

# SEND and Inclusion newsletter



Derby City Council



## A busy year so far for Learning, Inclusion and Skills, and so much more to come!

We are delighted to welcome you to the autumn issue of our Local Offer newsletter, sharing key updates on the work and collaborations that have been taking place in recent months.

Co-production and communication are integral to what we do. More regular communication is part of responding to feedback, and groups like our young SEND Ambassadors and Derby SEND Voice (The Derby Parent Carer Forum) make sure we can have a greater understanding and open dialogue with the people using our services, learning what's going well and where we can improve.

Our Derby Promise initiative continues to provide children with great experiences and the chance to learn about the possibilities open to them, through exciting events such as our recent Dream Fest and August's Festival of Sport.

We've recently released our Local Area Inclusion Plan, highlighting key strategic objectives, plans, and opportunities for the city.

Last but certainly not least, we're proud to share news of SEND Capital investments designed to create greater sufficiency in the city, ensuring children and young people can be educated in the right environment, with the right support at the right time.

It's been a very busy year so far, and it's a joy to share these successes with you all.

*Paul Hezelgrave*

**Paul Hezelgrave**  
Derby City Council Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Skills.

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THEATRE AND DANCE WORKSHOPS PROVED POPULAR AT DREAM FEST

## Derby Promise: empowering young minds and unlocking potential

Launched in 2024, Derby Promise aims to open up the wealth of opportunities available through the economic regeneration and industrial growth in Derby to the city's children and young people. This is achieved through direct experience events with industry; developing an industry-led curriculum; work experience; apprenticeship and jobs fairs; and pathways into work. A roundtable of employers meets with young people and educational settings to steer the programme.

Derby Promise recently hosted an exciting weekend of culture, drama and creativity at Dream Fest, which ran from 11-12 July and encouraged children to explore careers in the creative and cultural industries as well as in the nuclear and construction sectors. The festival connected young people to accessible local organisations in the arts and gave them

opportunities to build confidence through workshops and performances.

This was followed in August by the second annual Festival of Sport, providing a week of coaching and inspiration for school-age children. Activities ranged from dodgeball and cricket to wheelchair sports including basketball and badminton, and all children received a hot, nutritious meal at lunchtime. Children explored a wide range of sports, met new peers, gained confidence in stepping out of their comfort zone and learnt about routes into sports-related careers.

Since 2024 organisations including Rolls Royce; Wates; Speedy Hire; Balfour Beatty; PFP Thrive; Vinci; ION; and the University of Derby have sponsored and delivered the following activities:



- Festival of Ideas (November 2024 and March 2025): 400 students engaged in activities around climate change and STEM careers.



- Becketwell/Vailant Design Competition: Six city schools competed, submitting regeneration ideas.



- Festival of Sport (August 2024 and August 2025): Over 1,000 engagements during a week-long programme of sports.



- Dream Fest saw an estimated footfall of 4,000 children and families across the two days.



## Local Area Inclusion Plan Launches

Following consultation with over 2,000 residents to discuss Derby's priorities, and in line with the Local Area SEND inspection, we've created a Local Area Inclusion Plan. At its core, the plan promotes meeting children's needs earlier through inclusive education, with specialist support where appropriate. As part of this, 11 schools have been supported by specialist schools to promote positive behaviours and total communication; over 2000 staff have been trained in trauma and attachment; 35 schools have engaged in specialist training for forest schooling, sensory support, and play therapy; and all schools have been trained by Autism in Education to embed good practice for neurodiverse young people and children.

Young people have identified six key outcomes that are vital to living their best life and inform the plan. These include being in good physical and mental health; being supported to dream big; and having real-life experiences and opportunities to help them find meaningful work. Available to all as a PDF and online, this easily digestible format gives an at-a-glance view of how we're tackling important issues, broken down into aims, objectives and supporting actions. Andy Smith CBE, Strategic Director for People Services, said of the strategy:

"Every child in Derby deserves to be seen, heard, and supported to thrive. This plan is our commitment — to work together across services so children, young people, and their families get the right help at the right time, for the brightest futures possible. This plan highlights the council's continued commitment to inclusion for Derby's children and young people. The overarching aim is to ensure that the needs of children and young people with additional needs, particularly SEND and those in Alternative Provision, are met in a timely manner so that they can succeed, thrive and live their best life."

We shall provide quarterly updates on the work being undertaken to address these priorities. View the Local Area Inclusion Plan at [www.derby.gov.uk/send-inclusion-plan](http://www.derby.gov.uk/send-inclusion-plan)

## Updates from the Parent Carer Forum

As a strategic partner the Derby SEND Voice has not only ensured the voice of parents are heard within the strategic SEND and Inclusion partnerships in Derby, but have also delivered on monthly 'lets talk SEND' events across Derby, providing a space for parents and carers of young people (aged 0-25) with SEND to share any concerns and discuss areas for improvement with representatives from Health, Social Care and Education. Ideas and opportunities raised at these sessions are then taken forward to help shape services and inform advocacy and positive change. Meeting once a month, alternating between in person and online, the next session is on Thursday 11 September, from 1pm-2.30pm.

Book your free place at:  
<https://tinyurl.com/2vam4wyd>

Follow the Derby SEND Voice Facebook page here:  
<https://tinyurl.com/4eckj46b>

Become part of the Derby SEND Voice, along with over 100 members and 700 followers, by visiting  
<https://tinyurl.com/y3hu47sh>





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## A new SEND centre focused on employability and support

November will see the launch of our new Skills Centre for young people with SEND. Based at Friar Gate Studios, education providers and commercial entities have been invited to co-habit in a centre focused on supporting economically active citizens, particularly those with SEND, and moving them closer to the labour market.

Created after consultation with 100 young SEND ambassadors and the Derby SEND Voice parent/carer forum, the new site provides an aspirational space for young people to gain practical support, confidence and independence as they're guided towards the world of work. This successful transition into the labour market and other opportunities will support young people in moving away from being service users, and towards thriving within their local community.

Managed by Transition 2, The Skills Centre will

provide access to careers information, advice and guidance specialists for young people with SEND, with route maps into education and employment pathways. It will also offer a healthy lifestyle programme in partnership with the NHS; a café; a membership-based club to encourage and enabling young people to be active members of their local community.

Post-16 pathways into supported internships across hospitality and catering, digital media, horticulture, and custom services are also delivered at Friar Gate Studios by T2 and the Shaw Education Trust's Horizons Post 16 Skills Training Centre. In addition, the Skills Centre will host regular careers events over the next academic year for young people aged 14 plus. Friar Gate Studios will also provide a space for Derby SEND Voice, Derby's parent/carer forum for SEND, enabling parents to have a central meeting point to gain advice via key advisory events and from staff based there.



### Journey to Work

Working with employers including Seven Trent, Balfour Beatty, Cosy, Compass and various teams across Derby City Council, we have designed a new Journey into Work programme that is available to all job seekers. It also supports young people with SEND, and care-experienced young people in accessing and securing employment opportunities.

Collaborating with the DWP, we have been able to secure a transition programme for

those receiving benefits, so that there is no drop in income whilst on training or waiting for the first salary.

From September we will have a new digital and AI initiative, designed ourselves, that will train job seekers to engage in the skills required for modern work placements.

We've also been working to build a dedicated website for the Derby Promise, providing a place for schools to register, explore resources, and connect their students with employer experiences,

whether that be work taster days, live briefs, or other career-focused opportunities, and jobs for job seekers.

One participant shared their feedback saying:

"The most significant change is now I have a career that I can look forward to every day."

Having proved a great success in achieving positive outcomes, planning is now underway to roll this out more widely for 2025-2026.

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## £24million investment in SEND provision



Capital works continue on new developments aimed at significantly increasing school places and Derby's SEND sufficiency.

With demand for support ever-increasing, the investment from the SEND and Alternative Provision Sufficiency and Capital Investment Programme means that more children will be able to remain within their communities when attending school – helping them to stay close to family and peers.

Our renovation of the St James building will provide a comfortable, well-appointed new setting for Castle School's students, who move into this exciting new space at the start of the school year in September. This move will create an additional places for children with social and emotional health difficulties. Similarly, Castle's sister centre, Kingsmead School, will also benefit from building work, providing an improved space for young people with social and emotional health difficulties, including ADHD.

Across the city, building refitting work and enhanced resources will create new places for SEND students, avoiding the need for those children to travel further afield for education. Other schools benefiting from this programme include:

- Alvaston Junior Academy
- Ashcroft Primary Academy
- Bemrose
- Borrow Wood Primary School
- Castle School
- Cottons Farm Primary Academy
- Ivy House
- Kingsmead
- Lakeside Primary Academy
- Ridgeway Infants
- Springfield Primary Academy
- St Albans
- St Andrews
- St Clares
- St Giles Spencer Academy
- Transition 2 at Friar Gate Studios
- Village Primary Academy
- Further developments in progress

## Outstanding results for Children's Services

Ofsted awarded Derby City Council's Children's Services a rating of 'outstanding' in our recent inspection – for a second consecutive time.

Demonstrably high standards meant that inspectors praised our 'responsive and effective' services, declaring them outstanding across all assessment areas.

This is wonderful recognition for our dedicated teams, but more importantly it means children, young people and their families are more likely to get the support they need, when they need it, and face safer and more positive futures as a result. The report states:

"Children in Derby benefit from consistently high-quality social work practice and excellent support from other highly skilled practitioners. Derby has achieved one of the most stable social work workforces in the country, with low

rates of staff turnover, few vacancies, and no reliance on agency workers.

Alongside this, purposeful investment in early help, effective partnership working and a commitment to supporting children within their family networks are helping to keep children safe and supporting them to thrive. Children in care benefit from consistent relationships with their social workers and impactful life-story work and live in caring homes that provide security and permanence.

The report also points to how children not in school or children with a social worker (including those with SEND) are supported to engage in education. This remains a key area of work for the local authority in partnership with the schools.

The full inspection report is available on the Ofsted website: <https://tinyurl.com/39tnsybf>

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# PINS: Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools

The Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools Project (PINS) is a nationally funded pilot project for 2024/25 and 2025/26, building on the success of the national Autism in Schools Project. The PINS approach has been developed around the key principles of Autism in Schools, and is currently deployed across 37 mainstream primary schools in Derby and Derbyshire. It is being delivered in this area, via a partnership, by the NHS, local authorities and the Derby and Derbyshire Parent Carer Forums in mainstream primary settings to:

- **help shape whole-school SEND provision**
- **provide early interventions at a school level**
- **up-skill school staff**
- **support strengthening of partnerships between schools and parent carers.**

The emphasis is on a needs drive rather than a diagnosis-focused programme. Strengthening knowledge and skills and improving environments to better meet the needs of neurodiverse children will underscore the ways that a supportive learning environment and well-equipped school can improve the outcomes for this group of children.

By the end of the 2025/6 academic year there will be 12 PINS schools in Derby. Feedback from schools gives a sense of the positive impact PINS is having:



"The way the learning was delivered, we could make small changes that had a long-term impact."

"Previously we'd only react when a child was at crisis point. Now we're more proactive about provision."

"Using examples of lived experience was powerful in shifting staff thinking."

"Staff have realised that inclusion doesn't look the same for everyone."

"Staff who have been resistant to change have seen the benefits of this."

Taking onboard learnings to date through the deployment of PINS, we are looking to establish school clusters to implement an allied programme so that children's needs can be met earlier.

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**YOUNG SEND AMBASSADORS PROVIDE CRUCIAL INSIGHT..**

## You said, we did...

Our young SEND Ambassadors meet monthly, to ensure the voices of children and young people are not only heard but embedded in the decisions that affect them. Representing a variety of secondary mainstream and special schools, they discuss key themes such as healthcare priorities, accessibility in sports, and improving employment opportunities for SEND individuals.

Their insights and suggestions are fed directly back to council teams, local partners and stakeholders, ensuring that young people's lived experiences shape policy and service planning. This collaborative approach means decisions are informed by those most affected, leading to real action. Outcomes so far include enhanced employability support, improved transport options, and targeted changes following health-focused sessions.

### **Our group of young people said...**

To live their best life, they needed to be physically active and enjoy exercise.

### **We did...**

Commissioned the Festival of Sport for a second year under the Derby Promise initiative. In its first year it achieved over 1,000 engagements, and is set to achieve a similar number this summer, providing opportunities to children and young people to be active and healthy in their community, as well as enjoying the social connectedness, emotional and mental health benefits of physical activity alongside their peers.

### **Our group of young people said...**

Getting good sleep and managing their screen time would improve their quality of life.

### **We did...**

After being raised as a priority at a SEND Ambassadors meeting, we improved education around healthy sleep habits and the impact of a good night's sleep on physical and mental health. We also created awareness about screen time management and its effect on emotional health. These topics were promoted at the Festival of Sport, and monitored by Includmi, an app used by children and young people in schools.

### **Our group of young people said...**

It was important for them to be able to make good, healthy choices around food.

### **We did...**

Undertook further consultation around the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme, to ensure those that receive benefits-related free school meals have a hot, nutritional meal in the holiday periods. Young people offered feedback on their likes and dislikes, and future sessions are planned around healthy eating and habits, and how this ties into independent choices and agency as we prepare children and young people for adulthood.