

# Game Changer



# Foreword

There was never a time in my childhood when I didn't want to go to University. Although no one in my family had ever been, I knew it would be a stepping-stone to a better life, and that by going I'd grow as a person, not just get a degree.

My parents couldn't give me advice about which University or course, but they were always very supportive of my aspirations, which made all the difference when studies got hard. Not everyone is so lucky to have that support, and in other cases there are far more barriers in someone's life to overcome than just studying hard to get good A level grades. Yet it doesn't mean that they don't have the potential to study to a degree level and then use that knowledge and experience to connect up with the wider opportunities beyond University. No one gets to choose their start in life. We as a society have a choice to make – do we allow talent to go to waste because of that, or are we prepared to create a version of Britain that makes sure less privileged people can succeed every bit as much as those who have a more privileged start? I believe that the latter route is the only tenable one to take.

My own experience of University was life-changing. I loved the academic challenge of doing a degree but arguably more important was the wider development it offered me, broadening my, at that time, limited horizons and improving my confidence. I met people from all walks of life and from different parts of the country that I wouldn't have met otherwise. It also connected me up with my future employer, PricewaterhouseCoopers. That opportunity to go to University in the first place changed the trajectory of my life and meant that I was able to make something of myself. If Britain is to stop wasting its young talent then it's crucial to support those people who experience early barriers to education, or in life more generally, to overcome them so they can access the opportunity of getting to University and getting a degree. University transformed my life and it can transform theirs too.

**Foreword by  
Rt Hon Justine Greening**

**Founder of the Social Mobility  
Pledge and Former Secretary  
of State for Education**



When I was Education Secretary, I spoke of “levelling up opportunity” and I welcome the fact that Boris Johnson made it one of the Government's top three priorities when he became Prime Minister. It's crucial that Universities are a core part of that plan to level up Britain, particularly as Britain's opportunity gap will widen as the country experiences the economic impact of coronavirus, hitting young people and the disadvantaged the most. As Education Secretary I introduced a number of Opportunity Areas across the country where disadvantage was most entrenched, including in Stoke-on-Trent. The scheme brought schools, local Universities, employers, councils, the local health service and other organisations together to ensure a joined up, locally owned set of education priorities that were driven by an evidence base and backed up with initial funding. In the 2017 Social Mobility Action Plan, I set out how Britain's challenge is that talent is spread evenly across our country, yet opportunity is not. I was not only referring to geography but also to the other barriers that people face wherever they are unfairly held back – their class, race, sex, sexuality, disability or a combination of these.

Work by Staffordshire University has especially focused on removing the barriers to higher education, not only across a local region but also especially for people who were finding it toughest to access a degree. It's understandable that many Universities prefer to take students who face fewer challenges but, if we are to level up Britain, then the higher education sector needs to work much harder to provide places and access for people with potential, irrespective of the challenges they face.

For them, as for me, getting a degree can unlock the chance for a better life, not only accessing more opportunities but, having had that success, creating them for others too.

This is what levelling up means in practice – overcoming the barriers that hold people back from reaching their potential. However, even beyond that, Staffordshire University has been at the forefront of creating opportunity by developing courses that provide employers in tech and other sectors with the skilled people they need. Its focus on cutting-edge, vocationally directed courses has seen it excel in the burgeoning fields of computing and gaming, degrees that might previously have been seen as undesirable but are now extremely valuable in a growth sector. And it is not only developing the region's talent, it is also connecting it to opportunities regionally and internationally, for example, providing a quarter of the workforce for Airbus's helicopter division in Germany.

Levelling up means firstly developing talent wherever it is in our country, whatever barriers it faces. Secondly it means spreading opportunity so that talent can be connected up to it. This is what Staffordshire University does. It is a levelling up University and it changes its students' lives. We should be asking all our higher education institutions to clearly set out their contribution to the levelling up agenda. A levelling up Britain must place the highest value on those higher education institutions like Staffordshire University that work the hardest and achieve the most. We need to understand the level of effort that requires when it is approached with ambition, and strategically, and that should be the norm for all higher education institutions, wherever they are.



# Foreword

If you are a proponent of equality, the merits of social mobility should be self-evident. It is the cornerstone upon which the ideals of equality are built, from access to education and healthcare to civil rights and women's empowerment – and everything in between. Social mobility is equality of opportunity in action.



**Foreword by Professor  
Liz Barnes CBE DL**

**Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive  
of Staffordshire University**

**Co-Chair of Stoke-on-Trent  
Opportunity Area**

Whilst it may seem counter-intuitive, I believe one of the most important steps towards achieving social mobility is to acknowledge that it does not exist; or at least that true social mobility does not yet exist. Whether at a local, national or global level, it is clear to see we are not born with equality of opportunity, which is why we must identify inequality in all its forms and work together as a society to level the playing field.

From my first role as a physical education and mathematics teacher at Longton High School in Stoke-on-Trent to my current position within Staffordshire University, I have spent my entire professional career in the field of education. I have seen that when schools, colleges and Universities embrace equality, diversity and inclusivity, they represent the perfect vehicles for social mobility, offering nurturing environments in which people of all ages and from all backgrounds are empowered to break down barriers and achieve their full potential.

I have also seen, however, how educators can have the opposite effect. Some of us are fortunate enough to remember the encouraging words of inspirational teachers and lecturers throughout our lives, but others remember those who said they would not achieve their goals. When you are constantly told you are not good enough to succeed, you start to believe it. Make no mistake, words of discouragement can have a lifelong impact too.

As Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of Staffordshire University, and Co-Chair of the Stoke-on-Trent Opportunity Area, I have witnessed first-hand both the transformative power of



inclusive education and the deleterious impact its absence can have on people's lives. Many things can prevent us from accessing and benefitting from education and these factors are frequently connected to our background rather than our ability. All too often, we are judged on where we are from rather than what we can do.

Inequality of opportunity represents a particular challenge in social mobility 'cold spots' such as Stoke-on-Trent, where levels of child poverty and participation in higher education are amongst the worst in the UK. What's more, these determinants extend into adulthood with approximately one third of our city's workforce employed in low-skilled jobs, significantly above the national average. However, one thing of which I am absolutely certain is that it is never too late to start levelling the playing field.

Equality of opportunity sits at the very heart of Staffordshire University's activities. Approximately 40 per cent of our students come from areas that are amongst the most deprived in the country, with some having experienced challenges such as homelessness and substance misuse. Many of our students are among the first in their families to go to University. Our role as a University is therefore to provide our students with the opportunities that their counterparts in other areas may take for granted.

One example that springs to mind involves a student who joined Staffordshire University in his early 40s. Having developed a drug problem at the age of 14, he had been fighting addiction – as well as its countless associated challenges – all his life. Many in society may have viewed this person as 'down and out' but he worked hard, graduated from

Staffs and now informs national policy on substance misuse and addiction. He is one of the many people I have seen transform their lives through education. Yes, disadvantaged students require support, but most of all they need the opportunity to succeed and for someone to believe in them.

We are working to integrate social mobility within the very fabric of our institution by skilling, enabling and empowering our students to pursue their own paths to learning and development so that they have the tools they need to operate autonomously as independent thinkers. Our approach rests on the twin tenets of 'lifelong and life-wide' learning in the sense that we recognise students bring different skills and experiences with them when they enter higher education. Not everyone joins Staffordshire University at the same stage in their life and it is vital we capitalise on our students' varied backgrounds to help them achieve their full potential.

It is therefore immensely exciting to sign up to the Social Mobility Pledge, which not only recognises the importance of equality of opportunity to our society's long-term success but is also actively working to drive progress through outreach, access and recruitment. The prospect of joining forces with the Social Mobility Pledge team and more than 500 like-minded organisations to boost social mobility really was too good an opportunity to miss.

Working in partnership to narrow the opportunity gap and harness the many talents of our diverse communities represents the bedrock of Staffordshire University's vision.

**This is what social mobility  
is all about.**



# The Opportunity Gap

## The UK's Social Mobility Problem

Social mobility is typically measured as the difference between a person's occupation or income and that of their parents. When there is a weak link, there is a high level of inequality, while a strong one suggests a low level of social mobility<sup>1</sup>.

Social mobility levels in the UK have been stagnant for years. This means that those born into deprivation are statistically likely to remain in those circumstances throughout their lives<sup>2</sup>. *A Broken Social Elevator? How to Promote Social Mobility* reports that, given current levels of inequality and intergenerational earnings mobility, it could take at least five generations, or 150 years, for the child of a poor family to reach the average income, on average, across OECD countries. One in three children with a low earning father will also have low earnings while, for most of the other two-thirds, upward mobility is limited to the neighbouring earnings group.

Unsurprisingly, this is not uniform across the globe as social mobility has different rates in different countries. It can take just two to three generations to reach that average income in the Nordic countries but nine or more in some emerging economies.

Globalisation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution have successfully helped to reduce extreme poverty and eradicate famine. While celebrating that success, however, it cannot be denied that the flipside is that they have also deepened inequalities by transferring low-skilled jobs in high-productivity sectors in high-income economies to lower-income counterparts.

The OECD's report also highlighted that, whereas many people born to low-educated parents between 1955 and 1975 enjoyed income mobility, this has stagnated for those born after 1975.

Over the four-year period looked at by the report, about 60 per cent of people remained trapped in the lowest 20 per cent income bracket, while 70 per cent remained at the top.

At the same time, one in seven middle-class households, and one in five people living closer to lower incomes, fell into the bottom 20 per cent.

This is borne out by the Social Mobility Pledge's own research which reveals that, in the UK, young people are finding it harder to progress in the workplace than their parents or grandparents did.

Its study<sup>3</sup> of 2,000 people revealed that most UK workers believe breaking through the 'class ceiling' is harder for young people now than it was for earlier generations. A majority (60 per cent) of workers aged 35 to 64 believe economically disadvantaged people in the generation below them have a harder time advancing their careers than those one generation older.

The poll also asked thousands of workers aged between 18 and 64 to score how easy it is to get on in life, regardless of background, in the UK, with one being 'very hard' and 10 being 'very easy'. An average score of five was registered, although a quarter of those polled rated it 'hard' or 'very hard'.

Getting on as a disadvantaged young person is either 'difficult' or 'very difficult', according to the majority (54 per cent) of respondents, rising to 62 per cent in London.

Only 44 per cent of respondents said progressing in life regardless of background is easier in the UK than elsewhere in the world.

Universities are crucial in facilitating an individual's route to better opportunity and, at the same time, improving the communities in which they are located. It is important for us all that they adapt and consider new ways of working to make sure opportunities are directed at those who need them most. In a recent report by the Social Mobility Commission, research shows that graduates are three times more likely to participate in workplace training compared to those with no qualifications. Universities are key to facilitating those initial links with employers to ensure that their graduates are well prepared for the workplace.

The Social Mobility Pledge has been set up to highlight and address these issues in the UK and, in doing so, to level up opportunity and build a fairer society. It encourages organisations to be a force for good by putting social mobility at the heart of their purpose. By sharing their own best practice with other businesses and Universities, they are not only demonstrating their own commitment but creating a powerful shift towards purpose-led organisations.

1. "About us - Social Mobility Commission - GOV.UK." <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/social-mobility-commission/about>. Accessed 28 Nov. 2019.

2. "State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain." [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/662744/State\\_of\\_the\\_Nation\\_2017\\_-\\_Social\\_Mobility\\_in\\_Great\\_Britain.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662744/State_of_the_Nation_2017_-_Social_Mobility_in_Great_Britain.pdf). Accessed Nov. 2019.

3. <https://www.socialmobilitypledge.org/news/2019/2/2/class-diversity-at-work-worse-now-than-decades-ago>







## Coronavirus

The Office for Budget Responsibility's COVID Reference Scenario predicts that the UK economy will contract by 35 per cent, with unemployment potentially peaking at 10 million.

But, just like the issue of social immobility, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic is varied across the UK. While the 35 per cent national average figure is high in itself, it is the case that some areas – predominantly in the North West and Midlands – will see their economic growth reduce by almost 50 per cent. Only one of the twenty hardest hit areas are in the South East or London.

In addition to the significant diversity of geographic impact estimated by the Centre for Progressive Policy, the Resolution Foundation points to previous data suggesting that there is likely to be a large impact on those leaving full-time education and graduating into an economy in the midst of turmoil.

In the 2008 recession, the unemployment rate across the whole population rose from 5.2 per cent in 2007 to 8.5 per cent in 2011; for those with GCSE-equivalent qualifications the unemployment figures were 22 per cent in 2007 and 32 per cent in 2011.

Large numbers of young people are now in the jobs market having had their career pathways significantly disrupted. One in three young people under 25 are employed in the three sectors most affected by the pandemic: travel, hospitality and retail. It has the potential to leave a long-term legacy of unemployment and will certainly impact those from disadvantaged backgrounds and on low incomes the most.

Coronavirus has shone a spotlight on the inequality that already exists and data suggests that it will have a varied and profound impact across locations, ages and education levels. It is clear that the businesses and Universities which do best as we recover from the crisis will be those that have stepped up to the mark in recent months for their students, employees and communities. We need them now to lead the way in delivering solutions and sharing best practice.

## Opportunity Gap

The impact of coronavirus across locations, ages and education levels also has an impact for social mobility in the UK.

Our research shows that eight of 14 measures used to calculate social mobility will be impacted. We have used existing place-based social mobility analysis together with the predicted impact of coronavirus to examine the size of a community's 'Opportunity Gap'.

From our analysis we believe there are 16 areas in England at risk of a 'double opportunity hit'. Already amongst the worst areas for social mobility, they are going to be particularly badly hit by coronavirus. Those in the top 20 per cent, with the largest opportunity gaps, are referred to as COVID Opportunity Coldspots.

This opportunity deficit overwhelmingly impacts people from more disadvantaged communities and backgrounds and the gaps start opening up from the very start. Coronavirus widens that opportunity gap for young people at every stage of their formative years and it is becoming clear that we are at risk of a lost generation.

The impact on those in the education system in these more disadvantaged communities is obvious. Education closes the gaps between the life chances of different young people. Research by the Sutton Trust showed that underpredicting of grades of BAME and disadvantaged young people is significantly more likely to happen than for their better-off counterparts.

For those relying on part-time work that is now no longer available, University may even become unaffordable. Other students may have previously found it a struggle but nevertheless managed to balance study with wider family and financial responsibilities. Yet the sectors overwhelmingly impacted by the coronavirus lockdowns are those that young people are most likely to work in: hospitality, retail, and sports and leisure. An estimated one in three young people under the age of 25 in work have roles in these sectors. For those already on a course, it may mean they simply cannot afford to see it through to the end and drop out. This would be a dramatic backward step for social mobility.

Staffordshire University's experience, detailed in this report, demonstrates that it is possible to improve outcomes for students in an institution that is rooted in, and supportive of, the community. It shows how it is successfully addressing social mobility in Stoke-on-Trent and the surrounding areas by providing its students, many of whom are the first to go to University in their family or are from the most deprived communities, with an opportunity to graduate with a course that will broaden their horizons and facilitate a successful career.

The report contains insights into best practices which have worked well and which have had a positive outcome for students but also for the community of which they're part. It features case studies which illustrate the impact that its approach has had on individuals and analysis focusing on the community in which it is located.

The Opportunity Action Plan also considers how Staffordshire University might work with other higher education institutions with a similar levelling up culture to promote and embed best practice. It also suggests possible next steps and recommendations for further action.





# Introduction

# Best Practices

## Stoke-on-Trent: a social mobility 'cold spot'

Staffordshire University boasts a global network of more than 20,000 students. In addition to its main campus in the city of Stoke-on-Trent, it also delivers higher education courses in other parts of the UK through its Centres of Excellence in Healthcare Education in Stafford and Shrewsbury, and the Staffordshire University London Digital Institute. The University has an annual turnover of more than £120 million and its 1,500-strong workforce make it one of the largest employers in its region.

With a significant number of students studying its courses overseas, Staffordshire University is a truly global institution. However, both its educational heritage and ongoing commitment to civic responsibility are firmly rooted in Stoke-on-Trent – a city that is dealing with a broad range of social problems.

Ranked 298th out of 324 local authorities in England, Stoke-on-Trent is a social mobility 'cold spot'. Life expectancy is three years below that of England's average for men, and two years below for women. In the city's most deprived areas, it is more than nine years less for men and more than six years less for women. Nearly a quarter of the city's children (24 per cent) live in poverty, compared to a national average of less than 17 per cent. As for the local economy, a third of Stoke-on-Trent's workforce is employed in low-skilled jobs.

In terms of education – a key determinant of social mobility – participation rates in higher education are between 16 and 28 per cent in Stoke-on-Trent, compared to more than half (50.2 per cent) nationally. The percentage of Staffordshire University's undergraduates who are first-generation entrants to higher education is 60 per cent, compared to 45 per cent across the wider sector.

Against this backdrop, it is unsurprising that many of Staffordshire University's students lack social capital. Approximately 40 per cent come from areas that are among the most deprived in the country, with some having experienced challenges such as homelessness and substance misuse, while the majority of its students are among the first in their families to go to University.

## 'Place shaping' and widening participation

Many of Staffordshire University's civic activities can be framed within the context of its ambition to act as a 'place shaper' for its local communities, with a focus on early intervention.

Staffordshire University's Vice-Chancellor co-chairs the Opportunity Area Board, and the institution supports a number of partnership-based projects. 'The Big Read' initiative, for example, comprises workshops with Year 9 students, helping them to develop their creative writing skills. In partnership with local newspaper *The Sentinel* and with the help of the institution's animation department, The Big Read team produces a colourful publication every year, showcasing the work of high school pupils and University students alike.

The University also allocates significant resources to engagement within the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), with a dedicated project officer working solely on STEM outreach. In trying to reach first-generation students, it seeks to engage their parents and guardians in discussions about how their children stand to benefit from higher education apprenticeships and degrees geared towards long-term employability.

At a senior level, Staffordshire University's Strategic Change Board oversees all major transformation projects. Equality Impact Assessments represent a key focus for the group as they allow those responsible for delivering change to assess how their decisions are likely to affect different students and student groups. Will anyone be excluded by a decision and, if so, how can the project be amended to ensure inclusivity?

At ground level, the University works to widen the participation of hard-to-reach demographics, such as refugee students, mature students, students who have experienced homelessness and students who have faced addiction. Within this context, it has enjoyed significant success working with local

councils and the YMCA to identify mature students in the area who stand to benefit from its 'Step Up to Higher Education' University Foundation Certificate.

One Staffordshire University student recounted his non-traditional route into higher education to a BBC journalist in 2019. After leaving school with no qualifications and being kicked out of his family home, he joined the armed forces although it didn't work out as he'd planned. On leaving the military, he found himself homeless. He then lived in YMCA North Staffordshire for five years before obtaining his 'Step Up' certificate and enrolling on Staffordshire University's popular Esports course.

Another Staffordshire University student, whose family found themselves under significant financial pressure after she began her studies, established and now leads the Mature, Parent and Carer Students' Network.

While Staffordshire University works closely with organisations such as the YMCA to increase access to higher education, and encourages the establishment of peer-led support networks, it is also committed to ensuring that students receive additional assistance wherever possible.

## Broad-ranging support from the outset

Owing to their backgrounds, circumstances and life experiences, students often arrive at Staffordshire University with significant support requirements. For this reason, the institution's Student Services team has established a comprehensive suite of offerings focused on wellbeing, inclusion, safeguarding, residential support and more.



Students can be vulnerable in a range of areas, so the University places a strong emphasis on risk assessment and safeguarding. Members of the Student Services team are on hand to support students who are care leavers or estranged from their families, LGBTQ+ students, mature students and other groups. The University also has a team of Sexual Violence Liaison Officers who are trained to provide support for individuals who have experienced sexual assaults, either contemporaneously or historically.

Due to the makeup of its student body, Staffordshire University recognises that the Student Services role has to begin much earlier than the beginning of the academic year. On open days, for example, its nursery is open for inspection to demonstrate the support available to parent students. Mature students account for more than half (56 per cent) of the Staffordshire University population, and roughly the same proportion of those cared for by the nursery are students' children – including infants as young as three weeks old.

Like most higher education institutions, Staffordshire University previously asked all its students to enrol at the same time. This caused problems for the high proportion of students with caring responsibilities, so the University introduced 'Flying Start' – a wraparound programme that begins two-and-a-half weeks before other students enrol, allowing individuals with caring responsibilities to drop in, enrol, gain access to financial and disability support where necessary, and meet with peers whose circumstances are similar to theirs.

When students do drop out, it is often because commuting presents too great a challenge, so the University is exploring the possibility of making accommodation available for one or two days a week. Special arrangements are also in place for students with disabilities and other challenges during induction, allowing their families to stay with them on campus while they settle in.

As a signatory to the Care Leaver Covenant, Staffordshire University has put in place a comprehensive package of support for care-experienced students. For example, the cost for these individuals to travel to and from open days is covered by the institution. While at University, this group also receives financial guidance and year-round accommodation, plus hardship and summer funding as well as money to pay for their graduation and for guests to attend their ceremony.

## Driven by data

One could say that Staffordshire University is committed to providing opportunities to critique and challenge disadvantage in order to enhance social mobility. When summing up the institution's overarching philosophy, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Professor Liz Barnes CBE DL prefers to quote the late American businesswoman

Leila Janah: "Talent is equally distributed, but opportunity is not."

It is therefore vital to identify where gaps in opportunity exist. In tackling social mobility issues, Staffordshire University takes an evidence-based approach, having gathered a rich dataset. It undertakes granular analyses to empower performance monitoring at every level, and uses intersectionality to identify vulnerable student groups. It has also created a wealth of resources for its staff, including a sophisticated personal tutoring dashboard that can also be used by students to reflect on their own journeys.

## Raising aspirations

Encouraging its students to develop their confidence, resilience and expectations is central to the University's approach. Prior to the global coronavirus pandemic, students on every course were encouraged to spend time overseas, even if only for a week. Staffordshire University students, many of whom arrive without ever having had a passport, benefit from being exposed to a wider world through the institution's international placement programme.

It is also exploring the use of digital technologies to help students visualise their academic and career journeys, making it easier for them to articulate how far they have come and where they want to go.

## Creating opportunities

Historically, students at Staffordshire University tended to engage with careers advice towards the end of their studies. The institution found that many students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, felt more comfortable discussing their hopes, aspirations and problems with their peers, so it altered its one-to-one careers provision to encourage early engagement.

The University now employs 12 Career Coaches, all of whom are current students and contracted for 10 hours per week to fit around studies. Engagement rates have increased dramatically as a result.

When optional, work experience opportunities tend to be taken up by students from more affluent backgrounds, so Staffordshire University is exploring new ways to embed them within its curriculum. It hopes that by making work experience a compulsory part of the learning experience, these opportunities will benefit students from across the socioeconomic spectrum.

The University is also committed to helping students to develop knowledge and skills that may not typically be associated with their courses. Two years ago, it introduced 'Get Ahead' – a compulsory four-week programme that takes place at the end of the second semester of teaching. The initiative encourages students to undertake interdisciplinary projects that are not related to assessments, empowering them to develop supplementary skills that will prove beneficial during their future careers.

## Building networks

Staffordshire University works to create opportunities that students from other Universities and socioeconomic backgrounds may take for granted. Most of its learners, for example, do not enjoy the luxury of being able to take on unpaid internships during their holidays. Instead, many tend to be balancing their studies with demands such as work and family.

Networking is also a significant challenge. Staffordshire University students frequently lack social capital in terms of the contacts and connections that help them to get a 'foot in the door', facilitating those vital initial opportunities for work experience.

While unpaid internships are becoming increasingly frowned upon in certain sectors (the practice was once widely employed in the fashion industry, for example, but is now rare), virtually all placements in the NHS and educational sectors remain unpaid. Although Staffordshire University does offer some voluntary placements, which provide valuable opportunities for certain students, those who cannot afford to go without paid work – even if they are receiving financial support for travel and accommodation – find it difficult to engage.

In an attempt to level the playing field, Staffordshire University uses its Horizon Fund to support students who may otherwise be unable to engage in such placements. It is also working to establish professional mentoring networks by encouraging industry partners to offer guidance and expertise to small groups of students, both in person and remotely.

## Impact to date

In terms of graduate employability, Staffordshire University has achieved significant improvements during recent years, with an overall increase from 57.3 per cent in 2016 to 81.5 per cent in 2018. Its alumni now rank above the national average for sustained employment at one, three and five years after graduation. In addition, it now outperforms the sector in terms of participation rates for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, thanks to its efforts to better connect with its local communities.

Initiatives such as the University's international placement programme also appear to be paying dividends for students. For example, a quarter of the workforce at Airbus's helicopter division in Germany are Staffordshire University graduates – a statistic that is understandably a source of pride for the institution's School of Creative Arts and Engineering.

## The Civic University

The environment in which Staffordshire University operates has helped to shape an institution that prioritises place and engagement in all aspects of its educational provision. A highly vocational University with its sights set on careers of the future,

it has pioneered digital-first courses in fields such as computing, game design and esports (the first of its kind in the UK), while making significant contributions to public sector infrastructure and the foundational economy through its health and social care degrees.

As many of its students are studying computing-related subjects, it is one of the few Universities in the UK with more white male students than females. The 'typical' Staffordshire University student from these fields is young, male and often from a disadvantaged neighbourhood – and approximately 70 per cent of its computing and games students are on the autistic spectrum. Conversely, its health and social care subjects tend to attract a high proportion of mature, female commuter students.

With a view to further increasing its civic impact, the University is seeking to expand its existing teaching in business and management support. To this end, it has developed a number of projects that it intends to take forward with local businesses, engaging an estimated 1,000 of its students and graduates over the coming five years.

Everything Staffordshire University does is designed to support the long-term employability and success of its students and, in turn, the future sustainability and prosperity of its local communities.

## Connecting talent with opportunity

While the socioeconomic makeup of Stoke-on-Trent will no doubt continue to pose significant challenges, Staffordshire University is ideally positioned as a driver of social mobility both now and in the longer term. Home to a diverse student community from a broad range of backgrounds, it is an innovative, state-of-the-art institution situated in the heart of a low-skilled, low-income economy – a propitious situation for maximum impact.

Due to their relative starting points, many learners have to make significant progress during their time with Staffordshire University. While they may not all graduate with firsts and 2:1s, their achievements are perhaps best viewed within the context of the communities in which they grew up and their often-non-traditional routes into higher education.

**By identifying and bridging gaps in its students' social capital, Staffordshire University is using both homegrown and global talent to boost social mobility for its students and local communities, strengthening industries and public services in the process.**

To adapt Leila Janah's famous quote, Staffordshire University is leveraging the talent of its students, staff and key stakeholders to achieve a more even distribution of opportunity.

This is what social mobility is all about.



# Response

## to the COVID-19 Pandemic



### Transition to remote working

The challenges posed by the global coronavirus pandemic have been numerous and unprecedented. COVID-19 has changed our world.

To ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of its students, staff and local communities, Staffordshire University transitioned to remote working in March 2020. Building on its capabilities as 'The Connected University', the institution swiftly implemented cutting-edge tools and innovative ways of working to enable its academics to deliver first-class educational experiences to students through virtual platforms.

The University moved quickly to put in place a set of exceptional regulations, adopting a 'no disadvantage' approach to protect the quality and standards of its awards. Many of the assessments that would otherwise have taken place over the summer period – particularly where these were examinations, laboratory work, performances or exhibitions – were replaced with alternative assessments that could be completed online.

Recognising the importance of ensuring continuity in support during this difficult period, the University also moved its Student Services online, ensuring that students could continue to access the guidance and assistance they needed during this difficult time. In addition, the institution expanded the remit of several of its existing services in recognition of the increasingly challenging landscape in which its students found themselves.

Many of its students, for example, encountered unforeseen difficulties, so Staffordshire University extended its Student Support Fund to all students experiencing hardship due to the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 – including international, distance learning and postgraduate students.

The University also took steps to ensure that no students were disadvantaged due to access to technology, purchasing additional laptops that were loaned to individuals without the financial means to purchase the equipment required for remote learning. The Digital Services team also continued to invest in and implement the latest virtual platforms – powered by 'cloud' technology – to ensure those studying more technologically demanding subjects, such as Esports and Games Design, could continue to engage remotely.

### Accommodation support

Students who chose to vacate University-managed accommodation in the wake of Staffordshire University's transition to remote working – and in anticipation of the UK Government's introduction of national lockdown measures – received full refunds for the final term of the 2019/20 academic year.

Those who continued to live in University-managed accommodation during lockdown received a 30 per cent reduction on the standard balance of their third instalments. Care-experienced and estranged students who remained in University-managed accommodation were not required to pay the balance of their third instalments.

In conjunction with its Students' Union, Staffordshire University also engaged private landlords in its surrounding communities to ensure they were prioritising the health, safety and wellbeing of its students. Students living in private accommodation were also provided with template letters to refer to, in the event that they needed to contact landlords with rent-related queries.

During the first week of the lockdown, the Students' Union contacted student tenants through its accommodation service, Greenpad, to find out whether they intended to remain in their residences, identify any immediate support required, and signpost relevant advice and support services. Throughout the lockdown period, the University also worked closely with its Students' Union to help students who remained in the vicinity to gain access to food, cleaning and sanitary products, as well as health and wellbeing support.

Together, Staffordshire University and its Students' Union organised events and activities for all students who remained on campus or within the vicinity of its sites, including video game tournaments, cookery demonstrations, fitness classes and a virtual 'One Staffs Café', which brought together students from across the globe.

The accommodation-related efforts of Staffordshire University and its Students' Union were recognised in a case study published by the Office for Students (OfS)<sup>4</sup>.

### Enhanced careers support

In preparation for the economic and redundancy-related challenges expected to result from the COVID-19 pandemic – as well as the increasingly competitive job market its students are likely to enter – Staffordshire University's Careers Centre set about enhancing and extending its services to support students and members of its local community in the short, medium and long term.

### Improved chat functionality

The institution enhanced its 'Unibuddy' platform to enable students, both on and off campus, to message Careers Coaches directly. Staffordshire University was the first UK University to utilise this chat functionality in a career-related setting, allowing students to receive email, SMS and instant messaging notifications as soon as they received a response. The app is also being used proactively to target underrepresented groups within the University community, ensuring strong engagement across the entire student population.

<sup>4</sup>. <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/coronavirus/coronavirus-case-studies/student-accommodation/>



## New mentoring initiatives

In summer 2020, Staffordshire University launched two mentoring programmes for its students.

The first comprised a peer-to-peer scheme to help support applicants during their transition into higher education. Individuals participating in this initiative were mentored by like-minded but more experienced students, who supported and coached them in a variety of fields associated with becoming an independent learner, empowering new starters to embrace their University journey from the outset.

The second scheme offered professional mentoring to existing students, utilising the expertise and experience of the institution's employer partners and alumni. Industry mentors worked with Staffordshire University students to help them prepare for the rapidly evolving workplace, supporting them to develop key skills, self-awareness, resilience and confidence.

## Video interviewing software

Staffordshire University intends to introduce innovative software, available to all its students, enabling them to practise articulating their skills and experience in a broad variety of video interview scenarios. Following completion of these interviews, students will receive detailed and tailored feedback to help them improve and perfect all aspects of the interview process.

The system uses AI technology to track the pace of students' speech and their use of filler words, delivering feedback and overall scores to help enhance their interview techniques.

## Collaboration with Staffordshire's Redundancy Taskforce and local businesses

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Staffordshire University joined forces with Staffordshire County Council's Redundancy Taskforce. To support its region's economic recovery, the institution spearheaded and extended numerous initiatives to help those facing redundancy to enter higher education and upskill in preparation for their future careers.

## 'Step Up to HE'

Staffordshire University's long-running 'Step Up to HE' programme takes place three times per year, helping to bridge the educational gap for individuals considering higher education.

The 'Step Up to HE' initiative is primarily designed to enable participants to develop their writing, referencing, research and critical thinking skills – all of which are critical for success at University – while helping them to build their self-confidence.

In collaboration with Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire University offered places on a complimentary course that ran during summer 2020, comprising a series of four-hour sessions that took place over the course of 10 weeks. The complimentary edition of the initiative was aimed specifically at individuals facing redundancy as a result of the coronavirus crisis.

Staffordshire County Council's Redundancy Taskforce collaborated with the University to promote the 'Step Up to HE' programme through a range of external stakeholder engagement and social media activities.

The organisations also worked together to produce a pre-recorded webinar, providing additional details of the course and how members of the local community stood to benefit. Staffordshire County Council shared the webinar with more than 300 companies in its database, all of which employed individuals affected by COVID-19.

This resource was also distributed to the Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and a range of government agencies, helping to bring together the Taskforce's business elements.

## Careers Centre community outreach

Staffordshire University's in-house Careers Centre was originally established to provide information and guidance for its students and alumni. In the wake of the pandemic the team expanded its remit by identifying individuals and businesses affected by COVID-19, offering support and guidance to those facing redundancy.

## 'Thrive and Survive'

In May 2020, Staffordshire Business School ran a project named 'Thrive and Survive', which was designed to support businesses across Staffordshire and the surrounding region.

The initiative comprised two parts: the first involved a series of webinars covering a range of topics, such as relationship building, business assessment and audience engagement; while the second featured one-to-one business support delivered by the school's experts.

The interactive 'Thrive and Survive' webinars were supplemented by a range of downloadable resources, which were made available to support participants over the long term. Following the conclusion of the series in its live environment, the Staffordshire Business School team made these recordings available to replay online.

'Thrive and Survive' webinar content has been shared with commercial stakeholders through Staffordshire's Redundancy Taskforce, and the University also plans to distribute the resources to more than 500 contacts identified by its Employer Partnerships team.

## Supporting students and businesses through virtual events

Following the escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic and Staffordshire University's transition to remote working, the decision was taken to postpone or cancel all physical events in line with official public health guidance from the UK Government. However, events form a vital part of the institution's community-engagement commitments as a Civic University, so it quickly developed a plan for virtual delivery.

## #WednesdayWisdom webinars

To ensure the University remained connected to its students, staff, stakeholders and community partners, the team created the #WednesdayWisdom webinar series. As part of this initiative, Staffordshire University academics presented on matters related to the COVID-19 pandemic – the aim being to provide their audience with tools and advice that would enable them to deal with this rapidly evolving and difficult situation.

Topics covered as part of this initiative included 'Keeping the Faith', 'Positive Parenting in a Pandemic', 'A Greener Future?', 'Film on Demand', 'Working in the Cloud: the Necessity of Digital Transformation', 'Get in the Game', 'Business Start-up and Growth Essentials', and 'Leading Emergent Change'.

The #WednesdayWisdom webinar series ran weekly throughout May and June 2020, attracting an audience from across the UK. Speakers were invited to participate in interviews and promote their sessions on BBC Radio Stoke and Cross Rhythms Radio. The University also secured weekly slots in the Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Stoke and Staffordshire Growth Hub newsletters, both of which shared details of the webinars on their social media channels.

Taken in combination, Staffordshire University's #WednesdayWisdom webinars achieved organic reach of more than 125,000 through Facebook alone.

## GradEX20 and the Art and Design Degree Show

GradEX and the Art and Design Degree Show, co-located events hosted annually by Staffordshire University, offer an opportunity for the institution's final-year students to exhibit their exciting and innovative work to a diverse audience.

These events give Staffordshire University's final-year students the chance to explain their work to prospective employers, playing an important and formative role in their ongoing development. Every year, the interactions that take place between students and key industry figures result in job offers and career opportunities for the institution's future graduates.

However, to protect the safety and wellbeing of its students, staff and local communities, Staffordshire University took the difficult decision to cancel the physical editions of both exhibitions in 2020. Nevertheless, in recognition of the extent to which these events benefit students and external partners alike, the University developed an innovative online platform to enable students to showcase their talents and expertise in a virtual space, while forging connections with prospective employers.

The institution also seized the opportunity to enhance the functionality of its portal, allowing students to showcase their project work alongside links to their LinkedIn profiles, portfolios and CVs. The improved portal was made accessible to the University's industry partners from June 2020 and remained online throughout the summer months.

As of August 2020, GradEX20's online portal had garnered 44,545 unique pageviews and 127,652 total pageviews. These figures represent 173 per cent and 193 per cent year-on-year increases, respectively, compared to 2019.







## Imagining a world beyond COVID-19

In June 2020, students from the institution's School of Creative Arts and Engineering took part in a virtual five-day challenge set by Andrew Lawrence, Executive Creative Director at global brand consultancy Elmwood, and Visiting Professor in Innovation at Staffordshire University.

Students were tasked with imagining a world beyond COVID-19 by envisioning a design, brand, product or piece of innovation that didn't exist before the pandemic.

The competition connected students from both Engineering and Design courses, as part of the University's 'Get Ahead' programme and the 'Creative Connection' projects, which is funded by the Royal Academy of Engineering (RAEng). Supported by online tutorials created by Professor Lawrence and Professor Jess Power, Associate Dean at the School of Creative Arts and Engineering, student groups from different subject areas worked together virtually using Microsoft Teams.

Prizes of £300, £200 and £100 were awarded to the first, second and third-place concepts, respectively. Money-management app 'Florin', which is named after the old 'two-bob bit' that was replaced by the ten pence piece and designed to help the elderly, secured first prize.

## International tech company champions student designers

In June 2020, 16 students from Staffordshire University's School of Creative Arts and Engineering took part in a five-day virtual design challenge set by Swedish technology company, VX Fiber. As with the initiative spearheaded by Professors Lawrence and Power, this competition brought together students from both Engineering and Design courses as part of

Staffordshire University's 'Get Ahead' and 'Creative Connection' projects.

As part of the competition, students were tasked with creating street-side furniture to house fibre-optic cables, which would complement or even improve their surroundings.

VX Fiber, which is working closely with Stoke-on-Trent City Council to roll out full fibre-gigabit connectivity to homes and businesses across the city, was so impressed with the creative confidence and quality of the submissions produced by Staffordshire University students that it plans to work with the institution to bring a combination of their concepts to market.

## Get into Staffs: Digital Art and Animation challenges

In June 2020, Staffordshire University's School of Computing and Digital Technologies launched a competition aimed at college students and University applicants. Participants were tasked with solving briefs relating to Animation, Games Art, Concept Art for Games and Film, and CGI and Visual Effects.

Each brief was designed to reflect the type of work undertaken by students studying these courses at Staffordshire University. The technology required to complete the challenges was freely available online, and the team provided links to resources to help those who had not used this type of software before. A series of virtual workshops was also arranged to give participants some ideas that they could apply to their own projects.

Staffordshire University's School of Computing and Digital Technologies allocated prize money to winners in each of the four categories, totalling £1,000.

## GVE Summer Showcase 2020

In June 2020, Staffordshire University's Department of Games and Visual Effects launched the GVE Summer Showcase 2020, a virtual exhibition open to all students at all levels, offering final-year students an opportunity to exhibit their work publicly.

Part of the University's 'Get Ahead' initiative, the online exhibition secured industry collaboration and engagement from some of the biggest names in the games industry, including Codemasters, Playground Games, Ubisoft UK, Sumo Digital, Creative Assembly, Rebellion, Radical Forge, Flix Interactive, Second Home Studios, Hipster Films, Bigtooth Studios, and Mackinnon & Saunders.

The industry judges selected first-, second- and third-place entries from 13 categories, which included Animation; Character Art; Concept Art; Games Culture and Production; Environment Art; Games Animation; Games Programming; Level Design; Vehicle Art; VFX; Weapon Art; Games Design; and Game of the Year.

## 2020/21 academic year

### Blended teaching and learning

Staffordshire University is continuing to do everything in its power to support students through the COVID-19 pandemic, both now and in the future. Blended teaching and learning lie at the heart of its approach.

In line with the latest guidance from the UK Government and other relevant authorities, the institution is using a combination of virtual and face-to-face delivery to provide the best possible student experience within a COVID-secure environment.

Staffordshire University commenced its blended delivery model in September 2020. Social distancing measures have been introduced across its campuses to facilitate a safe learning environment during all face-to-face sessions and in-person activities.

The institution's blended approach means that students are benefiting from face-to-face teaching on campus in smaller groups, supported by online sessions for larger cohorts. All students have classes delivered on campus through a more intensive study pattern, receiving regular academic mentoring – plus access to support services across the University – either online or face-to-face where necessary.

### Welcome and development activities

Given the unprecedented circumstances facing its students – both new and returning – Staffordshire University took the decision that the traditional 'Welcome Week' period would not be sufficient in the 2020/21 academic year. Students therefore benefited from an enhanced and extended period of welcome and development activities from September 2020.

This period included a range of activities and workshops that went beyond the core curriculum, as well as opportunities for returning students to cover any essential materials missed during the period of remote learning.



### COVID-secure accommodation

Staffordshire University is committed to creating a safe home environment and a sense of belonging for students living in halls. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of its latest student intake, the institution made a number of changes to ensure that University-managed accommodation is COVID-secure, while remaining a brilliant and friendly space to live, work, relax and socialise.

The measures taken included reducing the occupancy levels in existing student flats and houses, so that students have plenty of room and the potential risk of infection is reduced. Staffordshire University also allocated accommodation to students undertaking similar courses to create protected households – or 'bubbles' – helping to foster a supportive living, learning community.

For students living in private accommodation, the University continues to work closely with its Students' Union to liaise with private landlords, reminding them of their responsibility to its students. Students who encounter difficulties with private landlords are able to contact the Students' Union's Advice Centre for support, guidance and advocacy whenever necessary.

### Social life

The relationships formed between students form a vital part of the University experience, which is why the institution and Students' Union are working closely to deliver COVID-secure social events throughout the 2020/21 academic year and beyond. Students are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities, in line with the latest official public health guidance.

### Student support

The same broad range of student support services are available to all Staffordshire University students, with even greater flexibility than ever before. These services include academic support and guidance, international student support, advice on health and wellbeing, advice on finances and more. Student support is being offered both remotely, as well as in person where necessary.





# Insights and Assessment

Staffordshire University demonstrates an ambitious commitment to social mobility and social inclusion. It has recognised the nature of the social and economic difficulties facing the population in its own geographical area and has taken practical steps to ensure that all parts of the demographic can access the benefits of higher education. It understands that for each and every one of its students, the chance to study at the University represents the opportunity to make something of their lives and progress beyond the stage their parents achieved. It offers true levelling up to them and to their communities.



It has been able to do this successfully by gaining an understanding of the obstacles and difficulties facing particular sections of the population and how those might hold people back from taking advantage of higher education opportunities. It is effective in reaching out in the first place to groups who might never have considered University – those with disabilities, refugees, those with a history of addiction, care leavers – and then targets practical and sensitive solutions to help address each group's circumstances.

Those students, often first-generation and from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, are made to feel part of an institution which works for them. Staffordshire University has not only devised inventive and creative structures and procedures that help them settle in and progress; it also offers a supportive and welcoming culture and environment to facilitate access into what might otherwise be a daunting and unfamiliar world of academia for vulnerable groups.

Staffordshire University continues to put their students first as they embark on their chosen courses. It employs a strong evidence-based approach that can identify where gaps exist relating to students' performance and, for vulnerable groups, monitoring and mentoring them as they progress.

It is refreshing to see that, in doing this, Staffordshire University has maintained an ethos of aspiration and ambition for its students, so that while it eases entry into, and survival in, higher education for them, it ensures that the content of its courses are of real value to the individual and to employers. This is particularly true of its computing, game design and digital courses where they are, in fact, ahead of the curve compared to many other Universities. They attract students who may have thought that a University course was not for them and their success highlights how previously held opinions that certain types of courses have little value when offered at University do not hold true anymore. Employers in successful industries want these skills and Staffordshire University equips their students with the tools to succeed. As AI replaces more of the lower-skilled jobs, it will be increasingly important to train higher-skilled workers.

Staffordshire University employs 12 current students as Career Coaches, each working 10 hours a week to encourage early engagement with new students

Graduate employability has increased from 57.3 per cent in 2016 to 81.5 per cent in 2018

It is also striking that, although Staffordshire University is enjoying considerable success in its championing of social mobility, it is not complacent. It seeks to make continuous improvements in its culture, policies and structures, using its own strong evidence base as a motivation for action. It acknowledges that it would like to improve the representation of BAME students which, although good on a local basis, has some way to go before achieving the national benchmark. It is also considering how it might retain a higher proportion of graduates in the region. At the moment just 20 per cent of their graduates remain in Stoke-on-Trent and the surrounding areas, compared to the national figure of 60 per cent.

Staffordshire University recognises the ability of a University to transform a person's life, and not just at the school-leaving stage. It reaches out to engage those least likely to have the opportunity to change their lives and sustains them through their

University career in a way that will best equip them for the future. It acknowledges that the skills and experience students acquire there are not always the traditional ones but are, nevertheless, crucial for their employability and their life chances.

These students have often overcome huge barriers to get to University in the first place, and many of them continue to experience significant challenges throughout their time there. However, for a prospective employer they are able to bring resilience and maturity to a job which can be far more valuable and relevant than a first class degree.

It will always be an easier option to attract students who would do well whichever University they attend. Staffordshire University aims for those students for whom going to University will have the biggest impact. The 2020 Social Mobility Commission report, *Monitoring Social Mobility*, acknowledges that a large part of society is still consistently being left behind. Education is the great leveller and it sees that there is a strong correlation between success in the education system and success in other aspects of life, including economic ones.

It also highlighted that the Opportunity Area approach has been the only place-based social mobility strategy introduced by the Government. It has been effective because it is successful in bringing together all stakeholders at a local level to deliver what that particular area needs. As one of the local partners, Staffordshire University has been integral to the Opportunity Area in Stoke-on-Trent and it should continue to use its expertise and experience to drive change in the region.

It is therefore even more crucial that Universities play their part as the country recovers from the impact of COVID-19. That means ensuring that they continue to engage with the hardest-to-reach groups so that they feel University is for them, to modernise their skills base while they are undergraduates and to use University as a launchpad for rewarding and prosperous careers which, in turn, will boost the economy at a local and national level.

Staffordshire University has demonstrated what such an institution can provide. It is not necessarily a first class degree, nor a traditional degree subject, but it is academic capital, capability capital and connections. While there is no straightforward way of measuring the added value that this delivers, it is clear that, in the absence of the University, many in the Staffordshire area simply would not otherwise have the chance to transform their lives so they, collectively, raise the bar for everyone.

Staffordshire University should use its experience to work with other like-minded Universities to promote the culture of a 'levelled-up University' to deliver real social and economic benefits to their students and their communities.



# Recommendation



## Game Changer

The Social Mobility Pledge is working with over 500 businesses and Universities to ensure that, no matter where they are born or what their start in life, everyone has access to opportunities. It is encouraging them to adopt a purpose-led approach, with determined leadership and a strategic approach to achieve that for the long term. In particular, it is challenging Universities to become levelled up Universities which put social mobility at the heart of everything they do.

This report demonstrates that Staffordshire University's approach to improving outcomes for those from the most deprived communities and with the most complex backgrounds is hugely successful. It supports those people who experience early barriers to education, or in life more generally, to overcome them so they can access university and a degree. It develops the talent that undoubtedly exists in those communities and equips its graduates with the skills and expertise that employers need, in some of the fastest growing sectors of industry.

This approach will be even more crucial in the wake of the pandemic. Working with the Social Mobility Pledge, Staffordshire University should focus on a 'Game Changer' campaign as part of its commitment to the national recovery. We recommend it should focus on the following three key priorities – leadership, impact and advocacy – to ensure that it continues to make a real difference to people's lives.

### Leadership

This is a unique time for Universities to lead on the higher education agenda. In this Action Plan, Staffordshire University has set out how it is already leading the way in boosting opportunities, providing real social capital for its students

and for its local communities. It should continue to build on the best practice illustrated in this report, enabling those furthest away from opportunity to have meaningful and positive access to it. With its clear understanding of the social and economic issues which affect people's ability to go to University and the creative and flexible solutions that it provides in response, it can demonstrate leadership across the higher education sector on the social mobility agenda.

### Impact

Staffordshire University has shown that the chance to go to University can change people's lives. It should continue to engage with those groups that are the hardest to reach so that they are well informed about how to get to University, life as a student and the opportunities that can open up to them as a graduate.

The Social Mobility Pledge has provided an overview and analysis of the key characteristics of life outcomes across some of the key areas around the University, as shown in the Appendix. It should consider where the opportunity gaps are to inform future community engagement.

This could include:

- increasing BAME participation
- encouraging a higher proportion of graduates to remain in the area

Educating graduates with the relevant skills and expertise that employers want, in sectors which are growing, will bring benefits to the individual, who will have the chance of a better paid and more

rewarding career, as well as to the community, which will have a pool of talent that businesses can draw on. This will have a positive impact on the economy at a local and national level.

### Advocacy

Finally, Staffordshire University can play a major role in the levelling up agenda in both the sector and in Parliament, highlighting the impact of the campaign and helping determine and shape the HE agenda and Government policy.

In particular, the University is in a position to advocate for the Opportunity Area model to drive change in areas of the most entrenched disadvantage. As a local partner in the Opportunity Area in Stoke-on-Trent, it can advocate for an expansion of the scheme to extend to more left-behind communities across the country where other Universities could benefit from the effective partnerships that result.

The University is also well placed to encourage other Universities to consider the introduction of non-traditional courses which will provide skilled graduates in evolving industries as it has done with its computing, game design and digital courses.

The role of Universities in the country's recovery from coronavirus will be crucial. They can deliver highly educated, highly skilled young people back into their communities who will in turn prosper from having the ideas, innovation and skills that they will bring with them. Staffordshire University is already helping to deliver this in its own region and the 'Game Changer' campaign will enable it to continue to develop its work further and to encourage other Universities to adopt a similar model.





# Data Analysis

## Staffordshire University Data Analysis - Part A - Social Mobility

In this section of the Opportunity Action Plan we analyse the challenges those individual communities face in terms of social mobility and the impact of COVID-19. The combined and interlinking impact of those two elements enable us to quantify a community's "Opportunity Gap". For the purposes of this analysis we have focused on Stoke-on-Trent Central which is the location for the main campus, the adjoining constituencies of North and South Stoke-on-Trent and the commuter areas of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stafford.

Social mobility research conducted in 323 local authorities in England and Wales shows the top 20 per cent of local authorities are labelled as 'hot spots', areas where social mobility is good, and the bottom 20 per cent of local authorities

are identified as 'cold spots', areas where social mobility is poor.

It is important to note that just because an area is designated a hot or cold spot based on the current rankings, that is not the complete picture. An area which is a social mobility hot spots for most indices can also mask sharp decline in social mobility at different life stages such as early years.

These complexities highlight that social mobility cannot be tackled with a 'one-size-fits-all-approach'. Therefore, a thorough understanding of the challenges those individual communities face is vital and we assess social mobility below through those life stages.

Office	Constituency	Ranking out of 533 constituencies
Main Campus	Stoke-on-Trent Central	424
	Stoke-on-Trent North	388
	Stoke-on-Trent South	262
Commuter Area	Newcastle-under-Lyme	171
	Stafford	327



# Stoke-on-Trent Central

Stoke-on-Trent Central		
Early Years 283	Percentage of Nursery providers rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	93
	Percentage of children eligible for free school meals (FSM) achieving a good level of development	52

Stoke-on-Trent Central		
Schools 501	Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a primary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	78
	Percentage of children eligible for FSM achieving at least the expected level in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2	35
	Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a secondary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	14
	Average Attainment 8 score for pupils eligible for FSM	36

Stoke-on-Trent Central		
Youth 332	Percentage of young people eligible for FSM that are not in education, employment or training (positive destination) after completing KS4	86
	Average points score per entry for young people eligible for FSM at age 15 taking A-level or equivalent qualification	28
	Percentage of young people eligible for FSM at age 15 achieving two or more A-Levels or equivalent by the age of 19	25

Stoke-on-Trent Central		
Adulthood 245	Median weekly salary of all employees who live in the local area	387
	Average house prices compared to median annual salary of employees who live in the local area	4
	Percentage of people that live in the local area who are in managerial and professional occupations	24
	Percentage of jobs that are paid less than the applicable Living Wage Foundation living wage	20
	Percentage of families with children who own their home	59

# Stoke-on-Trent Central Analysis

Staffordshire University has its main campus in the Stoke-on-Trent Central constituency. The area ranks 424/533 in terms of social mobility in English constituencies, and the entire Stoke-on-Trent area is a social mobility ‘cold spot’, meaning it is in the bottom 20 per cent of local authorities for social mobility. In January 2017 Justine Greening, as Education Secretary, announced that the Opportunity Area scheme would be brought to Stoke-on-Trent.

## Early Years

Stoke-on-Trent Central is ranked 283 out of 533 at the Early Years life stages. Ninety-three per cent of nurseries available in the area are rated as good or outstanding, which matches the national average. Fifty-two per cent of children eligible for free school meals achieve a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, slightly less than the national average of 53 per cent.

## School Years

The School life stage is the area in which Stoke-on-Trent Central performs most poorly, being ranked 501st out of 533. In terms of attainment, only 35 per cent” of FSM-eligible children achieve the expected level in reading, writing and maths by the end of Key Stage 2. Only 14 per cent of FSM-eligible children attend a secondary school rated good or outstanding, far behind the national average of 72 per cent” and making Stoke-on-Trent Central the sixth worst area in England on this metric. This is reflected in the average Attainment 8 score for FSM eligible pupils being just 36 in Stoke-on-Trent Central, compared to 39 across England.

## Youth

At the Youth stage, Stoke-on-Trent Central ranks 332 out of 533. Eighty-six per cent of FSM eligible children go on to a ‘positive destination’ after Key Stage 4, meaning they find further education, or go into employment or training. This is slightly below the England average of 88 per cent. Although just 25 per cent of FSM-eligible young people achieve two or more A levels or equivalent, worse than the average of 34 per cent, those that do take A levels or equivalent end up with 28 points, higher than the average of 26.



## Adulthood

Stoke-on-Trent Central scores most highly in the Adulthood stage, although it is still only just outside the bottom half, at 245th out of 533. It scores particularly poorly on average earnings, which at £387 a week is much lower than the English average of £443. Another poor area is the number of managerial and professional jobs: just 24 per cent of jobs in Stoke-on-Trent Central are in those occupations, compared to 30 per cent nationally. Eighty per cent of jobs pay at or above the living wage, higher than the 75 per cent nationally, but despite this and a lower than average cost of housing (houses are four times the annual salary instead of the national eight times), home ownership is at just 59 per cent, ranking Stoke-on-Trent Central as the 412th worst area for this.



## Stoke-on-Trent North

Early Years 100	Stoke-on-Trent North	
	Percentage of Nursery providers rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	96
	Percentage of children eligible for free school meals (FSM) achieving a good level of development	55

Schools 342	Stoke-on-Trent North	
	Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a primary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	84
	Percentage of children eligible for FSM achieving at least the expected level in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2	35
	Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a secondary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	76
	Average Attainment 8 score for pupils eligible for FSM	36

Youth 442	Stoke-on-Trent North	
	Percentage of young people eligible for FSM that are not in education, employment or training (positive destination) after completing KS4	91
	Average points score per entry for young people eligible for FSM at age 15 taking A-level or equivalent qualification	19
	Percentage of young people eligible for FSM at age 15 achieving two or more A-Levels or equivalent by the age of 19	26

Adulthood 508	Stoke-on-Trent North	
	Median weekly salary of all employees who live in the local area	369
	Average house prices compared to median annual salary of employees who live in the local area	4
	Percentage of people that live in the local area who are in managerial and professional occupations	15
	Percentage of jobs that are paid less than the applicable Living Wage Foundation living wage	36
	Percentage of families with children who own their home	62

## Stoke-on-Trent North Analysis

Stoke-on-Trent North is one of the neighbouring constituencies to Staffordshire University’s campus, located in Stoke-on-Trent Central. Stoke-on-Trent North scores slightly higher than Stoke-on-Trent Central in terms of the Social Mobility Index, although it still does not score highly. At 388 out of 533, it is still firmly in the bottom 50 per cent.

### Early Years

At 100 out of 533, Stoke-on-Trent North scores its highest ranking in the Early Years life stage. Ninety-six per cent of nurseries are ranked good or outstanding, beating the national average of 93 per cent, and 55 per cent of FSM-eligible children achieve a good level of development, slightly higher than the 53 per cent national average.

### School Years

Stoke-on-Trent North scores more poorly at the School Years stage, beginning a downward trend that is replicated at every life stage. While 84 per cent of FSM-eligible children are in a good or outstanding primary school, slightly higher than the average of 83 per cent, just 35 per cent of children eligible for free schools achieve the expected level in reading, writing, and maths by the end of KS2. The same pattern is replicated at secondary school, where despite 76 per cent of FSM-eligible children attending a good or outstanding secondary school in Stoke-on-Trent north, compared to 72 per cent nationally), the Attainment 8 score is 36, lower than the national average of 39.

### Youth

At the Youth stage, Stoke-on-Trent North falls again becoming the 44th constituency. However, the area reports a high level of FSM-eligible children finding a positive destination after Key Stage 4, at 91 per cent, higher than the national average of 88 per cent. On this metric, it is ranked in the top 100 constituencies. Unfortunately, the area performs poorly on the other measures at this stage: just 26 per cent of FSM-eligible children achieve two or more A levels or equivalent by age 19, and the average points score per entry is just 19, making it the 12th worst area in England on this metric.

### Adulthood

Stoke-on-Trent North records its worst performance in the Adulthood stage, where at 508th out of 533 it is the 25th worst area in England. Similarly to other areas in the city, a lower than normal housing affordability does not translate into higher home ownership, which at 62 per cent places Stoke-on-Trent North as the 380th constituency for this metric. Just 15 per cent of jobs are managerial or professional, half the national average: which makes Stoke-on-Trent North the second worst area in England for this. Average earnings are £369 weekly, much lower than the English average of £443. Thirty-six per cent of jobs pay below the real living wage, slightly higher than the average of 34 per cent.





Stoke-on-Trent South

Early Years 92	Stoke-on-Trent South	
	Percentage of Nursery providers rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	94
	Percentage of children eligible for free school meals (FSM) achieving a good level of development	59

Schools 454	Stoke-on-Trent South	
	Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a primary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	77
	Percentage of children eligible for FSM achieving at least the expected level in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2	35
	Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a secondary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	41
	Average Attainment 8 score for pupils eligible for FSM	38

Youth 185	Stoke-on-Trent South	
	Percentage of young people eligible for FSM that are not in education, employment or training (positive destination) after completing KS4	89
	Average points score per entry for young people eligible for FSM at age 15 taking A-level or equivalent qualification	31
	Percentage of young people eligible for FSM at age 15 achieving two or more A-Levels or equivalent by the age of 19	24

Adulthood 408	Stoke-on-Trent South	
	Median weekly salary of all employees who live in the local area	393
	Average house prices compared to median annual salary of employees who live in the local area	5
	Percentage of people that live in the local area who are in managerial and professional occupations	20
	Percentage of jobs that are paid less than the applicable Living Wage Foundation living wage	30
	Percentage of families with children who own their home	66

Stoke-on-Trent South Analysis

The highest ranked of the three Stoke-on-Trent constituencies, Stoke-on-Trent South is the 262nd constituency in England for social mobility. Although it performs relatively well on some metrics, it is particularly poor at the schools and adulthood life stages.

Early Years

At the Early Years life stage, we see a high level of good or outstanding nursery availability in Stoke-on-Trent South, matched by good levels of attainment. All in all, Stoke-on-Trent South is 92nd out of 533 constituencies for this life stage. Ninety-four per cent of providers are ranked good or outstanding by Ofsted, beating the national average of 93 per cent. This does result in higher attainment at the end of the Early Years foundation stage where 59 per cent of FSM-eligible children achieve a good level of development, better than the national average of 53 per cent.

School Years

The School life stage is where Stoke-on-Trent South performs worst; in fact, it is in the bottom 15 per cent of constituencies in England for this stage at 454th out of 533. Just 77 per cent of FSM-eligible children attend a primary school rated good or outstanding, a trend that continues into secondary school where only 41 per cent of FSM-eligible children attend a good or outstanding school. The national averages are 83 per cent and 72 per cent respectively. The lesser proportion of attendance at good or outstanding schools results in poorer attainment levels, with only 35 per cent of FSM-eligible children attaining the expected level of reading, writing and maths by the end of Key Stage 2, although this improves somewhat at secondary school where the average Attainment 8 score for that same cohort is 38, only slightly behind the average of 39 nationally.



Youth

Stoke-on-Trent South significantly higher at the Youth stage, its ranking of 185th out of 533 only just outside the top third of constituencies. Eighty-nine per cent of FSM-eligible children find themselves in a positive destination after Key Stage 4; across England that figure is slightly lower at 88 per cent. Only 24 per cent of young people who are FSM-eligible will achieve two or more A Levels or equivalent by the age of 19, worse than the English average of 34 per cent; but those that do go into further education have an average points score per entry of 31 compared to 26 if they were studying elsewhere in England.

Adulthood

At the Adulthood life stage, Stoke-on-Trent South again performs poorly, ranking at 408th out of 533 constituencies in England. In this life stage, the area records its worst measure in any life stage, with just 20 per cent of people in managerial or professional jobs, the 42nd worst constituency for this measure. Average earnings are £393 a week, worse than the average of £443, perhaps related to a greater proportion of jobs that do not pay at least the real living wage. In Stoke-on-Trent, 30 per cent of jobs pay less than the living wage, whereas in England only 25 per cent of jobs pay less. Unlike other areas of Stoke, a higher housing affordability (house prices are five times the annual salary compared to eight times nationally) does translate into slightly higher than average home ownership which stands at 66 per cent compared to 65 per cent nationally.



## Newcastle-under-Lyme

Newcastle-under-Lyme		
Early Years 162	Percentage of Nursery providers rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	93
	Percentage of children eligible for free school meals (FSM) achieving a good level of development	56

Newcastle-under-Lyme		
Schools 339	Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a primary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	79
	Percentage of children eligible for FSM achieving at least the expected level in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2	37
	Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a secondary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	84
	Average Attainment 8 score for pupils eligible for FSM	35

Newcastle-under-Lyme		
Youth 87	Percentage of young people eligible for FSM that are not in education, employment or training (positive destination) after completing KS4	91
	Average points score per entry for young people eligible for FSM at age 15 taking A-level or equivalent qualification	29
	Percentage of young people eligible for FSM at age 15 achieving two or more A-Levels or equivalent by the age of 19	35

Newcastle-under-Lyme		
Adulthood 306	Median weekly salary of all employees who live in the local area	415
	Average house prices compared to median annual salary of employees who live in the local area	5
	Percentage of people that live in the local area who are in managerial and professional occupations	22
	Percentage of jobs that are paid less than the applicable Living Wage Foundation living wage	29
	Percentage of families with children who own their home	69

## Newcastle-under-Lyme Analysis

Two of Newcastle-under-Lyme's indicators are in the top 100 rankings and two are in the bottom 100. Across all life stages, Newcastle-under-Lyme ranks 171st out of 533 on the Social Mobility Index. It is in the top third of constituencies.



### School Years

Ranking 339th out of 533 at the School Years stage, Newcastle-under-Lyme is in the bottom 40 per cent of constituencies. Seventy-nine per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals attend good or outstanding primary schools, with 37 per cent of them achieving the expected level in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2, the national average being 39 per cent. At secondary level, attendance of FSM-eligible pupils at good or outstanding schools is 84 per cent, making Newcastle-under-Lyme the 184th best constituency, but an average Attainment 8 score of 35 places Newcastle-under-Lyme at 438th out of 533.



### Youth

The Youth stage sees Newcastle-under-Lyme rise to its best ranking, at 87th out of 533. Ninety-one per cent of young people who were FSM-eligible find themselves in a positive destination (defined as being in education, employment or training) after completing Key Stage 4. Thirty-five per cent of FSM-eligible young people will achieve two or more A level or equivalent qualifications by age 19, and those that do take A levels will have an average points score per entry of 29. Newcastle-under-Lyme ranks at 179th and 104th for these measures respectively.

### Adulthood

At the Adulthood life stage, Newcastle-under-Lyme ranks at 306th out of 533. However, 29 per cent of jobs pay less than the real living wage, and average earnings are £415 weekly – the English average is £443. Housing is five times the annualised salary, the 87th cheapest area in England (where houses are eight times the annualised salary), and home ownership is higher than average at 69 per cent. The percentage of jobs in the area that are managerial and professional stands at 22 per cent, ranking Newcastle-under-Lyme at 84th worst for this measure.

### Early Years

At the early years life stage, Newcastle-under-Lyme performs well at 162/533. Ninety-three per cent of nurseries in the constituency are rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted, matching the national average. In the other measure for this life stage, the percentage of children eligible for free school meals achieving a 'good level of development', Newcastle-under-Lyme is ranked 139/533; 56 per cent of those children achieve a good level compared to the national average of 53 per cent.



# Stafford

		Stafford
Early Years 70	Percentage of Nursery providers rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	97
	Percentage of children eligible for free school meals (FSM) achieving a good level of development	55

		Stafford
Schools 510	Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a primary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	45
	Percentage of children eligible for FSM achieving at least the expected level in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2	30
	Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a secondary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	56
	Average Attainment 8 score for pupils eligible for FSM	38

		Stafford
Youth 361	Percentage of young people eligible for FSM that are not in education, employment or training (positive destination) after completing KS4	91
	Average points score per entry for young people eligible for FSM at age 15 taking A-level or equivalent qualification	22
	Percentage of young people eligible for FSM at age 15 achieving two or more A-Levels or equivalent by the age of 19	26

		Stafford
Adulthood 180	Median weekly salary of all employees who live in the local area	405
	Average house prices compared to median annual salary of employees who live in the local area	6
	Percentage of people that live in the local area who are in managerial and professional occupations	29
	Percentage of jobs that are paid less than the applicable Living Wage Foundation living wage	22
	Percentage of families with children who own their home	71

# Stafford Analysis

Only one of Stafford’s indicators is ranked in the top 100, but three are in the bottom 100. Across all life stages, Stafford ranks at 327th out of 533 on the Social Mobility Index.

## Early Years

At the Early Years life stage, Stafford performs best at 70th out of 533. Ninety-seven per cent of nurseries in the constituency are rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted, much better than the national average of 93 per cent and ranking Stafford 72nd out of 533 for this measure. In the other measure for this life stage, the percentage of children eligible for free school meals achieving a ‘good level of development’, Stafford is ranked 183rd out of 533. Fifty-five per cent of those children achieve a good level compared to the national average of 53 per cent.

## Youth

The Youth stage sees Stafford rise to a ranking of 361st out of 533. Ninety-one per cent of young people who were eligible for free school meals find themselves in a positive destination (defined as being in education, employment or training) after completing Key Stage 4. Twenty-six per cent of FSM-eligible young people will achieve two or more A level or equivalent qualifications by age 19, those that do take A levels will have an average points score per entry of 22. Stafford ranks at 416th and 487th for these measures respectively.

## School Years

At the Early Years life stage, Stafford performs best at 70th out of 533. Ninety-seven per cent of nurseries in the constituency are rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted, much better than the national average of 93 per cent, ranking Stafford 72nd out of 533 for this measure. In the other measure for this life stage, the percentage of children eligible for free school meals achieving a ‘good level of development’, Stafford is ranked 183rd out of 533. Fifty-five per cent of those children achieve a good level compared to the national average of 53 per cent.

## Adulthood

At the Adulthood life stage, Stafford ranks at 180th out of 533. Although 78 per cent of jobs pay at least the real living wage, average earnings are £405 weekly – the English average is £443. Housing is only six times the annualised salary, and home ownership is at 71 per cent, the 147th best area for this measure. The percentage of jobs in the area that are managerial and professional stands at 29 per cent, ranking Stafford at 294th out of 533 for this measure.





## Data Analysis - Part B - COVID-19 Impact

As well as considering the social mobility baseline for a community, our analysis also reflects the developing impact of coronavirus on opportunity. The Office for Budget Responsibility's COVID Reference Scenario predicts that the economy of the United Kingdom will contract by 35 per cent, with unemployment potentially peaking at 10 million.

But just like the issue of social immobility, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic is varied across the UK. While the 35 per cent national average figure is high in itself, it is the case that some areas – predominantly in North West England and the Midlands – will see their economic growth reduce by almost 50 per cent. Only one of the 20 hardest hit areas are in South East England or London.

In addition to the significant diversity of geographic impact estimated by the Centre for Progressive Policy, the Resolution Foundation point to previous data suggesting that there is likely to be a large impact on those leaving full-time education and graduating into an economy in the midst of turmoil. In the 2008 recession, the unemployment rate across the whole population rose from 5.2 per cent in 2007 to 8.5 per cent in 2011. For those with GCSE-equivalent qualifications, the unemployment figures were 22 per cent in 2017 and 32 per cent in 2011.

An exacerbating factor for those leaving full-time education without a degree is the varied impact of the virus on different sectors of the economy. While areas such as the financial sector will emerge from the coronavirus pandemic relatively unscathed, with a contraction of just -5 per cent, sectors like retail and hospitality, which have a higher proportion of workers who haven't completed higher education, will contract by -50 per cent and -85 per cent respectively.

The data suggests a varied and profound impact across locations, ages and education levels. This has a worrying impact for social mobility in the United Kingdom, as we predict that eight out of the 14 measures used to calculate social mobility will be impacted. We have combined existing place-based social mobility analysis with the predicted impact of coronavirus to estimate the size of communities' opportunity gaps, ranking these throughout England.

From our analysis we believe that there are 16 areas in England at risk of a 'double opportunity hit'. Already amongst the worst areas for social mobility, they are going to be particularly badly hit by coronavirus. These areas are Babergh, Bolsover, Broxtowe, Cannock Chase, Corby, Crawley, East Cambridgeshire, East Northamptonshire, Erewash, Melton, North Warwickshire, Norwich, Rutland, South Derbyshire, Tamworth and Wellingborough.

Local Authority	Opportunity Gap	Ranking
Corby	318	1
South Derbyshire	310	2
Wellingborough	308	3
Melton	306	4
North Warwickshire	296	5
Newcastle-under-Lyme	170.5	128
Stoke-on-Trent	158.5	154
Stafford	107	237

## Stoke-on-Trent's Economy

Sector	GVA (£m)	GVA (%)	Change (%)
1 Accommodation and food services	86	1.6	-85
2 Administrative and support services	210	3.9	-40
3 Agriculture, mining, electricity, gas, water and waste	231	4.3	-17
4 Construction	288	5.3	-70
5 Education	321	6.0	-90
6 Financial and insurance activities	116	2.2	-5
7 Human health and social work activities	893	16.6	+50
8 Information and communication	564	10.5	-45
9 Manufacturing	540	10.0	-55
10 Professional, scientific, and technical activities	133	2.5	-40
11 Public administration and defence	254	4.7	-20
12 Real estate activities	408	7.6	-20
13 Transportation and storage	198	3.7	-35
14 Wholesale and retail (including repair of motor vehicles)	688	12.8	-50
15 Other	462	8.6	-60

### Stoke-on-Trent's largest sectors

Sector	GVA (£m)
Human health	893
Wholesale and retail	688
Information and communication	564
Manufacturing	540
Other services	462

### Biggest impacted sectors

Sector	Predicted Decline (%)
Education	-90%
Accommodation and food	-85%
Construction	-70%
Other services	-60%
Manufacturing	-55%

Stoke-on-Trent's biggest sectors are human health and social work activities, wholesale and retail, information and communication, manufacturing, and other services. Manufacturing and other services are also in the worst impacted sectors, and human health is among the least impacted sectors. A large health sector has been noted as being able to provide a buffer to COVID-induced shocks in the economy. In Stoke-on-Trent the health sector makes up 16.6 per cent of the economy and is the single largest sector. The city's, economic growth is predicted to decline by 31 per cent, better than the 35 per cent contraction across the UK as whole.

Taking into consideration the economic reduction in Stoke-on-Trent as well as its position on the Social Mobility Index, we predict that an Opportunity Gap of 158.5 points will arise – the 154th largest in England.



## Newcastle-under-Lyme's Economy

Sector	GVA (£m)	GVA (%)	Change (%)
1 Accommodation and food services	70	3.4	-85
2 Administrative and support services	105	5.1	-40
3 Agriculture, mining, electricity, gas, water and waste	49	2.4	-17
4 Construction	118	5.7	-70
5 Education	188	9.1	-90
6 Financial and insurance activities	23	1.1	-5
7 Human health and social work activities	166	8.0	+50
8 Information and communication	71	3.4	-45
9 Manufacturing	177	8.6	-55
10 Professional, scientific, and technical activities	129	6.2	-40
11 Public administration and defence	46	2.2	-20
12 Real estate activities	256	12.4	-20
13 Transportation and storage	164	7.9	-35
14 Wholesale and retail (including repair of motor vehicles)	427	20.7	-50
15 Other	78	3.8	-60

### Newcastle-under-Lyme's largest sectors

Sector	GVA (£m)
Wholesale and retail	427
Real estate	256
Education	188
Manufacturing	177
Human health and social work	166

### Biggest impacted sectors

Sector	Predicted Decline (%)
Education	-90%
Accommodation and food	-85%
Construction	-70%
Other services	-60%
Manufacturing	-55%

Newcastle-under-Lyme's biggest sectors are wholesale and retail, real estate activities, education, manufacturing, and human health and social work. Two of these are also in the worst impacted sectors: education, which is the single worst impacted sector; and manufacturing. A large health sector has been noted as being able to provide a buffer to COVID-induced shocks in the economy. In Newcastle-under-Lyme the health sector makes up 8.0 per cent of the economy and is a top five sector. The town's economic growth is predicted to decline by 40.6 per cent, worse than the 35 per cent contraction across the UK as whole and the 93rd worst across the UK.

Taking into consideration the economic reduction in Newcastle-under-Lyme as well as its position on the Social Mobility Index, we predict that an Opportunity Gap of 170.5 points will open – the 128th worst in England.

## Stafford's Economy

Sector	GVA (£m)	GVA (%)	Change (%)
1 Accommodation and food services	81	2.6	-85
2 Administrative and support services	110	3.5	-40
3 Agriculture, mining, electricity, gas, water and waste	128	4.1	-17
4 Construction	210	6.8	-70
5 Education	138	4.5	-90
6 Financial and insurance activities	60	1.9	-5
7 Human health and social work activities	304	9.8	+50
8 Information and communication	70	2.3	-45
9 Manufacturing	409	13.2	-55
10 Professional, scientific, and technical activities	191	6.2	-40
11 Public administration and defence	311	10.0	-20
12 Real estate activities	493	15.9	-20
13 Transportation and storage	129	4.2	-35
14 Wholesale and retail (including repair of motor vehicles)	358	11.5	-50
15 Other	108	3.5	-60

### Stafford's largest sectors

Sector	GVA (£m)
Real estate	493
Manufacturing	409
Wholesale and retail	358
Public admin	311
Human health	304

### Biggest impacted sectors

Sector	Predicted Decline (%)
Education	-90%
Accommodation and food	-85%
Construction	-70%
Other services	-60%
Manufacturing	-55%

Stafford's biggest sectors are real estate, manufacturing, wholesale and retail, public administration and defence, and human health and social work. Manufacturing is among the worst impacted sectors, while three of Stafford's other biggest sectors are among the least impacted. A large health sector has been noted as being able to provide a buffer to COVID-induced shocks in the economy. In Stafford the health sector makes up 9.8 per cent of the economy and is the fifth largest sector. The town's economic growth is predicted to decline by 33.5 per cent, better than the 35 per cent contraction predicted across the UK as whole.

Taking into consideration the economic reduction in Stafford as well as its position on the Social Mobility Index, we predict that an Opportunity Gap of 107 points will arise – the 73rd least impacted in England.



