

ONE PLAN

for all Children and Young
People in Gloucestershire

Growing Well Pillar



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Introduction

This generation of children has lived through difficult and destabilising times. We must make sure they grow up with the curiosity, confidence and passion to pursue their goals – and the education, skills and security to achieve them.

The Annual Report of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education,
Children's Services and Skills 2022/23

During this period children are maturing, learning the skills they need to become resilient, confident adults and reach their potential. To achieve this they need access to high quality, inclusive education, backed up by activities in their community to help them develop their interests and friendships, alongside a secure and stable home environment.

This strategy sets out how we aim to achieve this for all children between primary and secondary school age living in Gloucestershire today. It represents one of three pillars across the child's life stages ('Starting Well', 'Growing Well' and 'Being Well') that will inform the way we work with, and for, children and young people in the county. 'Growing well' describes our collective vision for children in primary school through to secondary school.

The strategy has been developed, and will be delivered, in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including young people themselves.

The elements in this pillar aim to work with schools and parents in partnership to promote healthy behaviours for all children, including

diet and nutrition, physical activity, importance of sleep, online safety and resilience and reduce nicotine exposure. We will need to utilise community assets and build capacity to provide opportunities for children to play, connect, build resilience and independence, and explore their interests outside school. We need to understand and respond to the barriers preventing children attending school.

begin with our vision and principles, feedback from parents and carers and an overview of challenges and opportunities facing children and their families locally. We then set out the outcomes we want to achieve for this age group and conclude with our priorities for action.

A more detailed action plan will be developed for each pillar, to set out a range of actions that will be taken to ensure the priorities are delivered and outcomes achieved.



What we want for the children and their families in Gloucestershire

We believe Gloucestershire should be a great place to grow up where all children and young people can thrive and live lives of choice and opportunity, irrespective of where they live, their ethnic background, sexuality, gender identity, special educational needs or disability.

Bringing together the feedback received from children and families, as well as what the data tells us, has led us to identify four objectives to deliver our vision:

Equity - close the gap and eliminate inequalities

Access – right help at the right time for all children

Inclusion – a county where everyone belongs and we celebrate diversity

Quality – effective, outstanding services

Responsibility for driving progress against these objectives will be owned by Gloucestershire's Children and Young People's Coalition board and three subgroups themed around the life stages of Starting Well, Growing Well and Being Well.

To deliver this vision we will be guided by the following principles:

1. **We will listen** – work in partnership 'with' children, families and communities, not 'for' or 'to', build on existing children, family and community assets and aspirations, ensuring

everyone can make a contribution, is respected, and that we take a whole family approach.

2. **We will care** – build a culture within our workforce of empathy, using language that cares, acknowledging children and their parents and carers are the experts in their lives, and being welcoming and inclusive for families and children of all ages, cultures, religions, ethnicities, genders, sexuality and disabilities.
3. **We will be fair** - prioritise resources to those that need it most, ambitiously aim to reduce inequalities in outcomes and close the gap.
4. **We will act early** - aim to reduce escalation and specialist support through early identification of needs, building resilience, using restorative approaches, and reduce trauma for children and young people.
5. **It will feel easy** - strive to create integrated services, smooth transitions and pathways to give coherence to children and families' experience of support.
6. **It will work well** - seek to ensure value for money with our resources, avoid duplication and inefficiency, embrace innovations and seek to build on existing evidence based approaches.

We are not starting from scratch; we have fantastic foundations to build from and powerful drivers for change. We have many examples of best practice, innovation and learning that we need to continue to develop and share as a system to effect change against our objectives and improve outcomes.

What you've told us it's like to be child in Gloucestershire

For most Gloucestershire's children, they do well in our communities, however there is a disparity for our most disadvantaged young people and for some of our young people the story isn't so positive. This strategy seeks to change the narrative for the most disadvantaged and to improve opportunities for all in our county. It is important to note to achieve the best outcomes we can for young people in our county relationships are key, this means we need to utilise a partnership approach working across statutory sector, voluntary sector, community groups and families to ensure our young people can be well and reach their potential ensuring Right child, right support, right time, every time.

You have told us you want:

- More opportunities to engage with nature and enjoy our surroundings green spaces.
- Affordable childcare.
- Easier ways to contact services and be referred, shorter waiting times and tailored support while waiting and on next steps.
- "Waiting lists are long... I have been seeking support for at least 4 years... I am struggling to find the energy to fight all the time." (parent)
- Help with transitions from early years to primary, primary to secondary and then into further education, training, and employment, especially those with SEND and asylum-seeking children.

- "Feel as though we've hit a brick wall as no other services offered/continued/involved. Very concerned about transition to adulthood which isn't far away." (parent)
- Easier processes and clearer communication to help with Education Health and Care Needs Assessments and their outcome.
- Sufficient nursery and school places to support children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- "We are struggling with home educating our child but are not yet able to find a school that is suitable." (parent)
- Never experiencing prejudice, racism or discrimination from services which are there to help.
- "There is a bias where a black woman is seen as strong and if you speak up or get upset you are perceived as this angry black woman, but you're just supporting your child." (parent)
- Feeling listened to, taken seriously, and respected by professionals, such as teachers and health professionals.
- Professionals use language that can easily be understood by young people.
- Reliable, regular, affordable, and safe public transport, which gets people to where they need to go such as college.
- "Services are too far away from where we live. I can't drive because of my epilepsy so my child cannot attend certain events." (parent)
- "Cirencester College is a three-hour round trip for Gloucester but many [asylum seeking young people] must attend this college instead of their local college. This means they wake up very early and don't get home until late – it is not fair" (professional working with asylum seekers)
- Opportunities to socialise and make friends in a safe and welcoming environment outside school and be active in their community.

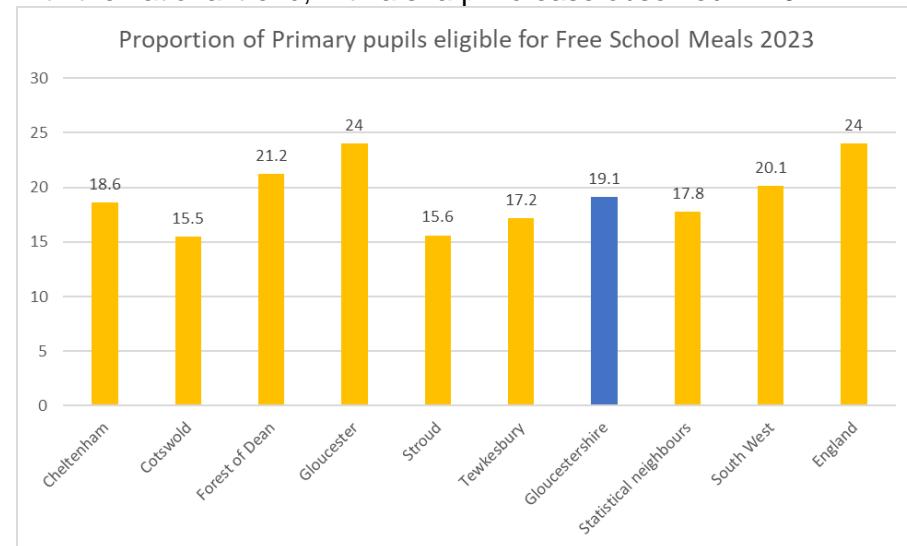
- “More hubs for youngster and then outreach to get the information out there digitally (Instagram and TikTok.),” (parent)
- Feeling safe when out and about from anti-social behaviour, serious violence, and around busy roads.
- “Don’t feel safe - kids hanging outside shops and there have been weapons in area. Don’t feel safe to go to park.” (Child, aged 9)
- Help to find work-experience and local employment opportunities, including more ‘modern’ career options (such as social media).
- Flexibility and understanding across services so young people can manage competing needs of health, education, and care appointments.
- More early intervention to stop needs increasing.
- Better promotion of services that are available in their own local area and involve young people in the design and creation, so it appeals to them.



What it's like to be a child in Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire has a population of 646,627, living within the two urban centres of Gloucester and Cheltenham and the many market towns and rural villages, covered by 6 District Authorities. Children aged 0-17 make up 20% of the population and a further 7% are aged 18-24 years.

The proportion of children living in child poverty generally fall below England averages, however rates have been increasing over time in line with the national trend, with a sharp increase observed in 2022.



Gloucestershire's population is becoming more ethnically diverse, although it is less diverse than England as a whole:

Percentage includes all ethnic groups excluding 'White British'	Gloucestershire	National
Total population ONS Census 2021	13.0%	28.6%

CYP ONS Census 2021	0-17yrs 16.6%	0-17yrs 32.1%
	0-24yrs 15.7%	0-24yrs 31.9%

Our Pupil Wellbeing Survey found that 70.1% of young people identified themselves as heterosexual, which has reduced over time. In 2022 we asked pupils about their gender identity for the first time:

- 1.1% identified as transgender (1.5% of biological females and 0.7% of biological males)
- 1.5% identified as gender-fluid.
- 1.6% identified as non-binary.

Education:

- 244 primary schools
- 41 secondary schools
- 20 special schools (including 8 independent special schools)
- 3 alternative provision schools

Children that go to school in Gloucestershire generally perform similar or better than England overall in their assessments at the end of their Reception year, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. However, inequalities exist, with the gap in performance between those eligible for Free School Meals and those not, consistently being greater for Gloucestershire than England as a whole.

Looking at educational outcomes by ethnic groups does not show a consistent pattern, and changes through the stages due to a complex mix of cultural differences, international migration patterns, and children travelling into the county from neighbouring areas for secondary school, amongst others. Asian pupils perform best at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 in Gloucestershire and in England as a whole. In Key Stage 2 the proportion of Black and Other Ethnicity in Gloucestershire achieving the expected level is below the average for the county and below our statistical neighbours and England. In Key Stage 4 all ethnic group categories perform better than their statistical neighbour and England counterparts.

Before the pandemic, around 10% of pupils across all schools were persistently absent (missing 10% or more sessions), in 2022/23 Gloucestershire reported 20% persistent absence, this pattern is similar to that seen nationally.

Rates of Electively Home Educated (EHE) children have been rising in Gloucestershire as seen nationally. In Gloucestershire they have risen from 13 per 1,000 CYP aged 5-15 in 2017/18 to 25.6 per 1,000 in 2022/23. The rate of EHE in Gloucestershire in 2021/22 was significantly higher than the statistical neighbour, regional and England average. Families do not always provide a reason for choosing Elective Home Education; however, where they have provided a reason the most common were Philosophical / Lifestyle / Preferential (19%), Mental Health (19%) and Dissatisfaction with School (combined bullying, SEND, and general dissatisfaction with school - 10%). These proportions are similar to those in our statistical neighbours and the South West region.

Permanent exclusions across all school phases were historically high in Gloucestershire but started to decline in 2015/16 and fell into line with national proportions. A sharp increase was then observed nationally following the pandemic. Exclusion rates in primary age pupils, though low (0.05 in 2021/22) are currently above England (0.02) and Statistical Neighbour averages (0.01) and require monitoring.

School suspensions in Gloucestershire have followed a similar trend to England and our Statistical Neighbours, with the most recent data putting us below the national and neighbour rate (6% compared to 7% in 2021/22).

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities: The number of children and young people in Gloucestershire identified with a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND) has been increasing since 2015 in line with national trends. This has been driven by a combination of increased need, awareness, diagnosis, training, and changes to policy. In January 2023 there were:

- 12,569 children with SEN supported in schools

- 5,295 of these are children with an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP)
- And 525 of these are children with a complex disability

This rise has coincided with a rise in Education Health and Care Needs Assessment applications, appeals to the needs assessment outcome and a rise in demand for special school places.

Overall Special Educational Needs are more common in children living in more deprived areas, a pattern seen locally and nationally, though there is variation depending on primary need. Children and young people with a primary need of Moderate Learning Disability; Social, Emotional and Mental Health; and Speech, Language & Communication Needs are significantly more likely to live in areas of deprivation (quintiles 1 and 2) than children without Special Educational Needs.

Feedback through engagement events has highlighted a need for professionals and parents to recognise that school is a community – children spend a lot of time in school, but these can also be places of pressure. Schools need to be safe community space.

Health: Overall Gloucestershire tends to perform well against England averages for indicators such as levels of immunisation, breastfeeding rates and oral health, however these mask disparities that exist based on deprivation and ethnicity. For example, the proportion of 5-year-olds experiencing dental decay in Gloucestershire is significantly lower than the England average (16.8%) however the prevalence in the most deprived areas of Gloucestershire is almost three times higher than in the least deprived. Benchmarking data shows that we have a higher proportion of admissions to hospital for some childhood illnesses and injuries, this needs further investigation but is in part due to hospital policies on when to admit children and the way data is coded.

Mental Health: Mental wellbeing in school age children declining Pupil Wellbeing Survey responses demonstrate that those in minority ethnic groups and those in areas of deprivation report finding it harder to access

mental health support. In addition, referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are disproportionately higher for the White British ethnic group.

Care and safety: The number of cases open to children's social care in Gloucestershire has been higher than peers but in recent years has started to reduce and we are becoming more in line with our peers 2022 to 2023 331.9 per 10,000 compared to 303.79 for our statistical neighbours and 311.9 across the Southwest region.

First time entrants to Youth Justice System 80.4 per 100,000 vs. 148.8 England. While white children are underrepresented in the offending population, mixed heritage children are the most over-represented at 15% despite only making up 5% of the total 10–17-year-old population in Gloucestershire. Using the term 'child' in this context is particularly important to emphasise their relative vulnerability, rights and needs and avoid 'adultification'.

Emerging concerns: The Pupil Wellbeing Survey has also highlighted a reduction in the proportion of pupils reporting they get the recommended number of hours sleep per night, from 60.7% in 2018 to 51.5% in 2022. This is coupled with an increase in the proportion of pupils reporting they used the Internet, gaming, social network and texting between going to bed and going to sleep.

Analysis of factors that contribute to school exclusions has highlighted the increased use of smart phones and social media which may be impacting on attention, speech & language skills, social skills and ability to articulate and express emotions.

What we will do for all children in Gloucestershire:

We have identified the following priorities to deliver our four objectives of equity, access, inclusion and quality. We believe that collective action against these priorities will achieve our vision for Gloucestershire as a great place to grow up where all children and young people thrive and live lives of choice and opportunity.

This pillar will focus on:

- Developing services that are available through school/education.
- All children to have access to education.
- Family hub model to ensure service delivery to children and their families.
- Needs identified and support provided at primary age to reduce trauma and further needs developing through their childhood/adolescence.
- Focus on community need and voluntary sector support.
- Recognising the importance of place and the need for children "to be children"
- Embrace the benefits of digitalisation but also recognise that children and young people will be more advanced in their knowledge of this and this needs to be used to support engagement.
- This pillar plan will also link to other plans, including the Children's Social Care Ambitions Plan, the Early Help Strategy and the SEND and Inclusion Strategy.

Objective 1: Equity – close the gap and eliminate inequalities.

Our data tells us people who have the least in Gloucestershire struggle more than they would in other parts of the country. The reasons for this require further investigation but are likely to include higher costs of living, challenges due to Gloucestershire's rural geography, and a focus on average population outcomes rather than incentives to target children falling behind. We must work together to create the conditions for children to thrive and target our resources where they are most needed. There are children living in poverty who have fewer opportunities to achieve in comparison to their peers. The county is large and is diverse in the more urban areas, but data tells us that children from different cultures or ethnicities are more likely to be over-represented in criminal/statutory services. We need to create services that meet the needs of all our residents and ensure that everyone has the same opportunities. For this pillar we see higher numbers of children being excluded from school and not having the same developmental or educational opportunities possibly due to unconscious bias and discrimination. Parents and inspection feedback informs us that there is a culture of parental blame that exists amongst some professionals in Gloucestershire – there is a need for this plan to address this and change this culture.

Priorities	Indicators to measure our success against
Build on our Healthy Schools programme (delivered by Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning) to further support healthy behaviours. This will be achieved by working in partnership with school nursing, and include access to and understanding of the importance of healthy	Children's attendance, GHLL Healthy Schools Awards, equitable uptake of school nursing services. Reduction in neglect

<p>meals and promoting physical activities in and outside of school. This programme will also need to consider those children who do not attend an education setting.</p> <p>We want to utilise community assets and build capacity to provide opportunities for children to play, connect, build resilience and independence, and explore their interests and this will be achieved through investing in youth charity groups, community partnerships, in and out of school activities.</p> <p>Develop a countywide programme to consider how family's access local resources, community centres, children's centres churches/ religious settings. This programme will also need to consider how children access early support for emotional and mental well-being. Develop a sense of belonging in their communities for our young people through a co-created Family Hubs Approach.</p> <p>Work with partners to improve the system for informing parents and carers of the opportunities for disabled children to ensure they have access to the same mainstream provision as their peers.</p> <p>Improve engagement with practices that promote positive wellbeing such as</p>	<p>of children in the community, closing the gap in equality.</p> <p>Improvement in community relationships, more opportunities for children and fewer children experiencing harm through exploitation and anti-social behaviours.</p> <p>Children and their families will have earlier access to the services they need, and waiting lists will have reduced.</p> <p>Increased service provision and opportunities for all children including disabled children and children with SEND.</p>	<p>exercise, good quality sleep, personal resilience and community connection.</p> <p>Analyse the drivers for the disparity in educational attainment between some ethnic groups and low-income families to inform action.</p> <p>Ensure consistent and effective use of the graduated pathway to ensure needs are met, prevent escalation and support a culture that children should live within their family, wherever it is safe for them to do.</p> <p>Work with relevant agencies to prevent domestic abuse, substance misuse and hidden harms, and where it exists, provide services to limit the harm and build children's resilience.</p>	
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Objective 2: Access: right help, right time, right place.

In Gloucestershire there is a need for communities and professionals to work together to identify those children who have some identified needs and then ensure these needs are responded to at the earliest point to avoid them to need a statutory response later in their lives. Young people and their families tell us the right support isn't always there when they need it. We acknowledge that services are under strain and need to invest in innovative approaches to improve efficiency, early identification of needs and build independence.

Priorities	Indicators to measure our success against	
<p>Improving attendance and reducing PA (persistent absence) and SA (severe absence) using the existing Attendance Multi-Agency Working Party.</p>	<p>We will see a reduction in numbers of children out of school</p>	<p>Professionals and carers need to understand trauma and how to respond to this at the earliest point in a child's life.</p>
<p>Improving inclusion and reducing preventable exclusion with the support of the existing SEND Exclusions Working Party.</p>	<p>We will see a reduction in families choosing (for reasons other than Philosophical / Lifestyle / Preferential) to EHE</p>	<p>Increased access to holiday clubs and after school activities for all children – develop sense of belonging and a connection to the community.</p>
<p>There is a good understanding amongst educational staff in relation to the barriers preventing children attending school. Focussed work is required to respond to and remove some of these barriers.</p>	<p>Parents will report feeling supported by schools, less escalations around education provision.</p>	<p>We need to improve safety in the community so children and families can get out and about.</p>
<p>There may be some identified groups where there should be some targeted interventions to support a culture change and travelling families will need to be considered within this programme development.</p>		<p>Promote a Whole School Approach to internet safety and building digital resilience, working closely with partners such as police.</p> <p>Earlier identification and support for children with neurodiversity or experiences of adversity or trauma to reduce over reliance on diagnostic pathways and ensure children and families can access services at the right time.</p> <p>Continue to improve access to mental health support, and factors that in all schools and in the community – at the point of need.</p> <p>Improve data quality including ethnicity recording so we know when services are not accessible.</p> <p>Reduction in repeat work/interventions for children. This will be evidence in individual agencies data/statistics.</p> <p>Pupil Wellbeing Survey will show a reduction in children telling us that they are experiencing online grooming/abuse. Decrease in bullying.</p>

Objective 3: Inclusion: A county where everyone belongs.

We know we have more to do to create an inclusive society, that values and respects people regardless of their age, cultures, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or disabilities. For example, our data shows us some ethnic groups are more likely to experience poor outcomes and this may in part be due to unconscious bias and prejudice. We must build a workforce that has inclusion at its core.

Priorities	Indicators to measure our success against	Develop and improve support, services, and guidance for parents with children with Special Educational Needs (SEN Support and EHCP). There needs to be attention to building positive working relationships with schools, professionals, and parents to ensure a streamlined Graduated Pathway process, including the EHCP process.	Measure this through technological developments and Family Information Service (GCC) Seeking feedback from parents, children and The Parent/Carer Forum will inform us of improvements. We will see a reduction in complaints and an increase in compliments. Clear pathways for children with a disability. Professionals can navigate family hubs, local offer, family information service.
<p>All children need to be able to read at an appropriate level. If children fall behind in reading, it affects everything and is the gateway skill.</p> <p>Develop specific support and training for school staff which will improve resources for children experiencing/witnessing domestic abuse/drug and alcohol misuse of parents with poor mental health.</p> <p>Education/community and faith settings need to embrace and celebrate difference in everything that they do. In Gloucestershire all professionals should take responsibility for this and ensuring that children whose first language is not English have access to all learning appropriate to their age.</p>	<p>Education attainment.</p> <p>Resources related to domestic abuse will be embedded in schools.</p> <p>Teachers will know how to safety plan and seek help for children.</p> <p>Use of family hubs.</p> <p>Increased use of the local offer.</p> <p>Parents will tell us that they feel more informed.</p>	<p>The Education Inclusion Service to continue to develop and support strong connections within and between mainstream settings around children with vulnerabilities, additional needs, no SEN, and at SEN Support, and continue to support the development of inclusive practice to help prevent escalation.</p> <p>The SEND Services to continue to develop and support strong connections within and between mainstream and special schools (school leaders) to ensure every child with an EHCP makes progress.</p> <p>Continued development of Gloucestershire's Inclusion Framework for Schools, with associated Inclusion Toolkit.</p> <p>Ensure practitioners understand neurodiversity and hidden disabilities.</p>	

<p>Improved access to external professionals by mainstream providers for children with high/complex needs and other SEND</p> <p>Ensure a smooth transition into school with child centred communication between all relevant agencies and routine check-ins</p> <p>Encourage everyone to be trauma informed, empathetic, use language that cares and help build resilience in individuals and communities. Create communities that celebrate and nurture children's diversity and operate in a climate of inclusivity, including coproduction, awareness raising and training to improve skills and knowledge.</p> <p>Co-production – parents and children will be listened to, and plans will be produced with them. Respectful practice needs to be a part of the professional culture within Gloucestershire.</p>	
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Priorities	Indicators to measure our success against
<p>Agencies need to come together and consider a programme of work that considers how agencies share data with each other to enable a response at the earliest point. Responses for families in crisis and in need of early help need to be planned and considered but also need to be quick and effective. This will require a strong methodology based on multi-agency planning.</p> <p>Development of a multi-agency curriculum to improve channels for sharing of information and to create opportunities for professionals to come together and learn and reflect.</p> <p>Increase collaboration of statutory and VCS sector to understand gaps, reduce duplication, improve services and build capacity.</p>	<p>Children are supported at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Professionals work cohesively in the best interests of children.</p> <p>Multi agency decisions are made and co production exists across the board.</p>

Develop systems for sharing data to prevent people having to repeat their story and improve the speed and coordination of response.

Utilise our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and robust evaluation to inform system development and to raise the standard of services.

Support recruitment into services for children, including strategies to recruit men and other underrepresented groups into the sectors and develop an integrated induction offer for people working with families.



Images from the Holiday Activity and Food Programme celebration event, August 2024