

# A Whole-Life Disability Strategy for Staffordshire

**2018-2023**

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## A Whole Life Disability Strategy for Staffordshire 2018 – 2023

### Foreword

We want Staffordshire's residents to live their lives to their full potential and this includes people who are living with a disability. We want people with disabilities to be independent and equal in society and have choice and control in their own lives. We want people to have dignity and self-respect and for those with more complex needs to have the support they need to maintain this.

Across Staffordshire, 3 in 100 people are currently living with a learning difficulty and 11 in 100 people with a physical disability. While drafting this strategy, we have spoken to many of these people and their families and carers.

What has become clear is that 'disability' is a label that is unhelpful. The way we support people in the future needs to be about ability, not disability, about focussing on what people **can** do and building on these strengths so that they can live full and independent lives for as long as possible.

Not only does evidence suggest that this approach leads to a better quality of life for people with disabilities, it is a principle that will ensure we can protect social care services for those who really need them in the future.

The county council is facing an unprecedented financial challenge with an ageing population, rising costs and a budget which is falling in real terms. This means that our approach to the provision of services and support for all residents, including people with disabilities, needs to balance meeting need with affordability.

In view of this, wherever possible, we intend to prevent, reduce or delay the need for long-term social care services. The reality is that most people with a disability do not actually need or want this kind of ongoing dependence.

For the few people who have an ongoing eligible assessed care need, the county council will continue to provide appropriate and best value support under the Care Act, Children Act and the Mental Health Act.

We want to be clear here, that the support offered will be of good quality, meet assessed needs **and** represent good value for money. This means that the type of support some people currently receive may change, but their assessed eligible needs will always be met.

We will continue to meet our responsibilities and encourage others to look at their own contribution. Supporting disabled people to live well in and be part of their communities is the responsibility of all of us - including people with disabilities, family members, carers, friends, neighbours, employers, educators, decision makers, funders and planners.

Together, we can ensure that people living with disabilities in Staffordshire can achieve their goals and enjoy happy, independent and successful lives, and that we are able to support those who most need it both now and for the future.



**Cllr Alan White**  
**Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet**  
**Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing**



**Cllr Mark Sutton**  
**Cabinet Member for Children and Young**  
**People**

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## **Contents**

<b>Overview &amp; summary of Needs Analysis</b>	<b>page 6</b>
<b>What People Have Told Us</b>	<b>page 10</b>
<b>Our Vision for People with Disabilities</b>	<b>page 12</b>
<b>The Strategic Approach and our desired outcomes</b>	<b>page 13</b>
<b>How We Plan to Achieve Our Vision</b>	
<b>Preventing Needs</b>	<b>page 15</b>
<b>Reducing Needs</b>	<b>page 19</b>
<b>Delaying Needs</b>	<b>page 21</b>
<b>Meeting Needs</b>	<b>page 22</b>
<b>Cross Cutting Themes</b>	<b>page 24</b>
<b>Key Activity to Support Delivery</b>	<b>page 26</b>
<b>Governance &amp; Monitoring Our Performance</b>	<b>page 26</b>

## Overview and Summary of Needs Analysis

This strategy sets out our vision for people with disabilities of all ages in Staffordshire from 2018 onwards. It builds on the approaches advocated in the previous disability strategy for Staffordshire, 'Living My Life My Way', but redefines the role of the county council in meeting needs for the next five years to 2023.

Many changes have occurred nationally since 'Living My Life My Way' was written, including the introduction of new legislation such as the Care Act 2014, the Children and Families Act 2014 (and associated SEND Code of Practice 2015), the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the Carers Act.

Furthermore, the political and financial challenges for the country have placed even greater focus on Local Authorities and other public bodies living within their means and ensuring value for money, sustainability, and fostering independence and self-reliance as a matter of course.

Whilst many of the ambitions of the previous strategy are still relevant, for example those of ensuring children with a disability get the best start in life, and that people with a disability have choice and control in the decisions that affect their lives, the way we operate to offer this choice will need to change.

The way the public sector will need to work in the future must focus not on 'doing things for people' but on 'helping people do things for themselves'. Living with a disability should not be a barrier to living full, independent, and successful lives. We want people to be empowered to direct their own life and have the same range of choices as a non-disabled person to go about everyday life.

Independent living can be challenging at times, but with it comes the freedom to live the lives we want, spend time with friends, enjoy hobbies and contribute to society. Above all a greater degree of self-reliance gives dignity and self-respect to people. Yes, applying this in practice can be difficult at times, especially when money is tight, but these are challenges all Staffordshire residents have to face.

### **The financial challenge and affordability for the county council**

As a well-run council, we will continue to modernise services, and find more efficient ways of working. However, our growing population, ageing residents, increasing demand for services and rising costs mean that more fundamental changes will be required. The county council has changed significantly over the last eight years and that pace of change will accelerate over the coming years if we are to live within our means. We will of course continue to meet our statutory duties, and work effectively with partners to achieve this.

We need to find different ways of working that help people to help themselves, take greater personal responsibility for their own lives, health and wellbeing, and greater responsibility for improving their own communities. If we succeed in this and reduce demand on public services, the county council can target taxpayer's money to supporting the people who really need help. If we do not do so we risk compromising not only our ability to support those with the highest needs now but also in the future.

The overall spend on adult learning disability by the council has risen by 22% over the last five years, and if we did nothing to address rising costs this figure would

increase by a further 25% based on the current forecasts between 2018 and 2023. Spend on children's disability has risen by a very similar magnitude and could increase further still by 2023 unless we take real action now to help keep children safe and healthy at home.

It goes without saying therefore that 'change nothing' is not an option; this is clearly financially unsustainable. There is a clear and pressing need to operate in different ways in order to live within our means and ensure value for money for the Staffordshire tax payer. This expectation and approach is no different to that taken across the rest of the county council.

### **Doing the right thing**

But it's not all about the money. It is about doing the right thing for people and offering the right support, at the right time, so they can live independent, happy and fulfilled lives. The county council can promote this by giving people the information they need to become and remain as independent as possible, as well as providing them with the right support at the earliest opportunity. This approach will not only promote independence, but also reduce reliance on the public services. This instils a sense of pride and dignity in people, the value and worth of which shouldn't be underestimated. We must work in a way which encourages people to help themselves and those around them.

This approach links with the Council-wide 'People Helping People' approach which you can read more about here:

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/community/Volunteer/PeopleHelpingPeople.aspx>

Thinking 'community first, services last' is one of the principles of our People Helping People approach. By putting communities at the heart of decisions about the things and local issues they care about, our communities will be stronger and more independent and will play a greater role in improving their local areas. That leads to more sustainable support.

Our Whole Life Disability Strategy follows this approach by focusing on promoting inclusion, independence and self-reliance from childhood, to ensure young people are prepared for an adulthood where they can achieve and remain independent as far as they are able.

To be absolutely clear, there is no expectation from this strategy that individuals who need support to meet eligible needs will be left without help. Similarly, no individual will be expected to do things they are unable to do without support or guidance.

### **Joint working with the NHS and education providers**

Whilst this strategy sets out the county council's vision and objectives for people with disabilities in Staffordshire we do of course recognise the importance of effective, joined up working with the National Health Service in ensuring well planned, effective care and coordinated support.

To that end we are already progressing plans with Staffordshire's NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups and their commissioned providers, to improve integrated working for those with highly complex needs and challenging behaviours (under the Building the Right Support/Transforming Care programme). We also need to progress plans for those with Continuing Health Care needs (CHC). We will be developing and broadening this programme of integrated working over the coming months and years in response to specific needs and to ensure effective, good value, joined up support is in place for those with assessed eligible social care and health needs.

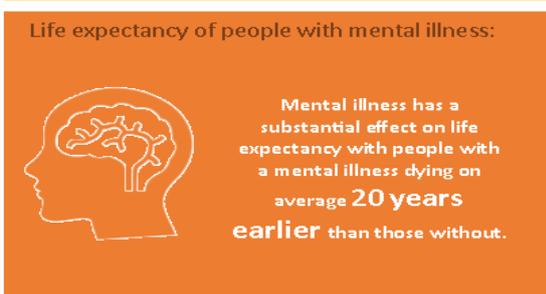
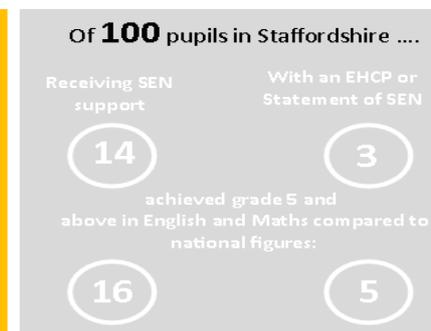
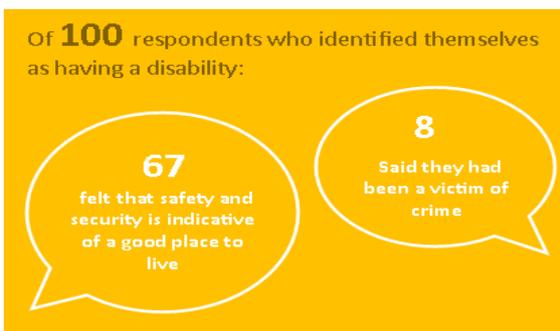
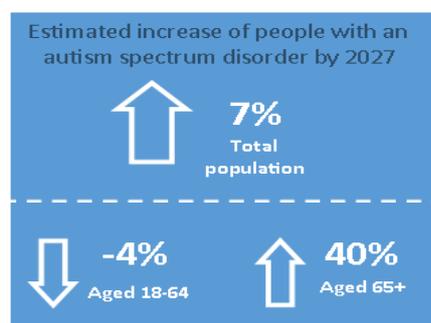
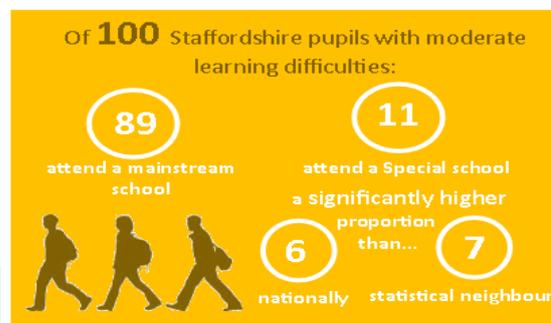
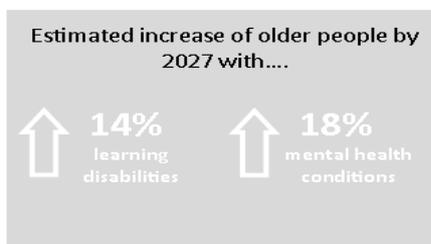
For children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) this joint approach will also of course encompass the role of schools and education providers to develop better planned support for their assessed Social Care, Health and Education needs

We will also link with the NHS Better Birth programme to identify what support is in place for both parents for whom issues related to disability are identified during pregnancy and beyond. Much anecdotal evidence collected during the surveys of residents we conducted in the autumn of 2017 would suggest that we are too slow to act when issues become apparent, and that we could improve things for individuals and families much more quickly if we streamline current processes.

### **The needs of people with a disability in Staffordshire**

Headline data from a comprehensive Needs Analysis undertaken between December 2017 and February 2018 is included below in summary form, along with a brief overview of the feedback from over 200 people with lived experience of disability collated between September and December 2017. Full in-depth reports are available for both pieces of research on request from the Staffordshire County Council Customer Insight team.

## Headline information relating to the needs of People with disabilities in Staffordshire



## **What people have told us**

Engagement with people who have disabilities and those that are parents and carers of people with disabilities is key to understanding what is important to them, what barriers and difficulties they face and what would improve their lives. Recent engagement activities have taken place across Staffordshire to gather this intelligence, including a county-wide online survey aimed at parent and carers of children aged 0 to 25 years old who have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) alongside a focus group with young people with disabilities, and further face to face sessions with adults who have a disability. Key emerging themes from this engagement activity is detailed within this section.

### ***Access to support, activities and information***

- The ability to access appropriate support was highlighted as something that parents and carers clearly feel strongly about. A number of parents and carers felt that early years services, such as Children's Centres, do not offer support that is appropriate to their child's needs. However, there were also parents who commented that they had benefited greatly from accessing high quality Children's Centre support. We need therefore to develop greater consistency across our Children's Centre/early years support, and help raise parents awareness of Children's Centre services and support available.
- Access to support was raised more often by those who have found this to be an area of challenge, rather than those who have had no difficulties. A number commented that they have had to "fight" on their child's behalf to ensure that they receive adequate support.
- A number of parents and carers felt that support was not available unless their child has received a formal diagnosis or statement of additional needs. For these parents and carers in particular, there are some issues around communication and engagement with professionals – with some feeling that they and the professionals are on opposing sides. Parents and carers of children with autism also felt it was difficult for their children to access support.

### ***Level and quality of support***

- Parents and carers who did access support for their children reported mainly positive experiences. Many have received support from an early stage which has been very effective in meeting their child's needs. A number shared comments about instances where practitioners have gone to what the parents consider to be great lengths, in order to support their child, or secure or co-ordinate additional support from other agencies.

### ***Awareness and understanding of special/additional needs***

- A number of parents and carers held the view that many professionals with mainstream school settings had a very limited understanding and awareness; particularly relating to autism and needs on the autistic spectrum, but also to dyslexia/dyspraxia. For some, it was felt that this perceived lack in awareness

and understanding had meant that their children were not provided with appropriate support, or did not have their needs taken into account.

- In a small number of extreme examples, it was commented that this had resulted in children refusing to attend school, and in a handful of cases had resulted in parents/carers paying for private tuition to enable children to achieve as well as their peers.

### ***Transition between schools and support received***

- Transition between schools had generally been smooth and without issue, with the only reported difficulties arising with transitions from mainstream to special schools.
- In the mainstream schools, most young people felt they were receiving the right amount of support. Those that did not however, felt that the school needed reminding on occasion that they had a special educational need, perhaps because their disability was not outwardly obvious. Support needed for the future was identified and was largely focussed on education and access to activities.
- Young people within the group stated that they sought advice from parents or carers largely. While a few respondents said they would also seek support from teachers or support staff in school, one felt that they would not be listened to. This will need to be considered when planning how to ensure people access information, advice or guidance
- Varying degrees of bullying had been experienced by the young people spoken to, largely in school, but all the young people spoken to felt that bullying had been successfully dealt with.

### **Preparing for adulthood**

- The need for an understanding of entitlements, available services, and how to access them is something that parents and carers considered to be very important for both themselves and their children - particularly as their children approach 18 years of age, and prepare to leave statutory education and become more independent. Parents felt that support and care plans should be more long-sighted, and focussed on achieving long-term positive outcomes, not just short-term academic milestones.

### **Views and experiences of adults with disabilities**

- Feeling safe in their homes and communities, being as independent as possible and having choice and control over the way they live their lives were identified as the three most important things by adults with a disability.
- The role of the internet was important to this group, with the majority of them having access to it and most commonly used it for learning and finding information, social interaction, watching videos and playing games.
- Access to activities is limited for those who are dependent on carers
- Having something to do in the day which developed new skills was important to the adults who responded.

## Our Vision

Our vision is to take a whole life approach to ensure that:

**“People with a disability of any age can reach their potential and live healthy, safe, independent and fulfilling lives in their own communities”.**

In order to deliver our vision, we will:

**Build a Healthy Staffordshire**, with an environment that improves health and wellbeing for all.

**Help people to help themselves**, by giving simple, clear information and advice to enable them to take responsibility for keeping themselves healthy, safe and prosperous.

**Grow communities to support people**, and which help people to live independently in their own home, with care and support from family, friends and the whole community.

**Offer extra help for those who need it**, to prevent and respond at times of crisis to get people back to independence.

**Be honest about the options available**, so that people understand who is eligible for support and who will pay for it.

**Maintain long term care services**, working with our partners and providers to ensure that when people do require support, we can offer quality and safe services that meet people’s needs.

This will inform a new approach to supporting people with disabilities of all ages. **The guiding principles** of our new approach are:

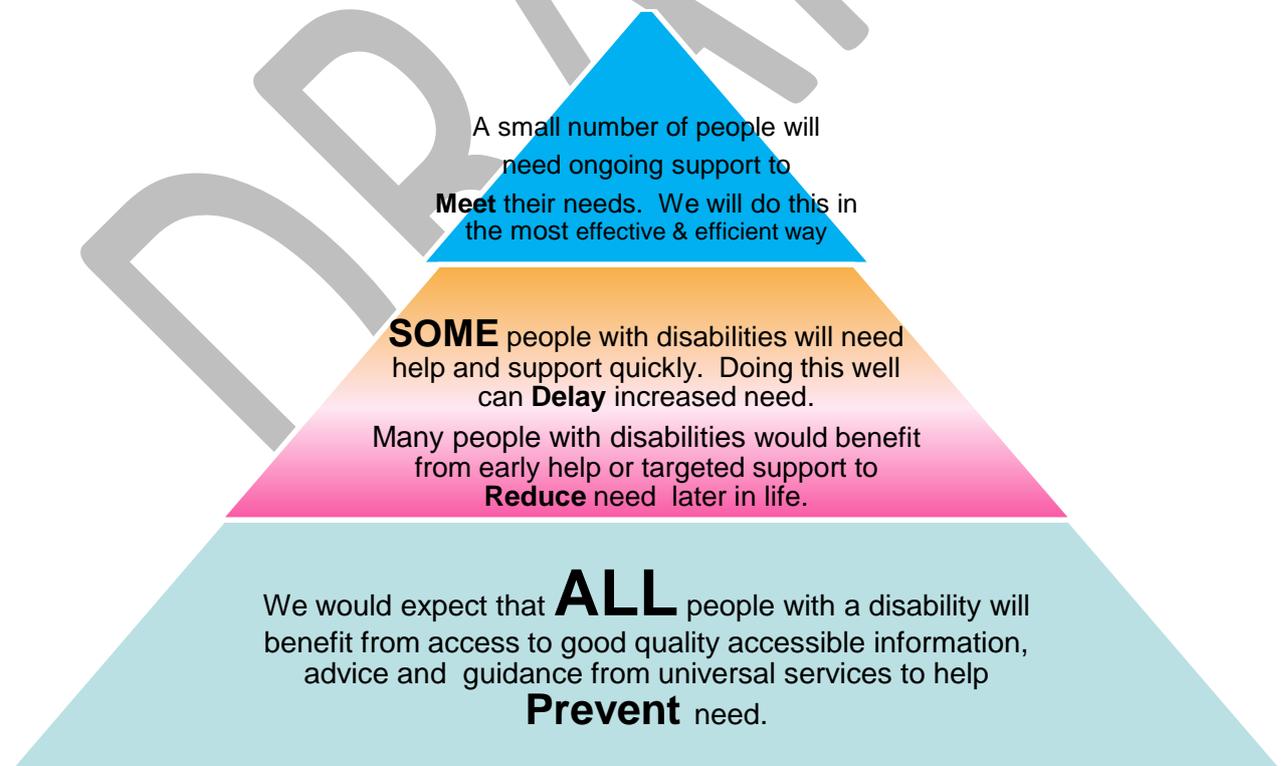
1. We will meet needs in a way that is financially sustainable, both in the short term and the long term, as well as being statutorily compliant
2. An understanding that in the first instance **all** individuals with a disability will be able to access and participate fully in family and community life to meet their needs
3. That **all** individuals and their families will have access to good quality, accessible information, advice and guidance to help **prevent** needs escalating
4. We will apply approaches that look at an individual’s strengths, talents and circles of support as part of assessment processes; a focus on ability not disability to **delay** or **reduce** increased needs later on.
5. **Some** people might need a little extra help and support. Those individuals will receive the right support, in the right place, at the right price to maximise their independence, underpinned by plans that reduce or delay additional longer term needs.

6. A small number of individuals may need ongoing, longer term support. For those individuals we will continue to develop a market that provides choice, control and diversity that meets needs and provides the best possible value for money.
7. For the small number of people who need ongoing support, reported needs will be assessed in line with the Children Act 1989, Children and Families Act 2014 (and associated SEND Code of Practice 2015) or Care Act 2014 as applicable to the age and circumstances of the individual in the first instance.
8. **Safeguarding** considerations for individuals of any age with a disability will be paramount at all times

### Strategic approach

This strategy sets out how the county council will work together with people who have disabilities, their families and others who support them to make the vision a reality.

By taking a whole life approach we can ensure that we can support people when they really need it, and in ways which will ensure that people are able to remain as independent as possible on their journey through life.



## **The outcomes we are seeking to achieve via our strategy are:**

### **To prevent, reduce and delay need:**

- Individuals and their families have access to the information, advice and guidance they need in order to be as independent as possible.
- Individuals with a disability have the opportunity to reach their full potential. They have the opportunity to learn, train, travel, study, work or engage in activities that match their interests, skills and abilities
- Young people with a disability will be well prepared for adulthood
- Individuals are able to access support in their local community, planned in a way which prevents, delays or reduces needs later on.
- Individuals with a disability feel welcome, safe, and included in their local community
- Individuals with a disability are supported within their community, in a place where they are supported by people that are important to them. In cases where this isn't possible, they will be supported to stay in contact
- Individuals are able to plan ahead and have plans in place to meet their needs. If something unexpected happens however help can be arranged quickly, without having to go through lots of complicated procedures
- The role of carers is recognised and understood by those working with the people they care for.

### **To meet statutory need**

If assessed needs meet statutory thresholds, and it is not possible to meet those needs by other means our aim is that:

- Individuals will be able to access good quality, personalised support that helps them become more independent.
- For children and young people, education, health and care needs will be documented and recorded in one plan so they can understand how their needs will be met.
- Young people with ongoing needs are prepared for adulthood, and this transfer is well managed irrespective of their eligibility for services (or otherwise) as an adult.
- Individuals (and their families or carers where appropriate) are able to get skilled advice to help them understand the costs of care and how they can make the best use of the money they have so individuals can plan their care in advance to meet their needs.
- Support for individuals is coordinated, co-operative and works well together and they know how to get things changed if they need to.
- Individuals are supported by the right people, with the right skills

## How we plan to achieve our vision

### PREVENT NEED

Whilst most disabilities cannot be prevented, we know that if we provide the right information and support at the right time, people with disabilities and their families will be able to make informed choices which can prevent or reduce the need for social care services later in life.

#### How it works now

- People often don't know how to find the information they want or what support is available, either through formal services or within their local communities.
- Too many people rely upon formal education, health and care services for support rather than accessing community based support and services. This is often because they don't know what is available within their community, and the people who run those services don't always know how to promote them, or make them accessible and welcoming to people with disabilities.
- We know that in Staffordshire children with moderate learning disabilities or Special Educational Needs are much more likely to go to a special school than children with comparable needs in similar areas.
- This can establish a pattern of expectation that makes preparing for adulthood more difficult.
- As many children travel long distances to attend our county's special schools it can mean that they have few friends in their local community and spend large amounts of time traveling to and from school.
- Children with a disability and their families don't always know where to look for the right information to help them plan effectively for their later life.
- Accessing the right advice and guidance is spread over a range of services and platforms.
- Families say that if their child has an 'obvious disability' then the service they receive is good. If, however, the disability is 'unclear', there are multiple presenting issues, and/or issues only become apparent later in childhood, then accessing information, assessment and support can be fragmented, inaccessible and slow.
- Educational outcomes for children and young people with SEND are below national averages. Consequently, intervention and support in universal services, in early years settings, schools and FE colleges needs to be improved.
- Children and young people with disabilities are more likely to experience poor health, irrespective of their disability.

### **To prevent needs arising or getting worse we will:**

- Work with our Public Health and NHS colleagues to check the right support and information is made available to help ensure women have a healthy pregnancy.
- Work with NHS Health Visitors to identify potential issues as early as possible for those conditions or health issues that can't be picked up or identified during pregnancy
- Work with NHS commissioners and providers of the School Nursing and Special School Nursing services to ensure effective arrangements to identify issues as well as plans to meet needs as early as possible are in place.
- For those parents that may decide to make the difficult and painful decision to terminate a pregnancy we will work with the NHS so that good advice and information is available at the outset to help them make fully informed decisions, and that the right support is available afterwards, including counselling, to support them when they need it
- Work with NHS commissioners and providers of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessment and diagnostic services to ensure effective early diagnosis and planning arrangements are in place
- Seek reassurance that there will be a comprehensive package of antenatal screening programmes implemented with public health, ensuring all children aged two years are assessed and screened for SEND and referred to Staffordshire County Council Early Years forums when appropriate.
- Work with Hearing Impairment, Visual Impairment, Autism and Sensory Support in Staffordshire (ASSIST), Educational Psychology, Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy services (amongst others) to develop robust plans to address needs as early as possible in order to prevent or reduce further needs later on
- Develop effective mechanisms for sharing data across education, health and care services for children and young people aged 0 to 25 with a disability to help coordinate support for individuals and shape and plan services in the future.
- Improve our use of modern technology as a way to communicate with, and inform people of activities in their area. A review of the pros and cons of the use of social media will be undertaken prior to considering wider use of this method to communicate information, to avoid abuse by third parties or the risk of compounding social isolation.
- Ensure that all staff working with people with a disability, in particular those working with children, young people and their families, understand the vision and are confident to promote it.
- Work with universal services, employers and others to make 'reasonable adjustments' to help people access community facilities and support, training, work and leisure opportunities
- Promote and ensure high quality early years and childcare provision by developing the market to ensure there is sufficient provision to meet the needs of

children, and allow children with a disability equal access to pre-school provision as the rest of the population.

- Work with the schools system to improve educational outcomes for children with disabilities, in order to close the gap in achievement.
- Ensure we have an internet based 'Local Offer' that is easy to navigate and provides good quality, up to date information for children with a disability and their parents, now and into their adult life. These are accessible via:

SEND Local Offer (for 0-25's and their Parents/Carers):

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/Access-to-learning/Local-Offer-SEND-Pathway.aspx>

Staffordshire Connects (primarily for adults with a disability):

<https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/home.page>

- Ensure (in addition to the above) that information, advice and guidance is accessible in alternative formats such as Braille, Audio, British Sign Language and Easy Read to ensure it is accessible to people with a broad range of disabilities and/or impairments
- Develop arrangements so that young people with a disability and their families are supported to think more proactively about their futures at their year 9 review.
- Work with health commissioners so that all young people who are disabled have a review of their health needs at the most appropriate age to start preparing for adult life. This will enable young adults to plan for any changes in their health support.
- Plan to taper support gradually for those young people who will not be eligible for services at the age of 18 so the impact of change is reduced and that we collectively fulfil our statutory obligations relating to Transition, set out in the Care Act 2014
- Work with local voluntary, and community based organisations to ensure that they have the right information to share and know who lives in their areas that may benefit from a connection, including investigating the potential to develop a network of community champions.
- Utilise mainstream community services such as gyms and exercise classes, leisure establishments and classes, libraries, community groups to meet the eligible needs of people who have a disability, reducing reliance upon expensive specialist services.
- Work with schools to identify young people who become carers are identified early to ensure that appropriate support is put in place to address inappropriate caring loads, and that the cared for person is receiving the support they need to prevent needs escalating.
- Undertake further research to develop a greater understanding of the reasons for the lower life expectancy amongst females with learning disabilities than males, which is the opposite of trends amongst the population who do not have a learning disability
- Undertake further research into the potential impact of the growth in the numbers of people with a disability living to older ages with learning disabilities (14%) and

mental health (18%) conditions, and the impact this will have on resources. Further analysis will also need to be undertaken on the secondary issues arising in older age for those with specific conditions, for example to further investigate the high prevalence of dementia in older people with Downs Syndrome.

- We will also conduct further research into the reasons behind the variations in prevalence of different disabilities in different ethnic groups, in order to better understand them, and how we might work with different communities

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## **REDUCE NEED**

Children with a disability often need additional early support to enable them to be ready to fully benefit from their education. Providing this support can improve their long-term life chances and opportunities. Similarly providing the right type of low level support or advice early to any disabled person can reduce their dependence on long-term care, give them a sense of pride and dignity, and enable them to be as independent as possible. Using modern technology to help monitor people's conditions or send for help if something goes wrong is an excellent example of how this can work in practice.

### **How it works now**

- Very few people with disabilities known to services are in paid employment.
- We don't know enough about those young people who are likely to need extra help when they get older, or the kinds of support they will need.
- We sometimes have low expectations of what people can do for themselves or could achieve with a little bit of help. For example, get a job, or travel by themselves.
- We support people to look for paid support rather than use what is already in their communities, which would make their personal budgets go further.
- We don't always offer support to people quickly enough when they ask for help, so they end up in crisis. Sometimes that causes entirely avoidable extra stress or may even mean families are separated or people have to leave their home.
- People don't always know where to look for the right help, or equipment that would help them manage on a day to day basis.

### **To help reduce needs later in life we will:**

- Work with the early years providers, school and college systems to develop ways to meet the needs of young people with a disability. We'll do this by setting out clear expectations at the SEN support stage and, where appropriate, devolving funding, responsibilities and decisions to a local level, to try and bring decision making closer to the point of need.
- Strengthen early help and pre-school provision for children with disabilities to ensure they are in a position to begin school ready to learn.
- Work with schools and education settings to offer the right kind of education provision and support so that children with disabilities can have their education needs met closer to home. We will develop local pilot programmes in each district, led by schools, to develop the skills, knowledge and expertise of mainstream school staff to help them better support young people in a mainstream setting where this is in the best interests of the child and meets their needs.
- Work with the Further Education sector to ensure a broad range of options for young people and adults who want to continue their education. This approach

will also need to encompass ways of reassuring parents that the right support and safeguards will be in place to ensure that young people who are academically able, but have other presenting needs such as physical or sensory impairments or disabilities, will be able to live and study successfully, and remain independent.

- Support initiatives alongside our partners, and particularly the Voluntary and Community Sector, which can help people to be active members of their communities.
- Work with partners to develop arrangements to support people with disabilities into sustainable employment. As part of the development we will look at the support that is available to people with disabilities and employers, both from the council and other organisations such as Job Centre Plus and the Department for Work and Pensions, and encourage employers to make reasonable adjustments to help support people with a disability, Autistic Spectrum Disorder or mental health condition to enter, and stay, in employment.
- Seek to broker relationships with major employers in Staffordshire to improve the percentage of people with a disability in paid employment
- Continue to promote and implement the use of new/assistive technology such as seizure alarms, bathroom aids, medication dispensers etc to help keep people with a disability safe and well and reduce their need to rely on outside agencies for their care and support.
- Support individuals and families earlier in managing difficult behaviours through the use of positive behaviour support and other forms of carers support programmes.
- Support carers to identify their own support needs so they can remain mentally, emotionally and physically well and confident to keep caring.
- Work with providers to seek new ways of working that promote independence and reduce needs for formal support.
- Continue to promote independent travel for people both young and old with disabilities.

## **DELAY NEED**

We recognise that most people with disabilities and their families cope well with everyday life and “just get on with it”, but there are times when people need additional help to delay the need for care. There are also things we can do to help minimise the impact of disabilities if we act early or intervene quickly when people tell us that things are difficult. These can range from supporting people in a crisis or helping them develop plans to cope with the unexpected, through to providing short term training or support to individuals and/ or their families to regain or learn new skills.

### **How it works now**

- We sometimes look at people’s disabilities and the things they can’t do, rather than build plans around those things they can.
- Some of the services we run or pay for support people in the same way over a long period of time, rather than adapting and changing to help them to grow, develop and be as independent as they can be.
- We do not yet have clear unequivocal evidence about what the most effective kinds of services and support are to help reduce need for long term care.
- It can sometimes take a long time to get the support people need as they have to wait for an assessment and then for the right support to be put in place.

### **To help delay further needs we will:**

- Work with partners to ensure we have the right plans and services in place to support people in crisis, for example looking at the emotional wellbeing demands on carers and of the impact of isolation on people with disabilities if they have nothing meaningful to do during the day.
- Ensure that the services we commission promote inclusion, dignity, self-respect, and independence.
- Ensure there is an appropriate range and types of short breaks and respite care, and ensure they support people to develop their independence, as well as provide families with a break from one another.
- Streamline assessment processes and develop information sharing arrangements with our partners so that people don’t have to tell their story lots of times to get the support they need.

## **MEET NEED**

We acknowledge that a small number of people with a disability will need support from childhood and through most of their adult lives. We will continue to meet their eligible needs in line with the requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014, SEND Code of Practice 2015, Children and Social Act 2017 and the Care Act 2014 as well as relevant children's or adults safeguarding legislation, as applicable to their circumstances. We will work with individuals, their families and others who support them to meet eligible needs - not wants. We will ensure that support is still focused on enabling them to live as independently as they can and to achieve their goals whilst utilising the other resources around them so that taxpayer's money can be put to best use. We will manage our resources well, so that we can continue to afford to support those who most need our support, both now and in the future.

### **How it works now**

- We often focus on meeting people's needs through paid support and traditional "specialist" services which often means that community resources and opportunities are not fully explored.
- People sometimes expect that the council will fund their choice of service or support regardless of the cost when in reality, this is not the case. The council will fund support which meets eligible care needs and if individuals wish to access services in addition to this they will need to consider other ways of funding them.
- Services are often continued whether they are effective at supporting people towards their goals or ambitions or not, in the absence of more suitable (and potentially cost effective) means of support.
- Some of the services and the ways we work with people do not focus on supporting and promoting independence and positive risk-taking, but instead can create dependence, over-reliance and avoidance of risk.

### **To meet statutory need we will:**

- Make clear guidance available on the statutory duties that apply to people with a disability and what the county council's role is in meeting assessed eligible needs, reflecting the guidance accompanying the Care Act 2014, Children Act 1989 & Children & Families Act 2014.
- Work with staff, providers and individuals, and where appropriate their families, to ensure that everyone understands what we are trying to achieve when we work together, to set goals as part of support planning and check regularly to see if they have been met.
- Continue to promote independent travel from childhood, where appropriate and the use other innovative and cost effective ways of helping people with disabilities get around.
- Seek to develop partnerships within the schools to meet needs locally without the need to resort to specialist/high cost placements.

- Review our approach to preparing for adulthood to ensure it is enabling young people to lead an independent life as a young person and an adult
- Where it is appropriate to do so we will support people to remain in their own home with the right levels of support to maintain their independence, however the county council can only fund support in the home environment if this is a cost effective approach to meeting eligible care and support needs
- Ask citizens and their families to contribute to the cost of their support in accordance with the Care Act. Where provision to meet need is identified, but the family choose to access a provider that charges a higher rate, the citizen will need to pay for the shortfall. This will be tested to ensure that it is affordable.
- We will seek to broker solutions for the citizen where required, to meet their eligible needs
- Where people cannot stay at home, we will seek to find the most suitable and cost effective alternative which meets eligible care and support needs.
- We will only work with providers who support individuals to increase their independence and, where appropriate, reduce the level of support required over time to meet their eligible needs
- We will develop care pathways across Adult Learning Disability Teams, to ensure good quality, robust, outcome focussed assessments, that lead to measurable results and improvements for Adults with Learning Disabilities who have eligible needs for support
- We will continue to work with our delivery partners to ensure the eligible needs of people with a physical disability and/or sensory impairment are met in line with our statutory requirements
- Develop new approaches to working with people who have complex needs and challenging behaviours, based on active, flexible case management and co-ordinated, community-based, affordable care, to provide genuine alternatives to outdated institutionalised care.
- Help people gain greater choice and control of their care via self-directed support, Individual Service Funds, and personal budgets where this is appropriate
- Effectively manage the market place to ensure they are delivering our vision, particularly where we want to see a greater move towards a diverse range of good quality support which helps people to further develop their skills and independence
- The Council will review its in house offer and independent sector provision, in order to ensure that there are good outcomes for our citizens and their families, whilst at the same time ensuring value for money for the council under it's Community Offer 2022 programme for day opportunities for Adults with Learning Disabilities
- Above all, we will be honest about what we will and will not do

## **Cross-cutting themes**

### **Education**

Further information on our aspirations and vision for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) will be contained within the forthcoming SEND Strategy, due to be produced in the first half of 2018. In brief, our expectation is that:

- Children and young people are fully prepared for adulthood – and they tell us so
- More children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans are able to be educated successfully within their local mainstream community schools and settings
- Children and young people have less need to access specialist educational, health and care services as a result of effective preventative and early intervention measures
- Provision to meet need has the right balance of being planned, affordable, flexible and sustainable.
- Education must be centred on achievable medium-long term aspirations

### **Housing and Support**

The county council and key stakeholders including Staffordshire's eight district and borough councils and social housing providers, will be working together to ensure that all citizens are living in the right place, with the right support at the right cost, to prevent, reduce and delay additional needs.

### **Transport**

We will assess how transport needs can best be met through independent travel arrangements, privately funded transport or county council arranged and funded transport. The decision to provide transport is based upon a person's individual circumstances including needs, risks, outcomes and on promoting independence and will always focus on ensuring that the individual can be safely transported to a service which is *essential* to meeting their assessed eligible needs, in accordance with relevant legislation as set out in the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014, and associated SEND Code of Practice 2015.

### **Employment**

We know that employment, for a sense of contribution to society, financial wellbeing, self-respect, and for the effect it has in reducing isolation and enhancing general wellbeing and pride in oneself is good for people. This is especially so for people living with a disability, who can be more socially isolated than many others.

We will be undertaking local market development work to identify individual solutions for those who are able to enter the workplace. We will be working with partners such as Job Centre Plus, the DWP, local employers, the local voluntary sector and private sector partners to ensure we are able to help people with disabilities enter the work place. Efforts will be made to encourage employers to make reasonable adjustments wherever possible to support access to paid employment for people with disabilities

We will strengthen links with the work of our Employment and Skills Commissioning Team and their contracted partners across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, as this

presents a number of opportunities to support those with disabilities to develop their skills and engage with the job market.

### **Crime against people with disabilities**

Engagement sessions with a number of community based groups who work with adults with learning disabilities have revealed that many are subject to unpleasant and anti-social behaviour from others in their communities, including name calling, bullying, verbal abuse and hate crime. It's likely that this issue considerably exceeds the number of reported incidences of such crimes because the victims are embarrassed or afraid to tell anyone else at the time.

Just as concerning is the rise in so called 'mate-crime' against vulnerable groups, and particularly those with learning disabilities. This can take many forms but typically involves the victim being 'befriended' by the perpetrator and encouraged to either engage in activity which is risky to themselves, or results in a gain (monetary or otherwise) of some kind to the perpetrator. Again this is likely under-reported due to embarrassment, or even because the victim doesn't fully understand they have been taken advantage of.

We will work with our colleagues at the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, as well as Staffordshire Police and local community groups and the Voluntary and Community sector to raise awareness of the risks posed to people with disabilities, and to develop approaches where people with disabilities have safe places to go if they feel afraid. Our aspiration is for Staffordshire to be a disability friendly society, where people want to help our disabled residents, not to hurt or take advantage of them.

### **Carers**

Every day, thousands of people in Staffordshire look after an ill, frail or disabled family member, friend or partner. Ensuring these carers can continue to do so is one of the county council's key priorities and our aspiration is for carers to be able to lead happy, healthy and more independent lives whilst continuing to care for their loved ones.

Those seeking more detail on our approach to ensuring carers are valued and supported in their role should refer to the forthcoming Carers Strategy for Staffordshire, which will cover this and our forward plans in greater detail. The Carers Partnership ensures carers across the county have a meaningful voice in the development of plans, improving services, and future developments for carers.

With our partners, we will:

- Ensure good quality information and advice is readily available
- Respond to the needs of carers earlier and in a more cohesive way, to manage their caring role without additional support where possible.
- We will also increase efforts to identify carers who do not currently know what is available to support them, enabling them to access support and reducing their risk of carer breakdown.
- We will support non-commissioned providers to develop and grow their networks of support through the Carers Partnership and by supporting their objectives

## **Key activity to support delivery**

We will need to take some additional actions to underpin our approach and help us deliver what we have set out.

These include:

- Gathering more information about what people need, what we already have and what works, to help us know where the gaps are.
- Reviewing our existing processes and pathways so we can fully understand what is working and what isn't working for people with disabilities, their families and the staff who support them.
- Working with our partners in health to expand our personal budget offer both for adults and children alongside introducing new ways to support people to make the most of their budgets without increasing the administrative burdens.
- Working with external partners and our staff to understand what support they need to change the way they work. This will inform the workforce development plans.
- Working with partners, such as schools and the NHS, to ensure we are all working to the same goals.
- Reviewing our contracts and specifications as new services are commissioned to ensure they support the delivery of our vision.
- Working with our providers, both those we fund and those we don't, to ensure they know what both the council and people with disabilities expect from them.
- Developing our Governance arrangements to ensure scrutiny, and that quality and value for money are improved. This will include setting up working groups and developing further delivery and action plans that we can use to check our progress.

## **Monitoring our performance and accountability**

Staffordshire County Council will commission a range of activity to deliver this strategy, and seek to influence partners and the public to help deliver the elements which we do not have direct responsibility for. There will be regular opportunities for relevant stakeholders to have their say on the issues that are important to them.

We will monitor how well we are doing in a number of ways. As well as the traditional routes of the business plan, yearly performance report and local accounts, we will work with the All Age Disability Executive Group to track progress and delivery against the strategy.

Delivery of the commitments in the strategy will be overseen by the **All-Age Disability Executive Board**. This high level group, consisting of the Lead Member for Health and Care, the Lead Member Children and Young People, as well as service directors and senior staff responsible for the delivery and commissioning of the Councils services and support for people with disabilities, will oversee and hold to account officers responsible for making the commitments happen on the ground.

The Board will also ensure work with partners such as the NHS, police, private, voluntary and community sectors is coordinated and progressed where the council does not deliver those elements itself.

A performance dashboard and comprehensive reporting arrangements will be developed to better performance and contract-manage commissioned arrangements.

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