

# Living my best life in Stoke-on-Trent 2021 - 2026



A strategy (Plan) for children, young people and adults with a learning disability in Stoke-on-Trent



What my best life is like for me



## In this Strategy (Plan)



Introduction by the Co-Chairs  
of the Stoke-on-Trent Learning  
Disability Partnership Board

Pages 5 and 6



Introduction - About Living My  
Best Life

Pages 7 and 8



Who is Living My Best Life For?

Pages 9 and 10



Living My Best Life - Key  
Principles (Big Ideas)

Pages 11 and 12



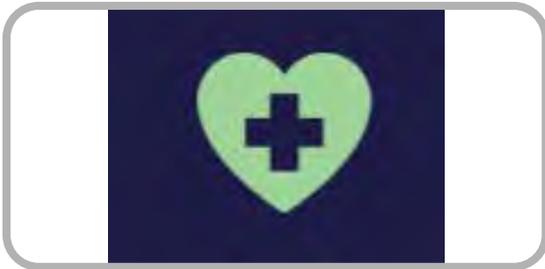
Living My Best Life - Our Vision  
and Outcomes (the difference it  
makes)

Page 13



## Outcome 1 - "I feel safe"

Pages 14 to 20



## Outcome 2 - "I am healthy"

Pages 21 to 33



## Outcome 3 - "I achieve goals"

Pages 34 to 41



## Outcome 4 - "I love my home"

Pages 42 to 48



## Outcome 5 - "I enjoy my life"

Pages 49 to 56



## Working Together and Staff Training

Pages 57 to 62





## An introduction by the Stoke-on-Trent Learning Disability Partnership Board Co-Chairs

Living My Best Life is a new strategy (draft plan) for supporting anyone, of any age, with a learning disability in Stoke-on-Trent from 2021 to 2026.

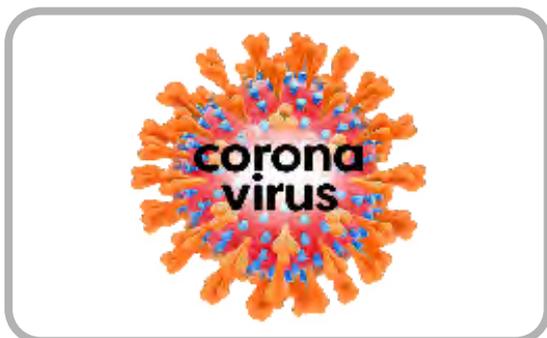
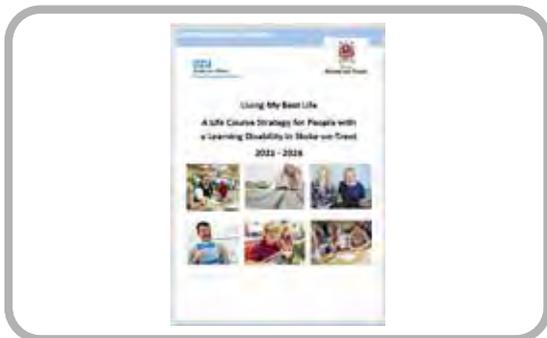
A draft plan is shared with people with learning disabilities, carers and everyone else to check if the ideas and actions are the right ones, based on what people told us is important.

Living My Best Life was co-produced by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Stoke-on-Trent Clinical Commissioning Group, working together with family carers and people with learning disabilities.

Writing this draft plan during the Covid-19 lockdown made it harder to find out what people want and need because there were no big meetings or events for people to get together to take part in this work.

We worked together with children, young people and adults with learning disabilities, parents, carers, health and social care staff and care providers.

We shared ideas using phone calls, video calls and online meetings.





By speaking to so many people, we have been able to find out much more about what support people with learning disabilities and families need.



This means we can understand more about how health and social care services can work to make the lives of children, young people and adults with learning disabilities.



Living My Best Life is about people with learning disabilities being supported with dignity, choice and respect, all through their lives.



Living My Best Life is linked to the new Autism Strategy and Inclusion Strategy.

It is very important that we keep working together to make sure these plans make life better for people.

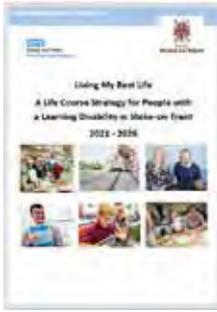


Thank you to everyone who helped us shape this plan at a very difficult time with their ideas, words, art and poetry.

**Councillor Ally Simcock**  
**Margaret Mason**

**Co-Chairs of the Stoke-on-Trent  
Learning Disability Partnership Board**

# Introduction - About Living My Best Life

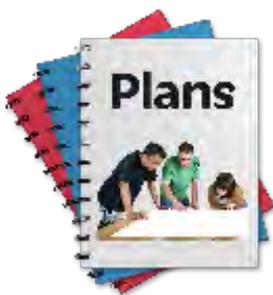


In Stoke-on-Trent we believe everyone has the right to a good life, to be part of their community and to be treated with dignity and respect.



We know that people with learning disabilities don't always have the same chances, and are not treated as well as people who don't have a learning disability.

That needs to change.



Living My Best Life is the main plan for making that change happen between now and 2026.

Lots of different people and organisations need to work together to make sure it does.



By listening to what people with learning disabilities and families want and need, we have written this plan to be person-centred, based on what people told us is important to them.



Living My Best Life will shape how we plan and run support services in health and social care for children, young people and adults with learning disabilities in Stoke-on-Trent.



An important part of Living My Best Life is that it is a 'life course' or 'all ages' plan for:

- children
- young people (up to 17 years old)
- adults (18 to 64)
- older people (65 and over).



Living My Best Life is about making sure health and social care support and services work well for everyone with learning disabilities, at any age.



Living My Best Life is linked to lots of other Stoke-on-Trent City Council plans and strategies about health and wellbeing.



Living My Best Life is also linked to plans and strategies written by the NHS and the government about making life better for people with learning disabilities everywhere in the country.



## Who is Living My Best Life For?



Living My Best Life is for any child, young person, adult or older person living with a learning disability in Stoke-on-Trent.



A learning disability affects the way people learn new things, how they understand information and how they communicate with people.



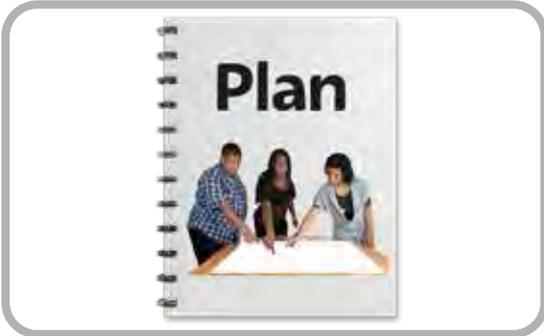
Some people with a learning disability may need very little support and some people might need a lot of support. It is different for everyone.



Some people with learning disabilities have sensory impairments (problems with seeing and hearing), physical disabilities, mobility problems that affect how much health and social care support they need.



Children and young people with a learning disability might need more support with learning because they have SEN (Special Educational Needs).



The new Autism Strategy is very closely linked to Living My Best Life because some people who have autism (40%, or 4 out of 10) also have a learning disability.



Stoke-on-Trent City Council support the **Social Model of disability**.

This means a person's disability is not really about their health conditions, it is about the way they are treated and the barriers they face that makes life harder.



**These barriers might be:**

- buildings or services that are not accessible or welcoming
- people's attitudes and ideas about what living with a disability means
- how organisations think about, and work with disabled people.



The Social Model helps us think about how to take away these barriers.

**Taking away barriers helps people:**

- to be more independent
- to have more choice and control
- to live in a country that values and includes people with disabilities.



## Living My Best Life - Key Principles (Big Ideas)



4 Key Principles (Big Ideas) are used all the way through Living My Best Life:

- Community First
- Equality
- Strengths Based
- Person Centred.



**Community First** is about people with learning disabilities having the same chances as everyone to be part of their community and have support services there when they need them.



**Equality** is about making sure people's needs are understood and met.

It is about equal chances in learning, training, work, housing, health and social and leisure activities.



Equality is also about understanding people with learning disabilities as individuals.

People with learning disabilities might have differences in race/ethnicity, religion, gender and sexuality but should all be treated as equal people.



**Strengths Based** is about focusing on what people can do, not what they can't do.

It means thinking about what's strong, not what's wrong.



Strengths Based is also understanding that asking people with learning disabilities for ideas is the best way to solve problems.

It is about asking families and carers who are an important in the lives of people with learning disabilities.



**Person Centred** is about treating people as individuals, with dignity and respect.

It is about supporting people to make their own choices about how they want to live their lives.



**The 4 Key Principles** are about making sure people with learning disabilities in Stoke-on-Trent have equal rights and the chance to live their best life.

**We want people to be as independent as they can be.**



This includes being financially independent (controlling their own money) as much as possible.

This means getting the right support to spend their own money how they want to.



## Living My Best Life - Our Vision and Our Outcomes

Our **vision** (what we are working for, what we want to see and what we want to happen) for Living My Best Life is that people with learning disabilities will have a life that looks like this:

‘I am my own individual. I want to be safe, healthy, independent and happy and have opportunities that are enjoyable and fulfilling.’

‘I want to have choice and control, help or support where needed and be able to live my best life.’

‘I want to live my best life, which is purposeful and meaningful to me, throughout my life.’



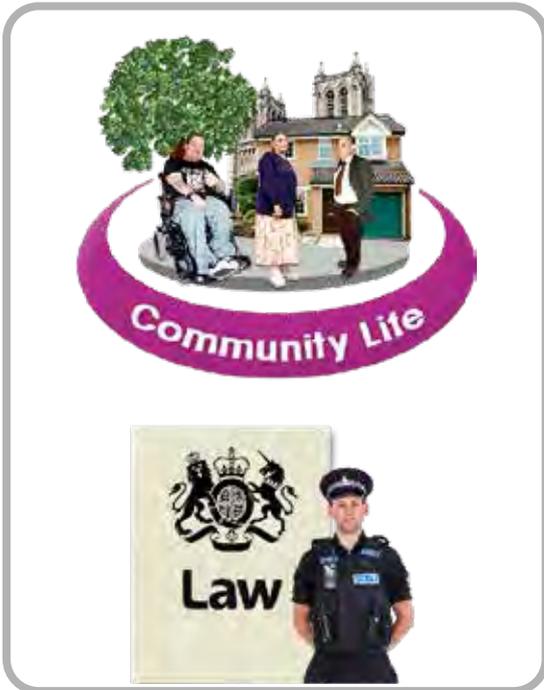
Our **outcomes** (what changes because of this plan) are based on what people with learning disabilities, families and carers told us are important in helping them live their best life.

We will know our plan Living My Best Life is working when people with learning disabilities can say:

“I feel safe. I feel healthy. I achieve my goals. I love my home.  
I enjoy my life.”



## Outcome 1 - “I feel safe”



We want Living My Best Life to help children and young people with learning disabilities feel they can say:

- “I am happy and safe at a school as close to my home as possible”
- “I feel valued as a person, cared for and respected by the community”
- “I am not bullied but know how to ask for help if it happens”
- “I feel understood by the police and courts if I have to speak to them.”



We want Living My Best Life to help adults and older people with learning disabilities feel they can say:

- “I can get around freely and safely”
- “I feel valued as a person, cared for and respected by the community”
- “I can take part in activities, and go to places in my community and be with other people”
- “I am not bullied, and I don't experience hate and mate crime but I know how to ask for help if I need it”
- “I feel understood by the police and courts if I have to speak to them.”



## “I feel safe” - what do we know?



Having social contact and being part of the community is very important but it can only happen if people with learning disabilities feel safe to get out and about.



Reports and studies show that children and young people with learning disabilities are more likely to be bullied than children and young people without learning disabilities.



A 2015 report by the University of Warwick about bullying in England said that 80% (8 out of 10) young people with learning disabilities had been bullied at some point.



A 2016 report by Dimensions UK said around 70% (7 out of 10) adults with learning disabilities had experienced some kind of hate crime (a crime where they had been targeted because they were ‘different’).



Challenge North Staffs say people with learning disabilities don't often report hate crimes, because they don't always understand what it is, or feel they just have to put up with it.



Parents told us their children want to be able to get out and about in their community but, as parents, they are worried if their children will be safe.



Social Care teams told us that some people are living in residential homes to make sure they are safe in the community, even though they could be living more independently.



There are a lot of adults living in residential care (which costs a lot of money to provide).

More people living independently would mean they have more choice and control over their lives and it would also save money.



During the Covid-19 lockdown, people spent more time using the internet.

Now it is even more important than ever that people are supported to understand about staying safe online.



## “I feel safe” - what is working well?



- ✓ There is a Safe Places scheme in Stoke-on-Trent that helps people to go into shops, community centres or council buildings.
- ✓ Safe Places have a big sticker in the window to show people they can support if they need it while they are out in the community.
- ✓ Knowing Safe Places are there helps people have more confidence to get out and about.



- ✓ We are working with Staffordshire Police to help them understand what people with learning disabilities need.
- ✓ We are helping the police to understand more about how to communicate clearly with people with learning disabilities.



- ✓ Supported living helps people feel safe because they are out and about in their community, going to the same places as everyone, but they have support to help them when needed.



## “I feel safe” - what needs to change?



There needs to be more understanding about why people with learning disabilities face problems in staying safe.

Different organisations need to work together to help keep people safe.



Organisations like schools, the police, the courts and the city council need to understand that people with learning disabilities might not be able to ‘prove’ they are being targeted (bullied).

People with learning disabilities should be listened to and believed.



There needs to be more understanding about what living with a learning disability means.

Neighbours and everyone in the community should help people to feel, and stay safe.



There needs to be more support for children and young people with learning disabilities.

Support earlier on could help them learn to take risks and try new things to help them stay safe and be more independent.



## “I feel safe” - what will we do?



- ✓ Make sure people with learning disabilities understand more about their safety and hate and mate crime and can speak up.
- ✓ Make sure communities, schools and local services are welcoming and accessible to people with learning disabilities.
- ✓ Make the Safe Places scheme bigger, in more places so it can support more adults and also younger people from age 14 all the way to older age.
- ✓ Make stronger links to the Community Safety and Community Cohesion teams.
- ✓ Make sure people are safe from abuse in their own home.
- ✓ Make sure there is more choice of different types of housing and support to help people stay safe.



## “I feel safe” - how will we check things are getting better?



✓ We will find out how many times bullying of children and young people with learning disabilities is reported by schools.

✓ We will find out how many children are in schools outside Stoke-on-Trent.



The more people understand what hate and hate crime is then more people will report it.

✓ We will check how many times hate and hate crimes are reported by people with learning disabilities.



✓ We will check if there are more Safe Places in the city, and then we will check if people say they feel safer in Stoke-on-Trent.

Safeguarding concerns are reported when someone might be at risk of harm.



Reports of sexual exploitation are reports when people are being used for sex and badly treated.

✓ We will check how many safeguarding concerns are reported.



## Outcome 2 - “I am healthy”



We want Living My Best Life to help children and young people with learning disabilities feel they can say:

- “I can use high quality health services that work together to meet my needs”
- “I am happy and feel physically, mentally and emotionally well”
- “I am growing up and I have support and information to help me make healthy and safe life style choices, with lots of chances to be active.”



We want Living My Best Life to help adults and older people with learning disabilities feel they can say:

- “I can use high quality health services that work together to meet my needs”
- “I am happy and feel physically, mentally and emotionally well”
- “I have a good social life, I am socially connected with other people”
- “I expect to live as long as other people without learning disabilities.”



## “I am healthy” - what do we know?

Government and Department of Health reports tell us that people with learning disabilities have worse physical and mental health, and die younger than other people.

The reports say people with learning disabilities are more likely to be overweight or underweight than other people.

Also people with learning disabilities are much more likely to have epilepsy.

People with learning disabilities do not always get checked to see if they have a disease they don't know about for some types of cancer.

People who do not have learning disabilities get their health checked out more often than people with learning disabilities.

As people live longer, they are more likely to have dementia (a serious condition that affects the brain).

People with learning disabilities are more likely to develop dementia than people without learning disabilities.

Reports tell us that early health checks and early treatment can help to stop people from dying from some treatable illnesses.





We need to understand what people need to help them to get health checks, care and treatment.

If we can understand more, we can plan the services and support that will help to keep people healthy.

We need to make sure people are on their GP's Learning Disability Register.

Less people with learning disabilities in Stoke-on-Trent are on GP Learning Disability registers than in other parts of the country.

If people are not on their GP learning disability register we cannot plan extra support and reasonable adjustments (changes made by NHS staff to make it easier for people to use the NHS).

If people are not on their GP Learning Disability register, they might not get extra support to stay healthy.

If people are not on their GP Learning Disability register they might not get Annual Health Checks or health screening (checking for problems and diseases).

They might not get tested to spot problems or diseases at an early stage (screening).

Flu and other seasonal illnesses can be a problem, especially for people who already have other health issues.

It is very important that people with learning disabilities have flu jabs.



Around 40% (4 out of 10) children, young people and adults with learning disabilities have mental health problems.

This is higher than for people without learning disabilities.



There are lots of reasons why someone has mental health problems.

It can be hard to spot if someone with a learning disability is struggling with their mental health, especially when people have trouble communicating or making themselves understood.



Covid-19 Lockdown has caused problems with mental health, people are struggling with mental wellbeing.

People have been isolated and lonely with less face-to-face support and services.



We know that sometimes people with learning disabilities get worse 'end of life care' (when living with an illness or disease that will not get better) than other people.

This is because some staff and services don't understand what people with learning disabilities need.



People with learning disabilities are more likely to die from Covid-19 than people without learning disabilities.

People with learning disabilities are also more likely to die from Covid-19 at a younger age than other people.



Children, young people and adults with learning disabilities told us that mental health is very important.

They said we shouldn't just look at mental health on its own or learning disability on its own or behaviour on its own.

People told us that sometimes their mental health and learning disability and behaviours are all linked together.

We know that people will need different types of support to stay well but people shouldn't have to go to lots of different places to find each kind of support.

We know people get fed up of having to tell their story over and over to lots of different professionals.

We know that important things about people's health gets missed if they have to ask for help at different places.

To help us to listen to what people want to tell us about their mental health and their learning disability and their behaviour, we need one main place that people can contact to ask for help and support.



Older carers told us they worry about their own health and the health of their family.

They said it's important for services to think about the wellbeing of the whole family.





## “I am healthy” - what is working well?

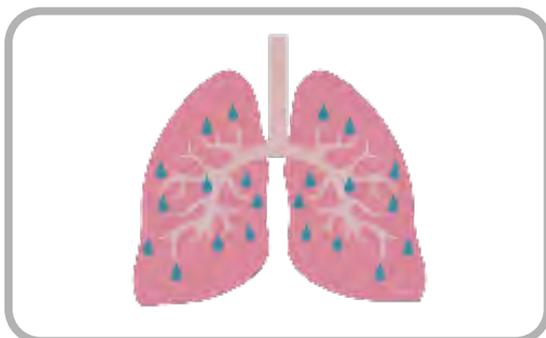


✓ Stoke CCG is working with health providers to organise one main place (instead of lots of different places and referral forms), so people can ask for help with their mental health, learning disability and behaviour.

✓ Over 200 of our NHS staff are ‘Learning Disability Champions’.

They raise awareness about health checks and reasonable adjustments in lots of different healthcare services.

✓ More people with learning disabilities are having Annual Health Checks now.



✓ Lots of work is going on to make sure NHS staff give people with learning disabilities the best care and support with respiratory illnesses (anything that affects lungs and breathing).



✓ If a GP thinks someone has dementia, they can visit the Memory Clinic.

✓ Learning Disability staff work with the Memory Clinic staff so people with learning disabilities can get extra help and support.



- ✓ NHS staff worked together with people with learning disabilities to update Hospital Passports.
- ✓ People take the hospital passport to hospital appointments to share important information about their mental, physical and emotional health.
- ✓ There is a 'flagging' system that tells hospital staff if someone has a learning disability and a Checklist to make sure staff look at Hospital Passports.



- ✓ ABLE runs drop-ins and courses that help people get training and support with health, safety and wellbeing.
- ✓ People meet friends and build confidence learning new skills.



- ✓ ABLE worked with hospital staff and social workers to make sure a patient got the right support when his family couldn't visit him.
- ✓ ABLE helped the patient's family to make his hospital passport.



- ✓ ABLE helped a woman with learning disabilities who was having problems with her mental health.
- ✓ ABLE found an online relaxation programme and the woman said it helped her feel much better.



- ✓ More Learning Disability Nurses have been employed to work with children and young people in mental health services so children and young people can get the right support for them.

People with learning disabilities are more likely to be on lots of medication than people who don't have learning disabilities.



- ✓ Work is going on to check that people are on the right medication for them.

- ✓ Work is going on to help make health screening more accessible.



- ✓ People with learning disabilities and their carers met with NHS staff at the 'Healthy Me' event, to talk about reasonable adjustments making things easier.

Transforming Care plans say less people should be living in specialist units by 2023 - 2024.



- ✓ Planning is going on to make sure people are safe and happy when they move to homes in the community



- ✓ NHS services plan for more people with learning disabilities and/or autism to have Personal Health Budgets.

- ✓ People with Personal Health Budgets have more choice and control over their healthcare.



## “I am healthy” - what needs to change?



The most important thing that needs to happen is that healthcare services need to work together and understand the needs of people with learning disabilities.



We need to work with people, their families, carers and advocates to understand how to make reasonable adjustments, to help people get the best healthcare for them.



People told us that mental health is very important and shouldn't be viewed or treated as an issue on its own but should be linked to everything else about their health.



Older carers told us they worry about their own health, as well as the health of the person they care for.

The carers also said services need to think more about the whole family and not just the health of one person.



There needs to be more support to help people to have a good diet, to exercise and to give up smoking for better health.



Services need to be better at working together so people get the right support and care for them when they need it.



Services need to work in more person-centred ways and should think about how everything in a person's life can affect their health.

Things that can affect people's health and wellbeing might be how much money they have, where they live and if they have a job.



We need to check that people with learning disabilities living in specialist units are more involved in their own Care and Treatment Reviews (meetings about their health and support and where they live).



Health and social care services need to work together to help people with lots of health issues to get care and support at home so they don't have to go into hospital as often.



More people from Stoke-on-Trent should be living in, and getting the support they need in the city, instead of living in 'out of area placements' in other parts of the country.



Stoke-on-Trent recently joined the 'Small Supports' project with NDTi (National Development Team for Inclusion).

'Small Supports' is a person having a small person-centred support team.

This project is for people who need lots of support, who are already in hospital or need to go into hospital.



More work is needed to make sure children with learning disabilities get the healthcare support they need.



We need to make sure staff are well-trained to help people with problems early on and before the problems get worse.

Intensive Support Team (IST) will help people earlier on, to help people stay at home instead of going to hospitals or specialist mental health units.



By 2023/24, all NHS care services will have to meet a new set of rules called the Learning Disability Improvement Standards.



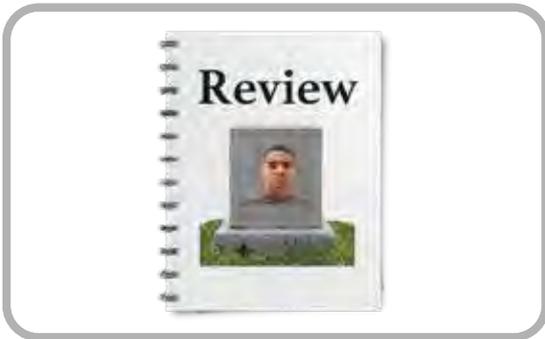
## “I am healthy” - what will we do?



- ✓ Make sure more people with learning disabilities understand their health and about staying healthy (health literacy).
- ✓ Make sure staff understand the physical and mental health needs of people with learning disabilities.
- ✓ Also making sure people have clear information, care and treatment in a way they understand, at the right time.
- ✓ Support people with learning disabilities to make positive changes in life to stay healthy.
- ✓ This could be exercising, eating healthy food and staying at a healthy weight.
- ✓ Make sure more people have Hospital Passports and Personal Health Budgets to give them more choice and control over their own healthcare.



## “I am healthy” - how will we check things are getting better?



We will check LeDeR reviews.

A LeDeR team checks if a person with a learning disability's death could have been prevented and helps services to learn about what they could have done better.



By 2023/24, children and young people with learning disabilities, (and/or) autism and lots of support needs will have a named key worker.



We will check how many of our NHS staff take part in Learning Disability awareness training courses.



We will check to see if health and social care services are making more reasonable adjustments to make their services more accessible to people with learning disabilities.



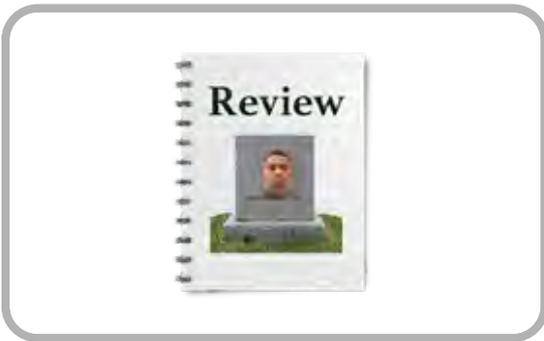
- ✓ We will keep checking how many people with learning disabilities have Annual Health Checks, take part in health screening programmes and have flu jabs.



A hospital computer system tells staff if someone has a learning disability.

It helps staff find out who needs extra help and clear information.

- ✓ We will check how many patients with learning disabilities are on the hospital computer system.



- ✓ We will check on the life expectancy (how long people live on average) of people with learning disabilities to see if they are living longer and see if they have a good quality of life.



- ✓ We will check how many people have Personal Health Budgets to help them have choice and control over their healthcare.



- ✓ We will keep checking how many people have Hospital Passports.

- ✓ We will check if staff are using the hospital passports to help them understand patients with learning disabilities more.



## Outcome 3 - “I achieve goals”

We want Living My Best Life to help children and young people with learning disabilities feel they can say:

- “I have chances to improve my education and skills and make the most of them”
- “I have a past, present and future and people who are important to me”
- “I get the right support to help me have a voice and make choices about my life and the future.”



We want Living My Best Life to help adults and older people with learning disabilities feel they can say:

- “I can choose to have a job, be a volunteer and be part of my community”
- “I have chances to improve my education and skills and make the most of them”
- “I have a past, present and future and people who are important to me”
- “I know how to get support to make choices and look after my own money.”





## “I achieve goals” - what do we know?



Children and young people with disabilities told us that being included and doing well at school are very important to them.



Children and young people told us they want to do well in life, be independent and have paid jobs.



Most parents said that mainstream schools (not special schools) were the best way for children to be educated, but they worried about their children being included in activities and friendships.



In Stoke-on-Trent about 1 out of every 6 children have SEN (Special Educational Needs) and need extra help and support at school.

Most of the children with SEN go to mainstream not special schools.



About 760 children and young people from Stoke-on-Trent go to special schools.

More than half of them go to schools outside the city, so they might have to travel a long way, or stay there, living apart from their families.



Only around 2% (2 out of 100 people) with learning disabilities who get support from the city council, have a paid job.

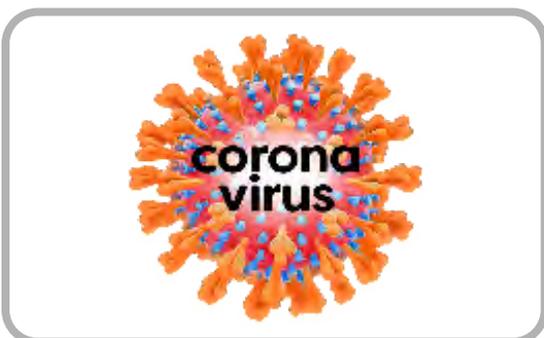
Less people with learning disabilities in Stoke-on-Trent have paid jobs than in other parts of the country.



Not enough adults with learning disabilities who want to work can find paid jobs so they keep going back to college to do courses.



It can cost a lot of money to keep running college courses, especially if people keep going back lots of times.



We think it will be harder for people to find jobs now because as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, there will be less money around and businesses will close.



## “I achieve goals” - what’s working well?



- ✓ There will be more NHS Internships (where people get on-the-job training but are not paid) for people with learning disabilities by 2023/2024.

About half of these internships will lead to people having paid jobs in the NHS.



- ✓ A Supported Work-Based Training Team (SWBT) will work together with employers, education and careers advisors in a service to help young people get good jobs.



- ✓ The SWBT will help make sure young people with learning disabilities can have job coaches who will support them to learn a job in the workplace.



- ✓ The Adults Learning Disability Employment Team is now now part of the main Jobs, Enterprise and Training (JET) service.

This means they are all working together to make sure employers offer placements, work experience and paid jobs.



## “I achieve goals” - Case Studies



✓ Here are three short stories about how people have been supported to achieve their goals in Stoke-on-Trent.



Abdul had been part of the Aiming High short breaks service as a child. When he got too old to use the service, he started volunteering, helping run sessions and activities as part of the the team.



During 2017/18, Fenton Manor’s Riptide Cafe started a partnership with Holiday Inn hotels to help people get training and catering qualifications for a group of people interested in volunteering or working in cafes, restaurants or hotels.



Annie had always dreamed of being a weather presenter. She was supported to join the team of volunteers running 6 Towns Radio, reading the weather reports on the Monday morning show.



## “I achieve goals” - what needs to change?



We need more different options for young people to find jobs and improve their skills.



More work needs to go into planning for work experience, apprenticeships and jobs, at an earlier stage, based on the person's strengths and interests.



We need to make sure that day service opportunities think about job skills as part of their activities for adults, and also make sure they see problems people are having at an early stage so they can be sorted out.



There need to be ways to support people who don't control their own money to have more choice about what they spend it on.



## “I achieve goals” - what will we do?



- ✓ Make sure people with learning disabilities feel confident and can speak up about what they want to do now and in the future.
- ✓ Have work experience opportunities for young people who go to special schools.
- ✓ Make sure there are more chances and different opportunities to do paid work or volunteer for young people with learning disabilities leaving schools and colleges.
- ✓ Make sure there are more training, volunteering and work experience chances and opportunities for adults with learning disabilities.
- ✓ Make sure people with learning disabilities are as financially independent (in control of their own money) as they can be.



## “I achieve goals” - how will we check things are getting better?



- ✓ We will check the results of school tests and exams to see how well children and young people are doing in education.



- ✓ We will check on how many apprenticeships there are for people.  
  
We will also check how many people have paid jobs.



- ✓ We will check how many volunteering opportunities there are for people with learning disabilities.



- ✓ We will ask people in surveys if they feel they can achieve their goals and do what they want to do in life.



## Outcome 4 - “I love my home”



We want Living My Best Life to help children and young people with learning disabilities feel they can say:

- “I live with family/carers or somewhere else that meets my needs and where I can be happy”
- “I can choose who I live with, and where I live as I get older.”



We want Living My Best Life to help adults and older people with learning disabilities feel they can say:

- “I have choices about where I live and who I live with”
- “My choices include living with family/carers , living independently or in supported living”
- “I have as much independence as I choose to have”
- “I feel safe, cared for and happy.”



## “I love my home” - what do we know?



Too many children and young people with SEN (Special Educational Needs) and lots of support needs are living in residential homes or schools outside Stoke-on-Trent.



This costs a lot of money and makes it much harder for people to be with their families, to make friends and to be part of their community.



Moving around from one place to another can be worrying and stressful.

When people keep moving home it is hard to make friends and be part of the community.



In Stoke-on-Trent there are more adults with learning disabilities living in residential homes, and moving around different places to live (unsettled accommodation) than in other parts of the country.



Parents of children with learning disabilities told us they worry about where their child will live when they are older, and if they could cope with supported or independent living.



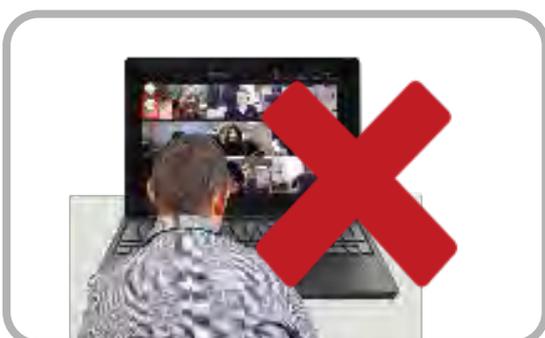
Parents also told us that having a social worker is a good thing, as long as they are not made to feel like bad parents for needing help and support.



Parents and carers of adults with learning disabilities told us they worry about what will happen when they are no longer able to care for them.



People with learning disabilities said they want to be independent and have friends in their life, not just Personal Assistants and care staff.



During lockdown, children felt more isolated and lonely.

A lot of families didn't have the technology (computers, tablets and WiFi) that would help them stay connected to other people online.



## “I love my home” - what’s working well?



- ✓ We have started offering more choice and different kinds of housing options to people with learning disabilities.



- ✓ Our **Shared Lives** project helps adults with learning disabilities to choose and live with a carer or family home where they can get support to live as independently as they can.



- ✓ The apartments at Abbots House means people have their own home and get staff support to volunteer, be part of the community, get a job and stay in touch with family and friends.



- ✓ We reviewed our short breaks service and worked with older carers to think about how we can support their loved ones to stay in the family home for longer.



## “I love my home” - what needs to change?

More people with learning disabilities need choice and control over where they live and who they live with.

This will mean looking at lots of different kinds of housing options to find the right one for each person.

This could mean trying out **HOLD** (Home Ownership Learning Disability) mortgages.

With HOLD people get help and support to have a mortgage (paying for and owning their own home).

We will also look at how **KeyRing** projects work in other areas.

These are projects where people live independently with help from support staff and volunteers who live in the same community.

We also need to look at how we can offer people more chances to live independently.

People with learning disabilities want to be part of their community and have things to do (activities).

We need to support people to live independently and support people with lots of needs to live in their own community close to their families.





## “I love my home” - what will we do?



- ✓ Make sure young people get the support they need to be as independent as they can when they become adults.



- ✓ Make sure carers have the support when they need it, and for as long as they need it.



- ✓ Keep working on having more choice in the kind of housing we can offer people with learning disabilities.



## “I love my home” - how will we check things are getting better?



✓ We will check that people with learning disabilities of all ages are able to choose where they live.

This includes supported living.



✓ We will check how many people who are living in homes that are right for them and not being moved from place to place.



✓ We will check how many how many children are living in residential homes or schools outside of Stoke-on-Trent, away from their families.



✓ We will check that people with learning disabilities are able to get out and about and be part of their local community.



## Outcome 5 - “I enjoy my life”



We want Living My Best Life to help children and young people with learning disabilities feel they can say:

- “I have lots of different social and leisure activities to choose from”
- “I have friendships and relationships that are good for my wellbeing”
- “I can keep in touch and connect with friends in person and online.”



We want Living My Best Life to help adults and older people with learning disabilities feel they can say:

- “I have lots of different social and leisure activities to choose from”
- “I have friendships and relationships that are good for my wellbeing”
- “I can make my own decisions, even if other people think they are not good for me, or if they think I am taking a risk.”



## “I enjoy my life” - what do we know?



People with learning disabilities want to live happy, fulfilling and interesting lives, often living with their families.



Sometimes people just need some support to help them through difficult times (like the death of a family member or money problems) but sometimes people need longer term social care support.



Parents told us they want their children to have lots of chances to meet other people but at the same time to be safe from bullying.



Adults with learning disabilities told us they want equal chances in life.

They want to be safe, go to pubs and restaurants, concerts and community activities.

They don't want to just do things at learning disability day opportunities.



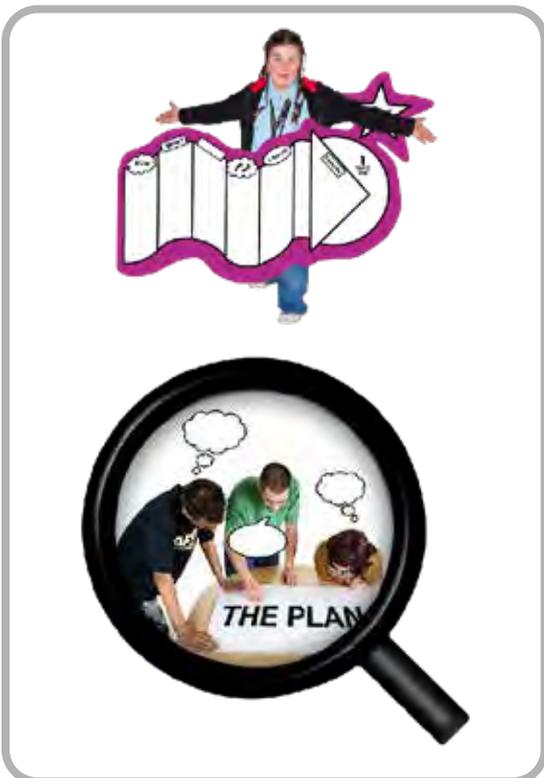
## “I enjoy my life” - what’s working well?



- ✓ We have lots of different support for people of all ages, and with different support needs.



- ✓ Our **Aiming High** short breaks service for children and young people moved some activities online during lockdown when they couldn't offer support in person.



- ✓ There has been lots of changes in our **Preparation for Adulthood** team that gives person-centred support to young people aged 14 to 25.
- ✓ Adult Social Care are working with schools and colleges to find out what support young people might need in the future.

This means everyone can start planning and talking about support earlier, instead of waiting for a referral to adult services (usually just before the young person turns 18).



## “I enjoy my life” - what needs to change?



People’s needs should be assessed at an early stage (starting when they are in primary school) and support services should be put in place to help them be independent, to prepare for adulthood and to help make friends.



Access to digital technology needs to be improved for lots of people.

This includes having the skills and confidence to use technology safely as well as having equipment and being able to connect to the internet (wifi).



There needs to be more chances for people to make friends so they don’t rely on Personal Assistants and care staff to have a social life.



We will think more about ideas like ‘gig buddies’ - volunteers who go to concerts with people with learning disabilities to help people feel safe and confident.

Port Vale FC and Stoke City FC have ‘buddy’ schemes for football matches.



More people with learning disabilities need to be able to safely and confidently travel around.

There needs to be better awareness training for bus and taxi drivers.



There needs to be more Changing Places toilets in Stoke-on-Trent for people who need more specialist equipment to use toilets.

There needs to be more **Safer Places** so people feel more confident going out in their local community.



There needs to be more work done to give people advice and support with problems before they get bigger.

This might be a bit of help with understanding letters and bills so people don't have money problems.



There should be more chances for people with learning disabilities with all different abilities to do activities and socialise with each other.



We need to think about what people can do, and make sure they can be part of group activities with other people in ways that are supportive and include everyone.



## “I enjoy my life” - what will we do?



✓ Make sure people get advice and support about issues like housing, employment and health so that problems can be dealt with sooner rather than later on.

✓ Check on and review short breaks and activities for people of all ages to make sure they are fun, interesting and help them learn new skills.

✓ Support people to have more chances to make friends and have places to go.

✓ Make sure more people of all ages get the support they need to stay in touch with others and find information using technology:

- smartphones
- tablets
- computers
- the internet.



## “I enjoy my life” - how will we check things are getting better?



- ✓ We will check that there are more Changing Places toilets in the city.



- ✓ We will check that more shops and buildings that are open to the community have signed up to be **Safer Places** where people can go if they need some help and support.



- ✓ We will check if more people in Stoke-on-Trent say they enjoy their life when we ask people with learning disabilities questions about their lives.



People told us about other ideas that should be in our new plan. These are:

- working together and staff training
- supporting parents and carers who have learning disabilities
- advocacy.



## Working Together and Staff Training - what do we know?



It is hard to plan how much support people with learning disabilities will need in the future.

Different people will have different needs.



Getting the right care and support in the community, and at home, needs to start at a young age, working together with families.



When families need some extra support, or specialist help, they should be able to get it quickly.

This can stop people getting to a 'crisis point' (where things become very difficult for them and problems are harder to deal with).



Sometimes when people are at a 'crisis point', the only choice is for them to go into hospital (like a secure unit) or another institution that might be far away from their family.

We do not want this to happen.



We know we need better recording and sharing of information in the city council and with health, education, service providers and support groups.



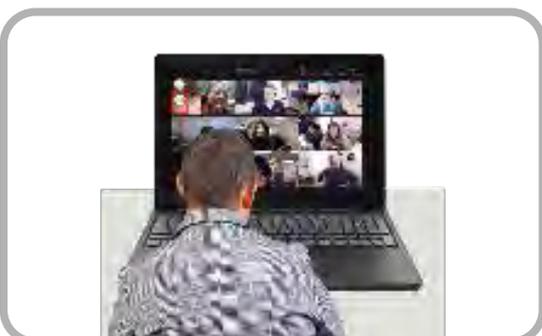
We know that different services work in different ways and don't always work well together.

Some services have very different ways of making assessments.

This means support planning can take much longer than it should.



Everyone should be working together more closely, using the same types of assessments and listening to what people need from the start.



Parents and carers said they don't feel like they are kept up to date about how services are working.

They want more working together, support groups and online group meetings and chat rooms for parents and carers to join in.



## Working Together and Staff Training - what are we doing well?



✓ Staff in different services already work together, but things still need to be better, especially in sharing information and planning.



✓ A training plan is being written to help the city council's **Children with Disabilities Assessment Team** with communication and working together with families.



## Working Together and Staff Training - what needs to change?



We want staff to support people in person-centred ways, using their own skills, knowledge and experience to make sure people get the right services and support for them.



We need staff teams from different services (like health, education and social care) all working together to find out what people need, and plan support and services with them from an early age.



We need to be better at listening to parents and carers because they know their family members best.

Their thoughts and ideas should be part of assessments and support planning.



More staff need training in different ways of communicating.

More staff will be trained in Makaton, BSL (British Sign Language) and using pictures to communicate with people.



The NHS have a plan for 4,000 more staff across the country to be trained in mental health and learning disability by 2023/24.

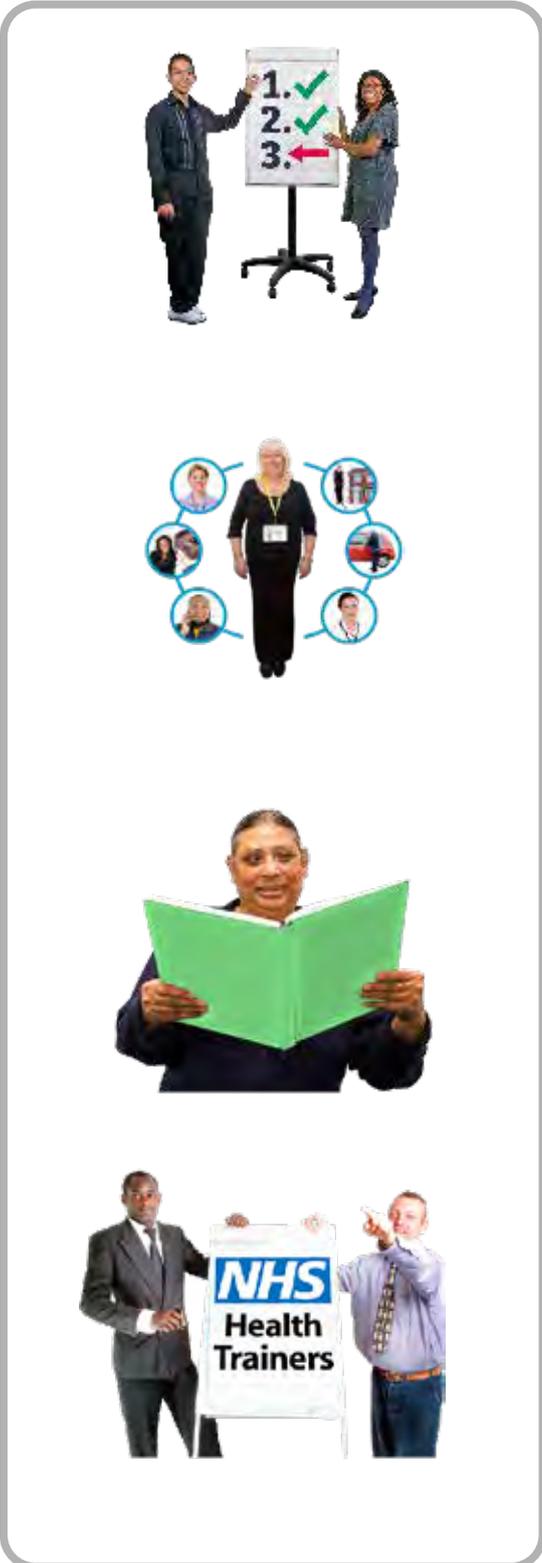
This means more staff in our area will have this training.



When we think about training, we need to make sure parents and carers also have support, training and information, not just paid staff.



## Working Together and Staff Training - what will we do?



- ✓ Create a new training course on learning disabilities that can be used by staff teams in lots of different services and teams.
- ✓ We will put together teams of staff from different services, all working together.
- ✓ We will have a community directory, a big book or list that will have lots of information about different services, support and advice.
- ✓ We will make sure all NHS staff have learning disability training.



We will work together with Carers.

Carers need support with their health and wellbeing.

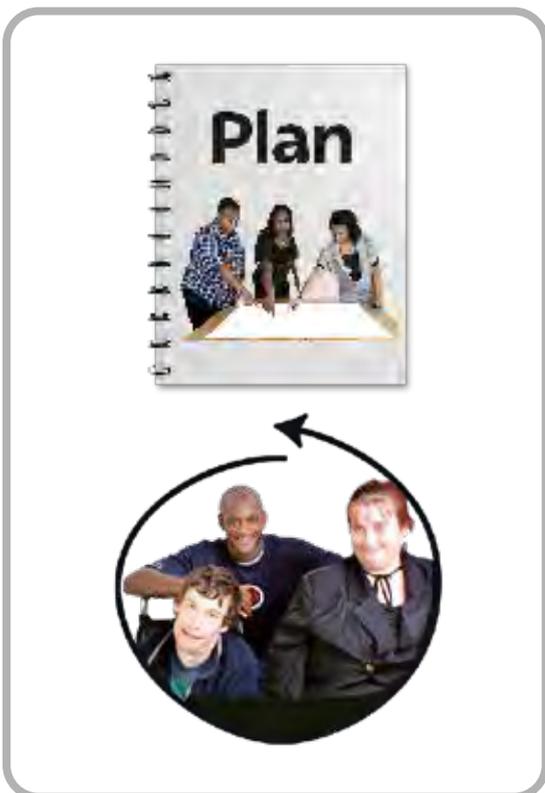
This is very important for them being able to care for their family members.



We know there are carers with illnesses and long-term health problems so we need to work with them and their families to plan extra support if they need it.



We will also work closely with carers and families where more than one person in the home has illnesses or long-term health problems.



There is a Stoke-on-Trent Carers strategy (plan) which explains how carers will be helped and supported, using befriending services and getting information and advice.

Our work on helping people with learning disabilities to live healthier lives means they will live longer.

This might mean their care and support needs change.

The Carers strategy has information about how we will work together with carers and families to plan for this.



## Working Together and Staff Training - how will we check things are getting better?



- ✓ We will check how many people go into specialist hospitals.

If these numbers go down, it should mean people are getting more support at home and in their community..



- ✓ We will check that more of our health and social care staff are being trained in different ways of communicating (such as Makaton, BSL and using pictures) and in understanding learning disability.



- ✓ We will check the feedback we get about staff and our services.

We use 'Complaints, Comments, Compliments' forms:

- to see if people are unhappy
- have ideas about how things should work better in future
- to see if people are happy with how things are working.



- ✓ We ask questions in surveys about how well staff and services are working with people, and if things could be done better.



## Supporting People with Learning Disabilities who are parents or carers - what do we know?



We don't know how many people with a learning disability in Stoke-on-Trent are parents or carers, but we think the number is growing.

Some people have never been diagnosed (told by a doctor or specialist) they have learning disabilities but they need support caring for children and family.



We know some people with learning disabilities are also caring for their parents, brothers and sisters as part of their usual family life.



Sometimes it is hard (because of the way assessments work) for children to get support from social care.

Sometimes this means parents can't look after their children safely and so they are taken into care.



we don't always know someone has a learning disability or need support until they are older and already have children of their own.

Parents and carers told us services should stop worrying so much about if someone has been diagnosed with a learning disability and should work with the whole family to sort out getting the support they need.



## Supporting People with Learning Disabilities who are parents or carers - what are we doing well?



- ✓ Stoke-on-Trent has a strong, independent self-advocacy project called Reach (part of Asist Advocacy Services in Staffordshire).

Reach supports people to speak up about their lives.



- ✓ Services are working together more to support parents and carers with learning disabilities (such as workshops with staff from social care and adults and children's services).



## Supporting People with Learning Disabilities who are parents or carers - what needs to change?

We need to to work together with people with learning disabilities to find out more about the things that need to change.

We need to hear from people with learning disabilities who are parents or carers and from people who may be parents or carers in the future.





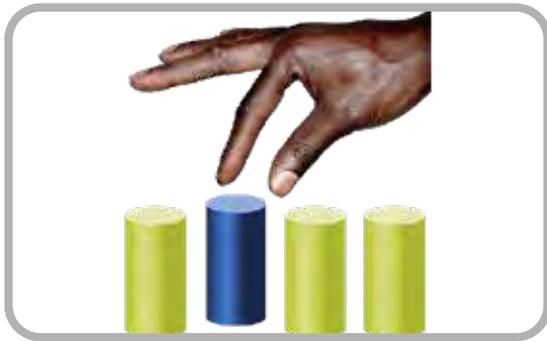
## Supporting People with Learning Disabilities who are parents or carers - what will we do?



- ✓ Make sure there is more support for people with learning disabilities who are caring for children and young people, or caring for their own parents.



## Advocacy and Speaking Up



Advocacy is about supporting people to speak up and make choices and decisions about their own lives.

Strong advocacy and self advocacy will help us understand how things are changing for people.



We will work to make sure people with learning disabilities understand how to speak up.



We will work to make sure people feel confident and able to speak up:

- about hate crime and mate crime
- about physical and mental health
- about what they want to do with their lives
- about what they enjoy in life
- about being parents or carers



## Accountability (who does what and how we check up on their work)



We will make sure Living My Best Life links with other city council and NHS plans for Stoke-on-Trent.



We will send reports about how things are going to the city's Health and Wellbeing Board.



The Learning Disability Partnership Board and the Inclusion Partnership Board will be in charge of checking that Living My Best Life is being used to make life better.



5 Learning Disability Partnership Board sub-groups will meet to check up on each of the main 5 outcomes in **Living My Best Life**.



Each of the 5 Learning Disability Partnership Board sub-groups will be co-chaired by a person with a learning disability who has experience of that issue.



We will review the Learning Disability Partnership Board to make sure the right people are going to meetings.



We will share reports and plans about Living My Best Life on the Partnership Board website - [www.equalpeopleinstoke.org](http://www.equalpeopleinstoke.org)



We will find out how things are working by listening to people with learning disabilities. We will speak to the people we support, and we will listen to what self-advocacy groups have to say about peoples' lives.



We will do a big 'baseline' survey every 2 years where we ask people questions about their lives to see if things are getting better.

## What the Future Should Look Like



As people live longer they need more support from services that have had their budgets (money) cut down over the last few years.



This means services need to find better ways of working to support more people with less money.



Services will need to use technology, work well with others, and work to spot problems early on, especially for children and younger people.



Services need to look at what people can do, not what they can't do, and support them to be as independent as they can be.





Children, young people and parents have told us they want choice and support at any age so we will move away from the idea of 'transition' and look at ways to support people at any point in their life.



As people live longer, we need to think about their support needs and how they might change in future.



Support needs to be about the person, but also needs to work for their family, parents and carers, too.



Co-production takes time and effort but is very important. People with learning disabilities, parents and carers have to be part of planning changes and checking on services.



We know all the changes we need to make can't all happen at once.

With good, well-trained staff in services, and by working together (co-production), people can check up on how things are changing.



# Living My Best Life - Last Words



Living My Best Life is all about planning to make sure children, young people, adults and older people with learning disabilities are safe, healthy and happy in Stoke-on-Trent.



People with learning disabilities want to make their own choices, be listened to and treated with respect. Living My Best Life is based on these ideas.



Living My Best Life is about making positive changes.

People told us lots of things they love about their life in Stoke-on-Trent and we heard from lots of staff who will work very hard to make things better.



The outcomes in this plan are all connected and together, they add up to people living their best life:

- feeling safe
- being healthy
- achieving goals
- loving your home
- enjoying your life.

# Contacts and Credits



The Living My Best Life strategy was co-produced by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Stoke-on-Trent Clinical Commissioning Group, working together with family carers and people with learning disabilities.

For more information visit the website [www.stoke.gov.uk](http://www.stoke.gov.uk)



This clear information was made by Reach, for people with learning disabilities, and for anyone else who wants clear information.

Reach is part of Asist Advocacy Service, we are a registered charity and we are independent from the council and from other organisations,

Reach have also written 6 briefing notes to help you think about each part of the Living My Best Life plan.

Reach have written a question and answer booklet so you can say what you think about Living My Best Life.

To find the Reach information about Living My Best Life visit the website:

<https://equalpeopleinstoke.org>



Thank you to Photosymbols for the images used in this document.