

Commissioner's report on children's services in Devon County Council

**Report to the Minister of State for Children and
Families by Children's Services Commissioner,
Nigel Richardson CBE**

December 2025

Introduction:

This report is my first as Commissioner relating to children's services in Devon.

I was appointed to the position in June 2025 following Devon being found to be Inadequate by Ofsted in a report published on 13 May 2025.

That report followed a previous report published on 17 March 2020 by Ofsted also after an inspection which found services to be Inadequate.

There is a presumption in cases of persistent failure of this nature that children's social care services will be removed from local authority control, for a period of time, in order to bring about sustainable improvement, unless there are compelling reasons not to do so.

My appointment and attendant Terms of Reference was laid out in a Revised Statutory Direction to Devon County Council in relation to Children's Services under section 497A(4B) of the Education Act 1996 published in June 2025.

Methodology

In undertaking this task, I have read a large number of documents relating to Devon County Council and the operation of its Children's Services in particular. My research and background reading started with recent and previous Ofsted reports and recommendations, the work of the first Commissioner, the Improvement Advisor that followed and the second Commissioner.

I have also conducted a number of 1:1 conversations with key personnel across Devon, key politicians, operational leaders, partners, partnerships and front line staff groups. I have attended a number of operational and governance meetings either in person or virtually including the Improvement Board, Cabinet, Scrutiny, Full Council, Chief Executives Leadership Team and performance management meetings. I have also read through the minutes and actions from those meetings and many others. I have also read the reports and updates of the previous Commissioners.

I have had helpful ongoing individual conversations with the Chief Executive, the Leader of the Council, the Interim Director of Children's Services and Deputy Director which have also informed my thinking, as have regular conversations with the most recent Commissioner who, with the agreement of the DfE, has been contracted directly by the Council to provide strategic support and guidance to the CEX and to Members.

I have undertaken extensive desk-based research and analysis which has also helped me pull together important information about where Devon currently stands in terms of its capacity and capability to run Children's Services.

Further key information has also been gathered from conversations and reports via the focussed and well received work of the existing SLIP partners, Essex and Hertfordshire.

Conversations with the regulator Ofsted have also been helpful and informative.

Contact with additional external expertise has been made to help challenge and test my thinking about the most useful way to recommend help and support to ensure continued improvements across Devon children's services.

Important Devon Context:

Clearly there is much work still to do in Devon and a disproportionate and relentless focus on improvement must remain.

The fact that Devon has struggled for many years to consistently provide good quality services to the children and families of Devon is well documented – the most vulnerable in particular have had a very poor service for too long.

That needs to change and change at pace, which is supported by all those I have interviewed and engaged with as part of the review process.

However, I want to pause at this point in the report as very early on in the background research and reading as well as in the initial meetings and dialogue with Devon it became apparent that this wasn't going to be the usual piece of work for a DfE appointed Commissioner.

While a number of 'models' for what constitute good children's services exist, in my experience, poorly performing children's services and particularly those rated inadequate twice in successive inspections tend to nearly always exhibit significant weaknesses in the following five areas – which, to a greater or lesser degree – they don't tend to display:

- a strong corporate Council able to provide support, scrutiny and challenge in order to create the conditions for success
- stable, focused and collaborative service and practice leadership
- a stable workforce, equipped and trained to deliver a consistent model of practice, with strong quality assurance and performance management systems
- consistently improving social work practice working and learning within a clear model of practice
- partnerships with key statutory agencies that reflect a desire for change and the collaborative nature of delivering that change

It soon became clear during my initial time with Devon that instead of having varying degrees of weaknesses in these critical areas they actually have varying degrees of strength and, that whilst they are still very much 'works in progress', were all heading in a positive direction.

On reflection I would also suggest that is actually the main finding in the last Ofsted report. That may sound like a strange conclusion to reach but to me the content of the report doesn't read like one describing a 'traditionally' inadequate LA. The fact that it contains quite a number of positive and encouraging comments about progress being made and that it gives the grade of Requires Improvement for the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families suggests to me that Ofsted observed a lot of things that were starting to come together positively albeit as they say from a very low base.

There is something here about timing and the arrival of certain individuals at critical points in the journey, following what was a period of 'churn' and a series of changes in leadership between 2022-2024. The new Chief Executive taking up post in 2023 has had a positive impact in reprioritising the importance of children's services across Devon County Council. The current interim DCS also had a very positive impact when he arrived and covered the role between January and September 2023 – at which point, things started to change. By the end of 2024, however, a new substantive DCS had been appointed and had then departed. It is unfortunate that this coincided with the first visit of the Ofsted team between September and October 2024. Following a challenge from the Council through Ofsted's formal complaints process, an additional evidence gathering exercise was agreed, and by the time Ofsted returned for the second phase of the inspection in January 2025 the previous interim DCS had returned, calmed and stabilised things and continued to implement the necessary improvements. While it is not for me to comment on the inspection process itself, I do elaborate further on the consequences of this later in the report. What I would say, however, is that the final report itself almost reads like the inspection of two different LAs – with significant difficulties identified in the first visit having been dealt with effectively by the time of the second visit. As Ofsted stated themselves in the report:

"Local authority leaders took decisive action in response to significant weaknesses that were identified by inspectors in October 2024, and subsequently implemented some targeted plans that have supported positive change, including an improvement in the responses to contacts. While there is a clear determination to turn around services for children, that is leading to some improvement, the current positive impact for children and care leavers is not widespread." Ofsted 2025

Clear evidence I would suggest of Devon's capacity and capability to improve – too little too late for the last inspection but something positive to think about looking forward.

That left me with a dilemma as it supported my hypothesis that there was something different about where Devon were on their improvement journey. It also made me question how best to report back and how to make recommendations for the future that would be helpful and support the clear direction of travel.

My conclusion, following further conversations, analysis and research was that the best way to support Devon and report back to Ministers wouldn't be to produce what you might call a 'traditional' report which highlighted another large number of recommendations to be actioned and the continuation of additional scrutiny via either a commissioner or an improvement advisor.

It feels to me, for reasons I highlight below, which I am confident in, that Devon needs to be supported to continue to improve by DfE moving away from more scrutiny and towards more helping.

Responding to my findings will require a different and more creative response from DfE. This report therefore is not yet another analysis of everything that has gone before and what now needs to start to be put in place to get Devon back on track – that would be unhelpful at this stage in Devon's improvement journey.

Devon's failings have been well documented elsewhere; what's needed is recognition of what has been achieved and how Devon's potential can be harnessed so the system wide improvements I have seen can be embedded, be helped to accelerate at pace and be applied consistently across the County.

A Different Type of Report:

It is well known as stated earlier that Devon has been subject to Government intervention since 2020. They have been subject to Statutory Notices and have had a number of Commissioners and Improvement Advisors while also receiving practical advice and support from other high performing LAs all approved by DfE. That in itself begs the question of why none of this appears to have worked as intended to date? DfE, at some time in the future, may well, I would suggest, want to look back objectively, with others, at the 'Devon journey' to try and understand and learn from what worked and what didn't in terms of improvement support in order to learn valuable lessons for any future interventions elsewhere. That time isn't now, as the priority is to draw a line, look forward positively and continue to help Devon as it works hard, to create the conditions for success that are, in my opinion, now clearly emerging strongly.

So for the rest of this report I intend to follow a slightly different but hopefully a more helpful format unique to the context I have observed and am describing in Devon.

Throughout the rest of this report I will:

1. clearly answer the key Ministerial question about capacity and capability and future control of children's services
2. highlight 19 headline areas supporting my conclusion followed by a 20th that should help both reassure and ensure long term sustainability.
3. reference the three areas of practical help that I think if done well, supported by DfE, will greatly assist in securing improvements at pace and further embed good practice as 'the way we do things around here' into Devon's day to day approaches to children's services.
4. identify two key areas of risk
5. suggest a possible 'light touch' level of oversight in a timetable looking forwards.

The Capacity and Capability Question:

The key question the Minister posed was for the Commissioner:

"To bring together evidence to assess the council's capacity and capability to improve itself, in a reasonable timeframe, and recommend whether or not this evidence is sufficiently strong to suggest that long-term sustainable improvement to

children's social care can be achieved should operational service control continue to remain with the council."

My answer to that key question is positive.

I am firmly of the opinion that Devon **does** have the capacity and capability to improve itself in a reasonable timeframe.

I am also of the opinion that Ministers **can** confidently leave the operational service control with the council.

Headline Evidence Supporting My Conclusions:

What follows is not meant to be exhaustive but they are some of the key things that give me confidence in reporting positively on Devon's capacity and capability to improve and to remain in control of its own services:

1. Following the recent local elections Devon now has new political leadership. The Lib Dem group have made an impressive 'fresh start' and they are very clear that they will be judged on the improvements they are determined to see in Children's Services. Children's services are undoubtedly the top priority for Devon County Council. Three cabinet members (including the Leader) hold portfolios across Children's services – Education, Lead Member and SEND. My observations of two cabinet meetings and scrutiny alongside additional face to face meetings assures me that the Leader and his team are very serious about bringing about the improvements needed. They are also very realistic about the amount of internal and partnership work needed, the fact that a lot of this work was initiated by the previous administration (which they publicly acknowledge) and that additional resources will continue to be needed to secure the long overdue change.
2. Devon's children's services now enjoy strong corporate support. There is very clear, effective, visible and passionate leadership from the Chief Executive for this agenda. She has successfully refocused her entire team on better understanding, and being better able to support, what is needed to secure long term sustainable change. This work isn't finished, and I would urge the Chief Executive to continue with this disproportionate focus on what's needed to bring about positive change. A continued relentless focus on what is a good, clear and comprehensive improvement plan by the corporate centre will go a long way towards accelerating that change. In particular, additional focus on recruitment/retention, the good and timely use and understanding of management/performance information, the effective implementation of the long-awaited new IT system and continued creativity within difficult financial constraints will, I'm sure, pay dividends in the long term.

3. Children's services in Devon are currently led by a good, experienced and well regarded DCS which is another very important factor supporting my conclusions. Since his return to Devon on an interim basis he has been a calming and stabilising factor. He has very effectively been leading on the necessary 'repair work' and has steadily and systematically been putting the right things in place. The confidence he has injected back into the system is palpable. While he is undoubtedly making a difference, the downside is the interim nature of his position when looking to the future and the fact that he is only available 3 days per week.
4. The interim DCS, the CEX and the Leader all recognise that a substantive DCS who is able to commit to being in Devon full time and for a number of years is essential for sustained improvement. The recruitment process remains ongoing. It has been thoughtful, thorough and well organised. It is also a sign of increased confidence that advice to not be afraid of not appointing if the right candidate can't be found this time round has been taken. Hopefully a good appointment will be made but if not, a sound fall-back position has already been negotiated with the current interim DCS agreeing to stay until a successful appointment is made.
5. An additional benefit of a substantive fulltime appointment to the post of DCS is that it will then enable the CEX and the Deputy Director to completely focus on their own full time roles while continuing to support each other which will be another benefit to the collective improvement capacity.
6. It is also evident that Devon benefits from an effective and able Deputy Director of Children's Services. She is a strong children's social work practice leader and she has successfully recruited well to an equally impressive and strong leadership team which is now all permanent – for the first time in a long time.
7. Recruitment and retention across the wider children's work force is not without its challenges but the direction of travel is positive with the entire workforce fast becoming increasingly more stable and able. I was fortunate enough to meet a number of practitioners and the growing enthusiasm for working in Devon and for where things are heading was very clear. The new Social Work Academy and the Leadership Development Programme are both examples of approaches that are helping grow long term capacity and capability. The whole leadership team continue to develop a much clearer self-awareness of the services strengths and weaknesses and how to build on the strengths and respond to the weaknesses.
8. Corporate recognition and action to respond to a very poor IT system is well underway. A new and much better system has been procured, for both Adults and Children's and due to the urgent need for a new system across Children's Services discussions are underway to secure a 'children's first' approach with the implementation programme.
9. The last Ofsted Inspection was not without some difficulties which, as referenced earlier, resulted in additional evidence gathering from Ofsted as

part of their advanced moderation process. It is therefore particularly pleasing to hear in my conversations with both Ofsted and the Council that the relationship between both parties has been strengthened and there is a fresh focus on securing improvements. This is a positive development. The usual expected series of Monitoring Visits are now being planned and will commence shortly. As also discussed earlier I do not think there is any contradiction in my positively reporting on Devon, and Ofsted labelling the services inadequate. The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families grade was Requires Improvement to be Good and the report itself highlighted a number of 'green shoots' that hadn't yet had chance to change outcomes. That highlights to me a capacity and capability to improve that I witnessed throughout my time with Devon.

10. A sensible move to a three Districts model for managing and delivering children's services has been developed, successfully implemented and welcomed. This new approach in my view, is the right thing to do, given the geography and size of the County. It should really help critical partnership relationships develop and prosper on the ground which in turn should help expand capacity and impact at a more localised level.
11. As alluded to earlier, my assessment is that the current Improvement Plan is strong. It has been recently updated and approved by OFSTED. It now needs continued support, focus and action by all concerned if Devon is to fulfil its potential to turnaround children's services.
12. A very helpful and effective Quality, Performance and Review Meeting (QPRM) is held on a regular basis led by the DCS. This is an important opportunity for Children's Services to come together in person and to pause and reflect on what's going on across the service. It is an opportunity to support and maintain high performance while also identifying those areas in need of further attention. It has a history of originally being chaired for a time by Essex as an Improvement Partner and also by the former Commissioner at certain stages. It is now appropriately chaired and led by the DCS and it is a critically important meeting that I think could be further strengthened in a couple of important ways. First, the need for it to still be a full day meeting and of the same frequency is questionable. The time when that was necessary has passed. It may well now benefit from a tighter and more focused series of half days. Second, the quality of the data presented and discussed still needs refining. The DCS is very clear about the need for accurate and timely analysis of data as a key means of getting and keeping a 'grip' on what is happening. This may be an area the corporate centre could be more supportive with. Routine performance reports produced on a regular basis to an agreed format that answer the following key questions for each service area are critically important in helping improve practice:
 - How much did we do = Quantity
 - How well did we do it = Quality
 - Is anyone any better off = Outcomes/Impact

I would suggest that in order to further refine this piece of good practice the DCS and the Deputy Director meet with the former Commissioner and representatives from Essex together with corporate colleagues to plan and implement the next iteration of QPRM.

13. Throughout my time in Devon the commitment to a 'families first', strengths and relationship based approach to practice has been evident. This puts Devon in a very strong position to respond to recently announced Government initiatives. The impressive family group conferencing service and the effective use of Life Long Links are both a credit to Devon and clear evidence of a restorative approach that moves beyond words. The 'Restorative Devon' brand may well have a chequered history, but it definitely has currency and it resonates across the partnership. I would suggest it needs to be given a fresh start. I think an increased clarity about Devon's commitment to keeping children safely connected and rooted in family and community by further expanding, developing and strategically using these two flagship restorative approaches in particular should help Devon move forward effectively at speed. The language of restorative practices should be the common language Devon needs to help mobilise collective effort across the partnership.
14. From a low base, Devon continues to develop a maturing use of a good quality assurance framework as well as thematic and bespoke audits with help and support from its sector led Improvement Partners. I would encourage the continued focused development of this work as it is critical to securing the important management oversight that is becoming increasingly evident across children's services.
15. Of the six areas of improvement highlighted in the recent Ofsted report, one concerned lack of appropriate provision:

'The availability of support and sufficient suitable local homes to meet the needs of children in care and care leavers'

The lack of 'suitable local homes' is a difficult one for any LA to address but Devon have risen to the challenge and the very first Cabinet meeting of the new administration approved an impressive and welcome ambitious strategic response to the problem. The paper '*Growing Futures: Homes for children and young people in care in Devon*', endorsed and approved by Cabinet, is an impressive piece of work that involves an investment of £156 million over 10 years to help secure the right 'not for profit' local provision. This work has its origins during the time of the previous administration but the fact that it was endorsed as one of the first acts of the new administration demonstrates how seriously politicians across the council are now taking their corporate parenting responsibilities. It is obviously not a 'quick fix' solution to the problem, but it is a clear sign of ambitious and serious strategic intent to put the right things in place across Devon.

16. The work of the sector led improvement partners - Essex and Hertfordshire – is to be commended. Whilst it would be easy following the Ofsted judgement to think about ceasing these relationships and replacing them with something different, which I believe would have been the wrong approach. I welcome the fact that DfE continues to support and expand this work. The ‘repair work’ they have helped with so far is, from what I’ve seen, appropriate and has been exactly what Devon needed. I would argue they have helped establish and secure the strong foundations needed for long term sustainable change. The more work they can now do to further enhance this work the better. The work started from a very low base, and it shouldn’t be forgotten that whilst the overall Ofsted judgement itself was very disappointing the report is full of positive references to practice improvements that are just starting to take shape. Another reason for my optimism looking forward.
17. The continued engagement of the previous Commissioner, initially by DfE as part of a planned transition as I started my work and then by Devon for an additional period into 2026, is also welcome and adds to Devon’s capacity and capability. The previous Commissioner has been involved for over two years now and has a good understanding of the Devon story and he, working alongside others, has been instrumental in the initial thinking and development of a lot of the improvement work that is now starting to show results.
18. The Improvement Board itself is another key part of the improvement jigsaw. I would suggest it also needs to take the opportunity to reset itself. In rising to a challenge I set it of responding to just 3 particularly stubborn performance indicators, members of the Board showed themselves capable of making positive things happen across the partnership. To harness this potential and to make the most of a reset I would suggest the Lead Member for Children’s Services takes over the chairing of the Board supported by the former Commissioner (pending the arrival of the new DCS when this supporting arrangement should be reviewed). The overall composition of the Board should be reviewed to look at possibly reducing its size and the Board should take time to restate its specific purpose and make sure it is aligned to the improvement plan and focused on securing the partnership support needed to effect change.
19. Having spoken to all the key agencies who make up the Devon Safeguarding Partnership there is no question that they are all agreed on the need for change and are committed to securing that change. Partnership work in Devon is clearly improving but it needs continued attention and support. Again, given the optimistic points I’ve made in this report, I would suggest it is time for this partnership to also pause and take the opportunity for a reset and a fresh start building on its work to date. This would also coincide well with the recent DfE announcement of three new National Safeguarding Partnership Multi Agency Facilitators who should be in a position to help the Devon Partnership with its reset. I know the interim DCS has already made contact with the facilitators and an early conversation with them, the DfE and Devon to work out how best to identify and package the appropriate support would be welcome. A collective understanding of what ‘Good’ safeguarding

partnerships look like and then a programme of work to achieve the full and effective implementation of Working Together across Devon would be the right place to start.

20. The 19 areas I've highlighted above, which although not exhaustive, combine to give me confidence about Devon and its capacity and capability to improve. They also come together under a new and recently endorsed Council wide strategic vision and plan "*Building a positive future for Devon where everyone thrives*". (Appendix 1) This important guiding document outlines the Council's vision, values and strategic priorities. It is another impressive start for the new administration which clearly places children and young people firmly at the centre of the Council's priorities. As the Leader of the council states in the foreword:

"Young people are at the heart of our ambitions and everything we do."

This approach and especially the more detailed plan for children and young people which will now follow should help create a common language and a clear narrative to help mobilise collective effort across the County.

As this work develops, I would suggest it matures into more of an Outcome oriented approach. Devon had a false start with its Child Friendly Devon initiative – I would also say it would be worth revisiting either a child friendly or a family friendly Devon as the strategic vision continues to be refined.

Three Recommendations for Practical Help:

As I said at the outset this has not been an ordinary brief for a Commissioner. It follows that its also not going to be appropriate or helpful to follow the usual recommendations of either a continuation of a Commissioner or a step down to an Improvement Advisor to support Devon.

In my opinion what is needed more urgently over and above the ideas and recommendations contained in the narrative of this report is some extra targeted practical help and support to help strengthen the current improvement journey and complement the existing help and support in play: in other words, more practical help and less scrutiny.

Before I go into the detail of these recommendations it is important to remind ourselves of the six areas of improvement specifically identified by Ofsted :

"What needs to improve?"

- *The response to children at immediate risk of harm, including the timeliness of strategy discussions.*
- *The identification of risk and response to neglect, domestic abuse and extra-familial harm for children.*

- *The quality and impact of plans for children and care leavers to meet their needs.*
- *The assessment of risk and safety planning for care leavers.*
- *The availability of support and sufficient suitable local homes to meet the needs of children in care and care leavers.*
- *Management oversight and grip across the service and the effectiveness of supervision. "*

Of the six areas highlighted above, Devon have moved at speed building on the good work of the previous administration to respond to '*The availability of support and sufficient suitable local homes to meet the needs of children in care and care leavers*'

The remaining five areas needing improvement are all already being focussed on via various aspects of the improvement plan, but the three specific pieces of additional practical help I'm recommending will enable progress to be accelerated across all five, help Devon implement its Families First plans at speed and help reinvigorate partnership working across the County.

I am recommending additional practical support funded by DfE (probably in the form of a time limited grant linked to specific individuals/organisations I have already identified as best able to help?) focused on three particularly important areas of practice:

1. **Additional practical advice, help and support on the roll out and embedding of 'reflective supervision practices' and their impact on casework decision making, planning and outcomes for children and young people.** Getting this right runs through the heart of the 5/6 of the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted and outlined above. This work would target social workers and PA's and will help and support multi agency decision making at the already improving 'Front Door', inform better case work planning and recording and help with the professional development of the workforce. Once agreed it can be shaped to complement the existing work ongoing in Devon and the additional support from Essex and Hertfordshire.
2. **The expansion and strategic development of an already very effective in-house Family Group Conferencing (FGC) and Life Long Links service (LLL).** Done well this will enable Devon to adopt a unique strategic position nationally where no child will enter care in Devon without first having had the opportunity of an FGC and no child will leave care in Devon without being offered the LLL service. This will potentially put Devon in a very strong position when implementing the new government Families First initiative and the requirements in the forthcoming Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. It should also strengthen the Early Help offer and support the Council wide commitment towards more preventative services. If successful it will help reduce the need for children to enter care in the first place by strengthening family and community ties while also ensuring that those who need care maintain and strengthen their own family links rather than have them weakened and sometimes inadvertently broken.

3. **Additional identified help to refresh and reinvigorate the ‘Restorative Devon’ brand.** This should target the partnership in its widest sense (eg Council, Health, Education, Police, third sector etc) as well as offering some more detailed support on restorative practices to enhance the developing social work practice framework in Devon. This approach can be a key way to create a much needed common language across Devon that helps mobilise collective effort to improve the life chances of the next generation – something that has been absent from the Devon story so far.

I would suggest that this package of practical support and its detail be agreed quickly so it can be offered on the ground between October and the end of March 2026. That way the existing momentum and growing confidence can be built on.

Any grant should also, I suggest, be delegated directly to Devon via the DCS and/or the Deputy Director for reasons of speed, final timetable planning and delivery. It would also be helpful for the former Commissioner to be involved in the planning, timetabling, oversight and effective implementation of this work with the individuals who have agreed to be involved.

All of the above will, I believe, help improve practice and outcomes, put Devon in a much stronger position in preparation for future inspection visits while also helping them implement the Governments Families First initiatives effectively and at speed.

Two Main Risks:

- Obviously in this complex area of work many risks exist as with most LAs (eg social, financial, operational) but I think it wise to highlight just two specifically in this report.
- Firstly, as mentioned, there is a risk of no appointment being made to the position of DCS at this time. Hopefully a good appointment will be made, but I am confident as stated earlier that Devon are now mature enough to make no appointment rather than the wrong appointment. The mitigation against this risk is the back up plan of the existing interim arrangements remaining in place for as long as necessary.
- Although not in the remit of this particular piece of work it would be wrong not to highlight a second significant risk. The current round of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) consultations is already consuming large amounts of political and operational time. However, that isn't the main risk. The bigger concern would be for any recommendation which leads to the break up and fragmentation of Devon CC and the existing arrangements for children's services. Given the positive improvement trajectory I have seen and identified in this report and the critical importance of having a well led and well functioning children's services for the local population anything that breaks that model would risk stopping the existing work in its tracks with an even bigger risk that things would quickly slip backwards. As stated, this is not

strictly in my brief to comment on, but the potential impact of LGR on services that are now showing signs of improvement should be appropriately considered by government as part of their decision making process.

Potential Forward Look Timetable:

Looking forward, I also recommend that given a substantive DCS (if one is appointed) is unlikely to be in post before the start of 2026 that consideration is given to the continuation of my role as Commissioner but only in a very 'light touch' way. Possibly a return visit in November/December and then again in February/March.

That should hopefully give additional assurance to DfE and Ministers and allow a full review of the intervention and statutory notice at the end of March 2026.

At this final point I would like to place on record that everyone in Devon who I've spoken to or sort information from has been welcoming, helpful, open and honest about where Devon has been, where they are now and where they believe they are heading. Throughout my time with Devon I have been extremely well supported and that support has been very much appreciated.

Nigel Richardson CBE
October 2025

Appendices:

- 1) <https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/s52548/Strategic%20Plan.pdf>
- 2) Children's Services updated Improvement Plan