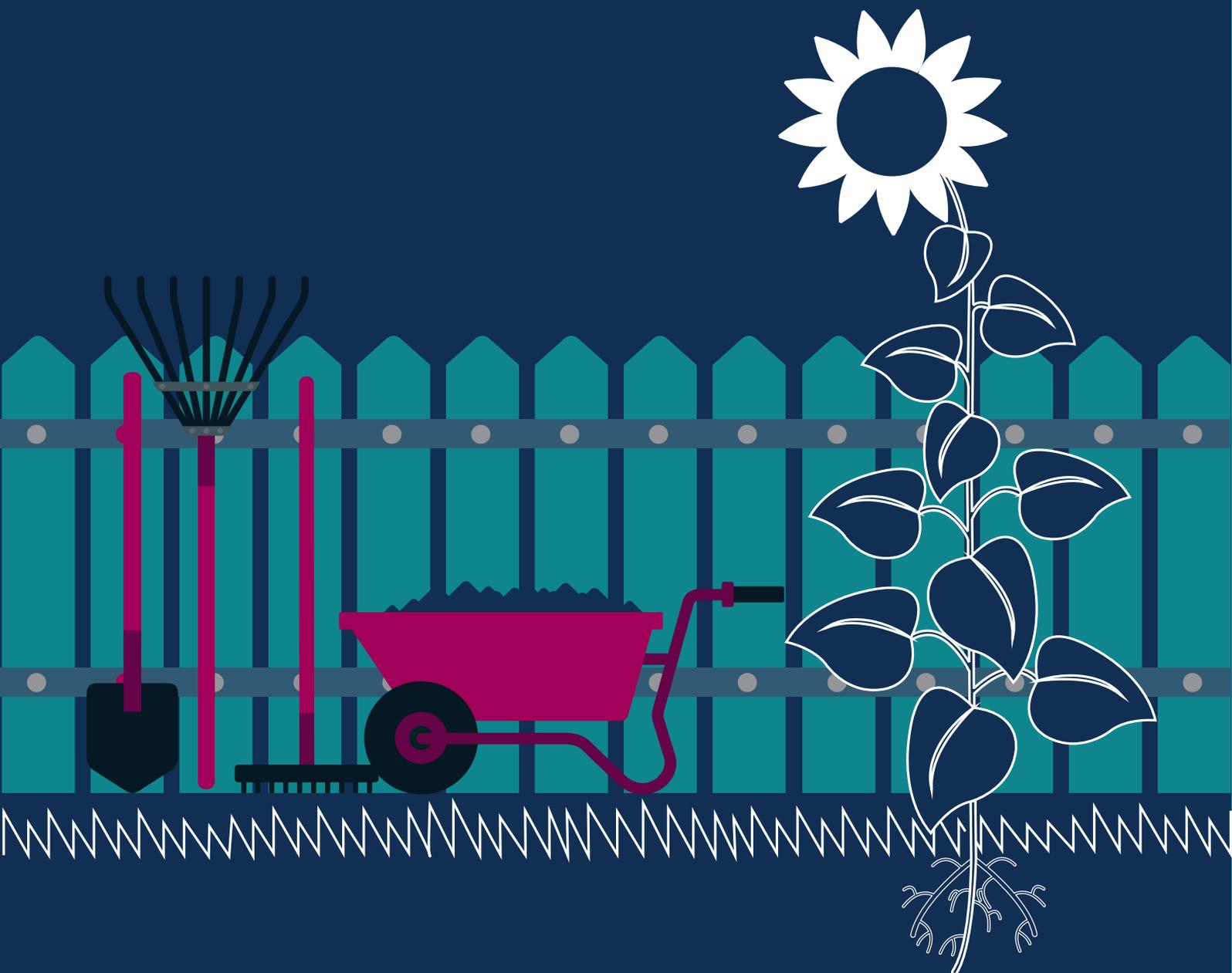




City of
Stoke-on-Trent

Stoke-on-Trent
**Children's
Commissioning Strategy**
2020 - 2023





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Children and young people are our number one priority, ensuring every child and young person thrives to be the most that they can be.

We recognise that we need to work in partnership with a wide range of providers, partners and stakeholders to realise the outcomes we aspire to and drive forward our improvement as set out in The Stoke-on-Trent Children and Young People's Plan 'Room to Grow; 2020-2024.

This commissioning strategy will direct our commissioning of services and improvement to meet the needs of children, young people and their families of Stoke-on-Trent. It clearly establishes priorities to address and what actions we will take to achieve the priorities/improvements over the next three years.

The strategic commissioning of our services involves long term planning to ensure that resources are used in the right way, at the right time and in the right place to meet demand and need. To do this well, we need to predict future demand and know what our resources are. This Strategy will not sit in isolation but will align with all our other strategies and initiatives that impact on children's services and improvement.

We acknowledge that in some circumstances and where applicable there are a range of providers who are better placed than ourselves to engage, involve, co-produce and support children, young people and families. In order to maximise this potential, it is vitally important that we are well equipped to commission people-focused services from a range of providers including the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector through a comprehensive, robust and transparent approach to strategic commissioning.

Stoke-on-Trent is one of the most deprived areas in the country with high levels of unemployment and lower than average income compared to England.

The city has the third highest proportion of children in care in the country (129 children per 10,000 population under 18) and has seen a 49% increase in the number of looked-after children since 2016. Children born in Stoke-on-Trent are more likely to experience challenges than those born in many other areas of England and positive educational outcomes for local children in school shows a decline as children grow.

Recent years have seen a sharp increase in the number of families reaching crisis point as a consequence of the early intervention service focus on families with multiple complex needs on the edge of social care. This puts greater pressure on services that over the same period have seen funding reductions and the need to be more creative and innovative in their approaches to service provision.

The answer to how we meet increasing needs with reducing resources cannot be to continue to do what we currently do. This strategy sets out some of the key changes that we aim to make over the next three years to ensure that we are able to meet our statutory responsibilities and continue to improve the lives for children, young people and families of Stoke-on-Trent.

These key changes are:

- Development of quality assurance and contract management framework to improve the quality of services and ensure providers are accountable.
- Develop and deliver training for staff in Children's Social Care on how commissioning will help improve children's services.
- Maximise joint commissioning opportunities to make the best use of resource available through place-based, people-focused service models.
- Market development to ensure there is sufficient provision to meet our needs that, where appropriate to do so, breaks down traditional divides and promotes working in partnership with a range of providers including the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector.
- Adopt an ethos of co-production so that children and their families feel empowered.
- Improving our prevention and early intervention offer.
- Review services and contract arrangements to ensure value for money and evidence of impact in areas such as:
 - 0-19 public health services
 - Alternative education provision
 - Family Group Conferences
 - Short breaks
 - Child Exploitation Services

The challenges are considerable and, by necessity, this document focuses on the changes and improvements that are required with commissioning support. The next few years will test our capacity further but we are confident in our abilities to respond to the changes and improvements that we need to make to ensure children, young people and their families receive the right support at the right time at the best possible price.

It is important that this strategy remains a live document. There will be regular reviews and oversight from both our Corporate Parenting Panel and the 0-25 Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure the strategy remains as relevant in 2023 as it is now.

INTRODUCTION

Commissioning is the process for deciding how to use the total resources available to improve outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way. It is one of the most effective tools that we can use to meet the challenges we are facing and will support the Children's Improvement Plan to help improve the lives of children and young people in Stoke-on-Trent.

In order to support the improvement in children's services effective commissioning and striving for quality children's services that are delivering good outcomes are fundamental. We want our children and young people to thrive by having the best start in life and the opportunity to develop well.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council shares with all public services a responsibility to constantly find more effective ways of using public money to deliver the best outcomes for their local communities. This aim has never been more important than in the current circumstances, with significant financial pressure and the need to improve local children's services a priority.

This strategy is developed during the Covid19 Pandemic and we will continue to work closely with local providers to be responsive to need, provide support and continuously monitor the situation as we come out of the pandemic and adapt together to a new commissioning landscape.

Excellent and effective procurement and contract management is integral to our Commissioning Strategy. It will provide Stoke-on-Trent with a foundation and a framework for improving and delivering the best outcomes for our children and families and clearly sets out how are we going to work together; what governance will apply; what information and processes we need; how will we work with providers and service-users and what new skills and behaviours we need to learn.

Setting out our commissioning approach is particularly important for joint working with our statutory and non-statutory partners. Our commitment to excellent commissioning starts with a renewed focus on successful outcomes. We will continue to develop strong relationships with our providers to achieve our shared priorities, identify those who can assist with service improvement, secure better value, develop alternative sources of supply and manage those providers who are less effective in delivering our vision for improved outcomes.

Our commissioning strategy will ensure that we have a diverse and mature set of providers providing choice in the market. Providers who we work with must be able to deliver, improve quality and performance, are forward thinking, innovative, and proactive in responding to the needs of our children, young people and their families.

The strategy is the high-level strategic document that informs the commissioning decisions and work programme and sets out our intentions for improving the life chances of children, young people and their families in Stoke-on-Trent over the next three years, from 2020 to 2023

The strategy is informed by:

- Stoke-on-Trent City Council Strategic Plan and Stronger Together Vision 2016 – 2024.
- Stoke-on-Trent Children’s Services Improvement Plan 2020 ‘Creating the conditions for success’.
- Stoke-on-Trent Children and Young People’s Plan ‘Room to Grow; 2020-2024.
- Stoke-on-Trent Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-20.

This strategy will ensure that commissioning embraces a partnership approach to improving the social, educational and health outcomes for children and young people. It will do this by adopting the principles set out in the Stoke-on-Trent Children and Young People’s Plan ‘Room to Grow’ 2020-2024.

The analysis undertaken to develop this strategy identifies principles, themes and actions which will enable us to overcome our challenges to improve the lives of children, young people and their families in Stoke-on-Trent.

NATIONAL DRIVERS AND LOCAL POLICY

The following national drivers and local policies influence this strategy:

National drivers:

- The Children Act 2004 amended the Children Act 1989,
- The Children and Young Person Act 2008
- The Academies Act 2010, the Education Act 2011
- The Children & Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2015
- The SEND Code of Practice
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015)

Local Policies:

- Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Child Exploitation Strategy 2019 – 2022
- Starting well, Living well, supporting well, A Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire approach to children and young people’s mental health and emotional wellbeing 2018 – 2023
- Serious Violence Strategy
- JSNA
- Children’s sufficiency Strategy 2020 – 2023
- Inclusion Strategy
- Children and Young People’s Plan ‘Room to Grow’ 2020 – 2024
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council Strategic Plan Stronger Together 2016 – 2020
- Stoke-on-Trent Children’s Services Improvement Plan 2020 ‘Creating the conditions for success’
- Opportunity Area Delivery Plan

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 with the principles embedded into every strategy.

Our young people are the future of the city; we need to ensure they have the best possible start in life and 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.





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



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 Children and Young People's Plan
'Room to Grow'; 2020-2024

There are six key outcomes that the plan delivers during the period 2020 - 2025, supported by our coordinated improvement programme to improve the lives of our children and young people and to ensure that they thrive to be the most that they can be. We will ensure that children and young people in Stoke-on-Trent are:

1

Safe



Children and young people are protected from abuse, neglect or harm and are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to keep themselves safe as they grow older.

2

Healthy



Children and young people experience healthy growth and development; this covers physical, mental, emotional and social development. They are motivated to make informed choices about healthy and safe lifestyles as they get older and given lots of opportunities to be physically active.

3

Achieving



Children and young people have the opportunity to achieve their potential and make the most of their abilities.

4

Nurtured



Children and young people are secure in the care they are receiving in stable environments, and families are confident in their ability to enable their children to thrive.

5

Involved



Children and young people know their rights and how to exercise them. They are able to express their views and to be involved meaningfully in the decisions that affect them. They feel empowered.

6

Prepared



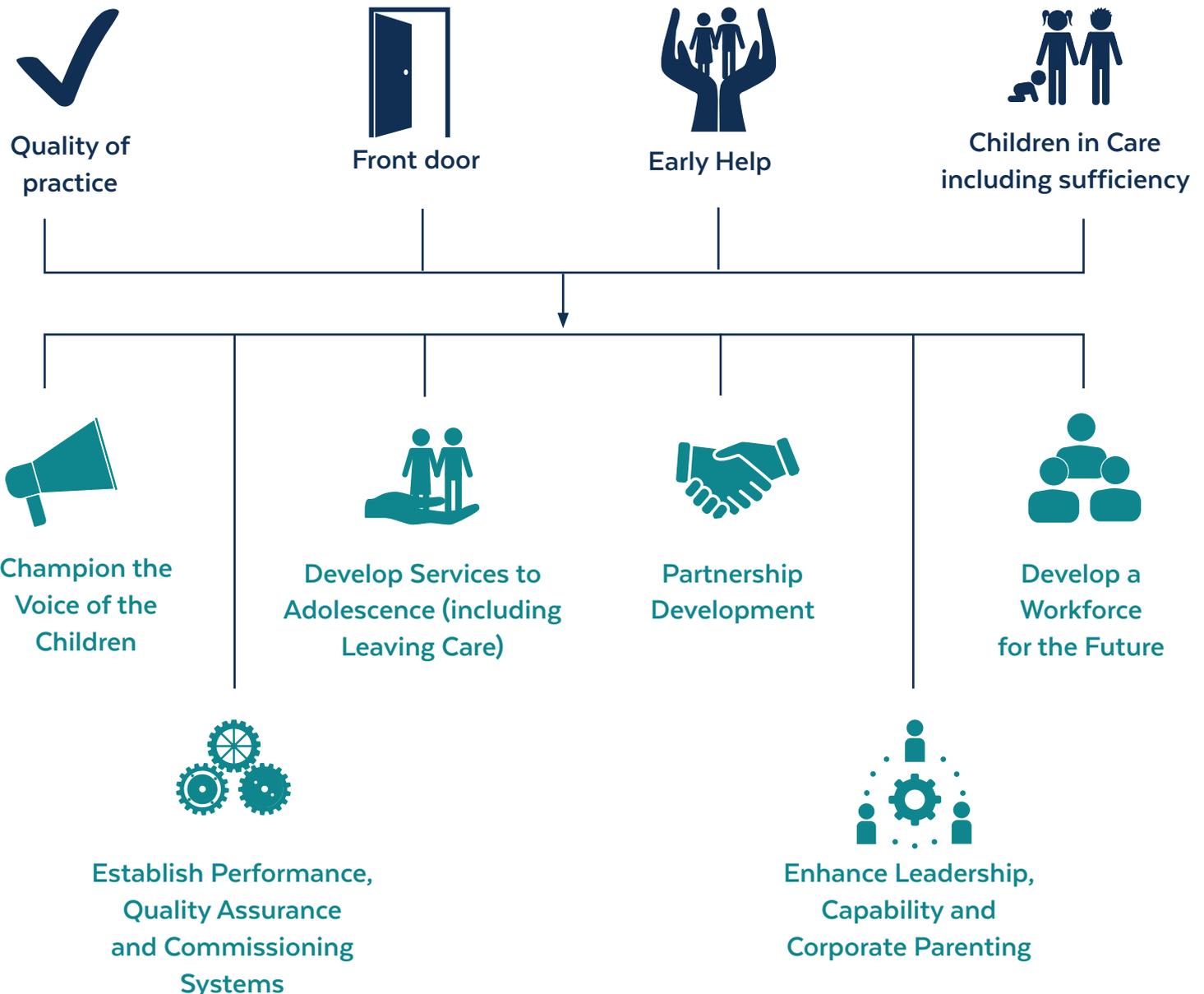
Young people enter adulthood with the qualifications, skills, confidence, self-esteem and opportunities they need to make their best contribution to society.

CHILDRENS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Stoke-on-Trent is ambitious for its young people despite having faced challenges in recent years. We are committed to transforming children and young people’s services in the city through the Stronger Together vision. Delivery will be aligned with our Thrive system model which will enable us to intervene as early as possible with children and families and drive forward how we work in partnership with other agencies.

Our Children’s Improvement Plan established four key priorities and ten focus areas across early help and social care and the virtual school to effectively focus improvement activity. Excellent strategic commissioning, pro-active contract and quality monitoring and effective placement brokerage will be aligned to ensure activity identified in this strategy will align to the priorities and specific focus areas below to improve services for children and young people.

Priorities For Improvement



STOKE-ON-TRENT LOCAL CONTEXT



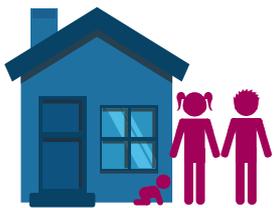
Stoke-on-Trent is one of the most deprived areas in the country with high levels of unemployment and lower than average income compared to England.

53% of people in the city live in areas which are classified as being in the top **20%** most deprived in England

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

13th

most deprived out of 317 Local Authorities for the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).



24%

of children (aged 0-15) live in out-of-work benefit households (England 14.0%)

256,375

people live in Stoke-on-Trent



24%

of which are aged between 0 - 16 years old

The city is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse; the 'Non-White British' population has increased from **6.4%** in 2001 to an estimated

20.2% in 2016



Around

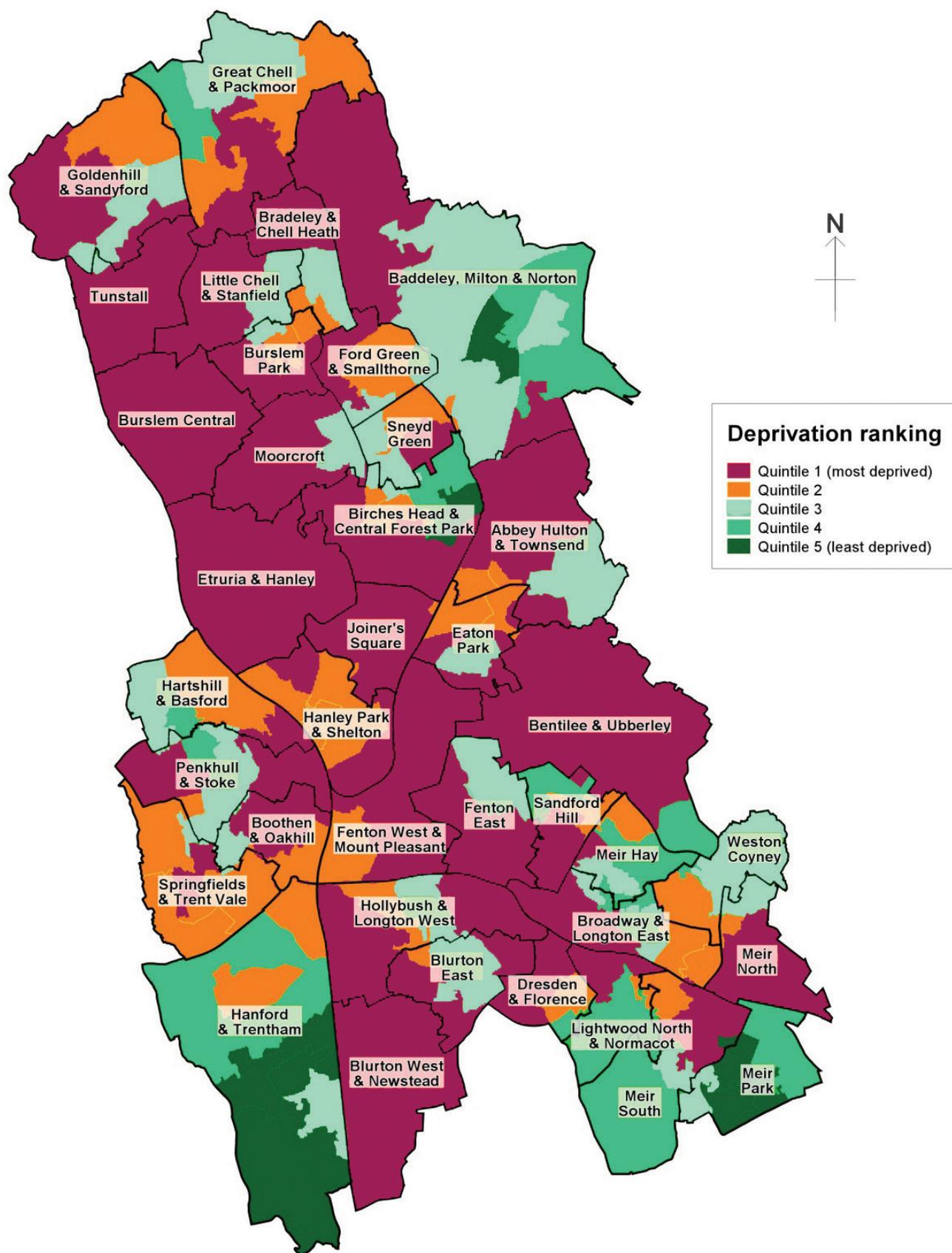
3,300

live births a year, with

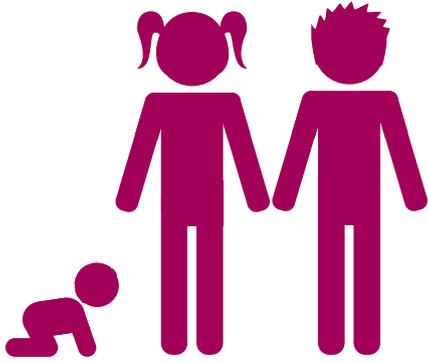
22%

of births to mothers from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups

The most deprived areas of the city are located around the wards of Tunstall, Burslem Central, Etruria and Hanley, Bentilee and Ubbberley, and Blurton West and Newstead



Stoke-on-Trent has an historic industrious background related to mining and the pottery industry. The effects these industries have had on the population is portrayed mainly through poor health (respiratory issues) and poor education, which is highlighted in the fact that the literacy levels are lower than in other areas. Health Literacy is an important part of educating people on healthier lifestyles and managing risk.



There are currently

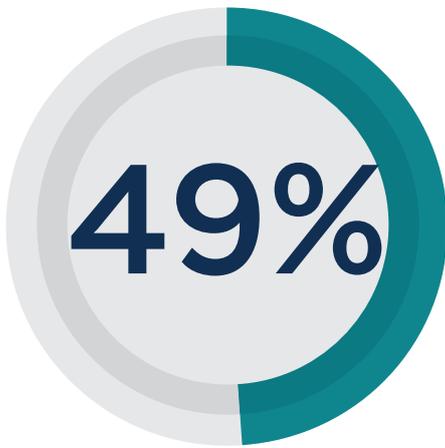
935 children
in care

(as of July 2020), including Young Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.

Stoke-on-Trent currently has the

third highest proportion

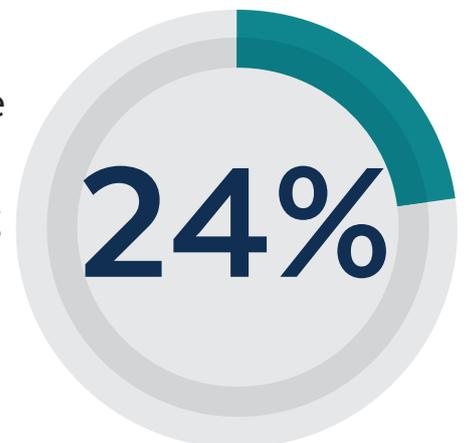
of children in care in the country (129 children per 10,000 population under 18)



The city council has seen a **49%** increase in the number of looked-after children since 2016.

The largest component of children's care spending in Stoke-on-Trent is services for looked-after children, and the cost of this has risen steeply in recent years.

24% of children (under 16) are living in low income families in Stoke on Trent, (17% in England) and the city councils' approach to partnership working will support children to obtain the education, health and social care support they need to live healthy, happy lives.



Best Start in Life

Children born in Stoke-on-Trent are more likely to experience challenges than those born in many other areas of England.



23.8%
of children (under 16)
live in poverty (England 16.8%)

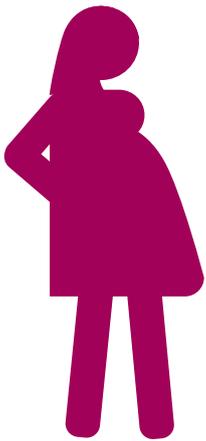
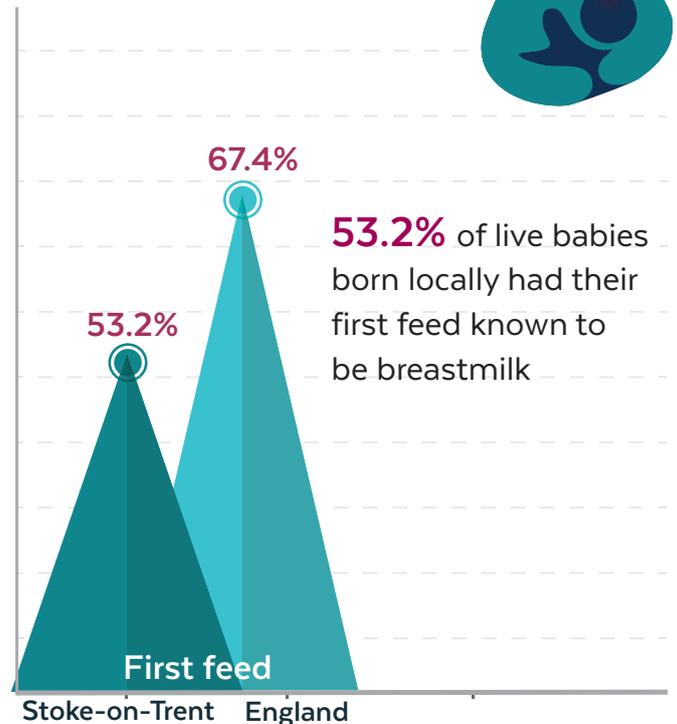


9.1%
of babies have a low
birthweight below 2,500
grams (England 7.4%)



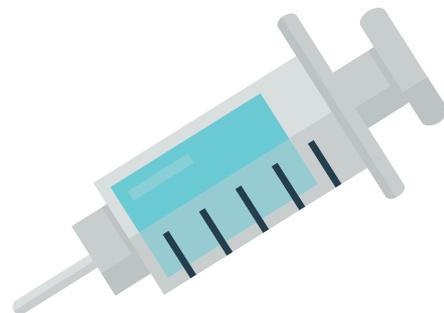
17.6%
of women smoke whilst
pregnant (England 10.6%)

Breastfeeding rates



1.3%
of all deliveries were to mums under 18
(higher than England 0.6% and West Midlands 0.8%).

Second highest infant mortality in England



Over **90%**
of local children vaccinated against
the main diseases

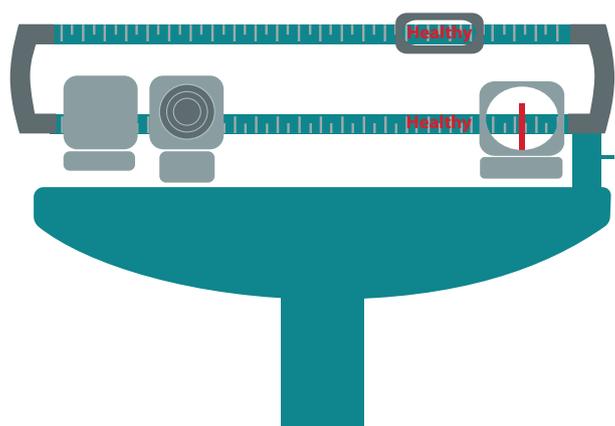
School Age

Positive educational outcomes for local children in school also shows a decline as children grow.

66% of schoolchildren in Stoke-on-Trent at the end of reception (age 4-5) were considered 'ready for school' in 2018/19 (similar to the England average)

60% of Key Stage 2 (10-11 year olds) schoolchildren in Stoke-on-Trent met the expected standards in reading, writing and maths (lower than the 65% in England)

59% of Key Stage 4 (15-16 year olds) of pupils in Stoke-on-Trent achieved a 9-4 pass (including English and Maths) (65% in England)



25.8% of Reception pupils (4-5 year olds) are overweight or obese (England 22.6%)

39.9% of Year 6 pupils (10-11 year olds) are overweight or obese (England 34.3%)



12.8% of 5-19 year olds estimated to have a mental health disorder, which equates to around

5,900 children and young people

There were **310** hospital admissions for self-harm among children and young adults aged 10-24 – admission rates continue to increase across the city.

30.7%  of five years old have tooth decay (England 23.4%)

4.0%

of 16-17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared with 5.5% in England.

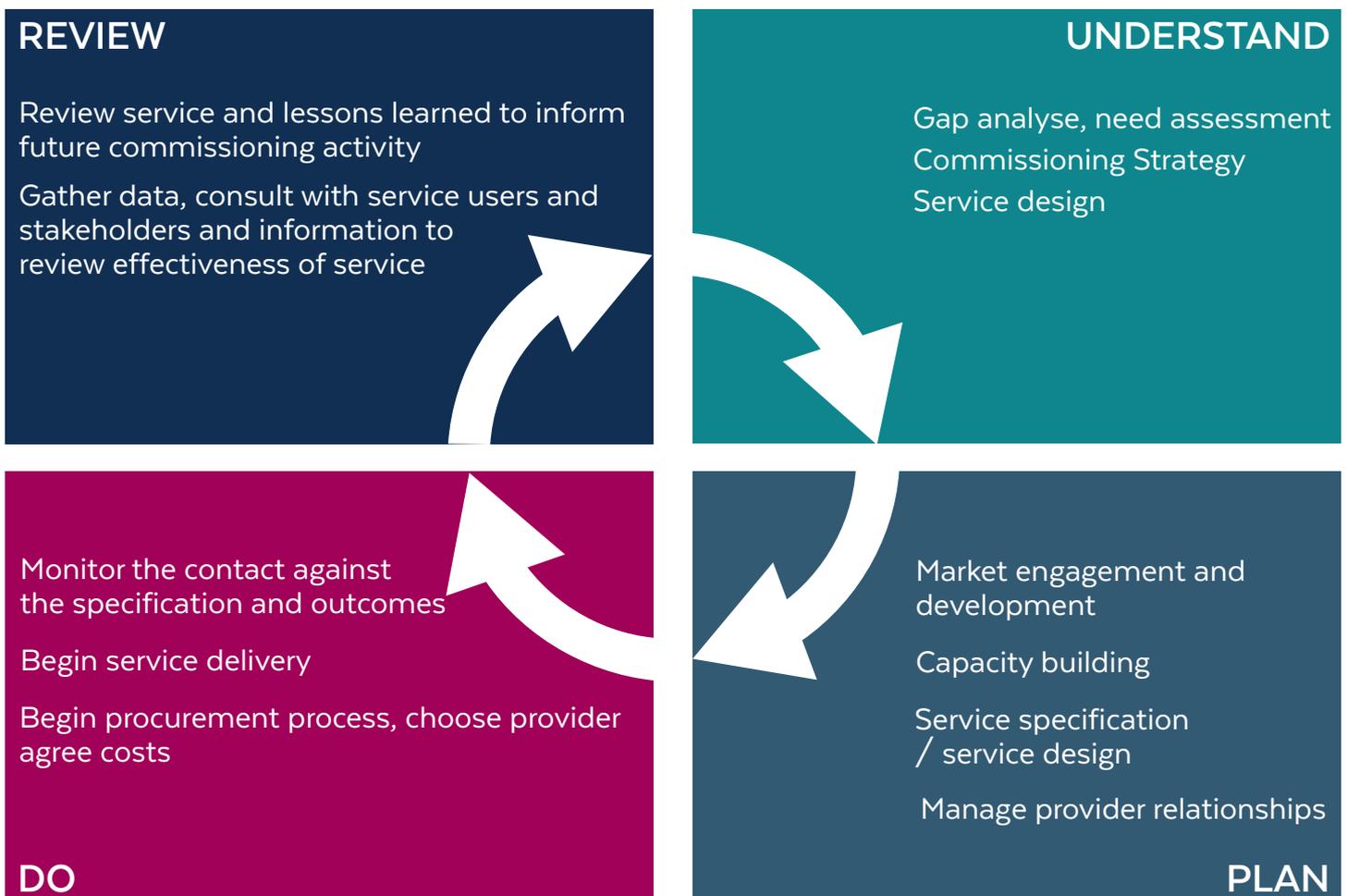
ENABLERS

These enablers are cross cutting themes that support and ensure the effective delivery of this strategy in order to support the children’s improvement plan to increase the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in Stoke-on-Trent.

LOCAL INTEGRATED COMMISSIONING MODEL

The local integrated commissioning division delivers the Council’s strategic vision using locally appropriate outcomes and making best use of the council’s ability to influence and shape services it does not directly provide or pay for.

The team delivers the functions of the commissioning cycle integrating the commissioning and quality improvement of adults, children and public health services, with expert procurement and commercial support.



The aim of the Integrated Commissioning Division is to:

- Centralise the contract and commissioning functions across, adults, children and public health services to create a holistic approach to commissioning.
- Bring together commissioning expertise.
- Ensure a dedicated quality assurance and commissioning support.
- Increase commissioning capacity within children's commissioning.
- Speak to partners with a single voice.
- Develop, shape and manage the market.
- Provide expert procurement and commercial support.

The new approach has enabled the commissioning division to work seamlessly together to better support the children, young people and family's services in delivering the priorities within the Children and Young People's Plan 'Room to Grow' and the Children's Improvement Plan. This approach will also help us to realise our vision that children and young people are our number one priority, they are the future and we want them to thrive, having the best start in life and the opportunity to develop well.

Working as one team, the benefits of an all age approach is that it will:

- Support with effective transition planning from children to adults' services.
- Effectively meet the needs of targeted adults or the wider population can have enormous impact on children, young people and families in our communities.
- Focus on prevention and understanding the effects on wider determinates of health, maintaining and improving a person's health and wellbeing helps builds resilience in the individual, their household and their community and creates a healthier environment for young people to live and develop.



Children's Commissioning Vision

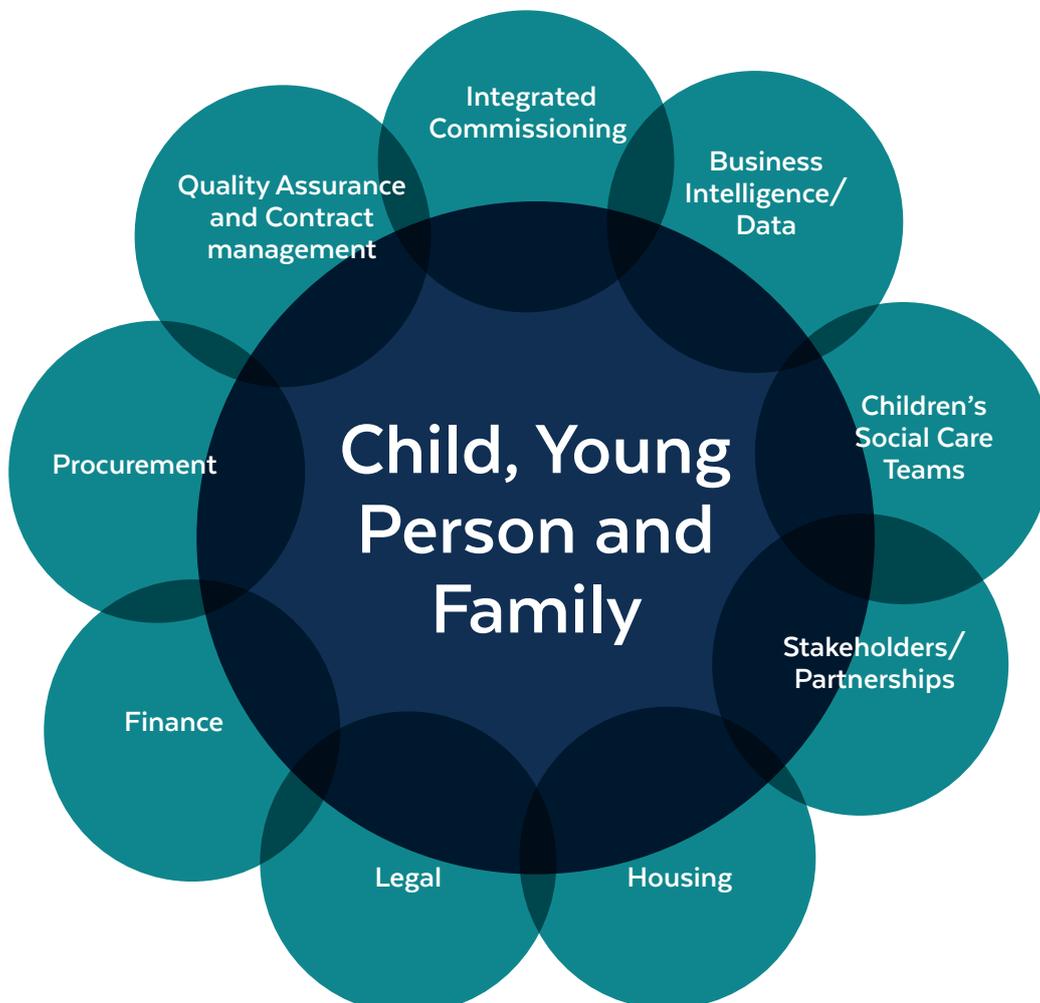
To work with children's services, children, young people and families to co-produce and develop high quality effective services and support which will improve and make a real difference to the lives of children, young people and families living in Stoke-on-Trent.

Our Commissioning Objectives are to:

- Fully understand the needs of the children and young people within the city to ensure that service provision reflects the diverse needs.
- Develop, shape and manage the market for children’s services.
- Broker services for individual children and young people that meet their needs and are local, where it is safe to do so, allowing the child/young person to retain relationships with their family and friends and have a stable school experience.
- Develop positive working relationships with all stakeholders to provide seamless services and appropriate support.
- Ensure resources are effectively utilised holding accountability for the public pound, through effective contract and market management.
- Develop a robust quality assurance framework to ensure that we can improve quality, ensure contractual requirements are delivered and prevent placement breakdown.

Collaborative commissioning approach

Commissioning is a cyclical process that ensures children and young people are at the heart of everything that we do and that services are designed around improving outcomes for children and young people. There needs to be a shared vision for commissioning across all stakeholders and effective joined up planning, including joint planning and commissioning and a strategic understanding of how the outcomes of the needs of children, young people and families are met and delivered and how the actions of each stakeholder impact on each other.



Governance

Commissioning, Commercialisation and Contracts Board

The Commissioning, Commercialisation and Contracts Board (CCCB) will provide transparency, strategic oversight, scrutiny and guidance and make recommendations internally for all major commissioning, procurement and contracts with a value over £500,000 across the City Council. The Commissioning, Commercialisation and Contracts Board acts as a Programme Board for all service re-design, service transformation, commissioning, procurement projects, contract management activity, including joint commissioning and joint procurement projects, to ensure that resources are used in the most effective way and that statutory requirements, corporate values, corporate considerations and standards are adhered to.

The Board will manage and review the Forward Plan of procurement across the City Council and agree the scheduling to achieve a clear link to shared strategic priorities and savings plans across the council.



Doing this will improve/will achieve

Carry out webinar training sessions on Commissioning for staff in Children Services



Operational staff will understand commissioning and how this will help improve children's services

Establish clear quality assurance frameworks and contract management schedules.



- Better understanding of the quality of placement provision
- Improve quality of services and ensure providers are accountable

JOINT COMMISSIONING

Joint Commissioning is a system wide strategic approach to planning and delivering services in a holistic joined up way that meets the needs of children and young people and their families and improves outcomes. Families benefit from services that work very cohesively together. This ensures that children's needs are usually identified early and that provision is effective in meeting those needs. The effective working relationships between services are productive, so they ensure that identified needs in the local area are appropriately prioritised.

Effective joint commissioning should generate efficiencies and value for money and enable partners:

- To agree local priorities – linking with and informing the Children and Young People's Strategic Plan.
- To have a shared understanding of the range and effectiveness of current service provision across public, private and voluntary/community sectors.
- Achieve a shared understanding of the current gaps in service provision, including areas that need to be developed in order to meet local needs.

The Integrated Commissioning Strategy developed by Stoke-on-Trent Clinical Commission Group (CCG) and Stoke-on-Trent City Council sets out the strategic intent of both partners to commission services for the population of Stoke-on-Trent, where collaborative and integrated commissioning delivers mutual benefits to the health and social care system.

Governance arrangements for joint commissioning between health and the local authority are already established and embedded within day to day service delivery. The Health and Wellbeing Board and Joint Commissioning Board aim to develop stronger and deeper integration of health and social care and enhance joint working, including the pooling of budgets where appropriate, to improve the health and wellbeing of our local population and reduce health inequalities.

We have a well-established Continuing Health Care (CHC) Panel with Terms of Reference and the process to agree funding here is very well embedded and understood by health professionals and social workers – predominantly the Children with Disabilities teams. The panel oversees and reviews the local process for decision making in children and young people's continuing care, in line with legislation (i.e. The Children and Families Act 2014 (SEND reforms), The Health and Social Care Act 2014). Meetings are multi- disciplinary and planned well in advance.

To address the needs of children and families with complex and multiple needs, partners across Education, Health and Social Care have worked extensively to agree a timely and robust approach to joint and/or tri-partite funding arrangements via the Placement Panel/High Needs Review Panel.

The format and membership of the panel, with each partner as 'critical friend', ensures children and young people are provided with the most appropriate care and support to deliver the best possible outcomes; whilst offering best value for each partner organisation.

The new Placement Panel/High Needs Review Panel were introduced in August 2020. Work is underway between commissioners from Stoke-on-Trent City Council (lead commissioner) and Stoke-on-Trent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) on ensuring a robust membership and terms of reference for these groups which provide the required governance, scrutiny and accountability to each organisation. Decisions taken by the group will be auditable and will assist in realising gaps in provision and identifying areas for joint commissioning.

Social care operational teams and commissioning will work actively with Housing partners to collaborate and work jointly ensuring that Children's needs are captured mapping accommodation requirements across the city. Joint working will improve on the sufficiency duties and be considerate of the permanency strategy and the Children's Looked after Strategy.

The Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Service contract is jointly funded service between the Stoke-on-Trent City Council (lead commissioner), Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (SPFCC). The current contract has been extended and work is underway with all partners to review the current provision to inform future model and delivery and commissioning arrangements. Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Stoke-on-Trent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) jointly commission a number of services through Section 256 agreements, including CAMHS and Looked after Children Advocacy.





Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Continue to maximise joint commissioning opportunities.



Common priorities across the partnership.
Best use of resource available.

Continue to work with CCG colleagues to streamline and agree the joint commissioning process which result in funding decisions for complex needs.



Clear process for SEND.
Packages jointly funded correctly.
Children and families receiving the right support at the right time.

Work with operational staff to ensure understanding of the evidence required to be submitted demonstrate health needs.



Speedier approvals to jointly funded packages of support.
Children and families received the right support at the right time.

Develop clear process and paperwork for operational colleagues to follow for complex case panel discussions.



Workforce who understands the process, no delay in completed paperwork or process.

REGIONAL COMMISSIONING ACROSS THE WEST MIDLANDS

The City Council is currently part of the West Midlands Regional group and the North Midlands Regional Adoption and Permanency Partnership. The Midland Regional Adoption and Permanency Partnership (Together4Children) focuses on permanency outcomes including adoption, long-term fostering, special guardianship and children living with kinship carers. This is a regional permanency arrangement, which operates across a large geographical footprint, maximising resources, capacity and flexibility; and leads to improvements in effective practice and long-term outcomes for our children.

The West Midlands Regional group supports the work of the Directors of Children's services helping to shape, develop and manage the regional market place through the commissioning hub as part of the programme of improvement work. Lead commissioners attend the Strategic Commissioning Network and the Operational Contracting and Commissioning Group that oversee and manage the markets and contracts providing:

- Residential
- Support Accommodation
- Fostering

Through these partnerships we are able to share information in relation to providers, including agreeing regional inflationary increases, sharing quality data, sharing knowledge and resources.

Although it is planned for the city council to develop its own local frameworks for specific local development and management of the market, it will continue to be a representative at the regional groups and use their knowledge and resources to ensure that we achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people.



Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Influence work taking place regionally and sharing our needs locally to inform future commissioning.



Regional arrangements will meet our local needs.

Sharing current and future arrangements on contract and quality monitoring.



Share our arrangements and learn from the regional approaches.



together
children



OUTCOMES BASED APPROACH

An outcomes-based approach to commissioning is adopted to demonstrate effectiveness of services and how they improve the lives for children and their families in Stoke-on-Trent. This approach gives the opportunity for providers to arrange their services in more flexible and innovative ways. The focus is on outcomes and impact, instead of the traditional approach to specifying inputs and outputs. The agreed outcomes are set out right at the start of the commissioning cycle and considered at every stage. The whole pathway of care, rather than individual services and processes, is also considered and commissioning decisions are based on quality and impact rather than price alone.

The introduction of quality frameworks and effective contract management will ensure all commissioned services will be able to evidence impact and a service's contribution to the children's improvement journey in Stoke-on-Trent. We will learn from other local authorities to adopt this approach, including national best practice. Staff in the Council and provider services will be appropriately trained to continue the journey for improvement.



Doing this will improve/will achieve

Service specifications and performance management frameworks will be written in an outcomes focused way.



Services which make a difference and meet the needs of children in Stoke on Trent.

Contracts will be monitoring effort and impact.



Evidence services are meeting local need and making a difference / improving outcomes.

Provide training for staff in outcomes based commissioning



The design and monitoring of services that make a difference and can evidence impact.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Stoke-on-Trent City Council shares, with all public services, a responsibility to constantly find more effective ways of using public money to deliver the best outcomes for their local communities. This aim has never been more important than in the current circumstances, with significant financial pressure to make savings and the need to improve quality of practice and outcomes for children and young people.

Over recent years there has been little early intervention or prevention support for children and young people that stems the flow for statutory services and our focus has been too much on those in crisis, rather than preventing this.

A recovery plan is in development to address this pressure linking closely to the children's improvement plan.

We recognise that more work is required in terms of market management, ensuring we have the right providers in place to meet the needs of our children and young people effectively, working closely with children's Brokerage to ensure we secure the right quality placements for children at the best possible price.

Effective commissioning will help us meet the financial challenges by:

- Reviewing services and contract arrangements to ensure value for money and sustainable efficiencies can be achieved.
- Market shaping exercises to provide greater choice and value for money.
- Jointly commissioning services and combining resources where it makes sense to do so to ensure the best possible value for local public money.
- Commission services that are most efficient, outcome focused and evidence impact.





Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Market shaping and market management activities are to be carried out.
Develop a market development and management strategy and action plan.



Sufficient placements available to meet the requirements of the children in the system.

Local commissioning arrangements in place with providers to ensure quality of provision at the best possible price.



Avoiding high prices for last minute emergency placements.
Services demonstrating impact and improved outcomes.

Pro-active long term strategic commissioning and horizon scanning for future need and demand.



Commissioning services that meet the needs and demands coming through the system.
Options available to enable informed decisions which is best for the young person going forward.

Further develop joint commissioning relationships with partners PCC/CCG.



Best use of pooled budgets in order to achieve good quality efficient services at the best value for money.

SOCIAL VALUE THROUGH PROCUREMENT

being of individuals and families. These impacts can be measured in terms, for example, of changes in levels of employment, health, crime, sustainability, education, community cohesion and diversity. Measuring social impact provides a useful way of capturing the added value delivered through investment in the local community. The Procurement team monitor social value via commissioned services.

The key principals which need to be considered when applying the Public Services Social Value Act 2012 locally are:

- That the social value outcomes sought must be **relevant and appropriate** to the type of activity or goods being purchased;
- That they must be **proportionate** in all the circumstances, including in the context of the value of the purchase;
- That they must be **practical** in their application.

Whilst the City Council is keen to secure a wide range of economic, social and environmental benefits through using its social value powers, the key beneficiary group is its young people in care. As a corporate parent, the Council will use social value to improve the life chances of the young people in its care, particularly those who are at, or nearing, working age. This could include (depending on the nature and financial scale of the contract) mentoring; work experience opportunities; and even apprenticeships. Tenders received will be partially assessed on the basis of a commitment by a provider to deliver these important social value outcomes.





Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Service specifications and performance management frameworks will be written to capture social value.



Local business delivering services.
Local volunteers delivering services.
Increase in apprenticeships.
Opportunities for care leavers.

Work with the market and in-house services to think about the role of social value



Local business delivering services.
Local volunteers delivering services.
Increase in apprenticeships.
Opportunities for care leavers.

DEVELOPING THE MARKET

It is recognised that, over time, both local and national priorities and the capacity of the market to respond will change. As part of ongoing performance monitoring, there will also be a need to identify the potential for managing the market. We will help our providers understand the needs, priorities and local context, and with the voluntary and community sector we will work with them to develop to capacity to fully participate in commissioning arrangements and local service provision. We aim to develop a relationship with our providers that creates mutually advantageous, flexible and long-term relations based on continuous improvement and financial savings.

We have a diverse and active Third Sector in Stoke-on-Trent ranging from small community groups with little experience of commissioning practices to local arms of major national charitable organisations. Delivering services from sexual exploitation support, missing support, short breaks, support for carers and counselling services. The Third Sector plays a vital role in promoting social inclusion, innovation, building trust and tailoring services that better reflect local needs and preferences; it adds value by drawing in volunteers and attracting external funding. At its best the Third Sector has the capacity to deliver the best outcomes, achieve better value for money and secure wider social and economic benefits for the area (such as reducing crime, worklessness or improving basic skills).

There are major barriers that have unnecessarily prevented some Third Sector organisations responding positively to a commissioning-led environment. These are:

- Lack of understanding of the range of services that can be provided through the Third Sector market and the unique qualities that the sector offers;
- The construction and packaging of contracts that tend to favour the largest types of organisations with significant existing infrastructure;
- The timescales set for response to commissioning opportunities are often problematic for smaller Third Sector organisations with limited back office capacity;

We recognised this as an issue for commissioning community short breaks for children with disabilities, which led to the design of a lead provider model for this service. This enables local community groups e.g. trampolining clubs, fishing clubs to easily access short break funding directly from the lead provider rather than having to complete funding applications to the city council.

Market development during the recommissioning of sexual exploitation and missing services:

- helped providers to fully understand the needs and priorities and stimulated interest
 - enabled providers to share their experiences and ideas for future service provision
 - informed service design and successful tender process
-

Local Community Groups delivered community short breaks:

- Local fishing clubs.
- Local trampolining clubs.
- Local dance clubs.



Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Work with and support the provider market to help them understand our needs and priorities.



Informed providers and services who fully understand the local and diverse needs of the city

Support the voluntary and community sector to participate in commissioning processes.



Service delivery from local organisations who know Stoke-on-Trent.

Engage with the market early and pro- actively when recommissioning services.



Stimulate market interest for our tender opportunities and develop positive relationships.



PARTNERSHIP WORKING

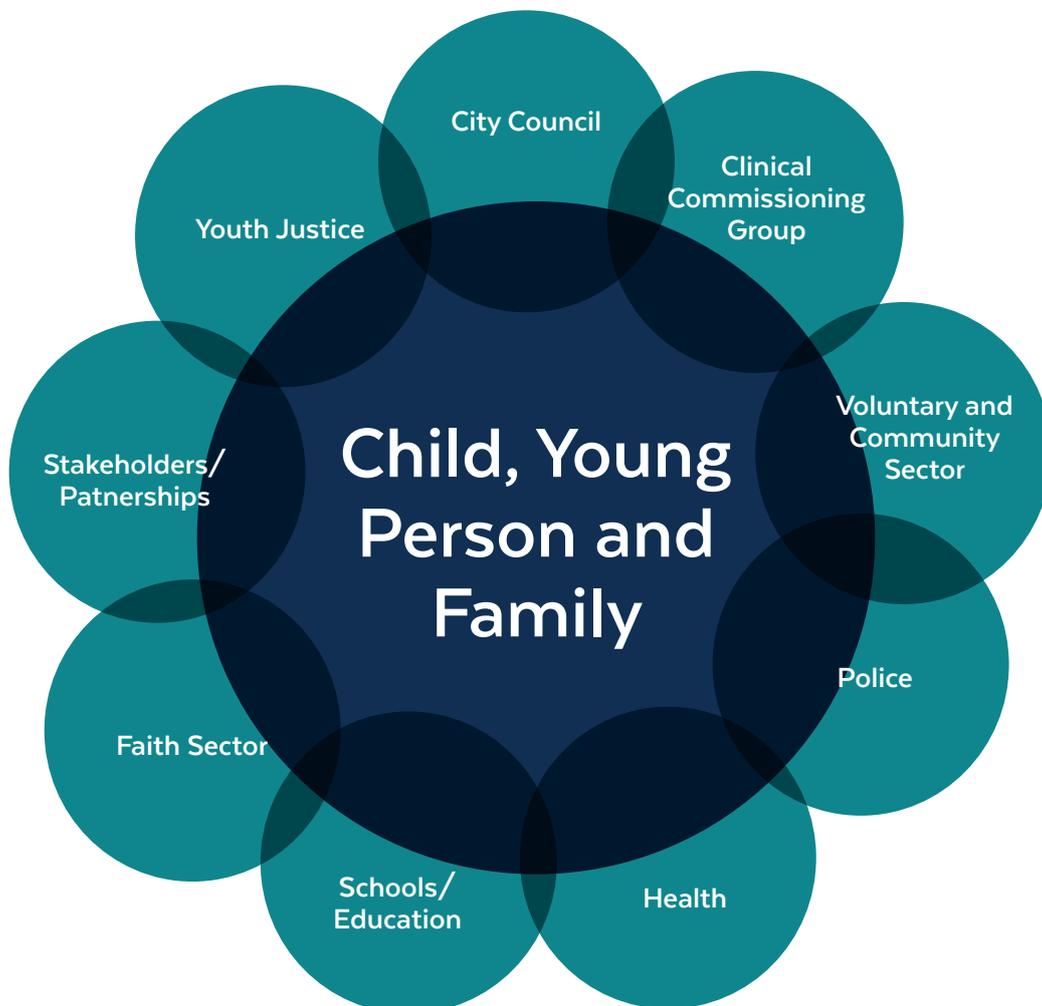
The City Council strongly believes in providing the best opportunities for children and young people in the city. This strategy forms part of its approach to the delivery of that ambition, working in partnership to improve outcomes at every opportunity.

Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership

The Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership is made up of a number of organisations in the city who have a strong commitment to work together to improve outcomes for children, young people, parents and carers and has a working group that sits underneath it.

The partnership is led by the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership Board and includes representation from the city council, schools and academies, health partners, Safeguarding Children Board, the Police and the voluntary and community sector amongst others. The Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership Board is a key underpinning group of, and accountable to, the Stoke-on-Trent Health and Wellbeing Board.

The ‘Room to Grow’ Stoke-on-Trent’s Children and Young People’s Strategy 2020-24 needs a strong partnership in place to support and deliver the priorities and improvements for the children and young people living in Stoke-on-Trent.





Who is the Partnership?

We have a partnership arrangement for adoption services. Four Local Authorities, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Staffordshire County Council, Shropshire County Council and Telford & Wrekin Council have come together to create the North Midlands Regional Adoption & Permanency Partnership, which is branded Together4Children. This partnership is formally recognised and supported by the Department of Education (DfE).

Actions we will take

Doing this will
improve/will achieve

Ensure that information around commissioning and quality improvement is fed into partnership arena



Partnership awareness of commission and quality improvement themes.

CO PRODUCTION

Working together, with our young people and their families, is fundamental to delivering good outcomes.

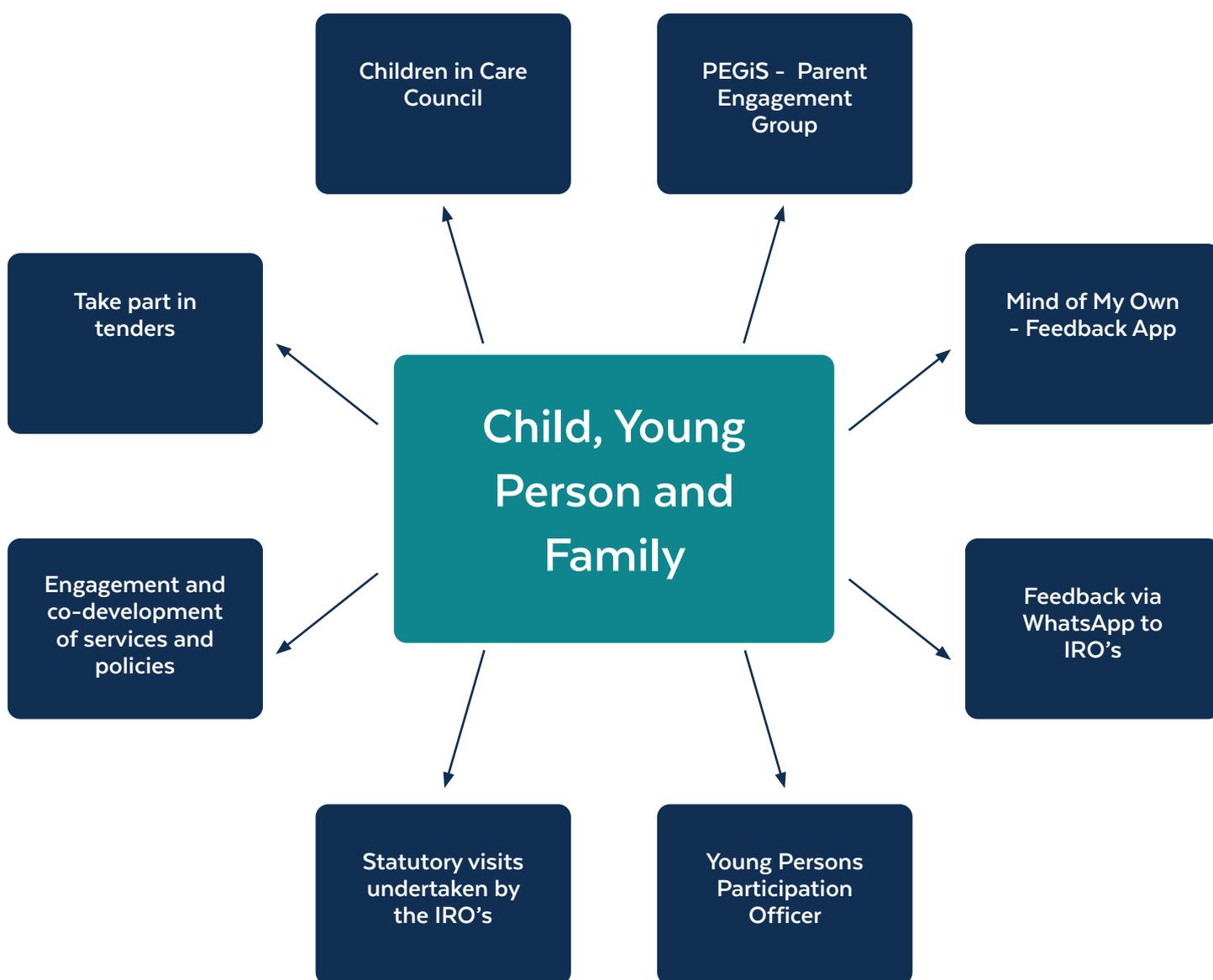
We are committed to seeking and capturing the voice of children and young people, parents and carers to influence, develop and improve the quality of the services that they access. By engaging, consulting and co-developing with children and young people, parent and carers we will have a better understanding of the needs, utilising their experiences to shape the market and improve provision. It will also enable us to understand their expectations and aspirations for the future and support in identifying and developing the support required for them to transition into adulthood. Our aspirations as a City Council is to change the culture in which services are designed and implemented for children and young people.

- We want all our children and young people to have an active voice and input into the decisions made by and about them; with them.
- As a council we want to make sure we are creating a culture and way of working which means co-producing with our young people, around commissioning services, reviewing processes and decision making.
- It is important for all our young people to have an active voice, to ensure they are providing direct lived experience of what is needed, feedback on the quality of services and their ideas for future delivery of services.

There are currently a number of ways in which we collect feedback from children, young people and their families, however, we know we can improve on this and it has been identified as a priority area in the improvement plan. We want to provide them with the opportunity to become more involved and to fully understand their aspirations and their innovative ideas to support in the commissioning of services, improving quality and to boost their confidence. .

Strong and proactive links are well established with PEGIS (Parent Engagement Group in Stoke) whose role is to support parents around special educational needs and disability, however we know that further work needs to take place in partnership with the national organisation CONTACT and our families to broaden our Parent Carer Forum in Stoke for SEND to access the national grant available.

We will adopt an ethos of co-production where children and young people and their parents and carers, are empowered. This will ensure that we apply a consistent approach to all decision-making processes in relation to market management and shaping, improvement, efficiency programmes and investment plans





Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Commission an engagement and co-production service to develop this work to include our children in care.



- Create opportunities for children to become young commissioners.
- Encouraging mentoring roles in the council giving the children opportunity to be influencers of the city.
- Increase opportunities for children to be involved in a range of decision making processes and groups that meet to discuss their needs.

Provide training for our young people and staff and commissioned services on effective co-production and engagement.



Increasing the offer from our businesses to engage with our young people.

Work with providers to build in co-production through service delivery.



Services where co-production is key to developing the service.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Involving young people in the commissioning of services can bring many benefits for example:

- Young people receive the support in the way that meets their needs
- Their experiences are understood and services know how to respond to them
- Easier to access and engage with the service
- Young people feel safe and supported
- Young people feel involved and have a greater sense of ownership
- Helps with young people's personal, social development and the development of skills for employment and further education for those directly engaged in commissioning
- It sends a clear message about the valued and positive place of young people in their community.



“Before you make any decisions, consult and involve the people its affecting.”

Everyone has a voice and it deserves to be heard no matter who you are, where you're from or what you've been through



I won't talk to other professionals. I normally hide in my room when they come to visit me. I even turned Netflix off to come and speak to you. You listen and you don't judge me

Quotes from young people supported by our CSE & Missing Service

THEMED AREAS



These areas have been themed together to reflect our new approach of working together with children and families, children and families at the heart of our thinking using the THRIVE system model. This model adopts a fluid and flexible approach that recognises there is no wrong door for families, ensuring that they receive the right support from the right part of the system at the right time, or earliest opportunity. Their needs will change over time but that doesn't have to be a linear journey up and down the traditional hierarchy. Rather, families should be able to move between and combine different types of support according to the current circumstances, but always within a context where all agencies involved with the family are seeking to use their strengths and support network to enable them to meet their needs and cope with their challenges.

For the purpose of this strategy we have adapted the THRIVE model and merged the 'getting advice' and 'getting help' domains to aid better flow.



THRIVING

School Improvement

The City Council works closely with schools and academies to ensure best value. Through the Education Challenge Board and in partnership with Teaching School Alliances and other partnerships, economies of scale can be gained when procuring teacher training courses and other resources relating to our core activities.

Our priorities for primary and secondary pupils are:

- Closing the gap for disadvantaged pupils at all phases.
- To improve the overall attainment of Stoke-on-Trent schools to ensure that they are at least in line with the national average at Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 at the expected and higher levels.
- Improving outcomes in reading at the end of Key Stage 2 so they are at least broadly in line with national.
- Increasing the proportion of good and outstanding schools across the City so they are at last in line with national.
- Improving outcomes for Special Education Needs support pupils so they achieve the best possible outcomes.
- To improve the percentage of good and outstanding early years settings.

We will achieve our priorities by:

- Working closely with schools to ensure resources are directed to where they are needed by providing high quality curriculum leadership development.
- Support and broker school clusters to work together and develop their expertise further.
- Signpost and broker school-to-school support for teaching and leadership





Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Extending the current Opportunity Area funded programmes for English and Maths support at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 from September 2020.



Improve achievement rates for vulnerable learners.

Continue to work in partnership with the Little Sutton literacy hub by creating satellite schools in Stoke-on-Trent.



Improve attainment levels.

Continue to work with our partnership of schools to explore opportunities to maximise income.



Increased opportunities for school's families and children.

Post 16 Provision

For young people aged 16 to 19 (or up to 25 for those with Special Education Need / Learning Difficulty/Disability), the City Council works in a strategic commissioning role with partners from education, training, business, voluntary sector and public sector agencies. Strong partnerships across the city and wider Local Enterprise Area, offer young people effective, independent Information, Advice and Guidance, that helps them choose the best post 16 pathway for them. This collaboration results in education and training provision that meets learner need and provides companies with employees who display the skills and attributes required by their business.

Current key issues for post 16 provision for young people are:

- Participation of vulnerable learners in education, employment and training is poor.
- Academic achievement locally, particularly GCSE English and Maths, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 is lower than the national average.
- Re-engagement of learners, and transition from year 11 to year 12; year 13 to year 14. This will be particularly difficult in 2020/21, due to the pandemic and young people not being in education, and exams (GCSE, A levels) being cancelled.
- Apprenticeships: many young people have been furloughed or made redundant due to businesses closing temporarily or permanently during the pandemic. This is on top of a reducing number of apprentices being recruited over recent years, following the government's apprenticeship reform and introduction of the levy.

We recognise we need to:

- Develop and implement targeted plans to help vulnerable learners achieve their potential.
- Continue to work with partners to re-engage learners who have been out of full-time education for several months due to the pandemic.
- Identify the needs of our residents and businesses to shape investment in skills training provision that meets those needs.
- Effectively use investment to unlock the potential of the current and future workforce through a demand-driven approach to provide skills training, and match those skills to employment opportunities.
- Make independent, impartial careers information, advice and guidance available to all young people, their parents and carers.

Adult Skills Service - the City Council has a contract with the Education and Skills Funding Agency for the delivery of Adult Skills and Community Learning, Apprenticeships, Traineeships, and 16 to 19 Study Programmes. Adult Skills provision focuses on English, Maths, ESOL and ICT. Community Learning is more about "leisure and pleasure" courses, including family learning, where parents learn alongside their children in school (mostly primaries).

In June 2019, the service was inspected by Ofsted and the overall grading was Inadequate, although Apprenticeships were rated Good. A recent Ofsted monitoring visit found the service had made significant progress on one theme, and reasonable progress on a further three. An Improvement plan is in place and progress continues to be made.



Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Extending the current Opportunity Area funded programmes for English and Maths support at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 from September 2020.



Improve achievement rates for vulnerable learners.

Assist to secure funds from programmes such as shared prosperity fund, National Skills fund, National retraining programme



Targeted employment and skill support will be in place

Working with local employers, training providers, to promote apprenticeships to businesses and young people.



Increase the number of apprenticeships for young people in the city

School Place Planning

Local authorities have a requirement to meet the general duty to secure sufficient schools in the area (Education Act 1996, Section 14). By monitoring local demand for places and projecting future demand trends, the authority is able to take appropriate action where necessary to alter the size of the school estate. For around a decade from 2010, it was necessary to expand the primary estate by around 10% and over £20million of capital grant funding was used to achieve this. In more recent years, there has also been a need to expand the secondary estate. From September 2020, three secondary academies are expanding with the help of additional classroom provision delivered and funding by the City Council via its DfE Basic Need Grant.

The main challenge moving forward is to keep pace with the demand changes in the secondary sector. Further Basic Need grant has now been allocated for additional secondary provision and this will be developed in the short-medium-term.

In the primary sector, areas of housing growth will be key determinants of necessary changes in the school estate. Where possible, s106 receipts from housing developments will be used to address any demand changes resulting from these developments.

Attention is paid moving forward to any bids from external organisations to establish Free Schools in the city as this could significantly impact on the supply of places.

Focus is also paid in terms of provision for Special Educational Need where this is appropriately delivered in secondary school settings. Plans are underway for the provision of a new Special Education Needs Free School; these expansions are a critical element in the city's inclusion strategy.



**Doing this will
improve/will achieve**

Work with the market of education establishments to raise awareness of the need to increase school places in the city.



Sufficient school places to meet the growing demand in the city.

School Traded Services

The council delivers a range of services which include - City Catering, City Cleaning, City Music Service, School Governor Services, Stanley Head Outdoor Education Centre, etc. The services deliver over £10 million of services to schools both in the city and beyond. They generate a financial contribution to the wider local authority. The services have proved popular in increasingly competitive markets and have retained a significant share of the Stoke-on-Trent school's market as well as picking up business from schools in Staffordshire and other neighbouring authorities. A consistent feature of the services is a commitment to supporting local school requirements and this is recognised across the city's schools. Further the quality of provision is maintained at a strong level with commitment to complying with national standards - something not offered by all competitors. Many of these services have been recognised nationally for their commitment to quality and service improvement.

The key issues facing these services are the challenges of operating in commercial settings while still operating within the local authority framework. Cost-competitiveness can frequently be an issue when these services bid for work, with the cost base (particularly around staffing) being higher than many competitors. Working in a very cost-conscious market given financial pressures on schools, price competitiveness is essential. Responsiveness to change is also a factor which impacts on the services - the pace of recruitment and similar operational matters can influence the ability to react to the demand of customers.





Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Review of the traded services to establish commercial viability.



Viable and sustainable services to continue future delivery

Where appropriate, support the traded services to secure sufficient share in the local market and expand to new customers.



Sustainable services to continue future delivery.

Explore alternative delivery models with these traded services to expand.



- Improving competitiveness of the traded service model.
- Generating increased reliable return for the City Council.

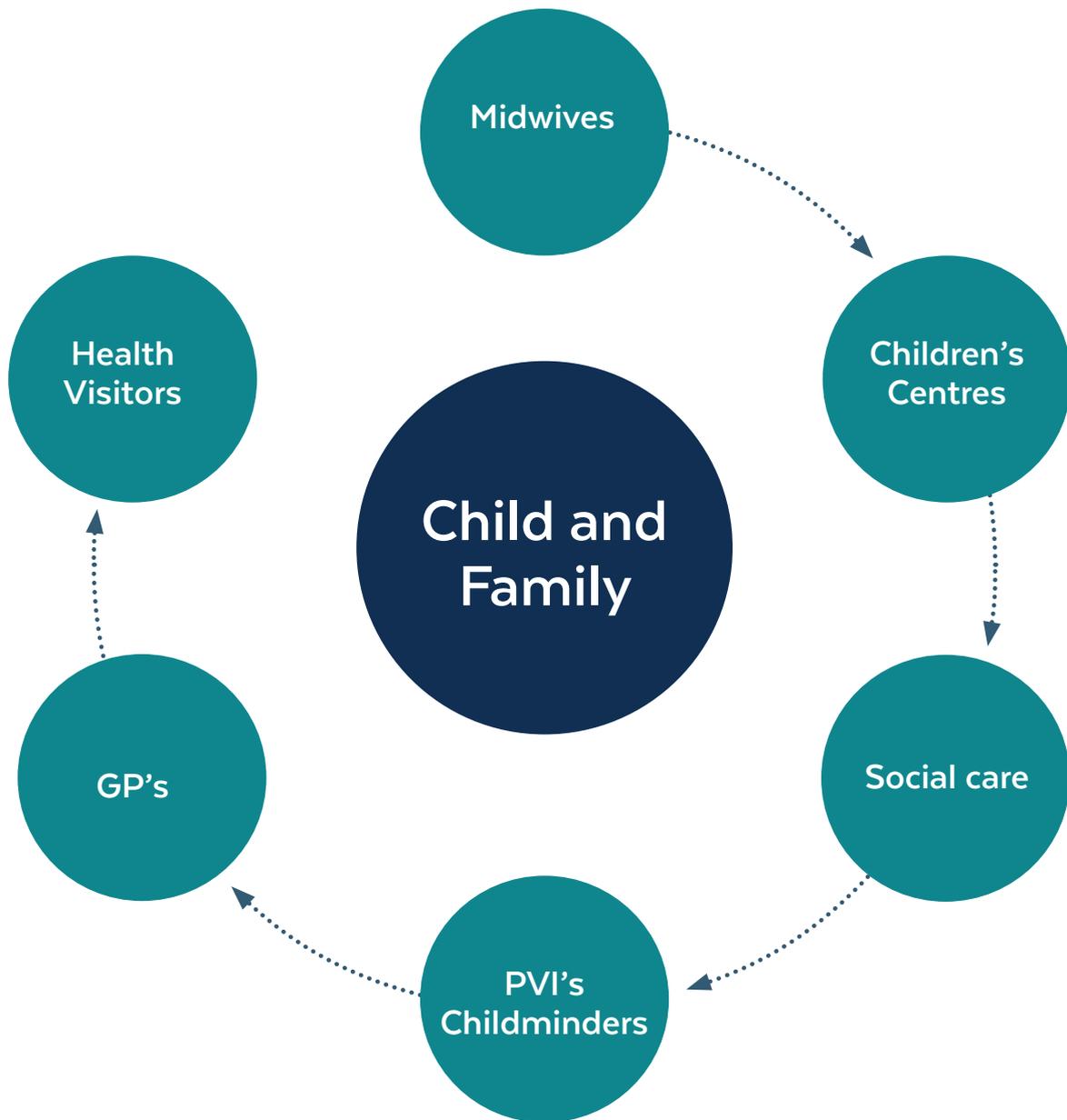
Best start in life - Pre-birth & 0-5 support

We are determined to ensure our children have the best start in life. Evidence shows that to ensure children have the best start in life and are school ready, services from pre-birth to end of reception need to be strategically co-ordinated to maximise outcomes for all children, with particular benefits to children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The infant mortality rate in Stoke-on-Trent is the second highest in the country. On average, one infant dies every two weeks in the city (during their first year of life). Reducing our infant mortality rate is a key priority and challenge. Infant mortality is a multi-factorial issue with physiological, modifiable, genetic and socio-economic factors. Improving infant mortality will require improvements in the health and care of mums and babies (including contraception and pregnancy planning, healthy weight, reducing smoking in pregnancy and increasing breastfeeding as well as antenatal and prenatal care); as well as improving the wellbeing, lifestyle and living conditions for parents/families to reduce the impact of social deprivation (including mental health, substance misuse, domestic abuse, housing, poverty etc).

65% of children screened in 2016 using the Early Communication Screen did not have appropriate communication and language skills for their age on entry to nursery and reception. Specific interventions to support children with these vital areas of their development, enable approximately two thirds of our children to reach a good level of development by the end of their reception year, but this is still below the national average with the gap for some disadvantaged groups widening. In order to address this under the redesign of our Early Help Thrive Model Service, there will be a specific pathway and offer for pregnant women, dads to be and for children 0-5 years old. This will include a partnership including these agencies and services working together to improve how we deliver services with and for children and families:





We are also working on the following public health programmes, with commissioning associated with them.

Smoke Free Homes service provides support and incentives for smoking cessation or harm reduction for pregnant mums and for smoke free families and these services will play a key role in supporting the priority to reduce infant mortality. Reducing the impact of smoking on children's health and improving breastfeeding rates continue to be a priority for public health.

Our Breastfeeding Peer support programme ends December 2021. This service is funded through one off funding from Maternity Transformation match funded by the council. This service will need to be evaluated and options for future sustainability and support explored to ensure there is a continuity plan.

30.7% of children aged five in the city are suffering from tooth decay, which is far higher than the national average of 23.4%. We need to review our oral health improvement delivery options with key links to Health Visiting and early years settings who currently provide the Brushing for life and Smile Bites programmes.

We need to continue improving vaccination rates in the city – particularly uptake of the MMR vaccine which has been declining to protect Children and Young People from preventable disease and reduce the possibility of outbreaks of measles, mumps and the transmission of rubella. The vision screening service will be reviewed and recommissioned.

Supporting parents to help their children to reach key developmental milestones from birth is a crucial part of the strategy. Parents are a child’s first teacher and the richness of the home learning environment plays a crucial role in how children learn and develop during these important years. The first 1001 days of a child’s life are important contributors of their future health, attainment and life expectancy. Our parents need support to understand the importance of their role and to ensure that they are mentally and physically able to meet the challenges of parenthood.

Ensuring that children have access to high quality early education will mean that in partnership with parents, early years providers will give children a broad range of experiences to support the development of the whole child, ensuring that children are ready to meet the challenges of future educational expectations.

Continuing to improve the prevention and early intervention offer for parents and Children and Young People is also a key priority to ensuring that Children and Young People and their parents/care givers/families have access to the right support to improve outcomes for Children and Young People. We will re-model our 0-19 public health service which currently includes mandated elements such as the National Child Measurement Programme as well as locally defined delivery elements to move to an integrated partnership agreement.



Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Recommission and remodel the 0-19 public health service in line with the Early Help thrive model to move to an integrated partnership.



Improve outcomes for families by creating a more flexible and integrated offer.

Create a Better Start in Life pathway and framework under the Early Help redesign workstream.



Ensure all children are school ready and have improved outcomes during the early years.

Review oral health improvement delivery options.



Reduction in tooth decay in under 5's.

Recommission stop smoking services.



Ensure that the service contributes to reductions in smoking levels.

Recommission vision screening service with a view of reviewing service outcomes.



Increase the outcomes delivered from the service.

Review and provide options for the future sustainability of the Breastfeeding Support Programme.



Sustainability of the service and a plan post December 2021.



Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Work with Early Years providers to ensure that they are equipped to provide high quality childcare and early education.



More children will meet developmental milestones including reaching a good level of development at the end of their reception year.

Increase the number of children accessing their early education funding.



Children from disadvantaged groups will have improved educational outcomes.

Work with health visitors and early years providers to improve the integrated review at two years.



Information sharing between professionals will mean that children's needs are identified at the earliest point.

Support parents to access information, advice and guidance in a timely and accessible way.



Parents will receive the support they need, enabling them to help their children to reach their full potential.

GETTING ADVICE AND HELP

Early Help and Prevention

The current Early Intervention service was formed in 2018 at which point it was aligned to children's social care. Prior to that, early help services were primarily delivered through children's centres operating on a locality footprint alongside other local authority services including Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) support, drugs and alcohol support, youth services and some adult's services.

Since joining children's social care, the focus of the early intervention service has been on those families with multiple complex needs on the edge of social care. Support has also been provided to families already within the statutory arena, subject to child in need or child protection plans. Instead of focusing earlier on emerging needs within families and communities, the focus has been on adding capacity to over stretched statutory services and providing support as part of a step down process when the risk has safely reduced and statutory intervention can cease. The consequence of the above is that we have seen a sharp increase in the number of families reaching crisis point and an overwhelming year on year increase in the number of children coming into the care of the local authority.

The challenge now is to consider the early intervention service within the broader context of early help and prevention and not solely within the context of local authority children's services. Local partnership arrangements are in place, but, too often are not well co-ordinated and priorities are not strategically aligned.

A new Early Help and Prevention Board has been established consisting of a range of partners to work collaboratively in redesigning early help services in Stoke. The work of the Board will align to this commissioning strategy, the school improvement plan, a review of the public health 0-19 offer and the inclusion strategy. Initial work of the Board will focus on:

- Establishing priority areas of focus - the first two have been established, Early Years and Adolescence, in line with child exploitation work.
- Developing a collaborative Early Help and Prevention strategy which sets out the priorities, aims and how we will achieve them.
- Developing the THRIVE model for delivery of Early Help and Prevention services in Stoke.
- Embedding a restorative approach to practice across the partnership.
- Mapping the existing landscape and identifying gaps in current service provision.
- Local needs analysis - assessing need in the City and also in the four localities that we work to corporately, to develop a core early help offer complemented by more targeted services bespoke to family's needs.
- Integrating commissioning into the work of the Board to support a forward plan for services delivered and commissioned by the local authority.

The Opportunity Area has funded a major project called Better Together (now concluded), entailing social workers supporting schools in addressing the needs of children and families at the early stages. We are expecting the learning and legacy of this project to be carried forward by the LA and schools into the new Early Help and Prevention model.



Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Support the review and improvement of our Early Help and Prevention offer in line with Early Help and Prevention Board priorities.



Effective early help and prevention offer in the city to support reunification and keep families together.

Support the review of youth support including Youth Offending Service Prevention offer in line with the child exploitation work.



Adolescent support offer across the continuum of need.

Support the development of a service directory.



Partner and staff knowledge of early help and support available.

Vulnerable Children / Alternative Provision

There are currently 244 students accessing alternative provision in the city. These are made up of referrals from mainstream schools and permanent exclusions/ fair access students. Permanent exclusions in secondary education have been in excess of 50 students per year over the last 3 years. Permanent exclusion in primary schools has remained low however, traditionally, the local authority has part funded preventative placements for in excess of 20 students.

The Learning Pathways Team place children into alternative provision in a structured and safe way ensuring that their needs are met in their new setting. There are 22 providers with service level agreements in place, both registered and unregistered provision, available to Schools. The referrals process for the provisions is through the learning pathways team.

The challenges for alternative provision are:

- Provision for permanently excluded children is currently not meeting need and students are spending far too much time in alternative provision when they could be transitioning back into mainstream education.
- Primary and secondary provision for excluded students and those new into city is expensive and limited.
- Limited places within the city.



Doing this will improve/will achieve

Review commissioning arrangements of all alternative provision
6th day provision
Inspire
MERIT
Nisai



Wider variety of support packages will be available which meet the needs of our students.
Alternative provision will be best value therefore reducing cost.
More places available within the city
Efficient use of contracts.
More support in mainstream schools
More inclusive work with young people integrating into mainstream school.

Education Psychology

Stoke-on-Trent Educational Psychology Service provides support for children and young people in Early Years settings, schools, academies and colleges across the city. The support offers:

- Statutory work – contributing Psychological Advice to Education Health and Care needs assessments. Critical incident support across the city, Multi Agency Early Years Early support for young children who may meet the criteria for a statutory need’s assessment. Work relating to tribunals.
- Core Work- Link Educational Psychologists for schools and associated time linked to this. There is no cost for this at present.
- Traded service – This work is dependent on staffing numbers and capacity and offers a traded service to all Stoke-on-Trent schools/settings and academies, including a central training subscription offer and bespoke setting-based training courses. This work is funded by schools/settings, either individually or through academy chains and clusters.

The main challenges at present are the recruitment and retention of Educational Psychologists across the West Midlands. The market is competitive and financial incentives are being offered by some authorities. We are currently reviewing future delivery options of the Educational Psychology service including whether that be a purely Statutory model, one with a traded element or one with a broader early intervention early help model or a mixture of all.



**Doing this will
improve/will achieve**

Review of Education Psychology to inform options of delivery going forward.



A sustainable, education psychology offer which meets the needs of the children and young people in the city.

GETTING RISK SUPPORT

Children in Need and Safeguarding

The number of child in need plans have reduced to 3178; numbers subject to Child Protection plans is the highest it has ever been at 505 with a target of 356. Numbers of children in care has increased to 932 with a benchmark of 691.

The common themes with all families open to Children's Social Care in Stoke-on-Trent are:

- substance misuse, domestic violence and mental health. These issues rarely exist in isolation and there is a complex interaction between the three issues.
- neglect
- sexual abuse.

Many of these services are commissioned to work with the parents, however very little change appears to be sustainable and children then require care. Children, wherever possible should remain in their family even if their primary carers aren't able to meet their needs. These difficulties cut across all of the safeguarding service so services need to be interchangeable and remain a priority throughout.

We commission a range of services:

- Family Group Conferences - this should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity, where appropriate, when children become subject to child in need plans. However, this isn't routinely achieved and many of the referrals are made during child protection which is generally a much more contentious period of working with the family. The service is currently under review to look at the quality of this provision and whether it is having an impact in either identifying family as alternative carers or confirm that there is no option but to place child in formal foster care.
- Parenting assessments for parents with Learning needs (PAMS assessments) are currently provided by a pool of independent social workers and the quality of the assessments is inconsistent. A review is required to inform a way forward that will achieve better value for money and quality assessments and achieve better outcomes for children.
- First for Mums is a service which helps to support vulnerable mothers who experience successive removals of babies and children. It was evident that statutory services had been unable to fully engage with a small cohort of women who went on to have repeated pregnancies and removals. This pattern of behaviour was recognised as having a significant impact on the financial burden carried by local authority children's service in terms of support during pregnancy, the legal process required when an unborn child is placed on child protection with a planned removal at birth, and the on-going cost of caring for a child if placed in LA care. The current service needs a full review to establish future long-term delivery options.

The challenges are:

- Family Group conferences are taking place too late
- Parenting assessment quality is inconsistent



Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Review the Family Group Conference Service to provide options for commissioning direction.



- Early offer of Family Group Conference to prevent escalation of family's needs.
- Reduction of children in coming into care.

Review of Parenting assessments to inform commissioning direction.



- Consistent quality of assessments.
- Value for money service.

Review and Recommission First for Mums Service.



Reduce pressure on statutory services.

Virtual School

The Virtual School for our Children in Care commissions a number of services to ensure that we meet our statutory duties as a corporate parent and that our children and young people in care do as well as they possibly can in education where ever they are placed.

We commission a service that provides a team of educational engagement specialists that support our children in care with the most complex emotional needs to remain in mainstream education. They train key school staff in practical attachment-aware and trauma-informed strategies in order to better understand how to educate our children in care and meet their needs in mainstream education. A service review was conducted earlier this year which was positive. The next stage for this commissioned service will focus on further developing training for educational establishments as part of a city-wide strategy and supporting the Virtual School to respond more efficiently to the needs of our children in care placed outside of the city.

E-Gov is a commissioned service that provides a national web-based platform for the statutory Personal Education Plans which must be completed once per term for all children in care by their social worker, carers and the educational provision they attend. The service is currently in the process of being recommissioned.

Welfare Call is an attendance monitoring service that collects attendance information for all of our children in care placed outside of the city in non-Stoke-on-Trent schools or educational provision, the service is due to be re-commissioned.

Whilst there is work underway to ensure more Stoke-on-Trent children in care are placed in the borough and educated in the borough, there are currently a large number of children in care placed and educated out of borough, which are presenting the following challenges for the Virtual School:

- These children are outside the remit of the contract for support.
- The virtual school is asked to support finding school places. There is often a period of time when children are without education. Some of these children have complex emotional and trauma related needs.

To address these challenges, we need to re-focus our commissioned support to children placed outside of the city and consider a strategy going forward to upskill schools to support our children in care rather than providing staff in most circumstances.



Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Recommission education support service to focus on children placed outside of the city.



Children placed out of the city have support to meet their education needs.

Support our local foster carers; Internal and IFAs to support Virtual School Educational Attainment through Training and Development.



Children in Care will have additional educational support by their foster carers to support their educational attainment.

Upskill local school staff to better support our children in care and become less dependent on Virtual School providing the support.



School staff meeting the needs of our children in care to achieve their educational potential.

Secure Accommodation

There are currently 15 secure children's homes in England. The referral for these homes are managed through the 'Secure Welfare Coordination Unit'. There is a national issue with this provision including issues around bed availability, capacity, quality and cost effectiveness. These are being discussed at a national and regional level to address these concerns. Whilst we do not commission these services we need to work with the Unit and other agencies to ensure that we are addressing issues of capacity, quality and cost provision for our young people placed in secure accommodation.

Regular monitoring visits are required to review quality of care with information that focuses on outcomes achieved and a review of complaints.



Doing this will improve/will achieve

Establish a regular monitoring schedule for secure placements provision.



By regular contract quality monitoring, poor quality provision picked up quickly and resolved.

Review and commission step down provision from secure provision to meet the needs of our children and young people.



Choice of quality provision for children who step down from secure.

Work with National and Local DCS and Youth Justice Board groups reviewing the needs of secure accommodation.



Ensure that the needs of our young people needing secure accommodation are improved by the new National and Regional arrangements for secure provision.

Independent Foster Agencies (IFAs) Placements

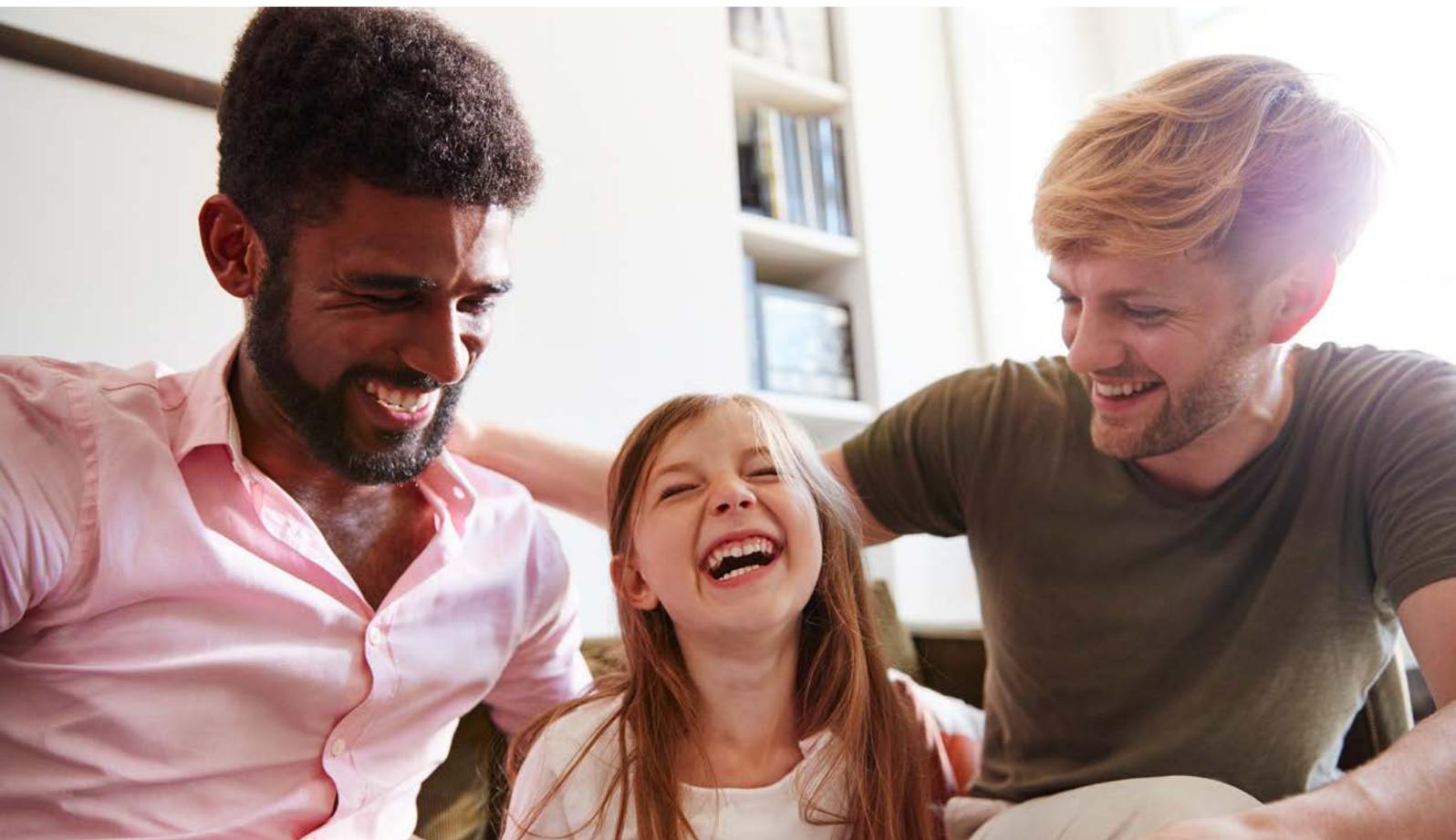
Our sufficiency strategy 2020-23 has recently been published, which gives a detailed overview of our plans to improve the quality, availability, location and cost effectiveness of our children in care placements.

There is currently a lack of sufficiency within the Independent Fostering Agency market, both within Stoke-on-Trent and within the West Midlands. Although providers have continued to increase the numbers of carers in recent times, this has not kept up with the demand from local authorities. This has led to local authorities competing over placements, and agencies cherry picking referrals.

We need to maximise the fostering offer as a whole inclusive of In-House services and the Independent Fostering Agencies. We need to increase the number of short- and long-term foster carers for older children and for short break foster carers. Our Aim is to grow our own local market and still have the advantages of utilising the regional frameworks as and when required. Growing our own local fostering market will ensure:

- Children remain local
- We have more control over staying put arrangement's
- We can work with the local market to establish permanency into our contracts
- We can develop allowances to enhance recruitment and retention
- Negotiate our own prices with the market
- Monitor services better
- Manage the financial budget more efficiently

Our plans for fulfilling our duties in providing sufficient placements include the following themes:





Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Market engagement to develop a preferred provider list of 10 top Independent Fostering Agencies.



Range of placement options to meet local needs.

Negotiate cost and volume discounts with main providers.



Reduction in cost.

Establish a regular contract and quality monitoring schedule for Independent Fostering Agencies.



By regular contract quality monitoring, poor quality provision picked up quickly and resolved.

Support agencies to upskill workforce to manage more challenging young people and support placement stability.



Less placement breakdowns.

Residential Placements

There is a lack of sufficiency within the residential market currently both within Stoke-on-Trent and regionally in the West Midlands. There is a lack of provision for children with high needs, for example DOLs orders, 2:1 staffing and solo provisions. The market is flooded with referrals at the moment which has led to providers cherry picking from referrals and local authorities competing for placements, with high costs placements and variable quality of provision. Quite often there are placement breakdowns with no solution focused support/alternative placement options and costs are increased with very limited information explaining why when additional services are required.

Within Stoke-on-Trent we have some very well-established providers of children's residential care, however there isn't enough sufficiency locally which has led to children being placed out of area. We are signed up to the West Midlands Regional Framework for Children's homes, which allows us to manage the market at a regional level to some extent and monitors value for money and quality.





Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Market engagement to develop a preferred provider list of 10 top residential providers.



Range of placement options to meet local needs.

Negotiate cost and volume discounts with main and local providers.



Reduction in cost.

Establish a regular contract and quality monitoring schedule for placements.



By regular contract quality monitoring, poor quality provision picked up quickly and resolved.

Support agencies to upskill workforce to manage more challenging young people and support placement stability.



Less placement breakdowns.

CROSS CUTTING THEMES

Sexual Health

Sexual Health - Prevention and timely access to support, information, advice and treatment services is key to reducing teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and supporting young people to develop healthy relationships and protect them from the harm caused by unhealthy or abusive relationships. We need to identify and address gaps in our service provision particularly in relation to support for a young person with a positive pregnancy test.



Doing this will
improve/will achieve

Review and recommission our
Integrated sexual health service.



Service which meets the needs of
young people with a positive test.



Substance Misuse

Alcohol

Alcohol is a causal factor in more than 60 medical conditions, including circulatory and digestive diseases, liver disease, a number of cancers and depression. Alcohol is the leading risk factor for ill-health, early mortality and disability among people aged 15-49 years in the UK. Alcohol-related harm falls disproportionately on poorer families. For Stoke-on-Trent:

- On average, over three people (3.4) die a week in the city from an alcohol-related problem
- 43% of adults (aged 18 and over) were drinking at levels of increasing or higher risk in Stoke-on-Trent (Adult Health and Lifestyle Survey 2019)
- In 2018, there were almost 2,600 years of life lost due to alcohol-related conditions in Stoke-on-Trent.
- Latest data from the Local Alcohol Profiles for England show that compared to England, Stoke-on-Trent had significantly higher levels of alcohol-related mortality (all ages, 2018) and hospital admissions for alcohol-specific conditions (all ages, 2018/19).
- In Stoke-on-Trent, 27.6% of people in treatment successfully completed treatment for alcohol in 2018, which is significantly below the national average of 37.6%.

Drugs

A person's drug use or dependence can significantly affect their families, friends, communities, along with their own health. For Stoke-on-Trent:

- An estimated 2,654 opiate and crack users aged 15-64 (2014/15), which is a higher rate of use in the city (16.4) compared with England (8.6 (per 1,000, 15-64 year olds), 2014/15)
- A higher proportion of local people (27.4%) in drug treatment (aged 18 and over) who were in contact with the criminal justice system compared with England (20.9%, 2017/18)
- A lower proportion of local opiate users (aged 18 and over) successfully completing drug treatment compared with England (3.8% versus 5.8%, 2018). This is the first time since 2012 that successful completions have increased within the city
- A lower proportion of local non-opiate users (aged 18 and over) successfully completing drug treatment compared with England in 2018 (21.7% versus 34.4%). This proportion has fallen locally from a high of 48.4% in 2014.
- 64 deaths (all ages) from drug misuse in the city in 2016-18 which is a local rate of 9.0 (per 100,000) compared with 4.5 in England.

Young People's lifestyle survey found that:

- The proportion of current smokers among secondary school pupils in the city has fallen from 13% in 2009 to 5% in 2019
- The proportion of pupils who had ever tried smoking fell from 40% in 2009 to 7% in 2019
- The proportion of young people exposed to second-hand smoke in their homes fell from 28% in 2009 to 15% in 2019 and the proportion exposed to second-hand smoke in their bedrooms fell during this time from 16% to 3%.
- In 2019, 18% of pupils said they had tried an e-cigarette
- 38% of pupils had ever had any alcoholic drink, with 13% reporting drinking within a week prior to the survey
- Less young people are drinking, with two thirds of Year 11 pupils (15-16 year olds) reporting ever having tried alcohol in 2019 compared with 84% in 2009
- The proportion of young people who had taken any sort of drug in the last month increased from 2% in 2017 to 5% in 2019
- The proportion of pupils who had ever taken cannabis has fallen from 10% in 2009 to 3% in 2019

Substance misuse continues to be an issue in the city impacting on children and families. Treatment outcomes in the city are generally worse than across the region.

The current Substance misuse service is delivered by Stoke-on-Trent Community Drug and Alcohol Service, work is underway to deliver efficiency savings during 2020/21. Changes to treatment provision as a result of efficiency savings may impact on the treatment offer.



**Doing this will
improve/will achieve**

Review the current substance misuse contract with the provider to meet local need and deliver efficiencies required.



Efficient service, service meeting the needs of young people in Stoke-on-Trent.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse services are provided by New Era, a partnership of Victim Support who provide victim services and the Reducing Reoffending Partnership (Community Rehabilitation Company) who provide perpetrator services.

The service is jointly-commissioned across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, between the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office who is the lead commissioner, Stoke-on-Trent City Council Community Safety and Staffordshire County Council. The service provides support for adults, children and young people across the continuum of need including education and awareness, group work for standard risk victims, and IDVA support for high-risk victims.

The children's service supports children who are both witnesses of parental domestic abuse and young people who themselves are victims in teenage relationships. The perpetrator service also supports young people who are displaying abuse behaviours. This is a much smaller service and there is no dedicated children and young person's team.

There has been a recent uplift in funding to manage short term capacity issues as a result of inefficiencies around pathways into the service and the appropriateness of some referrals received. Work will address these wider system issues in the longer-term, noting that these are external factors affecting the service rather than a result of the service itself.

There are other local domestic abuse services in Stoke-on-Trent who compliment the service delivered by New Era, these are provided by Glow. This service is a housing support service (including refugee).



Doing this will improve/will achieve

Review the current service to inform future commissioning.



Efficient service, service meeting the needs of young people in Stoke-on-Trent.

Children's mental health and emotional wellbeing

Stoke-on-Trent City Council & Clinical Commissioning Group have legal duties to deliver improvements in children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing outcomes which is a priority in the Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs).

The CCG currently commission and contract manage the main CAMHS block contract provided by North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust (NSCHCT). This contract includes CAMHS support to Looked after Children. This element of the contract has few targets and those which are present do not provide the information required to assess the impact of the service for this specific cohort of children.

Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) Trailblazer - The City Council is a member of the steering group for the CCG-led Trailblazer programme. The current provider is NSCHCT. The project provides Mental Health Support Teams in schools and colleges.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the CCG jointly commission services to improve mental wellbeing to prevent and offer support for mild to moderate emotional wellbeing and mental health issues presenting in children and young people between the age of 5- 18 years old (to the 18th birthday) This is part of a pooled budget (section 256). The City Council commission and contract manage these services:

Staying Well -The Staying Well service promotes mental wellbeing and resilience for children and young people and their families and the prevention of mental ill health developing. The Provider of these services is Changes Health and Wellbeing. This provision focuses on providing knowledge and skills to children, young people and parents to enable them to better manage mental wellbeing and identify and respond well to emerging issues, it also includes a training and support element for front-line universal staff working with children and young people and their families.

Changing Minds - the provider of this service is Changing Minds and there are two elements to this service:

Core service: Improving outcomes for looked after children and young people where mental health, trauma and risk-taking is, or has been, a cause of concern for placement stability. For children and young people who are in one of the council's small group homes (SGH), there is additional support to the staff to support indirect work with the young people. This is in addition to any direct support the young person themselves is entitled to from NSCHCT and is aimed at creating a psychologically informed staffing contingent and approach in the homes.

Pilot: Expanding the core service to in-house foster carers to support children and young people who will have had previous placement breakdowns or are preparing to "step down" from residential settings into foster care. Expected outcomes include increased placement stability and more children being able to be placed and remain with in-house foster carers, reducing the need for external residential placements and improving placement stability. The pilot has not been utilised to the full extent and will be reviewed in June 2020.

We spot purchase therapeutic support via the Adoption Support Fund (ASF)



Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Continue to build on the existing joint commissioning relationships.



Improved outcomes for our looked after children.

Review with the CCG the LAC element of the CAMHS block contract.



Ensuring children in care have improved mental health.

Responsible commissioner remit to be clarified, agreed and understood agreed by both agencies.



Increased staff knowledge and understanding of the guidance, and reduce the waste in time and resource to achieve joint funding decisions.

Review the Changing Minds Pilot project to ensure effective use of resources and pilot impact.



- Reduction of spot purchasing psychological assessments.
- Increase in use of in house foster carers and placement stability, reducing the need for external residential placements.

Child Exploitation

Stoke-on-Trent have well developed procedures to identify and support children who are at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation. This area of work has been a priority of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board since 2015. Through the commitment of all agencies we have made significant advances in this area and have a well-co-ordinated response.

Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Services are provided by Catch22. The service is jointly commissioned across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire between Stoke-on-Trent City Council who is the lead commissioner, Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Commissioners Office. The service provides support for children and young people across the continuum of need for those children at risk or who are being sexually exploited. The service also carries out return home interviews for children when they return from a missing episode.

In relation to child exploitation, our vision is to work in partnership to prevent child exploitation from happening and, where it does happen, to ensure that victims are supported and perpetrators are held to account for their actions and face the full extent of the law.

Tackling child exploitation is a complex task, therefore adopting the umbrella term of child exploitation provides the opportunity to bring together these complex work areas. We are therefore in the process of significant system re-design redesigning pathways, internal services, introducing Multi Agency Child Exploitation Panels MACE and introducing a new programme of training and intervention for workers as we move from Child Sexual Exploitation to Child Exploitation.

This process will help to inform our commissioning vision going forward for the current Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Service.

We recognise that we need to:

- Commission a service providing lived experience for our young people who are at risk of or being exploited is very effective for those who are at high risk and will achieve improved outcomes for these young people. At present these services are currently spot purchased.
- Review the way that harmful sexual behaviour support is commissioned; at present this is spot purchased.



Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Re-commission the Child Sexual Exploitation & Missing service with partners to meet our needs for child exploitation support.



All children at risk of exploitation will receive intervention that aims to minimise the risks and improve their outcomes and safeguard children.

Commission a service to provide lived experienced mentor/support for children who are high risk.



To ensure that those children who are currently being exploited have the best chance to be safeguarded.

Carry out engagement with young people and their parent/carers to inform system and service re-design and re-commissioning.



The service response will be informed by children and parents with lived experience thus ensuring it will be effective as it will focus on what matters.

Explore the need and demand for commissioning harmful sexual behaviour support.



Children who have displayed sexually harmful behaviour will receive the support and intervention they require which will minimise the chance for future children to be victimised.

Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The Children and Families Act (2014) and Code of Practice for Special Education Needs (SEN) (2014 and 2015) places explicit duties on local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) for developing joint commissioning arrangements for education, health and care provision for children and young people with SEN or disabilities. The duty includes the joint arrangements for commissioning services to improve outcomes for 0 to 25-year-old children and young people with SEND, including those with Education Health and Care (EHC) plans.

The local area of Stoke-on-Trent (including the Council and CCG) was inspected in 2016, in the early stages of the SEND inspection processes. As the first phase of these inspections comes to an end in the next year, there will be a phase two SEND inspection, which we will need to ensure we are prepared for.

Since the first inspection, there has been a range of workstreams, actions and strategies which have been produced to take forward the SEND offer to children, young people and families. This commissioning strategy is linked with the Inclusion Strategy, which is being developed currently. The strategy will describe how we will strengthen our services and offer for children with SEND, as well as wider communities. It will give a direction to our next steps in Integrated working for families with SEND.

There are 2260 children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans in the city. We have 13.1% identified as having SEN Support in mainstream provision; this is compared with 11.9% National Average and Statistical Neighbours 12.8% and 12.6% West Midlands. The data shows that Stoke-on-Trent has a higher than National Average and Statistical Neighbours on numbers of children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans at 3.7%, National 3.1%, Statistical Neighbours 3.1% West Midlands 3.1% (0-25)

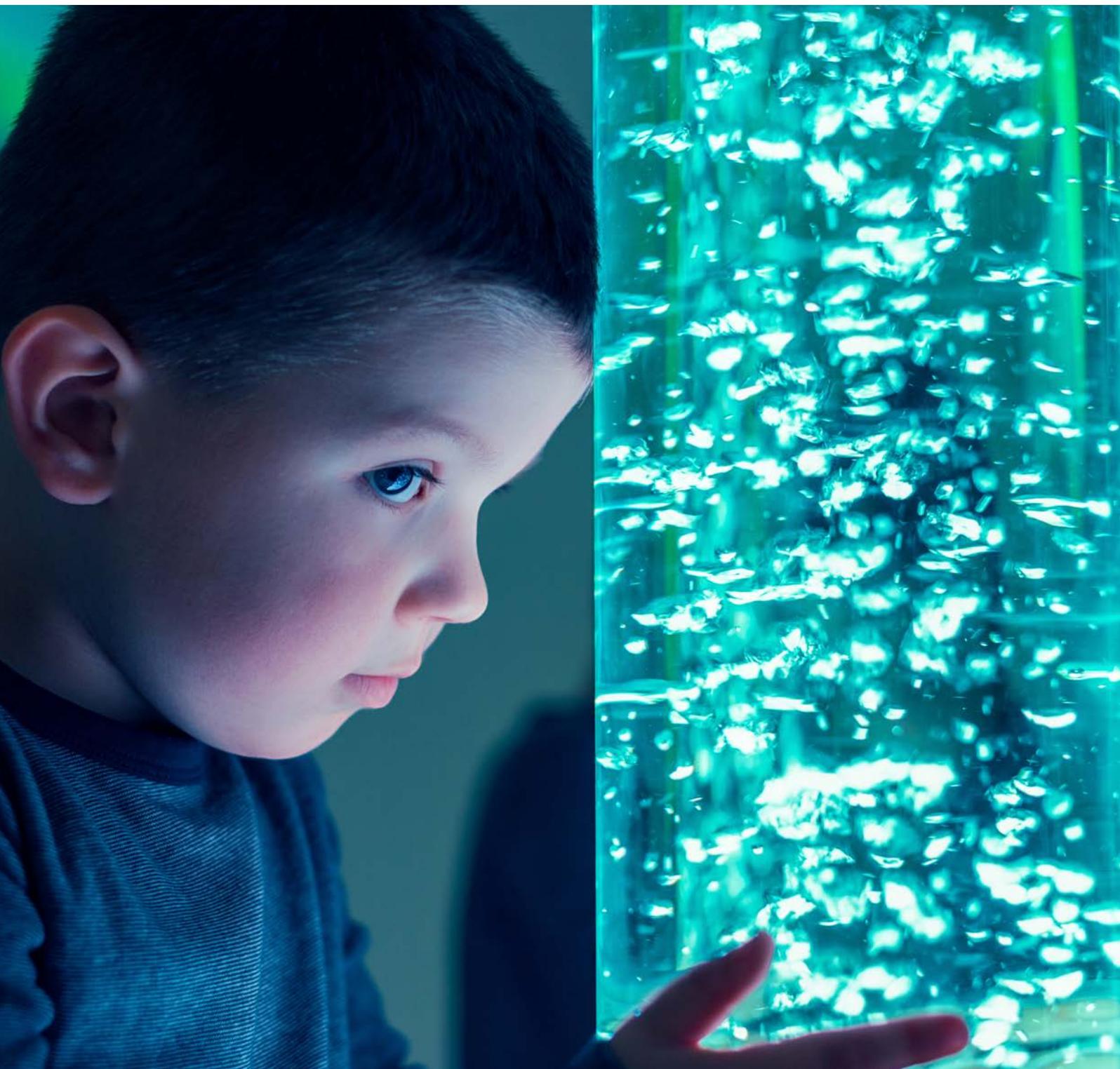
Our Children with Disabilities Team works closely with Education and Health to ensure that children with disabilities and their families receive the joined-up support they require. There are a number of forums where partners come together to look at the plans for children with additional needs including the Early Years Forum, The Multi-Agency Short Breaks Forum, The EHC Panel and Continuing Care Panel.

There are 258 children open to the children with disabilities social work team at present, the lowest numbers open in recent years. We have worked hard over the years to develop a short breaks support system for children and families, on evidence-based escalation with a fluid step up/step down for support.

Our commissioned Aiming High Short breaks service delivered by Action for Children Ltd offers community short breaks for children with disabilities and is our early intervention and prevention offer. Strong links with other short break providers and the social work team are evident, through the Multi-Agency Short Breaks Forum, and they play a major role in the prevention of escalation to statutory services.

Direct Payments Support Service - commissioned and delivered by People Plus Ltd, who support parent/carers in brokering Personal Assistant (PA)/Agency support and support PA packages. The direct payment rate is too low and has not been reviewed for many years. The rate is being reviewed and developing a framework for agencies or alternative way to commission agency support is being considered

Support for our most complex children is being spot purchased from agencies at high cost where it is available and where we have been unable to identify sufficient support. Some families have been unable to continue to meet the needs of their child at home. A joint commissioning arrangement with learning services and the CCG is required for purchasing support for these children through Transforming Care



Residential Short Breaks:

The City Council have an in-house unit, Woodview, that provides residential short breaks for some of the city's children and young people. The unit is up to capacity with no planned moves until 2021, therefore any overnight residential short breaks are currently spot purchased due to lack of capacity in our inhouse unit. A review of the statement of purpose is also required to be more flexible to be able to meet the needs of our children.

The CCG's health unit is Dragon's Square. This unit is 100% health funded via the mental health block contract and North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust deliver this service and it is a joint Stoke-on-Trent/North Staffordshire provision.

As part of the development of our Inclusion strategy we will be considering how we can better integrate social care and education services for children with disabilities and SEND which will include a greater focus on Preparation for Adulthood and the transition pathways to adulthood. Our last SEND Inspection in 2016 highlighted effective processes for assessing children's needs related to education, health and social care.

Strong and proactive links are well established with PEGIS (Parent Engagement Group in Stoke-on-Trent) whose role is to support parents around special educational needs and disability. We know that further work needs to take place in partnership with the national organisation CONTACT and our families to broaden our Parent Carer Forum in the city for SEND to access the national grant available.

We have four Special schools in the city all graded good by Ofsted, one Alternative Provision Academy Reach (PRU), one Pupil Referral Unit (Medical) Merit and one additionally Resourced Provision for children and young people Reception to Key Stage 2

We have 11% of children in Independent Special Schools compared with National 6%, West Midlands 6%, Statistical Neighbours 6%. This is published data and the figure is reducing. At present Stoke-on-Trent uses approximately 34 independent sector placements for both pre and post 16 children and Young People. These are spot purchased placements and there are expectations that fees are paid a term in advance with some placements.

These placements are not always local to the city thus transport costs are also high. At present there are no children and young people placed in residential educational provision for just educational reasons. Some of these placements are high cost and are tribunal-directed and often the cost of therapies/provision included in the fees have not been identified as an assessed need in the EHC Plan. There is also a need, in some cases, for more bespoke packages particularly for post 19 to support transition into adulthood.

However, some placement costs are comparable with the top end of our maintained provision. There will always be a need for some independent sector placements but it is important we are clear who are the appropriate client group.

We have very strong links with our Parents group, PEGIS, which ensures that we are able to work in a co-productive manner where parents have a real voice. More work needs to be undertaken to ensure that the voice of children with additional needs and disabilities positively impacts on the services that they receive.



Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Review of commissioning arrangements of independent sector placements.



- Commissioning arrangements in place to reduce the need to spot purchase high cost placements.
- Choice of appropriate provision to meet our needs.
- Cost effective placements, reducing the high cost placements.

Ensure there are effective integrated governance arrangements to discuss, plan and review services for and with SEND families.



Improved oversight of performance, outcomes and outputs for services.

Review of residential short break provision in house.



We will ensure sufficient overnight short break capacity exists to meet the needs of our children and families.

Work with CCG as they review health residential short breaks provision.



To ensure that the health needs of disabled children continue to be met.



Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Direct payments rate review, and use of agencies.



To ensure that children can receive support by a Personal Assistant in relation to short breaks, personal care and social opportunities.

Work closely with CCG to establish clear process, pathways and support for transforming care cohort.



To enable children to continue to live safely within their families.

Work with CONTACT and VAST to broaden our Parent Carer Forum.



Partnership arrangement with broader parent forum who will have regional and national presence and attract the national ringfenced funding into the city for parent engagement.

School Transport

School Transport is provided via a framework contract with local transport providers from taxis to bus / coaches. This framework is available and used for school transport and social care transport needs. There are almost 900 children and young adults who have been assessed and are eligible for free travel assistance. This is offered by a space on a share taxi, bus pass or a personal budget. A weekly panel currently meet to discuss which option of transport support meets the pupil's needs and is the most appropriate use of the local authority travel assistance budget. Any decisions regarding SEN travel assistance is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the children and young people are still eligible and require travel assistance.

The travel assistance budget is insufficient to meet the demands and therefore significant pressure is placed on this budget. School transport needs a review as part of the commissioning process.

Significant work with the market is required as, at present, the market does not have the vehicles to match our demands efficiently. Providers are also finding children's challenging behaviour an issue which results in refusals to transport or requests for solo taxis. These issues are contributing additional cost to the budget and need to be addressed going forward.

There has been a reduction in Independent Travel training offered over the years and this is now virtually non-existent, when this did exist it did not follow through to the young person travelling independently. This needs to be reconsidered as part of the overall review on transport for our SEN children and young people to promote independence rather than dependence.



Actions we will take

Doing this will improve/will achieve

Review transport framework and recommission.



- A service which is efficient and effectively meeting the transport needs of children assessed.
- Reduce the current pressure on the budget.

Work with the market to ensure the vehicles and services are available to meet the needs of our children and young people.



There is sufficient choice of vehicles which meet our needs and a provider workforce confident to be able to meet the children's needs.

Re-instating independent travel training.



Confident young people able to travel independently, prepared for adulthood and reduction in reliance of transport moving into adulthood.

MEASURING SUCCESS

We believe it is important that this strategy remains a live document. There will be annual reviews and oversight from both our Corporate Parenting Panel and the 0-25 Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure the strategy remains as relevant in 2023 as it is now.

We will evaluate the impact of this strategy through feedback from young people and their families through our co-production and engagement mechanisms and via Ofsted inspection feedback.

NEXT STEPS – ACTION PLAN

The Commissioning Commercialisation and Contracts Board will be responsible for the creation and monitoring of the commissioning action plan which will include key performance indicators to ensure the achievement of the actions and outcomes outlined in this strategy. The action plan will reflect a phased approach over the next three years.



CONCLUSION

Stoke-on-Trent is committed to ensuring our children and young people are able to fulfil their potential; socially, educationally, emotionally and financially. We know that to improve experiences and outcomes we need to ensure young people are actively involved in the commissioning, delivery and review of services and this needs to happen developmentally, however at pace.

Our commissioning approach is important for joint working with our partners and our commitment to excellent commissioning starts with a renewed focus on transforming services to achieve successful outcomes which can be sustained.

We will continue to develop strong relationships with our providers, particularly the VCSE working in partnership to achieve our shared priorities in delivering our vision for improved outcomes.

There are elements of this strategy which link in with other Children's Improvement Strategy themes and wider Council priorities; this will act as an enabler to ensure we effectively deliver to agreed outcomes and timescales.

The actions identified in this strategy and action plan will be monitored through different programmes around commissioning and practice and will link to the Children's Improvement Plan and Children and Young People's Strategic Plan.





City of
Stoke-on-Trent