

START WELL STRATEGY

2024 - 2027



FOREWORD

Chris McLoughlin OBE

Executive Director People and Neighbourhoods and Director of Children's Services

As leaders in the field of education, health and care, we recognise the importance of collaborative efforts required to create the right conditions for families to access information, advice and help as soon as they need it. We are delighted to present the Stockport Early Help Strategy which is part of a suite of strategies to deliver on Stockport's Children and Young People's plan. It outlines our joint commitment across the Stockport Family Partnership to early intervention and help in supporting all children, young people and their families to thrive in the communities they live, learn and play.

This strategy builds on our existing early help offer, and as we refresh the strategy, we celebrate the work that has already been done in Stockport and will continue to take forward our restorative approach and principles in all that we do.

Cllr Wendy Meikle

Cabinet Member for Children Families and Education

The strategy is fully in line with the joint aspirations and approach to the delivery of One Stockport: One Future and the Borough Plan and Stockport's Children and Young Peoples Plan. At its core is the spirit of collaboration, inclusion, equality and community. We know that we will have the biggest impact on improving lives when we work together across public services, businesses and communities. Every child is unique. Stockport Council's commitment is to provide flexible services that respect individual wishes and meet individual needs. The approach will empower families and enhance outcomes. Our combined workforce plays a pivotal role; therefore, we are dedicated to developing a skilled workforce that strives for excellence through continuous learning, professional development, and a passion for making a difference.

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the Start Well strategy for children (pre birth to five) families and communities in Stockport for the period 2024 until 2027.

Stockport is an ambitious place undergoing a spectacular transformation. A place to work and play, with green space and lots of culture on our doorstep, with excellent connections to Greater Manchester, London and the Peak District. It is a place where residents, businesses and communities work together to make good things happen and get people the support they need.

But Stockport is not immune from the big challenges of our times. The challenges facing us are big. They will take time. That is why One Stockport: One Future looks ahead to 2040. We want to ensure that Stockport is a place that is resilient to whatever changes and opportunities will come in the future.

One Stockport: One Future is the next phase of our borough plan. It sets out how we will work together to tackle the challenges we face, so Stockport can be the best place to live happy and healthy lives, a place where anything is possible, a place that everyone, right across the Borough can be proud of. It is embedded into our Council Plan and will be delivered through our organisational and partnership strategies.

DELIVERING 5 BIG THINGS TOGETHER

To achieve our shared vision to 'make Stockport the best place to live happy and healthy lives', we must have a relentless focus on the biggest challenges facing our borough:-

- **Fair and inclusive – making Stockport a great, diverse place to live, where everyone can thrive**
- **Climate Action Now – creating a 'green print' for Stockport so it is a climate friendly place to live, work, play and invest.**

No one thing or organisation can address these challenges alone. One Stockport: One Future is a collective call to action to work together to deliver the '5 big things' we believe will transform our borough over the next 15 years to help us achieve our shared vision.

The role of the Start Well Strategy in delivering:

The 5 big things are crucial to creating the right conditions so that all children, families and communities can thrive.

They can only be achieved if we all work together. Our Start Well Strategy provides a strategic framework for the delivery of One Stockport: One Future through the lens of children, families and communities who may need additional help to thrive.

The Start Well Strategy has a particular focus on our ambition to be 'the best place to grow up', 'best health and care' and 'thriving neighbourhoods' but also contributes to the delivery of the other big things.

1

Good Jobs and Homes



2

The Best Place to Grow Up



3

Best Health and Care



4

Thriving Neighbourhoods



5

Clean, Green Transport



The Start Well Strategy and the Children and Young People Plan

The Start Well Strategy is one of a suite of documents that contributes to the delivery of the Children and Young People Plan 2024-2027. The Plan identifies seven Big Ambitions

Ambition 1 We will work together to give families the help they need when they need it, so children and young people are safe and can grow up in their families and be supported by their family networks wherever possible.

Ambition 2 All children have the best start in life, be ready for school and life-long learning.

Ambition 3 All children and young people can access and engage in education and achieve the best they can.

Ambition 4 Children and families with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) receive the best possible support at the right time to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved.

Ambition 5 All children, young people and families have access to a clear and inclusive early help offer.

Ambition 6 All children and young people enjoy good emotional health and wellbeing and can access co-ordinated robust and timely support based on need¹.

Ambition 7 children in care and care leavers have safe, stable, and loving homes and are equipped with the skills they need to live a fulfilling, successful and rewarding life.

We want children and young people to be able to say*:

- I feel safe
- I feel part of my local community
- My voice is heard and acted upon
- I enjoy good health and wellbeing
- I am happy and have people I can trust
- I am confident and able to reach my goals
- The people who love and care for me are enabled to do this

*Outcomes co-produced with children and young people

OUR VISION IN STOCKPORT

Our overarching ambition for Stockport is “to be the best place to live happy and healthy lives. We want to create a place where anything is possible, a place that everyone right across the Borough can be proud of.”

Our vision for children and families is key to achieving this ambition

Our shared vision is for Stockport to be the best place for all children to grow up happy, healthy, with confidence, ambition and surrounded by love, care, and kindness. We want all families to feel supported, confident, and resilient and connected to their community and we want all children to have the very best start in life and to thrive throughout their growing up and beyond.

Inclusion is at the heart of our Children and Young People Plan: many children and young people in Stockport live in settled families, are healthy, benefit from high quality education places and achieve well at school and college. However, there are still too many children and families experiencing specific inequalities which prevent them from reaching their potential.

Our practice is founded on the belief that every child and young person matters and matters equally. We will nurture, sustain, and further develop connections, relationships, and mutual support between ourselves and within our communities in Stockport to build a better future, where all children and young people are included in the success of their community, and no one is left behind.

Working in Partnership

This strategy has been written in line with the commitments made in our Stockport Participation Charter, and Engagement and Participation Strategy 2024-27.

Stockport puts people at the heart of what we do and is committed to empowering people to shape and influence their local communities and council services.



Our Participation Charter builds on our Co-production Charter, which was produced by young people with additional needs and disabilities, parent, carers, health and voluntary and community organisations in 2020.

The Participation Charter covers all services and sets out how we collectively as a Council will work together with local residents and stakeholders. The Charter states that together we will:-

- **Listen and Engage**
 - Create spaces where you are able to share your voice
 - Make sure we listen to people who have experienced disadvantage and inequality
 - Reward and recognise people who share their experiences with us
- **Do what matters**
 - Prioritise what is important to you in what we do
 - Learn from each other
 - Work together to create solutions
- **Communicate clearly**
 - Be clear with our expectations
 - Have conversations about you, with you
 - Be clear about what can and cannot be influenced or changed
- **Be accountable**
 - Respond and follow up on agreed actions
 - Provide ongoing feedback in the form of 'you said, we did, what next'
 - Learn from and share what has worked and where we could do better
- **Be respectful**
 - Respect experiences, you are the expert in your own life
 - Have mutual respect for people and communities
 - Make information accessible for everyone
- **Work together**
 - Work hard to build relationships with people and communities
 - Be creative with how we work with people so there are many ways for us to hear your views
 - Work with you at all stages so your views can influence design and delivery of change.

OUR START WELL STRATEGY

Giving children the best start in life – the case for intervening early

Getting it right in the Early Years presents the best early intervention and prevention opportunity across Stockport Council and Stockport NHS Foundation Trust, leading to improved outcomes for children, families, communities and reduced inequalities across Stockport.

Pre-pandemic, the case for intervening in the earliest years of life, was strengthened by several influential reviews. (Field, F. 2010¹; Marmot, M. 2010²; Allen, G. 2011³; and Leadsom, A. 2013⁴).

Marmot's review of health inequalities in 2010 stressed that the early years must be prioritised, highlighting the importance of the first 1001 days from conception to age 2. Marmot, highlighted inequalities in child development and attainment at school were stubborn, and closely related to deprivation. Within his review, he cited the good work in Greater Manchester (GM) to improve equity in the early years such as the GM Early Years (EYs) Delivery Model. Marmot called for early intervention to prevent health inequalities and reduce child poverty.

More recently (2020)⁵ Marmot's report continues to highlight the widening inequalities gap and impact of the pandemic on early years children, calling once again for government to urgently prioritise reducing inequalities in early childhood development. In support of Marmot's findings and argument, the government published the 'Best Start for Life: A vision for the 1,001 critical days'⁶ in March 2021. The vision sets out 6 action areas to improve outcomes for families between pregnancy and age 2. **The vision paper also supports the development of Family Hubs**, influenced by the principles of Sure Start Children's Centres, considered one of the most important policy programmes in the early years in England.

¹ Field, Frank, Cabinet Office, corp creator. (2010) *The foundation years : preventing poor children becoming poor adults : the report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances*

² Marmot, M. Fair society, healthy lives : the Marmot Review : strategic review of health inequalities in England post-2010. (2010) ISBN 9780956487001

³ Allen, Graham, Cabinet Office, corp creator. (2011) *Early intervention : the next steps : an independent report to Her Majesty's Government*

⁴ Leadsom, A., Field, F., Burstow, P., & Lucas, C. (2013). *The 1001 Critical Days: The Importance of the Conception to Age Two Period.*

⁵ Marmot M, Allen J, Goldblatt P, Herd E, Morrison J. Build Back Fairer: The COVID-19 Marmot Review. The Health Foundation; 2020 (health.org.uk/publications/build-back-fairer-the-covid-19-marmot-review)

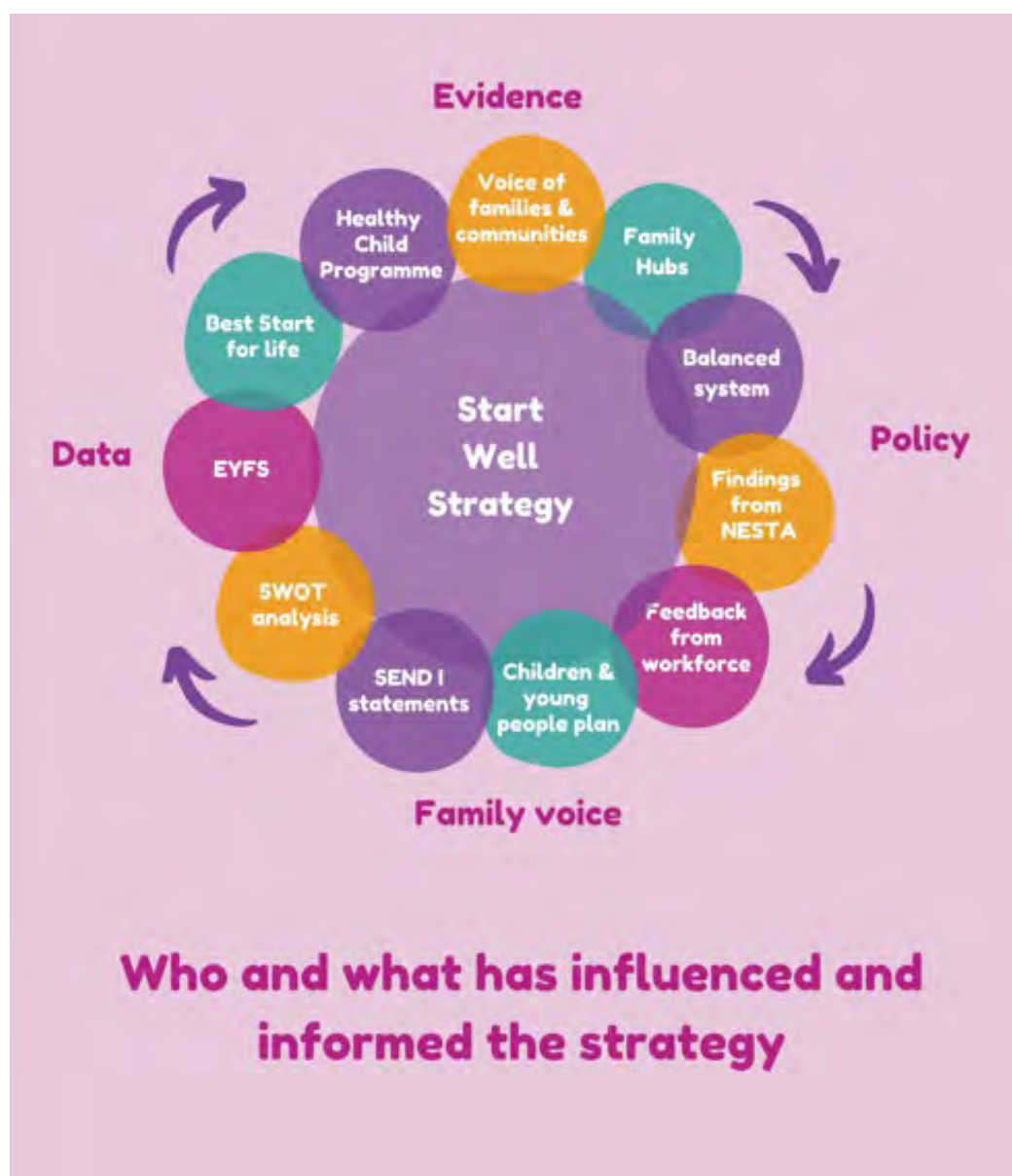
⁶ HM Government, corp creator. (2021) *The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days: The Early Years Healthy Development Review Report*

Refreshing the strategy – three years on

This strategy is a refreshed version of our previous strategy launched in 2021.

The process for refreshing the Start Well strategy has involved a systematic approach to reviewing the original plan, evaluating outcomes, consideration of latest literature and research – local and National, government guidance, stakeholder engagement and learning from the experiences of families. This includes insights and learning from our Nesta Innovation Partnership 2021 – 2024 – A Fairer Start Local Stockport.

The refreshed strategy builds on the foundations of the last three years (**see appendix for key achievements**). It has been updated and enhanced based on new insights and changing circumstances to ensure it remains effective and relevant in improving outcomes for children in their early years and their families. By aligning the strategy to the ‘Best Start for Life: A vision for the 1001 critical days’ and incorporating new and local research, the strategy will have a strengthened focus on the first 1001 days of life, prevention and early intervention, boys living in poverty and other children (Babies/Children in our Care, Special, Educational Needs and Disabilities and ethnically diverse) at risk of disadvantage.



Key policy and legislative drivers

- Healthy Child Programme (0-5 years) June 2023 updated
- Best Start for Life: A vision for the 1001 critical days (2021)
- Family Hubs and Start for Life programme (2022)
- SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (EYFS) (2021)
- Supporting Families Programme (2020)

Our Start Well strategy aligns with and reflects the priorities of the following local strategies and plans:

- Greater Manchester School Readiness Programme
- One Stockport Borough Plan – One Stockport: One Future
- One Health and Care Plan
- Stockport's Children and Young People Plan 2024-2027
- Early Help Strategy 2024-2027
- SEND Strategy 2024-2027
- Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023 – 2026
- Family Hubs programme

Purpose of our Start Well Strategy 2024-2027

Recognising how critical the early years are for children's development and success in later life, the refreshed Start Well strategy articulates how the Council, alongside the Foundation Trust and other partners, will work with families and communities to prioritise outcomes for children in the earliest years of life over the next 3 years. The strategy is underpinned by the Healthy Child Programme, a key public health early intervention and prevention policy with alignment to the GM EYs Delivery Model.

The strategy sets out an ambitious programme of work and aims to provide a comprehensive, collaborative framework that encompasses an integrated approach to supporting optimal child development from pregnancy to age 5. By focusing on **2 strategic goals and 6 key priorities (see our plan on a page below)**, this strategy aligns the 'Best Start for Life: A vision for the 1,001 critical days' guidance (2021) and seeks to ensure every child in Stockport has the opportunity to **start well, live well and thrive**.

As Marmot (2020) noted, the stubborn nature of inequalities in child development and educational attainment is linked to deprivation, which means the current context of the cost-of-living crisis makes the challenge greater than ever. There are certain constraints and external/environmental factors that have a huge bearing on the developmental outcomes of children, in particular poverty. **This means the whole**

system beyond midwifery, Start Well teams and early years providers needs to continue to be brought into supporting the Start Well strategy as recommended in the EYs Peer Review (2019)



Start Well Strategy 2024 -2027

Vision

Working together with families and communities, all children in Stockport will have the best start in life, be ready for school and become lifelong learners

Ambition

By 2027 we will have narrowed the achievement gap at the end of Reception for children living in poverty, particularly boys

Core approaches and values

Inclusive practice, integrated working, relational, restorative and trauma informed practice, coproduction, make every contact count, prevention and early intervention, innovation and evidence based practices

Start Well outcomes

- Children will experience loving nurturing relationships
- Children live in safe homes free from adversity
- Children are supported to have good early years development
- Children and parents/carers have good physical and mental health and access to healthcare

Strategic goal - Ensuring the Start Well System is working together to give families the support they need

An empowered Start Well workforce



- Deliver a high-quality workforce development and training offer to support integrated delivery
- Develop volunteer pathways as a route into employment
- Extend peer support programmes to build capacity and resilience within communities
- Ensure sufficient high quality early education and childcare provision
- Continue to develop a shared understanding of school readiness

Continually improving the Start Well offer



- Ensure better use of data and evaluation to improve the quality of our offer and improve children's outcomes
- Scale evidence-based practice to have the greatest impact on children's outcomes (changemaker)
- Implement recommendations from balanced system to ensure we make best use of resources to support SLC and physical development across neighbourhoods

Leadership for change



- Hold a shared accountability for improving early years outcomes and reducing inequalities, which goes beyond traditional early childhood services
- Grow front line leadership to share influence and responsibility for the quality of practice and impact on children's outcomes
- Ensure effective integrated delivery within neighbourhoods and strong partnerships

Strategic goal - Ensuring families have access to the services they need

Seamless support for families



- Identify and respond to developmental needs of early years children at the earliest opportunity
- Recognise the first 1001 days of life, from pregnancy to age 2, as a critical period to lay the foundations for lifelong health and wellbeing
- Prioritise specific projects that support equality of outcomes for early years children and their families
- Ensure the voice of infants and parents and carers informs and shapes Start Well services and offers

A welcoming hub for families



- Establish One Stockport Family Hubs as a way to access Start Well offer
- Work more closely with VCFSE organisations and groups to improve access and develop our offer

The information families need when & how they need it



- Further develop and clearly define the digital offer to extend access and options of support for families

Home Learning Environment

START WELL VISION AND AMBITION

Vision Statement – “Working together with families and communities, all children in Stockport will have the best start in life, be ready for school and become life-long learners”

Ambition Statement – “By 2027 we will have narrowed the achievement gap at the end of Reception for children living in poverty, particularly boys”

This vision and ambition will be achieved through a prevention and early intervention approach which focuses on relationships, between parents and infants, their wider community and the services that provide help in that community. A system wide focus on improving outcomes in child development and school readiness which goes beyond traditional early childhood services is essential. This requires a continued change in culture across the workforce so that everyone knows what it means to give children the best start in life and how they can contribute towards this vision.

What does best start in life and school ready mean?

The ‘best start in life’ starts in pregnancy and refers to providing children with optimal conditions and opportunities during the early years to ensure their overall health, wellbeing and development. There are essential factors that we want every baby and young child to have as the foundations to a healthy, happy life:

- **Loving nurturing relationships**
- **Safe homes free from adversity**
- **Good early years development**
- **Good physical and mental health and access to healthcare**

These essential factors will frame the high-level outcomes for this strategy.

For this strategy, Stockport are defining school readiness as...

‘A child entering compulsory education ready to engage in and benefit from all the learning experiences available, enabling him or her to become a life-long learner’.

The journey to school readiness starts at pregnancy and continues to the age of five. It is developed through relationships and interactions in the home with parent/carers and family members, in the early learning environment, and the wider community. Within research (local and National), the role of parents and carers and the home learning environment stands out as the greatest influence of a child's development. **Supporting the home learning environment will therefore be a fundamental foundation in achieving the key priorities of the strategy.**

It is recognised that all children have different needs and abilities and these need to be embraced on their school readiness journey to ensure they achieve their full developmental potential. Our strategy reinforces a commitment to creating a supportive inclusive environment where all children in Stockport can thrive.

Work will continue to develop a shared understanding of school readiness.

The approaches and values underpinning implementation:

Inclusive practice is founded on the belief that every child and young person matters and matters equally. We will nurture sustain and further develop connections, relationships and mutual support between ourselves and within our communities in Stockport to build a better future, where all children and young people can thrive, and no one is left behind.

We will build on our programme of **co-production** with families so that services meet need based on lived experiences, feedback, and collaboration. This will ensure services are genuinely responsive to the needs and wants of children and their families.

Our commitment to **prevention** will stop problems before they start by reducing risk factors in family lives and communities. We will identify and provide **early intervention** to support children to get the best start in life. We will work together to address needs quickly as they emerge to prevent them from escalating or reoccurring, requiring specialist or statutory support. We will also support our families requiring risk support and our corporate parenting responsibilities by addressing the developmental, educational, health and emotional needs of children under 5 in our care.

Integrated working will ensure seamless collaboration between various professionals, services and agencies to provide holistic coordinated support to early years children and their families.

Restorative, relational and trauma-informed practices align with integrated working and enhance the effectiveness of our work with children and their families from pregnancy to age 5. Embedding these practices within our approach to working with families benefits both the workforce and families by creating supportive, effective and empowering interactions that foster positive relationships. **Making every contact count** will ensure every interaction with families contributes to improved outcomes.

By embedding **evidence-based practices**, our workforce can ensure they are providing the highest quality and most impactful interventions which are grounded in research and responsive to the needs of families.

Innovation will be crucial to enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency and reach of our Start Well offer. We will remain at the forefront of innovation to ensure we continuously improve the offer to provide the best possible early intervention to give children the best start in life.

WHAT IS START WELL?

Start Well brings together Stockport's early childhood services who work together with families and communities to improve outcomes for children from pregnancy through to starting reception year at primary school.

The **Healthy Child Programme** underpins the strategy and effective targeting of Start Well resources to support earlier identification of developmental need and timeliness of evidence-based interventions.

SEND Code of Practice sets out our legal responsibilities when supporting children and young people 0-25 years with special educational needs and disabilities. The guidance promotes inclusion, early identification and intervention. It complements the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets out the other main universal framework for professionals working with children in the Early Years.

Start Well integrated neighbourhood teams (midwifery, health visitors and early years workers closely aligned to family help and school nursing) deliver the universal, early help and targeted offer to children aged 0-5 years and their families. The leadership and management structure has been set up to deliver an effective integrated model with Heads of Service and Service Leads from different disciplines to also enable a 0-19 years (up to 25 where young person has SEND) whole family approach.

Other core neighbourhood early childhood teams and provision include:

- **Children's therapy services**
- **Portage**
- **Early years and childcare providers**
- **Libraries**
- **Family Nurse Partnership**
- **GPs**

The **Team Around the Early Years (TAEY)** will continue as our early intervention approach underpinned by restorative approaches which aims to support children and families with emerging needs. The approach enables early years providers to access early help and support for their children and families. **Supporting and promoting the habit of good attendance in the early years remains a priority for TAEY.**

The **Early Years Entitlement** includes work with partners to identify and implement opportunities to improve the local childcare market and support the economic wellbeing of families. It is a priority to ensure geographically appropriately located early education and childcare offers that are high quality and flexible to meet parental needs whilst maximising the take up of the 2, 3 and 4 year old entitlements. This includes implementation of the early years and wrap around childcare expansion.

Early Years provision includes work to maintain a high number of settings Ofsted rated good or

better and raising standards in early years settings to ensure all children start school ready and become life-long learners.

The Local Authority will continue to meet its early education and childcare duties through the delivery of the Start Well strategy ensuring sufficient high-quality provision.

Start Well and Family Hubs

In Autumn 2022, Stockport was awarded funding by the Department for Education (DfE) to create a network of Family Hubs to support families from pregnancy through to young people aged up to 19, or aged up to 25 with SEND to get the right information, help and support at the right time, built on a platform of trusted relationships.

Family Hubs will exist as networks of people and places which work together to create open access to universal, early help and community offers within local neighbourhoods. Families can access these offers virtually, and physically through buildings and outreach. The Family Hubs programme builds on and supports the further strengthening of our Start Well model. It focuses on creating the conditions for a more accessible, integrated offer which extends beyond the early years.

The 'service offer' for Family Hubs as set out in government guidance is broad ranging, covering all aspects of family life. This includes relationship support, debt and welfare advice, public health and mental health services, substance (alcohol/drug) misuse support, smoking cessation, oral health improvement, nutrition and weight management, intensive targeted family support, housing, youth services- universal and targeted including youth justice services, SEND provision, domestic abuse support and parenting.

Specific to the early years includes midwifery, health visiting, parent-Infant relationships and perinatal mental health support, early language and home learning environment support, infant feeding, activities for children aged 0-5, early

childhood education and care and financial support. Many of these early years services are already delivered through our Start Well neighbourhood integrated delivery model, providing a strong foundation to extend beyond the early years to a 0-25 approach.

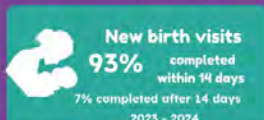
To support the development of Family Hubs in Stockport with a strong Start Well offer at the core, Start Well sites have now become One Stockport Family Hub sites. In communities where there is no main site, access to the Start Well offer and teams is available through:

- Local Health Centres
- Other places, like local Libraries and Life Leisure Hubs. These places are identified by family hub signs or banners
- Health Visiting and School Nursing advice line
- Families can also access Start Well and the offer beyond the early years online via www.stockport.gov.uk/familyhubs or at www.startwellstockport.co.uk

GIVING CHILDREN THE BEST START IN LIFE – WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The Stockport Picture for Early Years Children

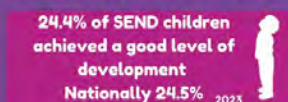
Loving, nurturing relationships



Safe homes free from adversity



Good early years development



Good physical and mental health and access to healthcare



Stockport continues to make progress in supporting children to get the best start in life, be ready for school and become life-long learners. However, it is still challenging for some of our children in the earliest years of life and their families, particularly those living in poverty.

There are over 3000 births a year in Stockport, and with the growing diversity within communities, it is crucial our systems of support and service offers are accessible to all families. Programmes such as Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) are helping us extend our reach to marginalised and disadvantaged communities, improve cultural awareness and continue to strengthen relationships.

Overall outcomes (2023/24) in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) measure (Good Level of Development) are now in line with the national average- Stockport 67.8% and National 67.3%. Outcomes for SEND learners have also improved. A Good Level of Development at the end of the Reception year is a key indicator for later life outcomes and lifelong learning.

Healthy Child Programme performance data reports the proportion of children receiving mandated contacts and timeliness of assessments is higher than the National and NW averages, indicating effective screening of child development needs in order to support readiness for school.

Whilst the achievement gap has narrowed in the EYFSP measure, a more granular analysis of the data for early years children continues to highlight Stockport's challenge and the correlation between deprivation and risk:

- Stockport is the 8th most polarised borough in England
- Increase in Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility in Stockport from 6009 (March 2020) to 8773 (22/23)
- Babies and young children continue to be impacted by the pandemic and cost of living crisis
- Healthy Child Programme data at a neighbourhood level suggests the inequalities gap widening and early child development differences are increasing
- Outcomes at the end of the EYFSP remain a concern for white boys living in areas of disadvantage and children eligible for FSM
- Early years children living in poverty do less well than their peers in neighbouring boroughs

The more we build good foundations, in the earliest years of life and beyond, we reduce inequalities and lifelong learning becomes achievable.

Voice of Families - What parents told us about being a parent in Stockport and their experiences of services

Hearing and responding to the voice of families and their experiences of services is crucial to successful strategy development and implementation. Incorporating the voices and experiences of Stockport parents, carers and children will ensure our Start Well strategy 2024-2027 is family centred and responsive to the needs of children in the earliest years of life and challenges faced.



HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE OUR VISION AND AMBITION?

Start Well Strategy – Three-Year Plan 2024-2027

The following two strategic goals and six priorities will support the successful implementation of the Start Well strategy over the next three years. Delivery plans will detail the specific integrated projects and initiatives needed to achieve our objectives. The strategy links closely with other key strategies, particularly SEND and Early Help. These interconnected strategies work together to ensure a joined up and coordinated whole system approach to improving outcomes.

Strategic Goal 1 – Ensuring the Start Well System is working together to give families the support they need

Priority 1 – An empowered Start Well workforce

Why is it important for Stockport?

An empowered, well supported Start Well workforce, is crucial for families to receive the support they need through high quality, consistent, and responsive help and support families will experience better communication and a coordinated holistic approach. This in turn helps build trusting relationships with families and communities, encouraging more families to seek out and receive the support they need when they need it.

In Stockport, families are supported by a range of services, professionals and volunteers, each of whom brings skills, knowledge and empathy to interactions with families. From their first contact, every parent and carer must feel that they are heard and that they can ask for help. Parents and carers should be confident that the people there to help them have the right skills and knowledge and that whoever they speak to is aware of the full range of support available. Above all, families should feel that every individual they encounter treats them with dignity and respect.

How will we achieve it?

- Deliver a high-quality workforce development and training offer to support integrated delivery
- Develop volunteer pathways as a route into employment
- Extend peer support programmes to build capacity and resilience within communities
- Ensure sufficient high quality early education and childcare provision
- Continue to develop a shared understanding of school readiness

What will success look like?

- Confident, competent and skilled early years workforce supporting early years development
- Increased number of early years practitioners registered and using GM EYs competency framework
- Increased number of early years practitioners trained and supported to deliver evidence-based interventions
- Increased number of parent volunteers trained as EPEC Parent Group Leaders extending and expanding peer support options in communities, and pathways into employment
- Maintaining the high percentage of Ofsted registered early years providers with good or outstanding judgements
- Sufficiency reports demonstrate a strong market for childcare

Priority 2 – Continually improving the Start Well offer

Why is it important for Stockport?

In Stockport we want every parent and carer to have confidence that the services and support in their area will help them give their baby the best start in life. A successfully integrated Start Well provision for local families with every organisation (whether public or third sector) contributing to the local Start Well offer is crucial. It is essential that organisations are supported to understand how the work they do contributes to the wider system of supporting early years children and their families.

Families and communities are more likely to engage with and trust services that are responsive to need and are accessible. This leads to increased parent and carer satisfaction and engagement, which is crucial to improving children's outcomes. Our responsiveness, equity of offer and accessibility will be key focuses to continuous improvements.

By continuously improving the Start Well offer, we will ensure the services delivered remain effective, relevant and impactful to meeting the needs of children, families and communities. This will include regularly evaluating and refining our offer so the quality increases and resources can be deployed more effectively. An improved focus on 'what works' to improve outcomes will support embedding of the most suitable evidence-based practice/interventions to tackle disadvantage and the determinants that lead to poor early years outcomes for some communities in Stockport.

Good data and evidence informed decision making will help us commission and deliver services which continuously improve our offer and enhance early years outcomes.

How will we achieve it?

- Ensure better use of data and evaluation to improve the quality of our offer and improve children's outcomes
- Scale evidence-based practice to have the greatest impact on children's outcomes (Changemaker programme)
- Implement recommendations from balanced system to ensure we make best use of resources to support speech, language and communication and physical development across neighbourhoods

What will success look like?

- Robust monitoring of early years outcomes and inequalities gap
- Learning from the experiences of parents and carers
- A continuous programme of service and practice improvement
- Effective evidence-based interventions are delivered
- Use of evidence as a foundation of decision making and allocation of resources to interventions that have a strong evidence base

Priority 3 - Leadership for change

Why is it important for Stockport?

Giving every child in Stockport the best start in life requires clear and committed leadership. Families need leaders across the system to work together to achieve consistent and quality services. This includes advocating the necessary resources to deliver impactful results and reduce inequalities.

Collaboration and partnerships are crucial to achieving change and responding to challenges across the system and in communities. Leadership for change will ensure Start Well services are innovative, equitable and responsive to the needs of early years children and their families. Strong system and distributed leadership will help create the conditions within communities where children get the best start in life and thrive.

How will we achieve it?

- Hold a shared accountability for improving early years outcomes and reducing inequalities, which goes beyond traditional early childhood services
- Grow front line leadership to share influence and responsibility for the quality of practice and impact on children's outcomes
- Ensure effective integrated delivery within neighbourhoods and strong partnerships

What will success look like?

- Clear lines of responsibility and accountability are in place; strategically and operationally
- Whole system approach to supporting early years outcomes with a strong focus on reducing inequalities
- Start Well offer within communities and neighbourhoods is proportionate to the needs of the local population
- First 1001 days of life are prioritised for investment, service and strategy developments
- Effective frontline leadership enhancing child development outcomes
- Families experience greater integrated working between midwifery and health visiting
- Families have access to a neighbourhood integrated delivery model that extends beyond the early years to a 0-25 approach

Strategic Goal 2 - Ensuring families have access to the services they need

Priority 4 – Seamless support for families

Why is it important for Stockport?

Continuity of care, consistent and coordinated support ensures families receive the right interventions at the right time, leading to improved outcomes.

We understand families can often feel overwhelmed with the support on offer, especially when several professionals are involved in their lives. We also recognise that vulnerable families may experience additional barriers. Therefore, we want to make it easier for all families to have access to help and support, to prevent issues escalating and becoming more serious, reducing the need for more intensive costly services and intervention. We want parents and carers to know exactly what services and support they can expect to access, from pregnancy including timely access to mental health support if they need it.

The early years system including Council, Stockport NHS Foundation Trust and other partners will ensure a coherent, joined up offer which is clearly available and inclusive. Seamless support will ensure all families, regardless of background, have access to the help and support they need, when they need it.

It's important that we continue to strengthen and further develop our Start Well offer in collaboration with parents, ensuring services and support are child and family centred, and meet the needs of the local populations. This includes awareness of cultural, social and economic needs.

How will we achieve it?

- Identify and respond to developmental needs of early years children at the earliest opportunity
- Recognise the first 1001 days of life, from pregnancy to age 2, as a critical period to lay the foundations for lifelong health and wellbeing
- Prioritise specific projects that support equality of outcomes for early years children and their families
- Ensure the voice of infants and parents and carers informs and shapes Start Well services and offers

What will success look like?

- Increased % of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception, with a particular focus on boys living in poverty and other children at risk of disadvantage (FSM, SEND, Children in our Care, ethnically diverse)
- Families receive timely assessments, tailored coordinated support and experience smoother transitions between services
- Universal and enhanced Start Well offer for babies and infants (under 2's)
- Decrease in number of babies and infants (under 2's) going into care

- Improved health inequalities, measured by smoking in pregnancy, breastfeeding, obesity rates and parental mental health
- Increase in SEN support for early years children and decrease in EHCPs
- Families feel empowered to share their feedback and experiences to help shape service development
- Endorsement of the infant pledge

Priority 5 – A welcoming hub for families

Why is it important for Stockport?

We want every family to feel supported in giving their child the best start for life, whether they're together or separated. It's essential that All parents and carers no matter their circumstances — know where they can get help and support. We will provide shared training opportunities across family hub networks to support wider services and partners to be knowledgeable of the start well offer and know who to signpost families to when seeking support for an early years child.

Some families have told us trust is huge when asking for help, and community 'offers' and peer led options can be more accessible. It is therefore a priority that we work with the Voluntary Community Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector to extend our network of support and build on already established connections and trusted relationships the sector has with families to improve access to start well services and offers.

To strengthen inclusivity and connection we will work with the sector to ensure the voice of marginalised and underserved groups shapes service developments.

How will we achieve it?

- Establish One Stockport family hubs as a way to access start well offer
- Work more closely with VCFSE organisations and groups to improve access and develop our offer

What will success look like?

- Seven operating family hubs networks bespoke to the communities they service
- Inclusive accessible range of services and offers that meet the individual needs of families
- Families tell us they receive a warm welcome from staff who are knowledgeable and responsive
- Strong connection and relationships with VCSFE offer in neighbourhoods

Priority 6 – The information families need when and how they need it

Why is it important for Stockport?

Parents have told us that they need to be able to find information quickly and that they need to be confident that they are accessing information they can trust. This includes timely information about pregnancy, child health and development, parent infant mental health, healthy relationships, being a parent and the home learning environment, childcare choices and entitlements, and financial support.

When families have the right information at the right time, they feel empowered to make informed decisions and in times of crisis can be lifesaving e.g. seeking help when experiencing domestic abuse. We also know that families are more likely to access and benefit from services if they understand what is available, how to access, what they are entitled to and what to expect. This is why we will be publishing of our start well offer digitally and in hard copy.

We recognise face-to-face services and offers are important to families too. Therefore, our focus will remain on maintaining a balance between physical and virtual offers. This will include taking advantage of digital developments to strengthen and protect our universal offer, empowering self-help and ownership of child development data by families and enhancing our physical face-to-face offer to better meet the needs of individual families and communities and ensure equality of access.

Delivering information in different ways will be key to accessibility and meeting the needs of individual families as will continuing to prioritise face to face as a core means to delivering support.

How will we achieve it?

- Further develop and clearly define the digital offer to extend access and options of support for families

What will success look like?

- A strong digital and face to face inclusive offer
- Increased up take of digital offer by families
- Families know who to contact if they have a concern about their child's development
- Families feel empowered to make informed decisions and are confident the information they receive is responsive, reliable and meets their need

MONITORING AND MEASURING IMPACT

To support the strategy, an outcomes framework and scorecard is in development, which sets out the indicators and measures used to assess the success of the strategy and inform planning and evaluation. The framework will ensure timely and accurate data which will be monitored by the Start Well and School Readiness Board, reporting to the Stockport Family Partnership Board. Performance against some measures will also be reported to the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee as part of the bi-annual Portfolio Performance and Resource Report (PPRR).

This strategy will not only monitor at a system level but also focus on regular service delivery evaluation to ensure the interventions provided are evidence based and producing expected outcomes.

The strategy is a working document and will be reviewed each year with partners, parents and carers and communities.

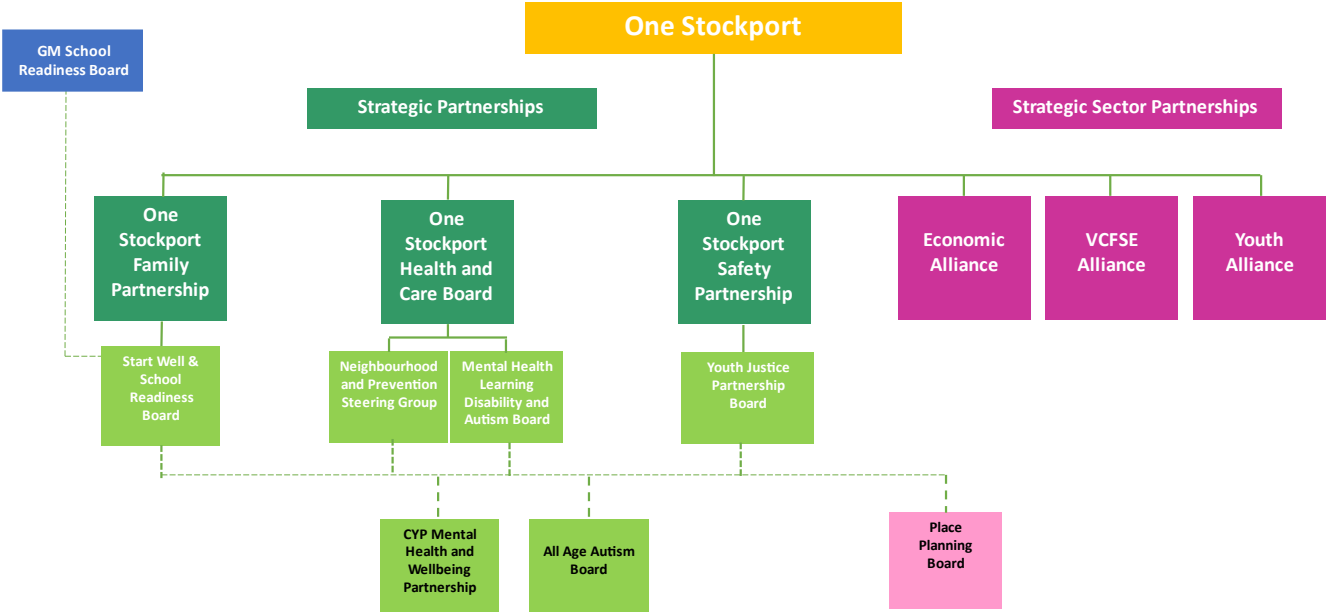
Success will have been achieved if by 2027, we have narrowed the achievement gap at the end of Reception for children living in poverty, particularly boys.

How will we know we have made a difference?

A Start Well outcomes framework will detail a suite of indicators and measures to evaluate the impact of our strategy. We will assess our progress against the following key outcomes:

- **Children experience loving nurturing relationships**
- **Children live in safe homes free from adversity**
- **Children are supported to have good early years development**
- **Children and parent / carers have good physical and mental health and access to healthcare**

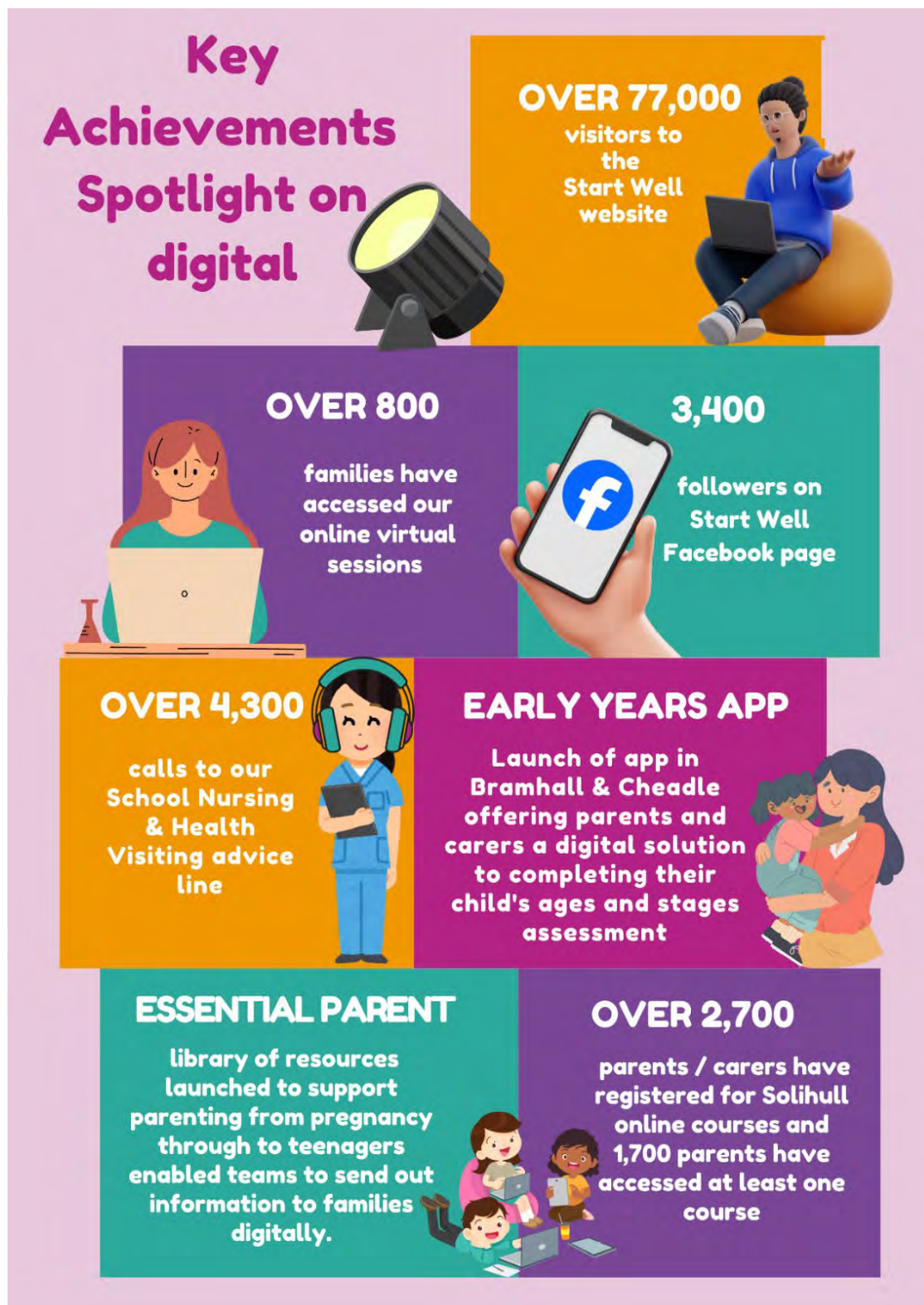
GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY



APPENDIX

Key Achievements 2021 – 2024

Below are some key achievements from our Start Well strategy 2021 – 2024. These will serve as a basis for further development and highlight the successes and impact of our previous strategy projects and initiatives.



Key Achievements

April 2021 – March 2024

GOOD EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT

- Development of best practice evidence-based pathways e.g. speech, language and communication and physical development
- Portage waiting lists have significantly reduced and are delivering an increased number of opportunity groups across Stockport
- 697 children were offered the Portage intervention
- We have sufficient places to support childcare needs across the borough and according to Ofsted most children accessing childcare and early education benefit from quality provision

SAFE HOMES FREE FROM ADVERSITY

- Over 1300 under fives have benefitted from an Early Help Assessment
- Team Around Early Years (TAEY) has been supporting smoother transitions for early years children. Over 1500 children have been supported through TAEY discussions
- 151 young parents have been supported by Family Nurse Partnership
- Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) - continues as a successful peer led professionally supported parenting offer within local communities
- Over 400 parents and 1066 children have benefited from the EPEC offer and 38 parents have been certified as parent group leaders to deliver the offer

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION

- Over 400 of the early years workforce trained in solihull approaches
- 490 members of the early years workforce have been trained in WellComm supporting the delivery of 'Pathways to Talking' (speech, language and communication pathway)
- Rollout of Greater Manchester Early Years Competency Framework
- Over 350 of the early years workforce are physical development champions
- 3 Family Hub sites and 3 Family Hub networks launched

LOVING NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS, GOOD PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

- Invest in Play intervention launched. Stockport UK trailblazers
- Reaccredited in UNICEF baby friendly across Stockport community services including Family Hub sites
- Strengthened evidence-based model with the integration of midwifery and health visiting & named health visitor caseloads
- Early years reception children supported to 'Think Equal' – a programme to teach social and emotional learning to early years (3-6-year-olds). Stockport has the highest take up in Greater Manchester

Stockport Family



