NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

Little Steps to Big Futures

With You. Your Place. When it Matters.

2026 – 2029

Our plan for children and young people sets out a clear vision for how we will work to ensure every child and young person grows up safe, supported and able to thrive.



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Foreword from Cllr. Janet Sanderson

Executive Member for Children and Families

Every child and young person in North Yorkshire should have the opportunity to grow up safe, healthy, happy and able to achieve their ambitions. They should feel that they belong within their family, school and community, know that their voice matters and have enduring relationships with people who know them, care about them and remain important throughout their lives.

This plan reflects our commitment to children, young people and families across our county. It recognises the many strengths within our communities alongside the challenges created by geography, inequality and changing needs. It sets a clear ambition to provide help earlier, strengthen inclusive education, support safe and loving family relationships and ensure children who need our care experience stability, opportunity and a strong sense of belonging.

We want North Yorkshire to be a place where all children can flourish while ensuring that our collective attention and resources are focused on those who are most in need. Children facing disadvantage, adversity or additional barriers should receive the right support and opportunities to overcome them, without those circumstances determining their future.

Achieving this ambition requires the whole Council, our schools and settings, partners and communities to work together. It means listening carefully to children and families, valuing the people who are important to them and making the best use of our collective strengths and resources. Our children and young people deserve nothing less.



Cllr. Janet Sanderson
Executive Member for Children and Families

Foreword from El Mayhew

Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Service

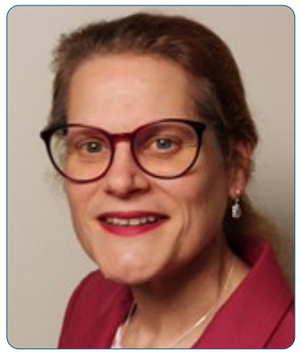
This plan translates our shared ambition for North Yorkshire's children into a clear framework for action. It brings together five priorities focused on the best start in life, inclusion and learning, safe families and strong networks, belonging and stability and preparing young people well for the future.

Our approach is rooted in inclusion, relationships and prevention. We want all children to be welcomed and supported within their local communities, to benefit from strong and enduring relationships and to receive help at the earliest opportunity. Where children and families are most in need, we will act with purpose, compassion and determination, building on their strengths and working alongside the people who know and care about them.

This approach is supported by three enablers: working as one system and one team, leading through relationships and equipping skilled people with the insight, tools and resources they need. Together, these provide the conditions for services to work differently, make better use of evidence and respond more effectively to the lives of children and families.

Place is central to how we will deliver this plan. North Yorkshire is a large and diverse county and children's experiences are shaped by the communities in which they live, learn and grow. The Council has an important role in connecting services around those places, bringing together education, family support, health, social care and community provision so that support feels joined up, accessible and rooted in local relationships.

Our success will be judged by the difference children and young people experience in their everyday lives. Delivery will depend on the contribution of our workforce, schools and settings, partners and communities and, above all, on our willingness to listen to children, young people and families and act together with purpose and pace.



El Mayhew
Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Service

Our Vision

From Little Steps to Big Futures: Coast to Dales, Together for North Yorkshire's Children

With You. Your Place. When it Matters.

In North Yorkshire, childhood is where futures begin. The small everyday moments, bedtime stories, friendships, the first day at nursery or school, cuddles, a walk on the beach, laughing at jokes, climbing a hill, joining a club, learning a new skill, shape who children become and the lives they will lead as adults. We want every child and young person to have the kind of childhood that helps them grow strong inside: with people who love and stand with them, places that welcome them, and support that arrives early when things start to feel wobbly.

We also recognise that growing up and parenting isn't always easy. Many families in North Yorkshire are managing pressures that affect day to day life, including financial pressures linked to the cost of living, housing stability and quality, and health and wellbeing pressures alongside the wider demands of family life. Some of our children and families face barriers and discrimination such as racism, disability and poverty. North Yorkshire's geography can make access to help harder for some families, so we will design services so it feels simpler, nearer and easier to reach for those most in need – coast to dales.

This plan supports the Council's ambition to act earlier and closer to families, schools and communities, preventing issues from escalating and reducing the need for crisis and reactive services. We know relationships and working alongside children, families, schools and settings is important, so we will deliver support locally through shared sites rooted in communities. We will strengthen and co-ordinate family friendly digital access, so information, advice and services feel more connected across our large and diverse county.

The years ahead, from 2026 onwards, will bring significant change for Children's Services. National reforms in safeguarding, children's social care and support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) will reshape how we work. These reforms are all about stepping in earlier, making sure everyone feels included, and getting the right help in place before problems grow. The aim is to help children and young people feel happy, safe and able to thrive in the places they live, learn and spend time.

Local delivery approach (how this will feel in communities)

We will deliver this plan through a locality approach: with services joined up and operating together through shared local places and spaces rooted in the communities most in need, with clear routes into support and strong multi-disciplinary and partnership working so children, families, schools and settings experience a cohesive system.

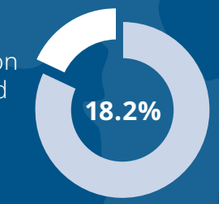
Understanding Need Across North Yorkshire

Using data and local insight to understand the experiences of children, young people and families across North Yorkshire

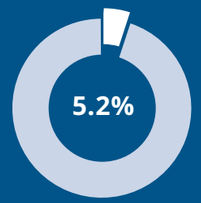
Children and young people across North Yorkshire have different experiences and opportunities. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) map highlights communities that may experience higher levels of disadvantage, with darker red areas indicating greater deprivation. Alongside the information shown around the map, this helps us understand where children, young people and families may benefit from additional support and where services can have the greatest impact.

North Yorkshire population: **635,270**

0-17 year olds: **115,721**



of the population are children and young people aged 0-17



of children and young people are from minority ethnic groups

100 different languages are spoken in our schools

IMD score 2025 (Middle super output area).

85,823 children attend North Yorkshire Schools (including nurseries)

1,523 children recorded as being taught from home (as at the end of March 2026)

Three dedicated further education colleges

23 of **41** secondary schools in North Yorkshire have a sixth form

5.9% of children in North Yorkshire schools have English as an additional language, compared to **19.5%** nationally

20% of year two children worry about the way they look

70% of children think lots of people care about them

96% of year six pupils said they 'always' or 'mostly' feel safe at home and **86%** said they 'always' or 'mostly' feel safe at school

two-year-old funding take up

18.6% of children in our schools are eligible for Free School Meals (academic year 2024/25)

17.0% of children live in relative low-income households (March 2024), although this varies considerably across the county. The overall proportion of children in low-income families has grown from **13.5%** in March 2021.

10 state Special Schools in North Yorkshire
5 Pupil Referral Units in North Yorkshire
21 Targeted Mainstream Provisions in **19** schools, this has created **190** places
As of the end of March 2026, there were **6,534** Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) funded by North Yorkshire
188 under 5s have an Education, Health and Care Plan
3.7 % of primary school children have an Education, Health and Care Plan
3.6% of secondary school children have an Education, Health and Care Plan
In 2024/25, over **3,150** individuals received information or advice from the SEND Information, Advice and Support Service

As of March 2026, approximately 6,100 children and young people are supported by our Children and Families Service. Of those:

- **2,797** children, young people (0-19) and their families are supported by the Early Help Service
- **3,596** children and young people are open to Children's Social Care
- **601** children in our care
- **613** children and young people are being supported with a Child Protection Plan

Outcomes for Children and Young People

Our Outcomes:



How will we measure progress of our outcomes?

We will use the following metrics to help us understand the impact we are having on children, young people and their families

SAFE	Reduction in the rate of children (per 10k 0-17 population) supported by a child protection plan
	Rate of re-referrals to children's social care within 12 months
	Rate of children becoming looked after (per 10k 0-17 population)
	Reduction in the number of children with a factor identified of going missing at the end of assessment
HAPPY	% of children who are happy at home and at school (GUNY)
	% of children who have a trusted adult to talk to (GUNY)
	Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire scores
	% of children who feel people care about them / have trusted relationships (GUNY)
HEALTHY	% up to date Health and Dental Assessments for children looked after
	Time between needs assessment being requested and an EHC plan being issued, excluding exceptions to legal deadline
	% of children worrying and having good levels of wellbeing and resilience
ACHIEVING	% of children achieving a Good Level of Development at reception
	School attendance and absence rates (including persistent and severely)
	Suspension and permanent exclusion rates
	% of young people NEET (16-17)
	Reduction in the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and young people and their peers at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4.
BELONG	Reduction in the number of children taught from home
	Proportion of pupils in mainstream school settings with SEND
	Care arrangement stability
	% of care leavers in suitable accommodation

Where appropriate we will segment the data to understand the impact on different vulnerabilities and to understand if there is a difference in expected outcomes.

Our Five Priorities

The five Priorities are what we will do and we will organise our delivery and service development around these. They are the things that are most important and will make the biggest difference for children, young people and families. We will use the five Outcomes to check that the delivery of our Priorities is having a positive impact for children and young people.

Priority 1: Best Start, Helping Families Early

We will shift the local children's system earlier so children and families get the right advice to be the best parent they can be. We will offer help as soon as needs emerge, strengthening parenting support, early child development and the home learning environment, and improving early identification and intervention where children have emerging additional development needs or families need extra help to parent well and safely.

What this means in practice:

- Joined up early years support from pregnancy through reception and early primary years, with a relentless focus on help and guidance to prevent problems getting worse.
- Guide and support families early to build confidence and parenting skills to meet their child's emotional, learning and health needs.
- Help at the earliest opportunity, rooted in local communities and easy to access.
- Reduce barriers and early disadvantage by supporting high quality parenting and embedding inclusion as routine practice across early years services and settings.
- Use joint needs assessments to understand and target resources where need is greatest to reduce escalation and improve equity of outcomes for specific groups and communities.
- Improve access to clear information, advice and early help so families can understand and take up available financial and travel support.



Priority 2: Inclusion and Learning

We will champion and support an inclusive education system where barriers are removed so more children attend and achieve in mainstream provision, with strong support for children with additional areas of development, children in care and children with a social worker.

What this means in practice:

- Close attainment gaps for disadvantaged learners and those facing additional barriers with a relentless focus on improving outcomes, so that every child and young person can achieve, thrive and fulfil their potential.
- All schools, settings and partners are accountable for consistently delivering and evidencing strong inclusive practice, high quality teaching, learning and enrichment underpinned by a shared framework of expectations, measurable standards and robust quality assurance.
- Improve attendance and reduce exclusions and suspensions, through earlier support and removal of barriers to learning.
- Strengthen inclusive mainstream schools with local, non stigmatising wraparound support for children, families, schools and settings.
- Provide the right education and provision for children and young people with additional needs in the right places, closer to home, reducing unnecessary disruption.
- Targeted support for children and young people missing from school and those most at risk of lower outcomes.



Priority 3: Safe Families, Strong Networks

We will keep children safe by strengthening relational, evidence informed interventions that help families to choose and sustain change and by harnessing the resources, power and insight of family networks to build safety and lasting support around their children.

What this means in practice:

- Support parents and carers build the skills and confidence they need to find work, progress in their careers and create strong foundations for their families.
- Help children in care and care experienced young people build and maintain positive relationships with trusted adults and supportive networks
- Keep children safe at home, in the places they live and learn, in communities and online, with strong and decisive multi agency safeguarding.
- Embed anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice across all services, ensuring we recognise and address the impact of discrimination on children, young people and families.
- Identify risk early and respond effectively, strengthening family resilience through their family networks to prevent escalation into statutory intervention.
- Family Group Decision Making and family led planning so families and networks shape solutions and safe plans.
- Families feel heard, understood, empowered and confident in accessing support.
- Support local youth activities and opportunities that strengthens pro-social adolescent relationships and protective factors.
- Ensure children who are disproportionately vulnerable to harm are identified and supported through targeted interventions.
- Prevent offending and reduce reoffending through a coordinated Youth Justice approach that intervenes early, addresses underlying risks and supports children and young people to build positive relationships, skills and pathways away from harm.



Priority 4: Strong Roots, Stable Lives

We will support children and young people to experience stable, loving relationships and strong connections to family, school, settings and community. Where children need our care, we will prioritise their stability and keep children as close to home as possible.

What this means in practice:

- Strengthen children's sense of belonging through connection to important relationships and places, so children are known, included and supported where they live and learn.
- Improve education attendance and attainment for children in care and those with a social worker through joined up work between social care, education settings and the Virtual School.
- Strengthen local care sufficiency so children who need care can live in safe, stable and nurturing homes close to their family and community wherever possible, reducing the use of distant and residential care.
- Be ambitious corporate parents for our children in care and care-experienced young people.
- Help care experienced young people build a strong network of support and put down roots so they can access the right help at the right time and have stable relationships, education and accommodation.



Priority 5: Future Ready

We will support all children and young people to move through key transitions and into adulthood with confidence – developing skills, aspirations and pathways into education, training, employment and independent living. We will pay particular attention to those who need the strongest wraparound support to thrive, including care experienced young people, young people with additional areas of development and young carers.

What this means in practice:

- Strong transitions across early years, primary, secondary, post 16 and into adulthood, so young people experience continuity and clarity, not cliff edges.
- Skills and career development: strengthen routes into work and purposeful adulthood through employability, mentoring, work experience and practical life skills.
- Care experienced young people and care leavers: sustained support into adulthood including preparation for adulthood and stable accommodation pathways.
- Young people with additional areas of development and disabilities: strong preparation for adulthood and joined up transition planning so aspirations and support travel with them.
- Young carers and other groups who most need support: early identification and support so caring responsibilities and challenges do not limit participation and future pathways.



Our Three Enablers – How we will deliver

Enablers are important principles, structures and approaches that help and guide how we will work and deliver this plan:

Enabler 1: One System, One Team

We will make joined up working the default across education, early and family help, social care, youth justice, public health and community support so children and families experience one coherent system that is simple to access and understand.

What this means in practice:

- Shared sites rooted in community places for services to be delivered together where they are most needed, so support is closer to families, schools and settings and feels welcoming and non stigmatising.
- Clear routes into help so families, schools and settings can reach out when they need support and step out when things are going well again.
- Joined up multi-disciplinary help wrapped around children, families, schools and settings, reducing duplication and delays between professionals
- Strong partnership working so children are protected quickly and families receive coordinated help that fits around their daily lives.
- Family friendly digital access that supports connected services across our large county, provides open access to information and advice and reduces travel barriers.
- Strengthen joint working between CYPS, Housing, Community Development and HAS to ensure coordinated support for transitions, including care leaver move-on accommodation and housing support for families.

Enabler 2: Relational and Systems Leadership

We will lead a consistent CYPS culture that is relational, strengths based and inclusive, with co production and the voice of children, young people and families embedded in our governance and service development.

What this means in practice:

- We act as one system for children and families. We join up services and reduce duplication, so families experience seamless support.
- We lead through relationships and influence across boundaries. We invest in strong, honest partnership relationships and convene others around shared outcomes, often beyond direct managerial control.

- We keep a whole-system view and ask different questions. We routinely consider wider system impacts and focus on understanding causes (not just symptoms) before developing solutions.
- We create the conditions for ownership, good judgement and pace. Leaders model clarity and trust, enable decisions closer to families and reduce unnecessary escalation/permission-seeking through clear direction and culture.
- We build a learning system that improves continuously. We co-produce with children and families, test, monitor and learn with partners; we share learning, use evidence and adapt what we do based on impact.
- Embed co-production with children, young people and families as part of everyday practice, ensuring their voices shape service design, delivery and improvement so support is accessible, relevant and grounded in lived experience.

Enabler 3: Skilled People, Smart Planning

We will develop and equip our workforce with the skills, tools and support to deliver high quality interventions and use evidence, data and digital systems to understand need, track impact and plan capacity sustainably.

What this means in practice:

- A valued, nurtured and capable workforce with clear development pathways, improved retention and consistent reflective practice and supervision.
- High-quality, timely and connected data, providing a consistent view across the service, with clear data governance and fewer disconnected systems.
- Family friendly digital access points that help families find information, understand pathways and access support more easily.
- Smarter planning of local capacity through place planning and commissioning so the right school places, childcare, homes for children and specialist support exists in the right places and school place surplus and reliance on high cost spot purchase and crisis interventions reduces over time.
- Align delivery with the North Yorkshire Council People Strategy, ensuring we attract, develop and retain a skilled, resilient workforce with the right capacity, capabilities and leadership to deliver high-quality support for children, young people and families, now and into the future.

How we will keep this plan live

We will produce annual delivery plans to set out programmes of work that sit under these priorities and enablers, evaluate progress and impact and adapt as needs and National reforms evolve.

Now, Next, Future

This section sets out how our priorities for children and young people are being delivered through ongoing transformation, what we will focus on next and how this will shape our longer-term ambitions. It recognises the progress already underway, the pressures and opportunities driving transformation and the steps we will take to build on strong foundations and further transform outcomes.

Now

- Alignment of the 2023-2026 Local Area SEND Strategy, with national reforms by focusing on early identification, improving outcomes and improving communication with parents.
- Strengthen the quality, consistency and accessibility of system data to enable better decision-making, performance management and service outcomes.
- A review of the internal systems and processes which administer school admissions to identify opportunities to improve the efficiency of this function.
- A post implementation review of the home to school transport policy.
- Shift to prevention and early intervention to reduce escalation and Council cost pressures.
- Best start in life delivery, helping families' early pathways via development of Family Hubs. The Best Start in Life Plan will be delivered in alignment with wider national reforms to children's services, this ensures that Family Hubs and associated services are designed to meet the needs of children and families.
- Strengthen early intervention and family-based support by expanding edge of care services, embedding Family Network Meetings and working with health partners to enhance mental health and neurodiversity provision.
- Strengthen workforce stability, capability and retention through clear career pathways, enhanced recruitment and student pathways, and a comprehensive learning and development offer.
- Embed a positive, learning-focused culture by improving partnership working, delivering consistent training and reflective supervision and promoting continuous improvement across services.

Next

- The Department for Education's Families First Partnership Programme sets out a vision for reforming support for vulnerable children and families; we are planning implementation, with changes increasingly reflected in statutory guidance.
- Deliver SEND reform year one priorities to improve inclusivity in mainstream education, increase capacity and reduce escalations.
- Strengthening of effective partnerships and practice, through shared training, clear roles and responsibilities, open communication and collective accountability for outcomes.
- Ensuring sufficient high needs places within mainstream settings supported by appropriately skilled professionals.
- Improve the stability of care and reduce the use of high cost externally commissioned homes for children in our care.
- Deliver increased residential homes in North Yorkshire for children in our care so they are close to home and get good, cost effective care.
- Deliver enhanced inclusion support through targeted locality action and strengthened school engagement.
- Align 0-19 service to Best Start to strengthen early intervention through integration into Family Hubs and early pathways.
- Increase the sufficiency and stability of foster homes through targeted recruitment and continued development of innovative support models such as Mockingbird.
- Deliver the Digital EHCP system to improve communication with families and efficiency of the service, reducing delays and costs.



Future

- Best Start, Helping Families Early: Deliver a mature early intervention system where children and families can access joined-up support, information, and advice through integrated local and digital pathways.
- Inclusion and Learning: Create a sustainable and inclusive education system through strengthened partnership working, supported by improved SEND pathways, digital solutions and data-driven decision making.
- Safe Families, Strong Networks: Embed family-led, restorative and multi-agency approaches that prevent escalation and improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.
- Strong Roots, Stable Lives: Strengthen local sufficiency, accommodation, and care arrangements so that more children can remain close to home and experience stable, lasting relationships.
- Future Ready, Transitions and Skills: Support children and young people to develop the skills, confidence and opportunities needed for successful transitions into adulthood, employment and independent living.



Children and Young Peoples Service Finances

Our financial challenge is to meet increasing levels of need whilst ensuring every pound invested delivers the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families. By shifting towards prevention, inclusion and early intervention, we aim to improve lives, reduce reliance on high-cost specialist support and create a more sustainable system for the future.

Children and Young Peoples Services manage a significant level of investment to support children, young people and families across North Yorkshire. The service is funded through a combination of Council funding, Dedicated Schools Grant, grants, partner contributions, fees and charges and other income sources. The largest proportion of funding is received through the Dedicated Schools Grant, reflecting the scale of investment in education, SEND and support for children and young people.

The financial position reflects growing demand and increasing complexity of need, particularly within Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), social care and specialist care arrangement to meet childrens particular needs change. Alongside national reforms, these pressures require us to make the best use of available resources by intervening earlier, strengthening inclusion and improving local sufficiency so that more children and young people can be supported within their families, communities and local schools.

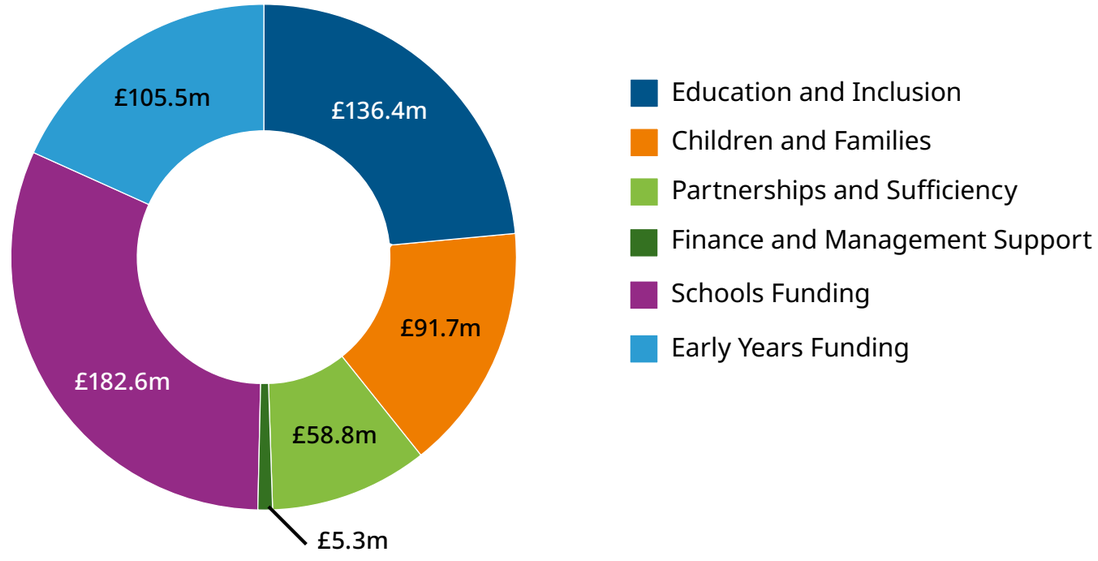
The distribution of investment across the service demonstrates our commitment to education, inclusion, early intervention and support for vulnerable children and families.

The largest areas of expenditure relate to Schools Funding, Education & Inclusion, Early Years Funding and Children & Families services, reflecting our ambition to help children thrive through prevention, inclusion and timely support.

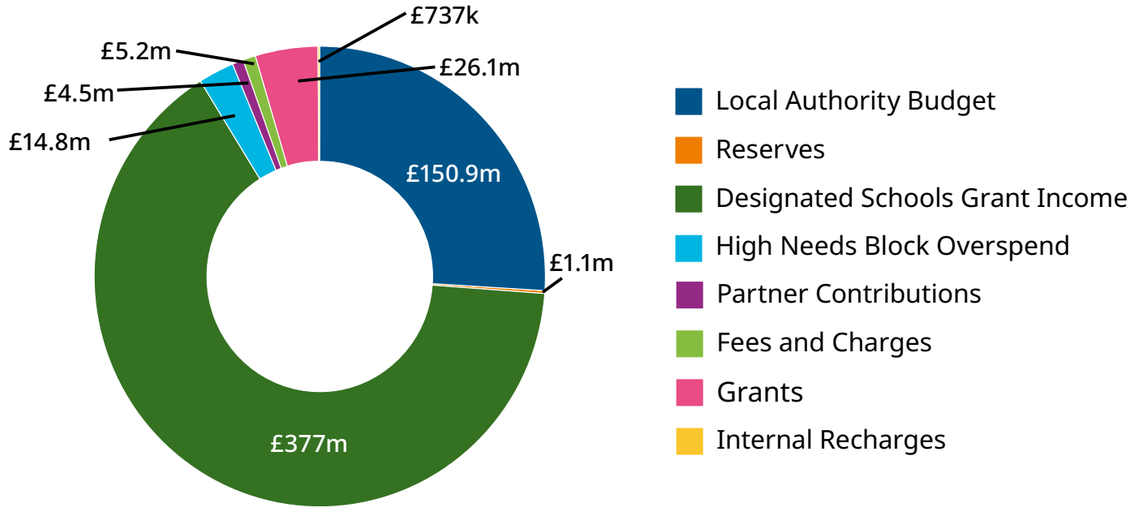
Over the life of this plan, we will continue to focus on:

- Investing earlier to prevent needs escalating into crisis.
- Improving inclusion and mainstream capacity for children with additional needs.
- Strengthening local sufficiency so more children can remain close to home and their communities.
- Using data, evidence and strategic planning to ensure resources are targeted where they can have the greatest impact.
- Delivering transformation and reform programmes that improve outcomes while supporting long-term financial sustainability
- Working together and efficiently as One Council, for example with Community Development regarding housing pathways for care leavers and Health and Adult Services on transitions

Children and Young Peoples Service Expenditure 2026/27



Children and Young Peoples Service Income Sources 2026/27







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