Free Early Education for 2 Year Old Children

From September more than 2,000 of Stoke-on-Trent’s 2 year old population are eligible for a free funded early education place. Changes to the eligibility mean that more 2 year olds than ever are able to get the best start in life by accessing up to 15 hours free early education each week (38 weeks per year).

Recently, the Department for Education (DfE) visited Stoke-on-Trent to find out more about the work that the local authority is doing to make sure that opportunities for families to access their entitlement are maximised and that the city has sufficient high quality places for two year olds. The visit was very positive and the local authority were commended for their marketing campaign, its strategic commitment to the programme and the high take up rate – the summer term saw 85% of eligible children access their entitlement, this is higher than the national average (73%) and local targets (80%).

If you work with families who have young children, you can find out more about free early education for 2, 3 and 4 year olds by visiting the website stoke.gov.uk/beststart

We have also produced a limited number of early education materials to help you spread the word about early education - Bookmarks, stickers and postcards detailing the eligibility criteria are available by contacting the Family information Service Hub on 01782 232200 or fish@stoke.gov.uk

Early Help Assessment

The Early Help Assessment (EHA) was rolled out across Stoke-on-Trent from 1 April 2014. There have been 430 Early Help Assessment’s registered since this date.

- There are still existing Common Assessment Frameworks (CAFs) in place. It is anticipated that these should be closed by December 2014. Please remember to close these cases, once completed, with the Early Help Assessment team.

- A number of documents, including the assessment and action plan, are available to download from the Safeguarding Children Board website. These documents are under constant review; therefore we welcome any feedback via early.help@stoke.gov.uk.

- 159 Early Help Assessment champions have been identified across a variety of organisations/settings including schools, academies, private day nurseries, health settings and voluntary sector agencies. A full list of these can be downloaded from Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Board website.

Their role is to provide support and training to practitioners undertaking Early Help Assessments with children and families. Five briefing sessions have been held and further dates are scheduled.

For further information and support please contact Claire Maxwell on 01782 231964.

To register an Early Help Assessment please contact Lynda Luck on 01782 236334.
Education Improvement Strategy

The Education Improvement Strategy brings together the way in which the City Council has re-defined its role in monitoring and challenging performance of all schools. In addition it outlines how the building of strong partnerships will help to keep education improvements aligned to the City’s need and priorities through the development of school to school support and the sharing of best practice.

The strategy is being developed in consultation with head teachers in the City including the Stoke School Improvement Group, a group which represents the different education partners now responsible for the performance of groups of schools in the city.

For further information please contact Rob Johnstone, Strategic Manager Pupil Achievement on Rob.Johnstone@stoke.gov.uk

Can you make a contribution to raising educational standards in our city?

We are delighted that educational outcomes for children and young people in all phases have improved in Stoke-on-Trent this year – a direct result of stronger leadership and management. An essential driver for school improvement is effective governance. Governors hold school leaders accountable for the performance of the pupils and ensure financial efficiency in running the school. Governors are now required to identify the skills they can offer, and expectations have been more clearly defined so they are fully aware of their responsibilities.

Could you become a school governor, and contribute to raising educational standards in our city? These positions are voluntary, and individual schools can advise anyone interested of the time commitment involved. This can be as little as 20 hours per year.

The benefits associated with taking on the role of a school governor are many and varied, with the most notable being the contribution you could make to raising educational standards in our city. This in turn has a direct impact on the employability skills of young people leaving full time education.

Boards of governors are there to make executive decisions, provide strategic management and support and challenge school performance – therefore an educational background is not needed. Skills that you already possess will be invaluable in acting as part of a team of governors, but you will also benefit from high quality, professional training which will develop your own skills in many areas. These include problem-solving, decision-making, business awareness, understanding of financial systems and developing technical and professional competencies.

If you would like to become a school governor or need more information, please visit [http://tinyurl.com/SoT-Governor-Support](http://tinyurl.com/SoT-Governor-Support), or call Stoke-on-Trent Governor Support Unit on 01782 236889.

Your contribution can make a real difference to the lives and futures of children and young people in YOUR local area.
Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership Annual Conference

The partnership’s Annual Conference took place at The Bridge Centre on the morning of the 20th June 2014. A huge thank you to those who attended, we hope you found the event informative. The event was well attended with over 100 delegates representing a range of organisations and sectors from across the partnership.

The purpose of the event was to provide an update on partnership developments and progress made on the Children, Young People and Families Plan 2013-16 and to discuss how, as a partnership, we can address the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Key themes emerged from group discussions that took place during the event:

Early Help
- Positive feedback about the introduction of the Early Help Assessment process and benefits of learning the process together through multi agency training, particularly new staff was noted.

Information and Engagement
- The importance of clear information regarding services, including pathways are key to support the early help agenda.
- Potential to use social media to provide information and engage.
- The importance of meaningful engagement with children and young people to shape services was recognised.

Literacy
- A whole systems approach to improving literacy was supported, promoting books and reading at every opportunity.
- Discussion included a challenge to ensure that information we provide is accessible to all.
- Links to health literacy and opportunity to link to adult learning noted.

Empowering Parents
- Working with parents across the system to increase confidence, aspiration and resilience.
- Building capacity in the community including volunteering and peer support and engaging with parents in the community and in school life.
- Supporting parents to gain employment e.g. skills, information, child care.

Transport and mobility
- Strong support from group discussion to progress this.
- Key to accessing learning, employment and leisure.

The groups leading on the five priorities of the Children, Young People and Families Plan are now looking at how they can use the feedback provided. As highlighted on page 4 the Board has also agreed to focus on strategic development of the Stoke-on-Trent parenting approach.

Annual Report Published

Progress made towards delivering the plan can be found in the CYPSP Board Review and Annual Report 2013-14, available to view on the Partnership website.

Achievements include:
- more children with disabilities accessed short breaks.
- obesity rates for children and young people began to show improvements.
- the numbers of young people in employment, education and training increased, particularly around the year 12 cohort – this was as a result of intensive work in raising the participation age.
- collaborative work around housing need and the prevention of homelessness in young people saw 75 potential homeless cases prevented.
Ensuring children have the best start in life

The Parenting Strategy Group (part of the Early Years Strategy – Priority 3) recognises that good parenting is across the life course from pre-conception, the early years, school age years and onwards into adolescent and young adulthood. They have recently carried out a mapping exercise to categorise known parenting programmes and support against 2 ranges: age (pre-birth to 19+) and universal-target-specialist. This information will feed into creating a new parenting programme and support offer in the city which better meets the needs of parents.

The Health and Wellbeing Board has also prioritised parenting support as one of the streams of the Health First transformational programme with the strategic ambition that:

“by 2020, to provide independence and health and protect the most vulnerable by putting in place a high quality, universal parenting support strategy to give children the best start in life”.

Amanda Fletcher will lead the strategic development of the Stoke-on-Trent parenting approach with close support from colleagues in the Early Years Strategy Group.

Communication Ambassadors is a citywide network and are parents or carers from the local community who have an understanding of the importance of speech, language and communication. 36 parents are now signed up as part of the children’s centre volunteer programme and are offered training, supervision and support to develop the role.

Parent comment –

“I have grown in confidence to give other parents ideas on things that can improve child’s speech”.

Back to work - Parents have been attending Start Up training courses and during April – June, 41 parents have achieved a back to work qualification.

The Family Nurse Partnership has expanded in Stoke-on-Trent and is now offering 175 places to 19 year olds with their first baby.

Think you know what the Family Information Service Hub (FISH) does?

You may be surprised, FISH do more than provide information and advice about the childcare across the city. The service also provide a wide range of information, advice and assistance about local services and organisations which help families with children and young people aged 0-19 (24 with a disability).

A new leaflet provides an overview of the services provided, copies are available, free of charge, by contacting FISH on 01782 232200 or fish@stoke.gov.uk.

You may also find it useful to print and display a copy of the leaflet on the wall so that you always have contact details close to hand. (Click on the link).

Ideas for next edition? Please contact Claire Roberts on 231963
Child Sexual Exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation is a local and national concern. The recent Rotherham Inquiry and publication of the Jay Report highlights some very serious areas for concern.

You can now read the full report or a summary by clicking on the relevant link.

It is important that everyone is aware of the possible signs that a child / young person is being sexually exploited. Shown on this page is a list – but this is not exhaustive of some of the signs to look out for:

- Regularly coming home late or going missing
- Overtly sexualised dress, sexualised risk taking (including on the Internet)
- Unaccounted for money or goods including mobile phones, drugs and alcohol
- Associating with unknown adults
- Associating with other sexually exploited children / young people
- Reduced contact with family and friends and other support networks
- Contracting sexually transmitted infections
- Experimenting with drugs and alcohol
- Poor self image, eating disorders or self harm
- Non school attendance
- Getting into cars with unknown adults or associating with known CSE adults
- Being groomed on the Internet
- Clipping – (offering to have sex for money or other payment and then running before sex takes place)
- Receiving rewards of money or goods for recruiting peers into CSE
- Disclosure of physical sexual assault and then refusing to make or withdrawing complaint
- Reports of being involved in CSE through being seen in hotspots (i.e. including certain flats, recruiting grounds, cars or houses and maybe in company of known CSE adults)
- Having a much older boyfriend/girlfriend
- Staying out overnight with no reasonable explanation
- Breakdown of residential placements due to behavioural issues
- Pattern of street homelessness and staying with an adult believed to be sexually exploiting them
- Young person under 16 meeting different adults and engaging in sexual activity
- Being taken to clubs and hotels by adults and engaging in sexual activity
- Disappearing from the ‘system’ with no contact or support

Safeguarding Children Board Training

Safeguarding Children and Cultural Awareness
Monday 3rd November 2014

Safeguarding Children and Forced Marriage
Wednesday, 5th November 2014

Working Together to Safeguard Children
Challenging Extremism
Thursday 4th December 2014

Understanding the Role of the Child Sexual Exploitation Unit
Friday 5th December 2014

To apply for any of the above courses please access the safeguarding children board website by following this link. The application forms can be found by clicking on the relevant course you wish to apply for.

For further information please email: safeguarding.training.administrator@stoke.gov.uk
Effective sharing of information between professionals and local agencies is essential for effective identification, assessment and service provision. The early sharing of information is the key to providing effective early help where there are emerging problems. At the other end of the threshold continuum sharing information can be essential to put in place effective safeguarding children protection services.

National and local serious case reviews have shown how poor information sharing has contributed to the deaths or serious injuries of children and therefore we all have a responsibility to help to strengthen this important aspect of our work together.

Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children. The “Information Sharing Guidance of Practitioners” has been produced by Staffordshire and SOT LSCB to support and help build the confidence of frontline practitioners in making information sharing decisions in the best interest of the child and their family.