

Stoke-on-Trent Supporting Families Service

Supporting Schools



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1. Introduction

Supporting Families is Stoke-on-Trent City Council's family support service, delivering the national Supporting Families Programme by providing 'whole family' early support to families with multiple complex needs. Formerly the Early Intervention Service, Supporting Families now forms part of the Education and Family Support Division of Children & Family Services. As well as the strategic shift in our position, moving from Children's Social Care to Education & Family Support, our delivery model has also been adapted to ensure the service is able to function effectively as part of the broad 'early help' landscape in Stoke-on-Trent. As a service we acknowledge that good quality service delivery is contingent upon and critical to effective cross-partnership working with both statutory and third sector partners. The service now consists of the following functions:

1. Family support service – early help assessment and planning delivered by lead workers through whole family interventions.
2. Family support groups – evidence-based programmes of support for parents and carers spanning the life-course of children from pre-birth to adulthood.
3. Support to schools provided by Effective Practice Development Co-ordinators and linked Family Support Workers.
4. Effective Practice Development – training and capacity building offer to support cross-partnership work, analyse local need and develop and maintain local resources.
5. Young Carers Assessment.
6. Participation of children and young people – opportunities for children and young people from all backgrounds to engage in universal positive activities, meaningful consultation and local decision making.
7. Supervised family time – supporting children in the care of the local authority to maintain positive relationships with their birth families

This document sets out the ways in which the Supporting Families service will support you as schools and settings, to identify children who may benefit from early support to enable them to thrive. The support is detailed on pages 6 to 8 and can be categorised as follows:

- Training and workforce development
- Linked Family Support Workers
- Early help community networks
- Preparing for inspection

You can find out more about the services listed above at the **Safeguarding Children Partnership** website or by contacting locality-based Family Advisors on the numbers below:

North Locality – 01782 232977

Central Locality – 01782 237100

South East Locality – 01782 237500

South West Locality – 01782 231815

A locality map can be found on page

2. Context

Providing early help support is one of five priorities in the current Stoke-on-Trent Children and Family Services Improvement Plan which is overseen by an Executive Improvement Board. The Board is chaired by Paul Moffat, DfE Commissioner for Stoke-on-Trent. Board members include primary and secondary heads as well as senior leaders from a broad range of cross-sector agencies in Stoke-on-Trent.

Early intervention & prevention are also cross-cutting themes embedded within many local services and strategies in particular those that relate to children and families. The growing local and national interest in early intervention and prevention as a policy issue reflects the widespread recognition that it is better to identify problems early and intervene effectively to prevent their escalation than to respond only when crises occur. In response to that, Stoke-on-Trent City Council have also developed an [Early Help and Prevention Strategy](#) that can be accessed via Stoke Online.



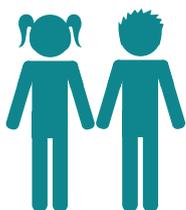
The strategy sets out 4 priorities. They are;

Best start in life



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

Adolescence and transition to adulthood



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

Supporting schools



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

Confident and equipped parents and carers



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

3. Why is support for schools a priority?

Firstly, we acknowledge that schools and settings are key anchor points within our communities. They support all children in our City and have the greatest opportunity to influence their social and emotional development as well as their learning experience. It is vital therefore that pre-school, primary and secondary schools, alternative and further education settings are equipped with the best and most up to date knowledge and tools to support children of all ages. It is equally important that schools have access to other specialist services such as mental health and other therapies that can support children and families in a timely and appropriate way, complementing a child's education and supporting parents to engage with it.

We aim to complement the excellent work that takes place in schools and settings on a daily basis to prepare children for the classroom environment by understanding what the home environment is like for our most vulnerable learners.

Secondly, we acknowledge the statutory responsibility of local authorities and the growing local and national evidence base on the importance of providing early help support that is now well documented and cemented into many key policy documents. Early help is not a new concept, it was acknowledged by Professor Eileen Munro in her Review of Child Protection published in 2011 that;

“Preventative services can do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services. Many services and professions help children and families so co-ordinating their work is important to reduce inefficiencies and omissions.”

There already exists within the Children Act 2004, a statutory duty on Local Authority's to promote co-operation between key local partners engaged in supporting children and families with a view to with a view to safeguarding and improving the well-being of children in the authority's area¹.

Since then, [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#), statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education, acknowledged that;

“Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later.”

Within the guidance and for our purposes, early help is defined as:

“...providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child’s life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.”

The most recent statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education, [Keeping children safe in education 2021](#) makes it explicit that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone’s responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child-centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child. It acknowledges clearly that schools and colleges and their staff are an important part of the wider safeguarding system for children.

Finally, we aim to build on the local learning from the recent ‘Better Together’ programme sponsored by the DfE’s Opportunity Area Board for Stoke-on-Trent. In many ways Better Together was a forerunner for much of the improvement work that is now underway in Stoke-on-Trent. The aims of the programme are woven into the fabric of the children’s improvement plan. Similarly we continue to work towards achieving the aims of the project which were:

- To support closer and more effective work between education settings and LA children’s services.
- To ensure that lower level support can be managed effectively in schools, preventing a family from reaching crisis point.
- To ensure that early help assessments and plans can be managed with confidence.
- To support schools to feel able to assess levels of risk and escalate concerns at the right time.

An independent evaluation published in April 2020 by Interface Enterprises UK Ltd identified the main benefits reported by schools were:

- Dedicated support from the local authority.
- Regular network opportunities.
- Thorough and timely insight into the lives of children and families they are concerned about.

This feedback has influenced the way in which we now provide support to you. Therefore, the support described below is designed to continue to add value by complementing the valuable work that takes place every day in schools and settings to prepare children for the school environment and help them to achieve their potential, in particular by understanding the experiences of our most vulnerable children in their home environment.

4. What does support look like in practice?

a) Training and workforce development:

Training is provided to schools by locality based Effective Practice Co-ordinators. Any specific training needs can be discussed with your locality-based co-ordinator but as a minimum, all schools will be offered training and ongoing support in relation to:

- Assessing risk and the application of threshold.
- Safeguarding children Level 1.
- Use of the Outcome Star assessment.
- Use of Liquidlogic – the single case management system for children’s services in Stoke-on-Trent.
- Identifying and supporting young carers.
- Ongoing training and support to deliver effective early help.

Your school is licensed to use the Outcome Star early help assessment tool, licenses are funded by the Local Authority.

Your school Designated Safeguarding Lead can access and make use of LiquidLogic, the single case management system used by Stoke-on-Trent Children’s Services.

To complement this training offer, you can also access the following supporting documents at the **Safeguarding Children Partnership** website:

Early Help Practice Handbook

Outcome Star guidance

A guide to using EHM (the Early Help module of the LiquidLogic case management system)



b) Linked Family Support Workers:

Every school and post-16 setting is supported by a dedicated Family Support Worker. Your FSW will support you to review on a fortnightly basis, those children who you think may benefit from early help support to help them to thrive to ensure that emerging needs are identified early and the right help can be provided at the right time.

If you have made a referral via the Local Authority Children's Advice and Duty Service (ChAD) that has resulted in an early help assessment being initiated on your behalf, your family support worker will be notified and will be able to assist you in co-ordinating your support for the family. Similarly, if a family is stepping down from the Family Support Service or a Child in Need plan, your family support worker will support the transition and help you to plan and co-ordinate your continuing support for the family.

If you feel that you can no longer meet the needs of a family that you are supporting, your family support worker will also discuss the options available to you and support a transition to Supporting Families where it is deemed appropriate.

c) Practice Development Forums:

Networking and practice development opportunities are provided on a half termly basis on a locality footprint. Each of the four localities hosts a practice development forum every half term to bring together cross sector partners who deliver early help support to families. These events can be tailored to meet current needs and can include training opportunities, shared learning opportunities, information updates and opportunities to discuss emerging local issues. They also provide an informal opportunity for cross-sector professionals to connect with other professionals and providers outside of their usual setting.

d) Family Advisors:

Family Advisors are the first point of contact for families accessing children's centres/Family Hubs. Their role is to provide information to families and professionals on a wide range of support services, local groups and activities and to help families navigate services and access the right support at the right time. Family Advisors also connect local services with each other in order to support the development of locally based communities of support, including voluntary, community and faith sector groups. You can contact your locality-based Family Advisor for more information about local services or to make a referral to the family support group work programme in your local area.



e) Inspection preparation:

As well as supporting your direct work with families, the Supporting Families Service will support your preparation for Ofsted inspection in order to evidence the wider work you do to support children's welfare. You should contact your locality based Effective Practice Co-ordinator who can help you:

- Ensure your safeguarding policies are up to date and accurately reference local safeguarding and early help referral pathways.
- Ensure your DSL and deputies can access local training provided by the Children's Safeguarding Partnership.
- Ensure your DSL is familiar with local services and how to access them.
- Create an effective safeguarding or pastoral care team in your school.
- Network with colleagues in other agencies including social care, school nursing, education welfare and SEND services.
- Train your workforce to identify and respond to needs in a timely and proportionate way.
- Evidence how you deliver early help effectively.
- Review children accessing early help on a regular basis.
- Monitor children with emerging needs regularly and respond effectively and appropriately and evidence how you do this.

5. Post-pandemic recovery

Given the timing of this offer, we should not ignore the challenge that the recent Covid-19 pandemic has presented for families, for schools and for safeguarding services. Improving attendance, increasing attainment and narrowing the gap between those children who are achieving in education and their peers who are not were all priorities even before the pandemic. Now, the challenge has never been greater but the opportunity has never been better. In order to fulfil the requirements set out in the most recent government white paper Opportunity for all - Strong schools with great teachers for your child schools and local authorities must collaborate effectively to identify children in need of help and support and co-ordinate the right support for those children, ensuring that everyone is clear on their role in helping our most vulnerable learners. The aim is clear, to ensure that children with additional support needs have the same opportunities as their peers. In doing so, we must continue to address the social, educational and emotional impact of the pandemic particularly for our most vulnerable children.

A list of useful links is provided below along with a list of useful contacts. If you are accessing a printed version of this document please check online at the **Safeguarding Children Partnership** website to ensure you have the most up to date version.

Useful links:

[Community Directory](#)

[Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

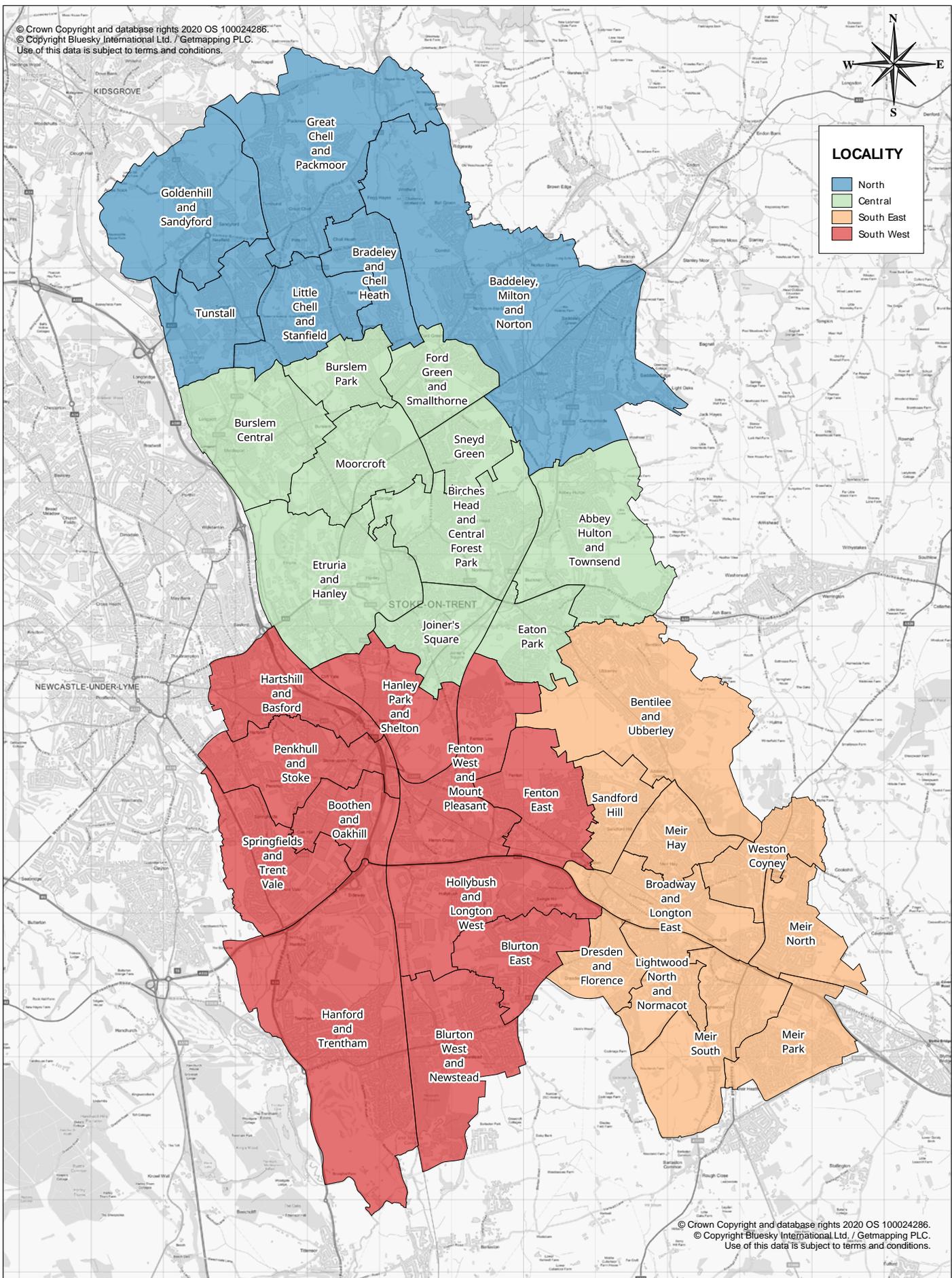
[EHM guidance](#)

[Early Help practice handbook](#)

Supporting Families locality based contacts:

	Effective Practice Co-ordinator	Advanced Family Support Worker	Family Advisor	Family Hub
North Locality	Beth Ashmall	Louise Hancock	Rebecca Foster	Stoke North Tel 01782 232977
Central Locality	Sam Hill	Angela Parkinson	Nelufa Mohideen	Thomas Boughey Tel 01782 237100
South East Locality	Vanessa Wareham	Andy Wilshaw	Yvonne Byatt	Westfield Tel 01782 237500
South West Locality	Nicola Phillips	Maxine Cockerham	Kay Woodward	Stoke Tel 01782 231815

Stoke-on-Trent Localities



Stoke on Trent City Council
 Civic Centre
 Glebe Street
 Stoke on Trent ST4 1HH
 UK

Scale	1:52000 @ A3
Date	07 Jan 2020
Drawn By	M Horwell
Drawing Ref	SOTL
Revision	1

IMPORTANT:

If you think a child may be at risk of significant harm you must contact the Children's Advice and Duty Service on the details below:

**Call Stoke-on-Trent Children's Advice and Duty Service (CHAD):
Phone 01782 235100**

Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 6.00pm, Friday 8.30am - 6.00pm

**Emergency Duty Team (out of hours)
Phone 01782 234234**

For more information about what to do if you are concerned about a child visit the [Safeguarding Children Partnership's website](#) .



City of
Stoke-on-Trent