

A BETTER FUTURE FOR DEVON



LABOUR MANIFESTO FOR DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2021

A Better Future for Devon

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1 Introduction

During the next four years, Devon Labour will:

- **Promote enterprise** through investment, innovation, improving people's skills, sustainable jobs and give priority to opportunities for young people and small businesses including cooperatives and other innovative models
 - **Tackle the climate and ecological emergency** by promoting environmentally sustainable practices and reducing carbon emissions towards a target of net zero by 2030
 - **Improve Devon's health and social care services** by making sure people in Devon receive good quality integrated services at hospital and at home that address the long-term effects of Covid19
 - **Promote better Public Health** solutions and funding to address health and wellbeing including mental health.
 - **Support nurseries, schools, colleges and universities** so that all young people thrive, catch up on lost education as a result of Covid-19 and reach their full potential
 - **Establish county wide fast broadband connection** accessible to all
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Strategy & Overview

Devon faces enormous challenges in the wake of the pandemic and a decade of cuts inflicted by Tory austerity. Devon must now be sufficiently resourced to deal with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on both our economy and on the health and well-being of our residents. Decisive leadership and action are essential to create a new post-Brexit economy and we support the growing awareness across our population and beyond, that action to deal with climate change is one of the most urgent issues we face as a society.

The County Labour Group recognises that residents within Devon face many issues around employment, transport, education and health. Whilst the impact felt in each of these areas may vary from community to community, we will seek and strive to represent all those affected by these challenges and be their voice at County Hall. Wide ranging engagement, a belief in the power of collective endeavour and the innovations we can create together is fundamental to our outlook as Devon Labour. As such, we are always on the lookout

for ideas to address the challenges facing communities of both coast and country. If you have any thoughts on our focus, any suggestions for new policy, or any ideas for new and exciting campaigns, we invite you therefore to get in touch. To further these aims we will actively seek to promote debate, produce sound policy, organise campaigns and enact real change.

Equality and Diversity

At all times, Devon Labour will promote and strive to secure equality, diversity, inclusivity, and tolerance that reflects the diverse communities which we serve. We are committed to ensuring that all members of society are treated in a fair and equal manner and that this is embedded within our policies and working practices. We are also committed to eliminating all inequalities that give rise to poverty, poor health outcomes, and unequal educational and job opportunities.

2 Tackling the Economic Challenges

At the core of Labour's vision for Devon is a thriving economy which provides jobs for all, and which promotes both traditional key service industries such as tourism, hospitality and food production as well as Devon's strong manufacturing, science and technology base, whilst providing opportunities for new locally driven small and medium enterprises, including those operating as cooperatives or social enterprises. The pandemic has exacerbated and hastened challenges already being felt in the retail sector caused by the growth of online shopping and as well as the development of new ways of working from home enabled by the Internet. Getting Devon back to work after the pandemic is essential to prevent large scale unemployment and increasing levels of deprivation amongst those already suffering from the effects of low income and poverty.

In order to achieve this vision, we will:

- Encourage research and investment to support locality-based solutions and services
- Support local small and medium start-ups, especially those working towards net zero carbon emissions
- Promote life-long education and training opportunities to enable people to continue in employment in a fast-changing work environment
- Work to ensure everyone in Devon has access to fast Broadband, and that no household is disadvantaged due to lack of access to the internet
- Support apprenticeships training and work programmes for young people and those needing to gain new skills, and press for better integration between apprenticeships, training and universal credit
- Consider maintenance grants for those who are disadvantaged or at risk of becoming not in education employment or training.

- Support skills and training to increase capacity in the construction industry
- Support local innovation hubs in universities and elsewhere to help entrepreneurs develop businesses and remain in Devon
- Recognise the significance of Devon's service and cultural industries
- Encourage innovation in sustainable sources of energy, food and digital/creative industries by backing research and training, and by investment in renewables
- Be advocates for net zero carbon targets and the region's innovative green initiatives
- Support micro and small business by:
 - i) Lobbying for a regional or national investment fund to provide grants and loans to develop skills, innovation and new companies, co-operatives and social enterprises
 - ii) Providing better access to public contracts for small organisations
 - iii) Requiring the County's commissioners to test procurement against social value and award contracts to local businesses and social enterprises which deliver social benefit
 - iv) Ensuring that Devon's Local Enterprise Partnership becomes more open and inclusive of small businesses, co-operatives and social enterprises
- Ensure all issues that affect economic activity are addressed and not just those within the scope of the Local Enterprise Partnership, including affordable housing, transport, childcare, health services, education and training
- Press Government to recognise the Great South West as an economic entity and to agree a rural productivity deal
- Pursue measures to ensure all companies that trade here pay their fair share of taxes

3 Fairer Funding for Devon

Devon Labour believes that the calculation methods used to allocate resources to local government are unfair and fail to take into account the demands of a sparsely populated county, with an ageing population and a large network of public highway to maintain. There is no justification for Devon still receiving less than the national average per pupil for education, and less than the average per person for health services. A decade of Tory austerity has led to a reduction of funding to Devon County Council of 62% since 2010 and the county has seen an unprecedented level of underfunding for young people with special education needs and disabilities over the past two years.

Labour will campaign for fairer funding for Devon by:

- Lobbying Government for use of fairer funding formulae, in particular for education and social care allocations
- Working to ensure Devon makes the best of Brexit opportunities and is compensated for loss of EU grants

- Championing public services - resisting and reversing privatisation
- Supporting further devolution of budgets to locally accountable bodies
- Encouraging joint working with city and district councils, and other public bodies to deliver more efficient working practices

4 Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care

Towards an Integrated Health and Social Care System

Transforming our health and social care system after coronavirus requires us to think imaginatively about the principles and values that must underpin our most important public services. The Tories have failed to give the NHS the funding it needs. At the 2019 General Election, Boris Johnson pledged to give the NHS an average increase of 3.3% per year - less than the historical average and, according to experts, only enough for the NHS to 'stand still' and social care had been pushed into a state of crisis due to budget cuts. £7.7 billion has been taken out of local authority social care budgets since 2010. Around 1.5 million older people are going without the care they need.

The pandemic has thrown into sharper focus than ever before the differences in how the NHS and social care are treated. For too long social care has lacked the priority, focus and attention of the NHS, and care workers have been undervalued and underpaid. In Devon we have a depleted workforce and are constantly having recruitment campaigns to fill vacancies. Retention rates are poor. The social care system in this country is highly fragmented with a mix of local authority, private and not-for-profit provision. We want to see an end to the kind of outsourced contracts that have undermined communication, accountability and efforts to develop a strategic response.

Devon is developing an Integrated Care System in which they plan to set strategic objectives and outcomes to improve the health and wellbeing of the Devon population and should for the first time incorporate a strategy for social care. Devon GPs are now formed into primary care networks and we see them as the key clinical part of a set of local services ready to respond to the full range of a person's needs. We will need to sharpen the focus on tackling the specific challenges faced by our diverse communities in Devon be they urban, rural, large or small, ensuring that health inequalities are addressed. An integrated system focusing on health wellbeing and independent living will demand effective partnership working at neighbourhood level. Increasingly public funding across local government and the NHS will be seen as one community pot. There is therefore a need to ensure active and effective public participation and a system that is accountable to the population of Devon.

Key priorities:

- Be vigilant in ensuring the implementation of the Integrated Care System in Devon maximises democratic accountability in its decision making about meeting the health and care needs of the different localities across the county.
- Promote joined up primary, community and social care at local level.
- Encourage the development of community hospitals as local health hubs connecting up doctors' surgeries with other health services in neighbourhood settings.
- Support the need for integrated and early discharge home from acute hospitals provided it is based upon a comprehensive assessment of personal needs and full funding for sufficient medical, skilled nursing and social care staff to provide appropriate levels of care.
- Fight to improve and sustain mental health services
- Embrace new communication technologies that will help to deliver services in new ways.
- Support the integration of care workers into Community Health Teams
- Promote homecare workers' regular training and quality conditions of work.
- Support people with personal budgets to ensure they receive good quality and reliable care
- Encourage the development of co-operative solutions to domiciliary care needs
- Make sure the places in residential and care homes funded by the Council offer the highest quality of services
- Work with private providers to make improvements and maintain good practice ensuring that they have clear accountability procedures for care workers to raise concerns about the wellbeing of the people they care for.
- Support the development of dementia cafés and dementia friendly communities
- Press for the best deal for carers to be supported and provided with respite when needed

Reducing Health Inequalities and Promoting Well Being for All

Responsibility for promoting the health and wellbeing of Devon people is a formidable challenge for the County Council particularly because of the government emphasis on protecting the nation's health from infectious diseases. The National Institute of Health Protection brings together Public Health England and the NHS Test and Trace budget with the Joint Biosecurity Centre and is focusing on tackling COVID-19 and protecting the nation's health. The new organisation's primary focus is public health protection and infectious disease capability.

The government's decision to change the structure of Public Health England will impact the budget for prevention measures and could reduce the budget for promoting better health for people of all ages. We must challenge any reduction to this budget.

Programmes to reduce obesity, cut smoking, reduce alcohol and drug abuse, improve sexual health, reduce teenage pregnancy and combat domestic violence and abuse

should be developed not cut, and should be targeted at those most at risk wherever they live in Devon.

Working together at community level by all those interested in health and wellbeing is the only sustainable way forward. We will strengthen the bringing together of existing public services, the voluntary sector, neighbours and carers, recognising that residents want to maintain an independent life for as long as possible. Maintaining Devon's network of libraries, supporting community facilities, encouraging active lifestyles and supporting cultural activities are all essential for healthy communities.

We will:

- Campaign for prevention programmes to be properly funded
- Seek to improve public health by promoting participation in sport and active lifestyles that improves both mental and physical health
- Promote a food justice action plan that provides affordable and nutritious food
- Support Devon's network of libraries as cultural and educational systems.
- Encourage the development of community hubs for the use of voluntary organisations whose main agenda is health and wellbeing.

5 Tackling Climate Change and Caring for our Environment

Devon Labour believes strongly that urgent action must be taken to halt climate change and to work towards achieving net zero carbon emissions across the whole of the county by 2030.

Labour also believes that every effort must be made to protect our natural environment, to support bio-diversity, and to halt the decline in the decline in flora and fauna evidenced within the natural world.

To do this, we will:

- Campaign for a consistent approach to carbon budgeting and ensure that the environmental impact is taken account of in every decision made by DCC
- Support renewable energy initiatives using wind, biomass and water, and encourage community ownership as well as community and co-operative energy procurement to reduce household costs
- Campaign for flooding mitigation strategies to protect vulnerable homes and businesses, and for adequate investment in flood defences
- Encourage greater use of natural methods of flood mitigation where appropriate
- Support good practice that encourages pollinators

- Identify areas of land where community gardens and fruit growing areas can be established, and support the Transition movement in Devon
- Invest in returning residential streets to safe environments where families can live, walk cycle work and play
- Develop policies to reduce litter and fly-tipping, establish local resources-recovery parks which re-use and repair waste material and create green jobs, and provide for more items to be recycled at recycling centres
- Continue to lobby government for a tax on packaging and encourage retail outlets to accept the return of non-recyclable materials
- Use waste to create energy and to make re-usable products that benefit our community
- Develop a road map for Devon County Council to achieve zero carbon emission by 2030
- Pursue the principle of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle at every opportunity, and support the principles of the circular economy
- Support investment in energy efficient homes, and in retrofitting of buildings that reduce energy consumption
- Work with users and producers of fossil fuels to facilitate change to renewable energy
- Promote local sustainable energy production
- Campaign to protect Devon's marine and natural environment and increase biodiversity, reduce habitat loss, and encouraging tree and wild-flower planting to increase bees and other pollinators
- Promote best practice in farming aimed at reducing the impact that agriculture has on climate change

6 Nurturing children and young people

Early Years

Labour believes strongly in the importance of early help and intervention for families to prevent difficulties becoming more deep-rooted and costly to solve in the long term. We also believe that family poverty combined with underfunding of early years and education holds back children's development and exacerbates inequalities. We need to break the cycle of low aspirations and poor achievement.

We will therefore:

- Seek to re-introduce universal rather than targeted support to ensure all families that need help are able to access it
- Support the work of children's centres, especially in the areas of outreach and community development

- Ensure full availability of affordable pre-school and nursery places to meet need, and to stop loss of places following the Covid-19 pandemic
- Support community groups that work with new parents
- Ensure good parenting advice on techniques such as therapeutic parenting are widely disseminated and parenting support available to all
- Ensure the Health Visitor service for early years is properly resourced
- Ensure mothers can access expert support to breast feed their babies when needed

Schools and FE Colleges

The current fragmented education system is failing many of our children and young people. Reform is needed with an improved National Education System being developed by educational experts, and not as a political football. All Academy Trusts should be accountable. Forced academisation should stop.

The Covid-19 crisis has revealed the inadequacies of our education system which had become divided and built on competition through results and outdated curriculums. More cooperation between schools is needed to build back a system that supports staff and student centred approaches to enable all to reach their full potential. The uneven distribution of state funding and resources causes some schools to be inadequate. Students therefore do not get the same chances in life. The quality of education should not depend on where you live and what you can afford.

Devon Labour councillors, support the f40 campaign for fairer funding for all Devon's schools through a better National Funding Formula. Devon, has been hugely underfunded partly due to increased statutory requirements being imposed by the Government without a corresponding increase in funding. Some children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities are having to go to Special Schools due to a lack of resources and support staff in mainstream schools. Many of our schools and colleges also have crumbling buildings and essential maintenance delayed. Labour councillors support the calls from parents and schools who are desperate for help and push for change.

In our view, all schools should be inclusive and meet the needs of all children and young people in their local community and we will promote this at every opportunity. We will work to ensure all schools set high expectations for learner's individual achievements and encourage the development of a curriculum to develop the intellectual, technical, creative and practical skills needed for every child. We will also promote civic education and critical thinking including current societal concerns such as those raised by the black lives matter and climate emergency campaigns and insist new skills are taught in line with advancements in methods of learning, science, engineering and technology. We believe that it is essential that both vocational and academic qualifications have equal parity, and that we must close the education gap between those that have and

those that have not. We also believe that the education system must promote and protect the mental health and well being of our young people.

In Devon the centralisation under the Department for Education (DfE) and the Regional School Board Commissioner's office has led to the slow opening of new schools or action to replace failing MATs. This greatly impacts on students and increases the costs to Devon County Council. It is our view that all schools should be under a single system of regulation and that they should be brought back under the oversight of the local authority, to ensure consistent standards and maintain local accountability. There is also a need for national oversight by the formation of a National Education Council as a centre for ongoing research and guidance for government, teachers and the public.

Labour Councillors will:

- Ensure blended learning and Home Schooling do not reduce the chances of young people and ensure all children have access to high speed internet and computers or notebooks
- Encourage support for parents to enable them to help their children with home learning
- Encourage collaborative work between schools to produce higher quality online work and a better education system online
- Focus on reducing the loss of education caused by covid-19, and on closing the education gap and lack of opportunities for disadvantaged children, including for Children in Care and Care Leavers
- Promote better communication and listening, with parents and young people helping to drive improvements
- Ensure all ECHPs are completed on time with improved quality and push for reviews to be done in a timely manner for successful transitions to post 16 and post 19 placements
- Improve services and education for children on the autistic spectrum
- With the Unions, focus on staff morale at all levels to improve trust, self-esteem and levels of staff retention. We will work to reduce levels of stress and foster respect, trust and the valuing of the expertise of experienced teachers, and improve support for trainee teachers and NQTs using properly trained mentors.
- Work to stop exclusions and zero tolerance on behaviour, by expanding the work of the Exeter Bridge project
- Address the mental health crisis among our children
- Reduce those Not in Education Employment and Training (NEET), by improving access to post16 education county wide
- Press for reduced segregation and more inclusion for those with learning needs and disabilities
- Increase the focus of Devon on the importance of improving communication/speech and language skills
- Highlight that sixth forms and colleges must not suffer more devastating cuts

- Improve safe and affordable sustainable travel to schools and colleges
- Aim for every school to be good or outstanding so that all students want to go to their local school or college

Young People

A decade of Tory austerity has seen swingeing cuts in youth service provision across the county, and a switch from universal provision to so called targeted provision. This has left too many vulnerable young people unreached and has led to rising levels of anti-social behaviour in some areas.

Labour Councillors will therefore:

- Replace lost youth work infrastructure/provision and extend to areas where there is unmet need
- Increase support in rural areas for access to high speed internet, sports, arts and peer group interaction outside school
- Increase support for young people by the LA and Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to enable them to cope with pressures that may lead to mental health issues
- Restore funding for a comprehensive careers' advice service available to all young people
- Call for reduced cost bus travel for all under 25 year olds

Child Protection

Children services in Devon have received an inadequate and requiring improvement rating from Ofsted in 2013 and 2019. Despite some improvement since 2017 there are still areas of concern.

Labour Councillors will therefore make it a priority to:

- Ensure timely action at every stage of the legal process for all children being considered for fostering
- Work to develop robust systems that ensure no case of neglect missed or any child let down
- Highlight that early intervention should only be used when abuse or neglect is evident
- Ensure the safeguarding of vulnerable children is always a top priority, including the prevention of child sexual exploitation and involvement in County Lines drug rings
- Improve support for care leavers, including facilitating peer support and suitable accommodation
- Work to improve the morale of social care staff and improve retention rates
- Ensure social workers and health visitors are remunerated sufficiently well to attract and retain good quality staff

- Improve training for all staff

7 Improving Transport in Devon

Labour believes strongly in the importance of a good public transport network supported by improved cycling and walking routes to maintain connectivity for all Devon's communities, and to reduce car usage which is an essential part of our strategy for tackling climate change. We believe that the best way to achieve an integrated and affordable public transport network is by returning public transport back into public ownership.

To support our vision, we will:

- Be proactive in developing 'green' travel plans for Devon's public and private employers and for schools
- Support the idea for a Devon Metro, and the development of a Devon Oyster card
- Work with private sector and community bus services to improve connectivity
- Demand increased financial support for essential but 'uneconomic' bus and train routes
- Continue to campaign for an alternative cross-country rail line via Okehampton, and for the Exeter-Waterloo line to be double line throughout
- Support infrastructure improvements to encourage the use of electric and new technology powered vehicles, including buses
- Campaign for lower traffic speeds to improve safety, lower emissions and noise
- Seek funding to deal with the backlog of road and footway maintenance issues, and to further develop high quality cycling and walking routes
- Work with residents to develop residents-only parking areas where there is excessive commuter or visitor parking
- Work with transport providers to improve station facilities including the provision of cycle racks, better integrated timetables, as well as to fully cater for the needs of those with disabilities, and to improve timetable displays at bus stops and in journey announcements
- Prioritise the securing of effective park-and-ride and park-and-change schemes around Exeter
- Work towards an integrated transport strategy across Devon which takes into account climate change, and recognises the need for people throughout the county to be able to access health services, education, training and employment by sustainable means

Cycling and Walking

Our aim is to secure funding to develop where possible high-quality segregated cycle-only lanes for key routes and improve existing cycle paths to promote safe cycling and

walking as alternatives to private motor vehicles. This will reduce congestion and pollution and improve health and wellbeing.

We will:

- Halt the degradation of the existing cycle network by adopting modern design guidance and prioritise cycle commuter routes that are direct, safe and with good surfaces
- Improve cyclist and pedestrian safety through school programmes and promoting best practice for motorists and cyclists
- Regularly audit the delivery of the already agreed strategies prioritising pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, and assess all new proposals against these strategies
- Categorise streets with people in mind (not just motor vehicles) so that any new development is planned accordingly
- Commit to bold leadership for delivering a vision of a better County, with cyclists and pedestrians at its heart
- Maintain a nominated Councillor and Officer 'leads' to champion walking and cycling

8 Supporting Rural Communities, Food Production and Food Policy

Devon is at heart a rural county, and Labour's vision is for a rural economy that enables every community across the county to thrive, and to be well connected to other communities.

We will do this by:

- Supporting key industries, including agriculture, fisheries and tourism
- Supporting small and independent businesses to flourish across the county
- Promoting the purchase of local produce
- Promoting the opportunities offered through DCC's own farm estate to encourage diversification, promote opportunities for young people to enter the industry, and to communicate best practice in farming methods, environmental protection and bio-diversity
- Pursuing initiatives which ensure every community can be connected to high quality, fast and reliable broadband
- Promoting the need for regular and affordable transport links to be restored to rural communities and for the devastating impact of Tory privatisation on services to be reversed

- Supporting rural communities to retain and develop essential local services such as community shops, post offices and GPs surgeries
- Pressing for full government recognition of the impact of rural sparsity when allocating funding

Food Policy

Devon Labour believes that food should be sourced locally wherever possible, and that affordable, nutritious food should be available to all. We also believe that food waste must be curtailed and that all surplus usable food should be redistributed to those in need.

In support of this policy we will:

- Work to eliminate holiday hunger for all Devon's children including providing access to food schemes for those entitled to free school meals
- Encourage full take up of entitlements to free school meals
- Design a Food Action Plan to eliminate food poverty so that no one is forced to resort to the use of foodbanks and other charitable sources of food
- In the meantime, support foodbanks and similar which provide food for those in urgent need

9 Keeping Devon Safe

Policing

The Tory approach to policing and criminal justice has been reckless and remote and has resulted in a significant deterioration in outcomes. Effective policing cannot be provided on the cheap. It has led to what HM Inspectorate of Constabulary described as dangerous, disturbing practices, with investigations shelved, vulnerable victims let down and dangerous suspects remaining at large.

We believe in investing in policing that prevents crime and make our communities safer, and we will enforce the laws protecting police and other emergency workers from violent assault.

We will work to rebuild the whole police workforce, recruiting more police officers, police community support officers and police staff. We will work with police forces to invest in a modern workforce to tackle the rise in violent crime and cybercrime under the Tories. To deliver these priorities, Labour will work with Devon Police and Crime Commissioner to reform police funding and share new resources fairly, and to ensure that local needs are met.

We will retain local democratic accountability for police forces and campaign for reform of the police funding formula to ensure sufficient, sustainable resources are fairly allocated. We will agree resources with the police authorities to combat crime and restore community policing by consent.

Effective police work requires the police to serve their communities and work collaboratively with youth workers, mental health services, schools, drug rehabilitation programmes and other public agencies. A police force working within our communities, with the capacity to gather local intelligence, is also the frontline of our domestic security – the first eyes and ears of effective counter-terrorism.

We will work to eliminate institutional biases against BAME communities. Proportionate stop-and-search based on intelligence is a needed tool of effective policing, but the use of expanded powers means black and Asian men are still more likely to be stopped and searched, poisoning relations between the police and the local communities they serve. We will also work to increase diversity within the police force at every level.

We will demand better police training on domestic abuse and offences arising from coercive control, as well as historical abuses and other crimes neglected by the reduced forces operating under Tory austerity.

A Labour government will establish a Royal Commission to develop a public health approach to substance misuse, focusing on harm reduction rather than criminalisation. A Labour government will also introduce minimum legal standards of service for all victims of crime.

The Fire and Rescue Service

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue service, not only fights fires but protects communities from disasters such as flooding, terrorist attacks, rail disasters and road traffic accidents. We support the development of collaboration between all the 999 services in the development of a co-responder service, so that fire fighters can respond to medical emergencies and if necessary, make arrests. This will require adequate training and support personnel. We also believe that the Fire and Rescue service should have a statutory duty to tackle flooding.

In addition, we will:

- Work to maintain a comprehensive network of fire stations to ensure the people of Devon are properly protected in case of fire or other emergency, including flooding and the threat of terrorist attack.
- Support the prevention programme of fire education within schools and the community and industry, in particular advising on appropriate building material such as external cladding. We also support the inclusion of sprinklers and fire alarms in all new homes and public buildings.

- Oppose the transfer of responsibility for the Fire Service from councillors to the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Support greater investment in the fire and rescue service, including recruiting more new frontline firefighters and support abolition of the public sector pay cap that has meant firefighters are on average £2,000 worse off than they were in 2010.

CONTACTS

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Devon County 2021 Labour Candidates