



# Safeguarding Children Partnership

STOKE - O N - T R E N T

## Annual Report

August 22 – March 23



City of

**Stoke-on-Trent**

**NHS**

**Staffordshire and  
Stoke-on-Trent**  
Integrated Care Board



**STRONGER  
TOGETHER**

## CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION FROM OUR STRATEGIC LEADERS
2. OUR PRIORITIES
3. STOKE-ON-TRENT SAFEGUARDING CONTEXT
4. INSPECTION OF STOKE-ON-TRENT LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES
5. STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE
6. Education
7. Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Integrated Care Board
8. ENGAGEMENT WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
9. HOW ARE WE DOING AS A PARTNERSHIP
10. DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A QUALITY ASSURANCE AND SCRUTINY FRAMEWORK
11. MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE TO CHILD EXPLOITATION
12. Children who go missing from home
13. NEGLECT
14. EARLY HELP
15. MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB
16. MULTI AGENCY AUDITS
17. SAFEGUARDING YOUNG CHILDREN AGED 0-2
18. CHILD MENTAL HEALTH
19. SERIOUS YOUTH VIOLENCE
20. REVIEW OF SAFEGUARDING ACTIVITY
21. MANAGING ALLEGATIONS AGAINST PEOPLE WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN
22. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS
23. CHILD DEATH OVERVIEW PANEL
24. LEARNING FROM RAPID REVIEWS AND CHILD SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEWS
25. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT
26. CONTACT DETAILS FOR THE PARTNERSHIP
27. ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT A CHILD IN STOKE-ON-TRENT?

## 1. INTRODUCTION FROM OUR STRATEGIC LEADERS

In November 2020 we formed a single Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Partnership to deliver a system that protects children, especially the most vulnerable. Protecting, safeguarding and ensuring the wellbeing of children are complex tasks that can only be successfully achieved by agencies working together in a coherent and effective manner.

The last Stoke on Trent Safeguarding Childrens Partnership (SCP) annual report was published on the Safeguarding Childrens partnership website covering a period of July 21 to July 22. This report is based on the period August 2022 up to the end of March 2023. This will bring future SCP Annual reports in line with Annual reporting periods April to March.

Working Together 2018, requires safeguarding partners to publish a report at least once in every 12-month period. This report set outs the progress that we have continued to make within the safeguarding arrangements in Stoke on Trent. This report provides an update on the progress that has been made in the priority areas and within the subgroups.

The Partnerships' Strategic Business Plan was approved in December 2021 and is effective from 1st Jan 2022 to 31st March 2025 allowing time to embed and evaluate the impact of the priorities. The plan will be reviewed annually, providing the opportunity for the plan to be dynamic and responsive to emerging local needs. Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Partnership is committed to safeguarding all children and everybody that comes into contact with our children has a role to play in keeping them safe.

The statutory accountable officers for the Safeguarding Children Partnership are:

- Jon Rouse, City Director, Stoke-on-Trent City Council,
- Chris Noble, Chief Constable Staffordshire Police and
- Peter Axon, Chief Executive Staffordshire and Stoke on-Trent Integrated Care Board.

They have delegated the day-to-day leadership to the Safeguarding Executive.

## The Safeguarding Executive Board



**Lisa Lyons,**  
**Director of Children and Family Services, Stoke-**  
**on-Trent City Council**

**Rebecca Riggs**  
**Chief Constable, Staffordshire Police**



**Heather Johnstone,**  
**Chief Nursing and Therapies Officer,**  
**Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent**  
**Integrated Care Board**

## 2. OUR PRIORITIES

The 2023 inaugural Spring Safeguarding Conference was attended by approximately 100 delegates from a variety of agencies and feedback from our initial conference has been positive.

The areas of focus for the conference included, Referral Thresholds (right help at the right time), Graded Care Profile 2, learning from Reviews and Child Exploitation.

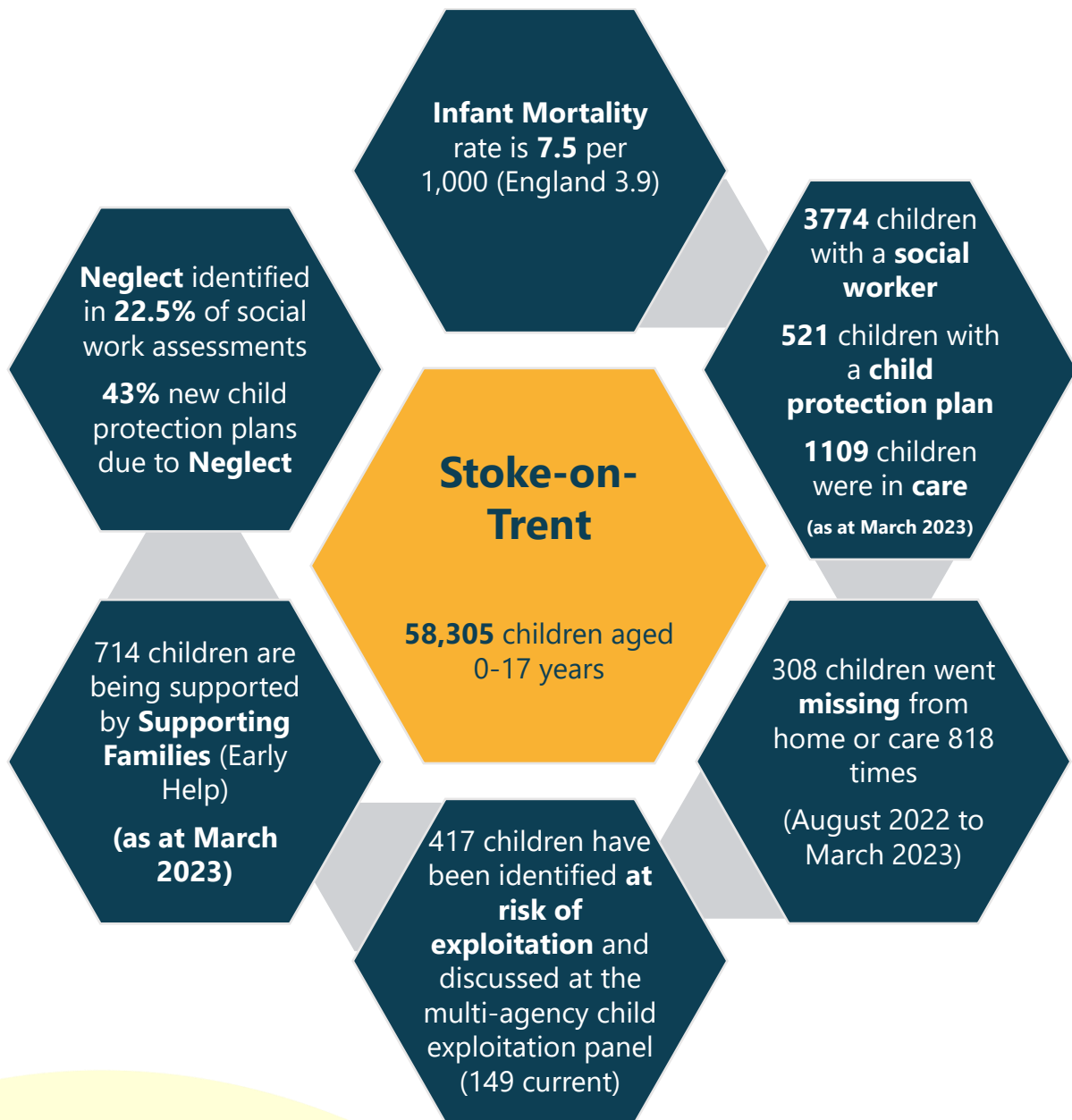
Multi-agency colleagues who attended the Safeguarding Children Partnership's Spring Conference were given a table exercise to discuss which of the current priorities remained pertinent, and could be added or moved. This exercise generated some good multi agency discussions. Within our business plan we have set out our three priorities categories; strategic, practice and assurance priorities. Our Practice priorities have been updated to reflect the agency feedback. Domestic abuse and Child Mental Health have been identified as our Practice priorities and Child Exploitation has moved over to be an assurance priority.



The next Conference is planned for Autumn 2023 with the selected theme of Safeguarding in education.

### 3. STOKE-ON-TRENT SAFEGUARDING CONTEXT

April 2022 – March 23



#### **4. Inspection of Stoke-On-Trent local authority children's services**

In October 2022, Children Services underwent a full ILACS inspection and received the judgment. 'requires improvement to be good'. The Ofsted report commented that services for vulnerable children and families in Stoke-on-Trent had improved substantially since the last inspection in February 2019. The experience and progress of children in care and care leaver was graded as 'Good'.

The inspection highlighted that as the senior leadership team had stabilised, the pace of progress had increased in addition this it referenced that the support and financial investment have resulted in improvements across many services, such as the revised early help offer, restructured front door services, improved partnership working and a relentless focus on achieving permanence for children.

With regards to partnership working the report also highlighted that 'Multi-agency governance structures and partnerships have been strengthened, which has led to tangible improvements in some areas, such as the virtual school and the front door service.' The report recognised that the Partnership was developed a year previously and provided a greater focus on the needs of children. It did however, refer to the Partnership as being relatively new but recognised the clear plans for further development.

#### **5. Staffordshire police**

In March 2023 HMICFRS re-inspected Staffordshire Police and found that the force had improved the service to children and commented that:

"The force has made several positive changes to improve the ways it protects vulnerable children, including better clarity in its senior leadership and governance arrangements."

The force understands that further improvements are required. The quality of investigations and the response to missing children needs to improve further and the risk assessment and allocation of response by the force Contact Centre also needs to be better.

The force continues to build both capacity and capability within the Public Protection Teams and works closely with safeguarding partners to improve multi-agency working. The force has also introduced enhanced vulnerability training days to frontline staff. To date, over 1200 frontline officers and staff have been trained to capture the voice of the child, recognise and respond to child protection concerns.

The force is investing £5 million into a new Public Protection Unit (PPU), ensuring an extra 100 officers to work in public protection. Recruitment is underway to bring in experienced Detectives as well as to train new officers to be able to work in this vital area of policing. Extra resources will ensure dedicated child protection specialists for criminal investigations and safeguarding for missing exploited children.

## 6. Education

Across the city of Stoke on Trent 86.2% of pupils attend a good or outstanding school. In primary schools, the percentage of pupils attending a good or outstanding school is 85.4%. In secondary settings, the percentage of pupils attending a good or outstanding school is 86.7%.

In order to be awarded Good – safeguarding must be effective, all staff must have received appropriate safeguarding training, policies and statutory checks such a single central record are in order and proactively used in the provision of safe learning environment.

Since December 2021, Staffordshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's Office has funded a PSHE Coordination role for Stoke-on-Trent. The service offer aims to support education providers (mainstream and alternative provision) from Key Stages 1-5 to ensure a quality and consistent Personal, Social, Health & Economic education offer across the city.

In the reporting period, the service produced and circulated an [End of Year 1 Impact Report](#) which outlines key milestones and projects timeline.

In addition to this, the PSHE Education service has established a 5-part service offer as detailed below:

- PSHE digest - a monthly newsletter giving information about resources, training opportunities, updates from local and national partners. In the reporting period, 7 editions of the newsletter were sent to 139 individuals in Stoke-on-Trent, including education providers and partners.
- PSHE Leads Meetings - Half-termly meetings that focus on different aspects of PSHE education best practice and gives PSHE Leads a safe space to share challenges, ideas and meet people in similar positions. In the reporting period, the service hosted 4 sessions which covered; assessment, quality assurance, pupil voice and policy engagement, creation & review.
- PSHE Practice Development Sessions - Monthly sessions to support anyone who delivers PSHE education to increase their knowledge and confidence in different topics covered by the curriculum. A subject specialist partner will be invited to co-deliver the session. In the reporting period, the service has hosted 4 sessions (these started in Dec 22) which covered; Extremism, Tackling Homophobia, Child Exploitation, Mental Health.
- PSHE series - Localised subject guidance packs to support linking the topic to curriculum and statutory guidance and also information to upskill staff delivering PSHE with information about signposting, local data/statistics included.
- Best Practice guides - Information to advise and guide education providers in implementing best practice in their own settings; Assessment, Quality Assurance, Aims & Objectives, Preparing for OFSTED, Creating Safe Learning Environments etc.

In April 2023, the service will launch a website which contains a resource library for education providers to access quality assured resources and materials in an easy to navigate area listed by topic and age-suitability.

The PSHE Education service has worked with partners, including teams within Stoke-on-Trent Local Authority to provide support, advice and guidance around the prevention education offer for children and young people. In November 2022, Staffordshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioners Office received Safer Streets 4 funding from the Home Office. The PSHE Education service are supporting with the development of education materials which will cover anti-social behaviour using these funds.

The service has also supported Staffordshire Police by delivering training to the PCSO cohort around delivering best practice PSHE in the classroom by following principles from the [NPCC Police in the Classroom guidance](#). In the reporting period, 61 PCSOs from Staffordshire Police have received this training. Next steps for this work is to develop a series of lesson plans for PCSO's to deliver on topics where they are subject matter experts.

## **7. Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Integrated Care Board**

Safeguarding Children Health Forum have published their annual report covering April 2022-March 2023. Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board (ICB) was established 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 following the abolition of the CCGs, as a result of the new legislation, Health and Care Act (2022) which contains the biggest reforms to the NHS, laying the foundations to improve health outcomes by joining up NHS, Social Care and public health services at a local level and tackling health inequalities. Membership has therefore changed from CCG to ICB safeguarding staff with a focus on developing a robust safeguarding presence across the Integrated Care System (ICS).

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Health Safeguarding Forum (SSoTHSF) facilitates communication between Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Partnership and health partners in order to support the local safeguarding agendas, including priority areas of safeguarding work.

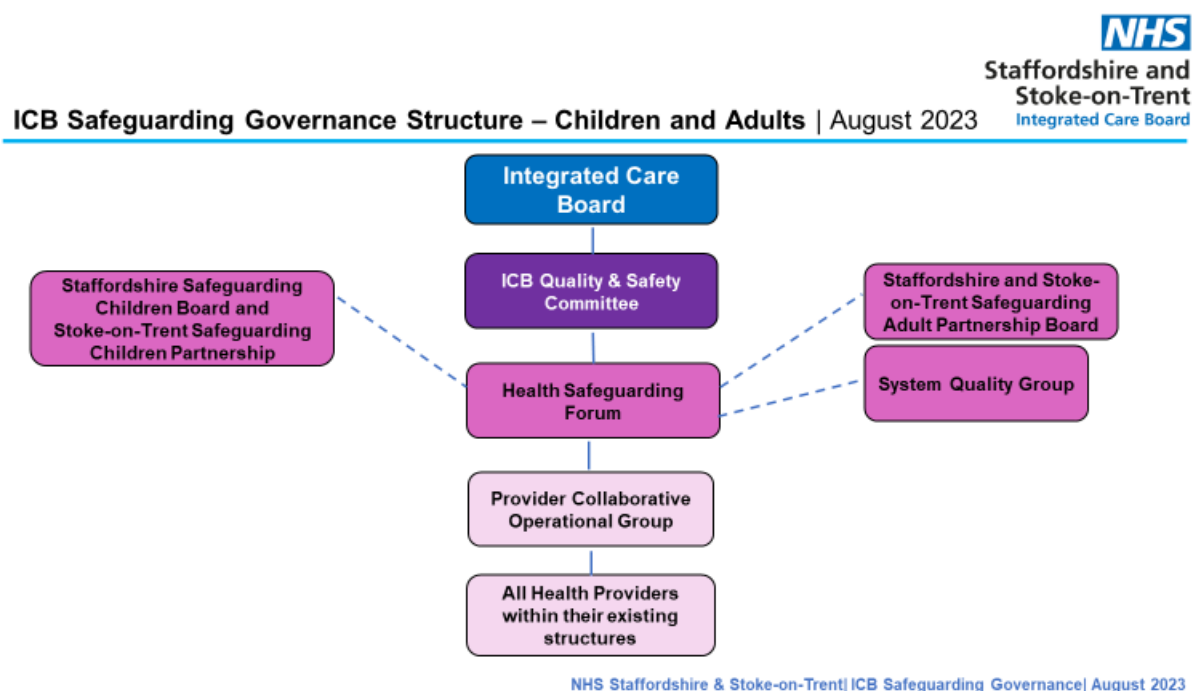
As part of the revised structure, the SSSCHF will report into the Partnerships and the ICB for the purpose of escalation and evidence of best safeguarding practice across the health systems. This will also provide assurance that the wider safeguarding system is effective in meeting the needs of children and families. The Designated Nurses and Doctors for Safeguarding Children will be the conduit and enabler of this collaboration and share information from the Partnership to the Forum on a quarterly basis.

There are a number of health priorities associated with the local safeguarding agenda and aligned with the Safeguarding Partnership priorities that have been worked through as key areas of focus for the Forum as below:

- The Child Protection Information Sharing System (CP-IS) is the national alerting system between social work and health providers for children (and “child to be born”) with a protection plan and children who are looked after.

- Training - The development and delivery of safeguarding training is one of many key objectives for all health providers, ICB and Primary Care as part of their duty outlined in legislation to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.
- One Health and Care is the name for the new integrated care record (ICR). The software will sit alongside individual organisation's own record keeping software.
- Organisations will be able to view data that has been entered by other organisations such as attendances, care plans and blood test results and an individual's summary of community, primary, secondary and social care.

## ICB – Governance Arrangements



## 8. Engagement with children and young people

There are a number of different ways that we communicate and engage with young people.

Mind of My own (MOMO), is an app that young people can use to contact their social worker to say what they like, dislike or how they are feeling, it also allows surveys to be completed. One of the surveys completed has been in relation to a City-wide survey around social activities, where young people do and do not feel safe.

The purpose of the app is for young people to be able to send updates/communication to their support workers (social workers/IRO's etc) regardless of the time of day. The young

person will have their own account and they can choose who receives the updates. Benefits of using the app include

- Children are more actively involved in their own care planning
- More interactive/fun than email
- Helps children with mindfulness and supports wellbeing
- The voice of the child clearly being heard within assessment, planning and intervention
- Can form part of direct work
- Can help to build positive relationships with young people

This app also has another version for younger children or with additional needs, making it more accessible. There is a feature that also allows for different languages to be used.

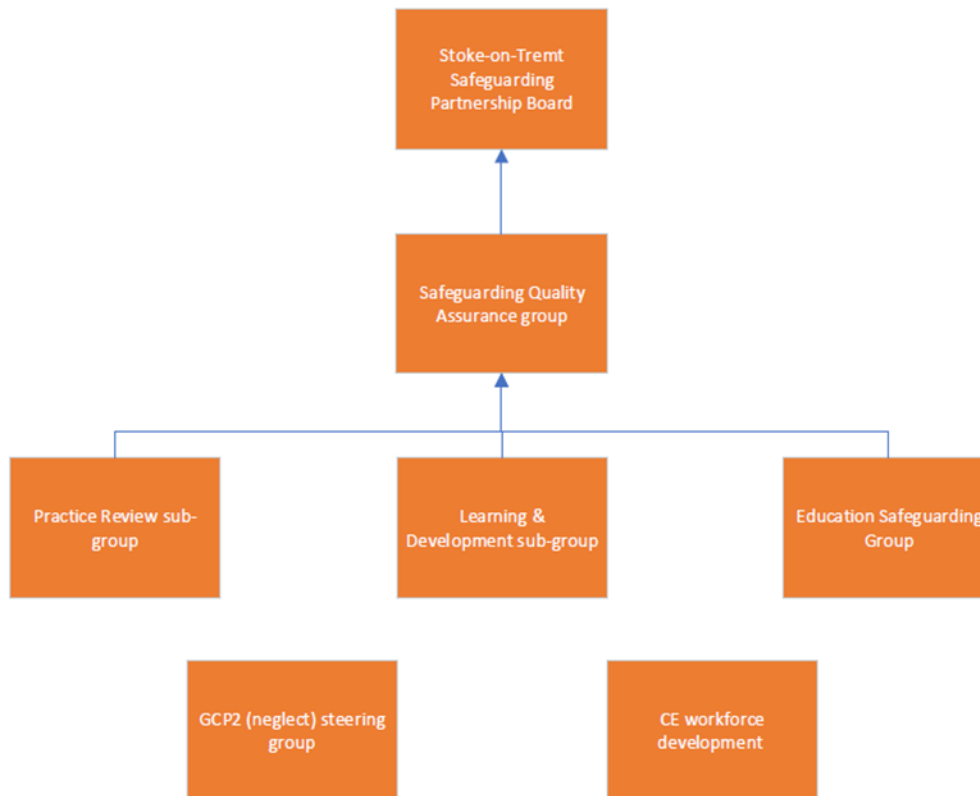
The NSPCC Together For Children has also completed a piece of work focussing on the area of Chell and Fegg Hayes (Together for Childhood).

We have looked at the NSPCC report along with the findings of the city-wide Survey report and they both show similar findings. The similarities and common themes have been highlighted a multi-agency response and recommendations have been formulated via a comprehensive action plan outlining priorities and timescales. The NSPCC worked with local partners and business to raise awareness and provide safe spaces for young people in the area. They also worked with youth providers to deliver a coordinated approach to youth provision in the area, setting up a Youth voice group with one of the providers. The aim is that the youth voice group will help shape the provision that's offered in the area.

## **9. How are we doing as a Partnership**

### **Effective partnership arrangements**

We have developed our strategic governance arrangements and have our meeting structures in place. We have established our Executive Group which consists of senior representation of our strategic partners. In order to ensure a wide range of expertise is brought to the task of scrutiny, it is proposed that we recruit a panel of scrutineers from different backgrounds.



The Quality Assurance Group, Learning & Development Subgroup and Review Subgroup are well attended by partners including the voluntary sector. The chairing responsibilities continue to be shared across our Strategic Partners.

We have recently established our Education Safeguarding Subgroup to strengthen the work with representatives from the various sectors of education.

We are strengthening the links with other partnership boards within the city to ensure a synergy of approach across the city.

We have further developed our Partnership’s website [Home \(stoke.gov.uk\)](http://Home.stoke.gov.uk) to cascade multi agency information widely and to act as a repository for resources.

## 10. Development and implementation of a Quality Assurance and Scrutiny Framework

The single SoTSCP was formed late in 2020, and published arrangements in 2022. A Quality Assurance and scrutiny framework was agreed within the arrangements and a work plan was devised which aimed to achieve a holistic view of the Partnership’s effectiveness using a range of methods which would be brought together in a series of integrated scrutiny activity and reports.

The statutory requirements for scrutiny are:

*scrutiny is objective, acts as a constructive critical friend and promotes reflection to drive continuous improvement. The independent scrutineer should consider how effectively the arrangements are working for children and families as well as for practitioners, and how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership and agree with the safeguarding partners how this will be reported. (WT 2018. p.80)*

In order to ensure a wide range of expertise is brought to the task of scrutiny, the Partnership is currently looking to recruit a panel of scrutineers from different backgrounds. Individual pieces of work will be tasked to one or more members of the pool depending on the knowledge and professional background required.

Our quality assurance work continues in good stead and includes

- Section 11 of The Children Act (2004)
- Sections 157 and 175 of the 2002 Education Act
- Multi-agency training programme which is delivered by expert practitioners from across the local partnership.
- Performance framework has significantly improved reflecting a range of data with a multi-agency lens. It will also include information and analysis in relation to the practice and assurance priority areas.

## **11. Multi-agency response to Child Exploitation**

There is a joint Child Exploitation Strategy for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire and the Joint Child Exploitation Task Group lead the implementation and delivery of the strategy. There are links in representation between the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Child Exploitation Task, Steering and Operational Groups.

Across the partnership there is a risk factor matrix (RFM) which includes all elements of child exploitation. Children who are assessed as having a medium or high risk are discussed at the Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Panel. Commissioned services and support for children who are identified as low risk of Child Exploitation are in place. The multi-agency practice guidance and Risk Factor Matrix are available on the Safeguarding Partnership website.

An additional child exploitation coordinator role has allowed for increased capacity to the exploitation and missing work. In addition to this weekly meeting are in place between children's social care, Police, and Catch22 to review all children who have been missing in the previous week to ensure appropriate plans are in place. Foster carers have also received training on exploitation and missing together with Staffordshire police.

Joint “missing” operational and strategic groups with Staffordshire has been established to share best practice and maintain pan-Staffordshire overview of the safety of our children.

There has also been work undertaken in the wider community for example, Operation MakeSafe involving training and comms for local hotels on child exploitation and new communications for taxi drivers on child exploitation.

There is ongoing work to further develop the services provided to children, young people and their families, this includes; child exploitation champion programmes, reviewing positive activities for children across the city, working to develop a multi-agency service focused on child exploitation, developing a new intelligence and reporting system bringing together police and council data into a single reporting tool and finalising and rolling out our new pan-Staffordshire Risk Factor Matrix which will include contextual safeguarding information

## **12. Children who go missing from home**

To assist partners in providing a robust response the missing from home or care protocol remains in place. This was jointly developed by Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Local Authorities and Staffordshire Police and was refreshed at the beginning of 2022. The protocol reflects current practice guidance and the duties of individuals to ensure that children who go missing are safeguarded. The following safeguarding principles should be applied:

- The safety and welfare of the child is paramount.
- Locating and returning the child to a safe environment is the main objective.
- The views of the child and parent/carer should always be taken into

consideration.

- Understanding the circumstances of the child going missing and seeking to reduce the risk of further missing episodes is key.

<https://safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/10/staffordshire-stoke-on-trent-missing-protocol-jan22.pdf>

between April 22 and March 2023, 485 children went missing accounting for 1,339 missing episodes. 99% of children who went missing in Stoke-on-Trent received a Return Home Interview which is significantly above the national average. 270 of the 485 children (missing April 2022 to March 2023) were reported as missing from their home rather than care.

More children go missing from home than missing from care in Stoke-on-Trent. 92 children were referred to Catch 22 for support around CSE in Qtr2 and Qtr3 2022/23.

## **13. Neglect**

Historically, in Stoke-on-Trent, neglect has been a key factor in child protection planning. The Neglect Strategy and a range of tools remain in place to support practitioners.



We have been rolling out the NSPCC Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2). This is a strengths-based approach which supports practitioners in the identification of neglect. It helps to inform decisions about next steps, additional support needs of families and encourage positive changes. 'Train the trainer' champions have been trained and have been delivering single and multi-agency training.

During August 22 and March 23, 26 practitioners have been trained and approximately 10 GCP2 assessments have been undertaken. This remains an area of focus to ensure that a multi-agency response to neglect is fully embedded in the city.

#### **14. Early Help**

Getting the right level of help to children and families at the right time and as early as possible can prevent long term harm and abuse. This starts with universal services, such as schools, primary health services and the police. Families needing 'more help' may need to access other services too. There are a range of services in Stoke-on-Trent who can help families to thrive for longer by providing short term support when needs arise.

The Stoke-on-Trent Early Help and Prevention Strategy sets out the approach to ensuring that effective early help and support is available to children and families in Stoke-on-Trent. A copy of the strategy can be found here: [Stoke-on-Trent Early Help and Prevention Strategy](#)

The Supporting Families Service is Stoke-on-Trent City Council's early help service and was redesigned during 2022. The service delivers the national Supporting Families Programme and is responsible for the co-ordination of Early Help support across the city.

Supporting Families comprises the following functions; Family support Service, Parenting Support, School Support, Effective Practice Development, Young Carers Assessment, Participation of children and young people, advice and guidance through Family Advisors and supervised family time.

Since the last annual report below progress has included;

- Positioned an Early Help manager at Children's Advice and Duty Service (ChAD) to support an effective interface between partner agencies, statutory social care and early intervention, promoting the right support at the right time for children.
- Developed Effective Practice Co-ordinator role to work with partners to increase confidence in identifying need early, responding appropriately and applying threshold.

- Redesigned the Early Help service to create capacity where it is needed and ensure families can be supported.
- Implemented a single assessment framework for use by all partners delivering Early Help support called the Outcome Star.
- Developed a bespoke programme for parents in collaboration with Adult Community Learning, Youth Offending Services, Catch22 and the FAST service to support parents of older children to identify risk factors and support their children as they transition to high school and into adulthood.
- Introduced group support for new parents to improve perinatal mental health, reduce social isolation and increase confidence in new parents promoting attachment and positive parenting.
- Focused the family support offer for those families on the edge of statutory services and stepping down from statutory support
- Strengthened the support offered to schools by linking a family facing support worker to each school and creating capacity to train schools DSL and SENCOs and provide continuing professional support and development to those school staff.
- Supported partner agencies to recognise and understand the criticality of their role in identifying and responding to needs at the earliest point so we have a shared understanding of Threshold for services.
- Undertook a dip sample of the revised step up/down processes to evaluate effectiveness.
- Rolled out Early Help training to a range of partners including school Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs), health visitors and third sector partners.
- Rolled out training on the Outcomes Star assessment framework to cross sector early help practitioners.

The early help service continues to demonstrate strength practice and partnership working, areas of ongoing work include;

- Working with cross sector partners through the Early Help and Prevention Board to strengthen the voluntary and community sector contribution to Early Help.
- Continued to deliver training for lead practitioners and partners to deliver the Outcome Star training to colleagues in their own service.
- Responding to Ofsted feedback through strengthening the interface between early help, the front door and Children's Support and Safeguarding teams.
- Developing a new training programme for across sector Early Help practitioners that focuses in particular on infants/parents of under 2 year olds.
- Continuing to strengthen our joint working with schools to respond to needs at the earliest stage.
- Reviewing practice standards and operating framework for family support to ensure effective compliance and reduce the risk of delay.

Raising the profile of early help across the partnership, engaging with the Early Help and Prevention Board and Safeguarding Children Partnership

## **15. Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub – MASH**

The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub enables the sharing of information from agencies within the MASH to allow risks to be identified at an early stage. The following work has taken place between August 22 to March 23 MASH in relation to the Stoke-on-Trent Mash development;

- Decision made to separate MASH service from Staffordshire County Council.
- A new suggested operating model designed and presented to Safeguarding Partners.
- Review of anticipated volumes for the separated service to support partners to predict resource requirements.
- A project board with a dedicated project manager was established within the CAFS transformation and improvement programme. Terms of reference and governance for this group approved and a full project lifecycle document completed including a specific risk tracking log.
- Began to consider options for best practice models including reviewing ways of working in other local authorities.
- Reviewed options for an information sharing system and decided upon the Liquidlogic MASH module solution.
- Reviewed One Staffordshire information sharing protocol to understand how the MASH will operate within this to ensure sharing is safe and legal.

## **16. Multi Agency Audits**

A multi-agency Audit schedule is now in place with the first multi-agency audit commencing in March 2023. This is an opportunity to collectively audit the work being undertaken with children and young people to ensure a multi-agency working approach is utilised. The audits will focus on the voice of the child, assessments, planning, intervention, and the impact of the overall work with the child and their family. Multi-agency learning from these audits will be taken to the Partnership subgroup in order to identify how improvements can be achieved.

## **17. Safeguarding young children aged 0-2**

As documented within the last Annual Report, we had reviewed the bruising in non-mobile babies guidance and published this on the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Partnership Website [Resources \(stoke.gov.uk\)](https://www.stoke.gov.uk) and planned to implement ICON training. This training is now being delivered with some fantastic feedback. There were two sessions delivered between August 2022 and March 2023. There is feedback below from delegates.



Regular training sessions covering ICON (Babies Cry You Can Cope) [ICON - Babies cry you can cope - Advice and Support | ICON \(iconcope.org\)](https://www.iconcope.org) and non-accidental injuries in children under 5 are delivered by the Designated Doctor to raise awareness across the partnership.

Clear slides and information put across well. One key area to be aware of is to use your professional curiosity and don't take things on face value. Good and open communication between professionals is so important. The knowledge and awareness of ICON is really good

Very well presented, factual and interesting content.

I will use the knowledge during advice calls to Health Visitors when they ring into Safeguarding Team MPFT. Fathers are known to be hard to reach.

All the information was useful

## 18. Child Mental Health

There is national and local recognition of the need to increase mental health support for children and young people, in particular early access to prevent escalation of the impact of trauma.

North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust is a leading provider of mental health, social care, learning disability and substance misuse services in the West Midlands. NSCHT remains committed to partnership working through active participation in the various sub groups affiliated with the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Partnership Board and sharing of both learning lessons and examples of good practice. The NSCHT safeguarding team attend Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) panel and share information on behalf of the Trust. Key messages have been delivered to staff during supervision in relation to neglect, Early Help, ICON, CCE/ CSE and MACE.

We will seek assurance and evidence of effective safeguarding in relation to child mental health and suicide prevention from statutory safeguarding partners, joint commissioners, Health and Wellbeing Board and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Integrated Care System Transformation Board.

## 19. Serious Youth Violence

The Stoke-on-Trent Community Safety Partnership is the statutory body responsible for implementing a strategy to reduce crime, disorder and substance misuse in the city. Preventing children, young people and vulnerable adults from exploitation, by addressing serious violence, substance abuse and modern slavery is one of the priorities within the Community Safety Strategy 2020-2023. [Policies, procedures and strategies directory - Safer City Partnership Strategy 2020 - 2023 | Stoke-on-Trent](#)

The Duty is a key part of the Government's wider programme of work to prevent and reduce serious violence; taking a whole-system approach to understand the causes and consequences of serious violence, focussed on prevention and early intervention (further detail below).

At a local level, local partners developed and published a multi-agency Serious Violence Strategy for Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent (2020-2023), predicated on a public health approach. As such, the aim of the Serious Violence Strategy is to "work together to strengthen the visibility, early identification and partnership response to prevent serious violence and its associated harms". It has five priority areas:

- Primary prevention – seeking to prevent the onset of serious violence or to change behaviour so that serious violence is prevented from happening.
- Secondary prevention – halting the progressing of serious violence once it is established. This is achieved by early identification followed by prompt, effective support.
- Tertiary prevention – rehabilitating people with established serious violent behaviour, or supporting victims.
- Enforcement and criminal justice – developing innovation criminal justice practices that reduce offending behaviour and recidivism.
- Attitudinal change – changing attitudes and behaviour towards all types of serious violence at a societal, community and personal level.

Establishing a local resourced multi-disciplinary approach to serious violence is a key action within the Primary Prevention priority of the Serious Violence Strategy. The Serious Violence Strategy implementation is managed by a partnership Violence Reduction Delivery Group which meets every 6-8 weeks.

A Violence Reduction Alliance website has been developed and is now live. It currently holds the violence against women and girls resources and is being further developed to include the serious violence information and resources.

A Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) Service has been commissioned with the national charity, Catch 22. The service comprises a prevention-led education programme, an early

intervention team to offer individuals and families case work support to stop issues escalating, support workers in A & E and custody to identify and support those already affected by serious violence and a lived experience worker. The service commenced in March 2020 and has since been extended to enable the timelines to coincide with the recommissioning of the Missing and Child Sexual Exploitation Service.

From Stoke on Trent, In year one, March 2020 to March 2021, the service received 127 referrals for support, in year two, from April 2021 to March 2022, 131 referrals for support were received; and in year three, from April 2022 to March 2023, 205 referrals for support were received. Work is ongoing to ensure that this service works together effectively with the Youth Offending Prevention services, the VRA approach and the wider system. The CCE Service contract with Catch 22 has been extended to run to March 2024.

As part of National Hate Crime Awareness Week, 8 to 15 October 2022, Staffordshire Victim Gateway Uniting Staffordshire Against Hate (USAH) delivered two awareness sessions.

The Youth Offending Service (YOS) works closely with the Community Safety Partnership and Violence Reduction Alliance in order to reduce the level of serious violence within the city committed by children. The Youth Offending Service offers a prevention service for children at risk of offending and this includes an early targeted approach for children at risk of violent behaviour. In the period from August 2022- March 2023, the YOS prevention received 72 referrals. Children open to the Youth Offending Service prevention team receive a bespoke assessment and intervention which includes support around behaviour, education, health and substance misuse. Small numbers of these children go on to offend following an intervention.

Within the period August 2022- March 2023, the numbers of children receiving a conviction for serious violence has remained static. However, there has been an increase in the numbers of children receiving a sanction for an offence of possession of a knife or offensive weapon. As a result, and with the support of the Community Safety Partnership, the Youth Offending Service is co-ordinating the delivery of a Virtual Decisions; Virtual Reality programme. This is a targeted intervention for children in educational placements who may be at risk of carrying weapons. The programme is also delivered to children open to the YOS who are vulnerable to weapon carrying or received a sanction. The initial response has been highly positive and a full evaluation will be available later in the year.

## **20. Review of Safeguarding Activity**

### **Annual safeguarding audit of schools and education providers**

Section 175 of the 2002 Education Act requires local education authorities and the governing bodies of maintained schools and further education colleges to make

arrangements to ensure that their functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Section 157 of the 2002 Education Act and the Independent School Regulations 2003 convey the same responsibilities on all other non-maintained settings.

All education settings within the city were asked to complete a section 175/157 audit to provide the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Partnership assurance that these statutory functions are fulfilled. The audit covers safeguarding information for all staff, management of safeguarding, safer recruitment, allegations against staff and child-on-child abuse. 70% of primary settings, 66% of secondary, 75% of special schools and 59% of alternative providers completed the audit.

The Section 175 Audits are expected to be returned on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023, the findings from these audits will be available in the 23/24 annual report.

### **Annual safeguarding audit of organisations (Section 11)**

The Children Act (2004) places on a statutory footing the obligation for named agencies and individuals to co-operate to safeguard children and promote their welfare. Section 11 of the Act makes clear to whom this duty applies and indicates that they must make arrangements for ensuring that: 'their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The 'Section 11 Audit' allowed the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Partnership to be assured that agencies placed under a duty to co-operate by this legislation are fulfilling their responsibilities to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

The Section 11 Audits are expected to be returned on the 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023, the findings from these audits will be available in the 23/24 annual report.

## **21. Managing allegations against people who work with children**

The role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) supports the wider community and organisations working with children in handling allegations where children may have been harmed.

A LADO referral is made in circumstances whereby an adult who works or volunteers with children is alleged to have behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, behaved towards a child in a way that indicated they may pose a risk to children or behaved in a way that indicated they may not be suitable to work with children

In Stoke-on-Trent, the number of LADO referrals in the year ending March 2023 was 161. This is a decrease of 18% from the previous year (196).

During 2022/23 170 LADO referrals were closed; Residential Care Workers were subject of 21.2% of the total, followed by Foster Carers at 16.5% and Qualified Teachers at 14.7%. 34% of LADO referrals were recorded as unsubstantiated whilst 30% were substantiated. 21% were deemed below the LADO threshold with advice and information being given.

An annual review of local LADO procedures against the national procedures to ensure that monitored engagement from partner agencies has been undertaken in addition to this a multi-agency feedback forms to gain feedback from professionals on how we can continue to improve our LADO service.

The LADO performance is monitored via the Monthly Business Report and considered within the monthly service performance meetings. In order to ensure a good standard of practice, a LADO presentation has been delivered to the voluntary organisations, and safeguarding groups to strengthen networks and raise awareness of the LADO process.

The LADO has also relocated to sit with Front Door services, whilst maintaining independent management via the safeguarding and QA service.

## **22. Independent Reviewing Officers**

The IRO Annual Report is a statutory requirement as per the IRO Handbook (2010). The report considers how the Local Authority fulfils its statutory obligations to the children cared for by Stoke-on-Trent for the period 2022/2023.

The primary reason why children became cared for in Stoke on Trent during 2022/2023 is due to neglect, followed by domestic abuse and emotional abuse. This could reflect the significant level of deprivation in Stoke on Trent over a prolonged period of time, potentially indicating a generational issue. A small number of children become looked after for other reason such as breakdown of previously permanent arrangements such as adoption and SGO although these are generally small in numbers.

In the year 2022/2023, 2725 children's reviews were held, of which, 2454 were in timescale. Increased participation of children at their review was a target in the previous year's IRO Annual Report.

The overall level of participation of young people in their statutory reviews for 2022/2023 was 66.33% (excluding the under 4 age group) which is an increase from the previous year of 57.92%.

## **23. Child Death Overview panel**

The deaths of all children under the age of 18 are reviewed by a Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). CDOP is a multi-agency panel whose main purpose is to learn from these deaths in order to try and prevent future deaths. The CDOP makes recommendations

and reports about the lessons learned to those responsible at a local level. Locally there is a joint Child Death Overview Panel between Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

During 2021-22, there were 34 deaths of those aged under 18 reported in Stoke-on-Trent, an increase compared to 2020-21 (19 children) and 2019-20 (23 children). During this period August 2022 to March 2023 there were 18 deaths of those aged under 18 reported in Stoke-on-Trent. This is a decrease of the number of deaths in comparison to the previous year where there were 34 deaths over a period of 12 months, this report does however only account for a period of 8 months at this stage, but the average number of deaths per month remains lower. Deaths of boys has consistently accounted for over half of all notifications in previous years, however the data reflects that these deaths were 11 female and 7 males. The neonatal age group (0-28 days) remained as the highest number of deaths which was 11 deaths.

Of the deaths across Stoke-on-Trent six were categorised as unexpected, however later confirmed to have known life limiting conditions. The other categories of deaths of children included, Cardiac congenital condition, known life limiting conditions, perinatal event, Chromosomal, genetic or congenital anomaly, and sudden death with life limiting condition.

## **24. Learning from rapid reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews**

If a child dies or is seriously harmed as a result of abuse or neglect then a notification is made to the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. A rapid review then takes place to gather facts, identify immediate learning and determine whether a local Child Safeguarding Practice Review is required. If a Child Safeguarding Practice is deemed necessary it should identify improvements to practice and consider potential national learning to try to prevent future harm or deaths.

A CSPR was completed in February 2022 for Child A some of the Learning included;

### **1) Learning**

The Partnership must review and update the Practice Guidance for Assessment, Management and Referral on Bruising in Non-Mobile Babies (2017);

#### **Response**

As a response to this the latest version of the Bruising in non-mobile babies' guidance and flow chart was escalated and discussed at the Quality and Assurance Group where it was agreed for changes to be made. These changes to the guidance and flow chart have been made and an updated version agreed with the paediatricians via the Designated Doctor. There is now an agreed version which has been adopted by the Stoke-on-Trent SCP and is available on the SCP website.

The updated policy is included in the Learning from Reviews session delivered by the Designated Doctor and Principal Social Worker.

## **2) Learning**

The Partnership must review and update the Professional Disagreement and Escalation Policy (2019) in the light of the learning from this review

### **Response**

The Escalation Policy has been reviewed and has been signed off at the Learning and Development Sub-group and the Quality Assurance Group. The policy is promoted in training and available on the SCP website

## **3) Learning**

The Partnership needs to request that all partner agencies consider introducing a requirement that individual agencies produce impact chronologies for all Initial Child Protection Conferences, and request assurance that this is having a positive impact for children.

### **Response**

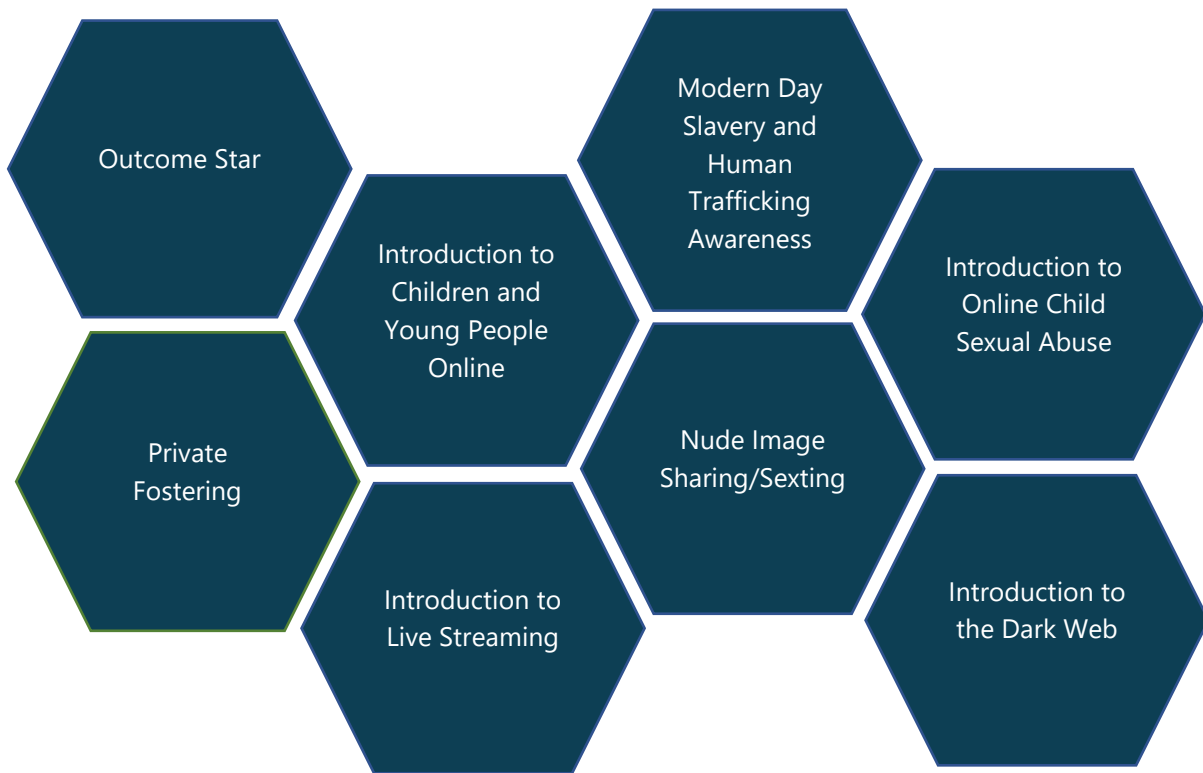
A toolkit has been designed and is published on the SCP website, this includes impact chronology guidance and useful templates to assist in writing an impact chronology. The guidance provides prompts and guides the chronology authors in focusing on key points, ensuring they capture immediate and cumulative impacts. The tool kits have been incorporated in the Conference Training and the Learning from Review training sessions.

## 25. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Through the support of our expert partners we have developed and delivered a multi-agency training programme. The courses offered over the last 12-months included:



New courses identified for 2023 – 2024 include;



The multi-agency training programme continues to be delivered by expert practitioners from across the partnership, the breadth and depth of knowledge and expertise of local practitioners continues to be evident from both the content and the positive feedback following the training via the course evaluations. Evaluation of training has shown that there is an increase in knowledge and confidence from the training sessions. Below is some of the feedback.

Not making assumptions and asking difficult questions

I am now confident that I know the signs of a child who has had/due to have FGM

I'll continue to promote ICON message at New birth or Antenatal contact and any opportunity where dad is seen if appropriate

This has given me the confidence to be more curious

The next day I had to complete a referral and the training helped with the process

I'll now use knowledge of changed terminology and ensure the voice of the child to be priority

Better insight and understanding in to particular mental health

This has informed me about a case that I am working on and has enhanced my confidence.

I will use this tool in my work as a children's safeguarding social worker to help me to identify those children experiencing neglect and develop a plan

I am now clearer about when to refer to LADO

Raised awareness will be used within the youth sessions to support young people who are at risk of or using substances

I will use this tool in my work as a children's safeguarding social worker to help me to identify those children experiencing neglect and develop a plan

It helps to remind yourself to look at the history rather than just isolated incidents

Better insight and understanding in to particular mental health issues



Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Adult Social Care and the Children and Family Services Directorate in partnership with the Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board commissioned the second consecutive Festival of Practice Week from Monday 12 June to Friday

16 June 2023.

This year's Festival of Practice built on last year's week, delivering a total of 44 free learning events throughout the week (compared to 29 last year) for internal staff and multi-agency partners including 42 training sessions, a joint Adult and Children Social Care Staff Recognition Event and a Breakfast Welcome by senior management and cabinet members. This year, an astounding 967 professionals attended the sessions throughout the week, building professional relationships across directorates and agencies and enhancing their own continual professional development.

The aim of the week was to provide the opportunity to deliver bespoke bitesize training sessions (outside of mandatory training) in line with the strategic priorities for each directorate including neglect, safeguarding children between the ages of 0 – 2 years old and child exploitation.

There was also a goal to build upon our multi-agency relationships, working in partnership with Staffordshire University, Staffordshire Police, Keele University, Combined Health Care and third sector partners. By working in partnership, we intended to offer multi agency learning that is crucial to the experience of our children, young people and their families and carers in Stoke-on-Trent. The training was open to our foster carers also, supporting them to access training and promoting their role.

The commitment of partners to deliver multi-agency training has been excellent. We were fortunate enough to draw upon the knowledge of local practitioners such as the Designated Doctor for Child Safeguarding North Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent CCG's, as well as those further afield, including practitioners from Cardiff University. This provided invaluable expertise in the subjects delivered and ensured learning was within the local context, as well as offering insight into the wider context.

## 26. CONTACT DETAILS FOR THE PARTNERSHIP

The partnership business manager can be contacted on 01782 234280 and e-mail address [SSCP.Information@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:SSCP.Information@stoke.gov.uk)

Information can be found on our website <https://safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk>

## 27. ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT A CHILD IN STOKE-ON-TRENT?

If so, you can call the **Children's advice and duty service (CHAD)** on **01782 235100** (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 6pm). If you need to contact us out of hours, then please call our emergency duty team on 01782 234234.