

Achieving Excellence in Learning and Skills

The foundations to
prosper, be healthy
and happy



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Foreword

Every child deserves a good education.

The right foundation of learning and skills is vital for our young people to access good jobs and live healthier, happier and independent lives.

Naturally we want the children of Staffordshire to have the very best, with strong leaders and teachers in all our schools. While this strategy challenges every one of our 400 schools to be rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, it also recognises that educating young people to take advantage of the skilled and hi-tech job opportunities in the county involves more than obtaining academic qualifications.

A good education also raises aspirations, provides personal skills young adults need to prosper in the real world and offers good, balanced careers guidance from an early age.

While the need for excellence in teaching and learning remains paramount, the rest of the education landscape is changing. More schools will become self-supporting, controlling their own destiny by forming strong partnerships with other schools, working together in partnership to share expertise, senior management teams and costs. As part of that process Staffordshire County Council's role must also change from being a direct provider of services to commissioning them, to

building upon the many strengths in our provision and swiftly challenging the weaknesses.

We have already created a unique joint venture in Entrust and commissioned it to support improvement in our schools. Simultaneously a newly-formed Education Trust is forging closer links between employers and schools so pupils better understand the world that awaits them. Parents and students will be provided with more details about performance, so they can make informed decisions on the choices before them, while governors' training and development will be supported.

Make no mistake, striving to be among the very best in the country will take hard work, but I am excited about the future, because I believe in that our approach in Staffordshire is unique and one that will make a real difference to the lives our children and young people will lead.

Please join in this conversation so we can work together to achieve the very best for Staffordshire's next generation."



Councillor Ben Adams

Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills, Staffordshire County Council

Introduction – Our Vision for Staffordshire

Staffordshire County Council has a clear vision that we want to make real for the whole county – a **Connected Staffordshire, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy**. We know that to deliver this we need to fundamentally change as an organisation. If we are to achieve our vision and its three underpinning outcomes, within a reduced financial settlement, we must think creatively and work differently. More of the same is not good enough. We must change now, if we are to make Staffordshire a great place to live, work and learn.

We are changing the way that we work, becoming an outcome-based commissioning council. Everything we do will contribute to achieving better outcomes for Staffordshire's people. This means new delivery models, and a new focus working together in partnership, including through the integration of commissioning arrangements and more efficient and responsive delivery functions.

The County Council will no longer hold on to its role as a deliverer of services – instead we commission the market to respond to local need and direct our efforts to ensuring that the whole system is operating effectively to improve the quality of life of Staffordshire's people.

Learning and skills are vital to this and they underpin each of the three outcomes which we focus our leadership on:

1. Be able to access more good jobs and feel the benefit of economic growth

To propel local growth it is vital that the workforce is equipped with the aspirations, skills and qualifications to meet the needs of growth in the Staffordshire economy. Driving up attainment and skills levels means that a greater proportion of Staffordshire residents can access more of the potential 28,000 new jobs that will come to the county by 2032.

2. Be healthier and more independent

We also know that people increasing their skills, aspirations and attainment become healthier. Through learning and skills more people are able to move into work from unemployment, and the resultant health benefits represent an estimated saving to the NHS of between £570 and £1,150 per person moving into work.

3. Feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community

Positive health and purposeful, rewarding employment link very closely to the state of wellbeing of communities, and to the level of time and personal effort which people are willing to commit in and to their own neighbourhoods. Schools, colleges and universities are important assets in a community and a focal point for community connections.

Why are Learning and Skills so important to us?

A good education is one of the best investments we can ever make in life. In terms of laying down the foundations for a happy, healthy and prosperous future there is little that beats it. Ask any parent or carer of a young person and they will tell you how important it is to them that they have access to the best schools and a good education for their children. Ask any business and they will tell you how important the skills of their workforce are in both improving productivity and driving innovation. In our modern global economy, learning and skills are prime factors in securing competitive advantage and feeding success. Our nurseries, schools, colleges, universities and training providers are powerful assets as they influence and create the right conditions that enable our communities to thrive, individuals to realise their potential, and society to continue to develop culturally, economically and socially.

In the UK we have a strong tradition and reputation for delivering first class education. But there is much evidence to suggest that we will not be able to trade off our proud history for much longer. As international competitors raise their game, so must we. Our observation, here in Staffordshire, tells us that we have significant challenges ahead if we are to deliver a first class education to all of our children and young people, and also ensure opportunities for life-long learning and skills development for our adult population.

Using 2012/13 as our baseline year, Staffordshire is ranked toward the lower quartile of the national tables that show the proportion of children accessing schools that are graded by Ofsted as good or outstanding, with 69% of children in these primary schools and 67% in secondary. This is not acceptable. The story gets more troubling when you look at it for those children and young people in our communities facing the disadvantage of coming from a poorer household. If you are in receipt of a “free school meal” (FSM) you are currently even less likely to get access to a good or outstanding school and the likelihood of leaving school with 5 good GCSEs, including English and maths, falls dramatically when compared with your Staffordshire peers – 60.8% of those not in receipt of a Free School Meal achieve these grades, compared with only 34.3% with those who are. This is not acceptable. Whilst we have many successes, and low unemployment rates, there are challenges too when it comes to skills. We have success rates stubbornly below the national averages (generally about 2% lower), enterprise rates below both the region and national figure (at 41.7% compared with 43.3% and 51.6% respectively), reported skills gaps in priority sectors such as advanced manufacturing and energy engineering, and pockets in every area of the county where the working-age adult population has no qualifications at all (peaking at 20.7% in Tamworth). This is not acceptable.

This is why we are putting a priority on Learning and Skills in Staffordshire.

A Whole System Approach - Why Work Together to Make a Difference?

Every school, college, university or training provider sets out to deliver the best for their learners – no-one wants to fail. There are many complex factors that contribute to the current position and we all know that there are very few easy answers or quick fixes. “Requires Improvement” the first state of the nation report into education failure in England produced by the Centre for Social Justice makes a number of recommendations across a wide span of influential factors, including social determinants and the impact of parenting. This reinforces our belief that it takes concerted and collaborative action to drive and sustain systemic change.

Staffordshire’s core vision is “Connected Staffordshire, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy”.

Staffordshire County Council wants to work together with all education providers, business and community leaders, and the children, young people and families themselves, to make a difference to the lives of our citizens, through driving excellence in learning and skills. We know that by working together and by marshalling and focusing our resources we can make a difference.

There are already positive trends emerging. Working as part of the Local Enterprise Partnership we have agreed a City Deal with central government, with skills as a key element of our investment, driving up apprenticeship participation and technical skill levels. Staffordshire schools have achieved year on year improvements, for example in the number of students achieving 5 GCSEs at A*-C including Maths and English – this has risen consistently over the last 4 years to 59.3% (while the national average has most recently dropped, to 58.6%). Colleges and Training providers have massively increased apprenticeship participation from 4,718 in 2009/10 to 9,221 in 2011/12, with success rates generally holding steady over the period too. Our Special Schools buck the trend – all but one is currently graded as good or outstanding meaning 88% of special school students are in good or outstanding provision. There are strengths in our local provision that we can build on and expand.

What are the Benefits of Success?

There is a lot of evidence that points to the fact that having a good education contributes to success in life:

- Michael Marmot found in his review that the relationship between socio-economic position and educational outcome has significant implications for later life – in employment, income, living standards, behaviours, and even mental and physical health. This is illustrated in the fact Marmot found that for people aged 30 and

above, if everyone without a degree had their death rate reduced to that of people with degrees, there would be 202,000 fewer premature deaths each year.

- A review by Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that the average economic benefits of early education programmes for low-income 3- and 4-year-olds are close to two and a half times the initial investment. These benefits take the form of improved educational attainment, reduced crime and fewer instances of child abuse and neglect¹. Just as these factors are closely linked, they often improve together. Other reviews of individual early education programmes have noted benefit-to-cost ratios as high as 17:1², proving the importance of making sure children get the best possible opportunities to learn from day one, and as such the best start in life. These are the principles which Graham Allen put at the centre of his 2011 review of early intervention for the Government.
- These are just two examples in the growing body of evidence around early intervention and the way education is a key part of this concept. Other reviews, like those of Rt Hon Frank Field MP, Dame Clare Tickell, David Norgrove and Joyce Moseley OBE, all link very closely with this idea.

What are the Costs of Failure?

Whilst the case for positive benefit of investing in learning and skills is compelling, a look into the cost of failure in the system is even more so. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the evidence is overwhelming – poor educational outcomes correspond with blighted prospects:

- A recent Strategic Assessment of offending in the county³ found a strong link between low educational attainment and offending behaviour – over two thirds of young offenders in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent have issues with their statutory or further education, which is associated with their offending behaviour. There has also been considerable research into the extent to which a young person's educational experience can be associated with an increased likelihood of criminality – for example⁴:
 - **Low attainment, beginning in primary school.** At least half of the young people who have come to the attention of Youth Offending Teams have been deemed to be under-achieving⁵.
 - **Poor literacy and numeracy.** Of young people who enter custody, 31% have literacy levels at or below that of a 7-year-old, and 40% have numeracy skill levels at or below that of a 7-year-old⁶.

¹ Aos S, Lieb R, Mayfield J, Miller M and Pennucci A (2004) Benefits and Costs of Prevention and Early Intervention Programs for Youth. Document No. 04-073901. Olympia, WA: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

² Lynch R (2005) Early Childhood Investment Yields Big Payoff. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

³ Staffordshire Observatory, *A Strategic Assessment of Offending in Staffordshire*, June 2011

⁴ Research summary from <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/youth-justice/yjb-toolkits/ete/ete-source-document.pdf>

⁵ Oxford University, 2002, cited in YJB, 2006a

⁶ (Ecotec Research and Consulting, 2001)

- **Poor relationships with teachers.** Farrington et al⁷ found that the ‘troublesome’ behaviour (as rated by teachers and classmates) of 8–10-year-olds, was the strongest individual ‘predictor’ of later delinquency.
 - **Truancy.** Prisoners are 10 times as likely to have been a regular truant compared with the general population⁸.
 - **Exclusion.** In 2004, MORI explored young people’s experience of crime and found a higher rate of offending amongst excluded young people (60%) in comparison to those in mainstream education (26%)⁹.
 - **Engagement with education.** A young person’s perception of school can also be related to the risk of offending. A survey in 2000 found that boys aged 12–16 years who did not like school were three times as likely to be an offender (31%) than those who liked school (9%). Similarly, girls of this age who did not like school were four times as likely to offend (20% compared to 5%)¹⁰.
- We also know that poor educational attainment is linked with substance abuse.
 - We know that young people who live in conditions of relative poverty are more likely to attain lower educational outcomes than young people in relative affluence
 - Poor educational attainment is strongly linked with unemployment – DfE figures show that young people who leave school with no qualifications are most at risk of dropping out of other education or work. Our own figures also clearly show the link between attainment and progression – or the alternative of not being in education employment or training (NEET). Our 2010 Worklessness Assessment showed that Cannock Chase and Tamworth –then the areas with by far the lowest levels of progression into higher education – were also the areas with the lowest levels of KS4 attainment, and the areas with the lowest levels of skills amongst their working age populations¹¹.

Therefore, we know that improving learning and skills outcomes is not only the right thing to do for our children and young people, but it will pay dividends for the health and wellbeing of our economy, our communities and drive improvement across the full breadth of the public sector. It is no exaggeration to say that Learning and Skills touches the future of every one of the people of Staffordshire.

What is a Good Education?

A good education is about more than just exam results. The argument about what an education should be and should deliver is hotly debated and widely researched, ranging from the Government’s Schools White Paper in 2010 which focused on the importance of teaching, Alison Wolf’s report on vocational education, to the Finnish approach which

⁷ The Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, Farrington et al, 2006.

⁸ According to research by the Social Exclusion Unit 2002

⁹ The Youth Survey (MORI, 2004)

¹⁰ Flood-Page et al, 2000

¹¹ Staffordshire Observatory, *Staffordshire Worklessness Assessment*, 2010

focuses on equality of opportunity for all students, rather than distinction in a few. What is clear is that a good education should be one that encourages people to think for themselves and be able to respond to life situations – to be “ready for life” - clearly this is a far wider remit than simply being able to deliver under exam conditions.

Talking to parents and carers about what they want to see in Staffordshire for their children is an essential part of our approach. Through this engagement we know that parents want to know – just as their children do – that a system exists which enables those moving through school and beyond to do what they want to do. Moving forwards, we will further build on our partnership with parents/carers, through governing bodies, voluntary groups, and formal or informal networks. Reforms for learners with Special Educational Needs and the arrangements for integrated education, health and care planning is one important aspect of how parents/carers and learners can inform and influence local provision.

It is also fundamental to our approach that we engage with, and respond to, children and young people themselves. For example, our recent insight has shown that children do not feel they have all of the necessary practical skills to support them through adult life, even down to simple but essential elements like cooking and managing finances. We need to create a system where people feel prepared for work, but also for life. We also know from engagement work that 27% of children aged between 7 and 12 did not feel confident that they would be able to do what they wanted to do when they left school, with reasons for this lack of confidence including that they did not think they would be able to get the right grades and that there were not enough jobs. This reflects the priority that young people place on the need for good quality careers information and guidance, and the opportunity to gain work experience: a message clearly articulated by our Youth Action Council of young people from across Staffordshire.

We must also consider the needs of businesses and employers who can offer these jobs. In a recent Employer Skills survey¹², where recruits have been considered poorly prepared for work, this has most often been put down to a lack of experience, or a lack of the softer skills and attitudes which businesses need. This suggests that young people would benefit from increased work experience activities, to build these skills. It also shows a need for action to increase the numbers of children and young people engaged in social and volunteering activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh programme, where leadership and social skills are fostered.

Also, beyond the softer skills, we know of a number of hard-to-fill vacancies across the county where employers struggle to find the specialist candidates they need. Our role in responding to this has to be creating the environment where people want to rise through the skills system and develop their expertise, in the knowledge that they are pursuing available jobs. Not only do employers want a stronger focus on skills and experience but young people want that too.

¹² Employer Skills Survey, UK Commission, 2011

Whilst we have a wealth of research evidence about what a good education can look like now, in Staffordshire we are also driving for excellence through innovation and not being constrained by seeing learning dominated by traditional classroom-based activity. We are already adapting to living in a digital era and technologies are bringing about radical and rapid change. The first iPad was sold in April 2010 – less than 4 years later, tablet computing is redefining the workplace and the classroom alike, and the changes being driven by technology’s proliferation are still accelerating. Just as a good education does not have to be just about exam results, learning environments no longer have to be all about classrooms in a school building either.

Parts of life like social networking, mobile technologies, the internet and even newer technologies like 3D-printing are all adding to a situation where people are more independent and have more opportunities to create and learn than ever before. Countries across the world are recognising the potential of this for learning and skills, as well as for industry too; Staffordshire’s ambition is not simply to adapt or “keep up”. We want to be well placed to achieve through the creativity, innovation and enterprise that is characteristic of Staffordshire heritage from ceramics to engineering, from medical sciences to rural enterprise, and more besides.

The speed of technological advancement is the speed with which areas like Staffordshire will be left behind if we cannot develop the advanced skills system which will be a part of future innovation. In fact, we already have significant strengths in advanced, high-growth sectors:

- Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire is fast becoming a major centre for medical technologies and healthcare expertise in the UK. A growing medical technologies and healthcare sector continue to expand, including pharmaceuticals, medical devices, medical software, diagnostics, biologics and nanotechnology. Over 1,100 people contribute to the sector, with more than 850 employed in scientific R&D and related technical roles. Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire is also home to a growing number of leading medical technology and healthcare companies, including Swiss owned TRB Chemedica, Biocomposites, Cobra Biologics and Intelligent Orthopaedics.
- A strong cluster of automotive companies exists throughout the Midlands and wider area, such as JLR, JCB, Toyota, BMW, Mini, Rolls Royce, Vauxhall, Bentley, Peugeot, Ford Triumph, Massey Ferguson, Morgan etc.
- The agri-tech sector is a significant strength of Staffordshire’s – not just because of the presence of companies like JCB and their supply chain, but because of our existing skills strengths here. And these strengths in industry are supporting innovation in learning and skills with JCB Academy as the country’s first University Technical College and The Rural Enterprise Academy as the first dedicated land-based free school in England.

Our economic strength is shown across the world – from Staffordshire-built JCBs, to Alstom’s energy engineering at an international scale, to the ‘earthquake-proof’ Oakland Bay

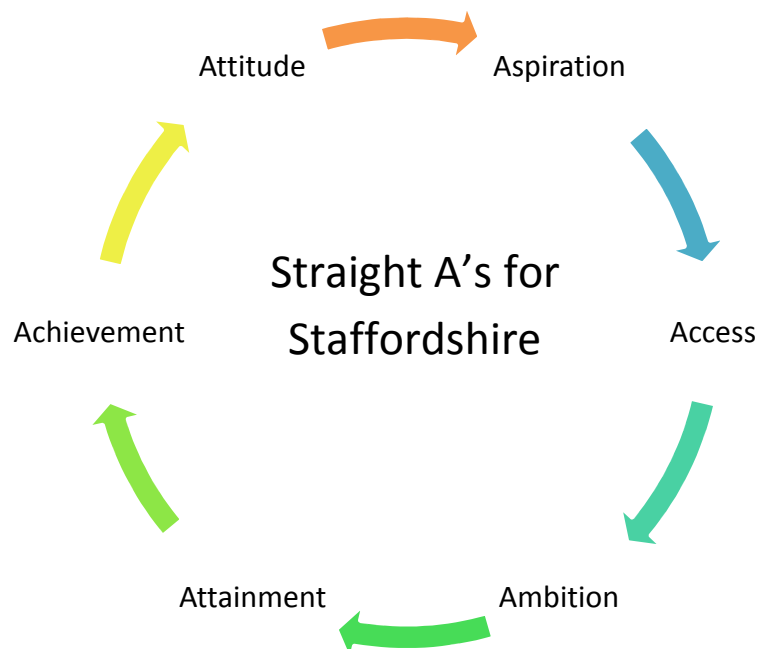
Bridge in San Francisco which contains parts made by Goodwin in Stoke-on-Trent. These are the strengths we need to protect – and build on. Here in Staffordshire we are saying very clearly that “good enough is not good enough!” By setting the bar high we are accelerating and magnifying the challenge – but we are driving for excellence.

The Principles of Our Approach - Straight A's for Staffordshire?

Our response to the challenge of achieving excellence in learning and skills needs to be radical, bold and ambitious – to deliver a learning and skills strategy which shapes the future environment in Staffordshire, moving ahead of change and with all partners aligned to a singular ambition. How we operate to drive and deliver a step change is central to our success. To achieve our vision we will need to be unified around a set of principles that will guide how we deliver. Summarised as “Straight A for Staffordshire” these principles foster:

- Aspiration – so that individuals, families and communities cultivate high aspirations and raise their expectations of what they can expect and what can be achieved
- Access – so that there is fair and equitable access to excellent provision through a vibrant, dynamic and diverse market of providers, with genuine choice and control for the customer
- Ambition – so that learning providers are ambitious about what they offer and the standards they deliver to, and parents/carers are persistently ambitious for their children and young people’s futures by championing high standards
- Attainment – so that the learning and skills outputs in terms of results , exam scores, levels of attainment and progress will continue to improve and will match with the latent potential of each individual and each cohort of learners
- Achievement – so that successful outcomes are enabling people to achieve their personal goals, to progress well, into good jobs, well-equipped to thrive and prosper in adult life
- Attitude – so that the culture and the behaviours we most value are intrinsic to our approach including: promoting personal and community responsibility, stimulating innovation and enterprise, valuing volunteering, making positive and informed lifestyle choices, being prepared to go the extra-mile, solve problems, and be resilient and tenacious in driving for excellence

Each principle in our approach works together in a virtuous circle – each supporting and accelerating change in the next. This is illustrated below:



Critical Success Factors - The Components of our Approach – What Do We Need to Deliver Excellence in Learning and Skills?

In order to deliver our ambition and to create a step-change that accelerates progress over the next five years, we need to ensure that all of the components of the learning and skills system can operate together to drive and deliver excellence in learning and skills.

This system-wide approach will provide the leadership for partnership working that will engineer and deliver radical change. It will secure co-operation, recognise inter-dependencies and provide coherence through a unified approach. By avoiding fragmentation of the local learning and skills landscape we can more effectively tackle the challenges, and create opportunity from policy and curriculum reforms. Our system wide approach will promote confidence to utilise our resources to the full, to invest to make a difference, and to reap the benefits of a bold approach.

Powerful and effective system-leaders bring clarity, purpose and energy to drive for excellence. We will be clear in setting out the key contributions of the each component within an integrated system. Through local partnership we will harness the energy and dynamism of shared leadership and hold ourselves jointly accountable. Through this we will create momentum and movement – driving the step-change in both quality and outcomes that we required in order to achieve excellent in learning and skills.

Together we will grow and build on the strengths in local provision and together we will tackle the weaknesses. We will capitalise on the diverse assets we have in our communities and make good use of the local freedoms and flexibilities that we have available at local level.

The main components of the local system and therefore the critical success factors we describe as:

- Effective System Leadership
- Powerful Citizens as Customers
- Influential Business Engagement
- Flexible Learning Infrastructure
- Supportive Partnership and Policy Environment
- Excellent Schools and Settings
- Highly Effective Governance

The key contribution that each of these critical success factors makes to driving the whole system approach is further developed and detailed in our “Whole System Action Plan”.

What will be different as a result of this Strategic Plan?

Setting out a clear ambition and a bold plan means that success will deliver real and radical sustainable change. By the end of 2016 we expect the differences to be tangible in:

- A very different role for the Local Authority in its Learning and Skills function. Having already moved away from directly delivering and providing services to schools – through the transfer of these to our Joint Venture Partnership, Entrust – the Local Authority will offer strategic and system-leadership for our area. We will bring partners together, champion democratic accountability, advocate on behalf of our residents and communities, and secure coherence across a range of local services to enable better integrated commissioning that focuses on delivering impact and benefit to the citizen
- A different system of public accountability, with greater autonomy and therefore accountability held by each school, college or provider for the services they offer. We expect more schools to have chosen to operate independent of the Local Authority as the confidence of schools to take-up academy status accelerates
- New and different structural and support networks of schools will be operating under a new national funding system. The advantages and opportunities inherent in being part of a strong network of provision will have changed the way that schools work together. There will be more multi-academy trusts, more hard federations, different specialist networks and the clustering of groups of schools and providers in order to reap the benefits from economies of scale, gaining access to shared expertise, capacity, and developing sustainable operating systems that support a self-improving system

- A different and more powerful role for children, young people and their parents in the whole system and in the choices they make for themselves. Better informed, and with greater choice and control, the people of Staffordshire will feel the local offer of provision responding to meet their needs and ambitions. This will impact on admissions, school choice, transport options, and in particular the support provided to meet the assessed needs of those with special education needs and disabilities
- A fully transformed system for Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) will be operating to change the pattern of local provision. Statements of SEN will have phased out and the integrated Education, Health and Care assessment and plan will ensure that children and young people with the most complex need are well-supported to achieve to their full potential alongside their peers, through access to local provision that meet their needs
- A different approach to meeting the additional (but less complex) needs of our learners. More will be met through tailored and timely support within mainstream provision and resources. The redesigned “common assessment framework” will underpin highly effective multi-agency early intervention action. This will identify, assess and plan to address the specific needs of children and young people thereby avoiding escalating need and preventing a pattern of cycling in and out of service dependency
- An enhanced and increasingly different extended offer from schools and education settings. As critical assets in their local community, the public purse investment in buildings, infrastructure and facilities will be operating purposefully as community hubs and shared assets, accessible at different times and in different ways than in the past. This will reap benefit for community cohesion and participation as well as for income generation and sustainability
- A different kind of local ownership and accountability will develop. New, more diverse and different measures of success will be applied in judging what a successful and effective education delivers. This will include a stronger focus on the progress each learner makes to fulfilling their potential, the progression into good jobs and further learning opportunities, more learner/customer satisfaction feedback that informs and shapes self-improving systems, and increased local and peer accountability
- A different and more actively connected education-business link that encourages local pathways into employment and improves the supply of the skills that businesses need. Our skills programme will have contributed to reshaping the curriculum, strengthened the supply of highly technical skills and fostered a skill-based culture of enterprise, creativity and innovation
- An improved supply of relevant information, advice and guidance. Informed by business and local economic opportunity, and powerful in the hands of those that use it, the IAG offer will include more real-time and real-life experience of work through innovative public –private partnerships led by our Education Trust
- A more powerful and influential voice for the customer and the community, including in governance and accountability mechanisms. Student councils and parent

partnerships will be better connected to provide feedback that shapes and steers responsive provision

- The role and function of governing bodies will be different, developing to function in an even more professionalised capacity across groups of schools. With access and the ability to interrogate a rich set of both soft and hard intelligence, they will be better able to set strategic direction, ensure continuous improvement and secure efficient, effective and sustainable schooling

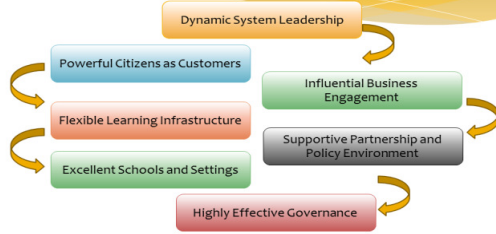
All of these changes will combine to deliver a new and vibrant local offer of learning and skills that is judged externally as at least good, and increasingly as outstanding and it performs as “best in class.”

There will be a shared commitment to innovation, collaboration and a collective pride in the learning and skills offer in Staffordshire, based on a shared recognition of the passion, optimism and professionalism that drives all of our local partners and stakeholders.

How we will get to this is outlined in the whole system approach to Learning and Skills.

Learning and Skills Whole System Approach – Overview:

Achieving Excellence in Learning and Skills: Critical Success Factors



1. Effective System Leadership

- * Promotes collaboration
- * Articulates the shared ambition
- * Leads the strategy and implementation
- * Drives the step-change
- * Champions the interests of all stakeholders



2. Powerful Citizen as Customer

- * Makes informed choices
- * Raises expectations for quality and outcomes
- * Shapes and influences by demand
- * Active in contributing to successful outcomes



3. Influential Business Engagement

- * Partners the public and private sector
- * Lends expertise and opens opportunity
- * Informs curriculum and skills priorities
- * Promotes pathways into good jobs
- * Invests in our people and our places



4. Flexible Learning Infrastructure

- * Contributes as an asset in each community
- * Adapts to meet changing needs
- * Organises to meet demand
- * Designs for access, inclusion, sustainability and efficiency
- * Embraces technology and 21st century learning



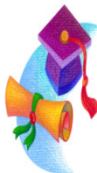
5. Supportive Partnership and Policy Environment

- * Fosters innovation and excellence
- * Permits freedom and flexibility
- * Devolves decision-making and power
- * Supports a proportionate and light-touch approach
- * Generates collaboration and instils trust and confidence



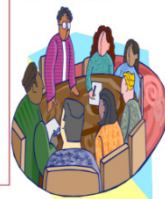
6. Excellent Schools and Settings

- * Autonomous institutions engaged in collaborative networks
- * Self-improving and evaluative
- * High performing with big aspirations
- * Delivering added value and improving outcomes
- * Warm, welcoming and willing to engage



7. Highly Effective Governance

- * Holding to account through robust intelligence
- * Governing to provide powerful leadership for each institution
- * Harnessing wider expertise and valuing the local commitment
- * Challenging and supporting for the benefit of every child or young person
- * Serving the interests of the community



Success Factor 1 : Effective System Leadership

Why is this important?	Strong and effective leadership and management are crucially important to the success of the local system. This is recognised at the level of each individual school or setting and at the strategic level through Health and Wellbeing Board; the Local Enterprise Partnership; Safer Staffordshire Board; and Staffordshire Strategic Partnership. Leadership for the whole learning and skills system needs to articulate, orchestrate and co-ordinate the operation of the whole system, holding all of the components and contributory parts to account on behalf of children, young people and families in Staffordshire			
What does it need to do?	System Leadership needs to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote collaboration • Articulate the shared ambition • Lead the strategy and its implementation • Drive the step-change by setting clear expectations and planning to deliver these • Champion the interests of all stakeholders but in particular those who are most vulnerable or who face disadvantage 			
What does success look like?	Improving outcomes for learners will be evident and measured through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Excellence – we want all children and young people to have an excellent education so we will increase the % of pupils attending good or outstanding schools from 63% in 2012 to 90% in 2016 • Rapid Improvement – we want schools and settings that are judged to be failing to improve rapidly within 8-12 months, reducing the % graded as inadequate to zero by 2016 (from 5% of schools in 2012) • Nothing less than Good – we want all Staffordshire schools and settings to be good or outstanding, therefore we will challenge all to be at least good and ensure that we are lower than the national average for schools not yet reaching this benchmark from 65% in 2012 to 90% by 2016 • Sustained Progress – we want the attainment and progress of all learners to at least match national level of expectation at each key stage, therefore we will ensure progress between and across key stages is at least in line with national averages by 2016, reversing current weak trends from 2012 baseline • Best Start – we want all children to get the best start in life including in education. We will reduce the number of schools below the floor standard for attainment and progress at key stage 2 			
How will we get there?	Action	Impact	Delivery Lead	Output Milestones
1.	Develop a clear strategy for Learning and Skills in Staffordshire	Identifies and targets collective effort to priority areas and delivers on shared goals and ambitions	Cabinet member for Learning and Skills/SCC Commissioner for Education and Wellbeing	Published by Summer 2014 Monitored and reported at least annually
2.	Establish strong partnership infrastructure for Learning and Skills in Staffordshire	Collaborative leadership and effective mechanisms for engagement and accountability	Health and Wellbeing Board – Children’s Partnership Board Staffordshire Strategic Partnership/LEP – Education Trust	Established and operating 2014- Strategic Plan published annually Meeting schedule Reporting and accountable to Partnership Boards
3.	Effective communication and operating system	Transparent, co-ordinated and accountable local network	Children’s Partnership chair Education Trust chair Commissioner for Education and	Published communications schedule Reports and minutes public

Success Factor 2 : Powerful Citizen as the Customer

Why is this important?	<p>Each learner and their family have a fundamental role and responsibility in contributing to the success of Learning and Skills in Staffordshire. The power and the potential of the customer to drive up expectations and standards are considerable. We must work across the system to give greater choice and control to local people. We need to empower them to make good choices through access of effective impartial information and advice, including a clear description of the local offer of what is available and promote their part within it. We need a system that is driven by intelligent demand from all of its customers – and this includes responsiveness to business in order to support economic growth and demand for skills and innovation. We need to use customer feedback and insight to drive further improvement, personalisation and responsiveness so that the market of provision rises to meet customer demand and expectation.</p>			
What does it need to do?	<p>A system with the citizen as the customer needs to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a clear local offer with customer choice and control • Empower people to make an informed choices with good information and advice • Raise the expectations for quality and outcomes for customers • Be more responsive to customer feedback and demand • Promote the active contribution of customers contributing to success 			
What does success look like?	<p>Improving customer responsiveness will be evident and measured through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Satisfaction – we want learners to enjoy and achieve so their experience will be monitored and reported through impartial annual surveys and citizen surveys • Learner Feedback – we will promote and publicise the methods available for recording and reporting learner satisfaction and feedback both at school or provider level and through corporate or statutory procedures • Responsiveness to Choice – we will publish the local offer and monitor the number of first choices achieved in the offer of school places • Complaints Resolution – we will encourage swift and effective resolution of complaints and introduce analysis of themes and trends in order to drive responsiveness and service improvement 			
How will we get there?	Action	Impact	Delivery Lead	Output Milestones
4.	Redesign the Information, advice and guidance offer	Clear and impartial information to inform choices	SCC County Commissioner/Education Trust City Deal for Skills plan	Commissioning Review 2013/14 New service operating 2014/15 Evaluation 2015/16
5.	Maintain effective school place policy and allocations	Learners access their first choice of provision	SCC County Commissioner &/or Admissions authority	Systems accessible Transparent policy and allocations Report on choices
6.	Promote Learner Feedback mechanism and data reporting	Transparent and accountable local systems	Children’s Partnership chair Education Trust chair Governing Bodies/Providers	Published feedback and complaints analysis
7.	Deliver regular surveys and publish outcomes including trends over time	Range of impartial intelligence to enrich strategic dialogue and improvement	SCC Insight Engaging Communities Staffordshire	Surveys increasingly representative and utilised to drive responsiveness

Success Factor 3 : Influential Business Engagement

Why is this important?	Staffordshire places a priority on ensuring that all of our residents have the best opportunity to thrive and to feel the benefit of economic prosperity. Our City Deal’s focus on skills demonstrates this. We value the fact that learning for learning’s sake contributes to enriching people’s lives culturally, socially and academically. However, we know that our young people place “getting a job” as one of their foremost concerns. For adults being skilled and equipped to adapt to a changing jobs market is also crucial. We also know that the competitiveness and productivity of local business whether public or private sector and regardless of size, relies on access to a skilled and adaptable workforce. Strengthening the link between business and education is therefore a key component of achieving excellence in Staffordshire			
What does it need to do?	Influential business engagement would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen and expand the partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors, including through the delivery of the City Deal • Lend expertise and open up new opportunity for innovation and growth • Better inform curriculum development and delivery in schools and settings and ensure that skills priorities are recognised and addressed • Promote pathways into good jobs through high quality work experience, internships, apprenticeships, training placements, sponsorship and more • Secure personal, public and private investment into skills 			
What does success look like?	Improving business engagement would lead to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum change and innovation – with employers playing a greater part in informing and shaping local curriculum content and context so that it connects and responds to real life challenges • More and Varied Partnerships – we want more and different collaborations between the public, private and voluntary sectors and a programme of local activity and links that connect communities, schools and settings, local business • Improved workforce planning – some employers and sectors face skill shortages so better, more proactive workforce planning could help to address this, including through apprenticeship programmes and skills plans • Local Skills Plans – by bringing partners together through our City Deal we can further strengthen progression into employment and promote innovative pathways for those moving into work or changing direction as adults 			
How will we get there?	Action	Impact	Delivery Lead	Output Milestones
8.	Develop the work of the Education Trust	Clear and visible leadership through expert partnership	Education Trust Chair and lead partners	Annual programme of activity and impact
9.	Create local Skills Plans to deliver City Deal targets	Specific targets for local skills development and delivery	Education Trust with partners	Skills plan produced and implemented with City Deal milestones
10.	Promote education business links	Better quality work-related learning and locally relevant contextualised learning	Education Trust with Chambers of Commerce and wider partners	On-going programme of vibrant and purposeful links
11.	Deliver an Apprenticeship strategy to support City Deal delivery	Fewer skills shortages and gaps, better workforce planning	SCC County Commissioner with Apprenticeship Providers	Apprenticeship strategy that delivers targets, progression into jobs and growth

Success Factor 4 : Flexible Learning Infrastructure

<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>Staffordshire is a large county and very diverse in its characteristics. In our more rural settings being well connected with appropriate access to good local learning and skills provision is a focus, when access, size and sustainability can be issues. In our more urban settings ensuring that clusters of provision work to strengthen and enrich the local offer is critical when competition, specialisation or inequalities can be issues. Furthermore, schools and other settings represent a major public investment in each local community and these assets need to work hard for us both in and outside of a formal learning context. Changes in population, through demographic shifts and other circumstances demand that our infrastructure is sufficient, suitable and flexible enough to respond to changing need. Combining good access with a viable, safe and well-maintained infrastructure is an on-going priority and challenge, and therefore a key component of our overall system for learning and skills.</p>			
<p>What does it need to do?</p>	<p>A flexible learning infrastructure would ensure that each school and setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes positively as a valued public asset within its community • Adapts to meet needs and organises to meet changes in demand • Designs in fair access, inclusion, sustainability and efficiency • Embraces technological innovation and 21st century learning styles 			
<p>What does success look like?</p>	<p>A flexible learning infrastructure will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open and available – we want all of our community to benefit from the public purse investment in school buildings and facilities, both through formal learning for children, young people and adults and through wider access evening and weekends to meet local need and demand • Organised to meet demand – changing populations will be well accommodated in a flexible and responsive system that educates in good quality safe environment, utilising space well and responding to demand and choice • Efficient and Sustainable – we want to see efficient and sustainable learning and skills infrastructure. Ensuring that the estate is appropriately maintained, managed and attractive will keep our learners safe and inspired to be responsible beneficiaries of public investment • Inclusive and Accessible – all parts of our community should be able to access appropriate learning opportunities and we will continue to strengthen the ability of the local offer to meet specific needs so that people do not have to move out of county to access the right opportunities to learn 			
<p>How will we get there?</p>	<p>Action</p>	<p>Impact</p>	<p>Delivery Lead</p>	<p>Output Milestones</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p>Publish a school organisation plan for Staffordshire</p>	<p>Ensures adequate and sufficient provision of places and capacity</p>	<p>SCC County Commissioner</p>	<p>Published monitored and reported at least annually</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p>Promote availability and access as part of a published local offer</p>	<p>Communities are aware of how their schools contribute as assets and what there is to do locally</p>	<p>SCC County Commissioner, and Local leads</p>	<p>Local offer published and accessible – eg through Staffordshire Cares by Sept 14</p>
<p>14.</p>	<p>Further strengthen local offer to promote inclusion and access</p>	<p>Fewer out of county placements and learner demand is met</p>	<p>SCC County Commissioner and provider network</p>	<p>Local Offer developed as part of SEND reform programme</p>

Success Factor 5 : Supportive Partnership and Policy Environment

Why is this important?	<p>We have to work collaboratively to create the conditions whereby learners can thrive and the market of learning and skills provision operates in a way that drives up standards. Partners need to work together as there are significant inter-dependencies that are critical to success. For example, support services that wrap around a child with additional needs will significantly influence and contribute that child's ability to learn well. Meeting needs in terms of the conditions to thrive is all part of the partnership and the policy environment, including through safeguarding, family support, health and wellbeing support, attendance and inclusion. The framework set by national policy will also establish parameters for local activity. Examples of this include school funding reform and the changes to the national curriculum or the examinations system. Staffordshire's ability to meet new challenges and to seek out the opportunity in each circumstance of change will help to determine our success, through our resilience, strength of purpose, innovation and determination.</p>			
What does it need to do?	<p>A supportive partnership and policy environment will need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support innovation and excellence in partnership working • Build efficient and effective support around the learner and/or the family • Permit and foster increased use of freedoms and flexibilities • Devolve decision-making and power to local level and influence or inform in a national arena, through Staffordshire's reputation and record of success • Ensure that regulation and intervention is proportionate and timely 			
What does success look like?	<p>Supportive partnership landscape and policy environment would deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalised Approaches – the drive to personalise the way in which we meet additional or specialised needs would better focus choice and control with the learner, including through fundamental respect for learner views and voice • Integrated commissioning and delivery – there will be more seamless approaches particularly where there are complex needs and circumstances. Commissioners and providers will better integrate approaches so that both assessment and provision planning considers holistic need and local • Efficient and effective multi-agency operation – building on the strengths of partnership working in Staffordshire, multi-agency working particularly in respect of safeguarding, care and support will deliver better outcomes and efficiencies for those in need of care and support • Freedoms and Flexibilities – for local innovation and operation, and that secure proportionate but timely regulation and intervention to manage risk, prevent failure and promote continuous improvement and innovation 			
How will we get there?	Action	Impact	Delivery Lead	Output Milestones
15.	Ensure that the CAF and other multi-agency tools operate effectively to support the child/learner	Streamlined and efficient tool will ensure efficient and effective support at early stages of need	Integrated Service Delivery Board/ with Families First	New CAF arrangements produced, embedded and operating effectively
16.	Implement integrated assessment Education, Health and Care planning for SEND	Single holistic assessment and plan will help learners achieve to their full potential	SCC County Commissioners in Care and Education/Health Commissioners	Integrated Education, Health and Care assessment and planning operational
17.	Develop proportionate and appropriate policies and regulatory functions	All providers and stakeholders are clear and operate within a consistent framework	SSC Commissioners, Children's Partnership members	Policies developed, published and applied
18.	Embed personalisation across partnership	Approach promotes independence and is tailored to need	Children's Partnership members	Personalisation evident in planning and assessment

Success Factor 6 : Excellent Schools and Settings

<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>Every child in every school in Staffordshire matters to us. Every apprentice or trainee, every adult learner, whether they are learning for work or learning for life, they all matter to us. If we are going to achieve excellence then the contribution of each and every setting will need to reach that standard. Staffordshire has a very diverse network of schools and settings. From nursery school through to adult learning in the community this stretches to around 400 different settings and is therefore both our greatest asset and our greatest challenge. Each school and setting will have its own leadership and management, its own accountability regime through governing bodies and inspections, and will operate as autonomous and self-determining institutions. We wish to respect and support this independence, whilst ensuring that system-wide together we achieve excellence. Therefore, through appropriate regulation, scrutiny, challenge and support we will work proportionately to effect continuous improvement across the whole system.</p>			
<p>What does it need to do?</p>	<p>Excellent Schools and Settings will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomous but willing to operate in collaborative networks • Self-improving • High performing and open to sharing expertise and supporting best practice • Ambitious to progress and deliver added value that improves learner outcomes 			
<p>What does success look like?</p>	<p>Excellent schools and settings will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a difference for each learner – success will mean that each learner will make progress from their starting point to at least achieve to their expected level of attainment, and more often better. This means progress within and across key stages at school level, or added value in other settings, and achievement in excess of initial learning goals in informal adult learning, no matter where you learn. • Promote attainment at the highest level – this will drive toward seeking the most each learner is capable of and move away from delivering the least they need to do to reach the benchmark/requirement. It is the spirit of aspiration • Provide the best quality of teaching and learning – good teaching is at the heart of much good learning. Our learners want and deserve the best teaching input available and we want to continue to attract and retain the best teachers for Staffordshire • Excel in Leadership and Management - effective leadership is a powerful driver of improved outcomes. Success will include a vibrant Staffordshire network of local and national leaders in education, that act to power our system and inspire us to even greater things • Focus on Impact – by extending our shared vision and measures of success and by not using exam results as a proxy for success, we will better focus on how learning impacts to enable progression into work, further learning, more highly skilled roles, contributing to happier, healthier lives 			
<p>How will we get there?</p>	<p>Action</p>	<p>Impact</p>	<p>Delivery Lead</p>	<p>Output Milestones</p>
<p>19.</p>	<p>Agree our joint measures of success and report these openly</p>	<p>Greater transparency in outcomes achieved</p>	<p>Cabinet member for Learning and Skills/SCC Commissioner</p>	<p>Published education insight dashboard by Dec 14</p>
<p>20.</p>	<p>Revise the Framework for School Improvement</p>	<p>Clear & targeted support, challenge and intervention delivered</p>	<p>SCC County Commissioner</p>	<p>Framework published and operating 2013/14</p>
<p>21.</p>	<p>Introduce robust business & improvement cycle</p>	<p>Continuous improvement achieved</p>	<p>SCC Commissioner with Provider Networks</p>	<p>Annual cycle with published outputs</p>
<p>22.</p>	<p>Strengthen commissioning for outcomes</p>	<p>Effective investment in improved impact</p>	<p>SCC and other Commissioners/Entrust & delivery partners</p>	<p>Service Delivery Agreements and reporting metrics</p>

Success Factor 7 : Highly Effective Governance

<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>Effective governance is vitally important and powerful driver of the local system. The wealth of expertise that governors bring – through the diversity of their backgrounds in business, as parents, as professionals, as key contributors to community life and leadership – cannot be underestimated. Good governors make a powerful difference and are highly valued both at local level and strategically. That is why we need to recognise and support their role, empowering and enabling them to be equipped to support and challenge within their school, setting or organisation. Through a network of strong governance we can also build in greater resilience and flexibility so that we can respond in any case that needs additional support, and we can better share learning about what makes a difference to learner success and learner experience.</p>			
<p>What does it need to do?</p>	<p>Highly effective governance will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold to account each institution for their delivery and performance • Govern each institution to ensure it meets statutory and regulatory requirements • Harness the commitment, energy and expertise within across the local system • Provide robust challenge and support to lead improvement • Serve the community’s interests and champion the needs of each learner • Deliver outstanding leadership and management 			
<p>What does success look like?</p>	<p>Effective Governance will lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong individual schools and settings – by holding local leaders and managers to account, effective governance will provide the support and challenge necessary to drive continued improvement and provision that fulfils potential • Improved pace of change – In cases where rapid change is needed the energy and commitment of a tenacious governing body is critical to success, bringing additional expertise and a wider perspective to the leadership and management of the institution, and removing barriers or blockages • Schools and Settings Connected with their Community – as local volunteers governors connect and root schools/settings within their local community, and are powerful in the capacity of community leaders, championing these assets in their area and for the benefit of local residents • A Network of expertise and strong local leadership in education – utilising the strengths in our network of expert and experienced governors enables strengths to be better shared across the area, and where need arises, to address any problems or shortfalls across a locality, phase or type of provision 			
<p>How will we get there?</p>	<p>Action</p>	<p>Impact</p>	<p>Delivery Lead</p>	<p>Output Milestones</p>
<p>23.</p>	<p>Invest in the Governor Network across Staffordshire</p>	<p>Improved quality and responsiveness of governor network to local challenges</p>	<p>Cabinet member for Learning and Skills/SCC Commissioner for Education and Wellbeing</p>	<p>Revised Governor Programme & improved communications approach</p>
<p>24.</p>	<p>Re-specify commissioned support for Governors via Entrust</p>	<p>Better support for Governors that aligns with strategic ambitions</p>	<p>SCC County Commissioners/Entrust</p>	<p>New offer in place 2014/15 Evaluation to inform 2015/16</p>
<p>25.</p>	<p>Develop a pool of governance expertise to support interim or intervention arrangements</p>	<p>Strengthened capacity for local support for local problems if they arise</p>	<p>SCC County Commissioners with Entrust/Governor Network</p>	<p>Updated database Expert flexible pool available New initiatives and networks</p>

Governance and Partnership Structure

For Our Partners: To deliver this strategy, Staffordshire County Council will work through the strong established partnerships and networks that are already operating locally. This includes links to the Education Trust, Staffordshire's Children and Young People Strategic Partnership (reporting through to the Health and Wellbeing Board), the Schools Forum with the range of statutory and advisory functions that it holds, plus the wider network of school, college and governor forums that bring together local leaders.

For Local People: The diverse infrastructure that engages children, young people, parents, carers and stakeholders in the decisions and provision that affects them is a vital component of our approach. In order to give choice, control and influence to citizens we will secure strong links to these networks. We will use appropriate methods to engage, consult and communicate on the development, delivery and impact of our strategy.

For the wider Public: All of the work of the County Council, both officers and members, is accountable through the democratic systems of council. Through Cabinet, Select Committee and scrutiny function, there is on-going challenge and transparency in decision-making and operation. In addition, there are inspection and regulatory frameworks that provide impartial scrutiny and reporting to further support public accountability.

This strategy will be led, managed and held to account through this full range of governance and partnership arrangements. A communications approach will support the streamlining of our communication and meet the needs of our different audiences.

Implementation, Performance Measures and Milestones

The success of this strategy is of critical important to us and a priority for Staffordshire County Council. We will develop the detail of our approach to implementation, including through our commissioning plans, operational and business planning systems. We will establish performance metrics, key performance measures and progress milestones that provide specific and measureable mechanisms for implementation, working within the parameters established in this strategy. Wherever possible and appropriate (aside from legally restricted and commercially sensitive intelligence), these will be shared and reported through our governance and partnership structures.

Contact Us – Want to Know More?

If you want to discuss the strategy or know more about Staffordshire's drive to achieve excellence in learning and skills, please contact us.

General Enquiries: 0300 111 8000

Email: contactus@staffordshire.gov.uk

Key Contacts: Councillor Ben Adams – Cabinet Lead Member for Learning and Skills and Anna Halliday – Commissioner for Education and Wellbeing