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Tender

SEND Cluster Model Transformation

Stoke on Trent City Council

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Published 6 October 2025, 2:13pm

Scope

Reference

SR/2025/502

Description

1. Introduction

The Children and Families Directorate of Stoke-on-Trent City Council is seeking to commission a provider to design and deliver a comprehensive SEND School Improvement Programme to support the implementation of the locality-based Cluster Model. This work forms part of the Council's wider transformation agenda, aligned with the Stoke-on-Trent SEND Strategy and the DSG Deficit Management Plan.

The programme will be funded through the Council's approved Transformation Budget. The aim is to build sustainable capacity within the school system to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND more effectively, reduce reliance on statutory processes and specialist placements, and embed inclusive practice across all settings.

2. Scope

The scope of this contract is to deliver a city-wide SEND School Improvement and SEND development programme in Stoke-on-Trent. The programme must be designed and delivered in partnership with the Council and participating settings, including:

- Mainstream schools (primary, secondary and further education)
- Early years providers
- Special schools

The provider will be responsible for both the design and delivery of the programme, ensuring it is tailored to the local context and aligned with strategic priorities. The programme must include a strong focus on inclusive leadership, peer collaboration, coaching, and cultural change, and must be underpinned by robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The successful provider will be expected to work in a hybrid model, combining in-person and virtual delivery. The provider must ensure that all staff involved in delivery hold appropriate DBS clearance and adhere to the Council's safeguarding standards.

3. Background

Stoke-on-Trent City Council is undertaking a significant transformation of its High Needs Block, part of the DSG. This transformation is driven by the need to address a growing financial deficit and improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND in the city.

The SEND Cluster Model is a key component of the Council's SEND and AP Improvement Plan, aiming to embed inclusive practice across mainstream and special schools. The model promotes a values-led, locality-based approach to SEND support, enabling schools to collaborate, share expertise, and build capacity to meet needs earlier and more effectively.

4. Service conditions

The provider will be expected to:

- The provider will be expected to deliver the programme using a hybrid model, combining in-person and virtual engagement. Some elements, such as launch events, coaching sessions, and peer review activities, must be delivered face-to-face to support relationship-building and cultural change.
- All staff involved in delivery must:

- o Hold an enhanced DBS check.
- o Comply with the Council's safeguarding policies and procedures.
- o Demonstrate experience in working with schools, early years settings, and special schools.
- Work closely with a named Local Authority lead and the SEND Delivery Group, which will oversee programme governance and strategic alignment.

Flexibility will be required to adapt delivery to local needs, school contexts, and evolving priorities. The provider must ensure that all activities are inclusive, accessible, and aligned with the Council's commitment to improving life chances and tackling inequality.

The provider must also be able to mobilise quickly following contract award and demonstrate capacity to deliver at pace.

5. Statement of requirements

The successful provider will be required to design and deliver a comprehensive, locality-based SEND School Improvement Programme. The programme must be co-designed with the Council and delivered in partnership with schools, early years settings, and special schools.

The programme will initially be targeted at education settings in the central locality of the city before being rolled out citywide.

The programme must include the following core components:

Programme Design and Delivery

- A structured, phased programme following a clear timeline
- Delivery of launch events, self-evaluation activities, action planning, and feedback cycles.
- Integration of Early Years and Preparation for Adulthood strands to ensure continuity across phases.
- A strong emphasis on cultural change, shared language, and inclusive leadership.

Leadership Development and Coaching

- Identification and training of local coaches to support sustainability and increase

capacity within the system.

- Access to a national coaching network and opportunities for cross-authority learning.
- Provision of SENCO supervision, executive coaching, and peer mentoring partnerships.

Peer Review and Collaboration

- Implementation of a peer review methodology to support inclusive practice and accountability.
- Establishment of local peer networks and cluster-based collaboration aligned to the council's SEND cluster model.
- Use of Improvement Champions and optional Inclusion Leaders of Education (ILEs) to facilitate school-to-school support.

Digital Tools and Monitoring

- Provision of a single digital dashboard for the local authority to monitor school-level SEND priorities and progress.
- Integration with existing LA systems (e.g. MIS) where possible and compliance with GDPR.
- A microsite or platform for resource sharing, CPD tracking, and performance monitoring.

Consultancy and Strategic Alignment

- Tailored consultancy to align programme delivery with the SEND Strategy, SEND and AP Improvement Plan, and DSG Deficit Management Plan.
- Support for embedding inclusive practice into governance and business-as-usual processes.
- Strategic planning with LA leads and school boards to build shared ownership and accountability.

National Connectivity

- Access to a national SEND network for professional development, policy updates, and best practice sharing.
- Opportunities for participation in national webinars, forums, and cross-authority learning

events.

6. Technology, systems, and management techniques

The provider will be expected to:

- Use secure, GDPR-compliant systems for data handling and communication.
- Apply recognised project and change management methodologies to structure delivery and monitor progress.
- Provide access to any proprietary tools or platforms used during the programme, with appropriate training and handover to ensure sustainability.

7. Desired outcomes

The programme must deliver measurable improvements in inclusive practice, leadership capability, and system-wide sustainability. The desired outcomes include:

- A reduction in Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCP) requests
- A reduction in children transitioning from mainstream to independent specialist provision
- Increased parental confidence, with 80% of surveyed parents reporting improved confidence in mainstream provision.
- Improved SENCO leadership, with 90% of participating SENCOs reporting increased confidence and capability.
- High levels of school engagement, with 95% of schools actively participating in the programme by the end of Year 1.
- A demonstrable shift in inclusive culture, evidenced through shared language, collaborative practice, and reduced reliance on statutory processes.

8. Performance Measures and KPIs

The provider will be expected to monitor and report on progress against both local indicators and KPIs from the DSG Deficit Management Plan. These will be measured quarterly throughout the delivery period. Performance measures include:

KPI Suggested Method of Data Collection

Participation rates across schools, early years settings, and special schools Attendance

registers from meetings, events, and training sessions; sign-in sheets

Completion of self-evaluation and action planning activities Submission tracking via shared platform; checklists or survey confirmation

Engagement with coaching, peer review, and network sessions Booking logs, attendance records, feedback forms

Progress against EHCP reduction and placement transfer targets LA data on EHCPs and placements; comparison with agreed targets

Feedback from schools, parents, and SENCOs on programme impact Online surveys, focus groups, feedback forms after events

Evidence of cultural change and improved inclusive practice Case studies, school audits, staff reflections, Ofsted comments

9. Reporting and Governance

The successful provider will report to the SEND Delivery Group, which includes representatives from the local authority, schools, early years settings, and other relevant stakeholders.

Reporting requirements include:

- Monthly progress updates to the Delivery Group, including key achievements, challenges, and proposed adjustments.
- Quarterly written reports summarising delivery activity, engagement levels, progress against KPIs, and impact data.
- Contribution to evaluation and learning activities, including:
 - o Feedback collection from participants
 - o Case study development
 - o Thematic analysis of qualitative data

Reports should include both qualitative and quantitative data, highlight risks and mitigations, and propose any necessary adjustments to delivery.

The provider must maintain open communication with the Council and respond promptly to requests for information, clarification, or support.

Total value (estimated)

- £125,000 including VAT

Below the relevant threshold

Contract dates (estimated)

- 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028
- 3 years

Main procurement category

Services

CPV classifications

- 80000000 - Education and training services

Contract locations

- UKG23 - Stoke-on-Trent

Submission

Enquiry deadline

17 October 2025, 5:00pm

Tender submission deadline

5 November 2025, 12:00pm

Submission address and any special instructions

<https://procontract.due-north.com/Procurer/Evaluation/Summary?evaluationId=4b2d4e19-5b92-f011-813a-005056b64545&fromRfx=False>

Tenders may be submitted electronically

Yes

Award criteria

| Name | Type | Weighting |
|---------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Quality (Technical) | Quality | 50% |
| Price | Price | 40% |
| Social Value | Quality | 10% |

Procedure

Procedure type

Below threshold - open competition

Contracting authority

Stoke on Trent City Council

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PDQZ-1442-RZTZ

Civic Centre, Glebe Street

Stoke-on-Trent

ST4 1HH

United Kingdom

Email: categorymanagement@stoke.gov.uk

Region: UKG23 - Stoke-on-Trent

Organisation type: Public authority - sub-central government