

# Staffordshire's Children and Families system

our vision, our principles and  
how we work.



# Contents

## Our Vision

Our Children's and Families' Experience

Our Vision for Children and Families

Our System Principles

## Our Values

Ambitious, Courageous, Empowering

Overview of Children's Services

## Our Operating Model

## Our System Functions

## Our Practice

Virtual School

Digital Innovation

Working with Partners

Continuous Improvement

A View of the Whole System



# Staffordshire County Council Vision

Staffordshire is home to historic and vibrant market towns, picturesque villages, and stunning countryside. Our economy is strong and growing, from start-ups to world-renowned businesses, and is home to many of England's leading tourist attractions.

Over the last decade much has been achieved. More people are in work, young people are leaving school and college with better qualifications, people are living longer, and tell us they feel safer and happier than ever before.

We are hugely ambitious for Staffordshire's future yet realistic about the challenges ahead. The uncertainty surrounding the UK economy, the health and wellbeing of our growing, ageing population, and reduced Government funding demand fresh thinking and new ways of working; as a County Council we are focusing upon community and digital solutions to help realise our ambitions.

## Our Vision

People will aspire to live in Staffordshire; from families looking for the very best schools and space to grow and thrive, to older people seeking a great quality of life.

 **Staffordshire County Council**

**Vision:** An innovative, ambitious and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy

### Outcomes

Everyone in Staffordshire will:



Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth



Live in thriving and sustainable communities



Be healthier and independent for longer

### Priorities



Support Staffordshire's economy to grow, generating more and better-paid jobs



Tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable



Encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience and independence



Fix more roads, and improve transport and digital connections



Offer every Staffordshire child and young person the best start in life, and the chance to achieve their potential

### How we work



Encourage our communities to help themselves and each other



Lead our workforce to be ambitious, courageous and empowered



Use digital technology and data to connect, inform and support the people of Staffordshire



Engage and listen to our communities, partners and business, working together to improve our county

**Pledge:** Live within our means and deliver value for money

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## Our Children's and Families' Experience

In Staffordshire we want to improve the lives of all children and young people. We are using a whole system approach to enable children to be happy, healthy, and safe. We are supporting families to stay together so that children can remain within a home environment wherever possible.

We are building an environment where our families are supported to stay together safely and live well within their communities by building upon their strengths. Our evidence has shown that lives are better if families do not require 'specialist intervention' or are reliant upon professional services – and it is also a more sustainable way of working for us. Our workforce can confidently manage risk and are supported to be courageous and ambitious.

In Staffordshire, more children than elsewhere in the country are ready to start school at age 5, however the number of children coming into our care has been increasing. Our children's services are rated good by Ofsted.

We are working more closely with our partners with a 'community first: services last' approach to help families and children. As an authority with earned autonomy status (BRFC) we aim to work inclusively with our partners and communities to identify what exists, what works and what is missing and then commission appropriately. Our aim is to provide the right mix of support from professionals, the voluntary sector, communities, families, and friends so that children and families can reach their full potential.

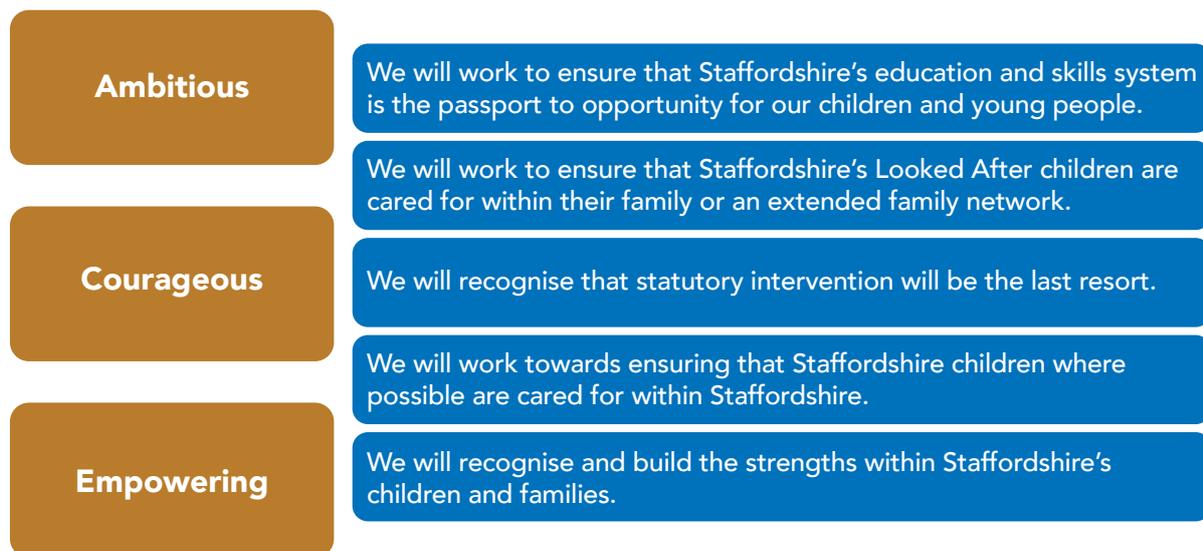
## Our Vision for Children and Families

Our vision is to create one system, that places children and their families at the heart of all we do. Where support is required for some families, access to this will be local, accessible and make a difference and specialisms will work to enhance those offers.

- Family First – We will do what works best for the child.
- Whole System approach – We are removing silos
- Integrated pathways and structures
- Specialist support available where needed
- Local –Children are supported to remain within their localities and families can access effective community support.
- Flexible –We are a learning system which can adjust to need, and our workforce is flexible and agile.
- Fixes current system issues – we identify system issues and implement solutions which work better for the child, their family, and practitioners
- We will always prioritise quality of Practice and Outcomes
- We are evidence led and informed by the views of the children and families

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## Our Values



### Ambitious, Courageous, Empowering:

We are **ambitious** and will ensure that Staffordshire's education and skills system is the passport to opportunity for our children and young people.

We are **ambitious** and will ensure that Staffordshire's Looked After Children are cared for within their family or an extended family network.

We will be **courageous** and recognise that statutory intervention will be the last resort.

We will be **courageous**, and work towards ensuring that Staffordshire children where possible are cared for within Staffordshire.

We will **empower** our workforce, stakeholders, and partners to recognise and build upon the strengths within Staffordshire's children and families.

To deliver our vision and our values we have implemented a whole system approach. This is underpinned by a Restorative Practice Model which is a strengths-based approach and promotes a culture of inclusion and support which enables children to achieve their best outcomes. It ensures our practitioners work with each other, with partners and alongside children and families, making decisions together, building resilience and enhancing problem solving.

Our aim is to ensure that children with social care needs remain with or return to their family, or extended family network where it is safe and appropriate to do so, and children with SEND, receive the right support at the right time.

Our operating model is based upon a district footprint which supports the child and family, enables a flexible approach to resource allocation and facilitates equitable demand/workload management.

Through our Place Based Approach, of which the SEND locality hubs are a part, we maximise the engagement of communities, the voluntary sector, partners, and universal services to address all needs at the earliest point.

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## Overview of Children's Services

As Director for Children & Families, Neelam Bhardwaja has the responsibility for all our services to, and support for, children and families across Staffordshire. This includes the statutory Director of Children Services role. Reporting into Neelam are three Assistant Directors who cover the services for our children and families, they have specific remits, which are outlined below:

### Wellbeing and Partnerships

Assistant Director: **Natasha Moody**

Natasha's key areas of responsibility are:

- Providing the strategic direction for our Placed Based Approach
- Building sustainable relationships with partner agencies and key stakeholders to develop, deliver and evaluate key strategies which improve outcomes for children including via the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board and the Family Strategic Partnership Board.
- Managing, developing, and improving the quality of the provider market to ensure that children have access to high quality support
- Management and delivery of Children's Public Health to improve Staffordshire's children's health and wellbeing
- Leadership of the Children's Centre's and Family Hubs offer across Staffordshire

### Education Strategy and Improvement

Assistant Director: **Tim Moss**

Tim's key areas of responsibility are:

- Working in partnership with education settings to co-produce and deliver the education and skills strategy which aims to drive and support improved outcomes for learners
- Ensuring children and young people have access to high quality education
- Ensuring that children at risk are included in education
- Leading the partnership which delivers the SEND Code of Practice and the SEND Strategy

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## Children's Social Care

Assistant Director: **Nisha Gupta**

Nisha's key areas of responsibility are:

- The effective, efficient, and safe management, development and delivery of Early Help, Children's Safeguarding and Services to Children who are within our care or have left our care.
- The management, development, and delivery of our services to Children who are living with a disability.
- The management, development and delivery of the Future's Matters offer, which includes the Youth Offending service, Intensive Prevention, and our Edge of Care Services.
- Building sustainable relationships with partner agencies and key stakeholders to develop, deliver and evaluate key strategies which improve outcomes for children including via the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board and the Family Strategic Partnership Board.

## Head of Performance, Quality Assurance and Engagement

The key areas of responsibility for this role are:

- The leadership, strategic direction, and development of services which promote improvement and learning across the system through a focus on performance, quality assurance, engagement with children and families
- To be a critical friend to the system provide challenge, evidence and support which enables the system to continuously learn, develop and improve outcomes for children and families
- To be accountable for the development, co-ordination and delivery of inspection preparation across the children's system including maintaining the statutory Local Authority self-assessment framework for children's services.
- To support and challenge the system to develop a culture of innovation, an environment of trust and a system where we challenge and support each other to drive improvement and promote learning.
- To develop strong internal and external relationships and partnerships which influence and inform service development, improvement and change programmes, for example the co-developed SEND multi-agency auditing, the co-development of the SEND self-assessment.

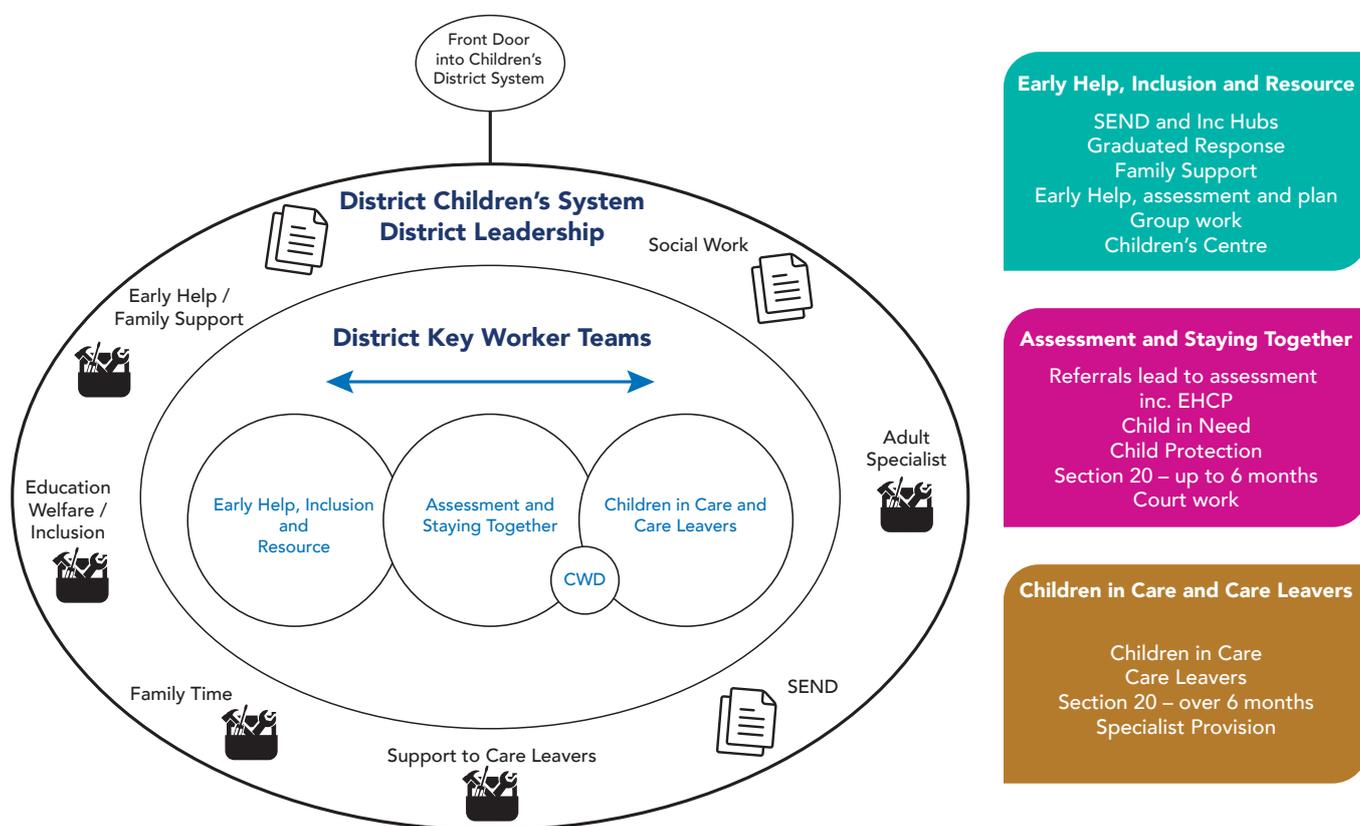
## Our Operating Model

We provide support at the earliest opportunity to prevent escalation and our system delivers the range of support that a child and family may need within their localities.

The model provides the opportunity for our staff to work with children across the spectrum of need, as part of a flexible and agile workforce, with minimised bureaucracy and equitable workloads. Staff have retained specialisms where appropriate, and the system provides opportunity for workforce development.

The system places the needs of the child and family at the centre, with a child centred key worker approach. Our Early Help, relationships with partners and the voluntary sector (Place Based Approach) are integral to this.

## District Model

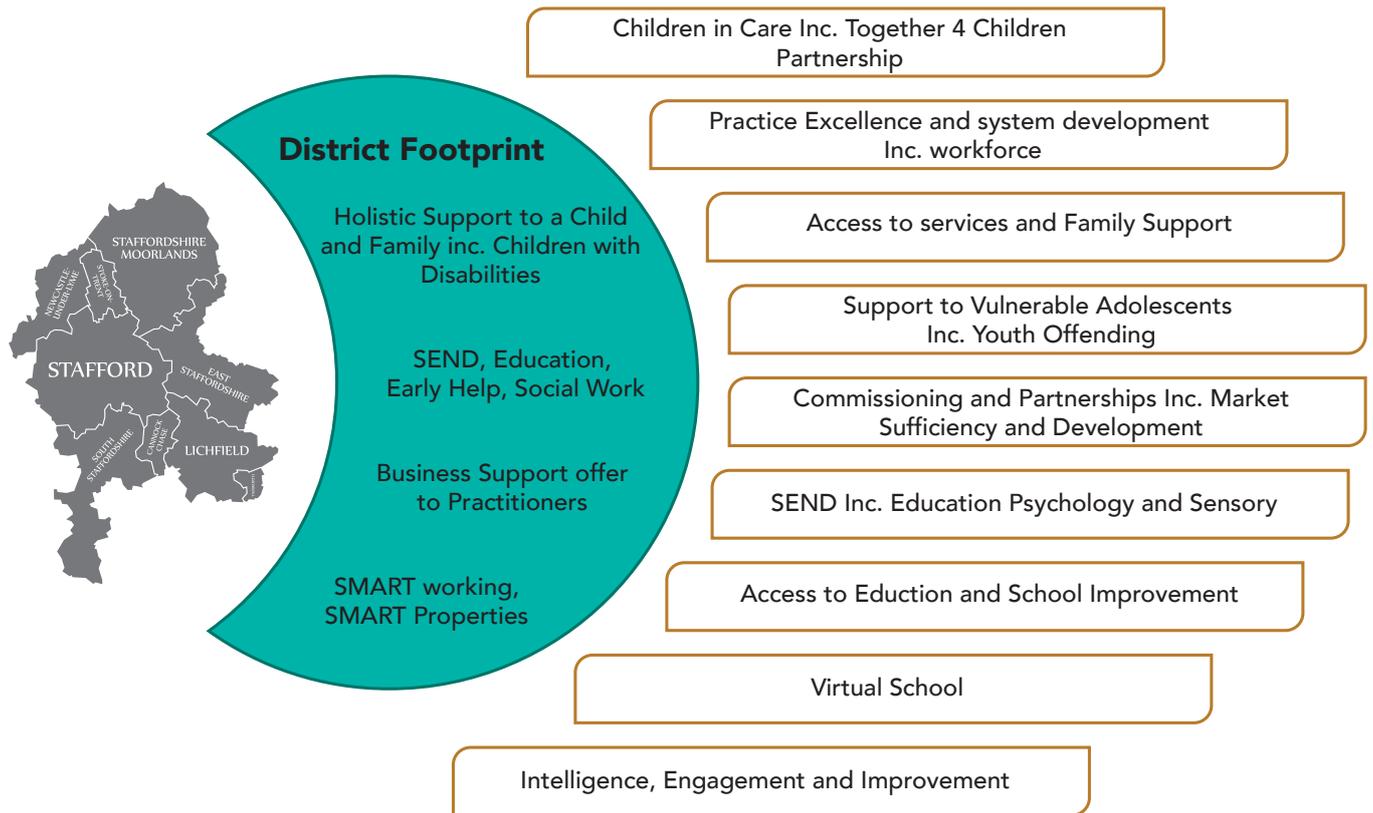


The responsible for operational delivery draw in expertise and support from central functions to enable them to provide appropriate support to all families within their locality. Business support functions and technology are aligned to enable the district model.

Our children's services are accessed through a single front door, where Social Work consultants can hold restorative conversations providing advice, support which really focus upon the children's needs.

Alongside the front door our Contact Centre plays a critical role in providing a route for our children and families to information, advice and guidance, community based and Tier 2 services with an emphasis on Early Help and preventative services. This provides families and partners with one number to access all Children's Services, including SEND and education functions, ensuring access to the right help at the right time.

## Our System Functions



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## Our Practice

Through a one system approach supported by specialist expertise our workforce are empowered to make the right decision at the right time. Our restorative practice is focused on early intervention and prevention and the following are key elements of our practice: -

- Commissioned Early Help providers
- Adult Specialist Workers
- Family Group Conferencing
- Futures Matters Offer (including intensive prevention services, breathing space, reunification, substance misuse support)
- Skilled team of Family Practitioners supporting Early Help, SEND, inclusion and statutory social work.
- Teams of family time workers and personal assistants focussed upon the needs of children within our care and those leaving our care.

Our focus is always upon returning children to their home or wider family, where it is safe to do so. However, if they need to remain within our care, we want to provide them with a stable and nurturing environment.

32% of our children live in matched, long term foster placements. A further 16% of children live with an extended family member or friend. We also use special guardianship orders to provide permanency and prevent breakdowns.

Our Staffordshire independence programme provides our care experienced young people with additional support so that they are prepared to live independently and thrive within the community.

Staffordshire County Council has made a commitment to supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. We work closely with the regional migration partnership and have supported the National Transfer Scheme model and the national proposals for the changes to the age assessment process.



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## Virtual School

We want children and young people who are cared for by Staffordshire County Council or who have left our care to have great education experiences, through being supported by people who have high aspirations for them.

We want our young people to have stable education placements, in positive settings that understand the impact and potential barriers that their care history may have on their education, attainment and achievement and do everything they can to help them aspire and achieve positive outcomes.

Within Staffordshire we have a highly effective virtual school which promotes high expectations and is committed to raising attainment of disadvantaged children and young people.

It supports Staffordshire Schools to become 'attachment aware and trauma informed' as this is key to ensure that those children who we care for and those that have left our care can feel secure and supported to thrive in their education.

## Digital Innovation

We have used information technology creatively to reduce bureaucracy and support innovation within our system, for example we now record our Child Protection Conferences which has saved 12,360 workforce hours per year.

Informed by our learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have used technology to not only transact with children and families but importantly to engage. This has meant for some of our families, children, and young people the quality of their contact has improved.

## Working with Partners

We recognise that we are only one piece in the jigsaw puzzle that makes up a network of support to our families and our partners are key to the success of our model. This means we will always work in partnership with others as this is in the best interest of our families. To make this as effective as possible we do this on a family level and at a system level ensuring that together we address the root cause of problems, make decisions together, and build resilience.

Across Staffordshire there are a range of partnership meetings and decision-making boards, some of which are statutory, all of which enable us to meet our strategic objectives. Our partnership arrangements continue to evolve, and we are keen to ensure that the right people and organisations are engaged so that decision making is robust and always reflects the best interests of the child and the family.

## Continuous Improvement

We recognise the importance of continuing to learn and we are focused upon continued improvement. Our system uses intelligence, data and learning to inform our commissioning and service development and as an organisation we ensure that we take time to reflect, learn and continually improve to achieve outstanding results for the children and families of Staffordshire.

Staffordshire has introduced the Power bi performance monitoring, which enables our practitioners to plan their workload daily proactively. Our performance team meet with district based staff each month as part of a solution focused performance and quality assurance conversation, which result in SMART actions to further improve outcomes for children and families

Power bi also enables us to link key information to our self-assessment, Ofsted annual conversation, business planning and retain our goal of improving outcomes for children

Data is also drawn together from all the systems used within children's and families' services and reviewed collectively.

## A View of the Whole System

We are proud of our whole system approach, and we are optimistic that our children and families will benefit from the model we have implemented. We will continue to benchmark ourselves against other high performing authorities, we want to share our learning and we endeavor to be ambitious where possible, courageous often and empowered as a workforce and service to do the very best for our Children and Families.

