

Stoke-on-Trent

# Early Help and Prevention Strategy

for Children, Young People and  
Families 2020 – 2024

Consultation Draft





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# STOKE-ON-TRENT CORPORATE VISION



The Stronger Together vision sets out the priorities for Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the wider city. The strategic plan has been shaped by the political ambition of the City Council's leadership, as well as the values and aims of the organisation. As such, it is as much a corporate plan for the council's directorates and teams as it is a strategic blueprint for improving Stoke-on-Trent as a city. Our Stronger Together principle is embedded into every strategy inclusive of our local sufficiency strategy which is set out within this document.

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





**Support vulnerable people in our communities to live their lives well**

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



**Enable our residents to fulfil their potential**

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



**Help businesses to thrive and make our city more prosperous**

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



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

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



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

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

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Stoke-on-Trent Early Help and Prevention Strategy 2020 - 2024 sets out our approach to ensuring that effective early help and support is available to children and families in Stoke-on-Trent.

The strategy should be read within the context of the overarching Children, Young People and Families' Strategy which sets out the vision for all children in Stoke-on-Trent. This strategy is also a key part of our ambitious plans to transform Children and Young People's services in Stoke-on-Trent. The document provides a high-level summary of need within the City based on the most up to date baseline data within the 2019 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. It also sets out the priorities of the Early Help and Prevention Board, the partnership body responsible for overseeing the strategy and the delivery plan that accompanies it. The strategy will be supported by the Children's Commissioning Strategy, the Early Years Plan, the Special Needs Inclusion plan, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Education Improvement Plan and the Youth Justice Strategy, among others.

The strategy aims to:

- Improve access to advice, help and support
- Develop a core local offer of early help and prevention support
- Improve the quality and co-ordination of early help and prevention services
- Empower families and communities
- Increase engagement from children and families
- Support the delivery and commissioning of evidence-based programmes and initiatives tailored to local need

Stoke-on-Trent faces a number of challenges in delivering timely, effective, good quality early help, advice and support to children and families as needs emerge and before they escalate. The landscape has become fragmented over recent years with some services unable to sustain at previous levels due to reduced funding and the need to shift resource downstream to support statutory services or crisis led interventions.

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.

The mapping and analysis undertaken to develop this strategy identifies principles, themes and actions which will enable us to overcome the challenges that Stoke-on-Trent face. The strategy sets out the need to work in a different way, to embrace a radical shift in thinking away from a drawbridge approach to service delivery provision that has in the past, insisted on families needing to prove their level of need they are before they meet the threshold for support.

This strategy will enable families to access help and support before crisis occurs, early enough to improve outcomes and prevent future needs re-occurring.

Our priorities are;

- Early Years – giving all children the best start in life
- Adolescence – supporting older children as they transition into adulthood
- Support for schools – as they support all children to realise their potential
- Support for parents – to be the best they can be for their children

The strategy introduces an exciting new delivery model for early help and prevention services, one that supports families to ‘thrive’ for as long as possible, drawing on support from the appropriate services in a timely way, only when it is necessary. Instead of a hierarchical model of escalating need, unlocking drawbridges towards the inner keep of specialist services, the THRIVE model adopts a fluid and flexible model that recognises that families’ needs will change over time but that doesn’t have to be a linear journey up and down the 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 with their needs and cope with their challenges.

‘Thrive’ is relationship-based and restorative in nature. This approach will underpin the delivery of this strategy, including the development of our workforce to ensure that all professionals, volunteers and peer mentors are suitably skilled, equipped and confident to play their part. The strategy embraces locality-based working to ensure that children and families can access help, advice and support where possible within their own community. It is our intention to develop a core locality offer for children of all ages and their parents, that can be accessed no matter where in the City you live. That will be complemented by more targeted support for those who need it through access to specialist services.

The strategy will create a space in which statutory partners, voluntary and faith sector services, families and communities co-exist and complement each other as part of a wider safeguarding community.

We believe it is important that this strategy remains a live document. There will be six-monthly reviews and oversight from both the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership Board and Children’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure the strategy remains as relevant in three years as it is now.

As a Children, Young People and Families’ Strategic Partnership, we strongly believe in providing the best quality help and support to children and families at the earliest opportunity. This strategy forms part of our approach to the delivery of that ambition.

# INTRODUCTION

The Stoke-on-Trent Early Help and Prevention strategy sets out our ambition for the development of early help and prevention services and the principles that guide us. It also sets out the priorities of the Early Help and Prevention Partnership and what we hope to achieve. As a Partnership, it is our aspiration that our practitioners, irrespective of their formal positions, develop a shared approach to working with children and families that makes the most of their collective knowledge, skills and experience.

Professor Eileen Munro highlighted in her review of child protection that ‘preventative services can do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services.’ The national report, *Working Together* (2018) requires local partners to have in place effective ways of identifying emerging concerns and potential unmet need for individual children and their families. It also requires local partners to work together to put processes in place for the effective assessment of the needs of individual children who may benefit from early help services. This strategy and the wider work of the Board have been heavily influenced and informed by these key works plus the evidence available from the Early Intervention Foundation as to what works.



# WHY DO WE NEED A STRATEGY?

Stoke-on-Trent has a clear vision for all children in the City, it is ambitious and we accept that we are starting from a low base in challenging circumstances. We recognise that the provision of an effective system of prevention and early help for families is critical in supporting children and families in achieving their potential. In the recent past, our child protection services have become overwhelmed and we have too many children in care. We are in the unwelcome position of spending much higher sums on reactive crisis-led interventions than our statistical neighbours. Prevention and early intervention offers a greater return on social investment. Investing in early help is significantly better for children, better for our local safeguarding system and more cost effective for the public purse, including the 'Stoke pound'.

We want all of our children and young people to fulfil their potential and thrive but we recognise that many families in Stoke-on-Trent experience short and sometimes longer-term difficulties and at times, may need advice, help and support to overcome them. It is vital then that those families benefit from the best quality professional help and support at the earliest opportunity. We also recognise that often, the solutions to such difficulties lie not within professional services, but in communities and families themselves. Stoke-on-Trent is a city with strong communities, a sense of pride and huge potential. The Early Help and Prevention Board seeks to bring together partner agencies, families and communities to deliver the right support at the right time before difficulties escalate or become entrenched. As a partnership we want to do better for our children, this strategy will set out how.

## THE STRATEGY IN CONTEXT

All partners in Stoke-on-Trent recognise that early help is a partnership approach, not a specific 'one service' provision. Likewise, this strategy is not a standalone document. It is an integral strand of the Children, Young People and Families' Strategy and has important links to other preventative strategies, education and public health initiatives that provide the earliest support to children and families. The strategy will also contribute to all of the priorities within the City Council's 'Stronger Together' vision.



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.

Likewise, the Early Help and Prevention Board adopt the priorities set out within the Children, Young People and Families' Strategy 2020 - 2024.

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board have created a set of principles that will guide the way we work under the mnemonic, 'ROOM TO GROW'. The Board and all of its sub-groups will adopt the same principles.

This strategy will also be guided and supported by:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- School Improvement Strategy
- Children, Young People and Families' Strategy 2020 - 2024
- Stoke-on-Trent Early Years Plan
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Youth Justice Strategy
- Special Needs Inclusion Strategy
- Stoke-on-Trent Children's Services Improvement Plan 2020
- Children's Commissioning Strategy

This Early Help and Prevention Strategy provides an overview of the current situation, sets out the Early Help and Prevention Board's priorities for 2020-2024 and intentions to improve outcomes for children and families by:

- Improving access to advice, help and support
- Developing a core local offer of early help and prevention support
- Improving the quality and co-ordination of early help and prevention services
- Empowering families and communities
- Increasing engagement from children and families
- Delivering and commissioning evidence-based programmes and initiatives tailored to local need

It will be supported by an Action plan that will be refreshed annually.

## IN SUMMARY:

Accessing the  
right advice, help  
and support

Developing clear pathways so that children and families can access help, advice and support swiftly and easily.

At the  
right time

Identifying needs as they emerge and ensuring services are able to respond swiftly, effectively and flexibly.

From the  
right service

Ensuring a range of early help and prevention services are co-ordinated within an effective locality-based system of support.



# BACKGROUND

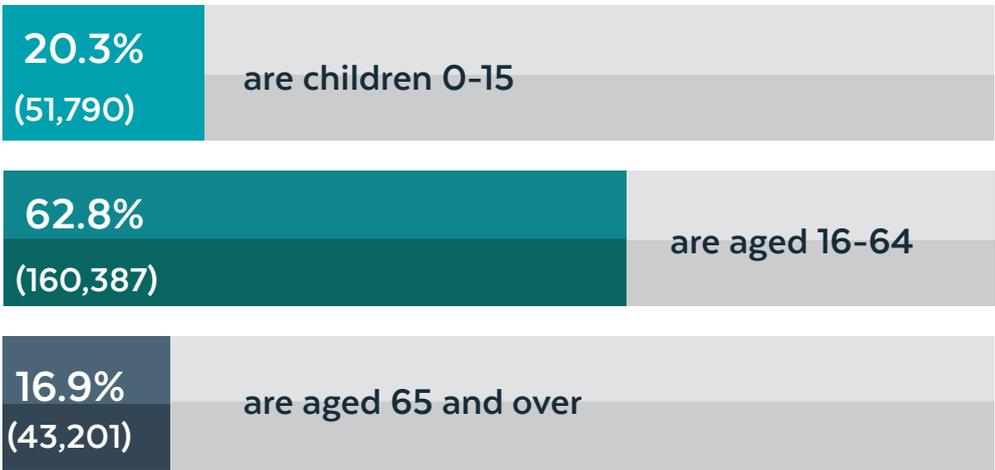
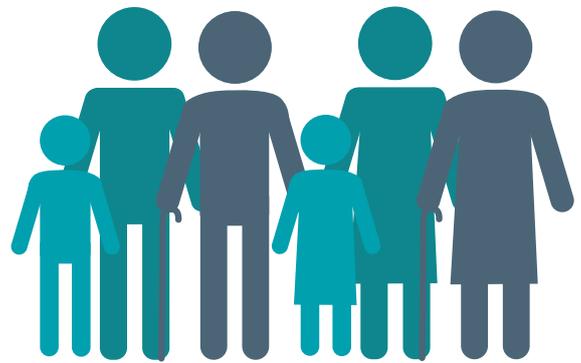
## Children and Young People – Strategic Measures

Stoke-on-Trent has an overall population of 255,378, 24% of which are aged between 0 – 18 years old. The baseline data for the 2019 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) suggests that Stoke-on-Trent is the 13th most deprived area in the country. The city has an historic industrious background rooted in the pottery and mining industries. The effects these industries have had on the population of residents is portrayed mainly through poor health and poor education, which is highlighted in the fact that the literacy levels in the city are low.

### Population

# 255,378

people live in Stoke-on-Trent



 Around **3,300** babies born a year

**20.2%** of people are from minority ethnic groups

# 22% of children

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



# 23.8%

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



# 9.5%

of babies have a low birthweight (England 7.3%)



Too many of our children experience a poor start in life. We have too many low birthweight babies, the second highest infant mortality rate in England and too few children meeting their key developmental milestones at age 5. Some of our children and young people face profound disadvantage with 23.8% living in poverty (against a national average of 16.8%). Our children don't do as well at school on average as England as a whole at both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. Despite a recent increase, the percentage of two year olds benefitting from a funded early years place remains below the average rate of our statistical neighbours. Take-up of free places for three and four-year-olds in Stoke-on-Trent is low and is a key priority for the local authority and partners. Too few Stoke-on-Trent young people go on to university. We have comparative high levels of obesity at age 11 and tooth decay by aged 5. We have disproportionately high numbers of children in care.

The proportion of young people aged 16-17 who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) or whose activity is not known was 4.4% in Stoke-on-Trent compared with 6.0% in England (in 2016).

A coherent, collaborative early help and preventative offer in Stoke-on-Trent can contribute to improving many of these poor outcomes for children and make Stoke-on-Trent a better place to grow up. We will know that our offer is having a positive impact when more children and families are thriving.

## If we succeed...children and young people will tell us:



“I feel like my voice is heard and my views are listened to.”

“I know who to speak to if I need advice, help or support to prevent problems from occurring or getting worse.”



“I feel supported at school and want to do well.”

“I have a strong and supportive network of family and friends in my community.”



“I want to make a positive contribution with my life and I know how to do it.”

“I feel that within my community, I am recognised and accepted for who I am.”



“I am part of a community where diversity is celebrated.”

“I want to succeed at school and make the most of the opportunities available when I leave school.”



“I enjoy socialising with my friends. I have access to activities that I am interested in.”

“I feel safe in the community where I live.”



## If we succeed....parents and guardians will tell us:



"I know how to give my child the best start in life."

"I know how to support my child's development."



"I feel confident in my own ability to support my child/ren."

"I know how to help my children to make the most of the opportunities they have."



"I am interested in my child's education and I encourage them to achieve."

"I feel able to support my child's social and emotional wellbeing."



"I know how to support my teenage children."

"I know what to do to protect my children from harm."



"I know where to go to get advice, help and support."

"I feel supported, not judged."



"I am part of a community where diversity is celebrated."

# Actions we will take



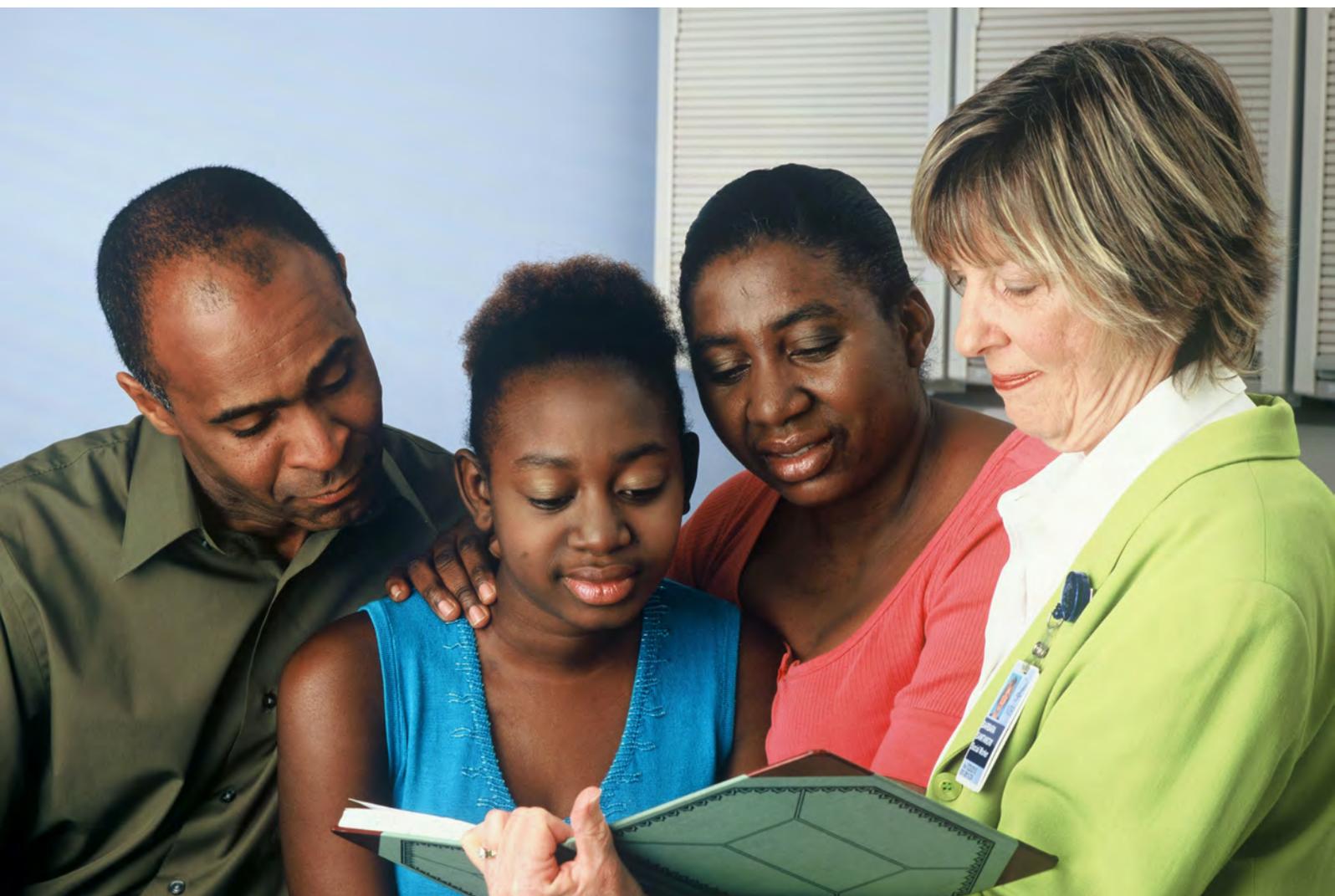
Ensure active co-production with children and families in service design, review and development



Develop engagement groups through which children, young people, parents and carers will share their views and experiences of early help and support



Identify innovative ways to collate feedback from children, young people, families and carers



# PRIORITIES

Each of our priorities will be pursued through a tailored approach because they are important and need detailed attention.

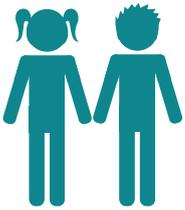
## Best start in life



This means the integrated delivery of services from conception through to the end of reception year, including the development of positive attachment and social empathy. It includes the Healthy Child programme, school readiness and a commitment to narrowing the gap between children who are achieving and those who are not. It will have a strong focus on maternal mental health, speech & language development and access to excellent early education.

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## Adolescence and transition to adulthood



This means keeping children and young people safe from harm, raising aspirations and enabling them to make informed positive choices about their future. We will seek to the impact of adverse childhood experiences, exclusions from schools and rates of offending. It will have a strong focus on mental health, domestic abuse, familial substance misuse.

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## Supporting schools



During school years, it is the schools that know most of our young people best after parents and guardians. They will often identify issues first and want to help resolve those issues. As a partnership we need to ensure that they have the support to do so. Much of our early help offer will be delivered in and with schools. We also want primary schools to play more of a role in early years development too.

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## Confident and equipped parents and carers



Wherever possible we want families to be the solutions to their own issues so we need to develop an effective framework of parental support services based around the delivery of proven programmes and initiatives. It will blend high expectations with high support for those parents who need it. There will be a strong focus on peer support and access to digital tools.

## Why is giving children the ‘best start in life’ a priority ?

Sir Michael Marmot underlined the significance of providing support in the early years in 2010 when he wrote: “Giving every child the best start in life is crucial for securing health and reducing health inequalities across the life course. The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual and emotional – are laid in early childhood. What happens during these early years, starting in the womb, has life-long effects on many aspects of health and wellbeing.”<sup>1</sup>

In Stoke-on-Trent, the number of nursery age children entering their PVI setting or school achieving age related expectations in communication and language is below the national average and that of our statistical neighbours. This is despite the considerable success of the ‘Stoke Speaks Out’ programme over many years. The number of children achieving their age-related expectations (ARE) as measured by the Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of the Foundation Stage has improved but remains below the national average.

In order to improve outcomes for children in the early years we will focus on:

- Information, advice and guidance for parents at the earliest point to support their child’s development
- Training for all cross-sector early years practitioners to identify and support at the earliest point
- High quality early years provision accessible to all families
- Increasing the take up of free early years funded provision for 2, 3- and 4-year olds
- Early communication and language, with an increased focus on the earliest years.
- Progress and attainment of FSM and SEND children
- Improved integration between health visitors and early years settings
- Improve the rates of initiation and continuation of breastfeeding
- Increased support during pregnancy including perinatal mental health

In order to develop an integrated early years offer we will embed evidence based, best practice pathways particularly focussed on universal and targeted provision that supports early intervention. This dedicated programme of work will focus on developing new and improving existing pathways where gaps have been identified, notably the universal and targeted antenatal offer for expectant parents, physical development pathway and an early years’ complex needs pathway.

<sup>1</sup>Marmot, M. Fair society, healthy lives: the Marmot Review: strategic review of health inequalities in England post-2010. (2010) <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report.pdf>

## Why is 'adolescence' a priority ?

Adolescence is a period of rapid change during which children and young people may be exposed to situations which can positively or negatively impact on their health and wellbeing. It is also the time where unresolved problems in early childhood are likely to manifest. Appropriate and timely support at this point in a child's life can prevent problems from escalating and continuing into adulthood.

There are major transition points in early adolescence between 10 to 14 years, including moving from primary to secondary school; this can also offer an opportunity to provide advice to support positive health and life choices. Young people experience significant physical, psychological and behavioural changes as they progress to adulthood. Supporting them through this period is essential to ensure future health and wellbeing and reduce social inequalities among adults. This dedicated programme of work will focus on developing a core offer so that all children in Stoke-on-Trent aged 8 – 18 can access positive social activities, formal and informal education and health advice. The core offer will ensure that children receive support which promotes their physical, cognitive, emotional, social and behavioural development.

Targeted support will complement a core offer, supporting children with identified risk factors including, but not limited to, the impact of parental conflict and domestic abuse, familial substance and alcohol misuse, offending behaviour within the family, experience of being a young carer, risk of teenage pregnancy, poor mental and physical health and those at risk of exploitation. Adolescence is a critical period for young people's mental health and wellbeing. The most recent NHS data published in 2018 shows that one in seven 11 to 16-year olds have a diagnosable mental health disorder.

The same data also shows that over half of all mental health problems are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24.

In an average class of 30 students aged 15:

- 10 are likely to have witnessed their parents separate
- 7 are likely to have been bullied
- 6 may be self-harming
- 1 could have experienced the death of a parent<sup>2</sup>

Particular groups of children are more likely to experience poor outcomes linked, for example, to gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, being a young carer, a looked after child or being in the youth justice system.

<sup>2</sup>NHS Digital 2017 Mental Health of Children and Young People in England

Children who have had an adverse childhood experience are more likely to have difficulties learning and engaging with others and are more likely to go on to experience mental health problems. An increasing number of 11 to 15-year olds report having experienced some form of bullying via online platforms. Vulnerability and adverse childhood experiences increase the risk of health-harming behaviours in this age group.

Substance and alcohol use within this age group have been associated with lower academic attainment, reduced school attendance, changes in affect and behaviours leading to a breakdown in relationships with family and friends. Teenage mothers have higher rates of poor mental health for up to one year after the birth of their child.

Taking a preventative approach to vulnerability and adverse experiences can yield both individual and wider system benefits, contributing to outcomes such as educational attainment, employment prospects, reduced crime and a reduction in the demand for mental health services. Supportive relationships and environments including within the family, amongst peers, in the context of school and the wider community, contribute to building protective factors and mitigating risk for adolescents' mental health and wellbeing.



## Why is schools support a priority?

Schools and settings are key anchor points within our communities. They support all children in our City and have the greatest opportunity to influence their social and emotional development as well as their learning experience. It is vital therefore that pre-school, primary and secondary schools, alternative and further education settings are equipped with the best and most up to date knowledge and tools to support children of all ages. It is equally important that schools have access to other specialist services such as mental health and other therapies that can support children and families in a timely and appropriate way, complementing a child's education and supporting parents to engage with it. Building on the learning from the Opportunity Area's 'Better Together' programme, schools will therefore be linked to early help and preventative services that complement their own delivery of early support to children and families. Support to schools will be a key topic for the revamped schools' forum.

## Why support to parents is a priority?

Parents should be equipped with the tools to give their child the best start in life and support them on their journey to adulthood. The solutions to many problems lie within the family or the wider community in which the family live. Supporting parents actively to engage in their child's education and in their wider community network provides children with the best opportunity to thrive and become part of a happy, healthy community themselves. Parents will be able to access a range of evidence-based programmes and initiatives to increase confidence and support them to identify their own strengths as well as raising the aspirations of their children. This is a key priority that underpins all other priorities of the Early Help and Prevention Board.



### Supporting children

Of all ages to reach their potential.



### Empowering parents

To raise healthy, happy children



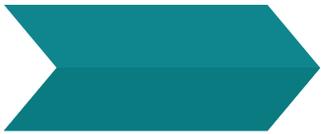
### Strengthening communities

To be safe and supportive.

# Actions we will take



Develop detailed plans for each of our four priorities based on evidence-based programmes



Secure strong external partners to help us deliver our priorities



Fully evaluate the impact our programmes to ensure that they are meeting our priorities and delivering the right outcomes



# THRIVE

## Our model of organisation

We are designing a new framework for our Early Help system, which is one of networked collaboration, in which we reduce duplication and maximise the use of all partner resources across local areas. How we work together in an integrated framework is central to our strategy and will involve an agreed way of working. We want to develop and invest in this system to achieve the very best for our children in Stoke.

The THRIVE framework provides a set of principles for creating coherent and resource-efficient communities of support. It is needs-led and those needs are defined by children and families, not by reference to thresholds, hierarchy or pre-requisites.

It also lends itself well to a locality-based approach where services and communities exist to support each other within defined geographies. It is inclusive and can support all children, all families and all professionals with a responsibility for promoting and delivering early help and support to families.

The THRIVE model operates across five domains with the aim for families to draw on the outer four quadrants to enable them to spend as much time as possible in the centre. It is needs-led and arranges the needs of all children and families into five groupings.



THRIVE adopts a fluid and flexible model that recognises that families' needs will change over time but that change doesn't have to mean a hand off and a linear journey up and down a 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 with their needs and cope with their challenges.

The five needs-based groupings are described as follows:

**Thrive:**

Children, young people and families who do not need individualised advice or support. This population is supported by prevention and promotion initiatives. Children and families receive the right level of support at the right time.

**Getting advice:**

Children, young people and families can access advice. This level of support is sufficient to provide reassurance and signpost if required.

**Getting help:**

Children, young people and families who would benefit from specific or targeted information and support.

**Getting more help:**

Children, young people and families who would benefit from targeted or specialist support.

**Getting risk support**

Children, young people and families who are a significant concern or risk, including those who routinely go into crisis or don't make use of help. This level of support keeps the child or young person below the threshold for Child Protection.

All of these groupings represent the provision of support before statutory or crisis-led intervention is required. The quadrants therefore provide a framework for the continuum of preventative and early help support.

## An opportunity to THRIVE

We want to make the most of this timely opportunity to create and sustain change and believe that embracing the THRIVE model will enable us to do that. It lends itself well to early help and prevention services and is conducive to achieving the overall vision for children in Stoke-on-Trent as set out in the Children, Young People and Families' Strategy. The approach is based on the following attributes which we as a partnership aspire to in our collective delivery of early help and support:

- No wrong door. Universal and targeted services co-exist within a broad landscape of services proactively preventing and responding to needs of children and families.
- Strengths based. Focus on existing strengths within families and communities acknowledging that the needs of many children and families can best be met by the community in which they live.
- Relationship based. Needs are assessed through supportive, transparent conversations, not by reference to thresholds or hierarchy of need.
- Restorative in nature. Do with and not to.
- Person centred. The child/family is involved in decision making throughout. This is a key feature of early help. Consent is essential and families retain control of their own journey.
- Partnership approach. The model relies on a multi-agency approach to meeting the needs of families. This marries well with our locality-based partnerships delivering early help alongside community and peer support. (although these will need strengthening).
- Networking. Professionals making better, collective use of intelligence and resource, expertise to jointly invest in an approaches and initiatives that have a proven evidence of success.
- Strengthens family and community networks. If needs do continue, the model ensures that plans are in place to help manage risk drawing on people the family are closest to. Children and families are empowered to manage their own difficulties and make the best use of the resources available to them.
- Increased engagement across the system resulting in more opportunities for families to access the right support at the right time.
- Reduction in the number of families being 'passed off' from one service to another and 'bouncing back' into services because positive change has not been sustained.
- Shared outcome framework understood and contributed to by all.

THRIVE offers the fluidity that will enable early help and preventative services to work closely with communities and acute services to support families in a responsive, dynamic way offering a continuum of support. It will help to build and sustain enduring relationships between families, communities and support services. The THRIVE model and early help as an approach, both require services to work together in a family-centred way, irrespective of whether they are responsible for giving advice, support or risk management interventions.

The THRIVE model recognises that some services will deliver support that spans more than one of the quadrants in the same way that it recognises that family's needs can change and span more than one quadrant at any one time.

A key feature of early help is the lead worker, whole family approach that means families should only have to tell their story once and they do not experience multiple hand-off points as their needs fluctuate. This requires local services to work together to address the needs of all members of a family and co-ordinate support so that families do not have to navigate their way through services to try and find the right one. Rather, a consistent lead professional or peer supports this irrespective of their formal role or organisation and does so because they have built a trusted relationship with the family.

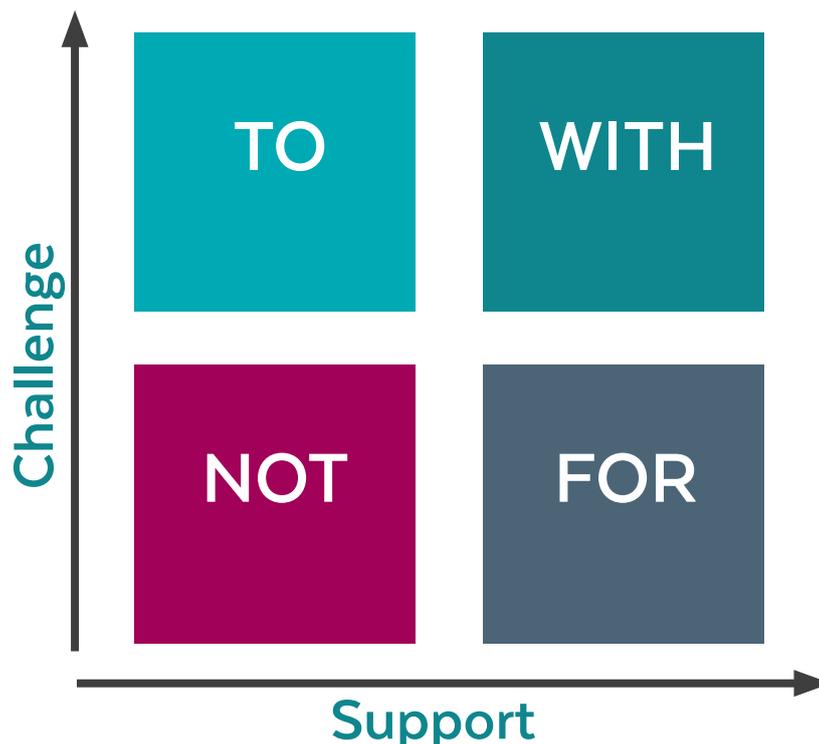
Within the THRIVE framework, locality-based services including early help, child protection, education and health will provide a child focused, collaborative and supportive safeguarding community offering the dedicated support that families and professionals value. Critically, this will result in more responsive services for children and families as soon as needs emerge enabling more children to thrive for longer.





## A restorative approach

Underpinning the work of the partnership is a restorative approach to supporting children, families and communities. We want to forge relationships where the emphasis is on working with children and families rather than doing things to them or for them. This involves high support and high challenge, so that families have the support they need to find their own lasting solutions to the problems they face and are equipped with the resilience to move forward successfully.





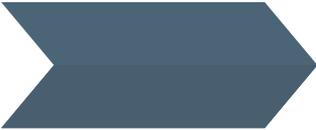
# Actions we will take



Map existing services on to the THRIVE framework so we properly understand key deficits



Adopt a 'lead worker' model so that there is reliable and informed coordination of support to families, based on principles of restorative practice



Recognise criticality of voluntary and community sector to success of THRIVE model and build capacity



# DELIVERY

## How will we implement this?

Our approach is based on strengthening communities, building resilience and establishing networks. As a partnership, we are committed to working in a way that maximises the resources and skills across the partnership. Stoke-on-Trent is a relatively small city with high levels of deprivation. As well as developing a locality-based offer around four geographical areas, we recognise that some services work best by supporting all areas and a range of needs. Our aim is to develop a core network of early help and preventative services in each locality complemented by other more targeted and bespoke services based on specific local needs, creating a unifying but not uniform offer. Our ambition is collectively to achieve the very best outcomes for children and their families by using our joint resources as efficiently as possible to equip our combined workforce to deliver outstanding relational and compassionate services, which are based on what we know works.

This framework will evolve and when complete will consist of all of the following:

### **Early Help and Prevention Partnership Board**

Overseeing the delivery of the strategy and the work of its sub-groups.

### **Priority working groups**

some short and some longer term, to focus on key priorities identified by the EHP Board. The first two of these are Early Years and Adolescence.

### **Locality based 'Family Hubs'**

where our integrated workforce deliver early help and preventative services for families aligned to our City's schools, academies and early years settings. These will be based around existing anchor points within local communities including schools, GPs and Children's Centres.

### **Partnership model**

where resources from statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations are focused upstream to support children and families at the earliest point working towards shared objectives.

### **Locality based Early Help Network forums**

regular forums for front line professionals and community representatives to identify local emerging needs and develop solutions collaboratively, sharing information, resources and evidence of best practice.

### **Local Authority Early Help offer**

supporting the co-ordination of early help and prevention services across the partnership, offering support to professionals across the sector that have a responsibility for delivering early help support. A Family Support service will focus on families with multiple complex needs as part of multi-agency approach to supporting children on the 'edge of care'. This team provides intensive casework and all referrals for this service go through the integrated 'front door' to children's services.

### **Key programmes of support**

identified by a thorough analysis of local provision and analysis of key gaps, delivered by a partnership of statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations.

### **A new integrated early years pathway**

this part of our framework will develop during the life of this strategy in line with our collaborative early years plan.

### **A 14-25 model of provision**

that draws on the best of children's and adults' services, working together.

### **A collaborative commissioning framework**

supporting the delivery and commissioning of evidence-based programmes and services to support children and families' needs at the earliest opportunity.

### **Workforce development programme**

ensuring we have confident, skilled practitioners across our partnership and this includes volunteers and those providing peer support.

A detailed workforce development plan will accompany the strategy and link directly to the overall Children's Improvement Plan for Stoke-on-Trent. It is critically important that children's practitioners in Stoke-on-Trent have the necessary skills and knowledge to identify needs and risks at the earliest point and deliver effective early intervention and prevention services to children of all ages.

A bespoke induction and training package will provide ongoing training and professional development to the cross-sector workforce. The aim is to retain, recruit and develop talented, skilled and experienced staff able to deliver excellent services to meet the existing and future needs of children and their families. The scope of this programme will cover early help and youth service practitioners, early years education specialists, health care professionals, social care professionals, front line practitioners and managers at all levels.

The workforce development programme will:

- Ensure the local workforce is of a high standard, flexible, dynamic and responsive
- Create a learning culture and environment for all early help practitioners
- Develop and support strong leaders and people managers
- Engage the entire cross sector workforce sharing the same vision
- Support our workforce in adapting to change, new teams, roles, functions, by offering learning and development opportunities to achieve this
- Assist the partnership Board to deploy resources to support our workforce in a cost-effective way
- Enable the workforce to better understand and support the emotional health and well-being of children, young people and their families
- Develop and support a Leadership and Development programme to create a supportive learning and development culture
- Use programmes and interventions with a proven track record and sound evidence base to support practitioners in their statutory safeguarding duties and improving outcomes for children
- Enable the workforce to support and empower parents to help their children thrive
- Embed integrated, cross-partnership working



# Actions we will take



Ensure that service provision reflects the diverse needs of the city by mapping existing services, identifying gaps in provision, delivering and commissioning more of 'what works' for Stoke



Offer training and development opportunities to all cross-sector professionals, volunteers, community leaders and peer mentors



Work collaboratively across the partnership deploying resources flexibly in order to meet the needs of children and families in a timely way





## How will families and professionals access early help and support?

Early help services will be accessed via an integrated front door to Children and Family Services which links directly to locality-based services. The reform of the ‘front door’ is critical to the improvement of Local Authority Children’s Services in Stoke-on-Trent. A single front door to Stoke-on-Trent children and family services, including early help services will promote the use of quality conversations, not paper based referrals and will focus on children’s needs, not thresholds. Operating hours will be extended so that services are available for longer. To enable us to realise our ambition of providing help at the earliest possible stage, the front door operation will link directly to locality-based early help services that will be co-ordinated on a locality footprint.

We will establish an early help presence at the front door to provide information and support to practitioners and families to enable them to identify and access the most appropriate services where a statutory response is not required. The front door team will provide direct access to locality based early help services and will establish a ‘keeping in touch’ initiative that supports families to stay connected, empowered and engaged. Local knowledge and expertise will ensure a proportionate and appropriate response to all requests for advice, help and support.

## Locality working in Stoke-on-Trent

The partnership is committed to developing a core early help offer for all children and families in Stoke-on-Trent no matter where they live. We also recognise that Stoke-on-Trent is a diverse City and different areas ma

The core locality offer i



Positive activities for young people

Promoting physical & emotional health and well being

Help with managing budget and debt

# Support for Families

Support for children with SEND

Reducing parental conflict and domestic abuse

Improving family communications

Preventing offending behaviour



In Stoke-on-Trent, many organisations already deliver their early help and preventative services on a locality footprint so the basis already exists for us to build upon. While some city-wide or pan-Staffordshire services may need to be drawn upon peripatetically, it is important that the core offer in each locality is complemented by a wider offer that is tailored to the identified local needs and as needs change, resource should be deployed accordingly. Partners' commitment to sharing resources and regularly reviewing local need is key to enabling the right support to be available at the right time.

The four localities within Stoke-on-Trent are defined within Appendix A.



## Measuring progress – how will we know we are making a difference?

It is critical that our approach is based on proven research and clear evidence of what works and what is capable of making a real difference to families in Stoke. Using the Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) process, outcomes, measures and actions will be determined and agreed at local level by all stakeholders. We will ask the key OBA questions:



**How much did we do?**



**How well did we do it?**



**What difference did it make?**

As a partnership Board, our agreed key ‘OBA indicators’ which collectively will demonstrate the impact and outcomes of early help and prevention will include:

- Better birth statistics – weight, still-born, maternal smoking
- Reduction in infant mortality
- Increased uptake of 2/3yr old funded places
- Improvement in school readiness/GLD at early years foundation stage
- Phonics progress
- Reduced early tooth decay
- Reduction in the number of children missing education
- Improved attendance rates for all children
- Improved access and waiting times for mental health services
- Reduced numbers of Children in Care (CIC), CP and CIN plans
- Fewer permanent exclusions
- Increased rate of participation in further education, training and employment by school leavers
- Reduction in teenage pregnancy rates
- Reduction in the number of first-time entrants in to the youth justice system
- Improved parental mental health
- More confident parents
- Reduction in the number of children experiencing the impact of parental substance misuse
- Reduction in the number of children experiencing the impact of parental conflict

## Target populations

At the moment, too many children in Stoke-on-Trent suffer the impact of multiple risk factors. The 2019 JSNA for Stoke-on-Trent identifies some potential groups of children and young people who might form the target populations for early intervention and prevention services. There are others, these include but are not limited to:

- Children living in poverty
- Children not ready to engage in education at age 4
- Children with education & health care plans
- Children missing education
- Children and young people with a risk of NEET indicator
- Children with special educational needs
- Children with disabilities
- Children and young people experiencing difficulty at key transition stages of their life
- Young carers
- Children at risk of exploitation
- Teenage parents and pregnant teenagers
- Children who are impacted by parental conflict or domestic abuse
- Children who are impacted by parents with poor mental health
- Children impacted by familial substance or alcohol misuse
- Children and young people involved in antisocial behaviour
- Children who have offended or are at risk of re-offending
- Children at risk of entering or re-entering children's social care
- Children whose families are at risk of homelessness

## Governance and responsibilities

### **Children, Young People and Families' Strategic Partnership Board**

will be responsible for the development, delivery and monitoring of the Children, Young People and Families' Strategy 2020-2024. The Board will critically evaluate the work of the cross-sector partnership in delivering effective early help and support.

### **The Early Help and Prevention (EHP) Partnership Board**

will be responsible for driving the EHP Strategy through the work of their respective organisations. They will promote the use of evidence based, research informed practice and develop a performance and quality assurance framework within which population and programme outcomes will be measured. The EHP Partnership Board will make sure that all non-statutory family work is coordinated, responds to needs and remains appropriate and impactful.

### **The Local Authority**

will ensure that whenever a child is referred through the integrated front door to children's services, the referrer is consistently given good quality feedback about the outcome of the referral. It will also establish effective processes for evaluating the overall impact of early help and support.

### **The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board**

will critically evaluate the effectiveness of early help and support and publish these findings as part of an annual report. It will ensure that all professionals working with children and families receive effective training in identifying need and delivering early help and support.

### **The Stoke-on-Trent Opportunity Area Board**

will continue to operate and collaborate with the EHP Board to drive better outcomes for children and young people in the city, from early years into adulthood. The Stoke-on-Trent Opportunity Area was launched in 2017 to raise education standards, providing every child and young person in the area with the chance to reach their full potential. The themes and priorities of the OA Board will be embedded into the custom and practice of early help and prevention services in Stoke-on-Trent for the benefit of children, their parents, our schools and our communities across Stoke-on-Trent.



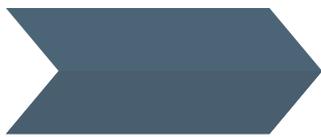
# Actions we will take



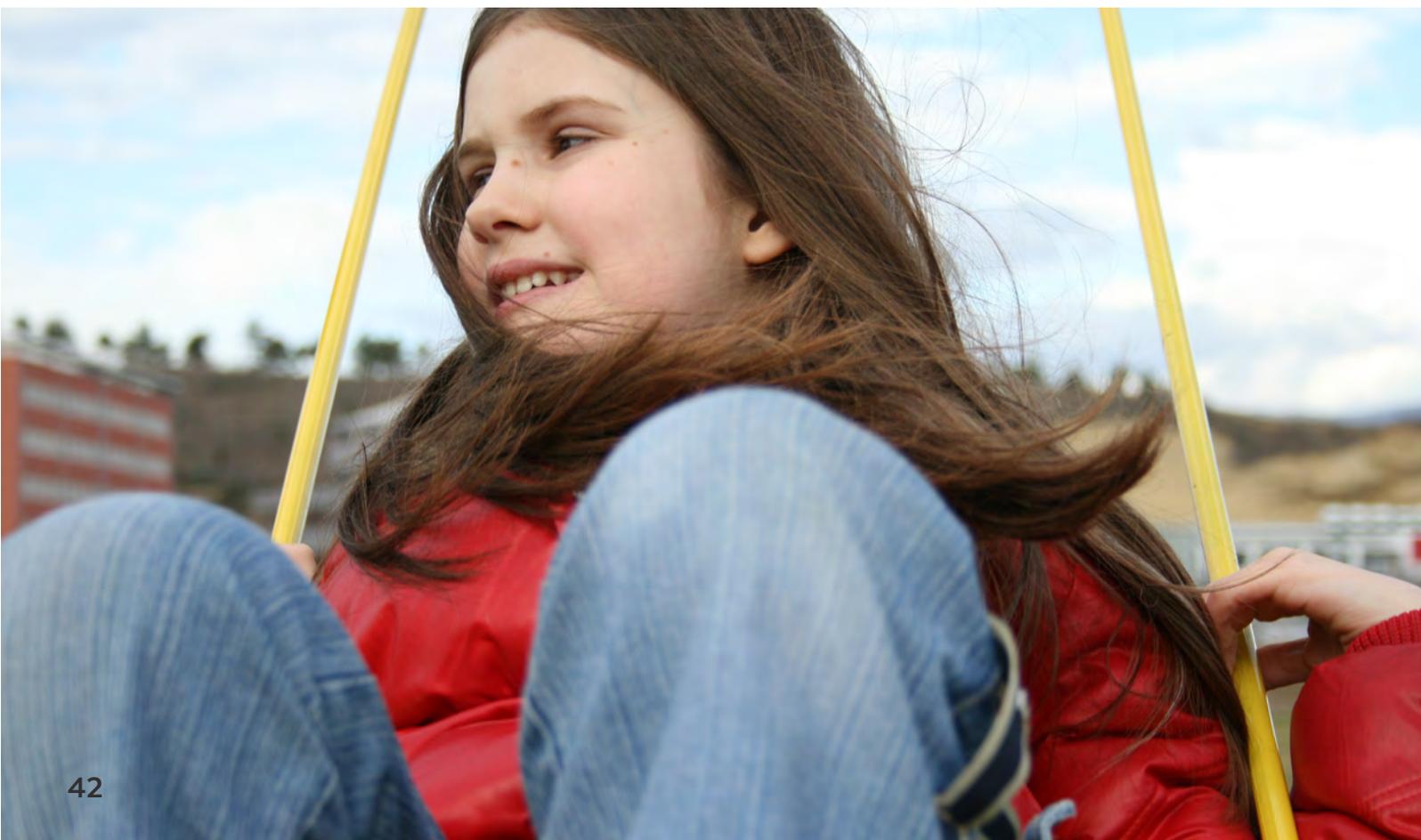
Embed Early Help in the integrated Front Door to ensure children needing support are identified rapidly and appropriate referrals made



Develop a mix of core and bespoke services for each locality based on a combination of 'what works' and the particular needs of those communities



Establish a performance monitoring system to track progress against identified key measures





## Turning a vision into reality – making this happen

This strategy will be supported by a detailed action plan with identified leads and key milestones. In summary, in order to ensure effective delivery of this strategy, we pledge to do the following:

### Supporting young people's needs

- Actively engage with children and young people and co-produce services
- Fully understand the needs of the children, young people and families within the city to ensure that service provision reflects the diverse needs

### Working together to make a difference

- Develop positive working relationships with all stakeholders to provide seamless services, appropriate support ensuring that resources are effectively utilised
- Build on existing relationships with partners and key stakeholders to better utilise resources, improve quality and develop a shared approach to supporting children and families

### Reviewing to make sure we are getting it right

- To develop a robust quality assurance framework to ensure that we can improve the quality of all early help and prevention services for children and families
- Review the priorities every 12 months as a minimum to ensure they remain relevant
- Report to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board to ensure all partners continue to support the delivery of the strategy and contribute to the aims of the CYP Plan 2020 - 2024
- The work of the Board and oversight of this strategy will be monitored in appropriate partnership forums including the Children's Improvement Board

# 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 in order to improve outcomes for children, services must work together in a responsive, flexible way in order to identify and meet emerging need. While there is much to do to improve the landscape, quality and effectiveness of early help and support, we are not starting from first base. There are already some excellent forms of provision in the city, pieces of the jigsaw that are already on the board and need now to take their place as part of this integrated offer. As for the pieces that are not yet in place, the challenge for the partnership is to identify those that are the best fit for families in Stoke-on-Trent and ensure they are available for families that need them most.

This strategy and its delivery plan are ambitious. Children in Stoke-on-Trent deserve nothing less. The planned improvements to children's social care, early help delivery, locality working and front door arrangements that are already underway must result in a more inclusive experience for all partners and stakeholders and even more critically, for children and families. Locality based services including early help, child protection, education and health will provide a child focused, collaborative and supportive safeguarding community offering dedicated support to schools, communities and parents. Critically, this will result in more responsive services for children and families as soon as needs emerge.

In recent years, Stoke-on-Trent has embraced many new initiatives and committed considerable resource to their delivery without necessarily joining the dots between new and existing services. Many examples that have gone before have all encouraged a local, multi-agency approach to supporting children, families and communities at the earliest opportunity. Many of the same enablers and barriers existed within all of these initiatives that have been founded upon sound principles and delivered with genuine commitment to improving outcomes for our children. This strategy acknowledges and embraces the learning from all past projects and interventions and will ensure it is not lost. It is timely now to look not just for short term solutions to long term challenges but to take all that we have learnt and ensure the very best of it is mainstreamed into our culture and practice which in turn will help us to make sure the improvements we make can be sustained. This strategy marks the beginning of the next chapter in our journey to improving the lives of children and families in Stoke-on-Trent.

Stoke-on-Trent

# Early Help and Prevention Strategy

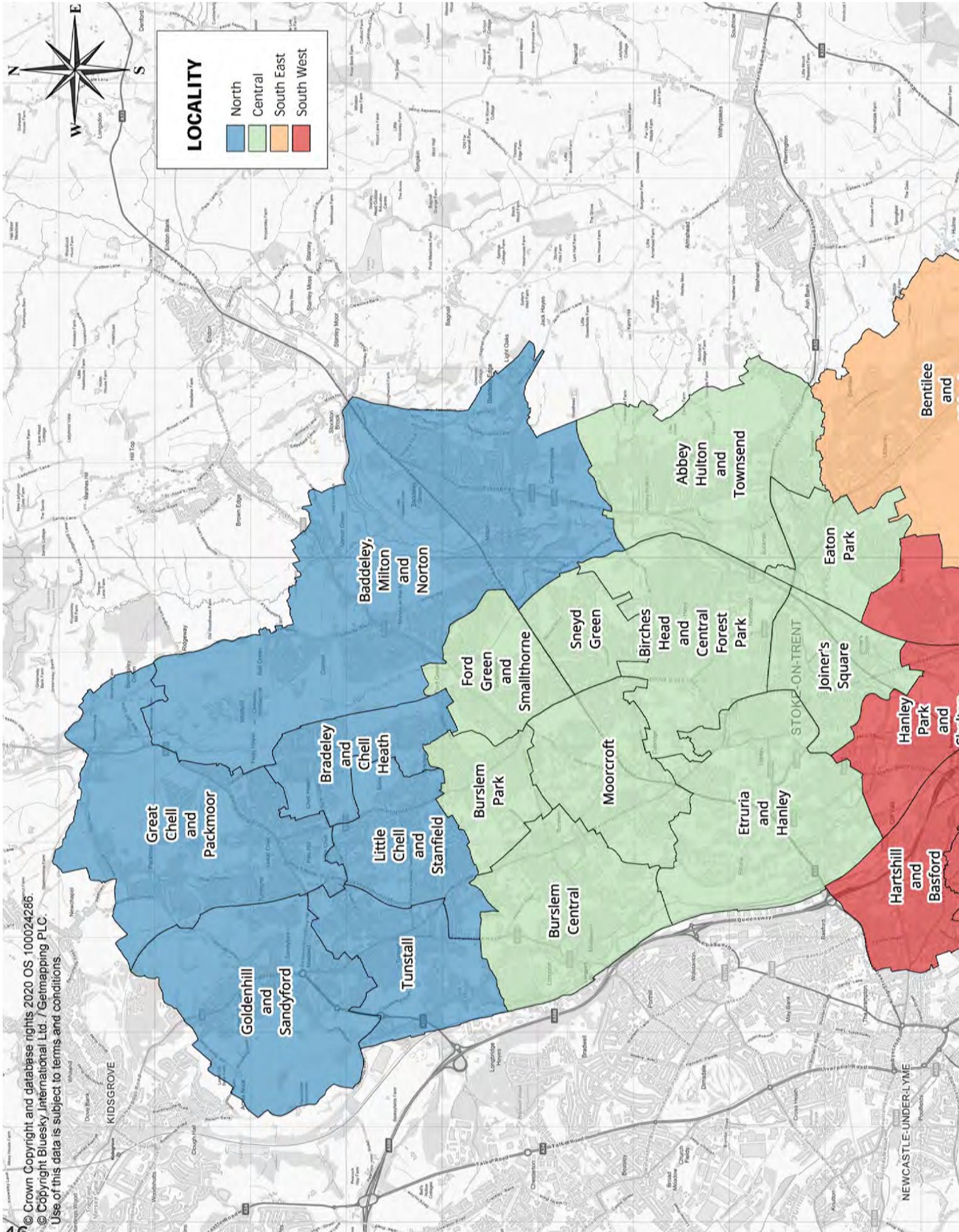
for Children, Young People and  
Families 2020 - 2024

## Appendix A

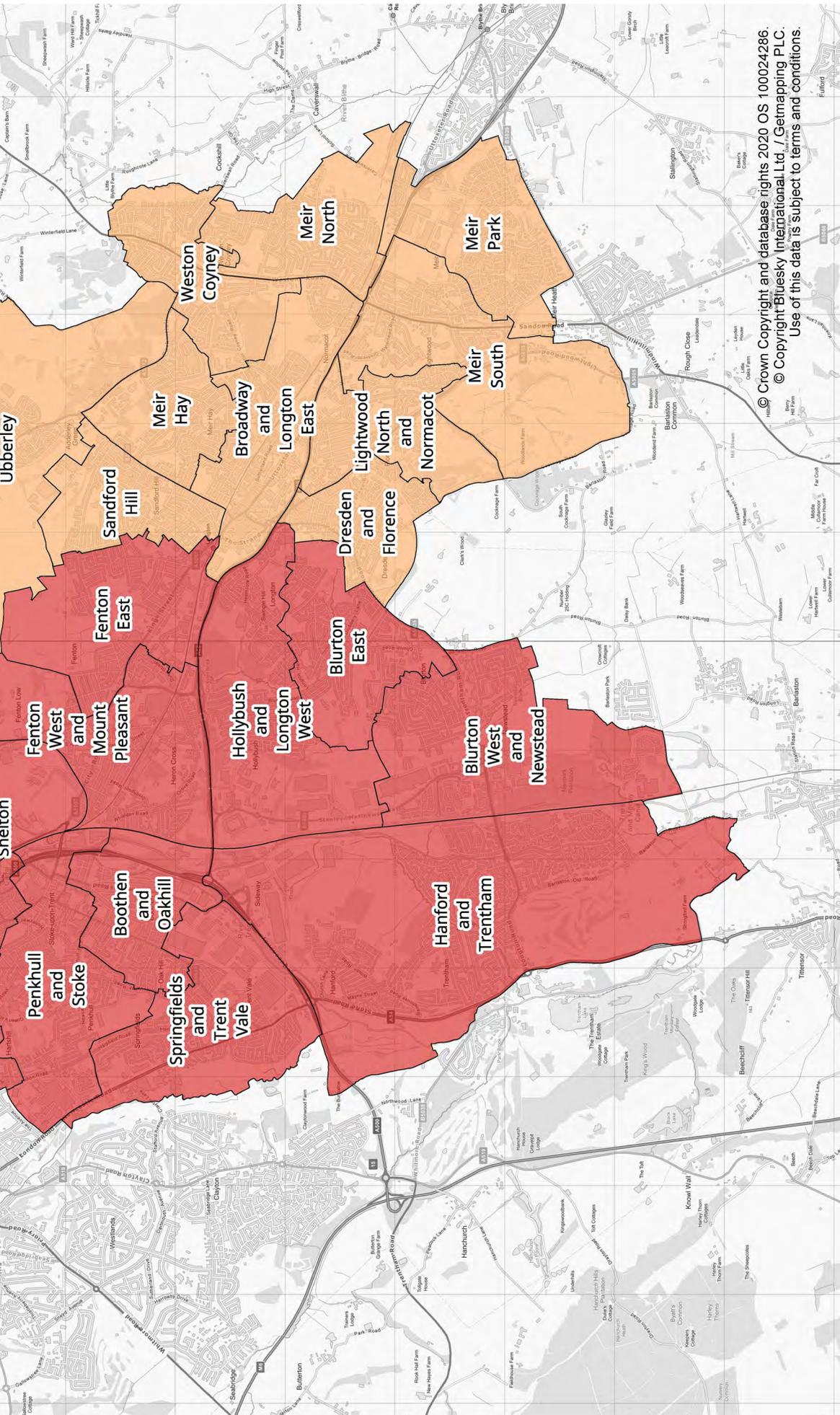
Consultation Draft



# CORPORATE LOCALITY MAP



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City of  
**Stoke-on-Trent**