

# Devon

## Area Assessment

Dated 9 December 2009



**oneplace**

for an independent overview  
of local public services

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## Devon at a glance

This independent assessment by six inspectorates sets out how well local public services are tackling the major issues in Devon. It says how well they are delivering better results for local people and how likely these are to improve in future. If, and only if, our assessment shows that the following special circumstances are met in relation to a major issue, we use flags to highlight our judgements. We use a green flag to highlight where others can learn from outstanding achievements or improvements or an innovation that has very promising prospects of success. We use a red flag to highlight where we have significant concerns about results and future prospects that are not being tackled adequately. This means that local partners need to do something more or different to improve these prospects.

### Green flags - exceptional performance or innovation that others can learn from

 Green flag: Domestic Violence

 Green flag: Working with local people to tackle climate change

### Red flags - significant concerns, action needed

No red flags have been identified for Devon

## The local area

Over 750,000 people live in Devon and this number is increasing. The population is older than average. A sixth of the population lives in Exeter, while most other people live in smaller towns and villages. Much of Devon is rural and includes two national parks, and a world heritage coastline. Unemployment is low compared with the rest of England, but wages are among the lowest nationally. People are healthy.

The next section tells you how Devon's public services are doing in each of their local priority areas.

## How is Devon doing?

### A Growing Economy

The economy of Devon is improving steadily and plans are in place to continue this progress. The current worldwide recession has slowed growth, particularly

in North Devon. The partnership of councils and business organisations works well to attract money and jobs into the area. It is working to create jobs in businesses that will do well in the future. But it needs to reduce duplication and ensure better value for money from economic projects.

Councils have responded quickly and effectively to the recession and have given good support to businesses and people in need. They are deciding and paying housing benefits more quickly and give advice to people in debt. But, some long-standing challenges remain. There are differences in wealth between the north and south of the county. Large parts of Devon are rural, and some people living in small towns and villages have low incomes. The Partnership has plans to address these issues.

## A Safer Devon

Partners like the County Council, district councils, police and other organisations work well to make Devon a safe place to live. Crime across Devon has fallen by 9%. People feel safer too. They are less worried about crime and anti-social behaviour than in recent years. Partners are undertaking excellent work in helping to tackle domestic abuse. Also they have been successful at organising activities aimed at keeping young people out of trouble. The number of young people who offend for the first time is well below the national average. Partners are tackling under-age drinking and drug and alcohol abuse. They have also succeeded in reducing night time violence in many towns and the city of Exeter. Road safety is improving. There were fewer casualties on Devon's roads last year. Partners have had good results in reducing the number of young people who go missing from home.

## A World Class Environment

The partnership of district and county councils with environmental organisations and community groups is working well with local people towards a vision of Devon becoming "England's greenest county".

The partnership recycles a high percentage of household waste and keeps waste sent to landfill sites low. It has an advanced approach to measuring and reducing the carbon footprint of the area. Partners are also helping local people and businesses to reduce energy consumption.

More people in Devon than the average nationally are satisfied with the county as a place to live. Devon has 7 green flag parks and 11 blue flag beaches and 6 quality coast awards. The area is clean and tidy. It looks after public rights of way to make it easier for people to walk, ride or cycle.

## Health and Wellbeing

People's health in Devon is good. But health and wellbeing varies according to where they live. People in the better off places live 14 years longer than those in poorer neighbourhoods. Teenage pregnancies are low in Devon overall but high in some places such as Exeter. Alcohol is a problem in the north of the county. Plans have been developed to tackle these problems. More money is

being spent on better sexual health services and on drug and alcohol misuse. But more could be achieved for better value for money. NHS Devon is not yet doing enough to work jointly with councils, police and other organisations to save money and improve health..

Councils and NHS Devon promote healthy living and help reduce childhood obesity. The rate of obesity at ages 6 and 11 is well below the national average and continues to fall. Services for the increasing numbers of older people who need health or social care are good. Health and social services help people leave hospital and return to independent living in their homes.

## Homes and Housing

Public service partners, such as councils and housing providers have worked with developers to provide 2700 new houses last year. This is fewer than in the past but the credit crunch has slowed down house building. Partners doubled the number of affordable homes delivered last year to nearly 700. Councils are identifying new opportunities to build homes but are not meeting government targets and local demand.

Devon councils have improved some services for homeless people. They have prevented many people from becoming homeless and halved the numbers of people living in temporary accommodation. But in some parts of the county people stay too long in temporary accommodation and bed and breakfasts.

The Partnership is improving some services for people from different walks of life. It is working with gypsies and travellers to meet their needs. It also helps many older people to live in their own homes. But it has not yet done enough to meet the needs of disabled people and older people who need extra care housing.

## Inspiring Young People

Organisations involved in providing services for young people work well together. They listen well to what young people have to say. But they could do more to find out the opinions of young people with special educational needs or disabilities.

The quality of primary and secondary schools is near the national average. The gap has widened between how well pupils from low income families do compared with the rest. The overall quality of sixth form and further education provision is similar to national levels. Support overall for young people in the care of the County Council is good.

Provision for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities needs further improvements. There are long delays in making special provision for children with serious behaviour problems. Day care for children over 16 who are no longer in education has been reduced and parents think it is inadequate.

## Strong and Inclusive Communities

Many people are happy living in Devon and have a strong sense of belonging to their local neighbourhood. Partners like councils, police and community groups have a good understanding of their area. They are improving how they gather and use information to identify how the population is changing. Partners then provide help to meet people's needs such as minority ethnic groups. They also raise awareness of the prejudice faced by some people - such as gypsies and travellers. They have been successful in reducing prejudice and hate crime and supporting victims.

Partners help people who might feel isolated, including older people from ethnic minorities. They are also improving how they involve minority and disadvantaged groups in decisions about service that affect them. For example councils consult people with disabilities about the design of public buildings and spaces. Partners encourage local people to do volunteer work in local communities.

## About Devon

A recent survey shows that in Devon 88 per cent of people are satisfied with their immediate local area as a place to live. This is higher than the average for similar areas and higher than the national average of 81 per cent.

Devon, in the South West of England, is the third largest county in England. A sixth of Devon's residents live in Exeter with the rest of the population spread across small towns and villages. Around a third of the landscape is protected including its World Heritage Coastline and the Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks.

Devon has a population of over 750,000 and this is expected to rise to about 850,000 over the next 10 years. The population is older than average. People are mostly white, with numbers of black and minority ethnic people low compared with the regional and national average.

Unemployment is low in comparison with other areas in the South West. Wages are among the lowest nationally. The largest employers are the public sector and tourism. People are healthy and life expectancy is above average.

Devon's councils, public services, voluntary organisations and businesses work together in the Devon Strategic Partnership to improve the quality of life for people. They have agreed on priorities they will tackle and have set targets for improvement. The priorities are:

A growing economy

A world class environment

Homes and housing

Health and wellbeing

A safer Devon

Strong and inclusive communities

Inspiring young people

## How well do priorities for Devon express community needs and aspirations?

Public organisations across Devon - like the County Council, District Councils, police and NHS have a good understanding of people's needs. They look at information together to help them understand what life is like for people in Devon and what will affect quality of life in the future. Public organisations make changes to services in response to what local people tell them. They compare how well the county is doing with other areas and other parts of the country. They have made sure they set priorities that match what local people say is important.

Partners in Devon have a good understanding of the needs of minority and disadvantaged sections of the community. For example they have consulted black and minority ethnic communities, people with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender people. They are also good at talking to older and younger people to understand their needs. Links have also been made with migrant workers and gypsies and travellers.

Partners work well together in a partnership called the Devon Strategic Partnership. The Partnership has developed a ten year plan to address Devon's issues. The Partnership is well managed and receives good and relevant information. It has agreed an ambitious local area agreement - a set of future targets agreed by Devon partners and government - that shows clear commitment by all partners to long term improvement.

Key challenges that Devon faces in the future include addressing the gap in quality of life between the least and most deprived neighbourhoods and developing services for the growing older population. Other challenges include reversing the impact of economic slowdown and the effects on the health and well-being of communities, families and individuals.

Providing value for money from public services is important to the public and will be a challenge with expected cuts in public spending in future years. All public services across Devon have made efficiency savings in recent years. Councils will be able to save more money in the future when they know what the final local government structure will be across Devon. They can then plan to look at whether they can work even more closely together by sharing buildings, information and more services.

## A Growing Economy

The economy of Devon is holding up better than many areas and can continue to improve in the future, despite the current worldwide economic recession. Councils, business organisations and community groups are working well together to strengthen the economy and change it so that it creates new types of jobs for the future.

The downturn in the economy is affecting life in Devon and people have to work hard to deal with its effects. Before the recession, Devon was doing well with good economic growth and low unemployment. The recession has slowed growth across the county and more noticeably in north Devon, where some projects -such as the redevelopment of Barnstaple town centre - have been put on hold. The County Council and most district councils have responded quickly and effectively to the recession and are giving good support to struggling businesses and families. Councils are paying out more benefits to people in need and settling their own bills quicker. Councils are also supporting credit unions that provide low interest loans and help protect vulnerable people from loan sharks. Voluntary organisations give good support to people, especially older people and families coping with debt. Health services are starting to respond to rising mental health problems linked to the loss of a job.

Devon is exploiting opportunities for becoming the 'greenest county' and on the back of this is attracting investment, particularly in Exeter. However, the green economy is developing slowly. Many small businesses do not know how to be more environmentally friendly and too few use renewable energy produced by wind and the sea. But the right skills are being developed to support local businesses and links are improving between schools, colleges and businesses.

Despite the improvements in the economy, some long-standing challenges remain. There are big differences in wealth between the north and south of the county. For example earnings in Torridge are 20% lower than in Exeter. Large parts of the county are rural and people living in small towns and villages suffer from low incomes and poor transport links. It will take many years to resolve these issues.

Devon gives good support to businesses and communities in the more rural parts of the county. It is helping farmers who are struggling with falling incomes, higher costs, and low production. Councils have supported several post offices to stay open and they work hard to help farmers and parish councils gain more grants.

Devon's economy has good prospects for improvement. Partners have good plans and know the areas that need most support. The numbers of people claiming unemployment benefits are starting to fall. Small businesses get good support and have a wider choice of office space available to them. This is important because of the high number of small businesses in Devon and the need to help these grow into larger ones.

Although progress is being made, there is still more work to do. All organisations need to work together to reduce any duplication and improve the value for money from economic projects and plans. Partners need to continue to create the right conditions to develop existing businesses, and give more support to young people in finding work by making the most of grants available from central government. Public spending is likely to fall in the next few years. Devon relies more heavily than other areas on public sector jobs and partners will need to find ways to address this risk to the local economy.

## A Safer Devon

## Green flag: Domestic Violence

Violence in the home is common but often hidden. Devon tackles it very well because it has strong focus on the people affected, including victims, abusers and children. The way the county combats abuse has been shaped by more than a decade of listening to those involved, including disabled victims and those from ethnic minorities. Devon was among the first areas to bring councils, health services, police, courts and the voluntary sector together in a partnership - called Action Against Domestic Violence and Abuse (ADVA) to counter the problem.

ADVA's slogan, 'Home is Where the Hurt is', has raised awareness among local people and encouraged victims to seek help. As a result, there has been a two thirds increase in the number of domestic violence incidents reported since ADVA started. Help is available in rural areas as well in as the larger towns. Last year help was given to 5,000 victims - six times more than five years ago. Training to recognise signs and give early advice has been provided to 6,000 staff from local services and some businesses.

The county council, prompted by a survey of its own staff, provides support at work to those with problems at home. It also works with men who admit they are prone to becoming violent. Victims are brought together to share their experience which they find helpful. Specialist help is available at refuges and in the home to children and young people from families where there is domestic abuse. Past victims of violence in the home also run a support network.

A system of independent advisors provides a further range of support for victims and those most at risk. The advisors support victims through cases at the county's three specialist domestic violence courts. Overall prosecution and conviction rates for domestic violence have increased. Last year 90 per cent of prosecutions brought in one of the courts were successful. But ADVA wants to do better. It has carried out research into why victims drop out of court cases. Hospitals use cameras to record evidence of domestic abuse, which may later be used in court. Victims supported by the independent advisors are less likely to suffer repeated violence than the average for the South West or England, and this measure has improved since they started in 2007.

ADVA continues to develop new ideas. Its early work for male victims was taken up by the Home Office as a model for others. It has established an emergency fund to support migrant women, because they cannot get housing benefit when in a refuge. Funding is available for ADVA to do more to extend the work it does combating violence in the home. Devon is now working with neighbouring areas to shape how domestic abuse is tackled across Devon and Cornwall.

## A Safer Devon

Crime levels across Devon have fallen by 9 per cent in the last year. Local organisations, including the County Council, district councils and police, are working well together to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. Partners have a good understanding of both countywide as well as local issues. Fewer people are worried about crime and anti-social behaviour, than in previous

years.

Partners are working well together to tackle problems such as drunk or rowdy behaviour, the dealing or using of drugs, and domestic abuse. As well as dealing with individuals, some organisations also work directly with families whose members are involved. However, problems remain and local projects are helping to deal with issues that people have identified as a priority in their area - for example, anti-social use of vehicles, drug supply to Dartmoor Prison and theft from farms.

The councils, police and their partners support many projects aimed at keeping young people out of trouble, such as providing alternative activities or targeting under-age drinking and related anti-social behaviour. As a result, the number of young people who commit a crime for the first time is well below the national average. Devon has one of the lowest rates in the country for keeping youngsters in custody. There are projects across the county that support this work, for example, a joint project in South Devon involves young people on community orders in activities to benefit the wider community. Another example is a new countywide volunteer Police Cadets scheme, which is providing valuable training opportunities to young people over 13 to develop citizenship and communication skills. The cadets learn to work in a team, and the experience is giving them increased self-confidence. These projects also raise awareness of the positive impact young people can make. Missing person intervention work is producing excellent results - engagement with 84 children since November 2008 has resulted in a 61 per cent fall in repeat missing episodes and a 20 per cent drop in reports of missing children.

Partners gather better information about domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour and drug and alcohol problems. As a result partners can now identify patterns and develop plans to help vulnerable people. For example, a team of 'street pastors' work in the city and larger towns late at night at the weekends to help people who are in difficulty - such as those who are drunk or in need of medical help. Some taxis now have cameras to record and reduce violence against taxi drivers.

Road safety in Devon is improving and there are some good road safety initiatives in place, for example a powerful campaign aimed at new drivers. Feedback from schools and colleges about this campaign is positive. Partners are addressing road safety issues on known dangerous roads, such as the A377. There was a significant drop in road casualties in 2008 and the number of child casualties was relatively low, with 18 children seriously injured.

## A World Class Environment

### Green flag: Working with local people to tackle climate change

Devon has been outstanding in the way it has raised the environmental awareness of local people. Building on local pride in the county, it has brought important issues such as recycling and the need to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> to the attention of hundreds of thousands of Devon residents. This has resulted in high levels of recycling and reduced carbon emissions that cause global warming.

The partnership is using an exciting interactive campaign to encourage local people to play their part in improving the environment in Devon now and in the future. It produces easy to use guides for schools, business and householders showing how small actions can save money and be good for the environment. It has led campaigns to recycle, give the car a day off a week and turn the temperature down on central heating and washing machines. It encourages residents to buy local produce and not use a plastic bag to carry it home, change to energy saving light bulbs and turn things off not leaving them on stand by. The Partnership provides information to show how much money is saved from each of these activities as well as the carbon savings.

Campaigns are promoted in a variety of interesting ways, for example on TV and radio, in local papers and websites and on bus shelters. Partners also use roadshows, quizzes, and novelty messaging on mugs and pens as well as the more traditional leaflets and posters.

The Partnership ran an award winning 'Don't Let Devon Go to Waste Campaign' on television and in cinemas to encourage local people to think about their impact on the environment. The advertisement reached 335,000 homes, persuading people to reduce their waste and increase recycling. It organised a climate change roadshow which reached 45,000 people. The number of people who thought that recycling was important went up by 10 per cent as a result. People in Devon now recycle more than half of their household waste putting them among the best in the country.

The 'Jingle Bottles' radio advertisements encouraged people to take glass bottles from parties to recycling centres. An extra 50 tonnes of glass was recycled as a result. Another radio campaign encourages composting at home but, where this is not possible, promotes community composting schemes and a central composting service. This advertisement generated an extra 7000 tonnes of compostable waste at recycling centres.

Devon Partnership is proactive in encouraging people to reduce car use. It uses roadside signs to promote car sharing and produces literature for schools, colleges and local businesses to encourage cycling. It has extensive free and reduced bus fare schemes across the county for young people in education. Now, 20 per cent of children in Exeter cycle to school compared with 2 per cent nationally. There has been a 37 per cent growth in the number of people cycling within Exeter and traffic pollution in the city has fallen by 8 per cent. Trips on public transport have increased with 25 million more journeys on buses and trains across the county.

## A World Class Environment

The partnership of district and county councils with environmental organisations and community groups has a strong vision of Devon becoming "England's greenest county". This ambition has the support of local people.

It is succeeding well in reducing waste and carbon emissions that cause global warming.

The eight district councils and the County Council are working well in partnership to recycle a high percentage of household waste and keep waste

sent to landfill sites low.

The Partnership has an advanced approach to measuring and reducing its carbon emissions in the county. It knows how much carbon dioxide is emitted in the area and has set tough targets to reduce this in the future. District councils and Devon County Council have strong approaches to reducing their own impact on the environment. They are reducing energy use in council buildings and recycling much of their own paper waste. As well as helping preserve the environment they are saving money. Councils are increasingly reducing their use of fossil fuels such as oil and coal by using other sources of energy such as wood fuelled boilers and wind turbines. They are investing in vehicles that do less damage to the environment such as fuel efficient refuse lorries and cars that run on gas. Also a green challenge fund for schools provides £2m to promote cost-effective energy efficiency measures.

Partners are also helping local people and businesses to reduce energy consumption. They pay for free and subsidised insulation, boilers and low energy light bulbs for homes. Libraries give free loans of energy monitors to the public. Devon County Council set aside £1.1m to support businesses and communities in Devon to adopt a more environmentally friendly approach and reduce their impact on climate change. The project provides free advice to those interested in renewable energy, with grants and help available to small companies and community groups.

The Partnership has supported cultural and environmental projects. These include a new education centre at the Royal Horticultural Society's flagship garden at Rosemoor near Torrington. It has also improved cycling and visitor facilities at the Haldon Forest Park and helped preserve historic Walronds House in Cullompton. The Partnership works well with local people and parish councils to preserve and improve the natural environment of Devon. Over 95% of public rights of way are easy to use making it easier for local people and tourists to walk, ride or cycle. This performance ranks second in the country. It helps attract visitors and income into the area. Local parish volunteers inspect and preserve countryside paths. Devon has 7 green flag parks, 11 blue flag beaches and 6 quality coast awards.

More people in Devon than the average nationally are satisfied with Devon as a place to live. Devon district councils perform better than most areas for litter, fly-posting, rubbish and graffiti. They remove abandoned vehicles quickly. Devon residents are more satisfied than most with the condition of streets, parks and open spaces.

Devon has received the Transport Local Authority of the Year award. The County Council was praised for the Barnstaple Western Bypass which has cut traffic in the town centre. New low floor double-decker buses, which are easier to get on and off, were also commended.

The strong environmental performance looks set to continue. Partners such as councils, the environment agency and Devon Wildlife Trust are committed to ambitious future plans. They work together as 'Environment Devon' to drive forward further improvements.

## Health and Wellbeing

People's health and well-being varies according to where they live in Devon. Some people live in conditions similar to the worst 20 per cent in England. People who live in the better off places like Ivybridge can expect to live 14 years longer than those who live in the worst off neighbourhoods such as Ilfracombe.

Representatives from the councils, NHS and other bodies, work together through the Devon Strategic Partnership, to improve people's health. They understand the problems that need to be addressed. They are working hard to improve the health of people living in the most deprived areas. Members of the partnership have good information and use this to change and improve the services they provide.

Teenage pregnancy rates in Devon are lower than average and reducing slightly. But in some areas such as Exeter the figure is higher. Partners have good plans in place to tackle this issue. They have put in extra money for projects to improve sexual health services for young people. For example, they have employed a specialist youth worker and a nurse to work with vulnerable young people in Exeter. Also youth workers visit colleges and schools to give advice to young people. It is too early yet to see if these initiatives are having an effect.

Mental health services are effective for those who need hospital care, help with recovery at home and for those over 65. There is good access to mental health support in the community. For example, 'Memory Cafes', which provide advice and information in community settings such as village halls, are helping people with dementia and their carers. Mental health staff are working well with those in the alcohol, housing and homelessness teams. Psychology and psychotherapy services are changing to allow people to contact them directly.

Drug misuse and alcohol related health problems in Devon overall are in line with other areas. But the north of the county has bigger issues with alcohol than in many places in England. NHS Devon, police, probation, councils and other agencies have good plans in place to tackle these problems. Also they are spending more on helping people across Devon with drug and alcohol related problems. By raising awareness and providing support, this extra money is helping reduce crime and harm to young people.

The number of older people in Devon is increasing and this trend is likely to continue. The County Council, NHS and their partners are working well to make sure that services are available to help people when they need it. In a recent survey, 90 per cent of people aged 65 and over were satisfied with both their home and neighbourhood. But only a quarter of people think that older people in their local area get the help and support they need to continue to live at home for as long as they want to.

Services for older people who need health or social care are good. People who need different types of help are getting better support. The County Council provides useful information about healthy living and well-being for older people, for example, through its improved web sites. It also listens to what older people have to say. The Council has expanded the health and well-being projects it sponsors to engage with people from black and minority ethnic groups.

The Council recognises that it needs to do more to help people leave hospital quickly and make the transition back to independent living. It has good plans in place to increase the choices available, including different types of accommodation, care and support in the community. But it needs to make social care assessments quicker and reduce delays.

Partners, including councils and NHS Devon, work well together to promote healthy living and help reduce childhood obesity. The rate of obesity at ages 6 and 11 is well below the national average and continues to drop. Participation in PE and sport among children and young people is significantly above average and there is reasonable leisure and recreation provision for young people overall.

Many people in Devon can expect to enjoy good health now and in the future. But public organisations do not always work well enough together to address the health challenges faced by people in less well off areas. NHS Devon staff such as health visitors, physiotherapists and occupational therapists often work well with public service colleagues on the ground. But, at a senior level, NHS Devon has not fully recognised the contribution that partners such as Devon County Council, district councils and the police can make. People's health is linked to earnings, housing, crime and feelings of well being. So it is more likely to improve when health services work closely with partners like councils and police. Senior management at NHS Devon has not placed enough emphasis on maintaining public health and so preventing health problems. For example managers have not always shared plans with partners to enlist their support. This means that partners could be missing the chance to save money through joint working. NHS Devon senior managers acknowledge these weaknesses. They have recently improved board reporting to include information on public health.

## Homes and Housing

Devon Strategic Partnership has a good understanding of housing needs and the housing market across the county. Improving housing services is a high priority across all the Devon district councils and they are developing good plans to drive forward the improvements needed.

Public service partners, such as councils and housing providers, recognise that building houses that people can afford to buy or rent is an important priority for Devon residents. In most parts of the county house prices are higher than average and earnings lower than average. Many young people, in particular, cannot afford houses in their local area and have to move away. District councils have worked hard with developers to provide more affordable homes. In the last three years they have increased the number of affordable homes provided in the county from 311 a year to 681. There has been a threefold increase in rural areas. The improved performance is still not enough to meet future expected demand. The number of new houses has dropped from 3800 to 2700 in the same period, largely because developers do not want to build houses in the credit crunch. New house building is not meeting demand and the current poor housing markets will make it hard for councils to meet needs in the future. But they continue to work hard to try to address the problem. They are identifying new opportunities to build homes including future major developments at Cranbrook and Sherford. They are setting ambitious targets for the proportion of new homes that have to be affordable

to buy or rent.

Councils across Devon have improved services for homeless people. They have reduced the number of homeless people every year since 2004. The number of people living in bed and breakfast has fallen, particularly for 16 and 17 year olds, and the Partnership has met a government target that no-one should stay in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than six weeks. Devon councils have also met the national target to halve the numbers of people living in temporary accommodation well ahead of the deadline date. But, in some parts of the county, people still live in bed and breakfasts and temporary accommodation such as hostels for longer than the national average.

The Partnership is improving services for vulnerable people and minority groups, such as the elderly who need care, disabled people, people with mental illness, victims of domestic abuse and gypsies and travellers. But it recognises there is more to do to give housing help to all those who need it. Partners have increased housing support for people with mental illness and disabilities and for victims of domestic abuse. However, they know they need to do more to provide more extra care housing for 950 older people and have plans to meet most, but not all, of this demand. Progress on providing pitches for gypsies and travellers has been slow but councils are increasingly working with gypsies and travellers to find them places to stay. Providing the right housing support to meet people's needs is good value for money because it saves costs in dealing with problems that can arise later. For example it is better value for money to help people live independently at home rather than in residential care. Councils in Devon are sometimes slow in organising adaptations needed by disabled people in their homes. Partners are helping householders in the recession by giving mortgage and debt advice.

Housing providers including district councils are keeping social housing in good condition. But private houses are in a worse condition and have poorer energy efficiency than in other parts of the country. An important way of meeting housing needs and getting value for money is to make sure houses in the county do not remain empty for too long. Councils in Devon can improve at this.

## Inspiring Young People

Leadership and planning of services for children and young people is good. Organisations involved in delivering these services work well together at both the county and local level. Service providers consult well with children and young people and have a good understanding of what needs to be done. Some improvements to services have been made but these improvements are patchy.

Services that safeguard children's wellbeing are adequate overall. This is an improvement on three years ago, when Ofsted judged the arrangements to be inadequate. Provision was not well coordinated in the past and people living in different places did not get the same level of support. But the different organisations involved in this work are now working well together. Substantial changes are being made to improve the way services spot problems before they become too serious and help stop them getting worse. Improvements have been made to ensure that formal assessments are more

likely to be completed on time, and the action planned to protect children is more effective than it used to be. The recent changes are an improvement but there is some way to go. When the worst happens and a child dies or is seriously injured, services do not review what has happened well enough.

The quality of day care provision for very young children is well above average. However, the quality of nursery schools is well below. The quality of primary schools is very similar to that nationally. Although six schools failed their last Ofsted inspection, the number of primary schools meeting the government's minimum target for test results at age 11 has improved. Overall, pupils at this age do quite a bit better than the average for similar areas. The quality of secondary schools is a little below average, and one school failed its last inspection. However, all secondary schools reached the government's minimum target for GCSE results last year, a big improvement from the previous year. Overall, pupils aged 16 do much the same in GCSE exams as in similar areas. At both primary and secondary level, the gap has widened between how well pupils from low income families do compared with the rest. This is a worse picture than nationally.

The overall quality of school sixth forms and further education colleges is similar to nationally. The number of 17 year olds staying on in education or training is close to the average in similar areas but the number of 16-18 year olds in employment, education or training is a bit lower. Slightly fewer young people than in similar areas achieve a qualification equal to five good GCSEs or better by age 19. The achievement of young people from low income families is below the national average and has not improved as fast over recent years.

The overall standard of behaviour in secondary schools is similar to the national average. The County Council has acted to reduce the number of permanent exclusions and this is now close to average. A lot is also being done to improve support for young people who seem likely to get involved in anti-social behaviour. Young offenders are reasonably well supported in finding suitable housing and taking up education and training opportunities after the age of 16.

Steps are being taken to improve the coordination of services for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Information for parents has improved, as has the provision of short breaks for young people and their families. Delays in making specialist provision for some young people with serious behaviour problems lead to their being excluded from school. Some then receive only part-time teaching for long periods. This is unacceptable. The standard of special schools overall is a bit lower than average and one school failed its last inspection. Specialist college provision is of substantially lower quality than average and one college failed its last inspection. There are some problems when young people transfer at 18 to adult mental health services. Day care for young people not attending school or college after age 18 has been reduced in recent years. Parents consider the current provision to be inadequate. Not enough is done to find out the opinions of young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Support overall for young people in the care of the County Council is good. Young people in care have to move home less frequently than in the past. But there is a particular shortage of suitable foster carers when emergency moves are necessary. The great majority of the Council's children's homes are good

or better, which is higher than the national average. However, one home failed its last inspection. Educational support is good and reflects the very high priority given to it. The success rate in GCSEs has improved a lot over recent years and is above the national average. No young person in care has been permanently excluded in the last two years. The number of children leaving care who were in education, employment or training improved substantially in recent years, although the figure dropped in 2008/09. Support for young people wishing to move on into higher education is very good. There is also good support to help care leavers find suitable accommodation. However, transition to adult health mental health services is not well managed in a number of cases. The County Council involves young people in care in decisions about them.

## Strong and Inclusive Communities

A high number of Devon residents say they are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the area as a place to live. Many residents also feel a strong sense of belonging to their immediate neighbourhood.

People from different organisations in Devon are working well together. They are committed to developing strong and inclusive communities, where people are proud to live, get on well together and feel they belong. The Devon Strategic Partnership is leading the way in raising awareness of how the area is changing and what needs to be done to ensure that Devon stays a good place to live.

Partners are working hard to address prejudice and hate crime. They gather information from police, schools and local people and use it to identify trends and issues. They share their findings with others so that all can work together better to tackle prejudice and hate crime. Victims of racist hate are less satisfied, than in previous years, with the way the crime has been handled. Partners recognise there is still work to do to ensure that all victims have access to good quality support - whatever their faith, race, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

The partnership has taken steps to understand the needs of gypsies and travellers better. It funded research, undertaken by members of the gypsy and traveller communities. The research report is very thorough and has been praised across the region. Partners are seeking funding to support projects aimed at reducing hate crime directed at travellers. Devon Racial Equality Council has produced a DVD, which shows the history and culture of Romany people and challenges commonly held, but mistaken, beliefs. The making of the DVD involved three Romany women and includes real-life accounts from victims of bullying and race hate crime.

There is a wide range of voluntary organisations in place that support local communities and help people who are isolated or need special help. Local communities also do a lot to help themselves. In some towns and villages, more than 90 per cent of households have been involved in town and parish planning exercises. Through these plans, residents have been able to identify what needs to be done and then help set up projects to make things better.

The councils and their partners use different ways to consult with local people

and ensure that services meet needs. For example, the councils hold meetings with groups that represent disabled people and have involved these groups in the design of public buildings and other public places. The police are working hard to improve people's confidence in the police and to make it easier for people to talk to each other. The Partnership supports a community based drop-in centre for minority ethnic people, the Hikmat Centre. People from the Indian subcontinent, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Hong Kong and China come together for social and educational activities such as learning English and computer studies.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>

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