

Aspirations in Staffordshire



How can communities raise the level of aspiration across Staffordshire?

Cllr Simon Tagg, Chair, All Party Working Group



Background

Key aims

- Understanding levels of aspiration
- Understanding how we can raise and realise aspirations

Approach

- Survey with young people (183 responses)
- ‘Think Tank’ session with a range of key stakeholders

Including;

Voluntary sector, Education sector, Elected members,
Children and Young People’s Services, Parent and Carer representatives



Context

Education and skills for young people

- County has seen recent challenges in KS4 attainment.
- ...but has also seen increases in young people progressing into university education.

Adult learning and employment

- Good progress with adult qualifications, with fewer working age adults without qualifications.
- Good growth in jobs and fewer residents now working in lower-skilled occupations.

Emerging challenges

- Growth of automation in Transportation & Storage and Manufacturing sectors present some risk to low-to-medium skilled employment, but also opportunities in linked sectors regarding technology and robotics



Current levels of aspiration

Current levels of aspiration

Young people appear to have a good idea what they want for their future;

- 84% feel positive about their future
- 84% have an idea about the career they want
- ...but most (65%) think that it'll be hard to get into their preferred career

Survey
n = 183



Current levels of aspiration

We have approaches that are working well;

- Work to refine how young people are allocated to subject 'sets'
- Projects to raise attainment in disadvantaged areas
- Improving links with employers to create more high-quality work experience opportunities
- Improving links between universities and our schools, sixth forms and colleges
- One-to-one GCSE options and exam preparation support for children in care



Current levels of aspiration

Most young people have got an idea of how to get where they want to be;

- 67% plan to attend university
- 21% want to go straight into work at age 18+
- 20% plan to start an apprenticeship or internship

Survey
n = 183



Current levels of aspiration

...but they may need more support and guidance

- **55%** weren't sure that they had enough information to progress towards their preferred career
- **44%** didn't know if other young people had high aspirations (and 14% felt they didn't)
- **38%** didn't know if there were local opportunities to help them realise their aspirations
- **32%** felt that there were local opportunities to support their aspirations
- ...and **30%** felt there were **not** local opportunities

Survey
n = 183



Our own aspirations for
Staffordshire's young people

What are our aspirations for future generations?

- Level of aspiration of those from disadvantaged cohorts and backgrounds should be the same as those from non-disadvantaged cohorts
- Personal talents and interests are nurtured – including those which sit outside of traditional academic routes
- Settings and providers offer academic and vocational pathways which are aligned to the future needs of the labour market
- Young people become resilient and adaptive; able to thrive in a changing workplace and build upon experiences that don't go to plan



Summary

Overall summary

1. Aspirations are high for many – but there aren't always the tools to realise these aspirations.
2. For priority groups (e.g. children in care, disadvantaged communities) there is a likely need to raise aspirations.
3. Existing advice and guidance about learning options (such as GCSE choices) does not always enable the individual to explore all possible options. Advice given by some settings is not always impartial.
4. Most young people (63%) look to their parents/carers for careers guidance. Parents/guardians also need access to up to date knowledge to be able to discuss career and learning options together.



Overall summary

5. Our aspirations for young people should put technical, vocational and non-traditional routes on an equal footing to traditional academic routes.
6. Careers advice needs to happen more than once throughout the journey; including after young people have received their exam results, so they can plan accordingly.
7. The quality and type of work experience/shadowing available to young people could be greatly improved – and operate in partnership with mentoring from existing professionals/employers.
8. Future plans need to accept that the workplace and labour market are changing all the time, and that young people's careers might change several times; we need to ensure that our aspirations include ensuring that young people are flexible, resilient and adaptable to future change.



What do we need
to do next?

Key recommendations

Short-term steps

- Identify communities and groups where aspirations are limited, and which may need additional focus.
- Identify evidence-based approaches to raising aspirations amongst groups where life-chances and aspirations have traditionally been limited.
- Encourage a greater range of sectors and employers to offer work-experience opportunities, and include shadowing of professional roles or occupations.
- Explore options for early advice and guidance prior to secondary school selection and prior to KS4 options selection.



Medium-term steps

- Implement career pathways guidance tools, which enable matching of personal and academic interests to occupations.
- Implement approaches to raise aspirations for those in identified priority groups (e.g. Children in care)
- Review of current work experience programme and whether this is 'fit-for-purpose'; covering a broad range of occupations and sectors and actively raising career aspirations amongst young people.



Long-term steps

- Develop career pathway and guidance tools which function universally, and apply to adults of all ages looking to change career or return to work.
- Develop pan-Staffordshire directory of available courses and apprenticeship opportunities, linked to career pathways and guidance.
- Ensure that there is continued focus on raising aspirations in disadvantaged groups, and monitor impact on life chances.



What could we do differently?

Re-developing careers advice and guidance

- Start careers advice and guidance earlier
- Refresh at multiple points (incl. after exam results)
- Ensure that advice on courses, qualifications and routes into work remains impartial – and recognises parents and guardians as a key source of aspirations and advice
- Provide information on pathways to careers as part of careers advice and guidance
- Provide career matching as part of careers advice and guidance – matching talents and interests
- Ensure that careers advice and guidance is accessible to all ages, including adults who may be changing career



What could we do differently?

Helping young people get a 'feel' for careers;

- Build more mentoring from existing professionals into the curriculum
- Improve work experience offer to cover more roles in more sectors
- Work experience 'speed dating' allowing insight into a range of jobs
- Ensuring all information and advice is accessible to everyone



Questions and feedback

