

Westerleigh & Coalpit Heath Parish Council – District Councillors’ Report

Monday 12th October

Local SEND Reform Plan Approved by Government

South Gloucestershire Council has welcomed government approval of its Local SEND Reform Plan, marking a significant milestone in improving support and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The government confirmed that the partnership’s plan has met the required threshold for approval and demonstrates a real commitment to delivering important local SEND reforms. The plan, developed jointly by South Gloucestershire Council, health partners, education providers, parent carers and young people, sets out how services will be transformed over the next three years to create a more inclusive, responsive and sustainable SEND system.

The reforms aim to ensure children and young people receive support earlier, closer to home and within their local communities wherever possible. Key priorities include strengthening inclusive practice in mainstream schools, expanding specialist support through a new ‘experts at hand’ model, increasing specialist provision within mainstream settings, improving post-16 opportunities, and embedding stronger co-production with families.

Government approval also means South Gloucestershire will be eligible to receive a High Needs Stability Grant worth approximately £50.3 million. This funding will help support the long-term sustainability of SEND services while reforms are delivered.

David Jarrett, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Chief Strategic Commissioning Officer at NHS Gloucestershire ICB and NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire ICB cluster, said: “We are pleased that the government has approved South Gloucestershire’s SEND Reform Plan, which reflects the strong commitment of partners and families to creating a more inclusive and responsive system. By working together, we will strengthen early support, improve access to specialist health expertise and help more children and young people with SEND to thrive in their local communities.

“We look forward to building on this important milestone and turning the plan’s ambitions into lasting improvements for children, young people and their families.”

The council’s vision is that every child has the best start in life and can thrive, with the right support available at the right time. Over the next three years, South Gloucestershire and its partners will focus on delivering the commitments set out in the plan, including expanding specialist support within mainstream education, creating additional specialist places close to home, improving pathways into adulthood and ensuring families play a central role in shaping services.

Thousands of Children Celebrate Reading Challenge Success

Almost 5000 children from across South Gloucestershire have taken part in the 2026 Summer Reading Challenge at local libraries, reading over 105,000 books during the school summer holidays.

This year’s challenge was titled ‘Read to the Beat’ and aimed to inspire children to explore the connection between stories and songs, discovering how both reading and music can ignite imagination and creativity.

Developed by The Reading Agency, the Summer Reading Challenge is designed to boost children's reading engagement and confidence, supporting their wellbeing and helping them to thrive.

Primary school aged children chose books to read and collected stickers to complete their sticker booklet to earn a medal, certificate and a voucher for a free swim at their local Active Lifestyle Centre, provided by Circadian Trust. A mini challenge was also available for pre-school children to help prepare them for starting school.

Throughout the summer, children also enjoyed a wide range of free activities at libraries, including creative arts and crafts, Lego challenges, music and cultural experiences, and inclusive sessions designed for children and families with additional needs.

South Gloucestershire Council Libraries also encouraged children to participate through outreach sessions delivered in partnership with local children's charity, Turtle CYP. These sessions supported children taking part in the Council's Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF), which helped to keep children fed and active during the summer break.

Chair of South Gloucestershire Council, councillor Adrian Rush, and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Libraries, councillor John Bradbury attended a special event at Hanhan Library to celebrate the achievements of everyone who took part this year. They met with local children and presented them with medals and certificates to mark their reading challenge success.

Throughout the summer, dedicated volunteers supported children taking part in the challenge, helping to make the experience fun and rewarding for all. To find out more about this year's Summer Reading Challenge and library services for children, young people and families in South Gloucestershire, visit: www.southglos.gov.uk/childrenslibrary

New Anti-Smoking Campaign Launches in South Gloucestershire

People who smoke in South Gloucestershire are being encouraged to think about the moments that matter most to them, as a major regional campaign launches to help more people quit smoking for good.

At the heart of the campaign is a simple but powerful question for South Gloucestershire residents who still smoke: "What will you miss?"

The campaign launches with 100 days to go until 1 January 2027, when the UK's smokefree generation law takes effect, meaning anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 will never legally be sold tobacco.

The law is designed to prevent the next generation from ever starting. It does not change anything for adults who smoke today, and that is who this campaign is for.

Smoking remains the leading preventable cause of illness and early death in the South West. Every year, around 6,600 people in the region die from smoking-related illnesses; the equivalent of around 18 lives lost every day.

Smokefree South West, a partnership of 15 local authorities working alongside the NHS, is launching the "What Will You Miss?" campaign ahead of Stoptober to encourage people who smoke to take the first step towards quitting and access free local support. South Gloucestershire Council is among the local authorities supporting the campaign.

The campaign is based on a successful approach developed by Greater Manchester's Make Smoking History programme, in collaboration with people who smoke. The emotionally led campaign will be shown on television, radio and social media to people who smoke across the South West, alongside local campaign activity in South Gloucestershire.

At the centre of the campaign is a film that follows a bride on her wedding day, surrounded by family but missing the one person she most wanted there. It carries a simple message: smoking doesn't just take years from your life, it takes you away from the moments that matter most.

A recent survey of more than 1,600 people who smoke across the South West found many already want to quit but struggle to convert that motivation into action. While health concerns are among the strongest reasons people consider stopping smoking, the survey found around two thirds of people who smoke do not have any current intentions to quit. The research also found that most people who smoke have already tried to quit at least once, but confidence remains low, with many doubting their ability to stop successfully. The campaign aims to make the risks of smoking more tangible, motivate quit attempts across the region, and quickly connect people to effective support.

Sarah Weld, Director of Public Health for South Gloucestershire Council, said: "Smoking is still the leading cause of preventable illness and early death in South Gloucestershire, and it affects some of our communities far more than others. This campaign is about reaching people who smoke with a message that matters to them personally.

"We know most people who smoke want to stop, and that many have tried before. The good news is that people are up to three times more likely to quit successfully with the right support, and that support is free, local and available right now through our Smokefree South Glos' service.

"If you have been thinking about quitting, this is the moment."

People in South Gloucestershire who want to stop smoking can get free support from the Smokefree South Glos team. To find out more, visit www.southglos.gov.uk/smokefree or call [01454 865337](tel:01454865337). Whether you prefer one-to-one support in person, telephone appointments, or group support, they're there to help you every step of the way.