

Stoke-on-Trent

Be the cause

Youth Participation Strategy

2021 – 2025





INTRODUCTION

Children and young people are at the heart of our city. We want them to thrive and be the most that they can be and we are committed to working together in partnership to give all children the best possible start in life.

To achieve this, we must listen to our children and young people, hear their voice, and put their thoughts, feelings and experiences at the core of how we design and improve our services. Room to Grow, Stoke-on-Trent's Children & Young People's Strategy 2020-2024, sets an ambitious shared vision for the future of our children, young people and families in the city. It outlines how we must work together in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sector to create a city where children thrive.

The development and delivery of these plans must reflect children and young people's lived experiences and their ambitions. The purpose of this strategy is to set out how the Children, Young People and Families Strategic Partnership Board will lead a city-wide drive to give children and young people meaningful involvement in shaping the services they access and crafting the future of Stoke-on-Trent.

In this strategy, Be The Cause, we present three phases of delivery to take us to 2025:

- **Phase one:** initiate our city-wide approach to participation, including a Youth Council
- **Phase two:** develop and widen our youth participation offer
- **Phase three:** reflect and evaluate how we're doing, and decide together with young people how to continue to improve.

By taking this approach we aim to develop services which better respond to and meet the needs and priorities of children and young people in the city. We will build the knowledge of those who deliver and design services about what matters to our young people. In turn, we will offer learning and development opportunities to our young people, empowering them to use their voice.

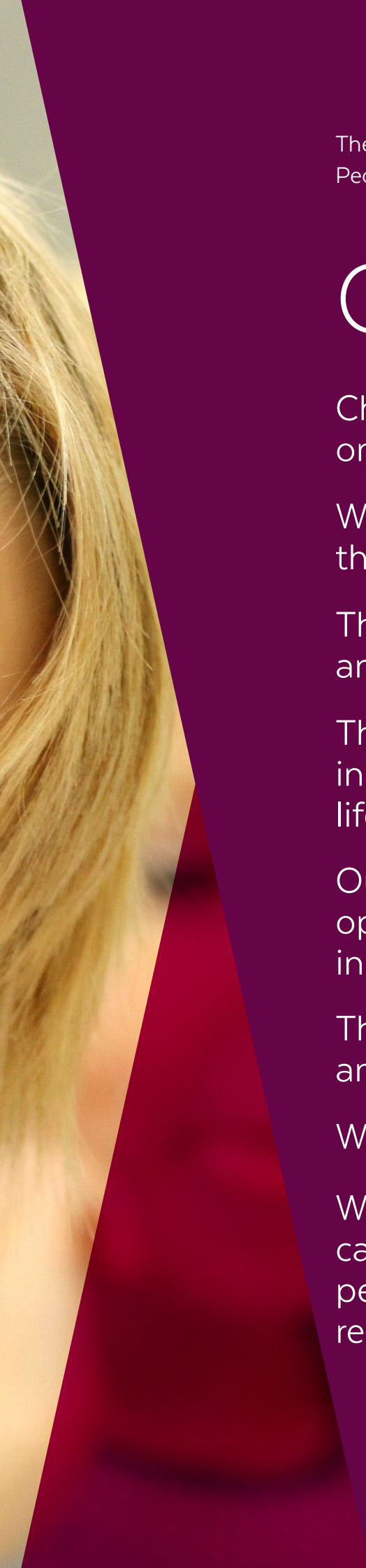
We want our young people to:

- be the key to developing better service delivery
- be happy, empathetic and kind
- have the confidence to aspire to grasp new opportunities
- be the pride of Stoke-on-Trent.

We hope that you will share our excitement and commitment to young people and we look forward to working with you to deliver our plan, to enable our young people to be the cause.

Children, Young People and Families Strategic Partnership Board





The strategy adopts the overarching vision of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board.

OUR VISION

Children and young people are the number one priority for the city of Stoke-on-Trent.

We want them to thrive and be the most that they can be.

They should be safe, healthy, nurtured and loved.

They should have the best possible start in life, the best education and the best life chances.

Our young people should be enthusiasts, optimists, creators, entrepreneurs and innovators.

They should be kind, empathetic and compassionate.

We want to hear their voice.

We need every adult in Stoke-on-Trent to care passionately about children and young people and express that through relationships, community and business life.

STOKE-ON-TRENT CORPORATE VISION



The Stronger Together vision sets out the priorities for Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the wider city. The strategic plan has been shaped by the political ambition of the City Council's leadership, as well as the values and aims of the organisation. As such, it is as much a corporate plan for the council's directorates and teams as it is a strategic blueprint for improving Stoke-on-Trent as a city. Our Stronger Together principles are embedded in every strategy including this youth participation strategy.

Our young people are the future of the city; we need to ensure they have the best possible start in life, as well as access to every opportunity open to them as they grow. We will continue to invest in children, delivering our improvement plan for children's social care, raising educational attainment levels, and ensuring our schools enable all of our young people to achieve their potential. We need to hear from our children and young people to understand their experiences and to shape services together. We are also focused on creating and sustaining a successful economy, leading on regeneration, investing in diversification of the housing market and creating the conditions for businesses to grow and thrive. Investment will drive employment growth, push wages up and increase prosperity for our residents and communities.





Support vulnerable people in our communities to live their lives well

- Transform outcomes for vulnerable children and young people in the city
- Help to protect vulnerable adults from neglect and harm
- Work with Partners to tackle the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping
- Protect families from the harmful impacts of drug and alcohol misuse
- Address financial hardship and improve access to affordable financial services



Enable our residents to fulfil their potential

- Improve education and skill levels for residents of all ages
- Protect and improve mental and physical health and wellbeing
- Improve the quality and supply of housing in the city
- Enable our residents to secure and progress in sustainable employment
- Transform digital infrastructure to improve access to online services



Help businesses to thrive and make our city more prosperous

- Foster enterprise and entrepreneurship to support local business and growth
- Deliver a high quality transport system that boosts community and enables productivity
- Prioritise the redevelopment of derelict and brownfield sites in strategic places across the city.
- Celebrate and promote a great city as a destination for business heritage and culture



Work with our communities to make them healthier, safer and more sustainable

- Improve the environmental sustainability of our towns and communities
- Work with residents and partners to make our communities safer, cleaner and healthier
- Reduce the numbers of empty properties to enable our town centres to thrive
- Transform community involvement in tackling issues which hold our city back
- Invest in communities to help build resilience and grow social capital



An innovative and commercial council, providing effective leadership to help transform outcomes

- Deliver more joined-up services to maximise efficiency and achieves improved outcomes
- Ensure the continued financial stability of the City Council
- Work with Partners to devise innovative and collaborative approaches to local challenges
- Deliver a wide range of commercial services and invest to enable the city to prosper
- Improve the use of data in decision making and service improvement

WHERE WE START

We are proud of the work we already do to involve children, young people and families in shaping our services.

We have a well-established **children in care council** and **care leavers forum** which are actively involved in questions about service delivery and design, with young people generously sharing their lived experiences to improve what we deliver. **School councils** are up and running across Stoke-on-Trent, offering young people a powerful and impactful role in shaping their education.

We are proud of our **local democracy events** and **takeover challenge** which give young people an opportunity to learn about and engage with the City Council and its councillors. The **Stoke-on-Trent Community Safety Partnership** has just started a new **youth researchers project** to use young people's knowledge and experience to explore contextual safeguarding and where they feel safe in the city. This is a really exciting 12-month project involving training, a residential trip and research which sets a strong precedent for the direction in which we should take youth participation.

The **Parent Engagement Group in Stoke (PEGiS)** hosts a valuable **forum for young people (up to 25) with SEND** to share their experiences, educational issues and concerns, and this is used often to gather feedback on proposed services or policies. **Changes Health and Wellbeing Youth Forum** (in collaboration with North Staffordshire NHS trust) run a **forum for young people to share their experiences of mental health support** and provide training/support in youth advocacy. This forum plays a key role in deciding how Stoke-on-Trent CAMHS should be delivered.

The voluntary, community and faith sector in Stoke-on-Trent is rich and varied and there are some really exciting initiatives being developed for young people to participate – from the **Cultural Education Partnership's youth cultural explorers** to the newly-created **Youth Collective**.

During Covid-19 some of these activities have had to scale back or meet virtually. However, moving to online platforms has offered new ways of participating which can be more accessible and reach a wider group of young people. We will continue to explore online participation alongside in-person sessions as the pandemic ends.

For more details about what is already going on in the city, see **Appendix A**.

So, there are a range of youth participation activities taking place already but we know we can do more to bring children and young people to the table as co-collaborators and co-designers of services. We need a shared city vision of what we want youth participation to look like and how we will embed it across all the different services we provide.

We want to upskill and empower a generation of young people to make their voice heard. At the heart of our youth participation approach will be a newly-created **Youth Council** which will bring together representatives from a wide range of forums and groups.

We will support the Youth Council to drive its own agenda, developing specialist roles and activities to shape different parts of the youth offer. We will encourage organisations across Stoke-on-Trent to come talk with the Youth Council whenever they are planning changes to their offer for children and young people.

This strategy provides the starting point for this vision. To achieve it we must work together as local partners with our children and young people, sharing resources and building a joint infrastructure for how we support young people to participate.



OUR COMMITMENT

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states:

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

UNCRC, Unicef¹



In Room to Grow, as a Strategic Partnership we make the commitment to embed Article 12 of the UNCRC, focusing on young people's voice:

The development and delivery of our plans must be reflective of children and young people's lived experiences and their ambitions. We therefore have to hear and reflect their voice. We will ensure that under this strategy there is a wide programme of engagement with children and young people so that they have had a genuine chance to participate in the design and delivery of plans and programmes.

Room to Grow, Children & Young People's Strategy 2020-24²

²www.stoke.gov.uk/info/20043/councillors_and_decision-making/363/room_to_grow_children_and_young_peoples_strategy_2020-2024

BE THE CAUSE

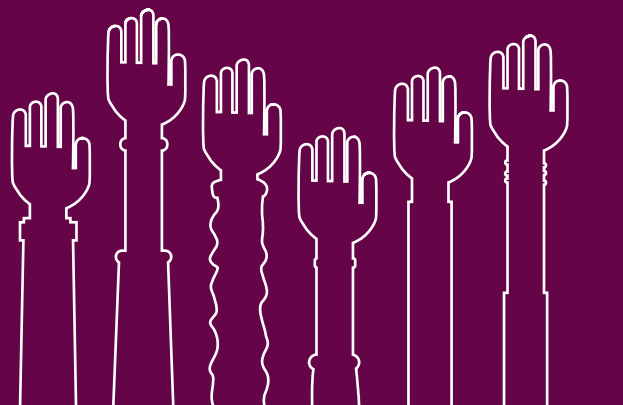
Our children in care and care leavers council have already created a model of participation with 10 fundamental principles: **be the cause**. We propose that this tried-and-tested approach is adopted more widely across the Partnership to drive all our participation with children and young people.

1. **B**e at the best interests of each child, develop their skills and be relevant to them.
2. **E**thical: have a genuine purpose and a realistic chance of achieving the goal.
3. **T**ransparency in all aspects of the project and the right to participate or not.
4. **H**onouring children and young people's views and opinions, and incorporating this into the final outcome.
5. **E**qual opportunities to take part and flexibility and creativity to include all.
6. **C**are, safety and protection of all involved.
7. **A**ppreciation for involvement.
8. **U**phold non-discrimination and inclusiveness.
9. **S**taff effectiveness through knowledge, skills and training.
10. **E**valuation allowing participants to give and gain feedback from their involvement.

Be the cause principles have clear links to Laura Lundy's model of participation³ which emphasises giving children safe, inclusive opportunities to express their views, facilitating that expression, listening, and making sure we act on what young people tell us.

It is important to remember that our children and young people are all different and may want or need to participate in different ways. It is our responsibility to give young people the support they need to express their views and to facilitate different types of engagement. For participation to be meaningful and successful, we must hear the voices of a wide range of children and young people from across our city.

As a Partnership, we will share this commitment and use it to hold ourselves to account. We encourage children and young people to challenge us if we are not meeting our promises.



WHAT WE AIM TO ACHIEVE

At a service level, through this strategy we aim to:

- Put children and young people's priorities, views and experiences at the heart of all services we design and deliver
- Create services that work for children and young people and support them to thrive and be the best they can be
- Encourage a culture across our Partnership of consulting and collaborating with children and young people
- Develop a city-wide infrastructure to support this culture of participation
- Give opportunities for all young people to be heard, including those who may want to participate in different ways
- Connect and support those facilitating participation to develop their skills
- Increase the input and ownership children and young people have in shaping the support they access as an individual.



We want our youth participation offer to be fun and inspiring. We want to celebrate not just the improvements to services that children and young people inform and influence, but the personal achievements of the children and young people themselves.

Our youth participation will aim to:

- Develop children and young people's self-confidence, public speaking and other skills
- Support critical thinking, encouraging young people to ask questions and consider different perspectives
- Engage young people in their community and local issues
- Enable young people to discover their personal values and beliefs
- Provide volunteering and work experience opportunities
- Give opportunities to meet other young people beyond their usual peer groups
- Inspire young people's career choices
- Provide transferrable life skills valued by business and further education.

All this will support our children and young people to be the pride of Stoke-on-Trent.

As we begin this strategy, we will work with young people to develop more specific measures and ways to monitor how well we are meeting these outcomes.



PHASE ONE:

INITIATE OUR CITY-WIDE APPROACH TO PARTICIPATION, INCLUDING A YOUTH COUNCIL (2021-22)

To kickstart our new approach to youth participation, we need shared, city-wide infrastructure. Some of this is already in place, such as the children in care council, care leavers forum and school councils. The Youth Council and members of the youth parliament are crucial to set up at the start so they can shape the direction for developing the rest of our participation offer.

Youth Council

As a Partnership, we will create a Youth Council to bring together children and young people from all our existing forums, as well as other under-represented groups, to offer varied perspectives and collective direction to anything that impacts children and young people in the city.

This Youth Council will be at the centre of our youth participation approach and we will issue an open invite for any and all organisations in Stoke to come work with the Youth Council to develop their offer for children and young people.

The Youth Council will draw membership from the children in care council, care leavers forum, school councils and a wide range of other voluntary and community sector groups (eg Scouts, Guides, youth clubs, Cadets, sport clubs, youth cultural explorers, the youth collective, PEGiS, Changes Health and Wellbeing Youth Forum) as well as our new members of the youth parliament. We will work closely with existing forums, including the Youth Collective, to coordinate our youth participation and add value.

Each Youth Council representative will be responsible for two-way communication, to bring to Youth Council the thoughts, views and ideas of other young people in the forum/organisation they represent, as well as sharing back with their host organisation updates, opportunities to get involved and other useful information.

We will work proactively to make sure varied perspectives are represented and included on the Youth Council, such as:

- LGBTQIA+ young people
- Young people from Black and minoritised communities
- Young people with special educational needs and disabilities, including physical health needs, learning disabilities and neurodiversity
- Young people who have experienced mental health challenges
- Young carers
- Young parents
- Electively home educated young people
- Young people with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- Young people who are in care
- Young people with experience of the child protection/safeguarding system
- Young people with experience of the criminal justice system
- Young people living in poverty.

We recognise that some young people may require more support than others to be able to participate and we will work as partners to provide any additional support required. In phase two, we will establish wider mechanisms for hearing from young people, including from more young people than can sit on Youth Council, younger children, and alternative types of participation.

The Youth Council will meet together at least four times a year (this could be virtually) and be facilitated to set its own agenda and activities/priorities, as well as discussing items brought to it by organisations across Stoke-on-Trent. However, cross-cutting groups from the membership of the Youth Council will work on issues through the year. It will be supported and administered by a local authority officer and sit alongside the Children, Young People and Families Strategic Partnership Board.

The Youth Council will be an invaluable resource to the city and in keeping with the cause principles, we commit to listening to their views and wherever possible taking action. Where action falls outside the power of local organisations, we commit to feeding the Youth Council's views, thoughts and concerns to other organisations, including national bodies.

We must work hard to ensure that the young people who give their time and perspectives also benefit from their participation. As such, as partners we will consider how to provide opportunities for participating young people to develop their skills and knowledge, including through drawing on the expertise of local voluntary sector organisations. The activities of Youth Council will benefit the young people as they will gain informal work experience and network with their peers and professionals.



UK Youth Parliament

From the 2022/23 academic year, Stoke-on-Trent will hold annual elections for young people aged 11-18 (years 7-13) in schools across the city to elect member(s) of the UK Youth Parliament. This provides an opportunity for our young people to engage in democracy, choosing who they want to elect as a representative and encouraging debate about what matters to them.

The elected members of the youth parliament (MYP) will sit on the Youth Council and have opportunities to represent the views of Stoke-on-Trent's young people at the highest level, including to Stoke-on-Trent's City Council, local MPs, and at the UK Youth Parliament's annual conference and sitting.

As part of the UK Youth Parliament programme, Stoke-on-Trent will participate in the annual Make Your Mark survey, which gives young people the opportunity to vote on the key national issues which affect them. The top issues are then debated in Parliament at the UK Youth Parliament's annual sitting and campaigned on across government over the year.

School councils

School councils are widely in place in Stoke-on-Trent. Our aim is to link these school councils into our broader youth participation approach and extend their impact beyond individual schools.

We will achieve this through inviting representatives of school councils to join our Youth Council. As partners we will consider how we can use school councils as a channel to consult with and hear the views of our young people. In turn, we will invite school councils to escalate issues or concerns to us through the Children, Young People and Families Strategic Partnership Board and Schools Forum.

Over the course of this strategy we will use the Schools Forum to encourage schools which do not have a council to establish one and share good practice and learning between schools. We want all pupils to be able to have a say on the issues that affect them and to know that their opinions count.

Children in care council and leaving care forum

There are three groups in Stoke-on-Trent that give children in care and care leavers a space to discuss topics and issues that matter to them:

- **Outloud** is the Children in Care Council, which is made up of children aged 11-16 who are currently in care
- **Tune In** is for young people aged 16-21 who are preparing to leave care or who already have left care
- **Tune In+** is for care experienced young people aged 21+ and they play a role in mentoring and supporting Tune In members.

These groups are well-established, supported by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, and take part in various activities including service design, recruitment and inspection. Appendix A provides more details about the current set-up.

We want to continue to support and develop these groups while also linking them into the city-wide youth participation approach. To achieve this, we will invite representatives of each of these forums to sit on the new Youth Council and bring their experiences and views.

We will also encourage a wider set of partners to come talk with and consult the three groups. Beyond the local authority, children in care and care leavers have views and experiences which are important to shape the services health, education, police and the voluntary sector provide – for example through working with the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Building a city-wide approach

This strategy will be owned by the Children, Young People and Families Strategic Partnership Board who will annually review its progress as part of the wider Room to Grow strategy. Youth voice will be added to the Partnership Board agenda as a regular item for partners to discuss feedback from youth participation activities and for members of the Youth Council and other groups to attend and share their views.

We will work with other multi-agency forums, for example the Safeguarding Children Partnership, Community Safety Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board, to advocate for what our children and young people have told us.

We know that our partners have activities and ways of involving children and young people which are not included in this strategy. To build a city-wide approach to participation, we will open out school councils, children in care council and care leavers forum as explained above.

In the same way, we want to encourage partners to share feedback from their youth participation activities with the Partnership, to link their representatives into the Youth Council, and to open their forums (such as PEGiS and Changes Health and Wellbeing Youth Forum) up to partners to consult on wider issues that impact children and young people and to co-produce service re-designs, policies and other materials.



PHASE TWO:

DEVELOP AND WIDEN OUR YOUTH PARTICIPATION OFFER (2022-25)

Developing the role of Youth Council

Once Youth Council is set up as a place where a wide range of young people from across the city gather to give their views and shape services, it will start to develop its own priorities, work plan and annual activities.

Some suggestions for what this could look like are included in Appendix B. We will facilitate and support the young people to set their own agenda and decide on the best ways of working. We will also work with the Youth Council to consider the future of the local democracy events and takeover challenge and see how these can best compliment other participation activities.

It is important that alongside any of these specific activities, the Youth Council has space to debate freely and discuss issues, respond to new topics that may emerge, and to work with organisations who want to consult with Youth Council.

Beyond Youth Council

We will provide support and flexibility so that a wide range of young people can contribute to Youth Council. However, there will be a cap on the number of young people who can be members of Youth Council in order for it to be a useful and strategic group (membership is likely to be 50-100). Some children will be too young to be part of Youth Council in a meaningful way (eg those under 8), and its format even with additional support may not be right for some young people with SEND. As such and in line with **be the cause** principles, Stoke-on-Trent's youth participation offer must go beyond Youth Council.

Below are some suggestions for what this could include, which the Children, Young People and Families Strategic Partnership Board will develop in consultation with Youth Council. We will work closely with voluntary sector organisations and specialist services who have expertise in reaching particular groups of children.

- **Creative inclusion sessions** – art activities can give SEND children and young people new opportunities to express their voice. This could be through workshop sessions where young people are encouraged to share their stories, needs and aspirations in a safe and supported environment through art activities and different creative media (eg drawing, sculpture, film making). This could take place in collaboration with PEGiS, special schools and voluntary sector organisations with expertise in this area. The art could then be shared with service leads to shape service design and displayed in the city.

- **Play sessions for younger children** – we also need to consider different ways of engaging with younger children, particularly those under the age of 8. They have feelings, preferences and experiences which are vital to shape our services and which will be best captured outside of the more formal Youth Council. There is a wealth of play activities which can capture younger children’s opinions. We may want to draw on existing voluntary sector groups, primary schools and practitioners working directly with young children to facilitate play activities in a familiar and comfortable environment.
- **Social media** – we know social media is a key way to reach young people. The Youth Council should consider whether it wants to set up its own social media accounts or use existing organisations’ accounts (including some well-established voluntary sector forums and the Council’s Instagram) to reach a wider group of young people, sharing messages and asking for feedback (eg through polls and comments).
- **Capturing informal feedback** – practitioners who work directly with children and young people on a daily basis are often in the best position to hear views about the support these young people are receiving. Informal comments about how a service is delivered or how it could be better are a valuable source of information and should particularly be sought in relation to safeguarding and care services. We should encourage staff to share the positive and negative feedback they hear – for example by passing it to their organisation’s participation officer, who can spot wider trends and themes.





Individual participation

So far this strategy has focused on how we involve young people in designing and shaping services at a strategic level. However, it is just as important that young people have meaningful opportunities to participate in designing and shaping the support they access as an individual. We want decisions that affect a young person's life to be made with them. We want all young people to be supported to express their views, feelings and preferences, and for this to drive the services we provide to them.

As a Strategic Partnership Board we commit to applying the same be the cause principles in the way we provide individual care and support. Each member of the board will act as the champion for the principles within their organisation and consider what support and development their organisation needs to embed them.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council have started to roll out **mind of my own** in children's social care, an app that lets young people express their views to professionals, in their own time and their own way. This is an important piece of groundwork to increase young people's involvement in their care and if this roll out is successful, wider partners could look to adopt the tool.

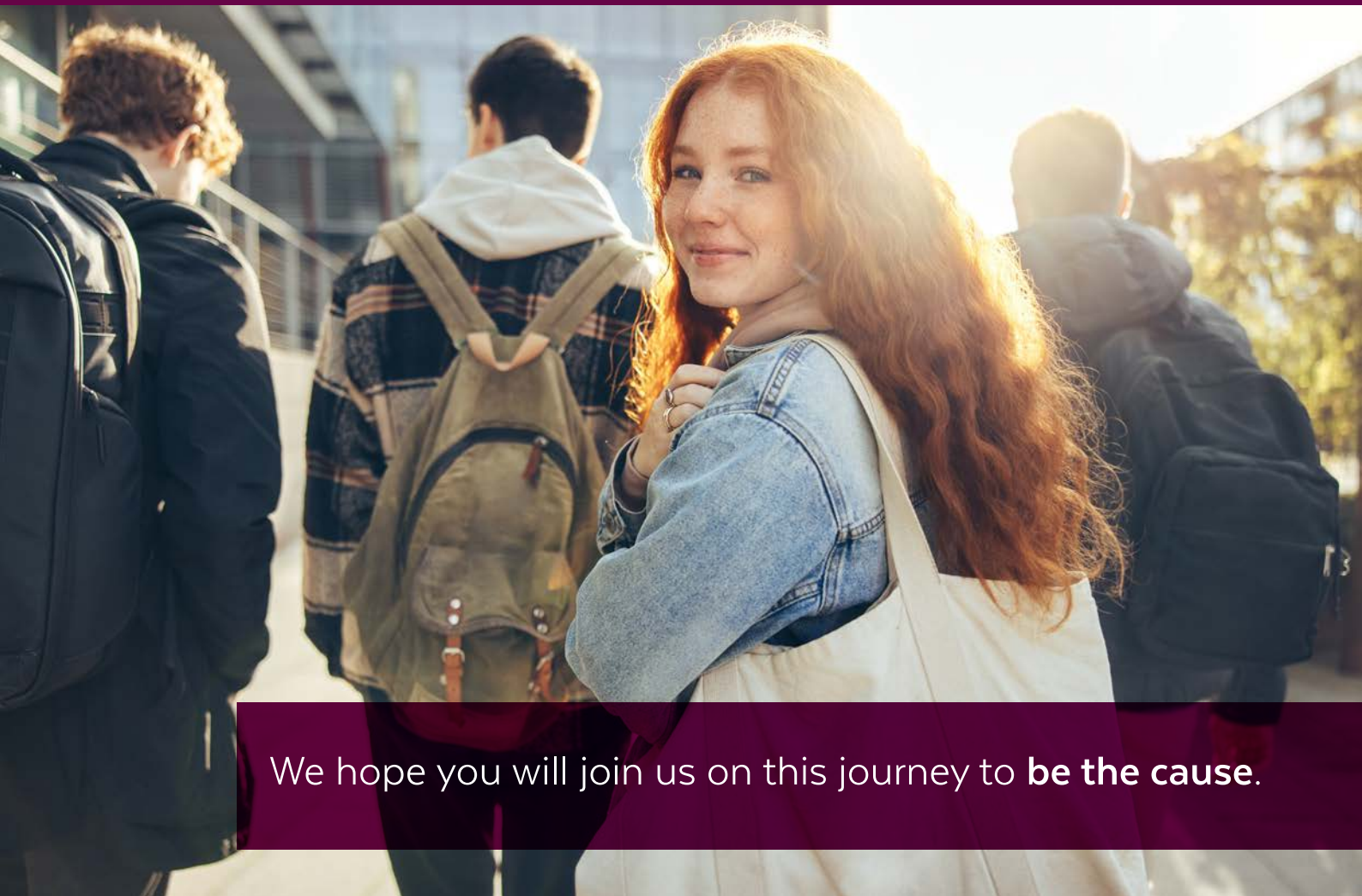
PHASE THREE:

REFLECT AND EVALUATE HOW WE'RE DOING, AND
DECIDE TOGETHER WITH YOUNG PEOPLE WHAT WE
SHOULD DO NEXT (2024-25)

The Children, Young People and Families Strategic Partnership Board will be responsible for delivery of this strategy, working closely with the Youth Council. We will publish this strategy online and encourage children and young people to hold us to account.

As we reach the end of the strategy we will ask the Youth Council and other forums to reflect on what we have achieved, celebrating our successes and impacts – both at a service/strategic level and the outcomes for our young people from participating.

Together we will write the next strategy, considering how we can do more to draw in a wider group of young people to participate, new activities or ambitions, and how we can continue to develop the skills of both professionals and young people in participation.



We hope you will join us on this journey to **be the cause.**

APPENDIX A:

WHAT IS CURRENTLY BEING PROVIDED

Stoke-on-Trent Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forums

Participation is having a voice and being heard in a meaningful way. If honoured and done right, participation influences decision-making and creates change.

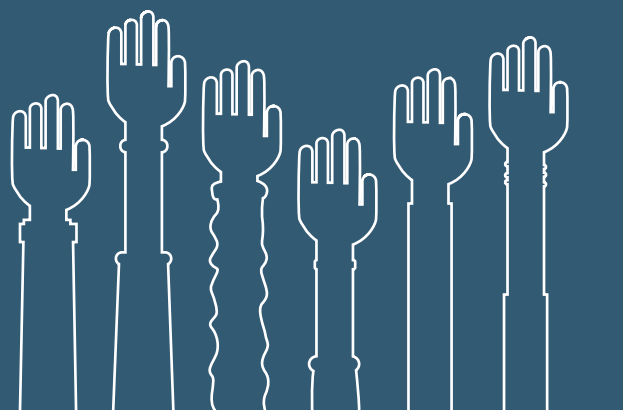
There are three groups in Stoke-on-Trent that allow children in care and care leavers to discuss different topics and issues based on the different stages they are at. These groups are funded and supported by Children and Families Services at Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

These groups follow 10 fundamental principles of participation: **be the cause.**

1. **B**e at the best interests of each child, develop their skills and be relevant to them.
2. **E**thical: have a genuine purpose and a realistic chance of achieving the goal.
3. **T**ransparency in all aspects of the project and the right to participate or not.
4. **H**onouring children and young people's views and opinions, and incorporating this into the final outcome.
5. **E**qual opportunities to take part and flexibility and creativity to include all.
6. **C**are, safety and protection of all involved.
7. **A**ppreciation for involvement.
8. **U**phold non-discrimination and inclusiveness.
9. **S**taff effectiveness through knowledge, skills and training.
10. **E**valuation allowing participants to give and gain feedback from their involvement.

Anyone wishing to consult with the groups is asked to complete the request form that gets reviewed by the relevant group.

The Children in Care Council and Care Leavers forum need to know their work makes a difference. The groups work closely with Corporate Parenting Panel and the Director of Children's Services who feedback how the work of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers forum have fed into the decisions they've made.



Contact between young people and elected members/senior managers is not limited to formal meetings. Corporate parents are encouraged to attend Children in Care Council/Care Leavers Forums, attend consultation and activity days, and visit young people where they live.

Both groups have a structure, a schedule of activities and agendas to encourage young people to take their work seriously.

Through the participation budget, the groups are supported with transport costs, refreshments and incentives, enabling and encouraging young people to take part.

Shop vouchers and other rewards are offered to young people for taking part in certain activities such as developing, attending or delivering activities including interviews, training and talks.

Young people who take part in the groups are also rewarded with trips, residentials and days out.

The participation lead is employed by the City Council and responsible for facilitating these groups and young people to achieve the desired outcomes.



Outloud

Outloud is the Children in Care Council for Stoke-on-Trent. The group is made up of children aged 11-16 who are in care and looked after by Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

Outloud meet monthly and have the very important job of making sure that children in care have a voice and are heard when it comes to decisions about their lives or things that may affect their lives. If some children do not wish to attend this particular group they are still welcome to be involved in a range of things that Outloud do and are still considered an Outloud members.

Outloud's activities include:

- Gaining the views and opinions of other children in care in Stoke-on-Trent. This could be from their own experience, via a consultation, conversations with peers or from feedback by other professionals.
- Working with senior managers to help make services for children in care better. Outloud list priorities they would like to work on each year.
- Creating and partaking in bespoke interviews for various roles within the Children's and Families service including the director, assistant directors, managers and frontline staff.
- Taking part in consultation activities for services that want feedback to improve.
- Representing Stoke-on-Trent children in care on a local, regional and national level.
- Reviewing, redesigning or developing relevant documents.
- Helping organise activities and events for children in care.
- Developing and delivering presentations and training for professionals and stakeholders.
- Assisting in the inspections of small group homes (known as Reg44 visits).

In all Outloud meetings, there are refreshments provided during the break and at the end of each session there is time to relax and play games together. The groups also have activities and trips throughout the year as a reward for their hard work and commitment.

The Pledge is a list of promises from the corporate parents to children in care, this document was co-produced with the Outloud group.

When reaching 16, members of Outloud transition to Tune In which is the Care Leavers Forum.

Recent achievements of Outloud:

- Wrote and delivered training to Ofsted inspectors in Birmingham.
- Initiated the implementation of the Pocket Money Policy.
- Redesigned the review documents to make them user friendly.
- Raised £1000s for charitable causes through theatre shows and fundraising activities/events.
- Supported the 1972 Stoke City FC celebration event and co-produced the documentary.

Tune In

Tune In Care Leavers Forum is a group of young people aged 16-21 who are preparing to leave care or already have. Meeting once a month they discuss issues that are important to care leavers. If young people do not wish to attend this particular group they are still welcome to be involved in a range of things that Tune In do and are still considered a Tune In member.

Tune In's activities include:

- Consultation as service users: these members have a specific insight into what it is to be a care leaver in Stoke-on-Trent. When services want feedback or views on how to improve their services they can consult with the Tune In group. The group will gain the views and opinions of other care leavers in Stoke-on-Trent and then represent these on a local, regional and national level. They will attend various meetings and forums as representatives of care leavers in Stoke-on-Trent.
- Improve the services that young people receive. Examples of this are by developing, reviewing and redesigning documents and services for care leavers, creating policies and co-producing projects. Tune In focuses on specific priorities and care leavers work directly with the corporate parenting panel and senior management to ensure that improvements are achieved and embedded.
- Support the local authority to become a better service for care leavers by developing bespoke interviews led by young people. Tune In members also deliver training for professionals and speak at events to give insight about care leavers' experiences.

Self-development of the young people is a natural benefit of Tune In's work. By being involved in both internal and external projects, activities and events they build confidence, self-esteem and empowerment.

At the end of each session food is provided and there is time to relax. This builds a network of care leavers that go on to support each other outside of the groups and into adult life. The group also has activities and trips throughout the year as a reward for their hard work and commitment. The care leavers charter is a list of promises from Stoke-on-Trent City Council to all care leavers in Stoke-on-Trent, this charter is reviewed each year to ensure that all the promises are being upheld.

Recent achievements of Tune In:

- Co-produced the award-winning House Project.
- Initiated the implementation of the Passport Policy.
- National Ambassadors at NCLBMF and Coram Voice.
- Raised £1000s for charitable causes through theatre shows and fundraising activities/events.
- Supported the 1972 Stoke City FC celebration event and co-produced the documentary.

Tune In+

Tune In+ is made up of care experienced young people aged 21+. Meeting at the same time as Tune In, Tune In+ are mentors to the Tune In group and will provide training to develop their skills. Tune In+ is available to offer support outside of the sessions to care leavers with a range of skills to build independence.



Local democracy events

Stoke-on-Trent City Council hosts two annual events to engage primary and secondary school pupils in local democracy. Each school is invited to send a couple of representatives who take part in a half-day of activities, including guest speakers, asking councillors questions, a tour of the council, and voting in a mock poll booth about important issues. This event has been paused due to Covid-19 but should be resumed as an excellent way to get children engaged and excited about local democracy, as well as sharing their views.

Takeover challenge

This is a national event established by the Children's Commissioner to give young people an opportunity to learn more about the adult world of work and influence decision making. Young people are invited to shadow a range of roles across the Council, including senior managers, and follow them on their day. There are also icebreakers and activities designed to capture young people's opinions; in the past this included a craft activity to design the 'ideal' social worker.

Previously Stoke-on-Trent has focused this event on children in care but there is an opportunity to review how this sits alongside the wider participation activities and how it can be expanded beyond the City Council.

Voluntary and community sector offer

Stoke-on-Trent's voluntary and community sector provide great opportunities for our children and young people to participate in decision making and have their voice heard. Young people that work with charities in Stoke-on-Trent are welcomed, included and involved. Voluntary and community sector organisations want to represent their communities and showcase the work that they do, as well as campaigning for improved support and better services.

There are many examples of organisations in Stoke-on-Trent where young people are already involved in sharing their voices and experiences through active participation roles. Their voices are listened to, respected and valued. We know this list only captures a small sample of the offering in Stoke-on-Trent – this is presented as some examples of youth participation in the city, and we would love to hear from other voluntary organisations to join together our offer.

SOT Youth Collective: Shape Your Gen

The city has recently seen the creation of the Stoke-on-Trent Youth Collective, an open cooperative of parties interested in the welfare of young people across the city. Currently there are 54 organisations involved in the Collective including charities, faith groups, youth clubs, alternative school provision units, private sector companies and large employers. The Collective has a wide scope but aims to empower young people and work together for their benefit. The vision of the Collective is to inspire young people to believe, belong and become, and as such, having young people directly involved in shaping their work is crucial. As part of this work, the Collective has developed a dedicated youth forum: Shape Your Gen.

Shape Your Gen brings groups of young people together with representatives from almost all high schools across the city and it is still growing. The board meet to discuss the future direction of the wider Collective, plan activities, and review the work of member organisations.

The young people involved are supported with coaching, teaching and opportunities to take part in projects and events in Stoke-on-Trent. The board are also developing outreach programmes to involve more people, and are particularly interested in widening the scope to link with other existing youth forums.

Changes Health and Wellbeing Young Persons Youth Forum

In partnership with the North Staffordshire NHS Trust, mental health charity Changes Health and Wellbeing run a monthly drop-in forum where children and young people can discuss their own access to and experiences of psychological therapies and other mental health support. The members are given full support and training by Changes staff and play a key role in deciding how Stoke-on-Trent CAMHS is operated, monitored and designed for the benefit of young people in Stoke-on-Trent.

Parent Engagement Group in Stoke (PEGiS)

Although its main role is supporting parents of children with Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND), Stoke PEGiS also hosts a forum for young people under 25 with SEND to engage in informal discussion around their educational issues and concerns, as well as discussion about their experiences as young people in Stoke-on-Trent more widely. They meet monthly and discuss national and local SEND issues and share personal experiences.

Previously the group has acted as a vehicle for the local authority to gather feedback on big issues and changes to policy. The group can review from their own experiences and shape the support that Stoke-on-Trent City Council provides. They are passionate and dedicated, and enjoy their participation and giving their voice to see real improvements across the city.

Stoke Cultural Education Partnership

The Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) is a charitable organisation working across the city to support young people's artistic and cultural education. CEP also host a group of young people that sit on an internal reviewing board with the aim of developing the work of the organisation, being a point for consultation, and creating their own work and projects. This group of cultural explorers receive training from the organisation and each another and are starting to develop their programme of work.

Stoke Community Safety Partnership Youth Researchers

The Stoke-on-Trent Community Safety Partnership has just started a new youth researchers project to use young people's knowledge and experience to explore contextual safeguarding and where they feel safe in the city.

The project involves recruiting youth researchers who will discuss and explore the concept of safe places (including at home, school and in the community) and what makes them feel safe/unsafe.

The young people will attend a residential to develop their skills and build team working. The young people will design a survey for young people across the city, review the responses, and discuss recommendations with local leaders to create a safer city.

APPENDIX B:

SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION OFFER

Below are a list of proposals for activities the Youth Council could consider, based on good practice and what has worked in other areas. We will support and facilitate Youth Council to decide its own agenda of activities which support its objectives.

- **Community engagement and campaigning** – the Youth Council may set particular priority issues which it would like to campaign about and raise awareness. This may be through: talking to local leaders and multi-agency groups in Stoke; using young people's own connections and networks as well as social media; or meeting with MPs and writing to national bodies. The Children, Young People and Families Strategic Partnership Board will support and facilitate this activity.
- **Young scrutineers** – the Youth Council may nominate a smaller group of young people to receive training or support in how to carry out scrutiny. Particularly working with the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Partnership to scrutinise and oversee improvements to safeguarding services and the Partnership's priority areas. Young scrutineers may also work with the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee or to inspect services (including commissioned services).
- **Youth researchers** – building on the Community Safety Partnership's young researchers project and learning from its progress, the Youth Council may recruit young people to research in-depth specific areas of interest, potentially related to the work of other Partnership Boards such as the Health and Wellbeing Board or Homelessness Reduction. These researchers will receive some training and support and report back to the Youth Council on their findings. This could include researching how youth participation in Stoke-on-Trent could be further developed.
- **Training** – the Youth Council may choose to deliver training, for example on how to facilitate good youth participation or other learning about how children and young people's services should be delivered. This training may be aimed at frontline practitioners or senior leaders.





City of
Stoke-on-Trent