

Staffordshire Strategic Partnership

CAA Self-Evaluation – Executive Summary



Version 2.0

June 2009



Staffordshire Strategic Partnership

Key facts about Staffordshire...

- Staffordshire has an estimated population of 823,000. 2.4% of the county's population is from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities.
- 75% of land in Staffordshire is classified as rural; however three quarters of the population live in the urban centres.
- There is no one single dominant town, but a diverse range of towns each with its own character, people and heritage.
- Staffordshire's governance arrangements encompass: 184 Town and Parish councils, eight district and borough authorities, the county council and nine parliamentary constituencies.
- We have strong links with neighbouring authorities, including: Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Shropshire and Telford and the West Midlands conurbation.
- Staffordshire's strategic location at the heart of the country makes it a natural cross roads for a number of key transport routes including key motorways and mainline rail routes.
- There are two distinct economic pulls in Staffordshire with the north of the county facing the Stoke conurbation and the south of the county facing the West Midlands conurbation.
- Staffordshire has a varied rural landscape, which includes Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Peak District National Park.
- Staffordshire is a county of diversity. We have eight districts (Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Newcastle under Lyme, South Staffordshire, Staffordshire Moorlands, Stafford and Tamworth), each has its own unique character, its own strengths and its own challenges.

CAA Self-Evaluation in Staffordshire

The CAA self-evaluation of Staffordshire Strategic Partnership (SSP) considered three areas:

1. **How we understand local needs and translate this understanding into local priorities** – this encompassed an analysis of SSP's arrangements for talking to and understanding our communities, the local data we have in place on Staffordshire and its communities, and how we use this information to develop the priorities for Staffordshire.
2. **The improvements we are delivering or are well placed to deliver in the future for Staffordshire**, based on our priorities as set out in a Sustainable Community Strategy for Staffordshire and what we said we would do to deliver those priorities.
3. **The areas that we have identified as key focus points for us to improve on in the future**, based on our priorities and improvements that are needed across SSP.

Understanding Local Needs and Translation into Local Priorities

The vision for Staffordshire, as set out in our [Sustainable Community Strategy](#), is:

“To improve the quality of life for all our people, by increasing economic prosperity, improving local services, and developing partnership working”

Partners across Staffordshire at county, district and locality level are committed to this vision.

We have translated this vision into the following priorities:

- **A Vibrant, Prosperous and Sustainable Economy**
- **Strong, Safe and Cohesive Communities**
- **Improved Health and Sense of Well-being**
- **A Protected, Enhanced and Respected Environment**

Our vision will not be realised if we only achieve three of the four priorities – they are all pieces of the same jigsaw. Improved outcomes for **children and young people** cut across and are embedded in each of these priorities.

Improving the quality of life for all Staffordshire’s residents underpins our Sustainable Community Strategy, but there is an emphasis on making the swiftest improvements for those who need it most. Staffordshire’s Local Area Agreement has the principle of ‘closing the gap’ at its core and seeks to tackle issues where inequality and disadvantage are prominent.

Each of our districts has their own Community Strategy, which link into the countywide strategy and also contains their own priorities to reflect the diversity of Staffordshire’s communities and geography.

Developing our Priorities - Staffordshire’s Arrangements for Community Engagement

Our vision and priorities were developed through a variety of engagement mechanisms with our partners and communities and through the use of local intelligence. Our multi-layered approach to community engagement provides us with an accurate understanding of the needs and interests of the entire community at county, district and locality levels through:

- **Community leadership by elected members** - county and district members facilitate dialogue within communities and provide a link back to partners through their established networks and through initiatives such as ward member hotspots in East Staffordshire. They actively demonstrate a commitment to sustainable development and to tackling inequality and disadvantage through their engagement activities.
- **Engagement with the third sector** - Staffordshire has improved its engagement with the third sector. Staffordshire Consortium of Infrastructure Organisations (SCIO) represents the third sector on SSP Management Boards. This has ensured that the third sector has been involved in discussions and the development of the vision and high level priorities.
- **Coordinating engagement activity across the partnership** - we recognise the importance of co-ordinating engagement activity and sharing results between partner organisations. Staffordshire Consultation and Engagement Network includes key engagement practitioners



across the partnership and has been established to achieve this. Arrangements for the co-ordination of engagement activity are also in place in district LSPs.

- **Engagement with groups of interest, with a specific focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups** - Staffordshire Equalities Network supports and advises the partnership on the engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Strong links are being developed with the Staffordshire Consultation and Engagement Network to ensure equalities are embedded in partnership engagement activity.

The Children's Trust, District Children's Trusts and Shadow Children's Trust boards ensure that the voices of children and young people and parents and carers are heard in terms of major policy developments through the Commissioner for Children and Commissioner for Parents. Arrangements are also in place for engaging with the business community and with people Not in Education, Employment Training in priority setting and decision making in a range of operational areas.

The Joint Commissioning Unit (JCU) for adults has established new partnership boards for older people, people with a physical disability and sensory impairment and people with a learning disability to ensure effective engagement with partners, users, carers and the wider community. Staffordshire also has Young Minds groups for young people with mental health needs to feed in their views and inform decision-making.

Locality working creates the infrastructure for communities to be involved and influence local service delivery based upon local priorities. Our award winning Community and Learning Partnerships (C&LPs) enable the local community to influence local priorities and ensure communities are informed of the result of their involvement. Neighbourhood forums and Locality Action Groups are held across Staffordshire to encourage local people to become involved in providing local solutions for their area.

Local Intelligence

The partnership uses a vast range of local intelligence in the form of needs assessments, research and data and community engagement to provide a robust evidence base, including diversity profiles, for its priority setting, outcomes and target-setting activity. The county council's corporate research team – under the brand of [Staffordshire Observatory](#) – undertakes a wide range of research and analysis on behalf of the SSP to inform priorities and facilitate effective decision-making.

Some of the local intelligence we use includes: the ['State of Staffordshire' report](#), needs assessments (Safer and Stronger Staffordshire Strategic Assessment 2008/09, Local Economic Assessment for Staffordshire and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for adults and children), place survey data sets, monthly economic bulletins to help understand the impact of the recession, customer relationship management system, [Staffordshire Ecological Record](#), monthly tension monitoring reports and locality profiles.



The Delivery of Improvements in Staffordshire

A Vibrant, Prosperous and Sustainable Economy

- **Skills levels** are improving in Staffordshire at different levels, but particularly amongst adults achieving NVQ levels 2 and 4.
- We are **maximising the opportunities presented by Staffordshire and Keele universities**, particularly around the development of Science and Technology Parks, knowledge transfer, training and skills development and renewable energy, such as Stafford Business Village and Keele University Science and Business Park Phase III.
- **Levels of enterprise have increased** through a range of business support activities, such as the award winning '[Think Local](#)', which seeks to encourage inter-trading amongst local businesses and partners.
- **The number of young people who are Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET)** is declining across Staffordshire. Connexions Staffordshire has targeted resources in specific areas to address intergenerational challenges. This has resulted in Staffordshire having one of the lowest 16-18 Not Known rates in the country.
- **Attracting sustainable, quality public and private investment that supports our towns and villages** is also being achieved by work in localities, for example the Biddulph Regeneration Partnership has assisted in the delivery of the Biddulph Area Action Plan and consequent major development in Biddulph.
- The recession is impacting on our ambitions to **reduce worklessness and increase the employment rate and improve accessibility to employment opportunities**. However, we are achieving successes in providing sustainable job opportunities for the most disadvantaged communities. For example, a number of local and regional partners have developed Lymedale Park in Newcastle under Lyme, which has created 3,000 new jobs adjacent to some of the most deprived communities in North Staffordshire.

Building Strong, Safe and Cohesive Communities

- The [2008 Audit Commission Inspections of Safer, Stronger and Greener Communities](#) rated Staffordshire as having a good (two-star) approach with promising prospects for improvement. Positive impacts by partners were highlighted in the following areas:
 - achieving **crime reduction** targets for 2005-08;
 - providing a variety of initiatives effectively addressing key public areas of concern such as **anti-social behaviour, alcohol and drug misuse** and **domestic violence**;
 - balancing local and national priorities and providing services which are inclusive;
 - strategic collaboration across the LAA
- **The causes of crime are being addressed.** For example, strategic collaboration across the partnership has improved, with the Stronger, Safer and Cohesive Communities thematic partnership committing funding to an Intensive Family Support Project that works with families where children are on the cusp of offending behaviour and where there are concerns over parenting capacity.



- We are **building trust and confidence within and between our communities**. This is reflected in the increasing number of residents who feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together. Close working with a range of partners is taking place to strengthen community resilience, for example, in East Staffordshire, where PREVENT programmes are aimed at strengthening communities against violent extremism.
- **Promoting participation in cultural activities and raising the aspirations of children, young people and communities** is being achieved through initiatives such as the Bay Leaf Project in South Staffordshire – thirty three schools have signed up to the project that aims to encourage intergenerational work around gardening. Staffordshire County Council's Culture and Libraries Service also undertakes a variety of projects with partners to encourage local communities to work together in a voluntary capacity to improve the lives of local residents.
- **Putting sustainable development principles at the core of services to help to create sustainable communities** is being achieved through a variety of measures. Locality working across Staffordshire is driving forward positive outcomes to those who need it most. For example, the award winning Community and Learning Partnerships (C&LPs) are helping to deliver a variety of outcomes at a local level in areas with most need through projects such as Turnaround in Tamworth, Cannock Resource Centre, Lichfield District Play Partnership, Speed Networking in South Staffordshire and Room 21 in Leek.

Improving Health and Sense of Well-being

- Overall, health and well-being in Staffordshire is improving. We are **supporting and protecting vulnerable people** through a range of partnership initiatives. For example, the county council and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) have several joint initiatives in place such as the introduction of a Care Call system to all Aspire Housing properties to help vulnerable people to live independently in their homes. This has led to a life being saved in Kidsgrove – a direct impact of a joint training initiative.
- **The causes and consequences of neglect of children are being tackled** via a range of initiatives driven by the Children's Trust Board and the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board such as a wide range of multi-agency training and inter-agency procedures to support both front line practitioners and senior managers. The Boards have responded swiftly to the tragic death of Baby Peter and the Government action plan following Lord Laming's report.
- More **carers are being supported and empowered** with more carers receiving services and information. Initiatives in place include the Alzheimer's Café for people with dementia, their families and carers to come together in a safe environment to meet others and share their experiences.
- **Healthy choices are being promoted** through a variety of initiatives that focus on improving lifestyles, such as South Staffordshire PCT working in partnership with local authorities on the 'Time to Quit' smoking service, which has led to annual targets being exceeded, and partners including Cannock Chase practice-based commissioning consortia and the Children's Centre working together to produce the 'Good Life Resource' pack to motivate families in Cannock Chase to be more active and eat more healthily. Furthermore, initiatives such as the Chef's Programme, Healthy Walks and Walk to Water in Staffordshire Moorlands



have led to reductions in levels of smoking, obesity and binge drinking and increases in the number of people using leisure facilities and adopting better diets. These initiatives are all helping to tackle **health inequalities** and **to reduce obesity**.

- **The harm caused by drugs and alcohol on communities and on an individual's well being** is being tackled through a range of initiatives in place by the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) and through initiatives such as Super Vampire+ in East Staffordshire, an alcohol harm prevention project focused in Burton town centre that touches on outcomes associated with health and wellbeing, domestic violence and road safety.

A Protected, Enhanced and Respected Environment

- Staffordshire's environment is better protected. **We are using our natural resources to support the development of the economy, but managing them in a sustainable way.** Some of the largest contributions to biodiversity targets are being achieved through careful planning of restoration of former mineral workings that can provide valuable recreational facilities, such as Middleton Lakes, which is set to become one of the RSPB's largest reserves in the region.
- More **green spaces are being created and maintained within our communities** through the [Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan](#) partnership. This is providing opportunities for local community involvement in practical site management.
- We are **encouraging more sustainable construction, securing high levels of resource and energy efficiency and helping to tackle climate change.** The Renewable Energy Project is attracting suppliers of renewable energy technology and products to what will hopefully become a regional centre of excellence. In Newcastle-under-Lyme, the first carbon positive industrial building (Blue Planet) in the UK has been constructed.
- **Our communities have improved access to everyday facilities but particularly those without access to a car.** Partnership work has resulted in the development of the Chaselinx bus service, which has ensured easier access for residents to Stafford and Cannock hospitals. The Staffordshire Wheels to Work scheme provides transport opportunities for individuals who have no means of accessing work, education and training.
- Staffordshire is leading the way in **responding to the threat of climate change and environmental deterioration.** The climate change steering group for Staffordshire is seen as exemplary nationally and is achieving the greatest positive impact with large cross cutting projects such as the fire and rescue service's energy audit project and with local community based projects such as the Low Carbon Communities and Carbon Crush.
- Waste management has been transformed in Staffordshire. We are **managing waste in ways which reduce environmental impact and support the economy and local communities.** Staffordshire now provides recycling services that are in line with the best of Europe. Local Authorities across Staffordshire are working together effectively on the Joint Waste Management Board, which has led to a joint agreement on Staffordshire County Council's Waste Strategy. The roll out of the waste strategy has led to an increase in recycling levels and therefore a reduction in residual waste leading to a healthier environment.



Areas for Improvement

Improvement actions are identified under specific priority areas and also in areas that cut across the whole of SSP. These are being incorporated into an SSP improvement plan. Key cross-cutting areas for improvement are highlighted below.

Area for Improvement	Key Actions
<p>Community Engagement: Improved co-ordination of community engagement activity across the partnership</p>	<p>A community engagement action plan is in place to develop community engagement arrangements.</p> <p>We are in the process of developing a partnership engagement calendar to record activity, outcomes and to reduce duplication.</p>
<p>'Fit for purpose' Governance arrangements</p>	<p>We will monitor the effectiveness of our revised governance arrangements, as identified in the SSP draft improvement plan.</p>
<p>Performance management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the performance framework for the Sustainable Community Strategy • Improving data quality across the partnership • Communicating performance information to the public 	<p>We will adapt our LAA performance framework to meet the needs of the Sustainable Community Strategy.</p> <p>We are in the process of pulling together a multi-agency group to consider improving data quality arrangements for the partnership.</p> <p>We need to be smarter at ensuring that performance information is in a format that is easily understandable to our communities.</p>
<p>Disaggregated data</p>	<p>The partnership funding agreement for Staffordshire Observatory will ensure the resources are available for disaggregated data to be made available.</p>
<p>Coordination of communications between partners</p>	<p>The SSP Improvement Plan has developing communications as a key action. This is both externally to the public and also internally to partners.</p>
<p>Reputation Management</p>	<p>Discussions are planned to take place at partnership forums to plan how to manage the reputation of Staffordshire and the partnership.</p>
<p>Identifying cross-cutting activity across the partnership and sharing good practice</p>	<p>We are beginning to do this through developing our delivery planning process through a peer review process. SSP also has cross-thematic partnership forums to discuss these issues further.</p>
<p>More focused measurement of outcomes</p>	<p>The focus on measuring outcomes needs to be developed and embedded in our performance management arrangements.</p>



Economic Recession	<p>SSP recognises the potential impact of the economic downturn in Staffordshire across all our priority areas.</p> <p>Our partnerships and partner organisations have developed plans to identify risks and opportunities and to put actions in place to ensure that the necessary provision is in place across Staffordshire.</p>
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