



**TOGETHER
ACTIVE**

**Strategy
2021 - 25**



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Introduction

*CEO Jude Taylor and
Chair of the Board
Malcolm Armstrong*



Over the last four years, we have undergone significant change.

We moved to charitable status to improve our organisational efficiency and capacity, we have built influential partnerships and shaped systems, and we have spent more time in our local communities and as a result we have gained a deeper understanding of both place and people.

However the fact remains, there are far still far too many inactive people in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and people whose health and wellbeing is being negatively affected by sedentary behaviour.

The COVID-19 pandemic has focused our attention. We have seen the disproportional impact it has had on parts of our population and we have observed an ever growing number of barriers preventing people from accessing physical activity and sport.

This strategy represents our renewed determination and focus. It is the start of journey which will see us focused firmly on the people who need our help the most.

We will step up to tackle inequality with activity.

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Who we are

Together Active is a local charity which forms part of a national network of 43 Active Partnerships.

We are funded by Sport England, our local authorities and our universities. As a strategic organisation, we work behind the scenes to create the conditions for physical activity and sport to happen across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

We do this by coordinating and commissioning programmes, providing information, advice and guidance and working lobbying and influencing systems to create change.

The essence of what we do is joining dots, driving improvement and sparking collaborations.

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Our journey

Over the last four years, we have undergone some significant changes.



We moved to charitable status to improve our organisational efficiency and capacity.



We built influential partnerships and shaped systems.



We spent more time in our local communities and as a result we have gained a deeper understanding of both place and people.

However, the fact remains that there are far still far too many inactive people in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and; people whose health and wellbeing is being negatively affected by sedentary behaviour.



The pandemic has focused our attention.

We have seen the disproportionate impact it has had on some of our communities, and we have observed an ever-growing number of barriers preventing people from accessing physical activity and sport.

This strategy represents our renewed determination and focus; it is the start of a journey which will see us focused firmly on the people who need our help the most. We will tackle inequality with activity.

Step Up is Together Active's four-year strategy outlining how we will support local communities to use physical activity and sport as a tool improve their physical and mental wellbeing.



What we stand for

Together Active believes in the power of sport and physical activity.

We know that even small changes in activity levels can have big impact on people's health and wellbeing.

We understand that the people who would benefit most are the least likely to take part.

Physical activity changes how we feel. It connects us to our environment and each other. It adds healthy years to our lives.

We want everyone in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent to have the opportunity to experience this.

It's a big job, but underpinning everything we do is our organisational DNA, our values.

Our values



We are focused.
Everything we do will help people be more active.



We are inclusive.
We leave nobody behind. We do not accept that characteristics like age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity or income should determine your access to activity.



We are engaged.
We listen first. We always seek to understand.



We are relentless.
We are passionate about the importance of sport and physical activity.



We are collaborative.
We never go it alone. We work to develop collaborations that are capable of sparking change.



We are effective.
We will demonstrate the impact of our work using clinical, economic and social measures and support our partners in doing the same.

Our place

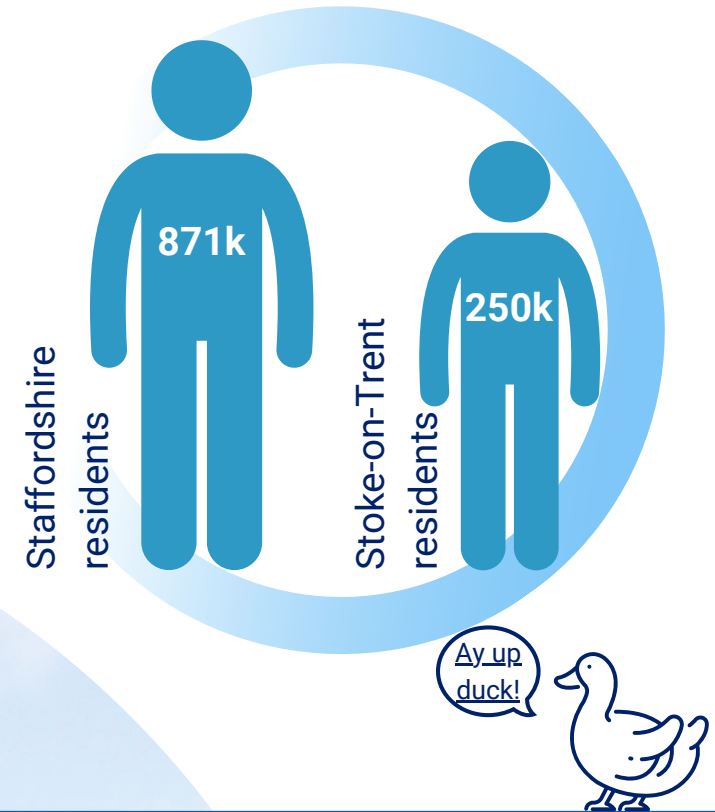
Staffordshire and Stoke-On-Trent can only be characterised by the diversity of our people and place.

Between Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham, we are the meeting point of different regional cultures, creating a melting pot of local identities.

Six towns make up the city of Stoke-on-Trent. Famous for oatcakes and calling strangers "duck", the people of Stoke are proud, their communities are small but close. They are a rich mix of religions, race and ethnicity

Povey's make
3.7 million
oatcakes
every year!

Gladstone Pottery Museum,
Stoke-on-Trent



Our geography is varied, ranging from the rugged hills of the Staffordshire Moorlands to undulating farmland across much of its central and western areas, plains along the Trent Valley in the east and the upland heath of Cannock Chase AONB and Kinver Edge in the south.

Whether it's protected landscapes, pits or potbanks, this environment provides a backdrop to a rich cultural, agricultural and industrial past that is central to the identity of many of our communities.

In a county this size it is impossible to make generalisations. Each town, street, neighbour even - has their own set of circumstances.

Challenges facing our communities

22%

of Staffordshire adults have a limiting long-term illness, rising to **53%** in older people.

Over half of Staffordshire wards have a higher than average proportion of adults living with this.

The least affluent areas of the county have **more than double** the percentage of children in relative low income households compared to the most affluent

Stoke - **31.6%**
Staffs Moorlands - **15.5%**

20.8%

of people in Stoke are experiencing deprivation due to low incomes vs. **14.6%** average in England

12.8%

An estimated of 5 to 19 year olds in Stoke have a mental health disorder.

Two thirds of Staffordshire's young people do not achieve a core level of attainment by the time they leave school, impacting on future health outcomes



12.3%

of adults in Stoke have no qualifications

Average pay in Stoke is **one week** less per year than in the rest of England.



Life expectancy from birth in Stoke is

76.5 years

That's the lowest in the West Midlands.



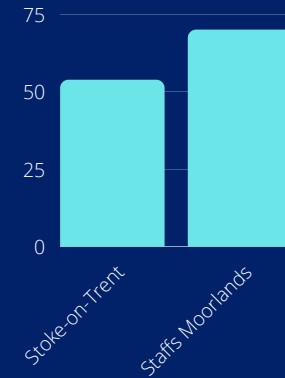
Favourite activities

- Walking - 87.5%
- Cycling - 33.9%
- Swimming - 26.1%
- Fitness Classes - 23.1%
- Running - 16.7%

Physical activity behaviours in Staffordshire

1 in 3

Stoke-on-Trent residents is inactive, meaning less than **30 minutes** of moderate activity per week.



There are huge differences in activity levels across the county.

Only **53%** of adults in Stoke-on-Trent are physically active, compared to **70.1%** in Staffordshire Moorlands.

1 in 4

Staffordshire adults are physically inactive - second highest of its 15 statistical neighbours and ranked **tenth worst area in England.**



In 2019, **260,200 adults** in Staffordshire and **25,622 adults** in Stoke-on-Trent were classified as inactive, meaning they do less than 30 minutes of physical activity across a week.

This trend of inactivity has been a feature of local life for many years and there are generations of families all over our county who have only ever known inactivity.

Activity and health for children and young people



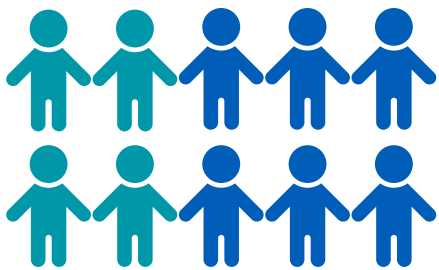
43.5%
of boys

in England know how to get involved with lots of different types of exercise and sport



but only **31.5%**
of girls

in England feel the same way.



Almost **40%**

of children in Staffordshire aged 1 - 11 are active for less than 30 minutes a day, 6% higher than the average in England



26%

of Reception-aged children in Staffordshire are obese or overweight, compared to **23%** nationally

40.5%

of children in Stoke are obese or overweight by Year 6

However, **42%**

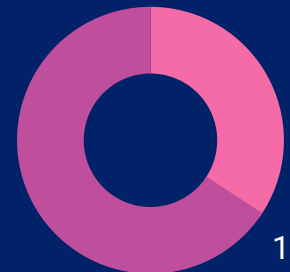
of children in Staffordshire aged 5 - 11 volunteered to support sport and exercise at least twice in 2019-20, 6% more than the average for England.



14

Only **33.5%**

of children in England from less affluent households feel confident when they exercise and play sport compared to **45.5%** of children from affluent households



15

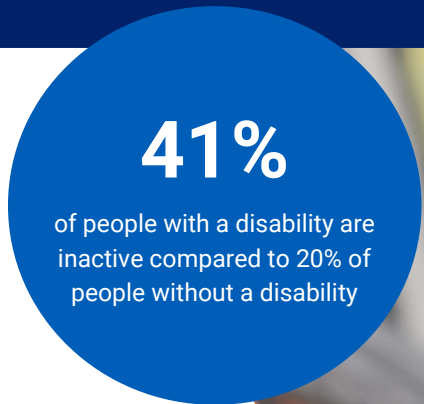
Understanding inactivity

Sometimes people choose a sedentary lifestyle, but in far too many cases people find themselves in habits of inactivity because of barriers relating their financial situation, disability, race, gender or health.

As an organisation we have been supporting local people to have a positive approach to their physical activity behaviours for several years, however we recognise we still have lots to learn about the lives of inactive people locally.

We are committed to hearing their story and are determined not to make assumptions.

Whilst we are developing this understanding, we will use national and local insight and research to guide our approach.



| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Mixed | 69% |
| White other | 65% |
| White British | 64% |
| Chinese | 61% |
| Black | 57% |
| Other Ethnic Groups | 56% |
| Asian (exc Chinese) | 53% |

Sport England research shows stark inequalities in those from ethnically diverse backgrounds, with only 58% of black people and 53% of Asian people in England classed as 'active'.

This clearly demonstrates that more can be done to improve inclusivity and reduce inequality in participation.

This large group of people is not limited to those facing greater economic disadvantage.

It also includes people and families who sometimes, or often, struggle to make ends meet.

It could feature people employed in 'semi-routine' jobs, like shop assistants, taxi drivers and hospitality staff; or people in 'routine' jobs, like waiters, cleaners and building labourers.

Time for change

Over the next four years Together Active will dedicate itself to these inactive people. We will have a focus on those facing financial disadvantage and those with health conditions and disabilities.

For young people, we will also include those in care and criminal justice systems.

This will require us to work differently, realigning 80% of all of our investment to these populations.


We will foster relationships with new partners and learn to say no to activities that don't bring us closer to our key objectives:

1 To drive systems leadership that results in physical activity & sport becoming a core feature in policy.

2 To work with health partners to advocate for physical activity & sport as a tool to prevent and manage health conditions.

3 In partnership tackle systemic inequalities in physical activity and sport participation.

4 To support individuals to add healthy years to their lives through positive physical activity behaviours.



This will result in the reduction of the number of inactive adults & children across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

These are ambitious objectives and will likely take beyond the four years of this strategy to achieve.

We recognise the importance of doing a few things well and intend to spend a significant proportion of the first twelve months listening, testing and learning, in particular with a focus on mental health, obesity and youth diversion.

Jude Taylor, CEO Together Active

Our Vision



Our vision

Active lives, healthy futures



Our mission

Working together to create active places and healthy lives through physical activity and sport.



Through our values of being

Focused, Inclusive, Engaged, Relentless,
Collaborative, Effective

Our Priority Audiences

We know that personal circumstances impact on how active an individual can be. However, some create far more barriers to activity.

We're focussing our efforts on four priority groups which we know need tailored, long-term support to improve their activity levels, and so their overall health and wellbeing.

People with a Disability

Long-term health conditions

Low income households

Ethnically diverse communities

Strategic Priorities



Delivering change

We're stepping up our efforts to increase the level of physical activity in our communities. We will achieve change through four key areas of work. The following are examples of what this will mean in action, but we'll continue to provide an agile response to the local need.

We're Stepping Up on Systems Leadership

We have an obesity problem across Staffordshire which is impacting on the physical and mental wellbeing of children, young people, and adults. There are also significant social and economic costs to excess weight in the population. The causes are complex and include personal behaviour, the environment, genetics, social relationships and culture. We are working with Staffordshire County Council and the Health and Wellbeing Board on a Whole Systems Approach to obesity. This approach enables local stakeholders, including communities, to come together to share an understanding about the reality of the challenge and to consider how the local system is operating and where there the greatest opportunities to mobilise change are.

We're Stepping Up on Active Environments

Together Active, along with a range of partners, has secured funding from Sport England to deliver a wayfinding demonstration project in Cannock Chase, specifically targeting residents of the Hednesford North ward. Aiming to connect local communities actively and emotionally to the natural environment on their doorstep, this project will use innovative and community co-designed wayfinding tools to engage and motivate. Physical infrastructure improvements, engaging digital content using QR codes and the Cannock Chase Can app will support the project and ensure its longevity.

We will test if this approach can increase physical activity through increased walking distance and improved mental wellbeing through connection to place and nature.

We're Stepping Up for Communities and People

We recognise the importance of community connections in creating and maintaining healthy lifestyles. Social Prescribing is all about putting the person at the heart of their choices when it comes to their health and wellbeing. The referrals that Link Workers generally receive tend to come from health care professionals such as GPs or nurses.

Through training, we will instil Link Workers with the skills and confidence to talk about Physical Activity and its benefits, all of which is heavily underpinned by the principles and applications of behaviour change theory. In turn, these Link Workers will play an integral role in getting people moving. We will also support local community groups to become "referral ready", providing training and support to ensure they can provide a quality experience for people from a range of backgrounds.

We're Stepping Up Our Information, Advice and Guidance

Supporting our networks to signpost into physical activity and sport effectively is crucial. With that in mind we have developed Active My Way, an open data-powered platform connecting people to activities easily. Active My Way enables the residents of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent not only to discover and book suitable activities, but also to receive supporting resources, tips and guidance about getting started in physical activity and maintaining healthy habits.

This will be a powerful tool for healthcare professionals and social prescribers to aid referrals into physical activity, particularly for residents with health conditions or mental health issues. It will also help clubs, groups and organisations reach new participants in a far more effective and efficient manner, creating access to digital platforms and innovative new technologies to create truly accessible routes into activity.

Partnerships

This strategy is built on the foundation of collaboration.

The scope of what we are trying to achieve makes it impossible to deliver in isolation; our success will be defined by the quality of our relationships.

During the pandemic, it has become clear that reaching our priority audience requires a range of partners, systems, groups and individuals.

We acknowledge the great number of partners who are already working within these areas and we only wish to seek to add value. Digital communication has been proven an effective and efficient means of collaboration, and we will continue to utilise it where appropriate to bring together diverse groups of partners in order to develop creative and impactful projects to best support the residents of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.



Evaluating success

Through the life of this strategy, we want to reduce the number of inactive adults and children in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, particularly those who experience financial hardship.

With research partners, we have developed a bespoke evaluation framework which will enable us to analyse the impact of our projects and services, iteratively and in real time. This will give us an understanding of the performance of both our individual programmes and the sum of our collective efforts.

The strongest indications of our success will be our level of understanding and the strength and depth of our relationships. By the end of the four years, we need to be able to effectively tell the story of local people, articulating the challenges, motivations and barriers of our target population - a crucial step in design interventions to support behaviour change.

One useful measure of our success is the awareness and understanding of our work within the systems we are trying to influence. Growing awareness of who we are and what we do is critical as a new organisation.