

Staffordshire Community Learning Strategy 2023-27

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1. Foreword

- 1.1. Staffordshire County Council's Community Learning Service provides learning opportunities for adults aged nineteen plus (19+), across the eight (8) districts of Staffordshire, offering courses of learning that support people to gain the skills that they need so that they can progress in the world of work, and that support the independence and wellbeing of families and communities.
- 1.2. Staffordshire Community Learning develops the skills, confidence, motivation, and resilience of adults of different ages and backgrounds in order to:
 - Progress towards formal learning or employment,
 - Improve their health and wellbeing and independence,
 - and support our local communities and families to get the most from lifelong learning in order to improve their life chances.
- 1.3. The Service is part of the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills directorate and sits within the Skills and Employability Department.
- 1.4. The Council receives funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for Community Learning through the Adult Education Budget to provide training and education to approximately 2,000 adult learners achieving over 3,000 enrolments per year.
- 1.5. The Council is responsible for the delivery of commissioned provision as Lead Provider.
- 1.6. The Council's Direct Delivery Unit delivers ESOL and Digital courses, while most of the funding is sub-contracted to local learning Providers.

2. Purpose and vision

- 2.1. Our purpose is to improve the lives of Staffordshire residents and the local economy by providing a range of lifelong learning opportunities.
- 2.2. Our vision is to offer a service of outstanding quality, to ensure significant impact for Learners and other stakeholders with efficient use of funding.

3. Outcomes

Staffordshire County Council Strategic Plan 2022-26

3.1. The overarching outcomes of the Service align closely with the outcomes and priorities of Staffordshire County Council as set out in the Staffordshire County Council Strategic Plan 2022-26¹.

3.2. Staffordshire County Council's Strategic Plan (2022-2026) sets out the ambitions and priorities for the years ahead. It outlines what the Council wants to achieve and how the Council intends to do it. The Strategic Plan outlines the vision:

'An innovative, ambitious and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy'.

3.3. As a result of this vision the plan outlines the overarching outcomes and priorities, and how the Council aims to achieve them. The priority outcomes are that the people of Staffordshire will:

- have access to more good jobs and share the benefit of economic growth,
- live in thriving and sustainable communities,
- and be healthier and independent for longer.

3.4. The priorities are to:

- support Staffordshire's economy to grow, generating more and better-paid jobs,
- tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable,
- encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience, and independence,
- fix more roads, and improve transport and digital connections,
- and offer every Staffordshire young person the best start in life, and the chance to achieve their potential.

3.5. The Council will achieve the outcomes and priorities by:

- encouraging our communities to help themselves and each other,
- lead our workforce to be ambitious, courageous, and empowered,
- use digital technology and data to connect, inform and support the people of Staffordshire,
- and engage and listen to our communities, partners, and business, working together to improve our county.

¹ [Strategic Plan 2022 to 2026 - Staffordshire County Council](#)

Staffordshire Community Learning Outcomes 2023-27

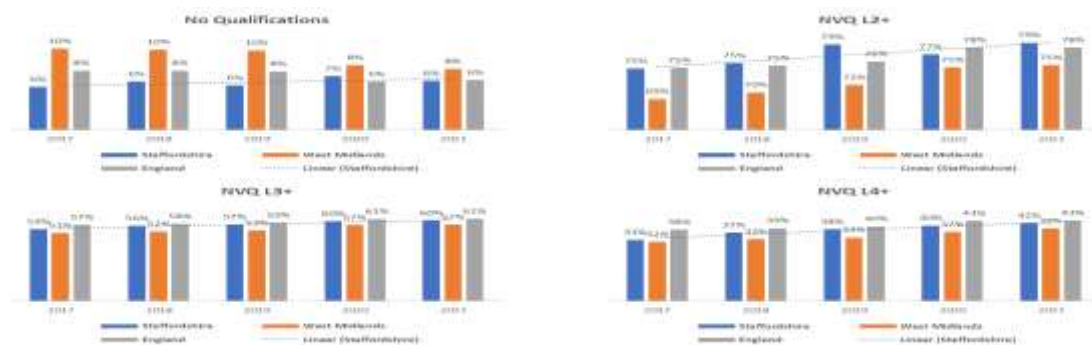
3.6. The overarching outcomes of the Community Learning Service are as follows:

- Community Learning courses will contribute to better health and wellbeing, confidence, resilience, and independence for all Learners, leading to raised aspirations.
- Learners and families who participate in Community Learning courses will gain the skills they need to achieve their personal aspirations, including making progress towards good jobs and giving their children the best start in life.
- Community Learning will bring local communities together through the promotion and delivery of lifelong learning to bring about new opportunities and improve lives, whatever people's circumstances.

4. Local Context and stakeholders

- 4.1. Staffordshire is a relatively affluent county. Stafford, South Staffordshire, Staffordshire Moorlands and Lichfield districts are among the least deprived according to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).²
- 4.2. The claimant rate for state benefits in Staffordshire remains below regional and national rates. At the time of writing, the cost-of-living crisis is affecting residents and businesses in Staffordshire as it is nationally, and there are significant job opportunities available locally, and priority sector skills areas in Staffordshire are digital, STEM, construction, Health & Social Care, and the green economy.
- 4.3. Over recent years, the proportion of residents with level 2 equivalent qualifications has grown and now exceeds the national average and level 3 and level 4 rates are closer to the national average. However, residents with no qualifications remains around 6-7%, indicating a need to provide learning at lower levels to tackle this.

² [English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019)



4.4. In 2022 the Council developed a new Economic Strategy 2022-30 with one of the key priorities to have higher skilled, higher paid workforce³ The strategy identified that low levels of skills are particularly entrenched within Cannock Chase, Tamworth, and parts of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Addressing this issue by supporting our residents to gain higher levels of skills will have job, not only by increasing people’s prosperity but also improving health and wellbeing.

4.5. The districts of Staffordshire are covered by the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) whose Strategic Vision is:

“To help deliver a diverse, inclusive and sustainable economy across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, developing local skills which enable more people to access higher value, better paid jobs across a wide range of priority and locally important sectors.”

4.6. The SSLEP has established its Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) to ensure that it “gets ahead and stays ahead when it comes to education, training, skills and jobs.”

4.7. As part of the Council, the Community Learning Service has a strong partnership with the SSLEP and involvement with the Skills Advisory Panel. The Local Skills Report ⁴influences local partners to match the provision offer against employer skills demand and local identified need. Within this report there are seven strategic priorities; Community Learning strongly aligns to the following priorities:

- Supporting and enabling adults to secure employment, to reskill and raise their skill levels and engage in lifelong learning, to enable career progression and increased productivity in priority sectors.
- Supporting greater diversity and inclusivity in the workforce and enable disadvantaged young people and adults to engage in learning and

³ [Economic strategy: 2022-2030 - Staffordshire County Council](#)

skills programmes, progress to employment and improve their health & wellbeing.

- Ensuring young people and adults are equipped with the digital skills required in the changing world of work to support growth in productivity.

4.8. Other local opportunities for strong partnerships and collaboration include:

- Local Skills Improvement Plan, led by Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce,
- £4.2m Multiply Programme targeted at adults without L2 Maths, led by Staffordshire County Council,
- and Staffordshire County Council's Job Brokerage Service⁵ designed to match local people, employers, and training providers to fill jobs and provide people with the jobs and careers they need.

5. National Policy Context

5.1. This section considers some of the most important national policy areas that also impact on our strategy.

5.2. The government has brought together a range of training and support services together under the Skills for Life⁶ banner offering good opportunities for progression for Community Learning and other adult learners. For example:

- £560m National Multiply Programme targeted at adults without L2 Maths over 3 years,
- Free Courses for Jobs, enabling 11 million adults to gain an A Level for free,
- Skills Bootcamps, offering sector specific and fast-track learning,
- Numeracy, English, Digital Essential Skills and ESOL,
- and Higher technical qualifications, apprenticeships, traineeships, Skills Tool Kit, and Sector Work Academy Programme.

5.3. The Skills and Post 16 Education Act (2022) placing employers at the heart of the skills system, instigates the new Local Skills Improvement Plans, led by local Employer Representative Bodies.

5.4. New FE Funding & Accountability System, currently proposed and under consultation by the Department for Education (DfE), proposes a new Skills Fund, and new outcomes for Community Learning. The proposals identified key sectors that DfE believe will play an important role in the growth of the

⁵ [Staffordshire Jobs & Careers \(staffsjobsandcareers.com\)](https://staffsjobsandcareers.com)

⁶ [Unlock a better way ahead - Skills for Life](#)

UK economy and are subject to increasing government and industry focus. These sectors include construction, manufacturing, digital and technology, health and social care, and haulage and logistics.⁷ The Council will need to ensure that we are able to respond to the changes as they are implemented in 2023 and beyond.

- 5.5. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) supporting the UK government's wider commitment to level up all parts of the UK. The vision is 'By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK'. The Council will need to ensure we are harmonised with training offered by this fund.

6. Partnership and Market engagement

- 6.1. In the development of this strategy, we have consulted with a range of stakeholders in 2022 through the following mechanisms:

- Two Market Engagement Events and Online survey to reach out to stakeholders,
- Focus groups with current Community Learning learners and
- analysis of current learner feedback and satisfaction levels.

- 6.2. These activities enabled the Council to gather information on what our key priorities and target learners should be, what the impact should be for these learners, what barriers and skills gaps exist and how we can address these, what delivery models work, and how we can support learners to develop their wider skills to support them towards further learning and work, as well as what marketing communication works best to reach out to potential learners.

- 6.3. From analysis of this information, we have developed our values, priorities, and targets for 2023-27, and we have reviewed and revised our curriculum offer.

7. Staffordshire Community Learning Values 2023-27

- 7.1. **Equality and Inclusion:** Accessible learning for all, including diverse groups to promote social cohesion across Staffordshire.
- 7.2. **Stakeholders:** Collaboration with a range of stakeholders informing the development and delivery of targeted and responsive provision.
- 7.3. **Place:** Taking a place-based approach to align with demand and local, and national priorities making good use of available resources.

⁷ [Skills for jobs: Implementing a new further education funding and accountability system](#) Para 136

- 7.4. **Quality & Innovation:** commitment to continual improvement to deliver a high-quality learner experience which empowers and raises aspirations.
- 7.5. **Impact & Employability:** Focusing on outcomes and progression that have impact for learners and their families.
- 7.6. **Sustainability:** Sharing and raising awareness of sustainability, including supporting learners to understand and make positive significant choices.

8. Community learning Priorities 2023-27

- 8.1. Work with Providers of adult education who can deliver to the 2023-27 Community Learning Service Specification.
- 8.2. Implement and deliver a broad curriculum offer to support Staffordshire residents based on their needs.
- 8.3. Engage individuals and groups who would benefit most from improving their confidence, motivation, resilience, and skills to access further learning and better jobs.
- 8.4. Actively support learner progression through delivery of appropriate information and advice so the learner can make informed choices.
- 8.5. Ensure provision is responsive to emerging local needs and can be developed over time to stay current, including innovation in digital technologies.

9. Target groups 2023-27

- 9.1 We aim for the Service to be inclusive and accessible to people from all demographic groups. Specific target groups are:
 - Parents and carers who wish to develop their skills
 - Adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including mental ill health
 - Refugees and asylum seekers
 - Care leavers
 - Adults yet to achieve a level 2, or those with low skills in English or maths or digital

- Adults residing in the Staffordshire wards with the greatest concentrations of deprivation, worklessness and economic inactivity (appendix A)
- Adults on low income and/or in receipt of state benefits
- Those who are unemployed and want to improve their chances of finding work by developing or acquiring relevant skills
- New or returning adult learners (defined as those who have not participated in Adult Learning in the previous three years)

10. Curriculum Offer

10.1. Our strategy will be achieved through learning delivery in four curriculum areas:

Wellbeing and Independence
Intent: The provision is to support learners to develop skills across a broad range of subjects relevant to their interests; deliver strategies to improve and develop wellbeing and personal independence. Supporting learners to pursue and achieve their aspirations and stimulate self-awareness.
Delivery: Provision may include life skills, work ready skills, 5 ways to wellbeing and other strategies that focus on self-efficacy, meta-cognition, personal action planning.
Impact: Improved wellbeing and increased independence, progression onto further learning, volunteering, employment, or other community opportunities.
Target Learners: Adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including adults with mental ill health
Community and Family Progression
Intent: The provision is to support communities and families to be more independent, develop skills and be active in their local community. Provision equips parents and carers with the necessary skills to give their children the best start in life.
Delivery: Provision may include courses that develop skills to support their family's wellbeing for example healthy lifestyles, mental health, fitness, family finances, accessing community activities and services, managing children's behaviour. Community courses may include basic DIY, garden maintenance, cooking, budgeting, sustainability, and community action projects.
Impact: Improved family cohesion, parents' confidence in their skills to support their children, progression into further learning, volunteering and employment, improved engagement in the local community.
Target Learners: All target groups, especially parents and carers who wish to develop their skills

English, Maths and Digital

Intent: The provision is for adults who would like to gain confidence in the use of English, maths, and digital skills, supporting learners to use functional skills more effectively in everyday life, work, and further learning.

Delivery: Provision should include standalone English, maths and digital courses which help learners to acquire/develop skills and knowledge for employment, self-employment, or further learning. Digital skills courses could include basic IT, digital technologies, collaborative technologies, emerging digital software, immersive technologies, website production

Impact: Progression onto Essential Digital Skills Qualifications (EDSQ) and Functional Skills Qualifications or Multiply, volunteering, employment, or further learning

Target groups: All groups, especially adults yet to achieve a level 2, or those with low skills in English or maths or digital

STEM and Vocational

Intent: The provision will provide learners with opportunities to be able to access better jobs and feel the benefit of economic growth through the delivery of STEM and vocational courses, supporting individuals to up-skill and re-skill to gain and improve employment opportunities. Provision should identify and address local needs and skills gaps in collaboration with local employers.

Delivery: This provision should prepare learners for work in various jobs and trades, for example, construction, business, health services, customer service, hospitality, logistics and the green economy. STEM provision should include **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics**.

Impact: Progression onto accredited further education, volunteering, or employment

Target groups: all groups

11. Delivery

11.1. Delivery is funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency amounting to approximately £1.6m per annum. This funding is divided between:

- Direct Delivery including IT/digital and ESOL courses, including some accredited courses, and family learning,
- Procurement of services from local learning Providers on a four (4) year Community Learning procurement framework,
- Community Learning Responsiveness Fund allocated annually to local partners in order to respond to specific local needs,
- Wider Family Learning for Schools grants allocated annually to local schools in order to respond to specific local needs.

11.2. Subcontracting through the 4-year procurement framework allows the service to:

- provide learning opportunities to our priority learners,
- offer an entry point for disadvantaged groups, including those with protected characteristics,
- maintain a balanced and high-quality curriculum offer that is accessible to all learners,
- be responsive to local, regional, and national priorities,
- engage with local Providers to deliver niche or expert provision with access to appropriate facilities,
- and maximise the use of its funding for front-line delivery.

12. Quality assurance

- 12.1. The Service has been recognised by Ofsted as being a 'Good' provider of education and skills at an inspection in February 2023 and has ambitions to be outstanding. The Service also holds matrix accreditation for Information, Advice & Guidance.
- 12.2. The Service has a Quality and Performance Framework which ensures that quality thresholds and performance expectations are defined across the Service, including procured and non-procured delivery. The standards stem from the Community Learning purpose and vision and contribute to the achievement of our outcomes and priorities.
- 12.3. The Quality and Performance Framework supports the Council to evaluate its performance as part of self-assessment reporting, and to identify and address areas for improvement or development. It supports the Council to evidence how standards expected by Ofsted and the ESFA are achieved, as well as against national benchmarking of education data.
- 12.4. It informs quality improvement in that information from internal monitoring, self-assessment, and external inspections is appropriately shared so that:
 - under-performance in quality or achievement against Contract can be systematically addressed through a range of support and capacity building activities, and
 - good practice can be built on, with the intent to continuously improve quality and performance.
- 12.5. The Quality and Performance Framework covers key areas such as:
 - the measures required to ensure learner and staff safety,

- teacher qualifications and development to support innovative and creative delivery including development of learners' wider skills,
- effective processes for recognising and recording of learner progress and achievement, including effective information and advice to maximise learner progression to positive destinations,
- compliance, eligibility, and administrative processes to ensure value for money.

12.6. To ensure that quality and performance management is evidence-based and focused on the Learner experience, the Community Learning critical success factors within the Skills and Employability business plan are distilled into Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These are to be used to measure overall contract compliance, quality, delivery, and performance of Providers.

12.7. Key Performance Indicators cover:

- Safety
- Satisfaction
- Quality
- Impact
- Value for money

13. Approval and review

13.1. This Strategy is reviewed on an annual basis and amended to reflect changes to local needs analysis and the Council's priorities. The strategy is reported to the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills, the Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and the Assistant Director for Skills and Employability for approval and is published on the Council's website by 31st October each year.

Review Date: January 2023

Next Planned Review Date: by July 2024

Appendix A – Priority Districts and Wards in Staffordshire

District	Wards
Cannock Chase – priority district	Brereton and Ravenhill Cannock East Cannock North Cannock South Hednesford North Norton Canes Western Springs
East Staffordshire – priority district	Anglesey Burton Eton Park Shobnall Stapenhill
Lichfield	Chadsmead Curborough Fazeley Summerfield & All Saints
Newcastle-under- Lyme – priority district	Crackley & Red Street Cross Heath Holditch & Chesterton Kidsgrove & Ravenscliffe Knutton Town Westbury Park & Northwood
South Staffordshire	Bilbrook Essington
Stafford	Common Doxey & Castletown Forebridge Highfields & Western Downs Manor Penkside Rowley Walton
Staffordshire Moorlands	Biddulph East Leek North
Tamworth – priority district	Amington Belgrave Castle Glascote Mercian Stonydelph

NB List updated January 2024 based on most recent Ward Area Data Matrix.