

# Joint area review

Report for children and young people in Stoke on Trent

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Report for children and young  
people about the services they  
receive in Stoke on Trent

## Why should I read this?

The law says that inspectors must look at and then report on how well local services serve children and young people in an area. This is called a "review". Inspectors visited your area recently. You might like to read this, or the full report, which you can find on Ofsted's website, to find out what they had to say.

## What did the inspectors do?

Six inspectors visited Stoke on Trent in September 2008 so that they could get a feel of what life is like for children and young people in the area. They:

- ❖ talked and listened to a number of children and young people
- ❖ talked with adults working with children and young people (such as social workers, headteachers and school staff, youth workers, nurses, doctors and councillors)
- ❖ spoke to parents and other people caring for children
- ❖ heard from the council and other agencies about what they think about the services they provide for children
- ❖ looked at a lot of data and read many documents; and
- ❖ visited a number of neighbourhoods and projects in the area.

The inspectors looked at how well services make sure that children and young people are properly kept safe. They looked at specific services for children who are being looked after by the local authority and those for children and young people with a learning difficulty and/or disability.

## How well are children and young people safeguarded in Stoke on Trent?

Local services are working well together to improve arrangements for helping to make sure that children and young people are safe. Generally children and young people feel safe in Stoke on Trent, particularly in school and travelling to and from school. There are good arrangements for protecting children who are most at risk. However, there are not enough services to help families in need. Good action is being taken to reduce the number of teenagers who become pregnant although the numbers are still high. Young people aged 16 and 17 who are not in education, employment or training, find it difficult to get specialist support if they have mental health needs.

### **How good are local services for children who are being looked after by the council in Stoke on Trent?**

The council wants to do a lot to improve the lives of children and young people who are looked after and things are generally getting better. There is a strong focus on listening to looked after young people and encouraging them to take part in decision making. The Special Congresses for looked after young people, together with the 'changes' group, enable them to make their views known and help to build their self-confidence. Along with other agencies, the council is working hard to tackle the things that need to improve even more, such as care plans, the range of placements available and the proper level of support to help looked after children do well in school.

### **How good are local services for children and young people who have a learning difficulty and/or a disability in Stoke on Trent?**

Provision for children and young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate overall. Agencies are working increasingly well together to provide early support to families with young children and to improve outcomes for all children and young people with a learning difficulty and/or disability. However, not enough secondary schools are doing enough to make sure that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do well in school. There are too many young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are not in education, employment or training.

### **How well are local services led and managed?**

The management of services to help ensure that children and young people are safe and to meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people, such as those who become looked after or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is good. Council leaders, managers and staff are very ambitious about improving the lives of these children and young people and are bringing about rapid improvement. In the light of this, the chances of making things better for vulnerable children and young people in the future are good.

### **What should services do to improve services further?**

#### **Things that need doing straight away**

Find ways of telling all children and young people in the area about this report.

#### **Things that need doing over the next six months**

Provide more services and support for families in difficulties.

Improve access to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services for 16 and 17 year olds.

Improve the quality of care plans and personal education plans for looked after children and do more to make sure they do well in school.

Increase the range of placement choice for looked after children and young people.

Challenge secondary schools to promote inclusive provision and ensure that children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do well in school.

Make sure that the Parents' Forum is in a better position to inform service delivery and increase awareness of the growing range of services.

Improve the funding arrangements for special educational needs.

Make sure that there are fewer young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are not in education, employment or training.

Ensure that school cluster arrangements and the development of neighbourhood working do not duplicate or create gaps in provision.

Make the Schools Forum represents a wider range of children and young people and is in a better position to take part in decision making.