

**Staffordshire County Council**  
**Community Learning Service**  
**Accountability Statement**

**2024 – 2025**

**1. Forward**

- 1.1 Staffordshire County Council's (the Council) Community Learning Service provides learning opportunities for adults aged 19 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 The Council delivers courses of learning that develop the skills, confidence, motivation, and resilience of adults of different ages and backgrounds to:
- progress towards formal learning and employment,
  - improve their health and wellbeing and independence,
  - and to support our local communities and families to get the most from lifelong learning to improve life chances.
- 1.3 The Council directly delivers English Speakers of another Language and Essential Digital Skills qualifications, while most of the funding is subcontracted to local education organisations to deliver non-qualification community learning provision through:
- Community Learning Framework 2023 – 2027,
  - Community Learning Responsiveness Fund,
  - and Wider Family Learning for Schools.
- 1.4 The Council delivers commissioned services as Lead Provider for provision funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

**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.
- 2.3 The Service's overarching outcomes align closely with the Council's outcomes and priorities as set out in the Staffordshire County Council Strategic Plan (2022–2026).

2.4 The Strategic Plan 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 vision is:

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

2.5 The Council’s strategic outcomes are that 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.

2.6 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.

2.7 The overarching outcomes of the Community Learning Service are:

- 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.

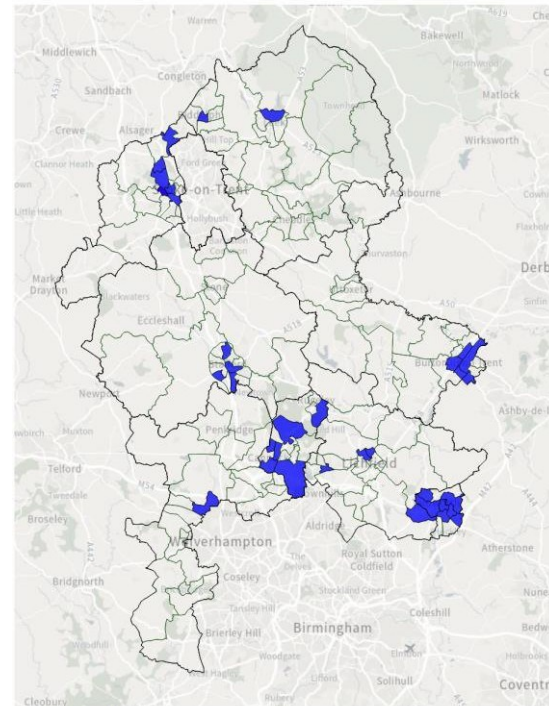
### 3. Local context and place

3.1 The County of Staffordshire (2,713 square kilometres) has a population of around 876,100, with approximately 25% living in an urban setting.

3.2 At the other end of the scale, London is 1,572 square kilometres with a population of 8.982 million. This exemplifies the rurality and challenges of delivering education in Staffordshire.

3.3 Staffordshire is made up of eight local authority areas including Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Newcastle-under-Lyme, South Staffordshire, Stafford (County town), Staffordshire Moorlands and Tamworth.

3.4 In the previous academic year at least 43% of Community Learning enrolments came from disadvantaged communities and 60% were adults below a full Level 2. The breadth and spread are illustrated in the map.



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3.5 Around 76,900 Staffordshire residents (9%) live in areas which have been classified as being among the 20% most deprived in England. The county has an ageing population, with 22% of people aged 65+ with this age group seeing a 24% increase between 2011 and 2021.

3.6 In Staffordshire, there are significant inequalities in health outcomes, as the gap in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas is over eight (8) years for men and nearly eight (8) years for women.

3.7 Staffordshire has pockets of high level of deprivation in Education, Skills, and Training, in Tamworth and Cannock Chase, with a rank of 75th out of 151 upper tier local authorities in England.

3.8 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 have also improved with those qualified to level 3 or above now above the national average and level 4 or above now just below the national average. However, residents with no qualifications remains around 5%, indicating a need to provide learning at lower levels to tackle this.

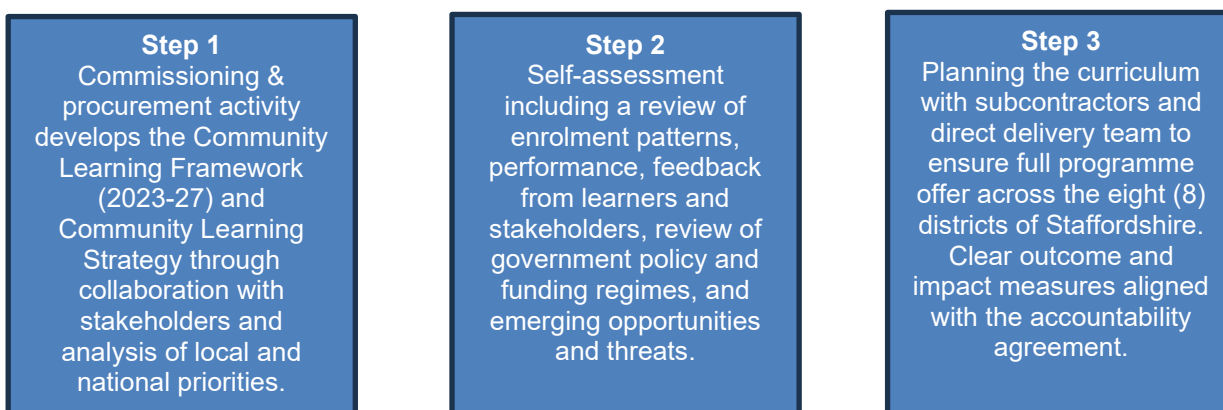
3.9 The Council's Economic Strategy 2022-30 key priority is to have a higher skilled, higher paid workforce. The strategy identifies that low levels of

skills are particularly entrenched within Cannock Chase, Tamworth, and parts of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

- 3.10 At the time of writing, the claimant count rate for unemployment related benefits in Staffordshire remains one of the lowest in the West Midlands and lower than the regional and national rates, however we have seen the claimant count continue to increase both locally and nationally over recent months reflective of the challenging economic climate and ongoing energy and cost-of-living crisis.
- 3.11 Although it is positive that there continues to be significant job opportunities available locally for those that unfortunately find themselves out of work, with a high number of job vacancies currently in growth sectors including engineering and advanced manufacturing (STEM), construction, logistics and health and social care. We are also seeing high demand for labour in locally important sectors such as hospitality, retail, education and an increasing demand for digital and green skills across the local economy.

#### 4. Approach to developing the annual accountability statement

- 4.1 The Council implements a continuous responsive approach to planning to allow the service to respond quickly to emerging needs and priorities in-year. The core planning commences in October and concludes in May the following year.



- 4.2 The Council engages with a range of stakeholders and partners to support the development of the accountability agreement. Engagement ranges from ongoing networking and collaboration through formal consultation and partnerships and includes:
- Community Interest Companies,
  - Colleges,
  - Independent Training Providers,
  - Local and upper authority areas,
  - Learners and potential learners,
  - Elected members,
  - Department for Work & Pensions and Job Centre Plus,
  - Schools,
  - Staffordshire Jobs & Careers,

- Local employers.
- 4.3 The Council's Economic Strategy 2023 – 2030 is our roadmap to delivering our ambitions for the Staffordshire economy, where our existing businesses are helped to grow, new businesses are established and thrive, or residents have the skills needed to access the jobs of the future and our towns across the county are supported to be places we can all be proud of.
- 4.4 Alongside this, the Employment and Skills Strategy 2023–2030 for Staffordshire has been developed with a range of stakeholders to achieve the vision and priorities to deliver our united economic vision for Staffordshire.

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 economy.*

The mission for employment and skills stakeholders is to:

*Create strong, effective partnership to help our people gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to achieve their ambitions and activity help to grow Staffordshire's economy.*

- 4.5 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:
- aspirational and active workforce,
  - inspirational careers advice,
  - technical skills to drive productivity and growth,
  - innovation and enterprise,
  - and a place of learning to instill a culture of lifelong learning.
- 4.6 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.
- 4.7 The Local Skills and Improvement Plan (LSIP) for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire has been led and coordinated by Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce in collaboration with key partners, training providers and businesses. Priority sectors identified through analysis of the labour market, skills and sector-based trends and a programme of consultation match those listed above and gives an overview of what partners are trying to achieve articulated in the LSIP vision and strategic objectives.

## 5. Contribution to national, regional, and local priorities

Community Learning Aims	
<p>The Community Learning Service will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide accessible and inclusive learning opportunities to promote social cohesion across Staffordshire and deliver a high-quality learner experience which empowers and raises aspirations and deliver outcomes that have significant personal and employability impact for all learners and their families.</li> <li>2. Work in partnership and collaboration with a range of partners to develop and deliver the Community Learning Framework 2023-2027 offering a targeted and responsive programme across the eight (8) districts of Staffordshire consisting of non-qualification and accredited learning with clear progression pathways that align with the demand of local and national priorities.</li> </ol>	
Community Learning Priorities	Impact and contribution to strategic aims, skills priorities, and areas for improvement
<p>Contract with local providers of adult education to deliver the Community Learning Framework.</p> <p>Implement and deliver a broad curriculum offer to support Staffordshire residents based on their needs.</p> <p>Engage individuals and groups who would benefit most from improving their</p>	<p>The Community Learning Framework 2023 – 2027 consists of the following programmes of delivery:</p> <p><b>Independence &amp; Wellbeing</b> non-qualification provision for adults who are furthest from learning and employment who require additional bespoke support to be successful in learning and to achieve positive progression outcomes. A broad range of subjects including strategies to stimulate self-awareness, improve and develop personal wellbeing and independence and achieve personal aspirations. This may include developing skills for independent living, health, and financial management, getting involved in the local community and developing strategies to live a more sustainable lifestyle.</p> <p><b>Planned Enrolments:</b> 850, a 13% increase on the previous year.</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> Working in strong partnership with social prescribers, GP surgeries, mental health professionals and other community-based support services the provision will develop good health and independence</p>

confidence, motivation, resilience, and skills to access further learning and better jobs.

Activity support learner progression through delivery of appropriate information and advice so the learner can make informed choices.

Ensure provision is responsive to emerging needs and can be developed over time to stay current, including innovation in digital technologies.

ensuring learners can take personal responsibility for their wellbeing, an increased number of adults accessing community support to help them stay healthy and independent and improved essential skills to increase life chances. Online, blended, and face-to-face community-based provision will be available contributing to reduced carbon emissions, and utilising community facilities and green spaces will contribute to improved health and wellbeing. Progression pathways on to other Community Learning courses with more stretching and challenging learning aims/or different subject, Multiply and Functional Skills qualifications, volunteering, and work experience.

**Community & Family Progression** non-qualification provision to support adults develop skills that contribute to their community and/or family learning that equips parents, carers, and guardians with the necessary skills to give their children the best start in life. It may also improve parental engagement with education to boost the children's success in school and provide a 'way in' to education despite possible negative experiences. Courses may include family budgeting, cookery, creative subjects, sustainability and community action projects, DIY, forest schools and early years and school curriculums at different key stages.

**Planned Enrolments:** 800, a 11% decrease compared to the previous year.

**Impact:** The provision will widen community participation and develop stronger communities, with more self-sufficient connected and pro-active citizens leading to increased volunteering, civic engagement, and social integration. Effective partnerships with Early Help, Children's Centres, and schools to ensure the most vulnerable children and young people are safe and support them to achieve their potential. Parents will have the strengths, skills, and knowledge to support their children and be better prepared for their own progression pathways, which may include further Community Learning courses, Multiply provision for parents that want to improve their own numeracy, direct delivery Essential Digital Skills or ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) qualifications, volunteering and further education.

**English, Maths and Digital** non-qualification provision providing support to gain confidence and the necessary functional skills to effectively apply in everyday lives, work, and further learning. These skills often lead to people being more active in their local communities, accessing local facilities and online services. Courses include access to digital devices for adults with limited access to equipment and connectivity, practical everyday English, maths and digital skills that can be applied to increase

independence and including English courses that develop reading, writing, and speaking and listening skills, activities that support cost-of-living, the development of basic IT (Information Technology) and introduction to digital and collaborative technologies and e-safety.

**Planned Enrolments:** 400, a 33% increase on the previous year.

**Impact:** Provides a progression pathway from Multiply for those learners who are not ready to undertake formal maths qualifications. Provides an internal progression pathway for current learners who want to gain confidence and develop their functional skills. Planned progression pathway to Multiply and Functional Skills and GCSE English and maths with colleges and independent training providers. Learners wanting to further develop digital or English skills for employment can progress onto direct delivery of Essential Digital Skills or ESOL qualifications at Entry Level to Level 2. Learners will be able to access more good jobs and feel the benefit of economic growth through the delivery of English, maths and digital provision supporting opportunities to up-skill and re-skill to achieve personal aspirations.

**STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) & Vocational** non-qualification provision deeply rooted in science, mathematics, engineering and/or are of technical or technology application to develop necessary skills to facilitate progression opportunities in accredited STEM or vocational learning and/or apply for jobs in key sector areas: Engineering & Advanced Manufacturing, Advanced Logistics, Construction, Health and Social Care, Digital and Green skills. Vocational courses may include business, health services, retail and customer service, hospitality, logistics, business, and customer facing roles and outdoor or environmental skills. Learners will develop enterprise skills and learn about self-employment and how to access support in starting their own business. Provides internal progression pathways for learners engaged in Independence and Wellbeing, Community and Family Progression and English, maths and Digital programmes (where appropriate).

**Enrolments:** 550 remaining consistent with the previous year.

**Impact:** Partnerships and collaboration with local employers to support programme development and creating opportunities for adults to get higher skilled, higher value and higher paid jobs. Signposting learners to the Councils Get Started Scheme and Start-up loans providing expert advice, support, and loans for new businesses. Additional progression support from the Councils Staffordshire Jobs and



Careers brokerage service providing residents with a quick and easy way to find employment and/or training opportunities leading to positive destinations. Strengthened partnerships with colleges to secure progression pathways into accredited provision, which may include Multiply maths modules embedded in vocational subjects, Functional Skills and GCSE English and maths qualifications, supported internships, apprenticeships, higher level technical skills and work placements.

Planned collaboration for progression pathways and skills growth will include working in partnership with Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Institute of Technology and businesses to deliver the facilities and technical provision needed in Staffordshire to provide the future skills for growth, Newcastle & Stafford College Group Innovation Centre at Stafford College equipped to deliver state-of-the-art skills in construction, engineering and motor vehicle, South Staffordshire College relocation of Tamworth campus to the city centre providing high-quality teaching and learning environment and specialist teaching spaces and Burton & South Derbyshire College's new suite of innovative facilities including Health and Social Care Realistic Working Environment, Mechatronics Suite, Creative Digital Learning Hub, Cyber Security Lab and a Games Development Suite.

**Community Learning Responsiveness Fund (CLRF)**, working in partnership with the voluntary sector to extend learner reach and engagement and to be responsive to emerging needs with priority groups and deliver bespoke non-qualification learning to meet the identified need. The provision supports and develops individuals and groups for whom formal learning may have been a barrier in the past and works with them to build confidence to realise their true potential. For the most disadvantaged learners the service will offer engaging 'first steps' learning opportunities as a way of increasing participation for people who are least likely to engage in adult learning and to prepare learners for a more formal course of learning.

**Planned Enrolments:** 200, remaining consistent with the previous year.

**Impact:**

A progression pathway for those not ready to engage in formal learning. CLRF will support residents of Staffordshire in achieving wellbeing and independence and gaining the confidence to increase personal aspirations and access further Community Learning including Multiply. Improved personal, social, and functional skills will allow residents to access more good jobs and feel the benefit of economic growth. CLRF is an important means of supporting social cohesion and ensuring everyone shares in a

prosperous Staffordshire. The diverse and inclusive nature of the curriculum offer and delivery via smaller community based specialised providers ensures an opportunity for amongst the most marginalised within society to gain the skills to access services and feel engaged in their community.

**Wider Family Learning for Schools**, further develop the partnerships with schools to increase learner reach and engagement and to be responsive to emerging needs of local families and deliver bespoke non-qualification family learning to meet the identified need. The provision has two purposes: it can be designed to enable adults and children to learn together, and these courses aim to develop the skills or knowledge of both the adult and child participants. Or provision can be delivered to parents/carers to enable adults to better support their children's learning. These courses focus on developing learners' understanding of the school curriculum and how they can support this at home, or to support parents in their own parenting skills or family wellbeing.

**Planned Enrolments:** 70 remaining consistent with the previous year.

**Impact:** In addition to the positive impacts on children's learning, and closer parental engagement in schools, the courses have a positive impact on adults' skills, wellbeing, and attitude to learning. They will have the strengths, skills, and knowledge to support their children and be better prepared for their own progression pathways, which may include further Community Learning courses, Multiply for parents that want to improve their own numeracy, direct delivery Essential Digital Skills or ESOL qualifications, volunteering and further education.

**Direct Delivery**, non-qualification digital skills provision for learners who have little or low digital skills who wish to develop their skills for everyday life and employment purposes. Courses may include the following: introduction to digital skills, digital skills for beginners, essential digital skills and/or bespoke content as requested by community groups. There are opportunities to progress onto accredited Digital Skills at Entry Level 3 to Level 1 for those learners who want to develop skills for the workplace.

**Planned Enrolments:** 170 remaining consistent with the previous year.

**Impact:** the provision will focus on bridging the gap between the digital first steps and digital disengaged learners – those learners that may need to use multiple devices daily and those that have little or no

experience of using digital devices and online content and will contribute to the achievement of the Council's Digital Strategy. With the increasingly large proportion of financial and governmental services being offered online and requirement for employees to access digital content or interact with digital devices becoming commonplace in a work environment, it is important to ensure that all individuals can gain these important digital skills.

Learners will develop digital skills necessary for work, life, and further study. They will also be able to interact with digital devices and handle information appropriately, share content and communicate effectively using digital devices, whilst developing transactional skills, be safe online, manage online accounts and maintain their privacy. The provision further strengthens partnerships with Further Education Colleges, to secure progression pathways into accredited provision. This could include functional, digital, and vocational skills.

Non-qualification and accredited English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) supporting adults with little or no English language skills to acquire the necessary skills for everyday life and employment at Pre-entry to Level 2. ESOL programmes will focus on preparing learners for the world of work or citizenship. The primary aim is to assist the learner in becoming independent of others when interacting with English-speakers, both in a work environment and elsewhere.

**Planned Enrolments:** 160 remaining consistent with the previous year.

**Impact:** By improving communication and fluency in English, learners will benefit from enhanced prosperity, supporting the local economy by providing residents with a quick and easy way to find employment and/or training opportunities leading to positive destinations. The provision strengthens partnerships with Further Education Colleges to secure progression pathways into accredited provision, including functional and vocational skills. Furthermore, these learners will benefit from the development of their independence to access service providers and to have the linguistic confidence to travel, work and socialize beyond their local community. Collaboration with Staffordshire's refugee resettlement group and Strategic Migration Partnership group and the West Midlands ESOL partnership have further supported economic prosperity.

	<p>We will maintain the Service's ambitious Key Performance Indicators as detailed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% of learners report they feel safe.</li> <li>98% of learners report they know how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation and extremism.</li> <li>90% attendance</li> <li>96% retention</li> <li>94% achievement</li> <li>98% pass</li> <li>70% new learners</li> <li>70% of learners report positive impacts on their wellbeing and confidence as a direct result of attending the course.</li> <li>30% of learners who were unemployed and looking for work at the start of their course progress into a positive destination.</li> </ul> <p>**Planned Enrolment forecast informed by actual performance to date in the 2023-24 academic year.</p>
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**6. Corporation statement**

On behalf of Staffordshire County Council, it is hereby confirmed that the plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by Cabinet on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

The plan will be published on the Council's website within three (3) months of the start of the academic year 2024 – 2025 and can be accessed from the following link: [Strategic priorities - Staffordshire County Council](#)

**7. Supporting documentation**

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

[Staffordshire County Council Economic Strategy \(2022-2030\)](#)

[Community Learning Strategy \(2023-2027\)](#)

[Staffordshire Jobs & Careers \(Job Brokerage Service\)](#)