



# Children and Young People's Strategy 2019-2023

# Foreword

Welcome to the new Children and Young People's Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees. This plan represents a clear break with the past. Not only does it move away from a traditional, target driven delivery plan approach but to one based on an ambition for long term change, but it also seeks to fundamentally shift the basis on which we work together, as partners.

Drawing on the best evidence and research available, we set out our belief that we need a new vision, one based on a shift towards a focus on prevention and creating the right conditions for children and young people to flourish, not one based on traditional public service delivery.

We believe this sets out a radical but deliverable, aspirational but realistic approach, which will support a very different way of working.

We have not arrived at this new approach by chance. We have based our thinking around evidence - from The Children's Society's model of a good childhood, from the Wave Trust work on the early years and prevention, and from Harvard University's review of what works in improving outcomes for children and young people.

From these building blocks, we have developed and tested the approach through the consultation on the Bright Minds Big Futures initiative, engaging and consulting with young people. This initiative, focused on creating the right conditions to make Stockton-on-Tees a great place to grow up, is also focused on similar priorities - helping young people to achieve a sense of self; ensuring there are stable and supportive relationships, and providing opportunities for young people to engage in and be supported by wider society.

We believe we are setting out a coherent, consistent basis by which we can improve the life chances of children and young people in Stockton-on-Tees, informed by evidence and the views of young people.

We look forward to working on it with you.



# Strategic context

This strategy sets out how partners in Stockton-on-Tees will work together for children and young people and their families.

It is a partnership strategy, closely aligned to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy which is also being renewed, and will operate over the same timescale.

The strategy is designed to provide a framework for action which complements the plans and priorities of each partner organisation.

It therefore deliberately does not seek to replicate corporate plans, but to be clear about how we expect partners to work together, and to share the same ambitions for children.

## The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-23

This strategy provides the detail of how we will deliver on the 'Children and families have a good start' ambition set out in the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy for children and families.

### What we want to achieve

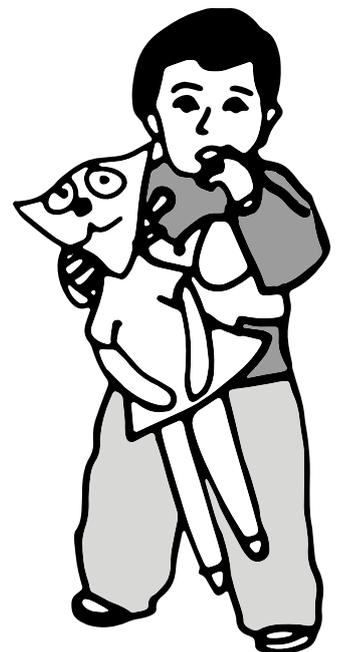
We want to improve the life chances of all children, young people and their families in Stockton-on-Tees through a good start in life. We want children and families to:

- receive increased support during the antenatal and perinatal period to help them lay the foundations for a best start
- have a positive attachment to their parents/carers
- have good emotional health and wellbeing and be resilient and aspirational
- live healthy lifestyles and make positive health and wellbeing choices
- live safely and be protected from harm

Having a focus on children, young people and families provides a significant opportunity to improve health and wellbeing across the borough. A good start in life provides important foundations for health and wellbeing throughout the life-course.

We know how parents and caregivers interact in the early stages of life is vital to the way in which children develop. Children thrive in environments that are predictable and responsive to their needs. Most parents and caregivers are able to provide this with enthusiasm and ability and are confident that they can meet their child's needs with support from their family, friends and resources available within their communities. However, some may benefit from additional support that is well-timed and sensitive to their needs and aspirations.

For the health and wellbeing system this means providing high quality maternal and perinatal care to help families build strong attachments and positive emotional health and wellbeing. It means ensuring that all of our services consider the family as a whole - their strengths and their needs - and work together to develop solutions.



# A look back - why are we proposing changes?

## What has worked well?

The Children and Young People's Plan for 2015-18 was developed to provide the newly formed Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Partnership focus for commitment and focus to help deliver the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The Plan set out a range of proposals and priorities, with a performance framework which overlap with the framework for the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The continued existence of a partnership plan was a positive achievement. Not only was there a rationale for partnership working, but there was a commitment to it. Partners in Stockton-on-Tees view better outcomes for children as a priority - they attend, contribute and engage.

The Partnership has overseen a number of positive changes, including the evolution of early help approaches, the radical reshaping of 0-19 services, the approaches to the commissioning of services including domestic abuse, weight management and sexual health. The Partnership has encouraged and supported debate, active involvement in the process of redesign, and has contributed to services which are better evidenced, more customer focused and which are supported by effective performance management.

## What do we need to get better at?

There are several challenges with the way the Partnership works which we want to address through the new approach being proposed.

It remains very much focused on traditional thematic areas - early years, health issues, specific focus on addressing 'problems' in the system. Whilst there is nothing wrong with this focus in many ways, and it can lead to improvements, it has several limitations as an approach, in that it:

- Is concerned with the treatment of problem issues, in isolation, and without being able to understand complexity and multiple need. The Ofsted Joint Targeted Area Inspection in November 2017 identified gaps in our approach where there were lots of agencies involved in the lives of young people, but where the focus was not on the lived experience of children and young people, and where agencies were dealing with the symptoms in isolation.
- Does not connect principles, practice and programmes together into a unified approach - this can lead to decisions in isolation about approaches programmes which reduces effectiveness.
- Reinforces segmented ways of working, as it is based on traditional models of commissioner/provider responsibility. This does not build the connections between people and agencies which ultimately make things work on the ground
- Fails to put children and young people at the centre, as it remains service or issue focused, rather than being based on what matters to and for children and young people
- Is not capable of delivering a system which learns and changes, as it reinforces a focus on symptoms not causes. We run the risk of collectively repeating the mistakes of the past, and in limiting our approach to more of the same, failing to address the underlying causes.

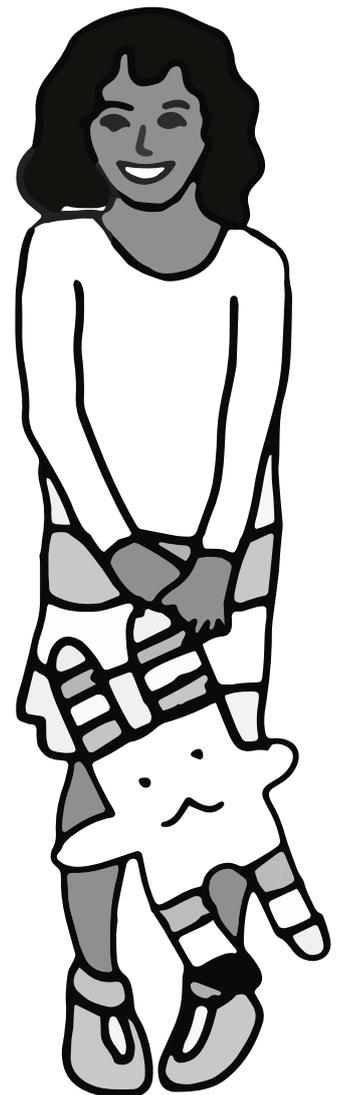
**In short, we believe a new approach is needed, one which is more transformative and radical, and long term.**

# A look ahead - the basis of our approach

We are basing our new approach on an evidence-led framework which recognises that the experiences children have in early life and the context in which they experience them, shape them for the rest of their lives. The ability to thrive and live a productive life is affected by the nature of our relationships and the extent to which they are healthy, supportive and secure. These are the fundamental building blocks on which we can build a strengths based approach and one which acts quickly to target and support the most vulnerable.

Our new approach is based on the following:

- A commitment to new ways of working. We believe a four year vision, linked to the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy and backed by annual delivery plans is required, though the basis for our new approach is a long-term vision which extends beyond this initial four year timescale.
- A recognition of the collective role of agencies and organisations, and a shift towards a more concerted and integrated way of working which puts children and young people at the heart of everything we do.
- A shift away from a focus on specific programmes and projects and into the development of a different way of working, which recognises the limitations of traditional forms of commissioning and service delivery and which is based on a set of common values and principles and a way of working which is based on prevention, learning and the importance of a whole system.
- A fundamental re-appraisal that the role of agencies is to enable children and young people to discover and develop their own sense of self, their ability to cope and learn, to overcome adversity and to find their own self-expression and to be supported in this by safe, stable and trusted relationships. Our role is therefore to support this at the heart of our approach.
- A refocused and strategic approach to the identification of vulnerability, using an agreed and shared vulnerability and risk assessment approach which helps us to identify issues early and relies less on the traditional model of referrals into services.
- The commitment to share data and information to support the implementation of this approach.



# The principles for our new approach

We are basing our approach on a consistent and relentless focus on four main building blocks to create the right conditions for children, young people and families to thrive in Stockton-on-Tees:

## 1. Sense of self, and the life skills to cope

- a. The fundamental basis of our new approach is that all partners need to work towards supporting all children and young people to develop their own sense of self, life skills and resilience. This element is based on a whole system approach to supporting young people to:
  - i. Be able to cope with adversity
  - ii. Be able to weigh up evidence and take decisions - self-efficacy
  - iii. Be able to self-regulate
  - iv. Have empathy for others
- b. Central to this approach is an understanding that all children and young people are different, are individuals, and therefore have the right not to be considered as a homogenous group.

## 2. Supportive, safe and trusted relationships

- a. Responsive, positive relationships with adults promote healthy development and act as a protective factor against stress. This is especially important in the early years, where a consistent, warm and loving relationship provides the essential basis for healthy brain development and underpins a preventative approach. In childhood and into young adulthood, the single most common factor for children who develop the capacity to overcome hardship, is having at least one stable and committed relationship with a caregiver. This relationship provides the basis to buffer from shocks, to learn, to regulate behaviour.
- b. For most children and young people, the family provides the basis for this essential stability. However, for those where this is not the case, our role is to restore this relationship, by finding it in family or community networks, or through the role of agencies and organisations.
- c. This element also includes a need to ensure that agencies are able to find a trusted lead individual around which networks of support can be built. This approach is sometimes known as a team around the worker, the worker with the best relationship with the young person and the constant relationship into which other agencies need to be brought.



### **3. Communities which value and are positive about children and young people - a strengths based approach**

- a. The extent to which wider community and environmental factors support the ability to cope and to form supportive relationships, and are geared towards supporting young people to develop their skills, access opportunities and play a wider role in society - the wider environment should respect, support and nurture every child and young person.
- b. These elements include the extent to which children and young people feel they have a role in wider society and decision making, have the opportunities to engage in their communities and form wider networks and are supported to achieve outcomes through high quality education, access to services, including creative, cultural and recreational activity, and the transition to productive employment.

### **4. Targeting adversity, stress and vulnerability**

- a. Chaotic, unpredictable and threatening environments cause toxic stress. Many children and young people experience these environments in their lives. The multiple risk factors such as those associated with the research on the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) can create excessive stress responses, which can lead to risky or harmful behaviours or result in adverse outcomes later in life.
- b. Our approach should therefore be to identify sources of stress and adversity, through a structured approach to targeting vulnerability, and with an emphasis on restoring the core sense of self, and the trusted and supportive relationships which enable children and young people to flourish.
- c. This approach requires us to be more proactive and explicit about working across partners to identify vulnerability, and to respond in ways which focus on a coherent approach in response, on which emphasises the need to focus on the young person and their sense of self, and which seeks to restore the supportive, trusted relationships which we know are critical to overcoming trauma.

# The views of children and young people

As part of our Bright Minds Big Futures programme we have consulted with young people on the principles in this plan. We have not consulted them in a traditional way, by asking their views on a document, but we have undertaken a survey which is focused on the key issues of self, relationships and community as a way of finding out their views on the issues of most importance to young people. We have had over 350 responses from young people, and their views were used to develop the Big Plan for children and young people.

Their views have also been used to underpin the principles in this document.

## Our framework for action

The basis of our framework is organised around the delivery of a consistent approach based around the four key principles. This requires the development of a clear framework which informs policy, practice and specific programmes of activity.

We want to go beyond a traditional approach and to more effectively link principles, and priorities to practice and to specific programmes. The way we work, and how we deliver is equally as important as what we do.

This is a four year programme, and we will identify key priorities in each year to form the basis of an annual delivery plan.



# Resilience - a sense of self and life skills - the ability to control and self-regulate, think and deal with setbacks

## Key principles

- A focus on providing children and young people with
  - The 'lifeskills' to prepare them for school and for work and independence
  - The ability to cope with setbacks
  - Self-regulation - the ability to manage emotions
  - Self-expression - the opportunity to find out about who you are
  - The ability to form safe relationships
  - The ability to have empathy and consider the thoughts and feelings of others

## The way we will work to achieve this

- A focus on capacity building and life skills development in all our work with children and young people
- Working with families to help them to develop and build these skills through our parenting support
- Trauma informed practice which understands development and behaviour
- Building resilience in children and young people through specific programmes of action
- Giving young people the chance to learn and use self-regulation skills
- Ways of working based on 'one plan' approaches which are based on knowing young people well

## What we will do

- Design and deliver an enhanced information and advice offer for children and young people
- Reshaped risk and resilience programme in schools
- A refocused emotional health and wellbeing approach with a bigger focus on schools
- Approaches to behaviour which are trauma informed
- The development of an approach to building empathy, potentially via 'Roots of Empathy' programmes



# Relationships - safe, supportive, trusted relationships are the single biggest factor in overcoming hardship

## Key principles

- The crucial importance of having trusted adults as a key element of prevention
- The ability to form relationships and to give and receive love
- Consistency and warmth in relationships
- Understanding what are appropriate and safe relationships

## The way we will work to achieve this

- A focus on early years as the crucial time for building attachment
- Supporting families when they need help, as early as possible
- Reducing the number of internal referrals and changes of worker
- An emphasis on ensuring children can stay with their birth families wherever possible
- Family finding and support to help extended families play a role
- Reunification
- Restorative practice
- Team around the worker approaches and systemic practice

## What we will do

- Embedding a whole system approach to restorative practice
- A focus on one worker, case working and team around the worker and stability in our contact
- A community offer which supports parents to be the best they can
- Family based decision making, including the expansion of Family Group Conferencing
- Family therapy approaches
- Tackling family conflict programmes
- Opportunities to provide respite for families who are not in the care system
- Mentoring programmes for young people
- Programmes focused on safe relationships
- A renewed focus on prevention

# Respect - respecting and valuing children and young people in a strengths based approach

## Key principles

- Being treated as equal members of society
- Valued and active in communities
- Being able to influence decisions that affect children and young people
- Having a supportive and nurturing education
- The right support to develop a career
- Being able to access services and support
- Having places and spaces to play, talk and connect

## How we will work

- A commitment to engaging young people and hearing their views
- Child centric practice where services and organisations are working with children and young people
- Acting on the Big Plan
- Creating more opportunities for young people for cultural and creative activity

## What we will do

- Commit to a partnership focus on work experience and work opportunities for young people, and support to access work
- Value, encourage and support young people's role in decision-making
- Provide access to wider ranging opportunities for young people around sport, leisure and culture
- Focus on making services accessible by young people through the development of accessibility standards
- Develop a focus on social pedagogy - a way of working which focuses on a personalised way of unlocking potential
- Support the work of BMBF / Big Plan / Big Committee as a strategic dialogue with young people
- Continue to support and develop Youth United Stockton as a youth-led network for engagement

# Response - targeting vulnerability, adversity and stress

## Key principles

- Using data intelligently to assess risks and target services
- Getting the right help at the right time
- Focusing on self and family as assets and that the focus on relationships is crucial - systemic approaches
- Recognising that the majority of solutions can be found in extended family networks and communities

## How we will work

- The development and implementation of a consistent approach to vulnerability
- Trauma informed practice
- Joined up approaches to families
- Sharing information on risks and threats
- The use of intelligence and data sharing to develop structured response

## What we will do

- A new early help offer focused on targeting; community; school and family working
- A Stockton-on-Tees practice model based on the principles of this strategy
- A more integrated approach to the risks of domestic abuse, parental mental health and drug and alcohol use
- An approach which identifies additional needs including special educational needs early and works to provide support not conflict
- Tackling welfare and poverty - understanding lived experiences through research and profiling to get to root causes
- Stability in delivery and contacts - one worker, one plan ethos
- Accessibility of information, support and guidance for those working with families - knowing who can help, and how to ask for help
- Putting children and young people at the heart of planning and decision making



# The Children and Young People's Partnership

- The CYPP will continue to provide the oversight for the delivery of this new approach.
- It will be refocused to meet 6 times a year, two oversight meetings and four workshops.

## Measuring progress

We will not replicate performance management measures elsewhere, as this plan is about working together to achieve more fundamental changes, but we will measure progress annually through a combination of data, qualitative analysis and feedback which are focused on outcomes.

**Our overall ambition is that:**

- Children and young people live in safe, secure and loving families
- Children are ready for school
- Children are achieving at school
- Children are happier and healthier
- Children feel safe, supported, and valued

We will design an approach which mixes data, qualitative audit work and feedback to measure these outcomes.

## Vulnerability, adversity and stress

We will develop and implement a significant change in the way we work with families who are struggling and where young people are at risk of not achieving the outcomes they should.

We will retain our current approaches to early help, our commitment to intervening as early as possible. This remains a commitment to a system wide, multi-agency approach, built on the foundations of an intelligence led process, which is able to target support and intervention, and which is firmly focused on conversations and the right support at the right time.

We are committed to moving away from the idea of thresholds and the behaviour which this drives (of arguments about where the work should sit), to a system which focuses on conversations between agencies and families, about how we can help to support children and young people.

As part of this element, we want to place a bigger emphasis on how we can identify children, young people and families in stress, and working across agencies to tackle the issues families face. We do feel there is value in considering a form of a vulnerability matrix as part of this to help to target resources effectively, based on the principles noted on the next page:

A new way of thinking about vulnerability, adversity and stress and how we can respond

We want to think more about our responses being focused on the causes, rather than dealing with the symptoms.

| Causes  | Symptoms  | Outcomes  |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have experienced emotional abuse</li> <li>2. Have experienced physical abuse</li> <li>3. Have experienced sexual abuse</li> <li>4. Have experienced emotional neglect</li> <li>5. Have experienced physical neglect</li> <li>6. Have been affected by domestic abuse</li> <li>7. Have parents with mental health needs</li> <li>8. Have parents who have substance misuse issues</li> <li>9. Have parents in prison</li> <li>10. Parents are separated or divorced</li> </ol> <p><b>Other vulnerabilities</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Caring responsibilities</li> <li>2. Bereavement of a close relative</li> <li>3. Long term health needs</li> <li>4. Special Educational Needs</li> <li>5. Disability</li> <li>6. Leaving Care/transfer of care</li> <li>7. Absence of a trusted/ caring adult</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Missing from home or care</li> <li>2. Truancy/poor school attendance</li> <li>3. ASB/offending</li> <li>4. Substance misuse</li> <li>5. Teenage pregnancy/ conception</li> <li>6. Violence/aggression</li> <li>7. Disruptive behaviour</li> <li>8. Difficult to engage</li> <li>9. Obesity</li> <li>10. Smoking</li> <li>11. Subject to exploitation</li> <li>12. Lack of empathy</li> <li>13. Attachment difficulties</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Long term mental illness</li> <li>2. Abusive/neglectful parent/s</li> <li>3. Abusive/controlling relationships</li> <li>4. Repeat/serious criminal offender</li> <li>5. Long term substance misuse issues</li> <li>6. Exclusion from school</li> <li>7. Poor educational attainment</li> <li>8. Poor physical health</li> <li>9. Early mortality</li> <li>10. Worklessness</li> <li>11. Homelessness</li> </ol> |