

SEND and Inclusion newsletter



Derby City Council



Measuring impact: working together to shape futures and improve outcomes

At a recent team conference I used the analogy of a battenberg cake to describe how bright and varied components complement each other to create something fantastic. Standing in a room filled with colleagues working in such varied ways to improve outcomes for our city’s children really brought home just how many moving parts there are to SEND and inclusion in Derby. Each one of these is crucial in its own right, but contributes to a much bigger whole - ensuring all children and young people in Derby are enabled to live their best life.

The old adage about an organisation being so much greater than the sum of its parts springs to mind when I look at the work that’s come together in the last few months. Some is more public-facing and already shared; other work is going on quietly behind the scenes but worthy of just as much celebration. I’m particularly proud of the collaborations that take place between our teams, and with the wider public. In this issue you’ll read about local businesses stepping up to work with the Derby Promise, education settings working with health services to improve life for neurodivergent children, and a whole host of other projects with collaboration at their heart.

As always, the focus remains our children and young people. We’ve achieved some fantastic things since our last newsletter, but won’t be slowing down any time soon.

Sharon Buckby, Director of Learning, Inclusion and Skills.

What’s inside:

A spotlight on Friar Gate Studios Skills Centre

Learner-led cafe opens to public

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Exciting events from Derby Promise

HAF transition programme launches

Neurodiversity in schools progress

A spotlight on Friar Gate Studios Skills Centre



Above and below: Pre-supported internship learners proudly put their skills to use in the Glow & Grow cafe, catering the Friar Gate Studios Skills Centre launch.

Following the successful launch of the new Friar Gate Studios (FGS) Skills Centre at the end of last year, we're delighted to share some updates on the impact that this important hub is delivering. Based in the city centre, FGS offers a place for those with a special educational need to access the following services:

- **Independent careers advice and guidance**, enabling access to a wide spectrum of education, employment and training opportunities across the city
- **Horizons Sixth Form**, offering young people with SEND a place for developing their full potential
- **Health advisors**, with a special focus on emotional wellbeing
- **BeConnected**, focusing on confidence, friendships, healthy lifestyles and community
- **Derby SEND Voice** - a forum run by and for parents and carers wanting to make a difference
- **The Glow & Grow café** - a stylish, public café staffed by supported interns
- **Transition2**, providing specialist further education, employment and pastoral services
- **Journey 2 Work**, combining work experience, employability training and wraparound support

Read on to discover more about the impact of these services on Derby's young learners.



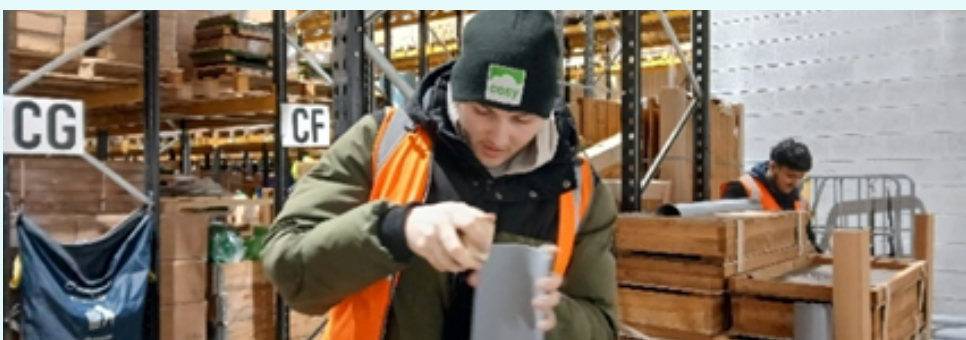
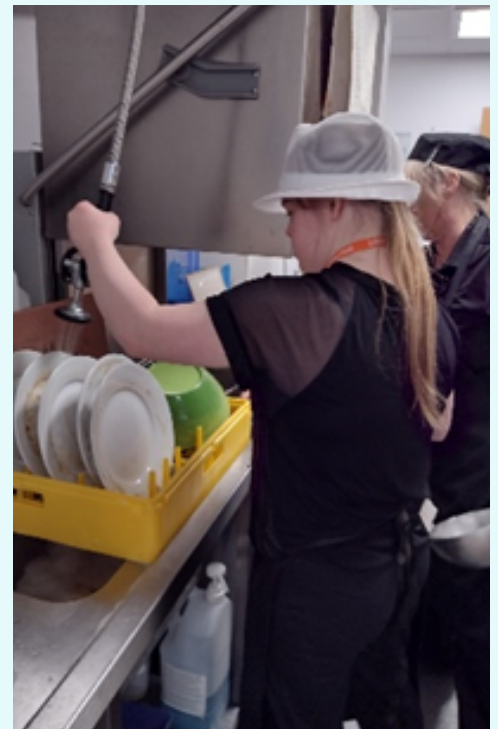
Preparing for work with Transition2

Transition2, based within the Friar Gate Studios Skills Centre, readies young people with SEND (aged 18–25 years) for adulthood and work. They offer vocational learning programmes, pre-supported internships, supported internships, sustainable employment services, and pastoral support – all essential in building confidence and independence. Simon Hancox, Head of Service at Transition2, shares the following highlights:

- **16** High needs learners now on-roll at Transition2, all doing either a full-time pre-supported internship or full-time supported internship vocational learning programme.
- A record number of applications received for 2026 entry. This is undoubtedly due to our shift in programmes, relocation to and development of Friar Gate Studios, and a more holistic support offer.
- DWP, Local Authority SEND Officers, Derby SEND Voice (Parent Carer Forum), and health services are now also established within the centre.
- An estimated **25** young people with SEND aged 16 years+ will complete their tailored travel training programme over the course of the year.
- **35** learners are now settled in and attending the Horizons Sixth Form, based within the centre.

"She tries to do things herself now before seeking help."

Parent of a Transition2 World of Work learner



Above: Transition2's supported interns thriving in their chosen placements. Supported internships and employment opportunities are designed to meet each student's needs, and last for up to an academic year, with the aim to segue into paid employment.

A confident new outlook for Charley



Above: Charley, hard at work in the Cosy Direct warehouse.

'[Charley's] come such a long way, and is focussed and mature at work – motivated to improve himself.'

Amie, Supported Employment Lead, Transition2

Charley shares how the combination of volunteering, a supported internship and travel training - all via Transition2 - have helped him to feel more confident and capable.

I came to Transition2 because I wanted to get work experience and get a job. I also got to see my friends. I found travelling on buses easier. I message my friend about when we need to leave, and I meet him at the bus stop. I go to the gym with him. [Transition2] staff used to help but we don't mind going on our own now.

In my first year, I worked in the warehouse at Cosy Direct, volunteered at Famous Trains and practised woodwork at the Glow & Grow Workshop at Elvaston. I used to get really tired at work, but I've got more stamina now. I've learned about quality control and health and safety.

In my second year I started a Supported Internship at Cosy Direct. I'm more independent, mature and calm. I always used to feel disappointed with myself at school - I don't now.

'Charley's gone from initially being quiet and shy to getting to know the staff, having lunch with them all, and generally being part of the Cosy family.'

Laila, Head of People & Culture, Cosy Direct

Visit transition2.co.uk for more information on supported internships.



Watch some of our young people and partners share their experiences of vocational learning at transition2.co.uk/about-us

New connections for Seth



Above: Seth (right) felt the impact of the pandemic on his learning and social skills

"I'd recommend people with a similar situation to what I had, who might not have a clue what they want to do. Here they can meet new people, make friends, enjoy the activities and relax."

Seth, BeConnected member

BeConnected is a low-cost membership programme based at FGS, offering leisure and wellbeing activities for young adults with SEND (without an EHCP). This pastoral support is designed to improve social confidence, friendships and communication skills, and to encourage healthy lifestyles and community participation. Seth tells us how his outlook and health have improved since joining BeConnected:

"I started college shortly after COVID so I didn't really have a transition period. I stopped going in and got kicked out of college. I didn't do anything after that really for three years. I moved to Derby about a year ago with my Mum and started looking around for things to do; Transition2 (and the BeConnected group) seemed the best one. The staff were nice and the location was easiest to get to. Since joining BeConnected, my mental health has improved. Before I was bored because I wasn't really doing anything. Here, I was able to continually come to classes. I had some motivation because the place is fun and lively. The people here listen and want to help.

The yoga sessions are relaxing and I've built up my stamina by walking. I've been more confident with public transport, and with going outside and doing more stuff in the community. I'm friends with most people here but I've become close with Thomas - we're going to now meet up every week to do War Hammer together."

Boosting independence through Travel Training

'She seems more independent, able and confident to travel solo.'

Parent of a Transition2 World of Work learner

The Independent Travel Training service is now based in Friar Gate Studios, and has seen an increase in interest since the move. Learners are offered up to 10 sessions with a Travel Trainer, working on skills such as journey planning, staying safe while out and about, and building confidence in travelling solo - whether to college, a work placement, or to meet friends.

'Katie' is a Transition2 learner who recently completed her travel training with the team based at Friar Gate Studios, and is now able not only to get to college independently but also to town to meet friends. She has been offered paid work which involves an additional bus journey; after some initial training and support, she's now able to make the journey independently. The impact of Travel Training is also felt by her family, who no longer need to provide prompts and lifts, and are able to watch Katie grow in confidence and independence. To learn more, visit derby.gov.uk/send-travel-training

Growing success for new learner-run café!



Above: Young SEND Ambassadors meet in the Glow & Grow café, helping to inform decision-making and planning for Derby.

The **Glow & Grow café** is a stylish new space on the ground floor of Friar Gate Studios. The café is staffed exclusively by learners on a catering and hospitality pre-supported internship programme. This hands-on, public-facing experience allows young people to develop practical skills and work behaviours such as timekeeping, teamwork, responsibility and self-management – all of which are important as they transition into paid employment.

The café is also a popular spot for hosting futures-focussed SEND events including:

- Derby City Supported Internships Forum
- Careers in Construction event
- East Midlands NDTi Supported Internships forum
- NDTi led Strategic Housing/Supported Accommodation event
- Monthly SEND Ambassadors meetings

Upcoming events at Glow & Grow include:

- BASE Midlands network meeting Tuesday 12th May 10am – 2pm (BASE member orgs only)
- Weekly Health and Wellbeing sessions for young people aged 16-25 years with SEND (see right)
- Post-16 SEND Youth Voice Forum Thursday 7th May 5pm – 7pm
- LD Voice partnership event Tuesday 14th April 10am – 1pm

Glow & Grow is now open to the public:

Wednesday 10am – 2pm
Thursday 10am – 2pm
Friday 10am – 2pm

Last orders for food at 1:30pm

NHS Health Space

Friday mornings at Friar Gate Studios see health and wellbeing sessions run in conjunction with staff and third-year medical students from the Derby Royal Hospital's Psychiatry Teaching Unit. Open to young people (aged 16-25) with SEND, groups get together in a relaxed setting, discovering ways to maintain good physical and mental health.

Recent sessions have focussed on anxiety, and have been described as 'absolutely fantastic'. One staff member describes how:

"The learners have been very open in sharing their feelings and experiences, showing respect and understanding when others have shared theirs too. They have embraced elements of the sessions such as movement activities, breathing exercises and guided relaxation.

We've had very positive reactions from attendees. After one session, a young person told a member of staff about a relaxation technique he had learned and was able to describe it and show her a bit of what he done! These are real, practical tools that our guys can take with them to help them in their lives. We have a good laugh too; the PTU staff are wonderful - it's such a positive collaboration between health and education".

Future sessions will move on to talk about sleep, including the links between sleep and anxiety. People aged 16-25 with a SEND consideration are encouraged to join!

Journey 2 Work: combining work experience, employability training and wraparound support

Our employment and skills team deliver a range of programmes to support children and young people across the city into the world of work. Together, these programmes have engaged over **300** young people, of which over **100** had SEND and over **70** have secured employment.

Journey to Work is one of these programmes which encompasses an intensive six-week support programme helping young people in Derby aged 16-24 gain confidence, practical skills and work experience, to enable them to move into paid employment. We're celebrating one year since the pilot programme launched and are excited to share some great milestones!

- We delivered **four** programmes (one per quarter). The latest began the week commencing 9th February 2026.
- Of the **56** young people who started the Journey 2 Work programme, **44** have completed it, giving a fantastic **79%** completion rate.
- All **56** of those young people had a work placement, as this is a core element of programme delivery.
- The **44** who completed the programme were supported with further employer engagement activity, such as attendance at jobs fairs and recruitment events. All continued to receive direct support from Supported Employment Officers. Of these young people:

-**23** progressed into employment, and **one** into education.

-**Sixteen** went into employment, including **five** who secured a job with their work experience employer.

-**Seven** gained an apprenticeship, including **six** who secured an apprenticeship with their work experience employer.

We're now widening our Journey 2 Work programmes to be sector and skills specific, launching versions for Welding and Fabrication, Construction, and Digital. This will also meet employer-led and identified skills needs and gaps. We're working closely with key stakeholders to develop this pilot programme into a pathway to employment, via Action for Construction, Balfour Beatty, EON, and local training provider Momentum.

For more information on the Journey to Work Programme, or to refer a young person into the programme please contact employmentandskills@derby.gov.uk



Watch Angel's powerful story about her journey to work at

youtube.com/derbycc

Harry's Journey to Work

Harry was referred to our SEND Supported Employment Officer, Tuybia, by a Department for Work and Pensions Specialist Work Coach in early February 2025. At 20 years old, Harry had found that autism made him very reserved, not wanting to communicate or engage much with people.

Once Harry felt comfortable around Tuybia, he began to communicate openly about his dreams of completing an Early Years apprenticeship. Tuybia referred Harry to DBC Training in Derby, with a view to gaining a Level 1 qualification in Communication in Health, Social Care and Early Years Settings. Harry managed to achieve the qualification but still lacked the experience to secure an apprenticeship. Tuybia then introduced Harry to the idea of the Journey 2 Work programme, noting that there were two Early Years opportunities on offer, and explaining the benefits and experience it would offer.



Above: Harry secured an Early Years apprenticeship through Journey 2 Work

She supported him in applying and preparing for interview, and briefed Hana (Business Engagement Manager for Journey 2 Work) about Harry's circumstances, to ensure he was appropriately supported. She then sat in on the interview to ease his nerves, and he managed to secure a programme place at Little Angels Nursery, St Andrews. To ensure Harry was as comfortable and confident as possible, Hana accompanied him on a visit to the nursery prior to starting the placement. During the programme, Tuybia conducted a duty of care visit and was able to witness how engaged Harry was. The children loved him, she said, and the manager was very positive, telling her "If I had the budget, I would offer Harry a job".

Following the Journey 2 Work programme and Tuybia's support, Harry went on to secure a Level 1 Apprenticeship in Early Years at The Old Forge Nursery in Findern, where he is currently working. He said:

"I'm really pleased Tuybia spoke to me about the Journey to Work Programme, and grateful for all her support. The Journey to Work gave me the skills and experience to get to where I wanted to be. I know I would not have been able get my apprenticeship if it wasn't for being part of the programme".

By the time Harry's Journey 2 Work programme ended, his confidence had increased and he had started to work on his social skills. The placement had also very much confirmed his desire to within Early Years.

To learn more about the the Journey 2 Work Programme, or to refer a young person, please contact employmentandskills@derby.gov.uk



Derby SEND Voice: shaping change

It's been a busy and exciting year so far for Derby SEND Voice since moving to our new home at Friar Gate Studios, and we're thrilled to see our community continuing to grow. We now have over **200** members, and are always looking to welcome more. Every additional voice strengthens our collective impact, helping champion better experiences for children and young people with SEND across Derby.

Over the past few months, we've been out and about meeting families at school coffee mornings, listening to experiences, and sharing how Derby SEND Voice can support them. Our regular Cuppa and a Chat sessions have provided a relaxed space for parents and carers to connect, and we've introduced new wellbeing sessions, starting with mindful craft at Friar Gate Studios, which have been wonderfully received.

One of our proudest moments this year was organising the Spring SEND Family Event at the Museum of Making. With more than 29 services and organisations represented, and over 350

people attending, it was a fantastic day filled with conversations, connections, and understanding.

We've also hosted several webinars on key topics such as the EHCP process and the recent White Papers on SEND reforms, helping families stay informed and confident in navigating the system. Alongside this, we continue to be actively involved in a wide range of workgroups across the local SEND landscape.

Our role is to make sure the lived experience of families is heard at every level, from shaping the wording in letters, to contributing to the development of neurodiverse and mental health pathways, to representing the forum at various SEND partnership meetings.

There's plenty more to come. We have some exciting projects in the pipeline, and we can't wait to share them with you soon.



Above: Over 350 people attended our SEND marketplace at the Museum of Making

Broadening horizons

Horizons Sixth Form, based at Friar Gate Studios, provides post-16 education options for young people with an EHCP. They offer a warm, inclusive place where students are respected for who they are. Along with giving opportunities to learn new things every day, Horizons:

- enables students to develop their independence and individuality
- supports students to contribute positively in the community as valued citizens
- empowers students on their learning journey towards realising their potential

On offer at Horizons:

- English
- Maths
- Employability
- Enterprise and project learning
- Skillsbuilder-8 essential transferable skills
- Placements/vocational experience
- Confidence and independence

For information about applying visit:
stmartinsschoolderby.co.uk/horizons-6th-form

SEN support in schools

In our last issue we introduced the work of the SEN Support team, including Derby SEND Advice Line (SAL)'s **Moving Forward Together** meetings and **Hot Topic** sessions, and the Specialist Teaching and Psychology Service (STEPS)'s **Intervention First** and **SENCO support** initiatives. We wanted to share some of the impact this work is having, and the encouraging feedback we've received reflecting this.

Moving Forward Together meetings

These sessions are held when an EHCP assessment has taken place and it's been decided that an EHCP is not the appropriate support package for a young person. Moving Forward Together meetings provide a space to discuss this outcome, and to give support, reassurance and signposting. The goal is to discern the best possible way to help the child or young person and their family move forward. The following is feedback we've had from educators in Derby:

"Parents value the opportunity to have a 'face' from the LA answering their questions and listening to their concerns. All stakeholders are invited to share ideas, which strengthens whole-school ownership and provides opportunity for meaningful and individualised action planning. Team members feel comfortable raising concerns or offering alternative viewpoints and staff/parents have both reported feeling supported and listened to following the meetings." **Director of SEND at a Trust**

"We have been really happy with the outcomes of both of the meetings. The outcome of both of these meetings was that the right decision for the *child* was made. I want to stress the word *child* as this is the reason why we all do our jobs. You have ALWAYS provided really strong support for the children and their families at (school) and for that we are very grateful to have you as part of the support for SEND children at our school." **Deputy Head and SENCO**

"Your guidance is always clear, and the follow-up actions you provide are easy to understand and pass on to parents. This transparency really helps keep everyone aligned. Your empathetic approach stands out, and several parents have commented on how much they appreciated feeling genuinely listened to." **Senior Leader of SEND at a Trust**

"I know that [Child's] dad felt heard during the MFT meeting and that he was supported through the process. Whilst it did not have the outcome he hoped, he felt you had done your best to support him. It always feels collaborative and solution focused. Personally, I really value the support in the meetings." **School SENCO**

"I appreciate the exploratory, professional discussion around a child. Speaking about a child's needs with someone who has a real depth of knowledge and understanding can be very useful in terms of crystalising thinking and setting appropriate next steps." **School SENCO**

This academic year (to date) **62** settings have been supported through MFT meetings with a total of **153** children.

Hot Topic briefings

These sessions drill down into one topic at a time and are delivered by a range of Derby SAL staff and guest speakers depending on what the focus is. Topics are selected based on information requests and are held throughout the year. We've been delighted by the feedback from these sessions.

To suggest a topic or request a session, please contact Derby SAL via <https://tinyurl.com/26p36x3n>



“Hot Topics has been a brilliant addition and it does feel as though there is a push to support SENCOs by having resources and answers within easy grasp. Keep doing what you are doing as you are all amazing.”

School SENCO

“The Hot Topics sessions have been really useful; you have selected themes that are relevant and timely, and these have supported SENCOs.”

School SENCO

Intervention First

Active since August/September 2025, the Intervention First team have been focusing on two key areas: development of a Whole School Intensive Support programme, and creation of training for New to Role, New to Authority and Existing SENCOs. The latter was delivered over two days in November (with a catch-up session in January) and was attended by 36 SENCOs from across the city's schools.

Feedback from November was 100% positive, with SENCOs describing the training as 'really helpful', 'informative', and commenting they'd 'gained so much useful information'. Established SENCOs said that the training would have made their first year in the role much easier, and New to Role SENCOs reported that the training would help them in their role. They now have increased knowledge of the EHCNA process, describing needs, writing educational advice, understanding the Matrix and deciding who should be on their SEND Registers. Therefore, they said, they can work more efficiently, make better referral decisions in their role and improve the likelihood that SEND children receive the right support at the right time.

The Whole School Intensive Support programme was introduced to schools through Hot Topics, at SENCO training and through face-to-face visits and online meetings with schools. There are 12 schools on the programme to date, joining when they feel ready: five schools are at the beginning of their Intensive Support journey; two schools are completing the self-evaluation stage, identifying their strengths and perceived weaknesses in relation to their SEND practice. Four are at the auditing stage, establishing main areas of focus around environment, communication, teaching and learning, people and attitudes and parents and agencies.

For one school, it was decided that a more bespoke plan was required before starting the main programme. A Intervention First team member was based at the school for two weeks, supporting the SENCO and leadership team to improve provision, set up an internal enhanced resource and enabling them to increase the time that several pupils on part-time timetables were able to access provision. Feedback from the school has been highly positive and we will continue to support them and other schools over the coming year.

Because school means more

The **Inclusion and School Attendance Service** (ISAS) carries out statutory duties to ensure regular school attendance, offering advice and support to schools and families who are attending a school within Derby. Their education welfare officers are based in multi-agency teams throughout the city. The numbers below illustrate the impact they've been having since September 2025. The team has:

- ★ Tracked **218** children and young people, to ensure none are missing education.
- ★ Tracked an additional **97** children who may have moved out of country, ensuring they receive an offer, too.
- ★ Issued **10** School Attendance Orders, where no education was present before, to support the best outcome for the child/children. Nine of those children are now back in school.
- ★ Served **22** additional notices of intentions to begin the School Attendance Order process.
- ★ Instigated **154** police checks, **156** boarder checks, and **63** health checks to ensure children and young people stay safe.
- ★ Issued **337** penalty notices for attendance, to support a full-time education offer in order for children to progress.
- ★ Issued **177** Chaperone Permits, so parents can be comfortable their child is safe when performing.
- ★ Issued **96** Child Entertainment Licenses, so that children can perform safely.
- ★ Issued **18** Child Employment Licenses, to ensure children can be work in a safe and trusted way.
- ★ Supported **102** children through In-Year Fair Access Panels, with support access to mainstream schools.
- ★ Supported **37** pupils through external organisations commissioned by In-Year Fair Access.
- ★ Visited **92** families who are home-educated, to offer support and check educational progress.

New Communities' Achievement Service

We have seen 1,954 individuals via Rosehill Family Hub and the New Communities' Achievement Team, supporting families with school applications, appeals, interpreting, translations, health needs, benefits information and council tax information, amongst other elements.

Virtual school for children in care and those with a social worker

- We have reviewed 420 personal education plans for those children in care of the local authority to make sure the children and young people have the best life chances
- We have introduced individual plans to target improved attendance in school.

To help support the best outcomes for all children and young people, the Inclusion Service runs a weekly drop-in service for schools seeking to put in place multiagency support, so that pupils can take up a full-time education offer in school.

School success stories

We're always keen to hear about SEND and Inclusion successes from Derby's schools; Allestree Woodlands School kindly shared two case studies highlighting the impact of their Enhanced Resource Facility on Deaf students, and Redwood Primary School recently passed on some of the feedback around their work with SEND. To submit stories for future newsletters, please email local.offer@derby.gov.uk



Above: Macie was part of the England gold-medal-winning Deaf futsal team at the European Championships in Italy

Macie's going for gold

Macie is profoundly deaf and attended Allestree Woodlands Enhanced Resource Facility for Deaf Students until 2024. She arrived at the end of Year 7, having transferred from a local special school. This was in the middle of Covid, so Macie's first couple of terms were largely spent in small-group bubbles, while the rest of the school were at home.

In spite of this, Macie went on to achieve 9 GCSE passes, including a Grade 7 in Art, a Grade 8 in PE and a Grade 6 in English Language. This last one is particularly impressive as Macie's first language is BSL and she does not use spoken English!

Macie was supported at Allestree Woodlands by a Teacher of the Deaf and a team of Communication Support Workers. They provided BSL support in her lessons, offered tutorials, and supported through all aspects of her education. She was encouraged to join the school's girls' football team, with BSL interpretation provided from the sidelines to explain the coach's instructions as well as pre-match and half-time team talks. Despite being the only Deaf player, Macie became the star of the team and has now become an international athlete and footballer.

Whilst in Year 11 at school she was also a member of the gold-medal-winning England Deaf Futsal Team, at the European Championships in Italy. She's currently playing for the England Ladies' Football Team, recently travelling to Japan for the Deaf Olympics, and scoring the winning goal in a victory over Australia.

Hilal's engineering success



Above: Hilal, now in his second year of a Degree Apprenticeship, is headed towards his dream career.

language, and has accessed his entire education through BSL - at school and at Rolls-Royce. We hope he'll have a long, prosperous career there!

Born in Tanzania, Hilal had contracted meningitis at the age of three, leaving him profoundly Deaf. His parents remained in Africa, but Hilal moved to live with an aunt in the UK, to give him the best chance of an appropriate education for a Deaf child.

After attending primary school in Leicester, he moved to the Enhanced Resource Facility for Deaf Students at Allestree Woodlands School at the end of Year 6.

Throughout his years at Woodlands, Hilal travelled in a taxi from Leicester - over an hour each way. He was supported by a Teacher of the Deaf and a team of Communication Support Workers, who provided BSL support in his lessons and offered tutorials.

Despite the difficulties he had faced, Hilal passed eight GCSEs, including Grade 7s in Maths, Science, History, Art and Design Technology.

He stayed on for sixth form, and in 2024 achieved three A Levels, including an A in Maths. With support and guidance from the BSL specialists at Woodlands, and through close home/school links and liaison with a range of outside agencies, Hilal applied for a coveted Degree Apprenticeship at Rolls-Royce. He secured his dream position and is now in his second year. Hilal doesn't use spoken

Positive experiences at Redwood Primary School

Redwood Primary School have built on their own in-school SEND-support systems, creating strong relationships with external providers to ensure that children and their families receive the best possible experience. Feedback from parents and providers alike truly highlights this!

"The school's approach to SEND is second to none. We wouldn't have got half the support we have now without the help and commitment of the school and its wonderful staff." **SEND Parent Voice contributor**

"Redwood School creates a welcoming, nurturing environment where children are encouraged to do their best. The emphasis on kindness, inclusion and personal growth really shines through." **SEND Parent Voice contributor**

"Redwood are so good at building relationships and engaging with us that we often offer them opportunities in return, including funded emotional health projects for children with additional needs; parent support courses and groups and student counsellors and mentors to work 1:1 with children. They've funded long-term 1:1 support for trauma-experienced children, and are always open to suggestions of reasonable adjustments to enhance a child's experience in school." **Bridge the Gap**

"Redwood have always worked well with [us as] an outside agency, and in a proactive way. I work closely with the SENCO to plan ongoing support, modified to individual children's needs. Recently we developed a regular, topic-based parents meeting. Parents, children and staff are able to build up a rapport, which gives parents, school and Autism Derby a trusting relationship." **Julie Fearn, Autism Derby**

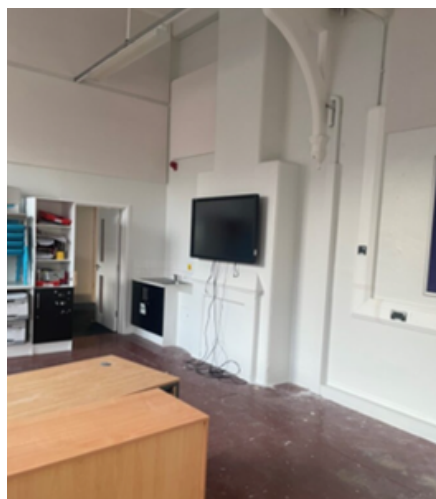
SEND Capital Project progress at Kingsmead School

Derby's commitment to increasing school places and SEND sufficiency goes from strength to strength, as we move towards our target of an additional 400 specialist places in the next two years. A £24million investment has seen extensive building, renovating and refitting work taking place at over 20 schools across the city, including at The Kingsmead School in Alvaston. Part of the Respect Collaboration Trust (which comprises one Pupil Referral Unit a health needs provision/special school , a Special School, and three part-time Alternative Provisions), Kingsmead School shared with us some of the fantastic improvements that have taken place over the last year to improve learners' environments and available space:

- Painted the gym
- Removed asbestos floor tiles; fitted out new, levelled-out floors
- Re-aligned push-bolt doors, updating security
- Painted and re-carpeted a large number of classrooms
- Blocked up redundant doors, increasing security
- Raised the height of the Wisgreaves Road site's boundary fence
- Changed access control to a key building, increasing its number of robust doors
- Made more appropriate use of the science room
- Completed ceiling works and soundproofing
- Added further maglocks to classroom doors, helping staff with access control

During consultation around the planned increase in admission numbers, pupils at Kingsmead School had said that space was a priority for them, and that they'd like more sensory spaces. The refurbishment and improvements mean the school is able to maximise the space it has available, and to improve sensory considerations. With some allocated funding remaining, other planned improvements include replacing select windows and flooring (which will have both environmental and sensory impact); adding secure gate access to the car park; introducing sound dampening and installing a new trim trail.

A Derby SEND Officer said of the allocated funding and increased sufficiency at Kingsmead that : 'It's simply the best news for vulnerable children in our city that I could have wished to hear, namely that an exceptional school, who already make outstanding provision for SEND pupils with an EHCP in the primary category of need of SEMH, are intent upon allowing even more children to flourish and succeed there than they already do. The Respect Collaboration of schools have transformed lives for vulnerable children for many years, and exponentially ... and swiftly started to address the critical need for SEMH places in the city.'



Left: Classrooms at Kingsmead School have received much-needed updates. The complexity of the site means it hasn't been a case of simply redecorating, but the hard work is clearly paying off.

Derby Promise Empowering young minds and unlocking potential

The Derby Promise puts inclusion, aspiration and future career pathways at the heart of the city, delivering powerful and purposeful ways for the city's children and young people to explore their ambitions and strengthen job choices. Now entering its third year, this city-wide programme is committed to conquering youth unemployment and helping every child in Derby thrive — regardless of background. In 2025 over 5,000 children engaged with its three flagship events; 2026 is shaping up to be an even bigger and more exciting year.

In February we hosted our first **STEM session for education professionals**, gathering at the Museum of Making to explore ways that careers information can be imbedded into the curriculum from an early age, and linking this with Derby-based job opportunities and the support available through the **DerbyPromise.org** portal.

This was followed by our inaugural **Roots Festival**, with over 100 people attending the creative careers marketplace at Electric Daisy. Children and young people took part in workshops including screen printing, content creation and DJing, having the opportunity to quiz creative professionals on their career paths. Staff from various training and support routes were present, and nine attendees signed up for Journey 2 Work introductions.

Young people were also asked questions about perceived barriers into the labour market, and the meaningful help they'd like to receive from potential employers in countering these. These responses were collected and later shared at the Derby Promise Employer Summit in March, where businesses were encouraged to pledge support and actions to address these requests.



Above: Derby Promise kicked off its 2026 calendar with STEM and creative careers events.

The Derby Promise comprises a multifaceted approach to preparing young people for the future, with the calendar of events one key way of reaching children and young people. Other key events for 2026 include:

Festival of Ideas: Celebrating World Skills day (March)

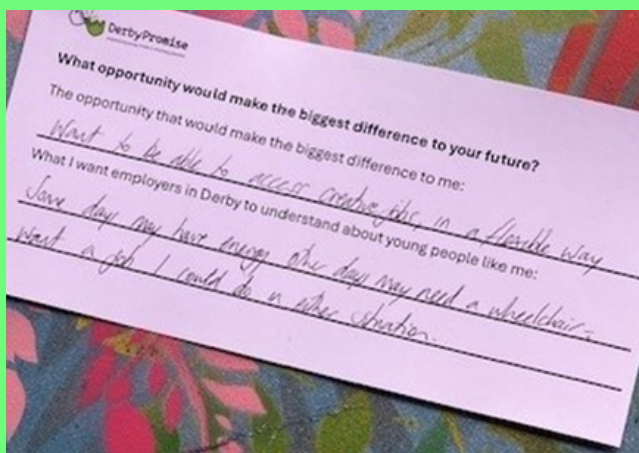
This event connected education, AI industry, and technological innovation. Students explored green career pathways and discover how STEAM subjects can help them tackle real-world challenges.

Dream Fest 26: The West End comes to Derby (April/May)

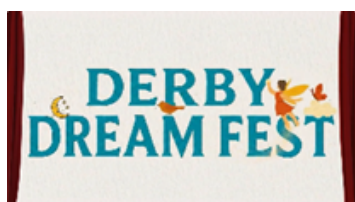
Following the success of last summer's event, Dream Fest will return this spring to inspire the next generation of creatives and performers in our city into creative careers. Working in partnership with The Lewis Sewell Trust, Children will have the opportunity to perform alongside West End stars from Matilda to Wicked.

Summer Festival (August)

Derby Promise's popular Summer Festival enters its third year, inviting pupils aged 8-14 to experience over 20 different sports. This week-long celebration of physical activity and wellbeing gives children access to taster sessions run by professional coaches, and access to daily talks from athletes and industry professionals about careers in sports and wellbeing.



Above left: Roots Festival encouraged young people to share their opinions around employment, which were then translated into illustrations on the spot (above right). These were presented at a summit for local employers, with businesses pledging actions in response.



To watch videos of last year's Dream Fest and Summer Festival highlights, and for information about booking and other Derby Promise resources, visit derbypromise.org

Derby Promise facts and figures:

- Green careers & climate action: 130+ pupils engaged; students developing school climate action plans
- Health, skills & aspiration through sport promoted at Summer Festival: 20+ sports, fully booked in 48 hours; 80% reported raised aspirations
- Boosted creativity & confidence at Dream Fest: 4,000+ attendees
- 5,000+ people engaged across all events
- 75+ schools and education settings involved
- Strong SEND participation across all events

New Holiday Activities and Food transition programme launches



Above, below and next page: HAF clubs offer a wide range activities, from dance and drama, to crafts, games and sports.

Derby's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme have partnered with the Specialist Teaching and Psychology Service (STEPS) to launch their Transitions initiative, a pilot project to support preschool children joining Reception and those moving into Year 1 in September 2026.

The HAF programme delivers holiday clubs for children in receipt of benefit-related free school meals, but there is an additional allocation from the DfE that allows local authorities to work flexibly with other groups of children and young people to support local strategic priorities. Improving outcomes for children is a key priority for the Local Authority and its partners and sits firmly in the outcomes identified in the Local Area Inclusion Partnership Plan.

We know the transition into formal schooling is a critical developmental milestone. For children from areas of deprivation, this transition can be particularly challenging due to factors that may impact readiness, confidence, and long-term educational outcomes.

Sixteen schools, identified using information such as educational outcomes and deprivation data, have been invited to join the pilot, which will involve delivering a holiday club (to include a meal and enrichment opportunities as well as some targeted interventions around language and executive functioning) during the summer for targeted pupils. The clubs will take place on the school sites, to help familiarise children and families with the setting and staff.

The Learning, Inclusion and Skills Department will support in the planning, training, connecting schools with existing club providers, and project costs for delivering each club.



We're fortunate to partner with some fantastic HAF providers, and would like to share some of the feedback children and families have given. If your organisation is interested in delivering HAF sessions and you'd like to know more about funding available, please visit www.derby.gov.uk/derbyHAF



"My 4-year-old son attended the Neuro Dynamic Junior Winter club, and I cannot praise the staff enough. As a mum I was very nervous as this was his first time attending something like this. From the moment we arrived, the staff were exceptionally kind, patient, and professional, instantly putting both my son and me at ease. Staff showed genuine care and attention to each child, creating a safe, supportive, and fun environment. My son came away happy, confident, and excited, which meant everything to me."

Parent of attendee at ID Derby (SEND provision)

"HAF is a great way for me to get my child to engage in physical activity and socialise. I would recommend HAF to those, who are looking to get their child out and about."

Parent of child at DCCT, Derby Racecourse



"I liked that we could play outside and run around every day. It made me feel happy."

"The staff were really nice and helped me try new things I wasn't sure about."

Superstar Sports attendees



"Children with significant additional needs (i.e. non-verbal) could demonstrate their happiness and excitement at returning to our HAF through vocalisation and movement. Returning children recognised the building and staff, and were able to re-engage with activities, resources and preferred staff members from previously. Children were keen to come into the building unassisted and were content for parents to leave quickly."

Staff observation, ID Derby (SEND provision)

"A parent of a new player with ASD worried their child would not be able to take part due to their need to "ask too many questions" or "sit still". After talking through our neurodiverse-informed approach, experience and being on the spectrums ourselves, they left feeling a little more assured. The attendee did show behaviours the parents disclosed, and we were able to adapt and ensure they engaged at the pace and capacity they wanted/needed."

Roll With Us CiC, HAF provider



Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS)

PINS is a partnership between the Department for Health and Social Care, the Department for Education and NHS England. This 24-month pilot builds on the learning from Autism in Schools by joining health and education specialists with expert parent carers in mainstream primary schools to help shape whole-school SEND provision, provide early interventions at a school level, upskill staff and strengthen partnerships between schools and parent carers. The project is an innovative model for the effective, efficient deployment of the specialist health workforce and strengthening of parent carer and school partnerships in mainstream education settings, focusing on pre- and post-diagnostic support for neurodiverse pupils. We're working with 14 primary schools in Derby and delivering the following interventions:

- Two days' leadership training for the headteacher, and school's special educational needs coordinator
- Half-day workshops for the head, special educational needs coordinator and other staff
- Webinars for other staff
- Four webinars for parents
- Two webinars for Governors

Topics covered include:

Inclusion • Parent voice • Pupil Voice • Classroom strategies • Neurodiversity • Pupil Wellbeing • Transitions: home to school, break to lessons • Speech and language • Sleep • Learning environment • Mental Health • Attendance/school refusal • Behaviour

Autistic and Ok

Autism and Ok is an exciting new programme promoting positive autistic identity amongst neurodivergent young people, while increasing understanding and awareness about neurodiversity in schools. Derby's STEPS team has been rolling this out across the city, with nine mainstream secondary schools and one special school involved to date.

Developed and created by Ambitious about Autism, the programme uses an evidence-based approach to help schools create neurodiverse peer-led support groups. Students are encouraged to identify with older autistic role models (within their school) so that they can better understand and explore their own autistic identity. Each setting integrates and adapts the project into their school in their own unique way, with settings now at different stages of their respective journeys, continuing to implement and embed the intervention in their whole school approach.

One Derby school said of their experience, "[T]his professional, external support allowed us to map our existing practices, reflect meaningfully, and clearly identify focus areas for future development."

An assistant educational psychologist working on the programme described having 'seen numerous students in different settings grow in terms of their autistic self-identity through the project,' adding:

"We were observing the Autistic and Ok group in one school where the young people were sharing their experiences of friendships and friendship difficulties. A girl stood up and spoke about how she had found it difficult making friends, but then went on to say that thanks to the Autistic and Ok group she now feels like she understands herself and her relationships with others better. She talked about how, through Autistic and Ok, she has now managed to make some friends within the group as well as now finding it easier to make friends with others outside of the Autistic and Ok group."

For more on the Autistic and OK programme, please visit www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

EBSNA and the ATTEND Framework: Georgia’s route back to school

Sarah, one of our Assistant Education Psychologists, often works with children and young people around Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA). She detailed how deploying the ATTEND framework (an early intervention programme for when school attendance drops below 90%) helped her support Georgia* in the best possible way:

“When I met Georgia, she hadn’t attended school for several months. She had a person-centred plan in place created by a previous Assistant Educational Psychologist, with graduated steps to increase time and build up to attending school, but the summer holidays meant that school and home contact broke down and the plan was no longer in place.

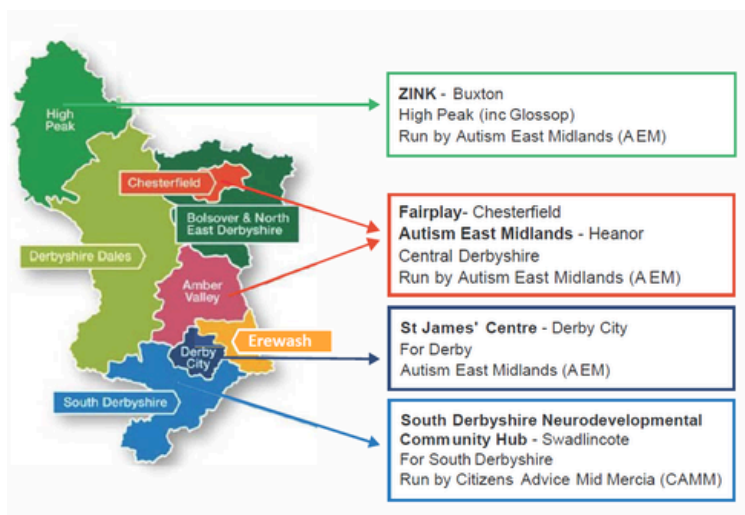
From September 2025, we began to use the ATTEND framework to understand what aspects of education, school, home, parental relationships, mental health and well-being and friendships were having an impact on Georgia, giving a sense of where she needed support. This identified that Georgia had aspirations and clear goals she wanted to achieve by the end of year 11, including going to college and working with horses. The ATTEND framework helped me to reframe advice, and to plan and guide conversations with school about how to reframe the thinking around Georgia’s attendance. We worked together on a plan to help Georgia achieve a blended learning package, supporting her anxiety and elements of neurodiversity which were exacerbating the negative perceptions she had of school. I helped the school to reframe their perceptions, supported home in building the relationship with school, and Georgia in having her voice heard and being able to lead the plan once it was in place.

The case is now closed and Georgia’s relationship with and outlook on the support from school is more positive. She has a successful blended learning package in place where she attends the internal enhanced provision one day per week, receiving 1-to-1 support with her learning, then has access to home and online learning. She sat her mocks in school and did incredibly well; a plan is in place to support her to achieve the GCSE’s required to attend college in September. School were supported to make reasonable adjustments and use their readily available provision effectively.

The outcome for this young person was brilliant and she’s done extremely well, with the help of the right support package, everyone working from the same page, and with attention to the ATTEND framework.”

*Name and identifying details altered to protect the privacy of the young person.

Neurodiversity Community Hubs



Derby’s neurodiversity community hubs provide a wide range of advice, information, support and other activities in an environment that helps people to feel safe and part of a wider network. This also provides the opportunity for professionals to signpost to the hub for advice and information. All hubs are open access, so there’s no need for a referral; the Derby City hub is based out of the St James Centre in Derby. For more details on the city’s Neuro Hubs, visit the Understanding your child’s needs section of the Local Offer at derby.gov.uk/education-and-learning/derbys-send-local-offer

Families shaping the way forward

The relationship between families, the local authority and education settings is so vital to enabling children to thrive and succeed. Through the wonderful leadership of the Derby SEND Voice, parents of children with SEND have a direct seat at the leadership table to shape decisions of how services are delivered.



Through a joint piece of work with the Families First programme and the Area SEND Inclusion partnership we are looking to establish closer connections with communities and families to build their confidence and trust in the impact that education settings, including schools, in Derby can have on the success of their children. Belonging and a sense of belonging to the school community is critical within this.

A key aim for this year is to enhance the partnerships already underway, through a greater focus on enabling communities.

EHWB website closes at end of March



From 1 April 2026, the Emotional Health and Wellbeing website will no longer be updated. Following a review, Joined Up Care Derbyshire system partners have agreed to focus website content about emotional health and wellbeing on partner websites that serve local people in Derby and Derbyshire. Information that is currently hosted on the Derby and Derbyshire Emotional Health and Wellbeing website will instead be hosted elsewhere.

The website will remain accessible from April 2026 and it will signpost users to alternative websites, but content will no longer be maintained.

Content relating support for children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing will be moved over to the city and county Local Offer pages. Derby's page can be found at derby.gov.uk/localoffer

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