

## **Report from West Sussex County Council for Chichester City Council**

**December 2025**

**By Sarah Sharp, County Councillor for Chichester South**

### **1) Mental Health Support for Young People**

A new initiative that aims to deliver earlier, more effective psychological support for children, young people and families has been launched. The **Psychological Hub** brings together a range of previously independent expert services to offer timely, co-ordinated and tailored support, helping families stay together and guiding children through complex emotional and mental health challenges.

[Referrals to the Psychological Hub - West Sussex County Council](#)

### **2) Social Worker Recruitment**

The Children, Young People and Learning Service were awarded silver in the Supportive Social Work Employer category at the Social Worker of the Year Awards. The award acknowledged the successful overseas recruitment programme which has reduced the permanent vacancy rate from 15% to 4% in three years leading to lower caseloads for staff. It also reflects the County Council's culture where social workers feel valued, empowered and supported to deliver outstanding care and improve outcomes for children and families.

### **3) Library at Home service**

If you know of a resident who can't access the library in person you can apply for a volunteer to bring you books, audiobooks and other resources free of charge:

[Home Library Direct - Home Library Direct - West Sussex](#)

### **4) Dementia support at the Library**

The library also offers support for residents with dementia eg reminiscence books, memory management membership where there are no fines if books are returned late: [Dementia Resources - West Sussex](#)

### **5) Foster Care**

A new film has been released to recruit foster carers in West Sussex:

This focuses on Tom, an 11-year-old boy, contrasting his need to run - away from danger, a chaotic home life, to get to school in time - with his love of running as a sport.

We see the disadvantages Tom faces before moving in with his foster family – with no linen on his bed, school trousers he's long since outgrown, and no

trainers for PE at school. All of these things make him stand out from his peers, impact his self-esteem, and increase his risk of being exploited by County Lines gangs.

But he's good at running and he's matched with Foster Carers who share and encourage this interest. Through simple acts, such as introducing healthy routines and coming together for mealtimes, Tom gets the sense of belonging he needs, and starts to learn to trust the adults around him again.

The film finishes with Tom taking part in an athletics tournament, running in a stadium, cheered on by his new foster family.

There are children like Tom across West Sussex, and they need our help!

[Our Children - Become a Foster Carer - Fostering West Sussex](#)

To find out more please become a Friend of Fostering: [Become a Friend of Fostering | Your Voice West Sussex](#)

## **6) Get Sussex Working Plan**

Ahead of Devolution we are already working pan-Sussex on plans:

These are the 6 key challenges for the Get Sussex Working plan:

too many people are excluded from the labour market – especially those with health conditions, caring responsibilities or lower skill levels

- too many young people leave school without essential skills or access to high-quality further learning, an apprenticeship or support to work so that they can thrive at the start of their career
- too many people are stuck in insecure, poor quality and often low-paying work, which contributes to a weaker economy and affects their health and wellbeing
- too many women who care for their families still experience challenges staying in and progressing in work
- too many employers cannot fill their vacancies due to labour and skills shortages, holding back economic growth, driving up reliance on overseas labour, and undermining living standards
- there is too great a disparity in labour market outcomes between different places and for different groups of people

A ten-year Get Sussex Working Plan ([Decision - Get Sussex Working Plan - ES03\(25/26\)](#)) has been endorsed by the County Council. The Plan, developed with East Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove City Council and key partners including the Department for Work and Pensions and Sussex Chamber of Commerce, sets out ambitions to help people develop the skills they need, to access meaningful employment, to address inequalities, and support businesses to thrive. It has been developed in response to government proposals to tackle economic inactivity delivered via an approach aligned to meet the needs of the local area. The plan will be implemented via a range of actions, with some covering the whole of Sussex and others tailored to address challenges in specific areas.

DWP have provided £125,000 to West Sussex County Council for the development of the plan and having the plan will enable external funding bids to be made. At the moment the plan is made up of some known activities and a pipeline of unfunded activities to achieve the ambitions of the plan.

## **7) Young People**

The County Council has published a health needs assessment focused on young people's recreational and educational leisure-time. Led by the Public Health team, working in collaboration with Early Help colleagues, and with input from young people, the assessment aims to understand young people's needs, and how they spend their time outside of school and formal education. Providing the latest evidence-based insight and data, the report is part of the West Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and will contribute to informing the future development of a West Sussex young people's leisure-time activities strategy.

[Young People's Health Needs Assessment - West Sussex JSNA Website](#)

## **8) Blood Pressure Monitors**

Residents can now borrow potentially life-saving blood pressure monitors free of charge from all 36 libraries in West Sussex. High blood pressure (or hypertension) is a leading cause of heart attacks, strokes and other diseases, but it is a treatable condition and early detection is key. The initiative is a partnership between the County Council's Public Health and Library Services and NHS Sussex to encourage residents to check their blood pressure at home, helping to detect previously undiagnosed hypertension, and to promote interventions to reduce blood pressure.

[A loan that could save your life! - West Sussex County Council](#)

## **9) SEND diagnosis delays**

Only 21% of applications were handled within the 20 weeks required in November. Recruitment of 6 new officers in the New Year will hopefully improve of times to be nearer the national average of 46%.

## **10) Active Travel Funding**

Final Consolidated Fund (formerly called Active Travel Capability Fund) allocations were confirmed for next four years by DfT

Larger Councils received more

Hampshire £23m

Kent £26m

Surrey £20m

West Sussex £5.46m

In the South East, East Sussex got less than us – a county we are more comparable with in terms of size and length of road than the larger councils listed above.

These figures are tied into the ratings that the Council has received from DfT.

WSCC has a rating of 1. We hope to get to Level 2 sooner. West Sussex will be talking to DfT about what we need to do to improve on this level.

DfT has acknowledged the challenging circumstances that shire counties have in achieving higher levels as we are more rural and have smaller urban areas.

The County will be working on a list for what the £5.5 will be spent on to get approval from the DfT.

## **11) White Ribbon Day**

In the run up to Christmas it is important to remember the recent campaign championed by WSCC and the Fire and Rescue service in the county to challenge inappropriate or harmful behaviour against women

Here is a link for help if you know someone who is suffering domestic abuse:

[Domestic abuse - West Sussex County Council](#)

It's not too late to take the White Ribbon promise: "I will never use, excuse, or remain silent about men's violence against women". [Make the White Ribbon Promise — White Ribbon UK](#)