



City of
Stoke-on-Trent

Stoke-on-Trent

'Room to Grow'

Progress report 2020-21





FOREWORD

It is now a year since we published Room to Grow, our four-year strategy for children, young people and families in Stoke-on-Trent. Room to Grow sets our vision for how we will work together as partners to support our children and young people to thrive and be the most that they can be.

We want all young people in Stoke-on-Trent to have the best possible start in life, the best education and the best life chances. They should be safe, healthy, nurtured and loved. Children and young people are our number one priority and we need every adult in Stoke-on-Trent to care passionately and express that through relationships, community and business life.

We've worked together at pace to start delivering these ambitious plans and I am proud of the way we've strengthened our collaboration and shared vision through the Children, Young People and Families Strategic Partnership Board.

Our focus this year has been on laying the foundations for success. We have created several strategies that support Room to Grow and set out in more detail how we will deliver on the objectives. We have set up a new transformation programme team who have put planning and controls in place to ensure that change is structured and effective, and partnership boards to provide oversight to particular priority areas.

Alongside this we have made considerable progress towards achieving our goals. Our new front door is up and running with a new practice model that focuses on providing children with the right support at the right time. We've set up an education challenge board and an opportunities taskforce to make sure all our young people learn skills for life, and we've continued to develop our social work practice including how we work with children in care and care leavers.

Our families have told us that they've noticed a change in the quality of the support we provide, and commented on how our openness, compassion and partnership working have enabled them to thrive.

We want to thank everyone who has been involved in achieving so much despite having to cope with the continued challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is testament to the hard work, commitment and care of all our partner organisations and our frontline staff, volunteers and communities. It is important that we continue to build and cement the partnerships forged as a direct response to the pandemic. We are stronger as result and will continue to work on these solid foundations.

We hope you find this update informative and it helps you to understand the direction we as a city are headed in for our children and young people. We always welcome suggestions or new partners to help us in delivering Room to Grow – we would love to hear from you and welcome you aboard our journey to help all children and young people to thrive.

Councillor Dave Evans

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Chair, Children, Young People and Families 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.

OUR THREE AREAS OF FOCUS

In our strategy we set three particular areas of focus that we will obsess about because they are so important. Over the past year, each of our Children, Young People & Families Strategic Partnership Board meetings have focused on one of these obsessions to shape our collective direction, hear directly from young people and families, and learn from both local and national good practice.

Best start in life

Giving our children the best start in life is crucial to set up our children for healthy, happy and thriving lives. It includes reducing health inequalities, effective early intervention, and supporting families from conception and throughout the early years.

We're working in partnership with other forums, including the Early Help and Prevention Board and Health and Wellbeing Board, to set this as a top priority. We've delivered initiatives to support young children's speech and language development, increase breastfeeding and help new parents cope with crying.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we've worked hard to adapt our services and make sure new and expecting parents have access to all the support they need. To further improve our offer, we're excited about launching Thrive at Five, a partnership initiative in two of our most deprived wards to support school readiness.

Children in care

The aim here is two-fold: to improve our partnership offer to children in care and care leavers, and secondly to provide effective early help to families so fewer children need to go into care.

To achieve this, we've updated our permanency strategy and embedded practice to make sure social workers are planning long-term, stable homes for our children in care from the earliest stage. We've launched a targeted recruitment campaign to increase the number of in-house foster carers, and as part of that we've been encouraging local employers to become foster friendly organisations and support their staff to foster care.

We're also looking at the opportunities for our care-experienced young people and how we support them to have access to work experience and apprenticeships to set them up for life. We're pleased to see an increase in the number of our care leavers in education, employment and training, and we want to continue to improve this.

Young people achieving more

Our improving education strategy aims to close the attainment gap and allow every pupil to reach their full potential, whatever their circumstances.

This is supported also through our new inclusion strategy, which is all about supporting young people with SEND to be the best they can be and receive the right support throughout their education.

We've set up an Education Challenge Board to hold collective accountability for education outcomes and drive improvements to school performance. It is a partnership between the local authority, regional schools commissioner, Department for Education, and schools and multi-academy trusts in the city as we know we need to tackle this together.



STRATEGIC IMPACT MEASURES

In our Room to Grow strategy we set six strategic impact measures to tell us how we're doing. Below is an update:



Healthy



16.3%

of mothers smoked in pregnancy in 2019 - 20. This is a reduction of **1.5%** from 2018 - 19



Safe

In 2018, under-18 conception rate was

30.9 in Stoke-on-Trent

16.7 nationally

In 2019

4.3%

of babies born at full-term had a low birthweight, an increase from **3.9%** in 2018 and remains above the national average (2.9%)



25%

of the contacts and referrals to Children's Social Care in 2020-21 were where the presenting issue was Domestic Abuse and Violence

Between 2017-19 the infant mortality rate in the city has remained at

7.5 deaths for every 1,000 live births, which is almost twice as high as the average for England (3.9)

There were

504 children

the subject of a **child protection plan as at 31 March 2021**

(+5 from previous year - 499 children in 2020).

51% were due to Neglect





Nurtured



There were

1,004

 Children in Care as at 31 March 2021

(+85 from previous year - 919 children in 2020)



287 children entered care in 2020-21, a 12% increase from 248 children the previous year.

27% of children who came into care were under the age of 1

188

 children

ceased to be in care during 2020-21, an increase from 181 children the previous year.



68

 children gained permanence via **Adoption or Special Guardianship Orders** an increase from 45 children in 2019-20

We increased the number of foster carer households recruited and approved to

27

 in 2021 compared to **21** in 2019/20

8.2%

 of children in care had **3 or more placements** in the last 12 months down from **10%**.

Meaning the stability of children's placements improved with less children having 3 or more placements in 12 months



Achieving



63.8%

of young people achieved a standard pass in English and Maths (9-4) at GCSE in 2020 a **5%** improvement on 2019, compared to 65.9% nationally

and the average attainment 8 scores at GCSE improved to

46.3

a **3.5 point** improvement on 2019 and 0.2 better than national increases. This remains below the national average of 48

In 2019-20 children achieving a good level of development at 2-2½ years were

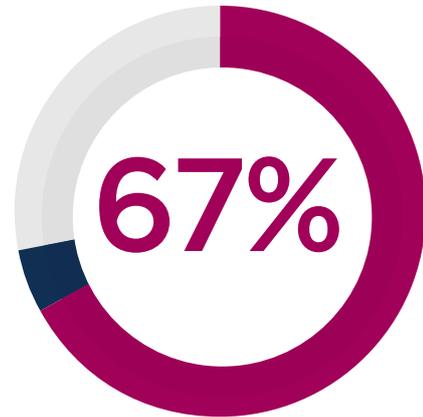
86.9% in Stoke-on-Trent

83.3% nationally

In 2019-20

86.9% of children were achieving

the expected level in communication skills at 2-2½ years compared to **88.9%** nationally.



of children reached the expected level of development by the end of reception (age 5) in 2019 compared to **72%** nationally



Prepared



In 2021

42% of Care Leavers (aged 19-21) were in **Education, Employment or Training (EET)** an improvement from **34%** in 2020

Permanent exclusions decreased from **0.13%** of the school population in 2018-19 to

0.08% in 2019-20

We remain above the national average which dropped to 0.06% from 0.10%



Involved

Since 1 January 2021, we've received

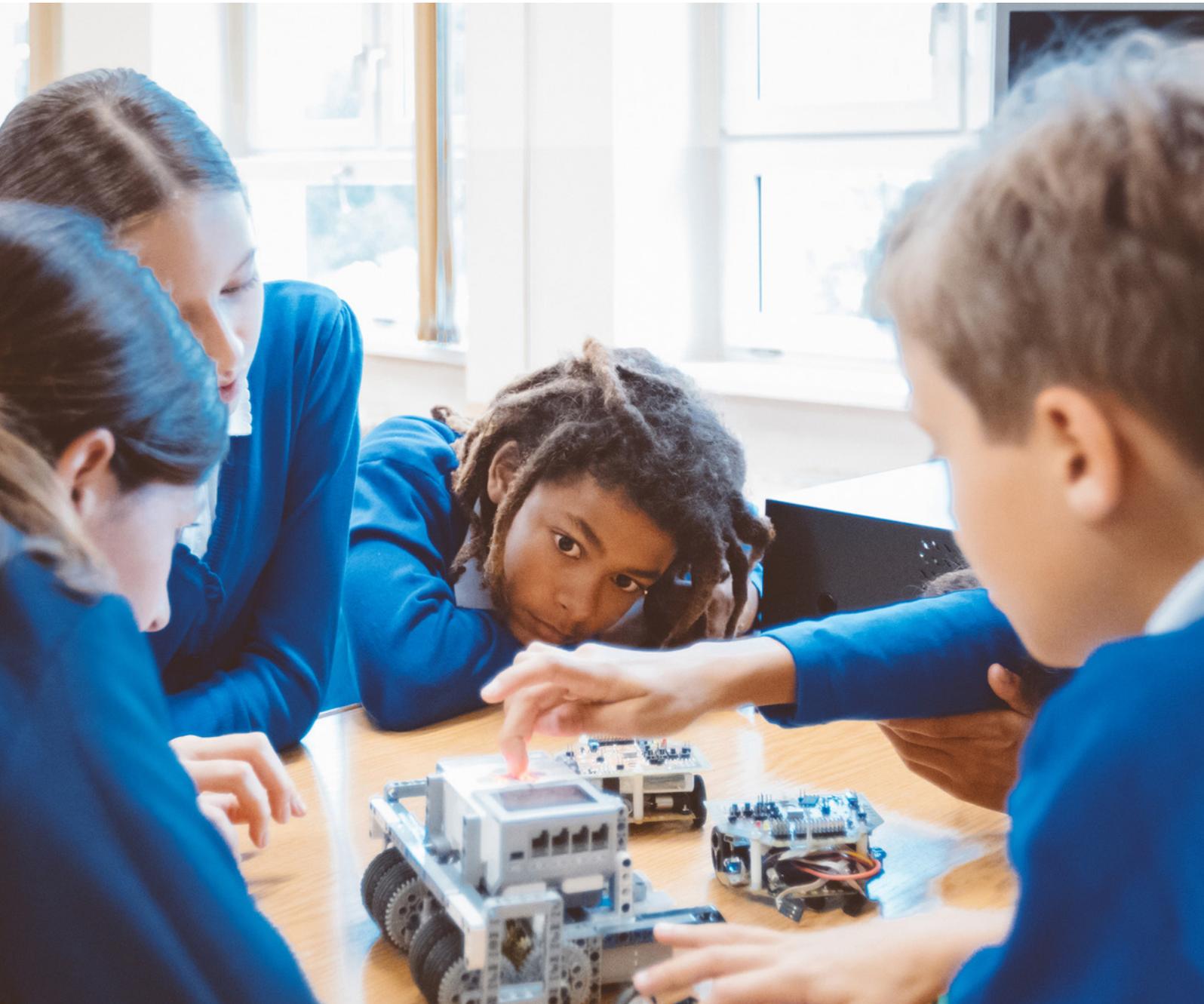


118 compliments

about our work with children,
young people and families



We've written a
youth participation strategy
and are developing mechanisms
to better measure this area
going forward



OUR PRIORITIES FOR ACTION – PROGRESS UPDATE

Develop our early years offer so that more of our children meet their early developmental milestones and are school ready

What we've achieved:



- Set this as a top priority for our city and built it into our strategies & contracts
- Our Opportunity Area work is improving children's communication skills
- We're above the national average for percentage of children achieving a good level of development at 2-2½ years

Our priorities for the next year:



- Start to deliver Thrive at Five, our partnership programme to support early years development in our most deprived wards
- Increase our level of children reaching the expected level of development by the end of Reception

Getting it right for our youngest children and helping them be school ready is a crucial part of laying the foundations for later life and supporting our children to be the most they can be. This is why early years is one of our top priorities in both the Early Help and Prevention Strategy and for the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Developing our early years offer is a key part of our new public health contract with Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust and is also reflected in Stoke-on-Trent CCG's focus on perinatal mental health to give all children and parents the best start in life.

During Covid-19 we have continued to promote and encourage access to our early years offer, for example Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust have taken a targeted approach to make sure development reviews are an opportunity to give families further support and signpost to other early years programmes.

Through the Opportunity Area, 42 local schools are benefitting from having a named speech and language therapist. The support being received is helping to improve outcomes in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage. More broadly, the project has developed a communication training tool to be used as an aid for all schools to identify need and shared supportive resources with schools. Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust has also been commissioned by Stoke-on-Trent City Council to develop an early communication screen and deliver training for early years settings to support its use.

As part of the early help THRIVE model, we are setting up a Thrive at Five initiative to support children in the most deprived areas of Stoke-on-Trent, focusing on communication and language, physical, social and emotional development to help children achieve a good level of development by age five. Alongside this we aim to empower parents and build their confidence, including through developing Parent Champions who will support each other.

This is a partnership initiative with the local authority, Keele University, the police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, the CCG and NHS trusts all pledging support and we will also draw in a range of local voluntary sector organisations. Thrive at Five is supported by a national group of philanthropists and expert national bodies, led by The Childhood Trust.

So far, we have laid the groundwork for this exciting initiative and, as partners, agreed a shared strategic approach. We have also held engagement sessions to draw in a wider range of local organisations. We are currently setting up a local programme office which will deliver the initiative supported by a steering group.



Develop an early help offer that gives parents and families the best chance to adapt and thrive when they are struggling to cope and supports older children that have had adverse childhood experiences

What we've achieved:



- New Early Help and Prevention Strategy launched
- Agreed shared model for early help assessments

Our priorities for the next year:



- Set up a performance framework to monitor progress in delivering our early help strategy
- Train up partners in our new early help assessment framework

In October we launched our Early Help and Prevention Strategy which sets out in more detail how we, as partners, will achieve this aim. Our Early Help and Prevention Board leads on delivery of this strategy and is developing a new performance framework to monitor progress.

The core principle of this strategy is our new THRIVE model to help all children and families to access help, advice and support swiftly and easily – from the right service, at the right time. This relies on us working more closely together to have a shared city-wide early help offer that works for families.

We are particularly focused on how we can support early years, adolescents, parents and schools. We're also considering how best to use our children's centres to support families.

To achieve this, we have been mapping our local services to understand our current offer and starting to look at where there are gaps which we need to address. We will be working with families to understand more about what support they want at a locality-level.

We've agreed a new model for how we will do early help assessments in Stoke-on-Trent so, as partners, we can wrap around families and coordinate our support. This includes training schools in the new framework.

Part of our early help response is the reducing parental conflict partnership initiative. This aims to increase the knowledge and skills of our multi-agency workforce on themes such as arguing better and getting it right for children. This will build on our local ICON partnership campaign to help parents cope with babies crying and reduce shaken babies.

There is also a greater emphasis on prevention and early help within the new 10-year NSPCC strategy.

Reform our child protection front door so that children and families receive the right multi-agency response at the right time in the right way

What we've achieved:



- New Early Help and Prevention Strategy launched
- Launched our new front door service to provide the right services to families at the right time
- Introduced Operation Encompass for schools to respond quicker and support children exposed to domestic abuse

Our priorities for the next year:



- Continue to review and embed our new front door service to deliver the best outcomes for our families

In the Room to Grow strategy, we set out how we would design a new child protection front door. That service, called CHADS (children's advice and duty service) has been created and is now up and running.

The new front door model is based on a restorative, strengths-based way of working. It emphasises conversations between multi-agency professionals and a consultant social worker (rather than paper-based referrals) and focuses on children's needs, not service thresholds.

There is a strong evidence base to support this model and we have been working closely with Professor Thorpe from Lancaster University to set up and develop our new service.

The new service is live and we've been continuing to train and mentor staff to help develop their confidence and skills in the new way of working, including supporting managers. We've also been developing mechanisms to monitor and review the quality of our new service to make sure we're making the right decisions at the right time.

We recently moved the front door team to permanent office space in Stoke-on-Trent and we will continue to develop the service through our multi-agency steering group. We welcome engagement from our partner agencies and will continue to look at the contacts made to our service to ensure that children are receiving the right support at the right time.

We have planned two further reviews (at six months and one year) with Professor Thorpe's team to evaluate how well we're embedding the new ways of working and how to continue improving.

Additionally, we have introduced Operation Encompass, a police and education initiative which allows schools, academies and higher education establishments to provide immediate support for children and young people exposed to domestic abuse.



Develop and implement an inclusion strategy that makes sure all children and young people with additional needs can fulfil their potential

What we've achieved:



- We've launched our new Inclusion Strategy which will support all young people to be the best they can be
- We've received grant funding from the Department for Education to improve our school provision for children with additional needs

Our priorities for the next year:



- We will deliver our Inclusion Strategy through working with partners and families
- We will improve our transitions process to help young people be independent and fulfil their life aspirations

The central theme of our new Inclusion Strategy is supporting young people to be the best they can be and live their lives to the fullest. The strategy was developed with partners and stakeholders, including experts by experience, and sets out how we will improve inclusion and outcomes for children and young people across Stoke-on-Trent by focusing on the areas they told us are important to them.

Over the next three years the Inclusion Partnership Board, jointly chaired by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Stoke-on-Trent Clinical Commissioning Group, will oversee implementation of the strategy. As part of our 'people first' ethos we will continue to work with families and use co-production so that we deliver the best services for our children, young people and families.

To make sure that we have a quality offer that identifies and meets needs proactively we have developed a graduated approach to support young people to stay with their peers in mainstream education as far as possible. Our aim is to have the majority of needs met using SEN support and use education, health and care (EHC) plans when specialist provision is required. The graduated approach will launch in schools and other settings this academic year and will help identify tools and strategies that can support young people to get the most of their education.

We are improving our transitions process to capture young people's long-term aims and aspirations so that the right support can be put in place to help them achieve their goals. We want young people to have the skills and independence they need to move forwards to the next stage of their life confidently. Young people need to have choices so that they are able to acquire the right education and life and vocational skills to take their next steps and be prepared for adulthood. To make sure we have the right support, at the right time and place we are focusing on commissioning the right support locally, so that more children can have their needs met closer to home. We were successful in bidding for additional funding from the Department for Education to develop additional school provision in Stoke-on-Trent.

We are making best use of our resources by focusing on developing our systems to support improving outcomes for children and young people and developing and supporting our workforce so that they have the skills required to support inclusion.



Develop and implement an educational improvement plan that uses the power of collective action and mutual support to raise standards across our provision

What we've achieved:



- We've developed and launched our new strategy for educational improvement
- We've increased the number of young people passing English and Maths GCSEs by 5%

Our priorities for the next year:



- We will launch our Education Challenge Board, a partnership body to drive excellence
- We are still below the national average in GCSE attainment and we will continue to work with schools and deliver our strategy to improve this

In April 2021, we published a new Education Improvement Strategy to underpin a system-wide vision of educational excellence in Stoke-on-Trent. The strategy, called 'Aspiration and Achievement for All' has been developed in partnership with schools and colleges, and acts as a cornerstone for a shared approach to educational improvement across the city.

It sets out ten immediate priorities for action. For example, we have committed to being the first local authority in the country to adopt the Thrive at Five programme approach for early years education. Secondly, we have set out a number of measures we will take to tackle disadvantage and promote inclusion in the city, such as overhauling our virtual school for children in care, and re-mapping education provision for vulnerable children across the city.

We will work with the Regional Schools Commissioner to ensure that the very best academy sponsors and free school providers are attracted to the city, and broker support between different trusts and maintained schools to build a culture of collective responsibility for educational outcomes. We plan to establish a network model for school leadership, based on shared accountability between partners and underpinned by high-quality, actionable data to measure progress towards outcomes and highlight emerging concerns.

Central to our plans for educational improvement is the Education Challenge Board, an independent group of education leaders which will hold its first meeting during the Autumn term of 2021. This group will include representatives from the most senior levels of local and national bodies working in the city, offering challenge and support to all partners and driving forward a culture of educational excellence.

Improve the quality of social work practice so that we are confident all of our children and young people are safe and have excellent plans for progression

What we've achieved:



- We've worked with Ofsted, our Children's Improvement Board and other local authorities to strengthen our social work, and received positive feedback that we're making progress
- Set up a new Safeguarding Children Partnership to improve our local response to abuse and neglect
- We're educating children about safeguarding issues so they know how to spot issues and how to seek help

Our priorities for the next year:



- Introduce our new training programme so staff at all levels can be supported to continue to develop
- Improve our work with families experiencing domestic abuse and young people at risk of exploitation

This is an urgent priority for us to get our services right for children and young people and we have been working at pace to deliver our improvement plan for this area. Over the past year we've focused on getting the right foundations in place, for example reviewing our policies and procedures and creating a new practice hub to support and guide social workers. We've been setting up a robust framework for quality assurance so we know how we're doing and can continue to identify and monitor improvements.

We're also developing our training programme for both newly-qualified and experienced social workers and we're setting up a practice supervisors management programme so all our staff can continue to grow. We're creating a robust structure for supervision so social workers are supported and constructively challenged in their work.

We've moved our family group conference service in-house so we can tailor our service to meet local needs. Our next steps include improving our practice with families experiencing domestic abuse and young people at risk of exploitation. We're creating plans to develop our youth participation offer and to re-model our edge of care/reunification team.

All this work has been supported through our Children's Improvement Board and our Ofsted monitoring visits have provided assurance that we are making headway and starting to see the results of our improvement to social work practice. We will continue to work with our partners in practice to learn from other areas and deliver the best services for our children and young people.

Our families have told us that our social workers are open, honest and compassionate, building trust and strong relationships with families even in challenging circumstances. We've received praise from parents and young people about how our social workers have gone above and beyond to get families the support they need.



"Your kind words and belief in us mean more than we'll ever be able to tell you all so, thank you" - a Stoke-on-Trent family

**"My social worker is amazing she helped me and told me what I needed to do. She listened to me and cared"
- a Stoke-on-Trent child**



We've set up a new Safeguarding Children Partnership dedicated to children and young people in Stoke-on-Trent. This brings together a range of partners to review, continuously improve and have a shared strategic approach to how we protect our children from abuse and neglect.

To keep children and young people safe, Staffordshire Police with Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service have developed virtual learning sessions to improve Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils' awareness about safeguarding issues such as exploitation, gangs, online safety and cyber bullying. Staffordshire Police have also undertaken other targeted activity to tackle online sexual exploitation, develop their strategic response to young people going missing, widen their crisis care work to include young people, and develop a police navigator programme to work with children in A&E who may be victims of serious violence.

The NSPCC have worked with local partners to support training about a range of safeguarding issues such as child sexual abuse, neglect and trauma-informed practice, including through the together for children initiative.





Develop the best possible offer for our children in care that means they are cared for by the right people in the right home, maximising the opportunity for permanency

What we've achieved:



- We've created a new permanency strategy and guidance for staff so we're planning long-term stability from the earliest stage
- Our targeted recruitment drive has increased the number of foster carer households, with 25% more approved this year
- 50% more children gained permanence this year through adoption or special guardianship orders

Our priorities for the next year:



- We want to reduce the number of children entering care by providing more preventative support
- We will continue to increase our numbers of local foster carers, including by encouraging organisations to be fostering friendly

We have agreed a new permanency strategy which sets out how we will work with young people and plan ahead to find secure, stable and loving homes for all our children in care and we are now delivering this strategy.

We have created placement practice guidance and trained frontline workers in these principles. We have also reviewed all placements with parents to make sure children are safe and receiving the right level of support. In many cases, we have entered Court to seek discharge of the Care Order.

To support the health and wellbeing outcomes of children in care, Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust has provided tailored health assessments and health visiting services as well as speech and language therapy support to care providers, such as communicating with confidence training for foster carers.

We have led a foster carer recruitment drive across the city so that more children can stay locally and receive the best kind of support for them. We've spread the word far and wide about becoming a foster carer and attended community events such as Pride.

Several large employers in Stoke-on-Trent have become fostering friendly organisations, including Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Unitas, Stoke City Football Club and Bet 365, and this is helping to promote and recruit foster carers. We are now working to encourage more organisations to become fostering friendly and to improve the support we offer to those participating.

This targeted activity has led to a net rise in foster carers recruited with more currently coming through the approval process. Alongside this, we've developed methods to involve young people more actively in planning their future.

We've received thanks from foster carers and adoptive parents about the quality of support they've received throughout the process, commenting on how multi-agency partners have worked together to find the right care for a child that is permanent and safe.

“

“We have and will continue to achieve a great life together and ensure that the child continues to be the best he can” – adoptive parents

”

Significantly improve our education, training and work offer for 16-25s including quality of further education

What we've achieved:



- We're collaborating to host Kickstart, helping young people get into the world of work
- Permanent exclusions have gone down, thanks to targeted work to keep children in school

Our priorities for the next year:



- We will publish our 14-25 education and skills strategy to set our shared agenda
- We will start to deliver our new virtual school provision to help our children in care achieve the best educational outcomes

We've recently set up an opportunities taskforce with Stoke-on-Trent City Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership and Chamber of Commerce, where we will be working with Stoke-on-Trent College and local businesses to give more young people opportunities to gain work experience.

This group will focus on care leavers initially but then look more widely and strategically at how we can unlock opportunities for young people, work in the best ways with businesses and what initiatives we need in place to support higher rates of education, employment and training.

We are also in the early stages of developing a new strategy for education and skills development of young people aged 14-25, setting out a long-term plan for our work with schools, businesses, and colleges to give young people the best opportunity to succeed as they transition to adulthood.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council already offer a range of apprenticeships across different service areas and has an active careers hub and careers advice and support services to prepare our young people for the world of work and help them find the right opportunities.

The NSPCC has collaborated with the YMCA and the Big Local in the North of the City to co-host the Kickstart programme, with local partners contributing including Staffordshire police. This is a national government initiative looking to create employment and training opportunities for young people aged 16-24 on Universal Credit or at risk of long-term unemployment.

Education and training is also at the core of our Silicon Stoke plans which focus on developing young people's digital skills and vocational training to unlock new employment opportunities in the technology sector.

We are also working to re-design our virtual school provision, which supports children in care through their education to get the best outcomes. Our new virtual school will provide more support to children in care aged 16+, care leavers and a wider group of children with social workers.



Develop the best possible offer with and for our care leavers that gives them the best chance to fulfil their ambitions in life

What we've achieved:



- We've introduced a card scheme to improve care leavers' access to sport and leisure
- The number of our care leavers who are in education, employment or training (EET) has gone up by 8%

Our priorities for the next year:



- We will continue to increase the number of our care leavers in EET including through the work of our opportunities taskforce

Tune In and Out Loud are our two forums for care leavers where we provide a space for care leavers to meet, discuss issues that are important to them, and support each other. We have worked with these two groups to develop our care leavers offer, including co-producing a care leavers charter which sets out our promise of support to young people with experience of care.

We are working to improve care leavers' access to sport and leisure through a MAX-type card scheme and we're organising an award and celebration event to mark the achievements of our children in care and care leavers.

We've also started to develop our communications with care leavers, for example sharing more information about the support that's available to them. We have worked with care leavers to refresh our care leaver information leaflet and care leaver handbook.

A key priority is improving the number of our care leavers who are in education, employment or training and we've been developing careers and employability guidance to support our care leavers. We have been working with Stoke City FC and local health services to offer traineeships and other opportunities to children in care.

We will be using our newly-created opportunities taskforce to encourage more businesses to consider if they could host an apprenticeship, internship or other kind of work placement for care leavers. We will match young people to the work experience that best meets their aspirations and provide support so both the young person and the business get the most out of the placement.



"Just wanted to say thank you so much for always having my back and believing in me" – a Stoke-on-Trent care leaver, talking about the support they received from our Next Steps team

Improving health outcomes for all children and young people empowering them to make good choices and ensuring they receive the right support

What we've achieved:



- Adapted our health services to continue to support families during the pandemic and lockdowns
- Put infrastructure and plans in place to tackle our biggest health concerns together
- The proportion of mothers smoking in pregnancy has fallen, which is positive for children's health

Our priorities for the next year:



- Deliver our plans including increasing breastfeeding, training parents to cope with crying & integrating service provision
- Our infant mortality rate and babies born at a low birth weight remain above average and we must tackle this urgently

We have developed a shared vision for improving physical and mental health in Stoke-on-Trent. This is aligned to the children and young people's health and wellbeing programme of Staffordshire's Integrated Care System (ICS, formally known as the Sustainable Transformation Partnership) so we can work together with partners across our wider local system.

The children's ICS is taking a system-wide approach to three priorities: infant mortality, healthy weights and avoidable admissions, particularly focussing on long-term conditions epilepsy, asthma and diabetes. This also supports the Children's Transformation Programme led through NHS England/Improvement. We are developing a delivery plan for system-wide improvements, striving to improve health outcomes for children and young people in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Linked to this, we have recently launched the new Stoke-on-Trent Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2025. This sets two core priorities of giving children the healthiest start in life and empowering young people to develop good physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and make healthy choices. The strategy sets a number of aims including reducing infant mortality, helping children meet their early development milestones, reducing teen pregnancy rates, and supporting parents and carers. As local partners we have agreed on initiatives to deliver this (including increasing breastfeeding, integrating service pathways and training for parents to cope with crying) and will monitor delivery through specific partnership boards.

To further support delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy, four obsessions have been selected which will be the Board's focus for the next 12 months, one of which is early years and best start in life. The priorities under this obsession are tackling low birth weights, infant mortality and maternal health.

Covid-19 has continued to be a dominant health concern over the last year and as partners we have worked together closely to monitor infections and minimise the adverse impacts particularly for children in the city. During the periods of lockdown, a range of support was offered to schools, families and young people to help them through the pandemic.

This included dedicated practical support to early years settings to manage outbreaks, online wellbeing sessions for children, support to access home learning and food vouchers. Where required (including for more vulnerable children) face-to face visits took place in a Covid-secure way in schools, community settings or at home. School nurses adapted their approach including e-clinics, launching a health for teens website, and the CALMNESS initiative to support mental wellbeing through the transition to high school.



OUR PARTNERS

This report was produced as a partnership and we wish to thank the following local organisations for their contributions:

- Stoke-on-Trent City Council
- Stoke Association of Schools, Colleges & Academy Leaders
- Stoke-on-Trent College
- Staffordshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner
- North Midlands NHS Trust
- Just Family CIC
- Stoke-on-Trent Clinical Commissioning Group
- Stepping Stones
- Ruff & Ruby
- NSPCC
- Probation Service
- Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust

