



Stoke-on-Trent Local Offer Annual Report 2024

Introduction

Stoke-on-Trent's Local Offer annual report 2023-2024 provides an update of the key developments over the past 12 months. The Local Offer is intended to include information on support and services available in the locality for children and young people in Stoke-on-Trent with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), between the ages of 0-25, in an accessible and engaging format in one place.

The SEND Code of Practice sets out the statutory duty upon local authorities to publish a Local Offer and annual report.

Local authorities must publish a Local Offer, setting out in one place information about provision they expect to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people in their area who have SEN or are disabled, including those who do not have Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans.

The Local Offer has two key purposes:

1. To provide clear, comprehensive, accessible and up-to-date information about the available provision and how to access it, and
2. To make provision more responsive to local needs and aspirations by directly involving disabled children and young people and those with SEN and their parent carers, and service providers in its development and review.

Key Features of Stoke-on-Trent's Local Offer

Our Local Offer brings together information for children and young people with SEND between the ages of 0-25, and their families. We completed a review of the site in 2022/2023 which culminated in moving to a new platform in May 2023. We have recently reorganised the layout of our homepage to reflect the most visited pages.

The main menu categories of the website are now:

- Education
- Health and social care
- Early Years
- Advice and Support
- Education, health and care plans
- SEND support for learning
- Information for young people
- SEND travel assistance

Our homepage also has a news section which includes a link to our newsletter, an events calendar and search bars. The Useful Links section provides easy access to other important information.

We have worked with parents, families, young people and other stakeholders to develop and improve our Local Offer under the co-production principles developed as part of our Co-production Charter. Information is developed in collaboration with professionals and young people with SEND and their families. We have a working group which meets regularly and involves partners from education, health and care services and our Parent Carer Forum. We consult regularly with local young people and the services who work with them, including voluntary organisations.

The insight gathered from talking with young people has been particularly valuable in helping us shape the redesign of the website.

Regular meetings with the Parent Carer Forum are helping to shape content that will be of particular use to those new to SEND visiting the website.

Feedback on the Local Offer

In line with the SEND Code of Practice which states “Local authorities must publish comments about their Local Offer received from or on behalf of children with SEN or disabilities and their parents and young people with SEN or disabilities.” We share comments received over the past 12 months, as well as our response to them on the Local Offer website section ‘You Said, We Did’

Some examples of comments received are:

You Said	We Did
<p>“The Local Authority does not invest in the Local Offer website”</p>	<p>We have brought the Local Offer website ‘in-house’ to sit on a Council platform instead of an external one. Having the Local Offer on an internal platform means we can have more control when developing the website in the future, updates can be done timelier, and there will be overall more flexibility. We also appointed a Local Offer Development and Engagement Officer.</p>
<p>Parents wanted to know more about local activities available in the area for children with additional needs – especially during the six weeks holidays, and the cost.</p>	<p>We have added a ‘Holidays Activities’ link on the Homepage under ‘Quick Links’.</p> <p>We also now have a calendar listing local activities, groups and events - you can find it on the homepage.</p> <p>We worked with local parents and carers and community groups to compile a comprehensive list of events over the Easter holidays.</p>

When accessing the Local Offer, our Feedback section gives visitors the opportunity to share their opinions and suggestions.

Achievements & Improvements over the past year

1. The website has been moved from an external platform to a Council galaxy site. This means that updates can be made more quickly and represents a cost saving.
2. Outdated and unnecessary content was refreshed or removed.
3. Our directory has been reviewed with duplicated content removed. We have improved the classification of records to make it easier to search.
4. All downloads and documents were reviewed, and upgraded to meet accessibility criteria where necessary.
5. A translation function was added meaning that the website can now be viewed in 52 languages.
6. Content across the site is in the process of being reviewed and refreshed. We have started with the pages that are most viewed including those around SEND support and EHCPs and have refreshed these to give clearer information about the steps in the process.
7. We have rewritten the page 'What is the Local Offer?' to make it a more useful guide to navigating the site. We are creating a video to help visitors further.
8. We added a video to our website outlining recent developments with the Local Offer which can be found in 'What is the Local Offer?'
9. Huge changes to the structure of the website are in the process of being made by colleagues in the Communications and IT departments. They are redesigning the whole structure of the site to make it easier to use. Already the homepage looks very different than it did at the start of the year – it is much less 'busy' and confusing and it is already easier to find information needed.
10. We are out and about in the local community, telling people about the Local Offer, talking with providers about what is available and working with them to try to identify and fill gaps.
11. We have created two newsletters, and have published two editions of each so far. One is aimed at families and the other at professionals but both are available on our website for everyone to read.
12. The Local Offer team were proud to be a part of Together We Thrive SEND event, organised by the Parent Carer Forum in June 2023.



Priorities over the next 12 months

Improving navigation of the website

We will continue to restructure the content of the website and improving how users navigate to information to simplify the process. We expect this work to be completed by summer 2024

Accessibility of the contents on the website

Young people have asked that we provide more video content on the website, improving the accessibility of content on the site. We are gathering audio clips from local schools and colleges to add to the website to share students' voices about some of the issues that are important to them, including their thoughts on their EHCPs. We are reviewing all the content of the site, looking where the text can be made more straightforward, and easy to understand and how and where we can replace long sections of text with more visual content.

Increase awareness of the Local Offer

We know that lots of people who might find the Local Offer website a useful resource, still don't know that it exists and haven't heard about the Local Offer. We will do more out in the community to raise awareness with people at events and meeting with groups, to spread the word. We will share information about the Local Offer on social media and create posters for display in public areas such as libraries and doctors' waiting rooms. We will also be taking part in another Together We Thrive event in 2024.

Supporting people to access the Local Offer

We need to make sure that people who do not have access to online information are still able to find the information they need. We are talking to people in the city for their ideas on how we can do this.

Improving information for young people

We are talking to young people in the city about what information they would want to find on the Local Offer and how this could be presented

Improving the 'everyday usefulness' of the site

We want the Local Offer to reflect the day to day life of people in Stoke-on-Trent and make it easy for people to find information about enjoyable things to do in the area as well as finding out about services and support available to help them.

We have created an events calendar and are encouraging providers to add details of activities they are organising or supporting to it. Our Easter activities round up, coproduced with local parents, carers and community groups was well-received.

Improving our understanding of what is available to children and young people with SEND within our city

We are working hard to find out about all the opportunities available within Stoke-on-Trent so that we can share them with our community and also so we can work with partners if gaps are identified. We are making connections with community groups all over the city and regularly meet with groups of parents to hear their experiences, recommendations and concerns.

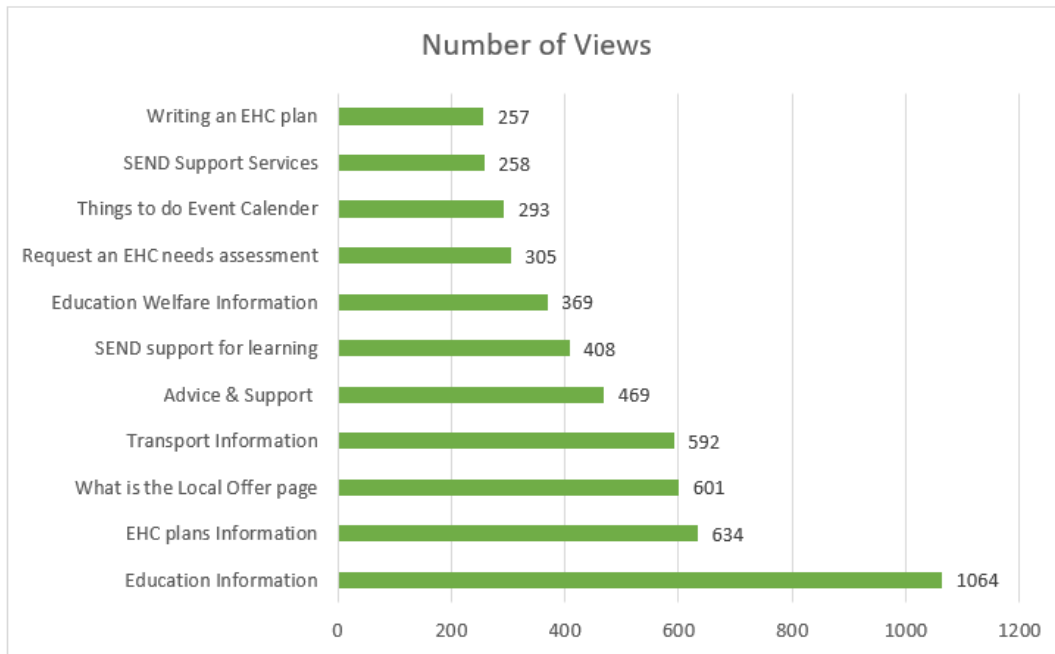
How are people using the Local Offer?

All data covers the period 1 June 2023 to 1 March 2024

How many people have visited the Local Offer?

During this period there were 24,735 views on the Local Offer website from 5,247 users.

The graph below shows the number of views for the most popular pages on the Local Offer during this period, some pages have been excluded from these results including the Local Offer home, directory and search pages.



Webpage	Number of views
Writing an EHC plan	257
SEND support services	258
Things to do events calendar	293
Request an EHC needs assessment	305
Education Welfare information	369
SEND support for learning	408
Advice and support	469
Transport information	592
What is the Local Offer?	601
EHC plans information	634
Education information	1064

How do people access the Local Offer?

Smartphone – 2781 people

Desktop computer – 2401 people

Tablet – 67 people

Smart TV – 1 person

