individual child – and they have been specifically working with him on important social interactions skills like sharing ideas and teamwork. What's made the biggest difference is how the group taps into special interests to spark learning. Lessons appear to be brought to life – accommodating sensory activities, movement, outdoor play, and meaningful community activities. Children like mine often carry a lot of shame – for not fitting in, for struggling in ways that are misunderstood or overlooked. The group has given him a chance to feel something different: pride."*

## Key Milestones for 2025-26

- Continue to ensure EHCPs are more timely and implement the revised model of funding to support fewer children to need an EHCP.
- Implementation of SEND capital strategy to develop provision to meet need in priority areas.
- Clear vision and purpose for the Alternative Provision system which underpins the operation of day-to-day processes.
- Service level agreements embedded through the termly monitoring meetings.
- Decision-making groups and financial controls in place setting out trajectories and mitigation arrangements.
- Improve local provision to reduce demand for Home to School Transport.
- Develop an updated short breaks offer, and a co-produced commissioning approach that is flexible, equitable and accessible and meets needs.

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## Strategic Priority 6 – Preparation for Adulthood

**Vision:** Strengthening support at key points of transition. Earlier planning with all partners. Confirming and implementing expectations for priority/vulnerable groups with partners (including young people and residents with SEND, Care leavers, young people in criminal justice system, parents and carers, young carers). Lifelong learning and delivering Unlocking Plymouth's Potential.

Agreed Milestones for 2024-25	Progress Highlights During the Year	Impact
Updated framework for Preparing for Adulthood	Monthly Transitions Meeting and Corporate Parenting Managers Operational Group established; multi-agency board created.	Improved transitions planning and support, collaborative approach.
Person-centred pathways for transitions	Task group for deferred school entry and Place-Based Work on transitions; updated CDC page and training sessions for SENCOS. Improved identification and support for young carers.	Better care plans, positive transitions, collaborative approach. Increased rates of young people in EET.
Early pathways to adulthood	Finalised Transition Protocol from CSC to ASC; added children to Tracker; drafted Transitions Pathway document.	Earlier assessment, smoother planning, clear pathways.
Apprenticeships and supported internships	Growing Supported Internships; successful Your Future Programme.	High EET status, positive transition outcomes. EET status at 90.4%;
T Level delivery	Mapped skills used by HE and FE providers to bridge gaps; new courses in nuclear engineering, construction.	Enhanced T Levels aligned to growth sectors.
Family Hubs for careers guidance	11 Family Hubs commissioned; 10 open, 1 opening April 2025; universal, early help, safeguarding, and SEND support.	Support for parents and carers with children aged 0-19 (up to 25 for SEND).
Processes for transitions of children with EHCP	Improved EHCP timeliness; reshaped decision-making panel; team training plan; 5 young people transitioned to adult social care.	More timely decisions, consistent EHCPs, improved support. 89% now EET from 72% in Jan 2023
Skills offer baseline	Mapped skills to bridge gaps between supply and demand.	Development of new courses, enhanced T levels.

### Experiences of Children and Families:

**Skills Launch Pad;** A young person with a recent Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis and mental health issues who struggled to take part in education or even leave their most days. They were able to access 1:1 mentoring and support to help reintegrate with the world and education through the progression fund and is now on a course at the Arts University.

**Your Future;** C has self-diagnosed ADHD and struggles with managing her time, commitments and workload, often overcommitting and becoming overwhelmed. Working part-time in a local care home, she aspires to be a registered nurse. She was experiencing significant barriers in her place of work which were contributing to existing mental health concerns. The Your Future team re-connected her with a range of local support services including her GP, Plymouth Options, and The Zone. She is due to complete her Skills Scan at OCSW in readiness for undertaking Maths Functional Skills and has been booked on to a Careers Support Surgery session with Clarion Housing.

### Key Milestones for 2025-26

- Sustain focused partnership approaches to further improve preparation for particularly vulnerable groups including young people with SEND and care experienced young people.
- Operate effective person-centred pathways and transitions for all priority groups.

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- Development of skills built across the four delivery plans within the Plan for Economic Growth.
- Join up training and skills provision across the city to deliver a united and streamlined skills offer.
- Increase traineeships and apprenticeships at higher levels and in STEM industries.
- Ensure talent pipeline of graduates and people with higher level skills is enhanced and aligned with priority growth sectors.
- Deliver improved approaches to supporting identified groups including care leavers into employment.
- Develop and implement support for entry level, basic and functional skills (including maths, English, digital, employability and transferable skills).
- Further develop approaches to support young people with an EHCP to access appropriate pathways to transition into adulthood.

## Strategic Priority 7 – Workforce Development

**Vision:** Workforce charters based on 'High Expectations, High Support, High Challenge'. Targeted recruitment for priority groups. Retention and workforce development including a refocused Academy Offer and SEND and partnership workforce development in priority areas. Leadership and Management Development Programme to develop high performing managers and leaders.

Agreed Milestones for 2024-25	Progress Highlights During the Year	Impact
Revised Academy offer	Deliver updated content on assessment, planning direct work and supervision for the social care workforce.	QA showing some evidence of improved quality of practice but not yet consistent for all children.
Management/leadership development programme to develop skills and behaviours.	Delivered programme for all managers focusing on workforce performance and people management. Coaching and action learning delivered for HoS and SM and sustained Leaders for Excellence programme for all managers.	Good engagement in programme (90%) and positive feedback about learning and behaviours. Evidence of improved management - average days lost to sickness reduced from 15 days to 9 days.
Management 'masterclasses'	Included in the Leaders for Excellence programme.	Improved cross service approaches in key areas including school attendance and SEND.
Review team structures and implement career progression opportunities for all staff	Career progression framework reviewed and strengthened for social workers.	Improved social work retention and increased stability in the appointment of managers.
Recruit to priority groups (EPs, managers and qualified SW Workers). Retention & % of permanent SW staff.	Comprehensive programme of work to recruit experienced social workers supported by cross Council group. Including updated website, attending job fairs, events for agency staff and online recruitment events.	Recruited to management posts. 6 SW recruited. Vacancy rates reduced to 22%. 7 agency staff moved to permanent contracts. Use of agency staff reduced by 18%.



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Develop team charters & complete a skills audit based on the agreed values and behaviours framework.	All teams sign up to the Ten Wishes framework and managers have begun implementing the values and behaviours framework.	Increased workforce stability.
SW caseloads & supervision achieve target levels.	Focused management action throughout the year to ensure caseloads remained within target ranges and to ensure all workers experienced timely supervision.	Caseloads remained within target ranges across the workforce (19.4 children) and 84% of supervision was on time across the whole service at the end of the year. QA identified that more work is needed to ensure all supervision is reflective and supports progress for children.
SEND & education of children to be a focus within the social care workforce development programme.	Delivered SEND training, workshops, and e-learning across the service. Young people have produced guidance for staff. Over 1000 participants complete the baseline SEND training across the local area to provide a consistent understanding across the system as a whole	Increased understanding of responsibilities evidence in practice. Quality assurance identified support more needed for social workers with the completion of assessments for EHCPs.
Early career opportunities in place to support us to grow our own talent.	Good progress in advancing Early Career Framework, delivering Step Up to Social Work, trainee routes, and student placements.	All ASYEs progressed to year 2. Recruited 8 ASYEs and 2 trainees this year.

## Key Milestones for 2025-26

- Deliver revised Learning Academy offer in light of evidence from quality assurance to focus on core practice improvement priorities and support the implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme.
- Update the curriculum and deliver a programme supporting the implementation of the Rethink Formulation practice model.
- Extend the Learning Academy to provide learning and development offer across the Children's Services Workforce.
- Improve retention and workforce stability, including for priority groups of Educational Psychologists and experienced social workers.
- Lead the implementation of an updated Children's Workforce Strategy across the partnership.
- Improve skills and confidence in SEND and education of children with a social worker across the workforce.
- Support management and leadership development programme.
- Introduce partnership workforce induction arrangements for priority groups, including supporting locality models.
- Implement effective career progression pathways for all groups.

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## Strategic Priority 8 – Performance Management and Quality Assurance

**Vision:** Practice standards are clear and embedded across Children's Services. Strengthen quality, quantity and impact of quality assurance across Children's Services, building on practice strengths and closing the loop on learning. Strengthen partnership quality assurance processes. Performance data which measures and reports the right things and supports improvement.

Agreed Milestones for 2024-25	Progress Highlights During the Year	Impact
Quality assurance across services	<p>Significant increase in QA activity across all service areas including Practice Weeks in all areas, monthly audits, dip sampling, IRO escalations and QA with PSCP partners. Stronger focus by Practice Learning Reviewers on 'closing the loop' on learning with action planning and engagement of service meetings.</p> <p>Implementation of multi-agency QA model in SEND including decisions around EHCPs and funding approvals. Business case for Invasion 360 to improve consistency in QA.</p>	<p>Dip samples of assessments evidence improved identification of risks, protective factors, parents' views and children's histories within assessments, more consistency with the sharing of multi-agency information and more assessments being written to children. Increase in IRO escalations; 303 between April 2024 to February 2025, an increase of 300% from the previous year.</p> <p>Findings from QA addressed in training of EHCP Officer and now informing EHCPs.</p>
Track audit actions	Implemented Moving Forward Meetings, audit action tracker, reassigned audits and close tracking by PLRs.	All actions on inadequate audits addressed.
Deliver Practice Weeks	Multi-agency and service-specific practice weeks held in all areas feedback, learning sessions held following weeks and action plans produced. Follow up weeks held to review progress.	Care Leaver practice improvement plan has enabled rapid progress with Pathway Plans. Follow up practice week in Front door found improvement in quality of assessment since the previous review.
Expand EHCP quality assurance	EHCP auditor recruited, monthly multi-agency audits, training and workshops.	Specific SEND training and workshops were developed using the learning from the quality assurance activity. A new EHCP template and guide produced by young people setting out what young people want social workers to focus on when they complete the EHCP paperwork.
Improved engagement of children and families in practice and decision making.	10 Wishes remains well embedded across partnership. Children and parents' views are collected via monthly audits and all QA including via QR code questionnaires. Sustained programme of groupwork for priority groups including Youth	Young people have written various sections of the Ordinarily Available Provision resource: <i>"I love that we have been able to help and show schools what works for us – we want it to be shared with everyone"</i> . Young people attended the SEND Improvement Board in Oct 2024. In advance, they

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	Ascends and care experienced. Children and young people now part of Scrutiny arrangements. Learning from families who we have struggled to engage is being used to influence practice improvements. Young people have produced EHCP guidance for SWs. Young people video on language used shared in the newsletter. Feedback obtained from CIC about their IROs.	had created a video which presented their thoughts about inclusion. They returned to the Board in March 2025 and further regular Board attendance is planned. Attendance Survey completed by c2200 parents and 1500 children to inform the Attendance Campaign and Attendance Strategy. Feedback from young people in Practice Weeks informed practice improvement plans, e.g. Pathway Plans. CIC feedback about IROs has improved children's communication in meetings by 7%, escalation and resolution completions by 39% and IRO visits by 7%.
Operate Performance Boards and monitor priority improvements	Daily/weekly/monthly performance boards in all service areas using performance scorecards. DCS chairs monthly QA and Performance Improvement Board.	Improvements include timeliness of assessments, supervision and Pathway Plans.

## Key Milestones for 2025-26

- Further develop the Quality Assurance Framework to bring together a range of qualitative information from audits, complaints and engagement with children and families, to provide a full evaluation of practice strengths and drive further improvement.
- Embed model of young people challenge in both Scrutiny and Corporate Parenting Board.
- Feedback to staff highlights good practice and supports further improvements to be made.
- Quality assurance provides evidence of impact of improvement work.
- Performance Boards evidence progress on KPIs across key practice areas in line with agreed targets.
- Further strengthen how children, young people and families are listened to and are holding us to account for the improvements we are making.

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Priority 9: Strong and effective partnership arrangements	
<b>Vision:</b> Strong partnerships and partnership governance arrangements deliver effective joint arrangements which improve outcomes for children and young people, particularly in priority areas.	
Agreed Milestones for 2024-25	Progress Highlights During the Year
Strengthen partnerships to drive progress through a refocused Strategic Systems Leadership Board Chaired by the DCS.	<p>Clear governance arrangements now in place with strengthened membership across the partnership. SSLB refocused in agreed areas under the leadership of the DCS who now also chairs PSCP.</p> <p>72 local area partners are invested in working groups through the Place-Based Plan, led by school leaders with a focus on inclusion.</p> <p>119 school leaders and SENCos recently participated in a consultation process for the implementation of a targeted funding model demonstrating their passion for improving inclusive approaches in mainstream schools.</p> <p>DfE monitoring has indicated strong confidence in our grip and delivery of the SEND Improvement Plan and our readiness for inspection.</p>
Refresh our partnership priorities and strategy 'A Bright Future' for 2024-26.	Progress review of the 2021-26 plan has been completed by key partners and priorities agreed for 2025-27 including early help and preparing for adulthood as additional priorities. Milestones reset and oversight of progress in place through SSLB.
Strengthen coordination between the SSLB, Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safer Plymouth Partnership	Key statutory partners now meeting regularly and DCS chairs both SSLB and PSCP. Safer Plymouth Partnership reporting progress into PSCP regularly.
Develop, implement and embed effective partnership governance of early help.	Stronger governance arrangements operated through the Early Help Executive during the year. An Early Help Board is now being established reporting into SSLB to deliver developments across early help and Family Hubs
Develop a partnership accountability framework and quality assurance to support evaluation of the impact of partnership improvement work.	The PSCP operates a comprehensive partnership QAF with a programme of quality assurance and learning activity informing partnership workplans. This has focused on priority work areas during the year including child sexual abuse, neglect, domestic violence, adolescent exploitation as well as priority work areas including MASH Operational Group dip sampling decision making in the Front Door and finding good practice.
Key Milestones for 2025-26	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed partnership governance of early help building strong and effective locality networks.</li> <li>• Sustain effective partnership safeguarding arrangements through the SSLB and PSCP, delivering practice improvements in priority areas.</li> <li>• Ensure effective partnership engagement in the design and delivery of the Families First Partnership Programme.</li> <li>• Deliver the partnership priorities set out in A Bright Future 2025-27.</li> </ul>	

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- Sustain strong and effective partnership Corporate Parenting governance arrangements and delivery of ‘The Sky’s the Limit’.

Strategic Priority 10 – Effective System Enablers		
<b>Vision:</b> We will prioritise creating the conditions within the service that enable staff to do their jobs well.		
Agreed Milestones for 2024-25	Progress Highlights During the Year	Impact
System Development	Good progress has been made in developing the use of Capita across EPS teams in line with agreed service need with a focused programme of training. Improving data and recording to support improved planning and decision making. A new phone system has been implemented in SEND to improve response to EHCPs. Priority Eclipse developments have been delivered including Chronologies and Pathway Plans.	Improved call monitoring and reduced email backlog. Customer appreciation and increased Annual Reviews.  Improved completion of high quality Pathway Plans for young people.
Recording Practices	Capita training to improve accuracy and consistency of recording. Scheduled team meetings and training sessions for Capita usage.	Enhanced buy-in, positive feedback. Improved recording and data quality for SEN2 Data.
Performance Data	SEND data cleanse for confident monthly reporting. Support for EHCP tracker and SEN2 return, training for accurate data capture.	Monthly statutory service reporting. Improved management reporting and staff training recognition. Practice improvements from improved use of data include assessment timeliness improving to 90% and EHC needs assessment timeliness improving to 90% in March 2025 compared to 44.1% in March 2024.
Commissioning	Reviewed monitoring processes and engagement audits. Reviewed Capita modules and spend for value for money. Implemented additional capacity for the children in care Placement Development of updated Sufficiency Strategy for children in care placements and development of an updated Market Development Plan to drive growth in provision in all priority areas. Updates on progress to every Family Homes for Plymouth Children Board. Brokerage Team to improve market management and placement finding. Improved capacity to ensure Contracts are in place and to support value for money. Review of contracts with health, including CAMHS, to ensure services meet identified need and deliver desired outcomes.	Value for money in Capita module purchases.  Strengthened brokerage improving placement finding for children in care in the context of a national shortage of provision.



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Reducing Bureaucracy	Reviewed schemes of delegation and processes to ensure staff are freed up from unnecessary expectations.	Proposals progressed from review at Leaders for Excellence including streamlined panels and decision making.
<b>Key Milestones for 2025-26</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>System development;</b> ensuring systems support staff to do their job, freeing them up from administration to spend more time with families.</li> <li>• <b>Data, insight and AI</b> support new and effective ways of working.</li> <li>• <b>Recording practices;</b> are clear and understood and support child focused practice.</li> <li>• <b>Performance data;</b> ensuring we are measuring and reporting the things that make a difference and tell us about the quality of practice and the impact of practice on outcomes for children, young people and families.</li> <li>• <b>Commissioning;</b> helping to us to ensure we have high quality provision in place to meet need, both now and in the future, and which represents value for money to the Council.</li> <li>• <b>Maximising funding streams;</b> maximising opportunities to bring funding into the Council.</li> <li>• <b>Reducing bureaucracy;</b> reviewing schemes of delegation and processes to ensure staff are freed up from unnecessary bureaucracy.</li> </ul>		