

Getting the Right Start

**The Children and Young People's
Programme 2023-2028**



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Foreword

The African proverb tells us that it takes a village to raise a child. Whilst Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent is bigger than a village, we think the same principle still applies. There is a collective responsibility to ensure that our children and young people get off to the best start in life, and that very much includes their health.

There have been times when children and young people have felt like poor cousins within our National Health Service. Thankfully, most children and young people are generally fit and well and make very little call on NHS resources. The reality is that focusing on the health and wellbeing of young people reaps a huge dividend in terms of their health later in life. Good habits usually start young, and we want to help children, with support from their parents and guardians, to prioritise their health and have the tools to stay well, physically, and mentally.

For those children who do need more intensive care and support, we want to ensure that this is of the highest quality and that those families really feel looked after. We want to achieve good quality outcomes wherever possible, from maternity care through to cancer treatment, and support those young people with life long and even life limiting conditions.

To meet the needs of our children and young people requires great organisation based on good plans that are well executed. We need to use our limited resources well, train our workforce to the best possible standard, harness the power of technology and most importantly, never stop listening to children and young people about what they think is important.



It is a complete privilege to be asked to lead this programme of work on behalf of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care System and our talented Programme board, who represent a whole range of disciplines across our system, including expert clinical leadership. Our aim is to make Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent one of the very best places to enjoy a healthy childhood, knowing that great care will always be there for our children when they need it.

Our vision

Children in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent will grow up healthy and happy, with their families and friends. They are able to look after their own wellbeing, while knowing they will get exceptional care and treatment when they need it.



Current context

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent are home to **246,800*** children and young people under the age of 19. Future projections indicate that this number is increasing.

(*data accurate as of the 2021 census data)

Whilst most children are happy, safe and have loving homes, some families face challenges that means they cannot thrive in the way they want to. They are prevented from living happier, healthier, and more productive lives due to long standing inequalities. Some health outcomes for our children are poor.



All children and young people should feel that they can have a say on the issues that affect them and the communities where they live. From some of our recent engagement surveys, children and young people have told us that improving health and wellbeing and reducing child poverty is amongst some of the things that are most important to them. This includes better mental health education and improved access to mental health support.

If we are to listen to our young people and are committed in supporting them to 'start well' and 'grow well' to fulfil their potential, we know that the current situation needs to change. Our aspiration is to make sure children and young

people have the best start in life and the best health. This document will explain what we need to do to make this a reality.

The shaping and delivery of our offer for children and young people cannot be developed in isolation. It will require a huge partnership effort. This programme is a real opportunity to approach and solve our challenges collectively, with shared ambition and commitment to improve the health and wellbeing of our children and young people. There is a considerable amount of positive work already underway to address some of those challenges but there is a long way to go to demonstrate real impact of our efforts.

**Our aspiration
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children and young
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Childhood in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

We are proud that:



Emergency admissions for children with asthma are decreasing



There are fewer mums who smoke when they are pregnant



The uptake for immunisations is high



More people are reading the Kind Minds Newsletter

We need to:



Reduce the number of children in care



Improve the survival of babies and young children



Increase the number of children who achieve and maintain a healthy weight



Reduce the time it takes for a young person to receive an autism diagnosis

Our approach

There are seven principles that will underpin all our work.



Children will be heard –

The voice and needs of our children and young people will be at the forefront of our decision making. We will work with them, listen to them, and let them know how we used their feedback and ideas in improving our services.



We care about the whole child –

We will take a holistic approach that considers children's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, and the relationship between them.



Every child is unique –

We adopt a personalised approach in the way that we care for children and young people, names not numbers; the more complex the needs, the more relational we will be in our approach to care.



Every child is part of a family, a home, a community – We recognise that health professionals rarely know a child best and we are committed to listening and working with families and a wide range of organisations in the way that we design and provide services. We also recognise that not all children can live with their birth family, and they need special care.



Every day counts – Our approach to child health starts even before conception, helping future parents to make good health choices and decisions, including through pregnancy.



Becoming an adult is a journey – Some of our children and young people will continue their need for care into adulthood. We will plan that transition with young people and their families early and in a way that reflects personal circumstances, avoiding cliff edges in care.



We are one team – It is not a child's job, or indeed their parents' and guardians' role to join up services, it's ours. We will seek to ensure that young people and families don't have to keep repeating their story but will instead feel the wrap-round care of trusted professionals.



Our priorities

Our priorities as a programme will change over time.
These are our initial areas of focus.



Best start in life: improve the survival of babies and young children to reduce infant mortality.



Increase the number of children and young people to achieve and sustain a healthy weight.



Support children and young people to achieve their potential by enjoying good emotional wellbeing and positive mental health.



Support children with complex needs with the help they need so that they can fulfil their potential.



Effectively manage long term conditions to reduce avoidable admissions in relation to asthma, epilepsy, and diabetes.



Improve the survival of babies and young children to reduce infant mortality

Infant mortality is defined as the death of an infant in the first year of life. In Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, over the last several years, infant mortality rates have remained significantly above the national average. There are several modifiable factors which are key to reducing infant mortality.



To reduce the level of infant mortality, some of our key focus areas will be to:

- Reduce the number of mums who smoke during their pregnancy
- Increase the rates of infant feeding initiation and continuation
- Reduce the number of pre-term births and babies with a low birth weight.

This priority will form part of our wider system aspirations as we continue to develop our system approach to maternity and neonatal care. We will ensure continued focus on maternity safety and service improvement. This will very much be a partnership and collaborative approach; learning and most importantly listening to the women and families that we care for.



Increase the number of children to achieve and sustain a healthy weight

The prevalence of obesity within Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent is worse than the England average for both children and adults.

However, we know the factors that influence this are by no means straight forward. We will work hard to gain a better knowledge of these factors and understand what we can do to address them. At the heart of this will be improvements in nutrition and access to physical activity. Much of the work on this objective will be taken forward by the two Health and Wellbeing Boards in the county and city, working closely with schools, sports clubs, cultural groups, and the voluntary and community sector.





Support children and young people to achieve their potential by enjoying good emotional wellbeing and positive mental health

Most children and young people manage their emotional health well and are thriving. However, sometimes, they may need some extra help and support. We want to make sure that when they need that help, they get it as quickly as possible and have an informed choice about the way they receive that support. This means that they are actively involved in helping shape the services that support them and deciding how they are best delivered.

By addressing any concerns as early as possible, we stand a much better chance at helping them build resilience and confidence.

We recognise that some of our young people need much more support as they struggle with poor mental health. 50% of mental health conditions are diagnosed before the age of 18 so it is crucially important that there is good access to treatment services and wider support, including when crises occur. In Autumn Term 2021, the Children and Young People's Mental Health System Improvement Board established the Mental Health Leads in Education Network as a way of engaging with schools and education providers. The Network recognises the vital role education settings play in supporting children and young people to achieve positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes. Membership of the Network continues to grow and there are currently over 200 representatives on the group, from education settings across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.



Support children with complex needs with the help they need so that they can fulfil their potential

It is important to make sure that the right support, best opportunities, and care is in place to help these children and their families thrive. We know we need to do things better; improving communication and awareness, reducing unnecessary processes that make things difficult for professionals and families, better access to information and advice – there is lots to do. In particular, we need to ensure that whenever possible, these young people can get help they need close to home, that they don't get unnecessarily stuck in hospital but can recover in the community or even better at home.



Effectively manage long-term conditions to reduce avoidable hospital admissions in relation to asthma, epilepsy and diabetes

We want to ensure that children and young people have access to the right support that is close to home and really offers them what they need to feel confident in managing their condition and preventing avoidable harm.

We will strive to increase competency and capability across all settings that have contact with a child or young person who has a long-term condition. This will help us to improve care and outcomes for children and young people and reduce variation in treatment care.

The key enablers

If we are to be successful in delivering our priorities, then there are some crucial building blocks that must be in place. These are:



Investment in our workforce –

this does not just mean our clinical workforce, but also the wider workforce that are working with children and young people. We must engender a confident one team ethos where everyone knows how to use their role to contribute to better health and wellbeing for our children.



Sharing information –

While always respecting individual rights to privacy and consent, we need to become better at sharing information between different agencies working with the same child or young person so that we understand the whole picture and work with families more effectively.



Making the most of digital –

Our young people expect us to engage with them in the way that they engage with each other. That means we need to be using the platforms they are using and using technology to put them in control of their own health.



Evidence-based commissioning – how we plan, contract, and deliver services is a powerful lever for change and improvement. We need to join up our resources across the system to make great decisions with young people and families as to which services we invest in and what value we gain from that investment, learning lessons as we go. We need to assemble and use the best evidence available, trawling the world for the best service solutions that could work well here as well.



Continuing engagement with children and young people –

We must use many, many different ways to meet young people and listen to what they have to tell us. What are their priorities, how do they want to receive services, what's going well and what's not going so well. They are our best source of knowledge and therefore improvement.



Leadership – We need to drive positive change and improve outcomes for our young people and their families. This means that Senior Strategic Leaders across all partner organisations need to come together to take collective responsibility of shared measures. This partnership approach to working ensures that there is a focus on early help, whole family and whole system working.





Measuring progress

We have developed a basket of indicators that will help us know whether our plan is having impact. There are some indicators that will tell us whether we are changing population health outcomes over time. Examples are:

Population health outcomes:

- Reduced infant mortality rates
- Improvements in early years development and school readiness.

There are other indicators that are more operational and tell us more about whether children and young people are getting the right care in a timely way. Examples of those indicators include:

Operational:

- Access to mental health services
- Emergency admissions for asthma, epilepsy and diabetes

We will be transparent about our progress against these measures, creating a web portal where this data will be readily accessible.

Governance and support

The Children and Young People's Programme Board has been established to oversee and co-ordinate our local approach.

The Board will be accountable directly to main Integrated Care System Board for the progress we are making where we can also make the case for specific resource requirements to achieve our plans. The Board will also have a close relationship with other portfolio boards that we are reliant on for progress, including the Mental Health Board and the Population Health Board. We will also rely on expert sub-boards for elements of our work, such as maternity safety and quality and children's mental health.



Clinical leadership and excellence will be at the heart of our governance. As well as individual Board members we will have access to dedicated clinical time to support our work. We will also be supported by a dedicated professional officer team employed by the Integrated Care Board.

Our model will be one of System Leadership, operating as a multi-disciplinary network to realise our ambitions for children's health. We will take a creative approach to problem solving and use our resources responsibly. We will connect to what is happening deep in local places and will abide by the principle of subsidiarity, enabling care to be provided as close to home as possible, with great family practice primary care at the heart of that community effort. We will work with the new network of Family Hubs and with all organisations who want to be part of this story.

How you can get involved



There are several ways in which you can get involved in this work.

First, if you have any feedback on this strategy, then you can e-mail the team at ssotics.comms@nhs.net.

If you want to tell us how things are going in terms of children's health provision in your community then you can contact us directly or you could engage through your local Healthwatch.

- [Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent](#)
- [Healthwatch Staffordshire](#)

If you want to get even more involved, then you might want to apply to be part of the ICS People's Assembly when we are recruiting new members.

Making it count

In the history of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent's health and care system, we have never been as integrated as we are now. All the right players are round the table across NHS, local government, and community sector; clinical and non-clinical; physical and mental health; from maternity to adolescent health. We will never have a better chance to make a major step change in our children and young people's health, even in the teeth of the economic difficulties that many households are currently facing. We are determined to make the most of this opportunity.

