



City of
Stoke-on-Trent

Stoke-on-Trent **Community Cohesion Strategy** **2020 - 2024**



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Foreword

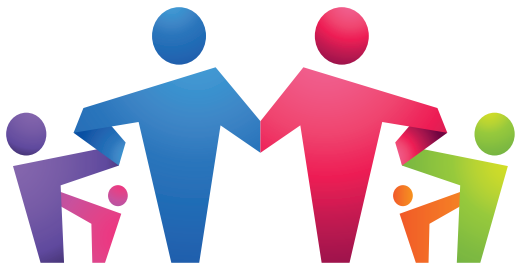


Councillor Abi Brown
Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council

This strategy sets out how together we will deliver our vision to develop stronger and more cohesive communities where supportive relationships flourish and everyone can play their part in making the city a safe, prosperous and welcoming place. I really appreciate how as a city we have all pulled together over the years to tackle the issues that affect us all and create a place where we can all be proud to call home.

I am honoured to represent a city whose communities came together and worked tirelessly and selflessly to help those most in need during the Covid 19 pandemic. This demonstrates the community spirit and resilience of local communities and I want this strategy to build on these qualities so we can be an even stronger and closer community.

Stoke-on-Trent prides itself on being a diverse and multi-cultural city and we want it to be a place where racism and prejudice continue to be challenged. It goes without saying that we should always ensure the city council is an authority based on equality and fairness. We must also continue to challenge racism, prejudice and inequality wherever we see it outside of our own organisation. We must support others who do the same to create a fairer and equal place for everyone.



STRONGER TOGETHER

Working together to create a stronger city we can all be proud of



Support vulnerable people in our communities to live their lives well

- Transform outcomes for vulnerable children and young people in the city
- Help to protect vulnerable adults from neglect and harm



Work with our communities to make them healthier, safer and more sustainable

- Work with residents and partners to make our communities safer, cleaner and healthier
- Invest in communities to help build resilience and grow social capital

The Stronger Together Strategic Plan 2020-24 sets out the strategic vision and priorities for Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the wider city. All delivery plans and strategies will align with the Stronger Together vision and the roadmap to ensure that service delivery right across the organisation is focused on the same priorities and outcomes.

The table above shows how creating cohesive communities by providing more opportunities for people to interact with others from a different background, improving community safety and celebrating diversity will contribute to the achievement of that vision.

Links with other Strategies

The Community Cohesion Strategy is aligned with the following strategies and will support their delivery:

- Stoke-on-Trent Safety City Partnership Strategy 2017 – 2020*
- Stoke-on-Trent Prevent Board Strategy 2019 – 2021
- Stoke-on-Trent Counter Extremism Strategy 2019 – 2021
- Stoke-on-Trent Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016 - 2020
- Safer, Fairer, United Communities Strategy 2017-2020*
- Staffordshire Police Public Confidence Strategy 2018 -2021
- Children, Young People and Families Plan 2016-2020*

* also being updated in 2020, please refer to latest versions



Introduction

This strategy sets out a vision for Community Cohesion in Stoke-on-Trent, our achievements so far and identifies our priorities and how we are going to deliver them. The strategy sets out clear links to existing and developing strategies; how progress on delivering the strategy will be monitored and reported.

How the strategy was developed

In developing the Community Cohesion Strategy the council has consulted with local residents and stakeholders to:

- Identify what we mean when we say we want to develop cohesive communities
- Ensure that communities and stakeholders understand and support the identified priorities.
- Obtain community and stakeholder views of the issues they consider to be a priority in their neighbourhood in order to support the approach to place-based problem solving.

Context for Community Cohesion

There has been a recognition in the city for many years that cohesion is more than just about race or faith; our approaches to developing cohesive communities have focused on rights, responsibilities and fairness. All our efforts have always focused on creating places where people want to live, work, learn and socialise together.

Since the last strategy was launched in 2016 there have been a number of key factors that have and will continue to impact on Community Cohesion:

- UK voting to leave the EU in June 2016 brings with it new opportunities to ensure that all our communities are equal stakeholders in the country's future prosperity.
- The potential impact of Covid 19 on the economy and the need for public services to be delivered in a way where they are more efficient and more responsive to the needs of the local population
- Population mobility means communities are more dynamic, diverse bringing with them challenges and opportunities
- Social Media's ability to build bridges between people and communities who would not normally meet in person has grown but so has its power to divide communities by spreading 'fake news' and conspiracy theories.
- Terror attacks, groups exploiting grievances, vulnerabilities and the impact of international events can shape public opinion in this country.
- The continued challenges of inequality, discrimination and loneliness; all requiring an effort to promote system change.

Covid 19

Covid 19 is by far the biggest challenge that the world has to face and the immediate and long term impact on our communities and economy cannot be underestimated. The costs to society and the state are significant and will force future governments to make often difficult choices on the direction of public policy. These decisions could undermine social and political trust which can be exploited by extremist groups for their own ambitions.

However whilst the challenges are real the situation has brought out an outpouring of kindness, compassion and community spirit across the city with many individuals and organisations reaching out to vulnerable neighbours and communities. There are many examples of individuals, businesses, charities, community, voluntary and faith groups giving up their time and money to provide food, household essentials and most importantly an essential lifeline for the vulnerable and elderly.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Voluntary Sector set up a partnership to co-ordinate the response locally to ensure that everyone who needs help receives it and that anyone who wants to help others can do so. This sense of community and coming together is something that we must continue to develop as we face the challenges together that the pandemic will bring.



What have been some of our achievements?

- Delivering sessions in schools working with pupils to talk about difference, intolerance, hate and extremism providing much needed space for challenging issues to be discussed in a safe and open environment.
- Set up a Head Teacher's Group to lead on tackling issues that impact on community cohesion such as extremism, tensions and intolerance. The group have undertaken an audit of their activities to address gaps and promote good practice.
- The local Hate Crime Network 'Challenge North Staffs' has encouraged the reporting of hate crime and supporting victims of hate crime.
- We identified that more needed to be done to engage and understand newly arrived communities from the EU so we secured funding to help us get a better understanding of the issues faced by these communities
- The city's Faith Leaders Forum has brought faith leaders together to reflect on strategic and local issues. Engaging with civic leaders to inform them on matters affecting the economic, social and cultural life in the city.
- Communities remained cohesive and resilient despite a terrorist attack with a link to the city, demonstrations by intolerant groups and efforts by extremists both online and offline to exploit criminal actions, grievance and conspiracy theories.
- Held a Holocaust Memorial Day Event attended by pupils from local schools in partnership with Port Vale Community Foundation, New Vic Borderlines and City Faith Leaders Forum.
- A Harms of Hate event was organised at the YMCA in Hanley over 200 people heard speakers relate their personal experiences of how they have been impacted by intolerance and hate.
- Facilitated Faith visits to local places of worship for pupils and Elected Members. These provide an opportunity for young people and our policy makers to better understand the different faith communities that we have in the city.
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council formally adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliances' (IHRA) definition of Anti- Semitism. Adopting the IHRA working definition on antisemitism sent a strong message that prejudicial views or behaviour that could impact on community cohesion are not tolerated.
- Projects delivered in education and community settings designed to promote cohesion, raise awareness of intolerance, encourage debate and dialogue.
- Stoke-on-Trent Standing Advisory Council in Religious Education in partnership with the council organised a Youth Debate. Pupils from schools across the City came to the Council Chamber to debate some of the key issues around the teaching of Religious Education.

Our Vision and Priorities for 2020 to 2024

Vision

Our vision for Community Cohesion in the city is 'for Stoke-on-Trent to be a place where strong and supportive relationships flourish in neighbourhoods. People from different backgrounds all feel that they are heard and everyone has the opportunity to make the city a safe, prosperous and welcoming place'

Strategic Assessment

This Community Safety Strategic Assessment provides evidence to inform the strategic decision-making process - helping commissioners and partners to determine the priorities that require particular attention in their local area.

The strategic assessment was approved in March 2020 and was based on a range of information and data sources from the City Council, Staffordshire Police, health services and other partners in order to distil key strategic priorities and risks for the city.

The Strategic Assessment identified a number of Community Safety Strategic priorities the priorities relating to this strategy are:

- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) & Criminal Damage
- Counter Terror / Counter Extremism

In addition, it identified Community Cohesion and Hate Crimes as additional challenges for consideration which required the work of the whole partnership to address.

Priorities

Stoke-on-Trent's Community Cohesion Strategy has four priorities that will drive the planning and action taken to achieve our vision for community cohesion.

The priorities are:

Priority 1: Creating more safe space opportunities

Outcome

Provide young people with more opportunities to talk in a safe place about what they see or hear in the news, social media or in their neighbourhood to build critical analysis skills.

Delivery

- Deliver Cohesion Sessions in local educational institutions including primary, secondary schools and colleges
- Arrange visits to faith institutions for local schools and colleges
- Secure resources to deliver projects that build critical analysis skills in local educational and youth settings
- Ensure that the Headteachers Board delivery plans provide opportunities in educational settings to talk about issues that impact on community cohesion such as extremism, tensions and intolerance
- Support schools and youth activity providers to engage with underrepresented groups and enhance provision of learning through the arts, sporting and cultural opportunities.



Priority 2: Building stronger and closer communities in neighbourhoods

Outcome

Working closely with local residents to build resilience through place based problem solving and get more people to interact with others from a different background.

Delivery

- Work with the faith sector in bringing communities together to promote a shared sense of belonging
- Promote the development of community groups which could support the engagement needs of underrepresented groups
- Deliver a partnership approach to engaging with communities at a local level to promote active citizenship and participation in community and civic life
- Develop work with organisations working in neighbourhoods to promote community cohesion and deliver training session to raise awareness of intolerance and extremism.
- Raise awareness of community cohesion issues with local community groups and support them to make a difference

Priority 3: Improve Community Safety

Outcome

Working closely with local residents, the statutory and voluntary sector to actively challenge intolerance, tackle discrimination and hate crime

Delivery

- Strengthening the partnership response to community tensions by understanding the underlying causes of community tension and working to address these.
- Improve our understanding of the links between Hate Crime and Anti-social behaviour and develop a more co-ordinated approach to delivery
- Improve our understanding off the links between Hate Crime and Extremism and develop a more co-ordinated approach to delivery
- Support any national or local initiatives to tackle discrimination, inequality and efforts to promote inclusion through system change.
- Deliver myth-busting and tackling fake news campaigns when necessary

Priority 4: To develop a shared sense of belonging

Outcome

Improve access to learning, skills and jobs for people from different backgrounds and promote the awareness and understanding of different communities across the city

Delivery

- Support activities that celebrate the contribution that different communities bring to the cultural life of the city and ensure they have wider cross- community appeal
- Encourage English language learning to those who cannot speak or write English well or not at all
- Promote employment and skills programmes targeted at groups underrepresented in employment
- Visits to faith institutions for community groups and local organisations
- Promote volunteering opportunities that bring people together especially younger and older people



Implementing the Strategy

Governance

We recognise that the strategy will only be successful if the vision and priorities for the city are owned at the highest level. The Community Safety Partnership Board, the local partnership tasked by the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) to improve community safety, the city Councils Executive Team and local Councillors will drive forward our priorities to ensure that our vision is met.

Membership of the Community Safety Partnership Board includes representation from a wide range of stakeholders and organisations including:

- Cabinet Member for Corporate Resource, Strategy and Partnerships
- National Probation Service (NPS) and Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC)
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council (Children's services, Public Health, Communities and Housing)
- Stoke-on-Trent Clinical Commissioning Group
- Staffordshire Commissioner's Office (Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner)
- Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)
- Staffordshire Police
- Youth Offending Services (YOS)
- Voluntary Sector

The Strategy will be supported by a Delivery Plan underpinning the priorities and will be reported into the Community Safety Partnership Board. The Delivery Plan will be reviewed annually as part of the Strategic Assessment process and will reflect any changes in emphasis and trends in relation to Community Cohesion, Hate Crime and Extremism.

The Council is committed to working with national government, statutory and community partners to develop strong, cohesive and resilient communities. It delivers this commitment through the city's Community Cohesion, Counter Extremism and Prevent Strategies.

How will we know we are making progress?

There is no single measure of community cohesion; local knowledge and an understanding of local issues are important for interpreting data in relation to community cohesion. We need to have a clear understanding of local community cohesion challenges and also measure changes in community cohesion levels.

We will monitor and evaluate success in a number of ways

- Hate Crime Monitoring via Staffordshire Police, the local Hate Crime Partnership and collated by the Community Safety Partnership.
- Anti-Social Behaviour monitoring via Staffordshire Police data and collated by the Community Safety Partnership.
- A survey of the views of children and young people in the cohesion sessions in educational institutions
- Feedback from ward councillors, community workers and voluntary, community and faith organisations active in neighbourhoods.
- A survey of the views of participants in relevant engagement and project activities, pre and post engagement







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