

Children and Young People

Where we are now

Children and young people make up around 23% of the East Sussex population. One in four households has dependant children living with them.

Child poverty, which can have a significant impact on children's lives and life chances, is an issue in parts of the county. Nearly one-in-five children in East Sussex live in income-deprived households, with Hastings being the most deprived district where nearly 30% or just over 5,000 children live in poverty. Eastbourne is the second most deprived district where nearly a quarter of children live in poverty. There are some areas in the county where child poverty is particularly concentrated. These include Central St Leonards ward (49%), Sidley ward (42%) and Hailsham East (39%). Poverty and social exclusion are potentially major barriers to achievement for a significant number of children and young people in East Sussex. Families in rural areas can also be disadvantaged through rural deprivation and with poor access to services.

Children's Trust Partners are working together to improve quality of life for children and young people, including those who have moved into the county from other places, such as eastern Europe. There have been some significant achievements including fewer young people being victims of crime, more children in deprived areas taking up nursery education places (although this is still lower than in non deprived areas), improvements to educational attainment, improved access to health services and participation in decision making.

The Challenges Ahead

In many areas of the county there is a need to overcome a culture of low social and educational aspiration which partly derives from our low wage, low skills economy. For example there are large disparities between the attainment of children entitled to free school meals and those that are not. This attainment disadvantage is replicated in other vulnerable groups such as children in care. One of our greatest challenges is to narrow the gap for all outcomes between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers.

In addition we know that one of the biggest determinants of life chances for children and young people is the ability of family and carers to support them emotionally and practically to develop to their potential. One of the ways we intend to address these challenges is to shift more resources to early identification and intervention. Children and young people are the future of the county so we must ensure that they not only have access to education, leisure, transport and other services they need, but are also engaged in planning the future and enabled to flourish and reach their potential.

Our strategic priority for 2026 is to ensure children and young people are well cared for, have healthy life styles, achieve their potential, and grow into confident, empowered, responsible adults - able to contribute to the economic prosperity of the county

Our key tasks (listed below) are integrated into the themes.

Underpinning them will be improving the way that agencies work together through the Children's Trust to identify and respond, in an integrated way, to the needs of children and young people and their families; and shifting resources to prevention and early identification and increase the range of family support services available

- Improve access to services, especially in rural areas
- Help children and young people to make healthy lifestyle choices and reduce health inequalities
- Reduce teenage conception rates across the county
- Protect children and young people from harm
- Reduce bullying towards children and young people wherever it occurs
- Improve support to children and young people on the edge of care, especially vulnerable teenagers
- Establish integrated services for children under 5 and their families through a network of children's centres and increase take up and quality of early years education
- Provide positive activities for children and young people and to increase opportunities for children and young people to be involved and participate in decisions which affect them and their communities
- Tackle youth homelessness, and provide better housing and housing-related support for young people
- Reduce child poverty by 2011 and eradicate it by 2020.