



Staffordshire

A PLACE WITH AMBITION

STAFFORDSHIRE EMPLOYMENT
AND SKILLS STRATEGY 2023-2030



TOGETHER, WE'RE MAKING STAFFORDSHIRE A PLACE TO LEARN

Staffordshire already has an enterprising, resilient, and inclusive economy. But for the county to continue to thrive, and for residents and businesses to fully experience the benefits, it's vital to recognise the importance of skills for employment and the need to support people of all ages into work, to progress or change careers, so businesses can access the skills and talent they need to diversify and grow.

That's why stakeholders from across the county have come together to create our Employment and Skills Strategy, putting in place the vision and priorities to deliver our united economic vision for Staffordshire. And it will make sure our workforce is equipped not only to weather economic shocks such as global pandemics, but also to thrive and grow, with the digital skills to embrace technological transformation and the green skills to achieve net zero by 2050.

What makes this strategy different is that it's built on partnership and shared endeavour. Those contributing to it are committed to making our ambitions a reality. We want people from all backgrounds and abilities to fulfil their potential and as devolution plans develop, we look forward to working with partners across Staffordshire and beyond to capitalise on the talent and highly skilled workforce that already exists here.

But above all, we're committed to making sure Staffordshire is a place where everyone can thrive; harnessing and growing our skills base to enable residents and businesses to maximise future opportunities and make prosperity a reality for all.



Alan White

Leader of Staffordshire
County Council and
Leaders' Board Chair



Philip White

Deputy Leader of Staffordshire
County Council and Cabinet
Member for Economy and Skills

THE BENEFITS FOR US ALL



Higher skilled workforce



Increased economic activity



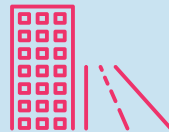
Reduced unemployment



Less labour shortages



Address skills gaps



Business growth



Greater inward investment



More high paid jobs



Increased productivity



Overall greater economic growth



Higher wages/prosperity



Better quality of life and wellbeing

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

A PLACE WITH A GREAT FUTURE

In recent years, Staffordshire has seen significant improvement and success in developing local skills, thanks to strong partnerships and substantial capital and revenue investment – including City Deal, Growth Deal, the European Social Fund (ESF), the Getting Building Fund and more.

In fact, the rate of improvement has been significantly faster than the national average, reducing the number of residents with no formal qualifications and increasing those with higher skills at Level 3+ (A Level equivalent or above) and 4+ (Degree equivalent or above).

The result is that more residents can now access better-paid jobs and play a more active and productive role in the local economy; our unemployment and economic inactivity rates remain well below the national average, so more of our residents are in work and fewer rely on state support. And in turn, our skills improvements have already led to greater economic growth and increased productivity, with more businesses investing in Staffordshire and creating more skilled jobs.



OUR SHARED VISION AND MISSION



Now it's time to build on our recent success, and make sure Staffordshire has the highly-skilled workforce to reach our full potential.

Our vision is to give our residents the skills to access higher value, better-paid jobs across a wide range of priority sectors, helping deliver a diverse, inclusive and sustainable economy.

The mission for employment and skills stakeholders is to create strong, effective partnerships to help our people gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to achieve their ambitions and actively help to grow Staffordshire's economy.

OUR PRIORITIES

Fundamental to our strategy are the **cross-cutting priorities of developing digital and green skills**, to help adopt new technologies and to transition our economy to net zero.

Our other employment and skills priorities are:

- **An Aspirational and Active Workforce** to increase economic activity, inclusivity, and productivity
- **Inspirational Careers Advice** to help access the world of work and career opportunities
- **Technical Skills to drive Productivity and Growth** and respond to business needs now and, in the future
- **Innovation and Enterprise** supporting entrepreneurialism and business growth
- **A Place of Learning** to instil a culture of life-long learning



CREATING AN ASPIRATIONAL AND ACTIVE WORKFORCE

Staffordshire's strong, robust, and diverse local economy is providing increased job opportunities for residents. But those jobs are becoming more advanced and digital in nature, so workers' skills need to continually develop and improve to access such higher value, skilled and better paid roles.

We need to help all those looking for work to gain the necessary skills by providing access to high-quality advice and guidance as well as relevant training and retraining, so they can play an active and productive role in the local economy.

The council receives funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for Community Learning through the Adult Education Skills Budget, to provide training and education to approx. 3,000 adult learners aged 19+ per year. The service currently works with schools, colleges, voluntary and community sector organisations, independent training providers and local community groups to deliver a range of learning opportunities to improve the lives of Staffordshire residents and the local economy.

Staffordshire County Council's Community Learning Service

Staffordshire Jobs & Careers (SJC) is helping local people by providing a quick and easy way to find employment and/or training opportunities. Its jobs brokerage and digital online platform provide free recruitment and support services to both businesses and residents.

Staffordshire Jobs & Careers



PROVIDING INSPIRATIONAL CAREERS ADVICE

The economy's going through big changes, with new digital technologies and the move to a greener future – both of which will require new skills. So, we need to make sure both students and adult learners are not only aware of the changes, but also have access to the Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) they need to make informed choices for a productive and prosperous career.

Effective CEIAG is vital in schools and colleges, as it influences students' aspirations, achievement and, potentially, their life chances and social mobility. It also plays a vital role – alongside experience and qualifications – in the development of the right skills for a chosen career pathway. So, we're continually working with education and skills partners to make sure CEIAG is aligned with employers' needs.

The Stoke & Staffordshire Careers Hub is the strategic arm for careers for all schools and colleges across the county including mainstream, academy, special schools and pupil referral units. The Hub assesses, quality assures and supports schools to achieve the Gatsby Benchmarks and improve career prospects for young people.

Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Careers Hub



DEVELOPING TECHNICAL SKILLS

Among Staffordshire's strengths are engineering and advanced manufacturing, logistics and construction. Together with increasing digitisation and the move towards sustainability, we have an opportunity to develop technical, digital and green skills to grow the local economy through increased productivity and help attract further high value investment.

Our colleges, universities and independent training providers are already improving the higher-level technical skills (including apprenticeships and T-Levels) available and developing new skills required by businesses, especially the combination of digital skills and green skills needed to help realise the county's net zero ambitions.

The needs of business are at the heart of our skills transformation – which is why we're building on the development of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Institute of Technology (IoT), bringing business and education providers together to provide the future skills for growth.

Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group (NSCG) led a consortium of education providers and employers to form the £20M IoT, based in Stafford and opening in 2024. It brings together key industry, education and research opportunities with employers and academia working collaboratively to widen participation in targeted STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) areas.

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire – Institute of Technology



SUPPORTING INNOVATION AND ENTERPRISE

More businesses are choosing Staffordshire, driven by both increased inward investment but also improving business start-up rates.

The creation of new SMEs is the lifeblood of any economy, bringing job opportunities, providing stable and growing incomes, driving local production of quality goods and services and fostering innovation – so were making sure everything's in place to develop entrepreneurial and innovation skills as a priority.

Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce's Ignite programme helps young people in their final year of further education who are looking to start their own business. Areas covered include business planning, marketing, networking, cash flow forecasting and selling. To date, over 16,700 students have been supported on the programme.

Ignite

Keele University has invested in dedicated Innovation Centres to help businesses grow. Currently there are six located at Keele University Science and Innovation Park, with Innovation Centres 7 & 8 soon to be completed.

Keele University Innovation Centres



INNOVATION CENTRE 6
Keele University Innovation Centre

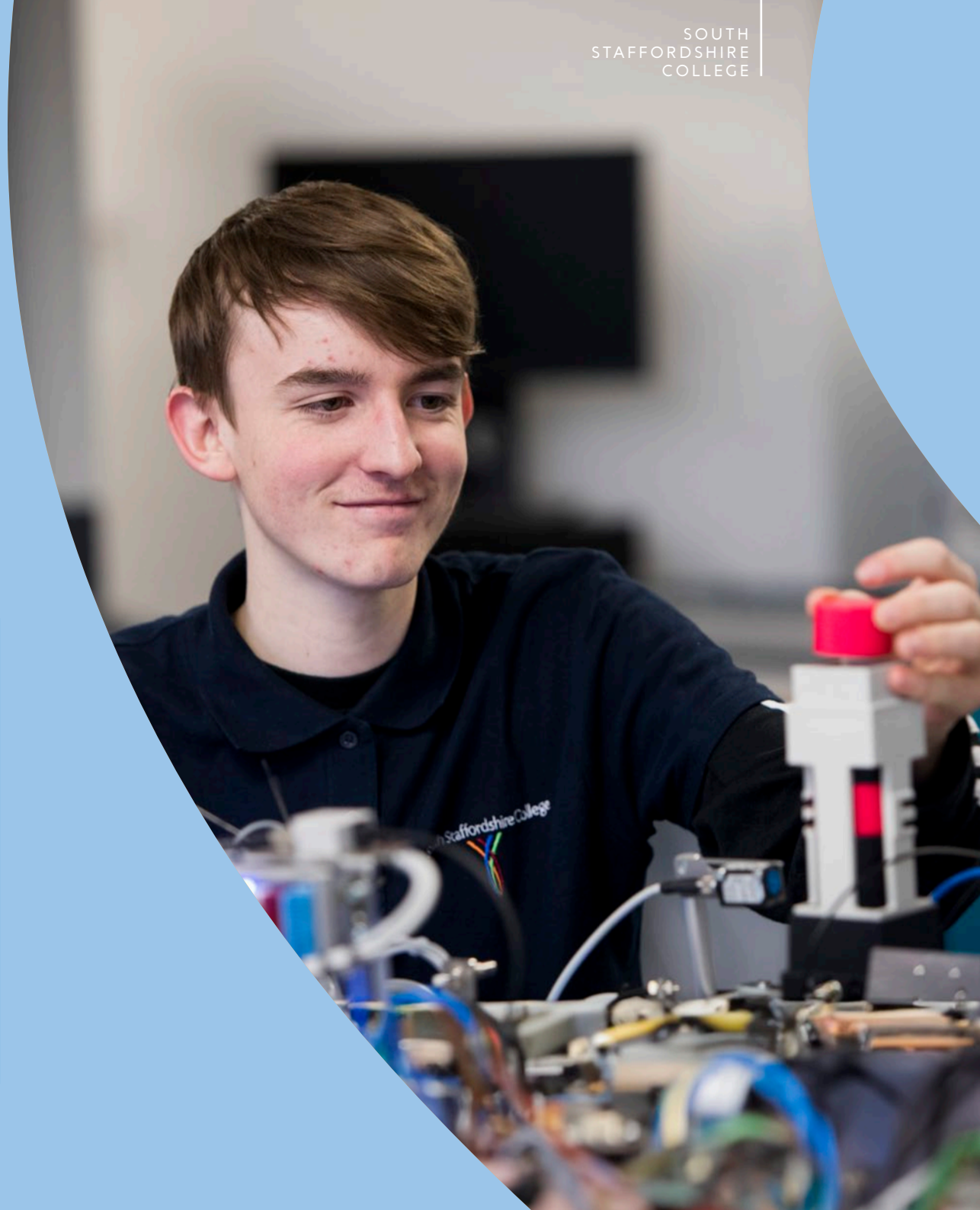
CREATING A PLACE OF LEARNING

With the economy developing more rapidly than ever, the world of work is constantly changing. There are now very few 'jobs for life', and wide-ranging labour shortages and skills gaps across both the local and national economy. One of the biggest challenges is creating a pipeline of talent with the right skills for current and future jobs. Most workers will need to retrain and upskill several times throughout their careers, as innovation and advances in technology change the skills requirements of jobs.

To support that change we've developed new delivery models so businesses, especially small ones, can help create new courses in modular, bite-size and on-demand formats geared around the skills they need. It gives people the opportunity to access qualifications, especially for digital and green skills, to upskill or reskill at a time and in a way that suits them, leading to improved social mobility, inclusion and lifelong learning.

With over 400 apprenticeships supported to date, the recently-closed Apprenticeship 500 programme provided grants of £5000 to cover the cost of recruiting and retaining an apprentice to help businesses recover from the pandemic.

Apprenticeship 500



OUR PRIORITY GROWTH SECTORS

As well as improving higher-level skills to drive economic growth and raise productivity, there are also opportunities for growth and improved productivity in high-skilled high-value jobs in several key growth sectors.

These require specific technical skills alongside digital and green skills – and developing them will help maximise the opportunities for growth.

Our priority growth sectors include:

- **Engineering & Advanced Manufacturing**, including Automation, AI & Machine Learning
- **Construction**, including Modern Methods such as Automation, AI & Retrofitting
- **Advanced Logistics**
- **Health and Social Care**, including Digitisation of Services/New Technologies

The £1M Digital Skills Centres provide digital hubs at Cannock and Tamworth offering access to quality training, supported by state-of-the-art physical and digitally-simulated environments, to develop the skills needed by employers.

South Staffordshire College Digital Skills Centres

A European first, this world-class demonstrator facility for research and development enables the testing and evaluation of new and evolving smart energy technologies.

Keele University Smart Energy Network Demonstrator



ENGINEERING & ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

This fast-paced sector covers everything from designing and building the next generation of electric vehicles to pharmaceuticals, and with new technologies such as AI (Artificial Intelligence), automation, robotics, 3D printing and plastic electronics changing the shape of production and engineering, it has a high demand for talent.

Staffordshire is expected to see high-value employment growth in advanced manufacturing and specialist areas such as automotive, aerospace, advanced materials, med-tech, agri-tech, energy and other technology-intensive industries, which will be driven by the availability of skilled local labour in the long-term.



With a Control and Automation Suite, a CAD & Visualisation Suite and an independent study area, the £275k scheme enabled the expansion of curriculum in both the mechanical and electronic sector from level 1 to level 3. The facility provides a bureau of specialist knowledge and equipment and allows smaller employers access to emerging technologies and advice.

JCB Academy – Automation & Robotics Suite

Completing a new training facility to enhance skills in core engineering practices as well as the Caterpillar production system curriculums, this £767k project provides a training area for assembly and core manufacturing process principles alongside the existing key machining training facility.

Perkins Engines Stafford – Manufacturing Excellence Centre

A £1m project to refit the Cannock Skills & Innovation Hub and create an Engineering Academy with specialist equipment including CNC lathes and mills, drills, mechatronic equipment and CAD software. It provides training in a range of engineering principles including welding & fabrication, manufacturing, mechatronics and computer-aided design.

South Staffordshire College – Cannock Engineering Academy

ADVANCED LOGISTICS

A diverse sector covering road, rail, sea and air industries, logistics is a key part of our growing service economy with other sectors such as retailers and manufacturers heavily reliant on freight services and the efficient movement of goods. With Brexit, technology and other disruptive forces changing in the way goods move across borders and through the supply chain, logistics has never been more important to the UK economy.

Given Staffordshire's central location, we are at the heart of one of the largest sectors in the UK economy with sustained growth in the numbers employed in logistics and recent growth in storage and warehousing. The accelerated shift to e-commerce and online retail is expected to continue, with an ongoing labour shortage in key roles such as HGV and van drivers.

Alongside changing consumer behaviour, fresh opportunities are emerging from new technologies and ways of working such as automation and AI, which are changing the shape of logistics and have the potential to significantly increase productivity.

West Midlands Interchange will be one of the largest logistic developments in the UK, offering 8 million sq. ft of rail served logistics facilities in South Staffordshire. This significant £1bn national project will support the creation of more than 8,500 skilled logistics jobs and apprenticeships for the local community during development, construction and operation. Local skills and training providers and partners will play a key role in ensuring that our residents have the skills needed to access the jobs being created.

West Midlands Interchange (WMI)



CONSTRUCTION, INCLUDING MODERN METHODS

Construction is one of the largest sectors in both the UK and Staffordshire economies. There are continuing skill shortages at all levels, especially with BREXIT restrictions impacting flows of EU workers on which the sector has heavily relied, and therefore high demand for talent to support future growth.

Significant growth opportunities include:

- Rising population leading to increased demand for construction of housing and infrastructure
- Long-term major infrastructure projects, such as HS2 and WMI (West Midlands Interchange)

New technologies and ways of working such as Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), including offsite manufacturing and prefabricated house building, are also creating opportunities by changing the shape of construction and offering the potential to significantly increase productivity.

The Green Economy is also key in this sector, with job opportunities emerging in areas such as sustainable construction, renewable energy, heat pump installation and retrofitting home insulation in existing properties.

MEECEBROOK
GARDEN COMMUNITY
STAFFORD

A £1m project providing specialist equipment including heavy plant, dumper trucks, excavators, a crane, scissor lifts, tractors and rigs for hybrid construction training at the Stafford campus's National Construction Plant Training Centre. The college is one of only twelve centres in the UK to provide specialist training in heavy construction plant machinery, and this equipment supports advanced apprenticeship frameworks in plant maintenance, plant operation, civil engineering plant & construction.

Newcastle & Stafford Colleges Group – Hybrid Construction Technology

A brand-new building at the Burslem campus enabling the College to work with more young and adult learners and employers to support upskilling in new green technologies for construction. The investment includes a digital Construction Suite, electric vehicles and new workshop facilities for building surveying and computer aided design, to help deliver the new T Level in construction.

Stoke-on-Trent College Digital Construction Suite

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The NHS is Europe's biggest employer and the fifth biggest employer in the world, with over 350 job roles in the health and social care sector. A growing and ageing population is increasing demand for health and social care services – however, the size of the sector workforce has not kept pace with this demand leading to a number of labour shortages and skills gaps.

In Staffordshire, there's ongoing high demand for social care workers and nurses, with recruitment pressures exacerbated by both the COVID pandemic and BREXIT. There are also opportunities to make better use of new digital technologies to improve quality, efficiency and patient experience as well as supporting more integrated care and improving the health of the population.

The £5.8m Centre for Health Innovation has been designed in collaboration with industry experts and includes a state-of-the-art Clinical Simulation Centre. The new facility means students, healthcare professionals and start-up businesses will have the chance to immerse themselves in the latest medical techniques and methods.

Staffordshire University – Centre for Health Innovation



HOW WE'RE DELIVERING OUR EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS STRATEGY

Our approach to delivering this strategy across Staffordshire and its districts and boroughs is clear:

We're working in partnership to leverage and align public sector investment, such as the Levelling Up Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

We'll match and maximise public and private sector investment – for example, the Apprenticeship Levy.

We're working with government on the opportunities for more powers and funding through devolution, including the Adult Education Budget.

We'll maximise employer investment in skills and involvement in the design of skills provision, such as through the Local Skills Improvement Plan.

We're shaping and influencing the strategic commissioning of other funds and priorities – for example, HS2, West Midlands Freight Interchange, A50 A500 Strategic Corridor and the LSIP – as a route to delivering technical skills.

THE EVIDENCE BEHIND OUR STRATEGY

Here's where you can access all the strategic evidence and information you need:

The latest Full Economy and Skills Evidence Base has the following key aims:

- To provide an overview of the pre-COVID economy and labour market position (core outcome datasets and Government KPIs e.g., Levelling-up missions).
- To discuss the impact of COVID and Energy/Cost-of-Living Crisis on the local economy.
- To identify COVID recovery opportunities.
- To consider economic renewal and transformation opportunities including priority sectors and skill areas.
- To provide detailed priority sector information including SWOT analysis.

The monthly Economic Bulletin provides the most timely analysis of official Government data, national intelligence and local analysis and insights on the state of the local economy and labour market.

We have commissioned over £250,000-worth of DfE funded research to inform specific aspects of local economic and skills system development including:

- Skills for Growth Employer Survey delivered by Metro Dynamics.
- Deep dive on CEIAG and employer education/provider relationships delivered by the University of Wolverhampton.



BETTER TOGETHER

“We’re delighted the county’s nine local authorities, skills providers, employers and wider stakeholders have come together in developing an Employment and Skills Strategy to ensure that Staffordshire has the highly skilled workforce it needs to reach its full potential.”

OUR SHARED VISION

Our vision is to give our residents the skills to access higher value, better-paid jobs across a wide range of priority sectors, helping deliver a diverse, inclusive and sustainable economy.

DELIVERING THE SKILLS STAFFORDSHIRE NEEDS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

We’re united in our ambition to deliver the skills Staffordshire needs. By working together, we’ll develop the skills to access higher value, better-paid jobs and deliver a diverse, inclusive, and sustainable economy across the county. We remain as one to put the whole of Staffordshire on the UK and world map to contribute even more to our national wellbeing.

BURTON AND SOUTH DERBYSHIRE COLLEGE



OMRICON
Red Hill Business Park, Stafford



Staffordshire



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