



Department  
for Education

**Social Mobility**

A collage of two photographs of children in a classroom. The top photo shows a young girl with dark hair and a white jacket looking towards the camera. The bottom photo shows a young girl with light hair, wearing a blue and white striped sweater, smiling broadly with her hands raised in front of her face. A purple box with the text 'Stoke-on-Trent' is overlaid on the bottom photo.

**Stoke-on-Trent**

**Opportunity Area 2017-20**

A city working together to build opportunity  
for all our children and young people



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A photograph of three young students in blue school uniforms. One student is in the foreground, looking towards the camera with a slight smile. Two other students are behind her, looking towards the right side of the frame. The image is framed with a white, jagged border. A purple speech bubble with a white border is positioned in the upper right corner, containing the text "OUR VISION".

**OUR VISION**

## A message from the Secretary of State for Education



### **Raising outcomes and broadening horizons for young people in Stoke-on-Trent**

The world economy is changing and it is more critical than ever that every child and young person is supported through their education and is equipped with the skills to make the most of their talents and get on in life. So I am delighted we are publishing our ambitious plan for Stoke-on-Trent. The plan clearly sets out the role of cross-sector collaboration to drive better outcomes for children and young people in the city, from early years into adulthood.

Stoke-on-Trent enjoys a rich and diverse industrial heritage: world-class names such as Wedgwood, Michelin and Emma Bridgewater are part of the city's proud history and continue to support the local economy. Coupled with its thriving cultural and sports sector, it is no wonder that the city was shortlisted for the 'City of Culture 2021'. And the city is keeping pace with the evolving job market. Stoke-on-Trent is leading the way in innovative practice in engineering, manufacturing and digital technologies and was recently recognised as one of the best cities in the UK to start a business.

Stoke-on-Trent is a city with so much to offer, but too many children and young people leave school on the back foot, and do not have the skills and tools required to access the opportunities on their doorstep.

The Opportunity Area programme provides a real opportunity to make a difference to the lives of children and young people. I am delighted that Dr Carol Shanahan and Professor Liz Barnes, will co-chair the Stoke-on-Trent Opportunity Area partnership board. Their ambitions for the city are clear. The leadership of two senior figures from business and education will also bring a renewed focus to the city, pulling together the expertise of vital sectors to ensure that children and young people are able to unlock their true potential.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Stoke-on-Trent partnership board for leading this work. I am grateful to all the local stakeholders and the children and young people who have contributed their ideas to the development of this plan. That local commitment and energy will be critical to our success in Stoke-on-Trent.

**The Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP**  
Secretary of State for Education

## A message from the Co-Chairs of the partnership board: a city working together to build opportunity for all our children and young people



**Dr. Carol Shanahan**  
Managing Director,  
Synectics Solutions



**Prof. Liz Barnes**  
Vice Chancellor and  
Chief Executive,  
Staffordshire University

Stoke-on-Trent is a wonderful city that inspires affection amongst those who live and work here. It is a place where people excel in working together to achieve important goals, and where we know our children and young people will be key to the city's success. That's why we are so pleased to be jointly leading this collaborative venture, chairing the Stoke-on-Trent Opportunity Area partnership board.

Our partnership board is made up of a wide range of people from across the city, including educators, leaders in business, the voluntary sector and Stoke City Council. It also draws on a wider group of stakeholders who have engaged with the work and helped us to shape the priorities set out in this plan. Together we will work to make sure that all Stoke-on-Trent's children get a good start in life and grow into happy, confident and successful adults. We will focus on four priorities:

- Improving outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Improving outcomes in English, maths and science
- Improving pupil engagement in learning at all stages
- Improving the choices young people make from 16.

There are some powerful themes that work across these priorities and are critical to securing success. So everything we do will have a focus on:

- Parental engagement in all stages of their children's education
- Building and supporting capacity in the teaching workforce
- The emotional wellbeing of pupils and their appetite to learn.

The evidence is that in our city too many children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are not doing well enough in these areas. That is simply wrong – both morally and in terms of the future economic success of Stoke-on-Trent.

Over the coming months and years, we will work collaboratively with local and national partners to change this through activities targeted at those communities and children who will benefit most from extra support. This plan sets out our vision to 2020/21, but we know that the work and the city-wide commitment to working together must continue well beyond that if we are to ensure that change is sustained.

We want to continue to engage with people across the city as we take the work forward. We will be keeping everyone up to date on progress via Twitter and our regular newsletter, and you can get in touch with us at the email address on this page. Whether you're a professional, a young person, a parent or anyone else who has ideas about what more we can do to build opportunity, we'd love to hear from you.

**Dr. Carol Shanahan and Prof. Liz Barnes**

Independent Co-Chairs of the Stoke-on-Trent Opportunity Area partnership board

**GET IN TOUCH**



SoT.OA@education.gov.uk



@StokeonTrentOA

# BUILDING ON STRONG FOUNDATIONS





## Building on strong foundations

In recent years, practitioners and local businesses have put in place a number of initiatives to improve outcomes for children and young people. This includes:

### 1. **Strong investment in education. The city has invested additional resources and energy into improving outcomes at all stages of education.**

**In literacy** there are two major initiatives to boost speech, language, communication and literacy in the city. Stoke Speaks Out supports and trains parents, carers, professionals and anyone else in contact with children experiencing delays to speech, language and communication. Stoke Reads is the local name for the National Literacy Trust (NLT) hub in Stoke-on-Trent, a city-wide campaign that brings partners together to lift literacy levels and inspire children to have a love of reading. The impact of these initiatives is beginning to be realised, particularly amongst the city's disadvantaged children.

**In maths** the Denise Coates Foundation and Stoke-on-Trent City Council have jointly invested in the Maths Excellence Partnership (MEP), a powerful collaboration between Keele University, Stoke Sixth Form College and secondary schools across the city. The MEP has four key priorities: to improve outcomes for students in Stoke-on-Trent; recruit and retain high quality graduates from School Centred Initial Teacher Training Institutes (SCITTs) in

the city; to develop the expertise of existing maths teachers; and to build capacity and leadership in the teaching and learning of maths. The MEP has seen improvements across all four priorities. For example, at GCSE the English and maths A\*-C pass rate improved from 50.4% to 55.8%; and GCSE maths grades at A and A\* increased from 9.8% to 12.5%, faster than the national rate.

**In technology** the engineering firm KMF, in partnership with industry and education, runs a Young Engineer of the Year competition for schools across Stoke-on-Trent. This competition is open to all year 10 pupils across the city.

**In the arts** the Stoke-on-Trent Cultural Education Partnership has over 150 members from the cultural and education sector and aims to ensure children have access to learning through various media such as the arts, music and theatre. In 2017, this included a major networking and celebration event (the Stoke-on-Trent Tea Party) hosted by the Partnership, which brought together primary and secondary schools in the city with partners from the cultural sector.

**In partnership working** Stoke Association for School and College Leaders (SASCAL) draws together secondary headteachers and leaders of further and higher education to collaborate in key areas for improvement. This is agreed through a shared business plan, including work to narrow the disadvantage gap in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and to raise literacy attainment. There is a similar approach for primary schools through Stoke Heads and Principals Executive (SHAPE).

**In the voluntary sector** the city's two football clubs, Stoke City and Port Vale, are active in supporting children and young people. Stoke City Community Trust (SCCT) offers activities focused on educational attainment, health and wellbeing, employability, enterprise, disability and inclusion as well as encouraging people to lead active lives. SCCT is using the appeal of football and sport to inspire primary school children in literacy and maths, delivering the Premier League Primary Stars programme and Premier League Reading Stars, a 10 week reading intervention which the National Literacy Trust created in partnership with the Premier League. The Port Vale Foundation delivers community projects and schemes in Burslem and at Vale Park with a particular focus on school sports participation, health and disability, education and social inclusion.

## 2. Employer engagement and pupil preparation for the world of work:

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) 'Locality Project' (supported by partners Young Enterprise and the Careers & Enterprise Company) has put in place strong foundations for building education and industry relationships to improve the work readiness of secondary pupils, via competitions, work experience and industry days. In its first year, over 3,000 pupils engaged in enterprise training; 3,600 engaged in employer activities; and 1,000 engaged in work experience. The LEP also takes an overview of careers education, information, advice and guidance, which is available through the local careers service and careers leaders in schools, aiming to ensure a streamlined, clear and sustainable offer to all young people.

A number of local employers in the city, including Intu, KMF, Michelin, Novus, Seddon and Synectics Solutions, are already strongly engaged in supporting children and young people in a variety of ways such as holiday provision and mentoring in schools.

The city is involved in the first wave of the Career Learning Pilot, which tests ways of incentivising adults from the age of nineteen to train in the skills that their local economy needs.

### 3. Inward investment:

Rigorous efforts are being made throughout the city through the LEP, the City Council and employers to boost productivity and prosperity. The LEP has brought in £37m in revenue and £16.5m in capital to support its Skills Strategy, a significant proportion of which is being spent in the city. The LEP strategic economic plan set out ambitions to grow the local economy by 50% and generate 50,000 new jobs over ten years to 2021. The LEP recognises that improving educational outcomes and closing the skills gap will be critical in realising this vision. Finally, The Constellation Partnership, which marries the work of two LEPs and seven local authorities to accelerate economic development, aims to deliver 120,000 new jobs and 100,000 new homes by 2040 across North Staffordshire and Cheshire, with opportunities emerging in the rail, civil engineering and construction industries, underpinned by STEM skills. The city's Ceramic Valley is a key part of this regeneration.

### 4. “Six Towns, One City” – the City of Culture Bid:

Although Stoke-on-Trent did not win the coveted title of City of Culture 2021, work on the bid created a catalyst for change and a buzz across the city, promoting the development of new partnerships across the six towns and encouraging a boost in cultural and creative activity. Over 15,000 children across the city played an important role in developing the bid by explaining why culture matters to them.

## With much work already underway

Over the last nine months, we have galvanised support from stakeholders across a range of sectors, including early years, education, business and the voluntary sector, and have established a strong local partnership.

We are **building a community of support** for our aim to drive social mobility in the city. The Department for Education (DfE) has put in place a team dedicated to improving outcomes in Stoke-on-Trent. The team has held two consultation events in the city with over 50 stakeholders attending each. These events have been critical in determining the local barriers to social mobility. We have established a partnership board led by co-Chairs, who are leaders from education and business, and put in place regular communications to encourage wider engagement in the programme (see, for example, @StokeonTrentOA).

The **Careers & Enterprise Company has established a dedicated Enterprise Co-ordinator for all secondary schools and colleges** in the city, targeting over 17,000 pupils aged eleven to eighteen, over three years. The co-ordinator will ensure all young people experience at least four high quality encounters with employers and develop the critical soft skills they need to be ready for the world of work. 26 establishments in Stoke-on-Trent, including secondary schools, pupil referral units and special schools and colleges, will have access to a dedicated

employer Enterprise Adviser, who is a senior business volunteer, to support the Senior Leadership Team in developing a careers, enterprise and employer engagement strategy.

We **held a phonics roadshow** in July, attended by 41 local primary schools. The roadshow showcased some of the best evidence-based approaches to teaching phonics and ways to improve outcomes in speech, language and communication.

Keele and North Staffordshire Alliance is hosting a new **Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Research School<sup>1</sup>** in Stoke-on-Trent, hosted by the Keele and North Staffordshire Alliance. Our EEF Research School is fundamental in building a collaborative network of teachers who can work together, using the best evidence, to understand and improve the positive impact they have on children's progress and achievement.

Five **approved Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund (TLIF) providers** working in Stoke-on-Trent, offering additional capacity in STEM subject knowledge; leadership development; phonics; providing additional support for physics teachers; and establishing a new 'Excellence Hub' for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers in the city.

<sup>1</sup> The Research Schools Network is a collaboration between the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and the Institute for Effective Education (IEE) to fund a network of schools, which will support the use of evidence to improve teaching practice. [www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/our-work/research-schools](http://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/our-work/research-schools).

We are **working with the National Citizen Service to build skills for life and work** amongst the city's young people. The National Citizen Service is working in collaboration with the local authority to ensure its approach fully reflects the needs of all parts of the local community through a four week programme of personal development and volunteering that is accessible to all young people.

Keele and Staffordshire Universities are part of a partnership delivering the **National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP)**, regionally branded as Higher Horizons+. The programme aims to increase the number of young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds entering higher education, through an undergraduate degree, a higher or degree level apprenticeship or study at level 4. Higher Horizons+ has a total budget of £11.8m and will run over four years. Ten deprived wards in Stoke-on-Trent are being targeted as part of the initiative.



# WHY STOKE-ON-TRENT?

## Why Stoke-on-Trent?

**Despite strengths and recent achievements, there are huge challenges.**



**298<sup>th</sup>**  
out of 324 districts<sup>2</sup>

Stoke-on-Trent's ranking in the 2016 Social Mobility Index, which compared the chances across the country that a child from a disadvantaged background<sup>3</sup> will do well at school and get a good job<sup>4</sup>.

Stoke-on-Trent is one of the most deprived local authority areas in England. There are high levels of child poverty, fuel poverty, poor housing conditions, low levels of educational attainment and poor health outcomes for its population, with almost one-third of the population in the city living in areas classified amongst the 10% most deprived in England (2010 data)<sup>5</sup>.

The city consists of six towns, each with its own distinct character. A recent survey conducted by the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity<sup>6</sup> suggested that the polycentric nature of Stoke-on-Trent creates a split across the city in terms of both affiliation to individual towns and services offered for children, young people and parents.

### Outcomes for children and young people:

In 2016, children in over half of all wards across the city failed to meet national averages at all three stages of education.

Whilst pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) fare better than their counterparts nationally at **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**, outcomes for pupils (including both FSM and non-FSM pupils) lag behind national averages by 4%. Across all seventeen Early Learning Goals (ELGs), pupils failed to keep pace with their peers nationally. Averages of children achieving at least the expected level were particularly poor in:

- **Communication and Language**, which includes assessments of 'listening and attention', 'understanding' and 'speaking', was below the national average by seven percentage points;

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-index>

<sup>3</sup> Within this plan, the 'disadvantaged' group varies depending on the DfE data source. However, they all include the number of pupils who were eligible for free school meals at any point in the previous six years. For further details about the specific definition of 'disadvantage' for each DfE data source, see the 'Education statistics by local authority, district and pupil disadvantage' release found on the DfE Statistics page

<sup>4</sup> Stoke-on-Trent has changed position in the Social Mobility Commission's revised 2017 Index and is now ranked 218 out of 324 districts, but due to changes in the methodology used, these indices are not directly comparable.

<sup>5</sup> The English Indices of Deprivation 2015 – Stoke-on-Trent Local Authority

<sup>6</sup> Linda Geßner, What makes for a good life in Stoke-on-Trent?, A Workshop Report · CUSP

- **Literacy**, which includes assessments of ‘reading’ and ‘writing’, was below the national average by seven percentage points;
- **Understanding the World**, which includes assessments of ‘people and communities’, ‘the world’, and ‘technology’ was below the national average by ten percentage points.

**At key stage 2**, the city is ranked amongst the lowest of all local authorities for pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics<sup>7</sup>; just 46% of all students in comparison to a national average of 54%.

**At key stage 4**, the city ranks 138<sup>th</sup> out of the 152 local authorities with 55.5% of all pupils achieving A\*-C in English and maths GCSE, compared to 59.3% nationally.

At both key stage 2 and key stage 4 disadvantaged children fare badly – both in comparison to their better off peers and against national averages for disadvantaged children.

The relatively high number of pupils who fail to attain the fundamental English and maths qualifications at key stage 4 impacts on numbers going on to, and achieving, level 3 qualifications. The city sits in the lowest quartile banding for the number of pupils achieving **a level 3 qualification (A Level or**

**equivalent)** by nineteen. When it comes to higher education, the likelihood of a young person from Stoke-on-Trent progressing to HE is significantly lower than the national average (28% compared to 38% nationally).

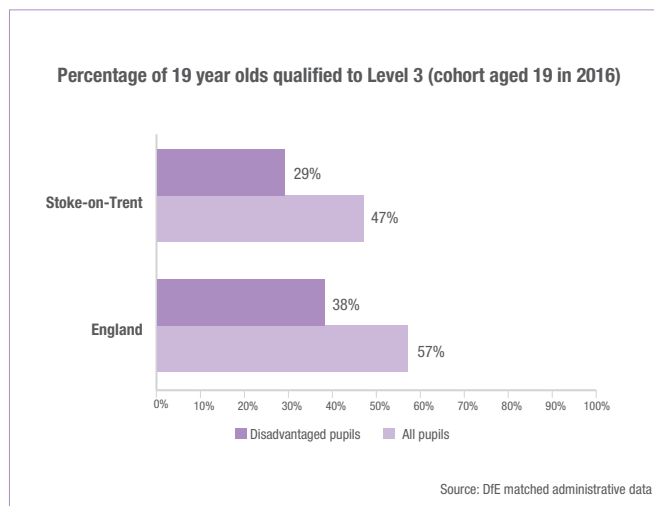
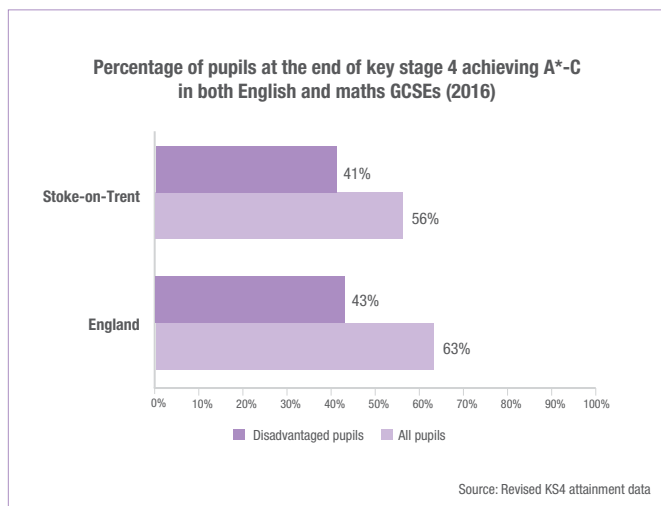
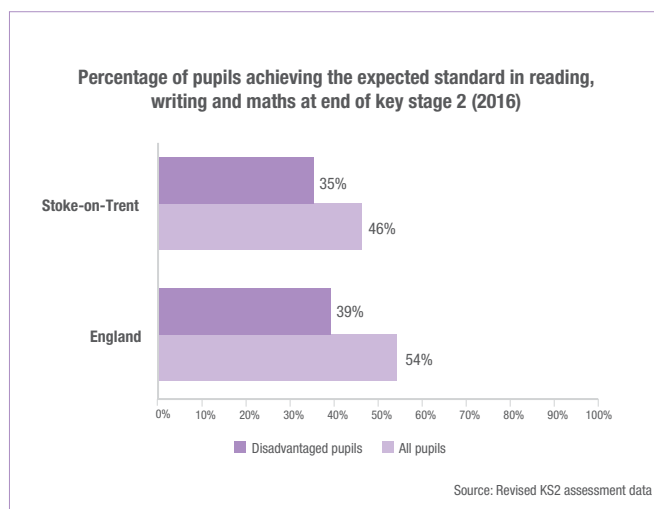
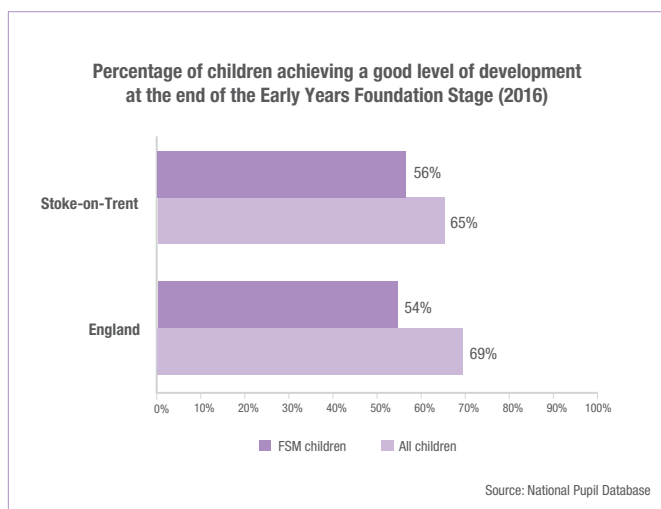
In the wards where educational performance is at its lowest (Bentilee and Ubbberley, Meir North, and Hanley Park), adult unemployment is also on the rise. Anecdotal evidence suggests that ‘normalisation’ of unemployment in the city may be an additional barrier to pupils making well-informed choices in learning and careers.

There has been a real drive across the city to improve the number of good and outstanding schools. At the time of publication, there were no primary or secondary school settings graded inadequate (Ofsted category 4). Early years settings, in particular, have made marked improvements with all settings being either good (Ofsted category 2) or outstanding (Ofsted category 1). However, educational outcomes at all stages remain below the national average. More needs to be done to ensure that opportunities, particularly for the city’s most disadvantaged pupils, are unlocked.

<sup>7</sup> Local authority interactive tool (LAIT) – GOV.UK



## Why Stoke-on-Trent?<sup>8</sup>



<sup>8</sup> For this analysis, we have grouped local authority districts into six groups (sextiles). The markers on the graphs described as 'high performing' and 'low performing' relate to the top and bottom local authority district sextile. Within this plan, the 'disadvantaged' group varies depending on the Department for Education data source. However, they all include the number of pupils who were eligible for free school meals at any point in the previous six years. For further details about the specific definition of 'disadvantage' for each Department for Education data source, see the 'Education statistics by local authority, district and pupil disadvantage' release found on the Department for Education Statistics page.

A close-up photograph of a man with glasses and a young girl reading a book together. The man is on the left, wearing a blue and purple striped shirt. The girl is on the right, wearing a purple and green plaid shirt. They are both looking down at the book. The image is framed with a white, jagged border against a purple background.

# STRENGTH THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

## Stoke-on-Trent's Opportunity Area partnership board

The Opportunity Area partnership board consists of senior leaders from education, business, local government and the voluntary sector. Together they bring vital experience, insight and ambition for Stoke-on-Trent and its young people. Working alongside the Department for Education and other national organisations, the board meets regularly to oversee progress and ensure the programme is coherent, effective and represents good value for money. We are also bringing together a wider group of partners, through sub groups, to develop our thinking and commission activities to ensure we harness the widest possible range of interests across the city.

### The Co-Chairs:

**Dr. Carol Shanahan** is the managing director of a local business, Synectics Solutions. Since it was established in 1992, the business has outgrown three premises. It employs over 350 staff and has been crowned Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year, as well as reaching The Times Top 100 for Export Growth. Carol engages with a number of initiatives throughout the city to improve outcomes for children in the most disadvantaged wards.

**Prof. Liz Barnes** is Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive at Staffordshire University, a leading provider of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships. Her career has been rooted in leading learning and teaching, and she is committed to creative and innovative approaches to enhance the student journey. She has built and maintained a strong network of employers across the city to ensure that the university provides vocationally relevant courses and supports the pipeline of talent.

“I am really pleased to be co-chairing the Opportunity Area partnership board with Carol. It is important that education and employers are seen to be working jointly in our endeavours to improve the life chances of our young people in Stoke-on-Trent. This offers us an opportunity to really make a difference.”

Prof. Liz Barnes

“What impresses me most about Stoke-on-Trent is how well people and organisations work together to develop and improve the city they are so proud of. The initiative, with the support of the Department for Education, provides a multi sector group who will focus on taking a holistic approach to addressing the challenges that families are currently facing. I am looking forward to working with Liz and the rest of the board.”

Dr. Carol Shanahan

## Stoke-on-Trent's Opportunity Area partnership board

- **Adrian Hurst:** Head of Community, Stoke City Football Club
- **Angela Tellyn:** West Midlands Regional Lead, The Careers & Enterprise Company Ltd
- **David Frost:** Chairman of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- **Denise Brown:** Principal and Chief Executive of Stoke-on-Trent College
- **Di Swift:** Executive Director for the Stoke-on-Trent EEF Research School and Keele and North Staffordshire Teacher Education
- **Jane Belcher:** HR Manager at Michelin
- **Jonathon May:** Headteacher of Watermill Special School
- **Margaret Yates:** Executive Headteacher of St Gregory's Catholic Academy and St Augustine's Catholic Academy and Executive Director of All Saints Catholic Collegiate
- **Mark Kent:** Principal of City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College
- **Mark Stanyer:** Principal of Ormiston Sir Stanley Matthews Academy
- **Rachel Beckett:** Executive Principal, The Sandon Trust
- **Rob Johnstone:** Assistant Director of Learning Services, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
- **Rose Dingle:** Founder, owner and manager of the Rosy Cheeks Nursery chain

Meetings are attended by Department for Education officials – the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Stoke-on-Trent Opportunity Area team. The local programme manager also attends to support the work of the partnership board.

## Our partnership with national organisations

The Stoke-on-Trent Opportunity Area partnership board is keen to work with local and national partners who can help achieve its vision for children and young people in the city. In particular, we are working closely with three national partner organisations:

### The Careers & Enterprise

**Company (CEC)** is working to ensure that every secondary school and post-16 provider in Stoke-on-Trent will have access to an Enterprise Adviser, who is a senior business volunteer, and a share of £2 million investment, so that every secondary school pupil has access to at least four high quality business encounters with the world of work. To help achieve these ambitious plans, the CEC has created a community of eight ‘cornerstone employers’ who have committed to making a significant contribution to working with young people in schools in Stoke-on-Trent, alongside the wider business community which is already very actively supporting schools.

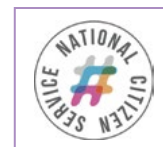


The eight ‘cornerstone employers’ are:

- Adecco
- Applied Materials Research, Innovation and Commercialisation Company (AMRICC)
- Autonet Insurance
- Emma Bridgewater Ltd
- KMF
- Michelin
- Stoke City Football Club
- The University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust

### National Citizen Service

is building a strong working relationship with Stoke-on-Trent City Council and its local providers to ensure that every young person experiences and benefits from a four-week programme of personal development and volunteering. The National Citizen Service has placed coordinators in secondary schools in the city to increase engagement with pupils and is supporting schools financially to help recruit young people to this life-changing programme. The National Citizen Service is also building partnerships with voluntary organisations, universities and businesses to offer additional incentives to young people to take part and targeting those least likely currently to step forward for this programme.



In collaboration with the City Council, the National Citizen Service also offers tailored enrichment activity to disadvantaged young people, those who are harder to reach, or those from incoming communities, through pre-National Citizen Service programmes targeted at pupils in years 9 and 10.

**The Education Endowment**

**Foundation (EEF)** will support the partnership board and Stoke-on-Trent's schools to make the best use of evidence about what works in educational improvement. They have designated 'Keele and North Staffordshire Alliance' as the area's dedicated EEF Research School, backed by an additional £200,000 over the next three years. The EEF will work with them to help share the most effective practice and accelerate improvement across the city's classrooms.



**“The Stoke-on-Trent EEF Research School will support colleagues so that even more teachers and leaders actively use evidence and research to inform and evaluate decisions. Our network’s drive and determination is relentless so as to enable high quality educational opportunities to overcome the barriers of social disadvantage.”**

**Di Swift**

## Engaging children and young people

### Engaging young people

Children and young people are at the heart of this programme and their views and opinions have been important in establishing the areas of focus for the next three years. Over the last six months, we have spoken to over 100 children and young people in Stoke-on-Trent, from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, to gain their perspective on the barriers to social mobility in the city. This has included working with 'RUGS' (The Really Useful Generations Students group); a group of primary school children from the Societas Multi Academy Trust; running sessions at 'Democracy Week' with 42 primary school children and 25 secondary school students; and speaking with a group of young people at the YMCA. We are also working with local stakeholders with expertise in engaging children and young people, to develop a strategy for long-term engagement.

"Our school is good because we have lots of technology"  
– Cleo, age 10

"There's a lot of green areas, recreational areas, surrounded by National Trust areas"  
– Will, age 17

"I would like to do work experience in primary school"  
– Kiera, age 10

"More equipment for science, PE and maths"  
– Humaid, age 10

"More school trips because we don't go very much"  
– Isobelle, age 8

"Free clubs, so that all children can join in"  
– Ansel, age 10

"We have had some careers advice but not enough"  
– Caitlyn, age 13

"I think that school is reading focussed and it helps with literacy"  
– Alex, age 14

"Everyone should get a fair wage"  
– Olivia, age 11

"I'd like to see more libraries in Stoke-on-Trent because we have to travel far to access one"  
– Freya, age 9

We are working closely with **The Week Junior**, a current affairs magazine aimed at

children aged 8 – 14 to help them make sense of the world. The magazine is working with the Opportunity Area team in Stoke-on-Trent, offering a range of activities to help promote social mobility across the city, including raising awareness through articles, facilitating events with children and young people, running young writers competitions and offering work experience opportunities.



In partnership with **the YMCA** and a working group of children and



young people, we will put in place training to support youth ambassadors for the Opportunity Area programme. These ambassadors will be fundamental in raising awareness of the Opportunity Area programme and the importance of children and young people's engagement.

Plans for future engagement: we will regularly engage with children and young people across Stoke-on-Trent to ensure their views are taken into account. This will include holding consultation events and establishing a core group of children and young people to challenge the partnership board and hold them to account.



Jerahl Hall, YMCA international youth ambassador from Stoke-on-Trent, speaking at St Paul's Cathedral.











## OUR PRIORITIES

Stoke-on-Trent's partnership board has agreed four priorities supported by three enabling themes. These priorities will be fundamental in improving outcomes for children and young people in the city, whatever their backgrounds; reducing barriers to social mobility; and driving a step change that encourages greater collaboration with parents/carers, the business and education sectors, and the voluntary sector over the next three years and beyond.

			
<p><b>1. Improve outcomes in Early Years Foundation Stage</b></p> <p>Giving children the best possible start in life and learning</p>	<p><b>2. Improve outcomes in English, maths and science</b></p> <p>Build strong foundations for key stage 4 by boosting attainment in primary and supporting transition into secondary</p>	<p><b>3. Improve pupil engagement in learning at all stages</b></p> <p>Making sure children are happy, resilient and equipped with the skills to learn</p>	<p><b>4. Improve the choices young people make from 16</b></p> <p>Making sure there is a pipeline of highly qualified young people in Stoke-on-Trent who can contribute to a skilled workforce</p>

**ENABLING THEMES**

<p><b>Improving parental engagement in education at all stages</b></p>	<p><b>Building and supporting a quality education workforce</b></p>	<p><b>Supporting the emotional wellbeing and behaviour of pupils inside and outside the classroom</b></p>
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## Priority 1: Improve outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

### Giving children the best possible start in life and learning

#### Why this is an issue

We want to ensure that all children have the very best start at the beginning of their education. In 2016, the percentage of all pupils achieving a good level of development (GLD) in Stoke-on-Trent was 65.1% in comparison to a national average of 69.3%. Ward level data shows that only eleven of Stoke-on-Trent's 37 wards managed to meet or exceed the national average, with children from Etruria and Hanley attaining the lowest scores.

The number of children eligible for pupil premium across the city exceeds the national average. However, despite high eligibility, take up of free education for two year olds is below the national average by 2%. The number of three and four year olds benefitting from early education has remained below the national average since 2008 (currently ranking 102<sup>nd</sup> out of 152 local authorities)<sup>9</sup>.

Data shows that attendance for funded places is often patchy: 15% of eligible three and four year olds attend less than the available 15 hours, with the majority situated in the wards of highest

deprivation. There is also a correlation between poor take up of early education and pupils not achieving a GLD. For example, in Tunstall and Etruria and Hanley, where take up is poor, children achieving a GLD is at its lowest.

In Stoke-on-Trent, the number of children achieving and exceeding the expected levels in the early learning goals for speaking and reading (2016) shows that children, again, lag behind the national average. This problem is at its most intense in the most disadvantaged wards. The data also shows that while some areas are showing improvements over the period 2015-2017, others have fallen back. Evidence shows early language acquisition impacts on all aspects of children's non-physical development. Children who are behind in language development at age five are six times less likely to reach the expected standard in English at age eleven, and eleven times less likely to achieve the expected level in maths<sup>10</sup>. This gap in early language development between disadvantaged children and their peers is often called the 'word gap'.

<sup>9</sup> Local authority interactive tool (LAIT) – GOV.UK

<sup>10</sup> Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential, a plan for improving social mobility through education, page 16 – GOV.UK

To tackle the word gap, and as a wider part of the school readiness programme, Stoke-on-Trent City Council has introduced screening for speech, language and communication. This revealed that in the summer of 2017, 46% of children were in need of additional support to achieve expected standards<sup>11</sup>. Children requiring the most support were in the most deprived areas of the city. Recent data from Stoke Speaks Out flagged that the children most likely to be in need of intense levels of intervention in speech, language and communication were from the north of the city, attended private, voluntary or independent (PVI) early years settings, or spoke English as an Additional Language (EAL). Boys are more likely than girls to experience delays in language development.

This gap also extends to other aspects of early years development. Our conversations with early years providers throughout the city suggest that many children, and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have the opportunities to experience the wider world. Data from the 'Understanding the World' early learning goal supports this. Against a national average of 83%, only 71% of pupils in Stoke-on-Trent achieve or exceed the expected standard. Children in Etruria and Hanley, and Moorcroft, are the least likely to achieve the expected standard.

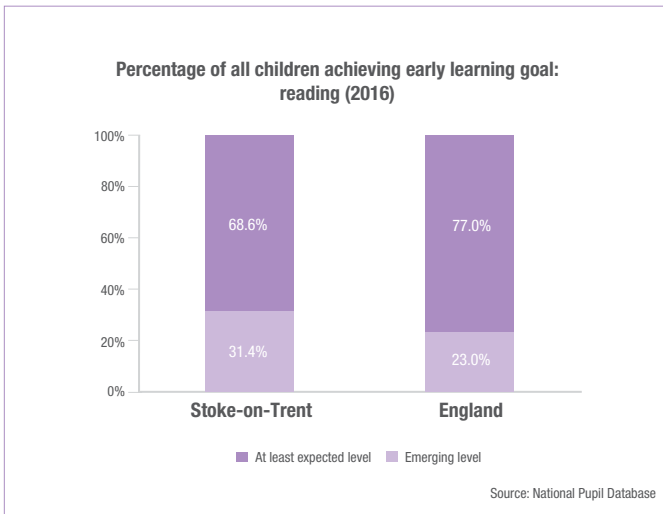
Our experts in early years education have also alerted us to issues across the city in terms of younger children achieving the expected standard within the 'mathematics' elements of the early learning goals. In 2016, only 58% of pupils born in the summer term achieved the expected standard in maths, in comparison to their peers born in the spring (72%) or autumn (81%) terms. This trend continues through to the 2017 results.

As two, three, and four year old children fail to grasp the basics at Early Years Foundation Stage 1 (the stage before pupils begin school), some primary school headteachers have reported that they are not 'school ready' as they enter Reception.

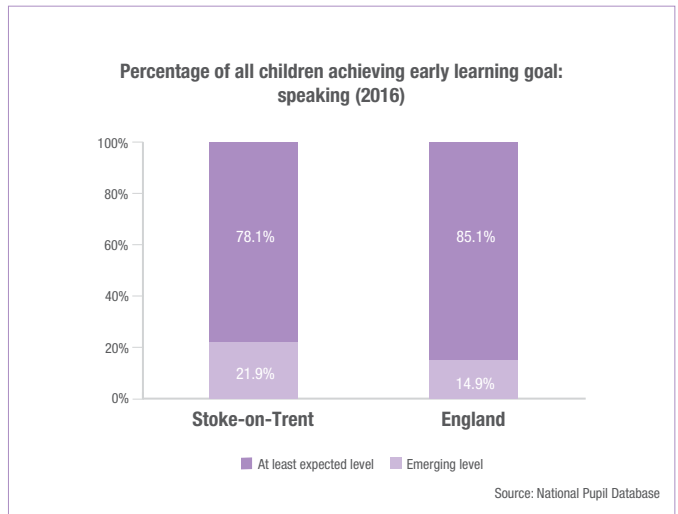
Local professionals tell us that it can be difficult to attract and retain high quality staff in some early years settings, and the availability of tailored, local Continuing Professional Development (CPD) may be an issue in developing quality.

<sup>11</sup> Data from Stoke-on-Trent City Council

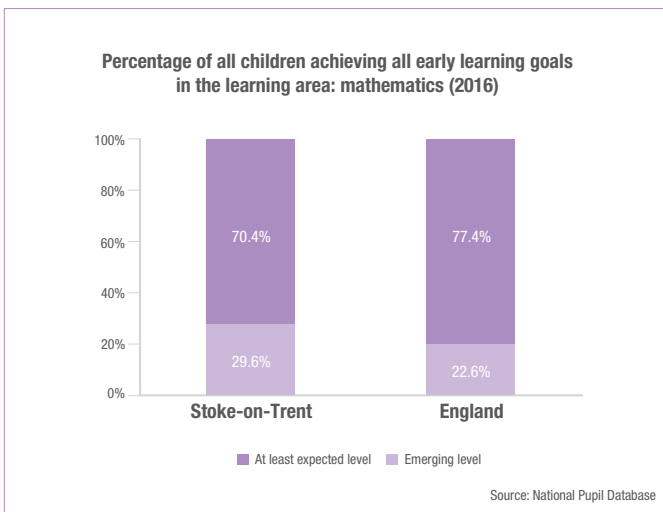
## Priority 1: Improve outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)



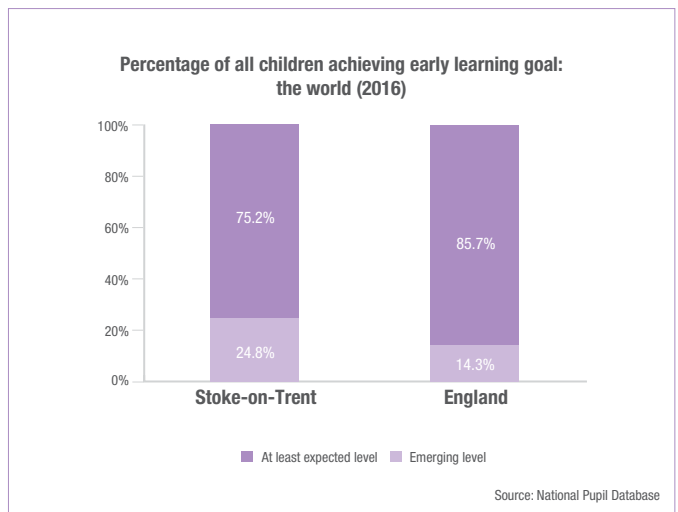
Early learning goal contained within 'Literacy'



Early learning goal contained within 'Communication and Language'



Area of learning and development contains Early learning goals space, shape and measures and numbers



Early learning goal contained within 'Understanding the World'

## What we will do

We want to make sure that all children – regardless of their background or circumstances – have a fair and equal start in life. We will build on progress already made to boost the number of children attaining and exceeding expected standards in the early years, and put in place further support to ensure that they gain the fundamental skills, abilities and confidence they need to make a flying start in key stage 1. We will have a particular focus on three areas of learning and development: communication and language, literacy and understanding the world. This, however, is not to the exclusion of the other learning goals, for example, numeracy. We will:

- Improve outcomes in speech, language and communication (SLC). To improve early language development and close the ‘word gap’ we will extend and embed existing, recognised and proven activity throughout the city to support SLC of all pupils. We will ensure that there is an enhanced focus on geographical areas and groups of children where SLC delay is most marked, including those children who speak English as an additional language (EAL).
- Build pupil understanding of the world. We will develop a richness of experience for all children which will be reflected in the curriculum through a range of activity. We will undertake an audit across the city, working with National Leaders of Education (NLEs), Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs), and our EEF Research School, to look at practice in early years teaching and learning in ‘Understanding the World’. This will have a strong focus on effective use of the pupil premium, identifying excellent practice and where more support is required. We will draw on work around the City of Culture bid to increase understanding of Stoke-on-Trent’s heritage, uniqueness and place in the world.
- Examine in further depth the emerging trends in the achievements of summer born children, with a particular focus on maths. We will identify evidence-based practices, drawing on work with our local and national experts, to close the gap between these pupils and their peers.
- Support excellence in early years practice. We want to make sure that all early years practitioners are well equipped when they start work and have continuing access to quality CPD throughout their careers. We will team up with Stoke-on-Trent College and early years providers across the city to develop pre-employment training, alongside the current early years teaching framework, to ensure new entrants are truly ready to work in an early years setting. This may include, for example, work trials at the beginning and end of training. Building on the training and development already available for early years practitioners in the city, we will work with partners to consider what more we can do to support excellent practice and increase the number of settings with a level 4 quality mark.

### In 2018 we will:

- Build on current work under Stoke Speaks Out, to introduce a programme of work on SLC, which will:
  - o deliver targeted specialist support to around 25 primary schools that have lower than average numbers of children attaining a good level of development by the end of Reception;
  - o expand the fledgling 'Parent Ambassador' initiative, working with parents to determine best practice and using the locally developed 'Together We Learn' package to build the engagement and skills of parents, early years staff in nurseries, and staff in the first years of primary. We will evaluate 'Together We Learn' using the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) DIY package; and
  - o focus on parents and children who are not accessing early years settings to support language development and encourage take up of places.
- Carry out an audit to identify outstanding local practice in 'Understanding the World' by March 2018. We will then work with local early years leaders to put in place an action plan from September 2018 to build collaboration and share best practice between settings, using the momentum around the City of Culture bid, to improve children's understanding and outcomes.
- Identify evidence based practices in partnership with our EEF Research School and the EEF, working with our local and national experts, to close the gap between summer-born pupils and their peers in maths. Pilot activity in areas of the city most in need of additional interventions from September 2018.
- Map the training on offer to practitioners in early years settings. In collaboration with local partners, identify any gaps and consider what more we can do to build and support excellence in early years practice by April 2018 to introduce any additional training in by Autumn 2018.
- Support work led by Stoke-on-Trent College to design a work-readiness element for existing early years courses, which will be implemented from Summer 2018.

### Our target for 2020/21:

- Stoke-on-Trent will have significantly closed the gap between children in the city achieving a good level of development and their peers nationally. This will mean that by 2021/22 at least 100 more children will have reached this level than was the case in 2016. By 2022/23, the city will have closed the gap entirely and will be in the top half of all local authority districts for pupils achieving a good level of development.







## Priority 2: Improve outcomes in English, maths and science

### Build strong foundations for key stage 4 by boosting attainment in primary and supporting transition into secondary

#### Why this is an issue

While there have been improvements in the quality of educational provision in Stoke-on-Trent over the last five years, more needs to be done. As recently as December 2016, nearly half of all learners in secondary education (47.5%) were in schools judged by Ofsted to be less than good<sup>12</sup>.

Businesses and further/higher education institutions highlight a skills gap in English, science and maths, citing learner disengagement in these subjects at an early age, which persists through to secondary education. Data across educational stages supports this perception:

- at key stage 1, only six of the 37 wards across the city achieve or exceed national averages in reading, writing and maths;
- at key stage 2, Stoke-on-Trent is behind the national average in English, maths and science;

- o in reading, 41% pupils fail to reach the expected standard (behind the national average by seven percentage points);
- o in writing, 30% pupils fail to reach the expected standard (behind the national average by four percentage points);
- o in maths, 37% of all pupils failed to reach the expected standard (behind the national average by seven percentage points). The gap for free school meals (FSM) children is starkest in maths, where 50% fail to meet expected standards; and
- o in science, 23% of all pupils failed to reach expected standards (behind the national average by four percentage points)<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Education statistics by LA district and pupil disadvantage – GOV.UK

<sup>13</sup> Statistics: key stage 2 – GOV.UK

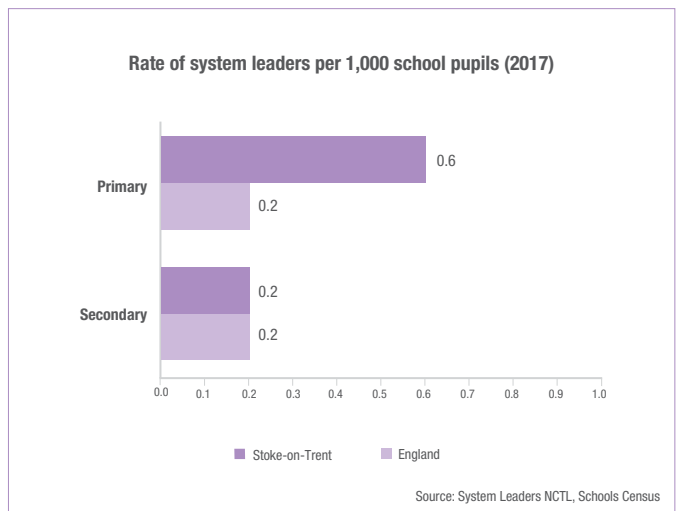
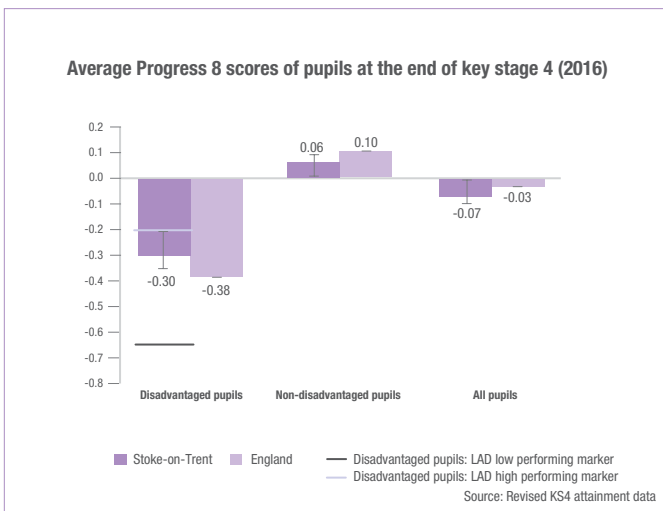
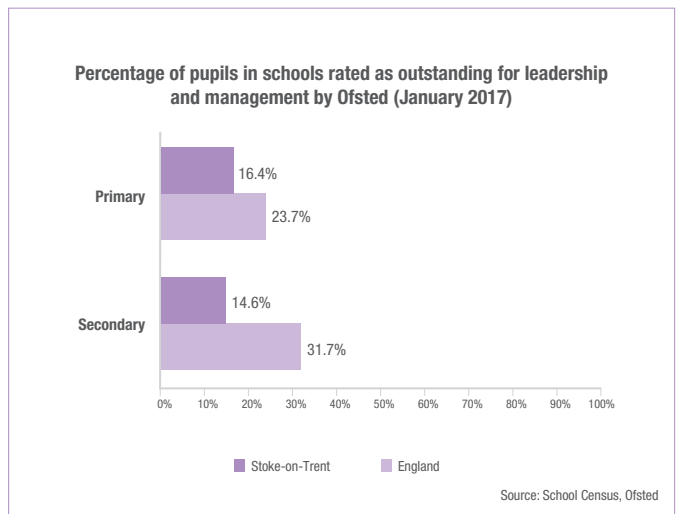
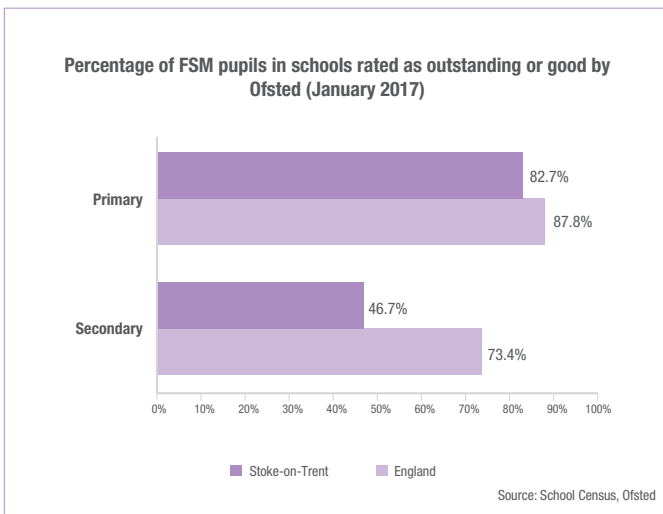
## Our priorities

The issues faced by the city's schools differ. Some primary schools where attainment is lowest have very high numbers of EAL children whilst others draw pupils from largely white British communities. All schools where attainment is low face high levels of deprivation.

Using Progress 8 scores as a proxy measure for successful pupil transition between key stage 2 and key stage 4, we know that many pupils, and particularly those that are disadvantaged, fail to keep up with national averages for achieving a good level of progress. Of the four secondary schools in the city that require improvement, all failed to achieve positive progress between key stage 2 and key stage 4, and failed to meet national averages for achieving grade C or better in maths and English<sup>14</sup>.

There is good system capacity across the city to support schools to improve outcomes for their most disadvantaged pupils<sup>15</sup>. But despite this, National Leaders of Education (NLEs) at both key stage 2 and key stage 4 tell us that they are not frequently deployed.

## Priority 2: Improve outcomes in English, maths and science



## What we will do

We want to focus our efforts where they will have greatest impact. The partnership board has decided that this focus should be on lifting attainment in English, science and maths at key stage 2 and supporting children through the critical transition stage between year 6 and secondary school so they make good progress during key stage 3. This will lay strong foundations for attainment at key stage 4 and beyond. We want to ignite children's imagination and ambition from a young age and ensure they experience a stimulating curriculum that inspires and motivates them and prepares them for the evolving job market.

Working with local partners, including our EEF Research School, we will offer additional support and training to those schools that are failing to meet national standards in English and in maths by improving teaching practices through evidence based approaches from the EEF's key stages 2 and 3 maths guidance<sup>16</sup> and key stages 1 and 2 literacy guidance<sup>17</sup>. We will offer training to system leaders to use the EEF DIY tool so that work is effectively evaluated and monitored. In science, we will work with the developing Science Excellence Partnership (SEP) to develop a package of support for

science teaching and learning, which we will pilot across the city in those primary schools in greatest need. We will ask participating schools to help us benchmark current key stage 2 attainment in science to evaluate the impact of this intervention, and we will listen to the pupil voice to establish what is working well and where greater focus is required.

Within this priority, we will give particular focus to disadvantaged children at the critical transition point between primary and secondary education who are either:

- high ability (a theme of the Future Talent Fund<sup>18</sup> mentioned in the social mobility action plan); or
- identified as being at risk of failing to achieve post-16 or of dropping out of education, employment or training altogether.

We will put in place targeted support for schools and pupils, drawing on expert advice from system leaders, our EEF Research School, and other partners. We are keen to introduce a tailored mentoring programme for these pupils, focused on their learning and engagement.

The partnership board recognises the importance of work across the city to raise attainment in English, maths and science at other stages of education, particularly key stage 4. We will encourage and support partners to address this through, for example, the Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund (TLIF) and the Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF).

<sup>16</sup> <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/maths-ks-two-three>

<sup>17</sup> [https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Campaigns/Literacy/KS2\\_Literacy\\_Guidance\\_2017.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Campaigns/Literacy/KS2_Literacy_Guidance_2017.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential, a plan for improving social mobility through education, page 16 – GOV.UK

## In 2018 we will:

- Deliver innovative approaches to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children at key stage 2 through to the critical period of transition to secondary school by:
  - o testing a programme to support high ability children eligible for the pupil premium through the transition into secondary (year 6 and year 7) from April 2018, with a view to rolling it out over the 2018/19 academic year;
  - o offering increased support from September 2018 to those year 7 pupils throughout the city identified through local level data as being at the highest risk of falling out of education, employment or training. This could be through, for example, mentoring and 1:1 tuition;
  - o increasing mentoring support in English, maths and science, drawing on the internship approach led by Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College and Staffordshire University;
  - o working with our EEF Research School to introduce evidence based approaches to teaching practice in English, maths and science at key stages two and three; for example by building on the EEF's 'Improving Mathematics in Key Stages Two and Three' guidance report; and
  - o ensuring that pupil premium investments in schools effectively support initiatives to narrow the gap in performance between disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers. By April 2018 we will use system leadership capacity in the city to offer pupil premium and pupil premium catch up reviews to those schools most in need of additional support. We will support follow up activities and monitor progress.

### In 2018 we will:

- Help children move successfully from year 6 into the first years of secondary education, working with partners, our EEF Research School and the EEF to identify best practice in teaching, extra-curricular activity and pastoral support.
- Take action to begin improving outcomes in literacy, maths and science, building on local initiatives that are demonstrating

impact in teaching and learning in these key subjects, such as Stoke Speaks Out, Stoke Reads (NLT Literacy Hub), the Maths Excellence Partnership (MEP) and the Maths Hub. We will work with the developing Science Excellence Partnership (SEP) to bring the same impetus to science teaching and learning.

### Our target for 2020/21:

- Stoke-on-Trent will be in the top half of all local authority districts for pupils eligible for pupil premium meeting the expected standard, improving outcomes on this measure for over 250 pupils.
- Stoke-on-Trent will be in the top half of all local authority districts for pupils eligible for pupil premium meeting the exceeding the expected standard, improving outcomes on this measure for over 70 pupils.





## Priority 3: Improve pupil engagement in learning at all stages

### Making sure children are happy, resilient and equipped with the skills to learn

#### Why this is an issue

Our discussions with stakeholders across Stoke-on-Trent have had a strong common thread. The city has high levels of disadvantage; a mix of incoming communities and long-standing white British communities; and a distinctive geography and “six towns culture” which can lend itself to insularity. Recent research conducted by the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity<sup>19</sup> pinpoints that, although in the past many jobs were available for young people leaving school in Stoke-on-Trent, there are now fewer opportunities, and it is no longer possible to leave school without any qualifications and expect to obtain employment easily. The report suggests that more could be done in the city to support young people’s involvement with activities outside the classroom and to improve their exposure to business in order to enhance their employability and entrepreneurial skills. Success under this priority is fundamental to supporting young people’s choices and readiness for the world of work post-16, as detailed in priority 4.

It is difficult to measure engagement in learning, but we believe there are some strong indicators in Stoke-on-Trent:

- rates of unauthorised absenteeism across the city at both primary and secondary phases are chronically high and persistent absenteeism is also above national averages. This may be symptomatic of the challenges some families are facing, and pupil/parental disengagement from education; and
- there appear to be high levels of disruptive behaviour in the city’s classrooms. In 2015/16, there were 1,855 fixed-term exclusions and 41 permanent exclusions, with persistent disruptive behaviour and physical assault against other pupils most commonly cited as the reason for exclusion.

<sup>19</sup> Linda Geßner, What makes for a good life in Stoke-on-Trent?, A Workshop Report · CUSP

## Our priorities

There are a number of organisations and individuals working to address this across the city. For example, the charitable foundations associated with the two football clubs in the city (Stoke City and Port Vale) are delivering a range of activities to improve outcomes for local children, from making sure they are fed in school holidays to building resilience and supporting their learning. National charities, such as the YMCA and the Prince's Trust, are working in the city to help children and young people build essential life skills such as resilience, confidence and wellbeing. The Careers & Enterprise Company, the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Chamber of Commerce and Business in the Community are all actively working to build the links between employers and schools, and efforts are being made throughout the city to contextualise the curriculum, particularly English, science and maths, and improve pupil engagement in schools.

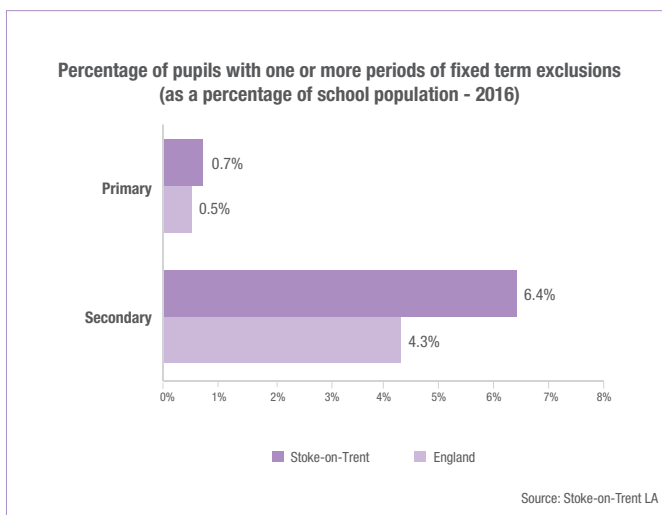
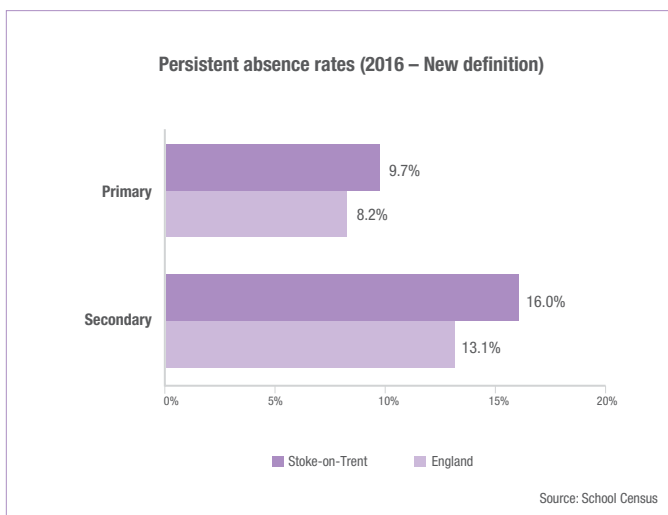
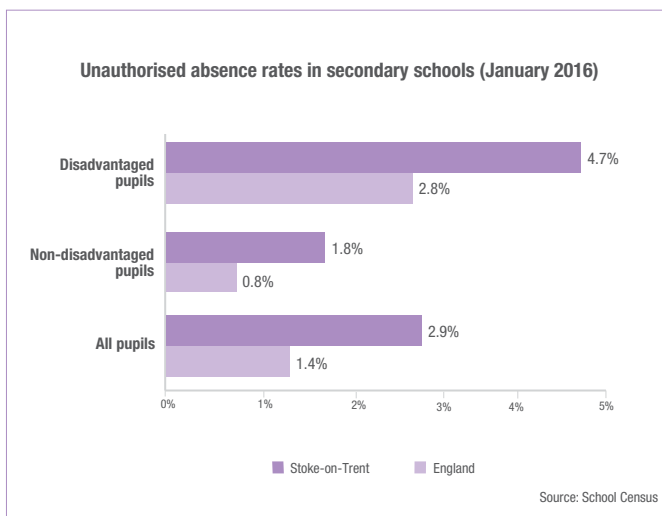
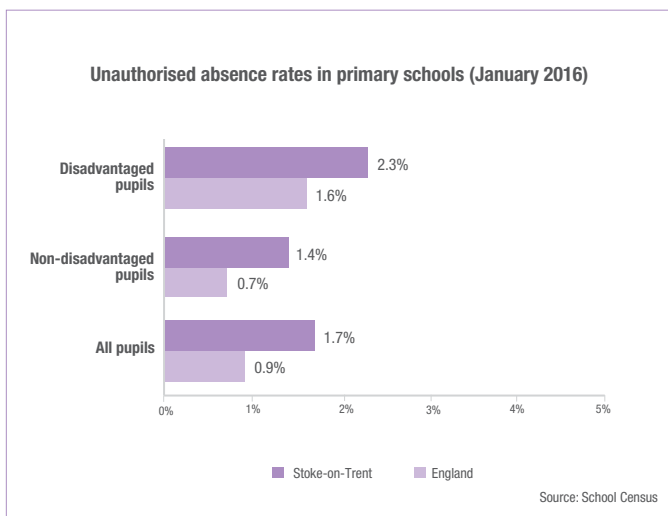
However, whilst these initiatives exist, not all the city's children are feeling the benefits. Partners suggest that there needs to be a more strategic, coherent approach to ensure that enrichment activities have a significant impact on children and young people's engagement in the curriculum and outcomes at level 2 and beyond.

**'The Stoke-on-Trent Opportunity Area approach provides a great opportunity to bring together the worlds of business and education, to help inspire the next generation of young people that will contribute to the future economic and social well-being of this locality. The partnership board is determined to improve things for young people across the city'.**

**Adrian Hurst, Stoke City Football Club**



### Priority 3: Improve pupil engagement in learning at all stages



## What we will do

The impact of absenteeism on educational attainment can be catastrophic. We want to be confident that all the city's children are engaged in education and are benefiting from opportunities to build their understanding of the world and of how to achieve their aspirations. We will offer enrichment activities outside the classroom to ensure that children and young people are switched on and ready to learn, and we will work to reduce absenteeism and fixed term exclusions. We will put in place three strands of work to realise this ambition with a particular focus on disadvantaged children, including those in Alternative Provision (AP) and those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).

**Improve access to and participation in extra-curricular activities throughout the school year.** The Department for Education is committed to ensuring that children and young people develop essential life skills such as resilience, confidence, team working and leadership, both through the curriculum and extra-curricular programmes. As part of this, Stoke-on-Trent has a dedicated budget of £2 million over two years through the Essential Life Skills (ELS) programme. We will use this funding to provide additional extra-curricular activities for up to 3,500 of the most disadvantaged children and young people in Stoke-on-Trent. They will benefit from structured, regular activities, throughout the school year, including participation in sports, culture, the arts, volunteering, and social action projects. We will build up our provision of these and actively target the most disadvantaged children and young people. In doing this, we will learn from the best of what is already available in the city and make sure the communities that are most in need can access

it. We know that children benefit most from such activities when they are clearly linked to their learning, and so we will have a strong focus on working with schools to provide activities throughout the academic year.

**Offer additional support through the holidays.** Over holiday periods, we know that some pupils may lose progress they gained throughout the academic year, and begin to disengage from education. In our city, we know that some children will also go hungry. We will harness the energy and commitment that currently exists across the business, education and voluntary sectors in the city by offering activity throughout the holidays in the most deprived wards. We will build on the success of the 2017 Holiday Hunger programme, extending it to include cultural and sporting activities. These activities will link back to the curriculum, ensuring that children and young people lead active and healthy lifestyles and sustain the progress they made in education throughout the school year.

**Build on the offer of the National Citizen Service.** We want pupils to develop skills for work and life beyond school through volunteering and social action projects. Building on consultations with the local authority, the National Citizen Service will introduce programmes that support the curriculum, particularly in those critical subject areas identified in priority two of this plan by working with local organisations and businesses. The National Citizen Service will also aim to deliver an extension of some elements of the programme to younger secondary school pupils, to increase resilience and commitment within these younger year groups.

## In 2018 we will:

- Draw on additional Essential Life Skills resource to commission extracurricular activities for children through term time that is linked to their learning in the classroom, commencing in April 2018.
- Increase access to holiday and free time provision for disadvantaged children that is fun and keeps them on track in their learning. In partnership with employers, schools and the voluntary sector, we will pilot this initiative over the Easter holiday (2018), aiming to scale it up over the critical summer holiday period.
- Significantly improve the accessibility of the National Citizen Service programme for Stoke-on-Trent's disadvantaged pupils, including those sixteen and seventeen year olds requiring additional support. These include children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), young carers, students in pupil referral units and young people in care. We will do this by increasing collaborative efforts between the National Citizen Service and its partners. Through the National Citizen Service, we will also support over 900 young people across the city accessing the National Citizen Service programme and deliver over 27,000 hours of social action.
- Determine ways to expand the use of Youth Ambassadors; for example, through the YMCA or the 'Step Up to Serve' ambassador programmes (the #iwill campaign), drawing on additional support from local further and higher education institutions.
- Audit the mentoring offer currently in place, identifying gaps and areas for further development in partnership with the CEC. We will hold a roundtable event in spring 2018 for providers and stakeholders, including the CEC, leaders in education (including those in post-16 provision) and providers with mentoring packages in place. By September 2018 we will establish the foundations of an effective city-wide approach to raise aspirations for Stoke-on-Trent's children.

## Our target for 2020/21:

- In 2016, there were nearly 300,000 sessions missed in primary and over 170,000 sessions missed in secondary. We will reduce unauthorised absence rates by half in primary school (to 150,000) and by two-thirds in secondary schools (to below 57,000) so that Stoke-on-Trent is in the top half of all local authority districts for pupils regularly attending school.





## Priority 4: Improve the choices young people make from 16

### Ensuring a pipeline of highly qualified young people in Stoke-on-Trent who can contribute to a skilled workforce

#### Why this is an issue

Evidence suggests that “almost half of those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) at age seventeen and eighteen are still NEET one year later, and those who are NEET at age eighteen and nineteen are 28% more likely than others to be unemployed five years later and 20% more likely to be so ten years later.”<sup>20</sup> In Stoke-on-Trent NEET rates among school leavers and sixteen to eighteen year olds have fallen in recent years as more young people are staying on in education, employment and training.<sup>21</sup> However, the number of pupils who failed to sustain employment, education or training (post-16) remains above the national average (7% in comparison to 5% nationally). This is particularly marked amongst young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). In 2016, the percentage of young people not in education, employment or training was 14% in comparison to 12% nationally, putting the city in the lowest quartile banding<sup>22</sup>.

More young people in Stoke-on-Trent also fail to reach level 2 in maths and English by the age of nineteen than nationally. Whilst there is an improving trend, attainment in Stoke-on-Trent remains nine percentage points below the national average.

Attainment at level 3 amongst nineteen year olds in Stoke-on-Trent is below the national average by ten percentage points. For FSM young people (included within the disadvantaged cohort) the gap with their national peers is wider – over eleven percentage points. Progression into higher education for pupils from state funded schools in the city is also well below the national average (28% in comparison to 38%)<sup>23</sup>. In all cases, the city is amongst one of the lowest performing areas in the country.

20 Crawford C, Duckworth K, Vignoles A, Wyness G. Young people's education and labour market choices aged 16/17 to 18/19. London: Department for Education, 2011.

21 Crawford C, Duckworth K, Vignoles A, Wyness G. Young people's education and labour market choices aged 16/17 to 18/19. London: Department for Education, 2011.

22 Local authority interactive tool (LAIT) – GOV.UK

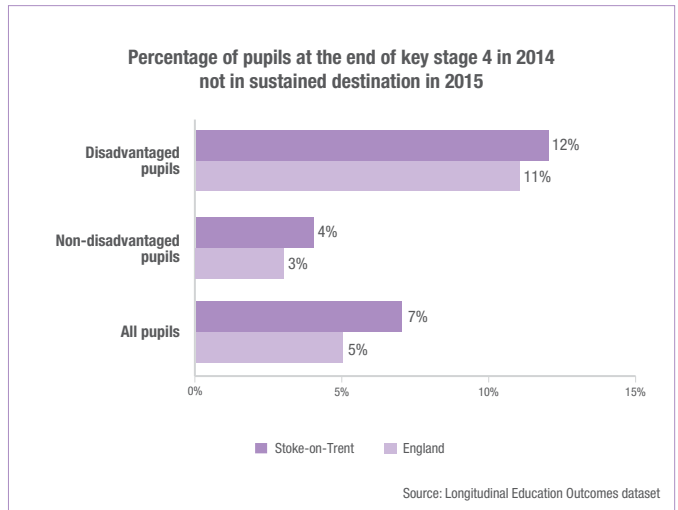
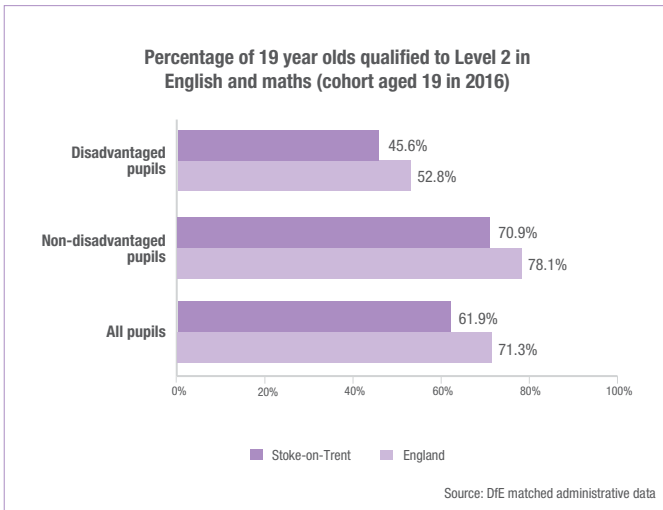
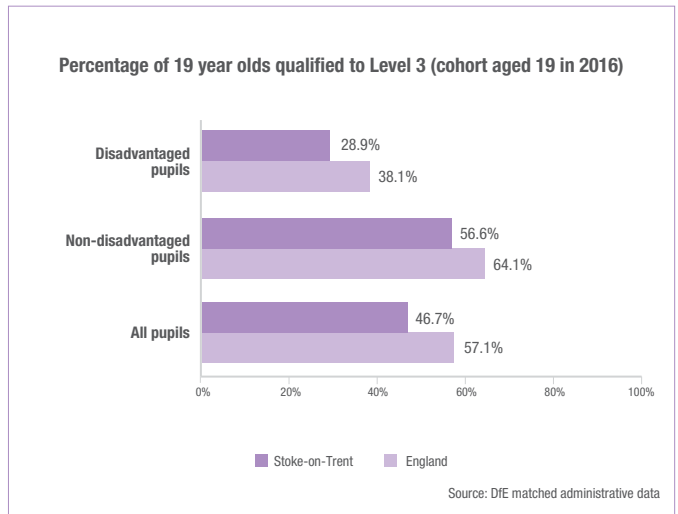
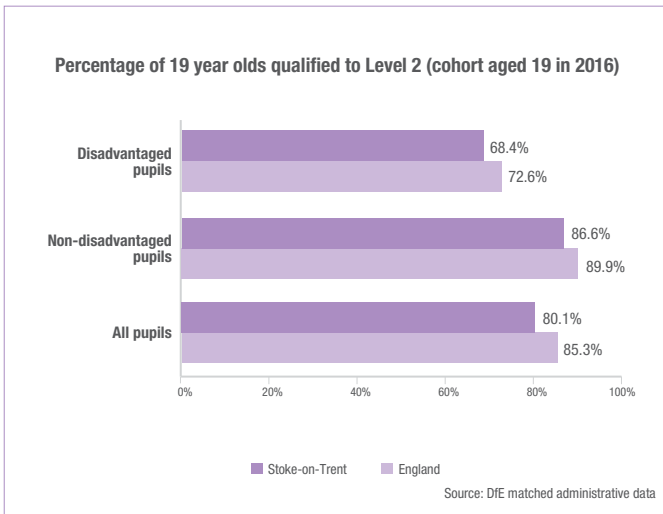
23 Local authority interactive tool (LAIT) – GOV.UK

There is also an emerging skills gap between pupil ability and the demands of the labour market. Careers information, advice and guidance in the city, while improving, is inconsistent, of varying quality and not always well embedded or coordinated. In our discussions with local employers, we have heard concerns that young people are not adequately prepared for work.

Take up of apprenticeships is high in Stoke-on-Trent, marginally exceeding national averages for both FSM and non-FSM pupils. However, many of these pupils are taking intermediate apprenticeships (level 2). Last year, 2,130 young people undertook intermediate apprenticeships in comparison to 140 who started higher-level apprenticeships. As yet, few employers have stepped forward to offer higher or degree level

apprenticeships in the city, particularly in areas related to science and maths. We have heard some concerns that this could perpetuate a higher-level skills gap in key sectors. There is, however, appetite amongst providers, for example Staffordshire University, to provide more degree level apprenticeships and expand the apprenticeship offer.

## Priority 4: Improve the choices young people make from 16



## What we will do

We know that being work ready is not simply about children and young people studying hard and getting the best possible results. We want to make sure all children and young people in Stoke-on-Trent have access to timely and high quality careers advice. This advice should not only consider post-16 academic routes but the possibilities that can be realised through apprenticeships and technical education. We will work to ensure that the qualifications young people achieve at school are enhanced with the employability skills and personal attributes needed to succeed in the world of work. This will include:

- Improving employer links – the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) will lead a programme of work with the Local Enterprise Partnership to build the links between employers and schools. Every pupil at secondary school or college in the city will benefit from four meaningful engagements with the world of work. We have listened to the views of children in primary phases and their teachers, and will work with the CEC to pilot employer engagement in primary schools. We will also improve access to learning experiences outside the classroom, working with employers, universities, colleges and the local football clubs to help contextualise the curriculum, building on the current 'Enterprise Education' initiative for eleven to sixteen year olds run by Stoke City Football Club.
- Increasing the number of learners achieving level 2 in maths and English post-16, by drawing on the findings of the EEF, and working in collaboration with post-16 providers.
- Drawing on the LEP strategy to review pathways post-16, focusing on clear routes to careers, particularly in key sectors.
- Supporting secondary schools and colleges to meet the eight Gatsby Benchmarks and achieve the Quality in Careers standard.
- Harnessing the expertise of special schools across the city and other partners (for example Stoke City Football Club and Port Vale Football Club), along with the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi), to develop a strategy that supports young people with special educational needs to make the transition into adulthood and employment.

## In 2018 we will:

- Enhance the information, advice and guidance (IAG) offer in the city, working in partnership with the CEC to:
  - o assess careers provision across Stoke-on-Trent using the Careers and Enterprise Company's Compass Benchmarking Tool measuring current activity across the eight Gatsby Benchmarks;
  - o support the capacity of careers leaders in schools and colleges to respond to the increasing array of careers education; information, advice and guidance; employability; and enterprise activities in the city;
  - o ensure that every eleven to eighteen year old benefits from at least four high quality employer encounters over the life of the Opportunity Area programme. This follows research from the Education and Employers Taskforce which shows that a young person who has four or more encounters with an employer is 86% less likely to be unemployed or not in education or training, and can earn up to eighteen percent more during their career<sup>24</sup>. Delivering these four encounters will help schools achieve the Gatsby Benchmarks relating to 'encounters with employers', and 'experiences of workplaces'. In 2018 CEC will target over 17,000 pupils across 26 establishments in the city;
  - o encourage cornerstone employers to extend their offer. For example, Michelin has committed to pilot their successful 'Inspiring Females' and 'Males' events in two secondary schools, with a view to extending the programme to at least 50% of Stoke-on-Trent's secondary schools. This will ensure more of the city's pupils are inspired by successful people across an array of sectors and careers;
  - o test approaches, from September 2018, to a structured employer offer in up to ten primary schools within the most deprived wards in the city, to excite and inspire children at the earliest possible stage; and
  - o give more help to young people aged sixteen and twenty one in making good choices about their future learning and their careers, building on existing local programmes, such as the SASCAL futures programme.

24 It's who you meet, Education and Employers Taskforce, Dr Anthony Mann, Director of Research and Policy, Education and Employers Taskforce



## In 2018 we will (continued):

- Improve outcomes for post-16 pupils by:
  - o joining forces with employers and post-16 learning providers to determine effective ways of teaching English and maths that help learners re-sitting their GCSEs apply skills to scenarios in both work and life. As part of this we will build on work underway between Stoke-on-Trent College, Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College and Mathematics in Education and Industry (MEI) with a view to embedding practice by September 2018; and
  - o supporting on-programme retention of pupils through, for example, in-year opportunities to transfer and tracking of progress against potential.
- Improve post-16 outcomes for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) in partnership with NDTi and special schools in Stoke-on-Trent, through better parental engagement and support into adulthood. We will start this from the beginning of the spring term 2018. We will gather lessons learnt over summer 2018 with a view to extending this approach to all children with an EHCP during the autumn term 2018.

## Our targets for 2020/21:

- Stoke-on-Trent will be in the top half of all local authority districts for the attainment of all pupils in achieving maths and English at level 2 post-16.
- Raise retention rates for sixteen to eighteen year olds to exceed the national average. Based on 2016 data, this would mean an additional 280 learners continue in the education or training course first selected<sup>25</sup>.



<sup>25</sup> Based on the "<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-achievement-rates-tables-2015-to-2016>" National Achievement Rate Tables (2015 to 2016) – this includes pupils in further education, sixth form colleges, and publicly funded private providers but not schools. To exceed the national average, pupils in Stoke-on-Trent would need to complete additional 560 learning aims (programme or module). 280 learners is based on an average of two learning aims per pupil

## ENABLING THEMES



## Enabling theme 1: building parental engagement in their children's education

### Why is this important?

'... 'at-home good parenting' has a significant positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation. In the primary age range the impact caused by different levels of parental involvement is much bigger than differences associated with variations in the quality of schools. The scale of the impact is evident across all social classes and all ethnic groups<sup>26</sup>.'

In a recent report, the EEF acknowledged the crucial role parents play in supporting their child's learning. Research on the importance of parental engagement is well established, and it is widely acknowledged that the more engaged parents are in the education of their child, the more likely that child is to succeed throughout their school career and beyond<sup>27</sup>. The partnership board has identified parental engagement as a key theme that underpins all four priorities. We want to do more to help parents to support their children at all stages of their educational journey.

### What will we do?

Practitioners feel we should do more to help parents and carers understand the importance and relevance of early education and how they can support their children's learning, including greater take up of the funded two, three and four year old offer. In addition to the work detailed under priority one, we will:

- work with our EEF Research School and expert practitioners on how best to involve parents in their children's learning, looking to evidence based practices in the EEF early years toolkit; and
- assess the impact of work undertaken by Stoke-on-Trent College to introduce a wider parenting package to those parents learning English as an additional language. This will include sign posting to opportunities such as the early years free entitlement. Depending on the impact, we will extend this approach to other providers in the city.

#### **In primary and secondary phases we will:**

- build on work underway through the city's school readiness programme to develop targeted approaches to improve parental support. As part of this, we will put in place evidence-based packages that will enhance parental engagement in children's education, learning and careers choices.

<sup>26</sup> The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: a literature review, Professor Charles Desforges with Alberto Abouchaar (July 2003)

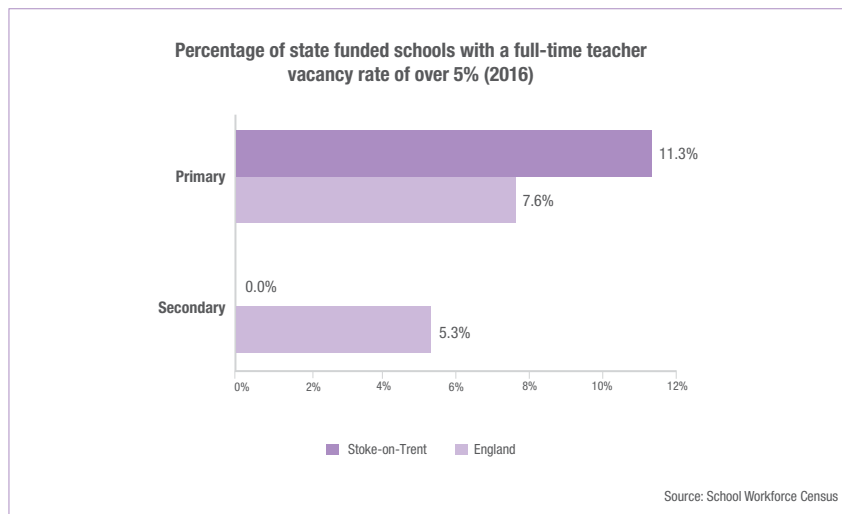
<sup>27</sup> Parental Engagement, EEF EY Toolkit Strand – [educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk](https://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)

## Enabling theme 2: building and supporting capacity in the teaching workforce

### Why is this important?

Quality teaching is the cornerstone of attainment at all stages of education. We will join forces with a wide range of partners both nationally and across the city to build on and strengthen existing activities in recruitment, retention and Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Our discussions with local partners have highlighted concerns about

difficulties in attracting teachers to work in the city, and about a growing problem in recruiting maths and science teachers in particular. All too often non-specialist staff fill vacancies in these critical subjects. We believe that investment in teachers' learning and careers is critical to recruitment and retention, as well as to the quality of teaching and leadership in the city's schools.



## What we will do

We will:

- build on existing work to improve peer-to-peer support amongst teachers in the early stages of their careers and improve access to targeted CPD and career planning advice for them. We will look at avenues for recruiting more maths and science specialists, working with Teach First as well as local providers of teacher training;
- strengthen the CPD offer for teachers in the city, drawing on the resources available locally through the Teaching Leadership Innovation Fund, which includes support for specialist and non-specialist science teachers (through STEM Learning and the Institute of Physics), and fully funded National Professional Qualifications offering high quality training for aspiring and current school leaders at all levels of leadership;
- review with post-16 partners in the city the CPD offer available to their workforce and what more can be done to build capacity in English, maths and science;
- collaborate with the two local SCITTs, the Maths Excellence Partnership, the Science Excellence Partnership and the local Maths Hub to develop and build upon Teacher Subject Specialism Training in mathematics and science. We will build on the capacity of non-specialists who may be able to move into a mathematics or science role, upskill non-specialist teachers currently teaching maths or science; and work with those looking to return to the profession;
- promote the work of our EEF Research School to link teachers with evidence informed practices to establish a norm for teachers in Stoke-on-Trent to be research engaged and effectively challenge the barriers felt by those children who are most disadvantaged; and
- work in partnership with the two universities to expand undergraduate internships in local schools to help develop the teaching workforce of the future, building on the work of the Maths Excellence Partnership (MEP) in deploying maths undergraduates from Keele University.

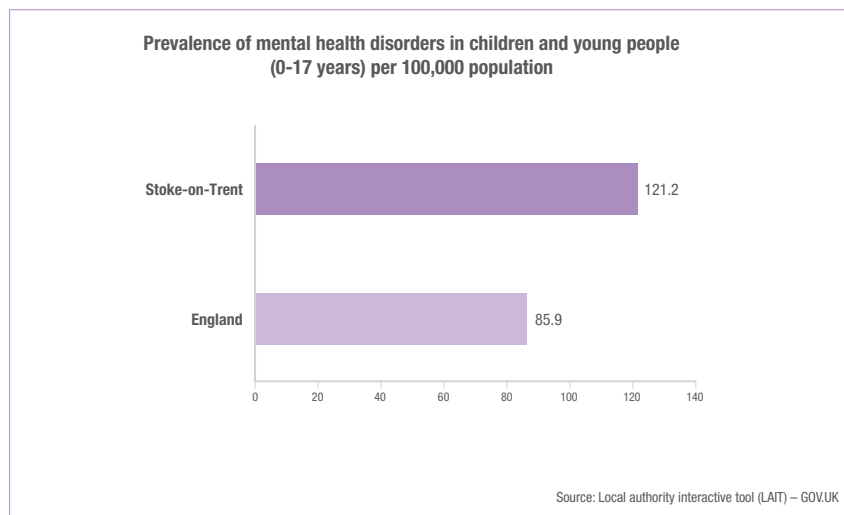
## Enabling theme 3: supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils

### Why is this important?

We know that there is a significant issue with poor mental health amongst children in the city and their parents. Data for Stoke-on-Trent shows that:

- there are an estimated 3,700 children aged five to sixteen living with a mental health issue<sup>28</sup>.
- mental health conditions are found in almost one in five families with dependent children.
- the prevalence of in-patient admission rates for mental health disorders (zero to seventeen year olds) has been increasing year on year since 2012<sup>29</sup>.

The recent 'Joint Strategic Needs Assessment' (JSNA) report highlights the importance of improving outcomes for children and young people with poor mental health. Those living with mental health conditions are less likely to reach their full academic potential; more likely to drop out of education, employment or training; and more likely to become known to the youth justice system<sup>30</sup>.



28 Children's Story: Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (April 2017)

29 Local authority interactive tool (LAIT) – GOV.UK

30 Children's Story: Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (April 2017)

## What will we do?

The partnership board and its sub groups will determine ways to best support emotional wellbeing, mental health and resilience of learners at every stage of education. Initially we will:

- identify effective, evidence based practice, offering targeted interventions to those schools where exclusions and unauthorised absences are highest, drawing together the work of our EEF Research School, the EEF toolkit and local efforts;
- introduce ways to promote wellbeing and resilience of learners in the classroom, through programmes such as the Paws b and Paws .b curricula from Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP), to teach children the skills of self-regulation and behaviour management;
- offer mental health first aid training to all secondary schools in Stoke-on-Trent and, depending on impact, make this available to primary schools;
- implement the Mental Health Service and Schools Link programme in up to 60 primary and secondary schools, colleges and alternative education settings, with engagement from key CAMHS providers, NHS and the third sector. A plan will be in place offering further detail in January 2018; and
- learn from pilot work undertaken by SASCAL through four key projects, aimed at building pupil resilience and good mental health.



**Stoke-on-Trent**

**GET IN TOUCH**

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