

Family Matters

Stoke-on-Trent Children, Young People and Families Strategy 2026-30



Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction – About the strategy	4
What has changed since 2020?	5
The main challenges in 2026	6
How young people feel about growing up in Stoke-on-Trent.....	7
Strategic aims: our whole-city missions.....	8
Our strategic priorities for children, young people and families.....	9
Why families in Stoke-on-Trent seek support.....	10
System leadership and partnership working.....	11
Early help and prevention.....	11
Local policy context.....	12
Future 100 – A place-based approach to growth and renewal.....	13
Improving child health and wellbeing outcomes.....	14
Key city strategies for children, young people and families.....	15
Key local initiatives which contribute to this strategy.....	17
Government policy which affects delivery of this strategy.....	18
Priority 1: Enable children and young people to grow up in safe, healthy, nurturing home environments.....	19
Priority 2: Make the city a safer, more inclusive place for children, young people and families.....	21
Priority 3: Give children the best possible start in life.....	23
Priority 4: Reduce the impacts of poverty, deprivation and inequality.....	25
Priority 5: Improve physical and emotional health and wellbeing for children and young people.....	27
Priority 6: Increase youth and family participation in decision-making.....	29
Priority 7: Enable all children and young people to benefit from high-quality education, training and employment opportunities.....	31
Governance and delivery assurance.....	33
Partnership governance links to the Children, Young People and Families Strategic Partnership Board.....	35

Foreword

Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, happy, healthy and nurturing environment. No child should be put at risk of harm, denied essential care or excluded from opportunities because of the circumstances they are born into. Children need loving, caring, supportive families to help them develop and achieve their potential. And families need to know they can rely on timely, effective support when they need it.

This strategy is about changing how we view and work with families. It's about recognising and understanding the many complex factors which can shape childhood and family life in our city and working together to achieve the best possible outcomes. They cover health, education, housing, community safety, economy, environment, leisure, employment, and many more factors besides.

This Family Matters strategy accepts that no single organisation can tackle these issues in isolation. However, it also acknowledges that struggling families are far from invisible. We know they are likely to exhibit signs of distress or dysfunction in different settings and situations. This fragmented picture of how families function can make it harder to spot signs of potential trouble, but it also underscores the need for joined-up approaches to family support, with all partners pulling in the same direction and focused on achieving the same goals.

To make a real difference we need to act earlier and more effectively, focusing more on prevention and early help, so families get the right support at the right time, before problems can become crises. It also means designing tailored, multi-agency services that support the whole family rather than focusing on individual needs.

Fundamentally, we need to empower children and families and put their needs and interests at the centre of everything we do – as a council, as a corporate parent, as a responsible delivery partner and as a commissioner of citywide services and programmes. Moving from listening to co-production will transform the way in which we and our partners design and deliver essential services and help to put children and families at the heart of what we do.

By working together in this way, we can start to break down long-standing barriers and reduce the inequalities faced by too many children in our city. We want Stoke-on-Trent to be a city where support is easy to find, trusted by families, and built on local strengths.

Cllr Sarah Jane Colclough - Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Neil Macdonald – Director of Children's Services, Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Introduction – About the strategy

This strategy sets out a shared vision and clear priorities for how we will work together across Stoke-on-Trent to improve outcomes for all children, young people and families. It brings together everyone with a role to play – from the council, schools and health services, to voluntary organisations, community leaders and families themselves - to build a whole-city approach to supporting children and helping them to thrive.

The strategy's intended audience is anyone and everyone with an interest in improving the lives of children and young people in Stoke-on-Trent, regardless of their knowledge, involvement or level of influence.

We know that children's lives are shaped by a wide range of factors, ranging from the support they get at home and in school to access to safe physical and online spaces, healthcare, opportunities, and trusted adults. This strategy sets out how we will join up our efforts, pool our resources and make smarter, child-centred decisions to ensure every child and young person in our city can grow up safe, healthy, supported, and hopeful for their future.

This strategy is more than a plan – it is a bold and ambitious roadmap which aims to ensure that local services meet the needs of our communities, both now and into the future, starting with our youngest and most vulnerable citizens.

The diverse nature of the policy challenges and opportunities involved make it impossible for any single organisation to address them effectively. The causes and impacts of the issues involved are so wide-ranging that they demand a system-wide response.

The purpose of the strategy is to mobilise and focus a cohesive citywide approach to improving the lives and life chances of local children, young people and families. The strategy aims to deepen understanding of the issues involved and highlight strategic themes, goals and potential synergies that can enable more effective partnership working around shared challenges and priorities.

By improving the focus on the lived experience of children and families, the strategy will encourage and enable more joined-up, inclusive approaches which minimise duplication, maximise the efficient use of resources and capitalise on opportunities for improvement.

Together, we have a responsibility to make Stoke-on-Trent a city where all children have the best start in life, where young people are supported to achieve their potential, and where families are valued, strong and resilient. This strategy sets out how we will do just that - by working in partnership, focusing on what makes the biggest difference, and never losing sight of the people we serve.

What has changed since 2020?

The development of the Room to Grow strategy for children and families followed a critical 2019 inspection report which had warned that Stoke-on-Trent's Children's Services and statutory partners were not doing enough to protect vulnerable children or improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

Since then, the City Council has achieved sustained improvements across Children's Services, including a stronger focus on health and wellbeing, and new partnership approaches to delivering family support, child safeguarding and services for children and young people with SEND.

With its sights firmly set on achieving outcomes for all children and families in Stoke-on-Trent, the Council's main priority is investing in and delivering effective prevention and early help to safely reduce the numbers of children needing to be taken into care, and improving outcomes by supporting more families through difficult problems.

Priority (2020 Strategy)	Progress achieved
<i>Develop our early years offer</i>	Uptake of early education places is level with the national average and outperforming the regional average.
<i>Design an early help offer</i>	More early help is now being offered by local Partners.
<i>Reform our child protection front door</i>	Redesigned the service to be focused on prevention and early support for children and their families.
<i>Develop and implement an inclusion strategy</i>	Developed a partnership SEND improvement strategy and plan and published a joint commissioning strategy with the Integrated Care Board.
<i>Develop and implement an educational improvement plan</i>	Developed a delivery plan as a priority education investment area, focused primarily on English and maths.
<i>Improve the quality of social work practice</i>	Ofsted lifted the requirement for intervention in Children's Services in 2025, citing the 'steady progress' achieved.
<i>Develop the best possible offer for our cared-for children</i>	The Virtual School service was shortlisted for a national award in 2023. The partnership Reunification project enables more vulnerable children to remain with or return to families.
<i>Improve our education, training and work offer for 16-25s</i>	Launched the Young People's Learning And Skills Strategy, and achieved 'good' Ofsted ratings across all criteria.
<i>Develop the best possible offer with and for our care-experienced young people</i>	Developing an enhanced local offer for care leavers. Established a care-experienced parents' group to provide vital peer support.
<i>Improve health outcomes for all children and young people</i>	Improved access to health visitors and school nurses by collocating with early years settings and schools.

The main challenges in 2026

- The city still has the highest rate of children in care per capita in England.
- Levels of demand and cost for external care placements are not financially sustainable, or always delivering desirable outcomes for children and families.
- Child poverty rates are very high and have risen significantly in recent years.
- Children born in Stoke-on-Trent are less likely to be as healthy or to benefit from the same life chances as those born in most other areas of England.
- Obesity levels are higher than the national average, particularly by the age of 11.
- Stoke-on-Trent lags behind the national average for child development rates.
- Education attainment levels at Key Stage 4 and 5 are significantly lower than for the rest of the country.
- Children and young people do not always feel safe or sufficiently included and feel they lack influence over key factors and decisions which affect their lives.
- Demand for SEND-related services in the city is outstripping resources and local service capacity.
- Outcomes and life chances for care-experienced young people are significantly worse than for other young people in Stoke-on-Trent.

Measure	Most recent city data	Commentary/comparison
High infant mortality rate	5.7 per 1,000 live births (2024)	England & Wales = 4.1
Child development at 2 years is below average levels (GLD)	78.4% (2025)	England average = 81.4%
Child development at 5 years is below national average levels	65% (2025)	England average = 68%
Low educational attainment (Attainment 8 – GCSE points per pupil)	39.6 points (2025)	UK average = 46.1 points
High proportion of children in poverty (absolute low income)	35.3% of children (2024) <i>(up 23.6% since 2016)</i>	UK average = 18.7% <i>(up 6.4% since 2016)</i>
High level of childhood obesity at age 5	12.3% (2024)	England rate = 9.6%
High level of childhood obesity at age 11	28.7% (2024)	England rate = 22.7%
High level of children with learning disabilities	62.0 per 1,000 pupils	England average = 34.4
High level of children in care	1,109 (2025) <i>(184 per 10,000 children)</i>	Highest level in England <i>(Nat. avg. rate is 70)</i>
High level of children in need (children's social care)	5,615 (2024) <i>(933 per 10,000 children)</i>	UK average rate would be 3,527 <i>(586 per 10,000 children)</i>
Above average levels of persistent absences from school	20.7% (March 2025)	England average = 18.9%
Young people from vulnerable groups who are NEET (incl. care leavers)	22.9% (2025)	Overall city NEET level (all 16/17-year-olds) = 1.8%

How young people feel about growing up in Stoke-on-Trent

The development of this strategy has been informed by engagement and consultation with young people throughout the city, both through involvement with the Stoke-on-Trent Youth Council and analysis of the 2025 Youth Consultation Report delivered by YMCA North Staffordshire and Keele and Staffordshire universities. Their voices provide an invaluable and powerful first-hand perspective on the lives and views of the city's next generation of parents, workers, students and leaders. Below are a selection of anonymised comments from young people on aspects of city and family life.

Family	<p>"Parents and family members teach me life skills."</p>	<p>"No one teaches you how to be an adult." "If I didn't have my mates, I'd have no one to talk to."</p>
Community	<p>"People here are friendly and will help you if you need it." "There's a real sense of community."</p>	<p>"There's a lot of racism." "They don't seem to care about making things better."</p>
Safety		<p>"Crime seems to be getting worse." "There are some places I just wouldn't go alone at night."</p>
Environment	<p>"There are green spaces all over the city, which makes it feel less cramped."</p>	<p>"Some parks are too dirty to hang out in." "We just hang around the shops because there's nowhere else to go."</p>
Social activities	<p>"There's stuff to do if you know where to look, but I wish there was more." "You can actually go out and do things without being broke."</p>	<p>"Shops are shutting down and there's less and less to do." "Even here, prices keep going up; it's not like it used to be."</p>
Opportunities	<p>"Having my own place and job sounds exciting, it's about being my own person." "I want to drive, have my own car, move out, and just be free."</p>	<p>"There's nothing here for young people who want to get ahead in life." "Getting your own place feels impossible." "You leave school and you're not ready for anything."</p>
Transport	<p>"Buses can be a pain, but at least there's some public transport available."</p>	<p>"If you don't drive, getting around is a real pain." "Public transport is expensive for what it is."</p>
Technology and social media	<p>"You can find people who share your interests and beliefs." "It's a way to ask questions you're too embarrassed to say out loud."</p>	<p>"People say mean things online they wouldn't say in person." "I end up scrolling for hours and feel worse." "People post lies, and it spreads so fast."</p>

Strategic aims: our whole-city missions

Our whole-city missions represent a set of cross-cutting strategic aims which will underpin the strategy's priorities and objectives, and which will be reflected in the outcomes and strategic management framework. These are the guiding principles which we want partners, citizens and other stakeholders to help us to focus on and address. These should be used to influence thinking in relation to decision-making and service design to facilitate systems-based approaches to improving outcomes for children, young people and families across our city.

We have chosen these four missions because of their clarity and simplicity – and because they represent common-sense goals which people outside the City Council and local public services will be more likely to understand and relate to. Fundamentally, these are the essential things that we should want for all children, young people and families, including our own:

- 1. To protect children and young people from harm.**
- 2. To give children and young people the skills to be able to thrive.**
- 3. To improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people.**
- 4. To make Stoke-on-Trent a more child- and family-friendly city.**

These broad missions comprise a number of more focused objectives which are linked to specific factors, as well as approaches which the City Council, central government and local partners are delivering in order to improve outcomes. The missions and objectives overlap in places due to the fact that many of the factors which affect one aspect of childhood, adolescence or family life also have an impact on other areas.

Similarly, addressing one issue in isolation may not lead to an overall improvement in outcomes because problems can be caused by a combination of factors. One of the driving forces behind partnership working between public services in Stoke-on-Trent is the need to identify problems before they escalate and deliver joined-up, holistic services which can address the different needs of individuals and families.

Our strategic priorities for children, young people and families

Priority	Strategic objectives
1. Enable children and young people to grow up in safe, healthy and nurturing home environments.	<i>Strengthen family relationships and help families to raise children well.</i>
	<i>Protect vulnerable children and young people from harm at home.</i>
	<i>Safely reduce the number of children in care.</i>
2. Make the city a safer, more inclusive place for children, young people and families.	<i>Make neighbourhoods and public places safer and more family friendly.</i>
	<i>Enable children and young people to be safe online.</i>
	<i>Ensure that children and young people can access and enjoy safe places and activities.</i>
3. Give children the best possible start in life.	<i>Reduce levels of infant and child mortality.</i>
	<i>Improve child development up to the age of five.</i>
	<i>Provide access to timely, effective wraparound support for families of children aged 0-5.</i>
4. Reduce the impacts of poverty, deprivation and inequality.	<i>Embed anti-poverty practice within family support, education and children's social care services.</i>
	<i>Improve opportunities for disadvantaged children, young people and families.</i>
	<i>Ensure children grow up in decent homes.</i>
5. Improve physical and emotional health and wellbeing for children and young people.	<i>Improve the physical health and wellbeing of children and young people.</i>
	<i>Ensure access to mental health care and emotional support services.</i>
6. Increase youth and family participation in decision-making.	<i>Expand youth and family engagement and co-production involving council and partner services.</i>
7. Enable all children and young people to benefit from high-quality education, training and employment opportunities.	<i>Improve learning opportunities and outcomes across all key stages.</i>
	<i>Expand provision and take-up of high-quality vocational learning opportunities.</i>
	<i>Transform educational outcomes and life chances for care-experienced young people.</i>
	<i>Enable every child to fulfil their potential within the city.</i>

Why families in Stoke-on-Trent seek support

Most children in Stoke-on-Trent grow up in stable, loving and nurturing homes, with parents or parental figures who invest time, energy and care in raising their children and are able to provide at least the minimum essentials required for their family to live well. However, this is not the case for a large number of households with children. For a number of years, Stoke-on-Trent has consistently reported the highest levels of children in local authority care of any council area in England. In addition to having around 1,100 children in care at any one time, there are more than 5,000 children who are known to social services because they are considered to be at risk of neglect, harm or abuse. This equates to around one in 15 children in our city, or at least two pupils in every class.

When families ask for support, there is rarely a single reason for doing so. Usually, a combination of problems is dragging a family deeper into crisis, and they are unable to turn the situation around without professional help. Below is a summary of the most common issues which families describe when asking for support.

Issue	Prevalence (% of families)	2021 data	Trend (2021-24)
Mental health of a family member (including self-harm)	68%	67%	↑ 1 % point
Domestic abuse (parent or child)	52%	56%	↓ 4 % points
Drug or alcohol misuse involving a family member	52%	57%	↓ 5 % points
Emotional abuse by a family member	26%	30%	↓ 4 % points
Neglect of a child	19%	20%	↓ 1 % point
Physical abuse of a family member	17%	12%* (2022 data = 15%)	↑ 5 % points* (↑ 2 % points)
Learning disability of a family member	15%	15%	(No change)
Socially unacceptable behaviour	11%	9%	↓ 2 % points
Sexual abuse of a family member	10%	7%	↑ 3 % points
Physical disability of a family member	8%	11%	↓ 3 % points
Criminal child exploitation	6%	0%* (2022 data = 4%)	↑ 6 % points* (↑ 2 % points)
Child sexual exploitation	5%	5%	(No change)
Young carer	5%	5%	(No change)
Going missing	5%	4%	↑ 1 % point
Gangs	4%	5%	↓ 1 % point

(*Data possibly affected by Covid pandemic and subsequent recovery period)

System leadership and partnership working

This strategy is intended to be a shared vision for everyone who works with children, young people and families in Stoke-on-Trent. Partnership working is already a key element of existing approaches to improving outcomes for children and families in the city. It is important that citywide efforts contribute to and complement approaches that are already achieving results. Many of the most successful interventions and initiatives being delivered in Stoke-on-Trent are partnership approaches which are able to pool knowledge, expertise, skills and resources effectively to address specific issues which affect children and families.

Stoke-on-Trent's Family Matters programme was established in March 2024 as a multi-agency approach to enabling families to access support to cope with challenging issues which, left unaddressed, could potentially require statutory intervention, including taking children into care in the most serious cases. To improve the coordination and delivery of targeted support services, the City Council appointed partners selected from the voluntary and community sector to act as family coordinators in different parts of the city. These locally trusted organisations (LTOs) are able to build on their community ties to reach individuals and families who need help, but might be reluctant to engage with local statutory services. This innovative approach links to wider partnership efforts which have contributed to a recent reduction in the number of children in care in the city.

Early help and prevention

Early help has a pivotal role to play in improving a wide range of outcomes for children, young people and families in Stoke-on-Trent. As well as tackling challenges sooner, before they can escalate into crises, early help can also contribute to child safeguarding, early years development, health and wellbeing, education and building life skills. The primary gateway to accessing early help in Stoke-on-Trent is through the Early Help in Partnership service provided by the city's network of multi-agency Family Hubs, where families can access non-judgemental support and advice from public services and voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations. From 2027, the Early Help in Partnership service will become the Family Help service.

Data shows that Family Hubs have supported more than 2,000 children and young people in the city since they were first launched in 2023, and more than 900 families. Children aged between 10 and 15 were most likely to require support (around 40 per cent). Around one third of the total caseload is handled by the City Council's Supporting Families team, with partner organisations working with the other two thirds of cases. More than one third of Supporting Families interventions and more than one third of partner-led interventions are completed within three months. However, some cases require longer-term support, with just over a quarter of partner-led interventions lasting more than 12 months.

Local policy context

Stoke-on-Trent City Council's strategic vision and priorities are set out in the Our City, Our Wellbeing Corporate Strategy (2024-28), which explains how the Council and partners will improve the wellbeing of our residents. The strategy's core aim is to tackle persistent inequalities which undermine people's wellbeing and life chances, and which contribute to hardship and deprivation. In addition, the corporate strategy articulates the need for "increasing preventative activity" and embedding a "permanent shift towards investment upstream" to prevent crises which can lead to poor outcomes for our citizens.

The corporate strategy features seven core priorities relating to population wellbeing, and also includes a cross-cutting challenge of Supporting Family Life, which prioritises working with the NHS, the voluntary and community sector, businesses and others to ensure families are helped to give their children the best start in life.

Corporate priorities which inform the Children, Young People & Families Strategy



1. **Healthier** - Creating a healthier standard of living for all our citizens
2. **Wealthier** - Reducing hardship and enabling greater shared prosperity
3. **Safer** - Building empowered communities, safe from the threat of harm
6. **Fairer** - Tackling inequality and improving life chances for everyone.
7. **Skilled** - Providing opportunities for people to improve their skills and education.

Cross-cutting critical issues addressed by the Corporate Strategy

Supporting Family Life - working with the NHS, the voluntary and community sector, businesses and others to ensure families are helped to give their children the best start in life.

Addressing Hardship and Poverty – supporting those who have least through improved education, skills development and employment opportunities.

Ensuring Decent Homes for All – recognising the crucial importance of affordable, safe, decent housing and its influence on health and wellbeing.

Supporting People to Live Independently – including young people with physical and learning disabilities.

Future 100 – A place-based approach to growth and renewal

In 2025, to coincide with the city’s Centenary, the City Council and local partners published the Future 100 Prospectus. This set out five strategic missions designed to shape a more prosperous and inclusive city of creativity, innovation and sustainable growth. The Prospectus, which was presented to 10 Downing Street, represented an open invitation to central government to support delivery of a range of initiatives designed to improve population outcomes, strengthen the city’s foundational economy and capitalise on existing and emerging opportunities to create sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Stakeholder-led boards focusing on each mission provide partnership-based governance to drive and monitor implementation.

Future 100 missions	Areas of focus
1. Securing economic growth	Employment, wages, transport infrastructure, sectoral support, skills and spatial planning.
2. Delivering clean energy, sustainable transport and an improved local environment	Decarbonisation, renewable energy decentralisation, sustainable transport, fuel poverty, housing quality and the green economy.
3. Regenerating our city	Housing development, city and town centres, neighbourhood spatial planning, brownfield regeneration, heritage sites, crime and ASB, culture, creative sectors and community assets.
4. Removing barriers to opportunity	Employment, skills, education, social mobility, inequalities, deprivation, homelessness, inclusion, youth provision and public service reform.
5. Improving the health and wellbeing of our population	Health-related unemployment, economic hardship, social capital, prevention, physical activity and family support.



Future 100 goals relating to children, young people and families

Our aim is that by 2030:

- The proportion of children in poverty will have reduced by five percentage points.
- The attainment gap with the rest of the country at Key Stage 4 (GCSE) will have closed by at least two percentage points.
- The proportion of working-age residents achieving Level 3 or higher qualifications will have risen by 2.5 percentage points.
- There will be an improvement in average healthy life expectancy (broken down by gender) of two years.
- At least 99 per cent of social housing will be classed as ‘decent’, and 1,750 private sector homes will have been improved.

Improving child health and wellbeing outcomes

The NHS has established Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) to provide joined-up care services in local areas across England. These are local partnership bodies enabling the NHS to work more closely with councils, voluntary and community sector organisations and other partners to identify, understand and address local population health needs. Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) set the long-term strategy for each ICS. Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) are responsible for planning health service delivery for their populations, working with local NHS service providers including hospitals and GP practices. The ICB also supports the work of Family Hubs.

The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICB's Children and Young People's Programme aims to ensure that children:








- Will grow up healthy and happy, with their families and friends.
- Are able to look after their own wellbeing, while knowing they will get exceptional care and treatment when they need it.

Its key goals are:

- 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.

The programme sets out five priorities to achieve its goals:

-  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.

(Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICS)

Key city strategies for children, young people and families

The citywide implementation of this strategy will be achieved through a number of existing and emerging partnership plans and delivery strategies, which are overseen and implemented by the City Council and local public and voluntary sector partners through joint management boards (see *Governance section on p.33*).

Strategy	Date(s)	Relevance to the CYPF Strategy
Stoke-on-Trent Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy	2025-28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to address issues such as infant mortality, children in care, child obesity, emotional wellbeing and mental health. Priorities include: reducing health inequalities, supporting family life and supporting physical and mental wellbeing.
Improving Education Strategy	2025-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to create an education system that promotes the highest standards for all children and young people. Priorities include: improving school readiness and child development, increasing school attendance, improving Key Stage 4 attainment, increasing educational inclusion, and transforming the city's post-16 education offer.
Corporate Parenting Strategy	2024-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes how the City Council and partners act as 'responsible parents' to children and young people in care. Sets out a shared responsibility to ensure that children and young people feel safe and secure, have stability in their lives, and are supported to achieve their full potential.
Getting the Right Start. The Children and Young People's Programme	2023-28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care System's (ICS) strategy for ensuring that local children have the best start in life and grow up to be healthy and happy. Priorities include: reducing numbers of children in care, improving infant survival rates, tackling childhood obesity and improving the diagnosis of autism in young people.
Youth and Community Strategy	2026-36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to empower young people as active citizens, leaders, and changemakers. By shifting the focus from problems to strengths, it aims to unlock the potential of youth through collaboration, innovation, and sustainable investment. Key actions will include establishing a Youth Advisory Council and Leadership Academy, developing multi-purpose youth hubs and mobile outreach services, expanding digital skills, apprenticeships, and green job pathways and enhancing mental health support.
Stoke-on-Trent Economic Development Strategy	2024-28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to improve living standards, reduce poverty and inequality and enhance citizens' wellbeing and life chances. Includes objective to improve education and skills provision in order to match industry needs.
Joint SEND Strategy (City Council and ICB)	2024-28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An agreed vision for a citywide focus on ensuring that children and young people with SEND receive the right support to meet their needs. Key priority: all children and young people will feel safe, valued and included in education and the wider community.

Strategy	Date(s)	Relevance to the CYPF Strategy
<i>Stoke-on-Trent Joint Commissioning Strategy for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)</i>	2023-28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims to improve services and outcomes for children and young people with SEND by jointly planning, commissioning, and delivering services across education, health, and social care. • Outlines a collaborative approach between Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board (ICB).
<i>Community Safety Strategy 2024-27</i>	2024-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with partners to reduce crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and substance misuse. • Links to the Youth Justice Plan and children’s safeguarding approaches and emphasises the importance of family support in strengthening and empowering communities and tackling social issues which contribute to crime and ASB.
<i>Youth Justice Plan</i>	(Renewed annually)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory requirement to set out how the local services will work together to prevent offending behaviour and reduce reoffending rates among children and young people .
<i>14-25 Learning and Skills Strategy</i>	2022-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-produced with the local community, schools and colleges, the strategy aims to enable young people to develop their skills and qualifications to reach their full potential and meet the needs of employers and the city. • Commits to promoting apprenticeships and other opportunities to disadvantaged young people through the ‘Be The Future’ programme, encouraging digital skills through Silicon Stoke programme, promoting mentorship programmes in the city and developing a local skills pledge partnership aimed at local employers.
<i>Housing Strategy</i>	2022-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on meeting the changing needs of residents by improving the housing offer, accelerating the delivery of quality living spaces, and attracting further investment. • Recognises the impact that poor housing standards can have on the mental and physical well-being of families, as well as local neighbourhoods and public spaces.
<i>Domestic Abuse Strategy</i>	2025-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlines a citywide approach to both preventing and responding to domestic abuse, supporting survivors and changing abusive behaviour. • Includes a partnership commitment to recognising children as survivors in their own right, giving them a more influential voice and identifying and supporting their needs.
<i>Joint All Age Carers Strategy</i>	2025-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets out a shared vision and aspirations for improving carer services for young and adult carers within the city. • A key priority is providing increased help, advice and support for young carers, including support to stay healthy.
<i>Anti-Social Behaviour Cross Tenure Policy</i>	2024-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims to ensure all residents in the city are able to live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes. • Includes a focus on preventing ASB among council tenants, and designing out crime and ASB in public spaces.

Key local initiatives which contribute to this strategy

Initiative	Date(s)	Relevance to the CYPF Strategy
Family Matters	2023-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprising initiatives such as Family Hubs and the Supporting Families programme, Family Matters aims to improve outcomes for children, young people and families in the city through access to timely, accessible multi-agency advice and support. These services help families to overcome difficult challenges and provide safe, caring homes for children.
Thrive at Five	2021-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boosting child development and school readiness through capacity building and asset-based community development. Project has involved seven schools and more than 70 education and health professionals in the Abbey Hulton & Townsend and Bentilee & Ubberrley council wards.
Community Support Framework for children and young people	2025-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A service for sourcing support for children and young people who require urgent crisis intervention. Children it will support include those with disabilities, who are NEET, cared-for or care leavers, as well as families on the edge of care and families being reunified.
Alternative Education Provision for Children and Young People	2023-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides suitable education for students who cannot attend mainstream schools, aiming to reintegrate them into mainstream settings or prepare them for adulthood. Emphasizes improving outcomes for young people, promoting social and emotional learning, and providing mental health and wellbeing support.
Enhancing Support for Care Leavers and our Local Offer	2025-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiative aims to improve outcomes for young people transitioning from care by addressing key barriers to independent living, education, employment, and social integration through the expansion of existing support measures and the introduction of new initiatives.
Holiday, Activity and Food (HAF) Programme	2025-26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £1.5 million DfE-funded programme to provide free access to healthy food and activities to children and young people from low-income households during school holidays.
Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service for Children and Young People	2024-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to improve the mental health offer for children and young people by creating a more robust model that aligns offers available across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire. Supports the delivery of the NHS Local Transformation Plan in relation to children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing.
Strengthening Communities programme	2025-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A partnership programme aimed at strengthening social capital and empowering citizens to help improve the local environment and quality of life for residents in some of Stoke-on-Trent's most deprived areas.
National Child Measurement Programme	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered by the Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT) school nursing team, the programme measures the height and weight of school pupils in Reception and Year 6 to monitor health levels.

Government policy which affects delivery of this strategy

During 2024-5 central government published new policy approaches and statutory guidance in relation to children, young people and families. These represent a concerted effort to refocus statutory services on prevention through earlier and more effective intervention. These changes enhance the focus, cohesion, accessibility and effectiveness of early help and family support across multiple public services, giving families more say in decision-making. In this way, government is creating the conditions for whole-system approaches to key challenges, in which universal services will augment statutory services' ability to identify and address issues which undermine outcomes for children and families within local communities.

Policy:

[*Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy*](#) – Aims to address issues affecting young people around loneliness and isolation, safety, health and wellbeing and opportunity. Covers partnership working, expansion of youth programmes, career readiness, mental health and investment in professional workforce and local youth infrastructure and community facilities.

[*Giving every child the best start in life*](#) – Providing high-quality support to parents, babies and children from pregnancy to age 5, delivered via a Best Start Family service focusing on early development; Best Start Family Hubs in every disadvantaged area; more cohesive approaches to children's healthcare, and a new outcomes framework to monitor progress.

[*Keeping children safe, helping families thrive*](#) – Aims to safely prevent more children from entering the care system by improving early help for families, make social care child-centred and reduce the cost of specialist care placements.

[*Family Hubs and Start for Life programme*](#) – Seeks to join up and enhance services for families with children of all ages, with focus on start for life services for families with 0 to 2-year-olds in deprived areas.

Legislation:

[*The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill*](#) – The Bill focuses on making sure that no child falls through gaps between different services and that families can access help when they need it, and enabling access to good local schools.

Guidance:

[*Working together to safeguard children*](#) – Statutory guidance requiring a more concerted focus on prevention, early intervention and family support. The guidance advocates a child-centred approach to meeting the needs of the whole family.

[*Children's Social Care National Framework*](#) – Statutory guidance on the purpose, principles and enablers of good children's social care practice and desirable outcomes, putting children, young people and families at the heart of practice.

[*Families First Partnership \(FFP\) programme*](#) – Guidance for safeguarding partners on implementing family help, multi-agency child protection and family group decision-making reforms to break down barriers to opportunity.

[*Keeping Children Safe in Education*](#) – Statutory guidance for schools on protecting children from abuse and child sexual exploitation.

Priority 1: Enable children and young people to grow up in safe, healthy, nurturing home environments.

- Strengthen family relationships and help families to raise children well.
- Protect vulnerable children and young people from harm.
- Safely reduce the number of children in care.

Key challenges relating to this priority

- Stoke-on-Trent has the highest proportion of children in care in England.
- The proportion of children in need is far higher than the national average.
- The cost of specialist and out-of-area placements is financially unsustainable.

What children, young people and families have told us about this priority

- They want to access more support and be taken seriously by professionals.

How we aim to address this priority and improve outcomes

- Closer partnership working to identify vulnerable families and children earlier.
- Expanding the provision and effectiveness of timely, tailored, accessible family support.
- Embedding child-centred approaches to family support, safeguarding and corporate parenting which place appropriate emphasis on their needs and wishes.
- Enhancing the capacity and quality of fostering and adoption within Stoke-on-Trent.
- Implementing a system-wide approach to tackling domestic violence.
- Ensuring that schools offer children and families access to multi-agency support.

Measuring progress – key indicators for this priority

Outcome measures	Latest data	Year	Trend since 2021	National average
Children in care (rate per 10,000 children)	1,109 (184)	2025	↑ 105 (10.5%)	422* (70)
Children with child protection plan (rate per 10,000 children)	521 (85)	2024	(No change)	270* (42)
Children in need (rate per 10,000 children)	3,376 (561)	2024	↓ 151 (0.04%)	3,527* (586)
Domestic abuse contacts to Children's Social Care services	4,744	2025	↑ 33 (0.01%)	N/A

Relevant national policy	Key element(s)
<i>The Families First Partnership Programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving multi-agency data-sharing. Making the case for a whole-family focus.
<i>Keeping children safe, helping families thrive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving early help for families. Reducing the cost of care placements.
<i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on more cohesive prevention, early help and family support services.
<i>Keeping Children Safe in Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting children from abuse and child sexual exploitation.
<i>Children Not in School</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duty to tackle non-attendance in education.
<i>Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening and more closely integrating multi-agency approaches to child protection.
<i>National Youth Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring young people can turn to a trusted adult for advice and support; Joining up support services in local areas.

Local strategies aimed at this priority	Relevant aims / objectives
<i>Corporate Parenting Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared responsibility to protect vulnerable children and young people.
<i>Children's Social Care Sufficiency Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to prevent family breakdown through early help, and provide stable local homes for children in care.
<i>Permanency Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securing stable, loving, lifelong homes for children in care through fostering and adoption.
<i>Safeguarding Children at Risk of Exploitation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership approach to tackling criminal, sexual and ideological forms of child exploitation
<i>Domestic Abuse Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater focus on the needs of child survivors.

Key initiatives addressing this priority	Relevant aims / objectives
<i>Family Matters programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-agency support to address a wide range of issues affecting children's safety and families.
<i>Family Hubs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Priority 2: Make the city a safer, more inclusive place for children, young people and families.

- *Make neighbourhoods and public places safer and more family friendly.*
- *Enable children and young people to be safe online.*
- *Children and young people can access safe places and activities.*

Key challenges relating to this priority

- Underfunding has impeded access to local youth services and facilities.
- Children and young people are at increased risk of online dangers.

What children, young people and families have told us about this priority

- There are not enough safe places to spend leisure time with family or friends.
- Many public places are not clean, safe or inviting.
- Young people feel unsafe online due to fears of data misuse and sexual abuse.

How we aim to address this priority and improve outcomes

- Working with communities to identify solutions to local challenges.
- Designing out crime in the delivery of new community spaces and infrastructure.
- Reducing drug and alcohol misuse to help communities to feel safer.
- Using data to identify the areas most vulnerable to crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Taking more joined-up, multi-agency approaches to tackling community safety issues that matter most to children, young people and families in the city.
- Working with Leisure Services and community sports organisations to create more opportunities for children and young people to engage in safe activities.

Measuring progress – key indicators for this priority

Outcome measures	Latest data	Year	Trend since 2021	National average
Total recorded crimes (average no. of crimes per person)	29,197 (0.11)	2025	N/A	(0.08 per person)
Recorded violent crimes (average no. of crimes per person)	11,872 (0.045)	2025	N/A	(0.032 per person)
Reported fly-tipping incidents	5,893	2025	↓ 781 (11.7%)	N/A
Youth re-offending rates	24%	2025	↓ 9.6%	32.5%

Relevant national policy	Key element(s)
<i>National Youth Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating safe spaces and facilities for young people to socialise and engage in activities. • Supporting young people to develop good relationships online and avoid harmful content.
<i>Freedom from Violence and Abuse Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling violence against women and girls.

Local strategies aimed at this priority	Relevant aims / objectives
<i>Community Safety Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.
<i>Community Cohesion Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening community relationships.
<i>Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making town centres and public spaces safer.
<i>Anti-Social Behaviour Policy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating activity to reduce ASB levels.
<i>Youth Justice Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing youth offending and reoffending.
<i>Safeguarding Children at Risk of Exploitation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership approach to child safeguarding.
<i>Domestic Abuse Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling the causes of domestic abuse.

Key initiatives addressing this priority	Relevant aims / objectives
<i>Family Matters programme.</i> <i>Family Hubs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deal with involvement and targeting of young people in relation to various criminal activities.
<i>Community Safety Partnership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating citywide planning and activity.
<i>Making Great Places initiative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership model of community-level prevention, intelligence, response and enforcement.
<i>One Stoke programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting and improving community cohesion.
<i>Making Our Town Centres Family Friendly</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeting anti-social behaviour, street drinking and drug misuse.
<i>Violence Reduction Alliance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling violence in and around city schools.
<i>Design Out Crime scheme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated programme of interventions aimed at reducing crime and ASB in city neighbourhoods.
<i>Youth Transformation pilot programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating safe spaces for young people. • Ensuring there are trusted people to go to.
<i>Playing Pitch Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving access to sports facilities and activities.

Priority 3: Give children the best possible start in life.

- Reduce levels of infant and child mortality.
- Improve 0-5 child development outcomes.
- Provide access to wraparound support for families of children aged 0-5.

Key challenges relating to this priority

- Infant mortality rates in the city are higher than the national average.
- Children in the city experience reduced levels of child development by age 5.

What children, young people and families have told us about this priority

- Use playgroups and support groups to educate parents about child development.
- Poverty impacts are affecting parents' ability to provide nurturing environments.

How we aim to address this priority and improve outcomes

- Focusing on achieving better maternal health during pregnancy and infancy.
- Supporting new parents to provide for their baby's needs in early life.
- Working with parents to encourage and support nurturing behaviours.
- Providing accessible advice and support to promote child development.
- Improving uptake of infant and child immunisation programmes.
- Diagnosing and treating long-term conditions earlier in a child's life.

Measuring progress – key indicators for this priority

Outcome measures	Latest data	Year	Trend since 2021	National average
Good level of development at age 2	78.4%	2025	↑ 5.4%	81.4%
Good level of development at age 5	62.2%	2025	N/A	68.3%
Infant mortality rate per 1,000 births	5.7	2024	↓ 0.8	4.2

Relevant national policy	Key element(s)
<i>Giving every child the best start in life</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing high-quality support to parents, babies and children from pregnancy to age 5.
<i>Healthy Babies programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joined-up support to help families to provide nurturing care during the early stages of a child's life.
<i>Best Start Family Hubs programme</i>	
<i>Start for Life programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on start for life services for families with 0 to 2-year-olds in deprived areas

Local strategies aimed at this priority	Relevant aims / objectives
<i>Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing infant mortality and numbers of children in care, tackling child obesity.
<i>Getting the Right Start (ICS children and young people's programme)</i>	
<i>Community Support Framework for Children and Young People</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sourcing support for children and young people who require urgent crisis intervention
<i>SEND Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving support for families of children with SEND from an earlier age.

Key initiatives addressing this priority	Relevant aims / objectives
<i>Start4Life programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing on first 1,000 days of a child's life.
<i>Best Start Family Hubs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated approach to helping parents to nurture and protect their babies and infants. • Ensuring healthcare services meet the needs of local children and young people and successfully manage transitions to adult provision at 19.
<i>0-19 Services programme</i>	
<i>Thrive at Five programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with parents to boost child development and school readiness levels in deprived areas.
<i>Healthy Start Scheme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for pregnant women and families with young children to buy healthy food.

Priority 4: Reduce the impacts of poverty, deprivation and inequality.

- *Embed anti-poverty practice within family support, education and children’s social care services.*
- *Improve opportunities for disadvantaged children, young people & families.*

Key challenges relating to this priority

- Child poverty levels in the city have worsened in recent years.
- Household incomes have not kept pace with rising inflation.
- Many parts of the city lack access to civic amenities and community assets.
- Public transport is not easily accessible in a city with low car ownership.

What children, young people and families have told us about this priority

- Living in poverty is damaging many young people’s and parents’ mental health.
- Families need more places where they can spend quality time together for free.
- Poor housing conditions place a strain on family life, health and wellbeing.

How we aim to address this priority and improve outcomes

- Provide accessible multi-agency support to people who are vulnerable due to poverty.
- Work together to address inequalities in health and education outcomes.
- Enable more families to live and raise children in decent homes.
- Empower communities to shape plans to improve their local areas.
- Help people on low incomes to access all the benefits they are entitled to.
- Invest in neighbourhoods with the weakest levels of social capital.
- Improve access to quality education and training opportunities for all ages.
- Create more free or low-cost services and activities for children and young people.
- Make public transport in the city more affordable and user-friendly.

Measuring progress – key indicators for this priority

Outcome measures	Latest data	Year	Trend since 2021	National average
Children in low income families	35.3%	2024	↑ 5.9%	19.1%
Pupils eligible for free school meals	37.4%	2025	↑ 2.6%	25.7%
Met KS2 standards (reading, writing & maths) – disadvantaged	50%	2025	N/A	67%
Households with dependent children at risk of homelessness per 1,000 popn.	13.6	2023	↑ 4.2	16.1

Relevant national policy	Key element(s)
<i>Keeping children safe, helping families thrive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaking links between poverty and poor outcomes and opportunities for children and families.
<i>National Youth Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Richer Lives’: creating more opportunities to participate in inclusive, engaging activities in local communities.
<i>Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing barriers to opportunity for children. • Expanding free school meals to more pupils.

Local strategies aimed at this priority	Relevant aims / objectives
<i>Partnership Cost of Living Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping low-income households to mitigate the impacts of the Cost of Living Crisis.
<i>Fuel Poverty Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making homes more energy efficient and providing support to manage energy costs.
<i>Tackling Health Inequalities Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICS strategy promoting a whole-system approach to improving population health outcomes including infant mortality and childhood obesity, immunisation and mental health.
<i>Future 100</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing barriers to opportunity.
<i>Bus Service Improvement Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making bus travel more affordable for people on lower incomes, including young people.

Key initiatives addressing this priority	Relevant aims / objectives
<i>Help is at Hand campaign</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package of measures to help households affected by the Cost of Living Crisis.
<i>Holiday, Activity and Food programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for low-income families of children who get free school meals in term time.
<i>Community Development programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower people to address local challenges.
<i>Community wealth building</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining more wealth in the local economy.
<i>The Food Partnership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership approach to improving the availability, affordability and sustainability of food in the city.
<i>Strengthening Communities pilot</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebuilding social capital in poorer areas.

Priority 5: Improve physical and emotional health and wellbeing for children and young people.

- *Improve the physical health and wellbeing of children and young people.*
- *Ensure access to mental health care and emotional support services.*

Key challenges relating to this priority

- Infant mortality in Stoke-on-Trent is significantly higher than the national average.
- Children in the city are more likely to be inactive and overweight or obese at age 11.
- Children and young people in the city are more likely to be admitted to hospital with a long-term health condition.

What children, young people and families have told us about this priority

- It takes too long for young people to access mental health support.
- Addiction to vaping is a growing concern among many young people.
- Significant numbers of young people need support to address mobile phone addiction.
- Social media and harmful online content and behaviours are having a detrimental impact on young people's mental health, relationships and emotional wellbeing.

How we aim to address this priority and improve outcomes

- Improving access to healthy food, exercise and physical activities.
- Reducing the time it takes for a young person to receive an autism diagnosis.
- Improving the management of long-term health conditions in children.
- Providing better transitions from child to adult healthcare services.
- Supporting more children and young people with complex needs to fulfil their potential.
- Working with education providers to identify mental health difficulties earlier.
- Using technology to help more young people to be in control of their own health.

Measuring progress – key indicators for this priority

Outcome measures	Latest data	Year	Trend since 2021	National average
Obesity levels: Reception (& Year 6)	15.1% (27.5%)	2025	↑ 0.8% (↑ 3.3%)	10.5% (22.2%)
Hospital admissions (0-14) for injuries per 10,000 admissions	55.7	2024	↓ 40.1	72.7
Hospital admissions (15-24) for injuries per 10,000 admissions	72.4	2024	↓ 88.2	80.2
Infant mortality rate per 1,000 births	5.7	2024	↓ 0.8	4.2

Relevant national policy	Key element(s)
<i>National Youth Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making wellbeing support widely available.
<i>National Child Measurement Programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing and tackling obesity in schools.
<i>Fit for the Future: 10 Year Health Plan for England</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using technology and neighbourhood delivery models to improve access to local health services across all age groups. • Focusing on prevention to reduce childhood obesity, vaping and poor dental health.
<i>Healthy Start programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding access to free school meals.

Local strategies aimed at this priority	Relevant aims / objectives
<i>Health & Wellbeing Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing health inequalities, supporting family life and improving physical and mental wellbeing.
<i>Getting the Right Start (ICS) Children and young people's programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling childhood obesity and improving the diagnosis of autism in young people.
<i>Healthy Child Programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing universal support from pregnancy to age 19, including developmental checks, immunisations and parenting advice

Key initiatives addressing this priority	Relevant aims / objectives
<i>Family Hubs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing health advice, drop-ins and support.
<i>Mentally Healthy Schools</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-based mental health advice and support.
<i>Young Commissioners</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-designing healthcare provision for young people to improve quality and outcomes.
<i>Young Health Champions</i>	
<i>Child Measurement Programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing obesity among primary school pupils.
<i>Health Visitors and School Nurses</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-5 and 5-19 universal healthcare and support.

Priority 6: Increase youth and family participation in decision-making.

- *Expand youth and family engagement and embed co-production across more council and partner services.*

Key challenges relating to this priority

- Perception that current approaches to engagement don't take young people's views or needs into account when making decisions affecting them.

Citywide ambition for this priority

Leading by example and encouraging and supporting local partners to embrace youth engagement and co-production to enable young people to shape fairer, more inclusive and effective services, approaches and decision-making.

What children, young people and families have told us about this priority

- Documents and processes are not easily understandable to young people.
- Engagement and consultation methods are not always accessible to those with language barriers, learning needs or who lack access to technology.
- Young people are unclear about how to engage and what is required.
- Organisations don't feed back about how participation shaped decisions.

How we aim to address this priority and improve outcomes

- Build on existing approaches to engagement, co-production and co-design.
- Ensure that front line services adopt child-centred, whole-family approaches.
- Create opportunities for children, young people and families to influence policy and decision-making.
- Use early dialogue to shape better solutions and outcomes for families who need support.

Measuring progress – key indicators for this priority

No reliable measures currently exist for this area of work. One of the early tasks of the Children, Young People and Families Strategic Partnership Board will be to identify a practicable performance measurement approach for this priority.

Relevant national policy	Key element(s)
<i>Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling young people to shape more decisions about communities and services. • Strategy was co-designed with young people.
<i>Children's Social Care National Framework</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places the wishes and feelings of children at the heart of children's social care practice. • Advocates whole-family partnership working.
<i>Working together to safeguard children</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance calls for a child-centred approach to meeting the needs of the whole family.

Local strategies aimed at this priority	Relevant aims / objectives
<i>Stoke-on-Trent Youth and Community Strategy (2026)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy advocates co-designing policies and service delivery models with young people to improve service quality and outcomes.

Key initiatives addressing this priority	Relevant aims / objectives
<i>Stoke-on-Trent Youth Council</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for young people to share their views on issues that are important to them
<i>Care Leavers' Council</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving young people in decision-making and co-designing approaches to improving outcomes for specific groups of children and young people.
<i>Young Health Champions</i>	
<i>Young Commissioners</i>	
<i>Youth Hubs (proposal)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing accessible guidance and support on a range of issues chosen by young people.

Priority 7: Enable all children and young people to benefit from high-quality education, training and employment opportunities.

- *Improve learning opportunities and outcomes across all key stages.*
- *Expand the provision of high-quality vocational education opportunities.*
- *Transform educational outcomes and life chances for care-experienced young people.*
- *Enable every child to fulfil their potential within the city.*

Key challenges relating to this priority

- Educational standards are lower than the national average at all key stages.
- The city is ranked 135th out of 152 English authorities for child development.
- The city has one of the highest proportions of children with SEND nationally.
- Educational outcomes for children receiving SEN support are too low.

What children, young people and families have told us about this priority

- Education doesn't prepare them sufficiently for work or equip them with life skills.
- They don't feel able to navigate pathways into secure, fulfilling careers.

How we aim to address this priority and improve outcomes

- Improving attendance levels across all educational settings.
- Focusing on strengthening educational standards at Key Stage 4.
- Ensuring all children can access the best educational setting for their needs.
- Providing quality advice and guidance on education, skills and careers.
- Creating beneficial opportunities to gain quality, relevant work experience.
- Adopting a concerted Early Years focus on improving school readiness levels.
- Improving the skills and employment offer for disadvantaged groups.
- Using multi-agency family support to identify and tackle potential problems which may affect educational participation or outcomes sooner.

Measuring progress – key indicators for this priority

Outcome measures	Latest data	Year	Trend since 2021	National average
Avg. Attainment 8 score (GCSE)	39.6 points	2025	↓ 5.5	46.1 points
Avg. Attainment 8 score for children in care	25.7 points	2024	N/A	18.3 points
NEET or 'not known' at ages 16-18	1.8%	2025	↓ 1.1 % points	2.7%
Key Stage 2 expected standards	59%	2025	↑ 3% (on 2022 data)	62%
Pupils with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)	4.9%	2025	↑ 1.0 % points	5.3%

Relevant national policy	Key element(s)
<i>National Youth Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice, real-world experience, and support that helps young people feel academically, emotionally and practically prepared for work
<i>The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving quality of teacher training Strengthening the 5-19 curriculum Improving school place provision in each area Flexible approach to school interventions
<i>Best Start in Life</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent approach to improving school readiness and early years development

Local strategies aimed at this priority	Relevant aims / objectives
<i>Improving Education Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving school readiness, attendance, attainment and inclusion
<i>Young People's Learning & Skills Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving work readiness and skill levels for children and young people aged 14-25.
<i>SEND Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing inclusion in mainstream schools and improving outcomes for SEN supported pupils
<i>Economic Development Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating skills pathways into specific sectors
<i>Joint All Age Carers Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting younger carers in education

Key initiatives addressing this priority	Relevant aims / objectives
<i>Thrive at Five</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving child development / school readiness
<i>Family Hubs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping families with education-related problems
<i>Multi-agency approach to reducing NEETs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEET levels are now below the national average
<i>Enhancing Support for Care Leavers and our Local Offer</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating more opportunities for Care Leavers to gain experience of, and access to, employment
<i>Alternative Education Provision for Children and Young People</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing suitable education for students who cannot attend mainstream schools

Governance and delivery assurance

Delivery of this strategy will be overseen by the Stoke-on-Trent Children, Young People and Families Strategic Partnership Board. The Board is responsible for setting, managing and delivering the over-arching vision for children and young people in Stoke-on-Trent. It is also the primary forum to enable multi-agency partners to have strategic conversations about services for families in our city, coordinating improvements and driving transformation.

Assurance will be supported by annual progress reports to the Board, based on the measures set out against each of the priorities in the strategy.

The Board's membership comprises:

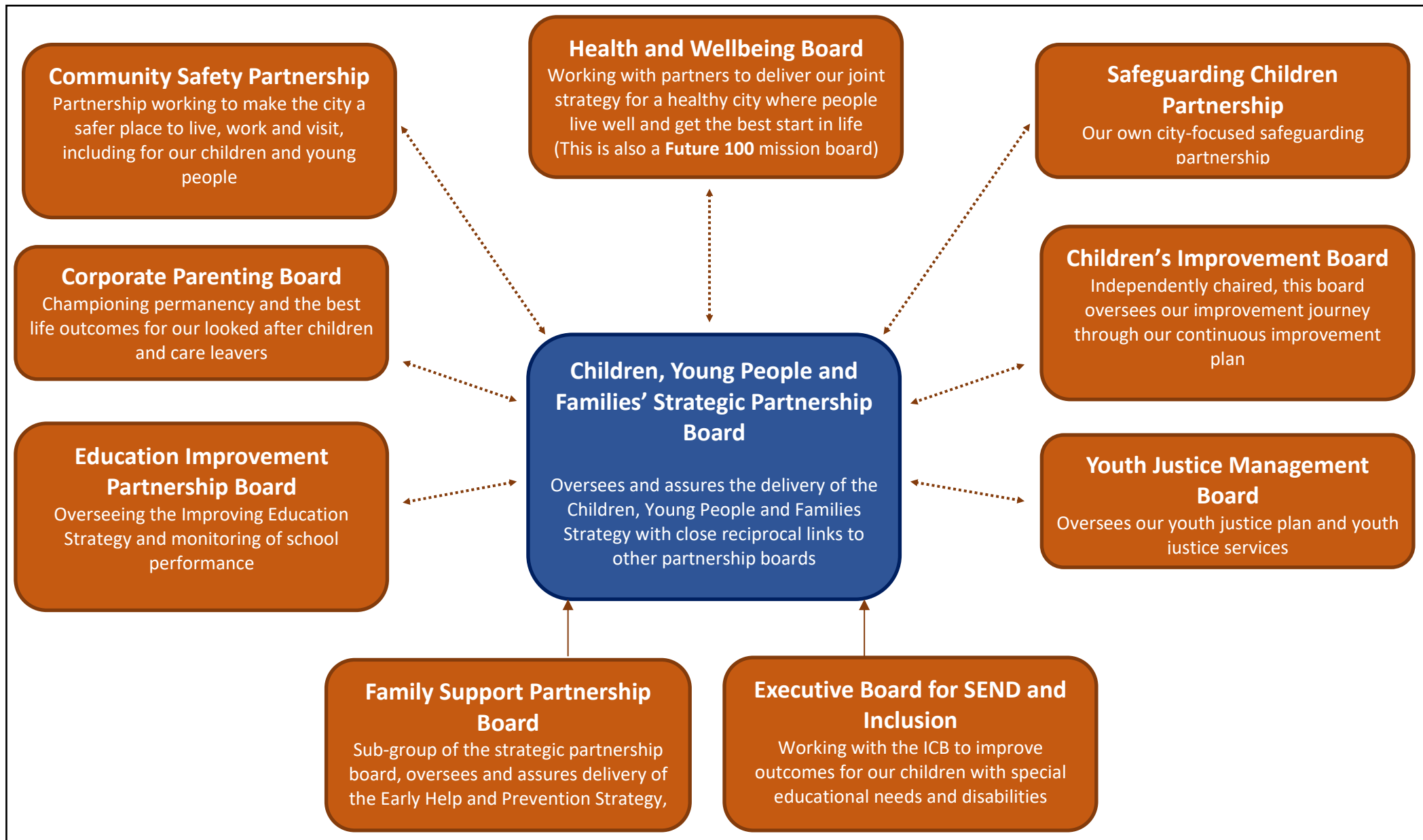
Stoke-on-Trent City Council members and senior officers

- Chair – Cabinet Member for Children's Services
- Children and Family Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee chair
- Chief Executive
- Corporate Director of Children's Services
- Director of Education
- Director of Public Health

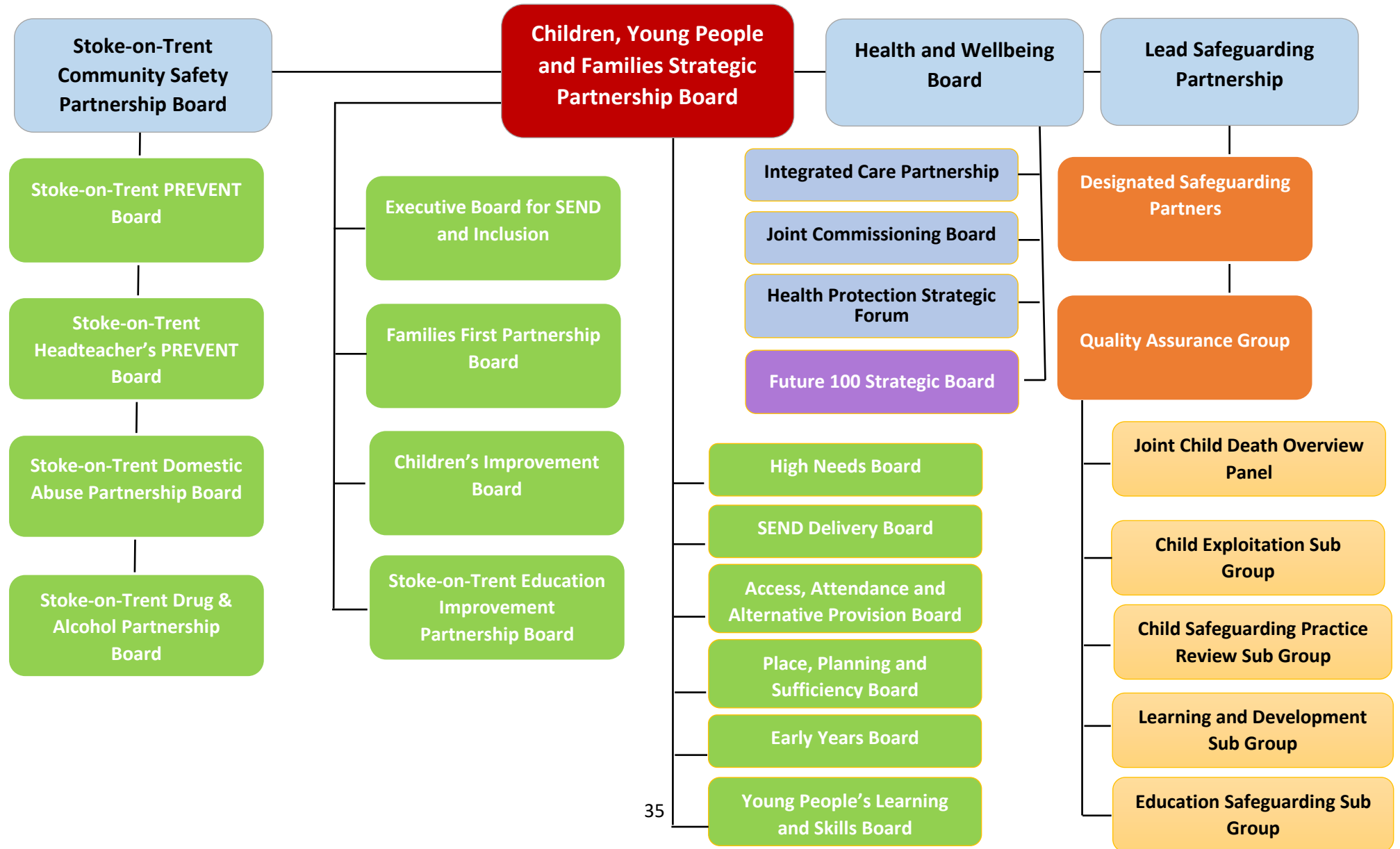
Senior representatives of partner organisations

- Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
- Staffordshire Police Child Protection Team
- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board
- North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare Trust
- Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust (MPFT)
- University Hospital of North Midlands (UHM)
- Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Probation Service
- Stoke-on-Trent College
- Multi-Academy Trust CEOs Group
- Stoke-on-Trent Association of School, College and Academy Leaders (SASCAL)
- Maintained/special schools
- Early Years
- Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce
- VAST
- Youth Collective

The diagram overleaf illustrates the Board's links with other partnership panels whose work and remits directly influence delivery of this strategy.



Partnership governance links to the Children, Young People and Families Strategic Partnership Board





City of
Stoke-on-Trent