

Growing Opportunities

Stratford-on-Avon

2023-25





This plan is supported by the Stratford-on-Avon Social Inclusion Partners as represented in the organisational logos above and taken from the original statement. Reflecting the additionality that the new plan brings, the SIP will work with a number of partner organisations and groups. Many are represented here and others will be added as the action plan develops.



Member Foreword

Creating Opportunities in Stratford-on-Avon District is a long-term ambition, shared across the broad range of partner agencies, who you will see represented in this plan.

Hosted by our Social Inclusion Partnership and facilitated jointly by the District and County Councils we are aiming to build upon a rich history of partnership working within the district.

The Creating Opportunities Plan 2023-2025 is the next evolution of the Social Inclusion Statement and Action Plan 2019-24. The objectives have been updated to reflect the national and countywide approach to Levelling Up, whilst ensuring our focus in Stratford-on-Avon District is on the communities, places and people who need the most support.

The Plan complements Council and organisation plans and strategies within our partnership. Our aim is to better understand need and build resilience across our many communities within the district. We will tailor approaches to local need using insight, and ensuring that activity delivers real and lasting improvements in residents' lives.

Our pledge is that all partners will work together and achieve together for the benefit of our communities.



Councillor Susan Juned
*Leader of Stratford-on-Avon
District Council*



Councillor Liz Coles,
*Portfolio Holder, Stratford-
on-Avon District Council*

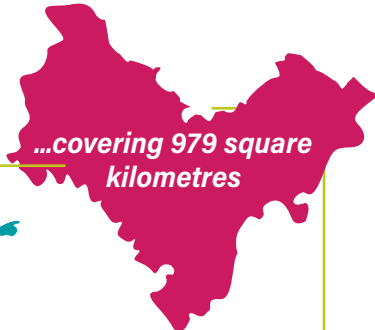


Cllr Izzi Seccombe OBE
*Leader of Warwickshire
County Council*



Introduction

Stratford-on-Avon is one of the largest districts in England...



The district boasts 6.25 million visitors a year



The district has a distinctly rural character, with over 77% of our residents living outside the main town in smaller market towns like Alcester, Shipston-on-Stour and Southam and in over 250 rural communities.

Levelling Up aims to spread opportunity more equally across the UK. Stratford-on-Avon District compares favourably with other local authorities in England, ranking 266 out of 317 in 2019, where 317 was the least deprived, according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

Locally Stratford-on-Avon District is the least deprived of the five districts in Warwickshire. However, there are areas of need in the district where residents' experience is far from equitable. We are demographically the second oldest district in the West Midlands and our predominantly rural setting can make it harder to access key services and opportunities. The population continues to grow, creating the opportunity for further community building, particularly in those areas where there are the greatest inequalities.

Creating Opportunities

Stratford-on-Avon is internationally recognised as a tourist destination and offers a great place to live and work. However, the evidence indicates that this is not the experience for all residents and the overall picture can mask challenges faced by some communities within the district. Citizens Advice South Warwickshire have seen a 26% increase in clients across the district seeking help during 2022-23 compared to the previous year.

Drawing from the evidence base we know that for Stratford-on-Avon-District:



- In 2021, **9,464 (16%)** households were estimated to be in fuel poverty measured by low-income low energy efficiency (LILEE)



- **2,544 (11%)** children under 16 were estimated to be living in low-income households in 2022



- **6,767** emergency food parcels were issued by the Trussell Trust in 2022-23



- **1,500 (1.9%)** people aged 16+ were claiming out of work benefits (Universal Credit and Job Seekers Allowance) in August 2023



- **1,541 (7%)** school children are attending a school not rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted



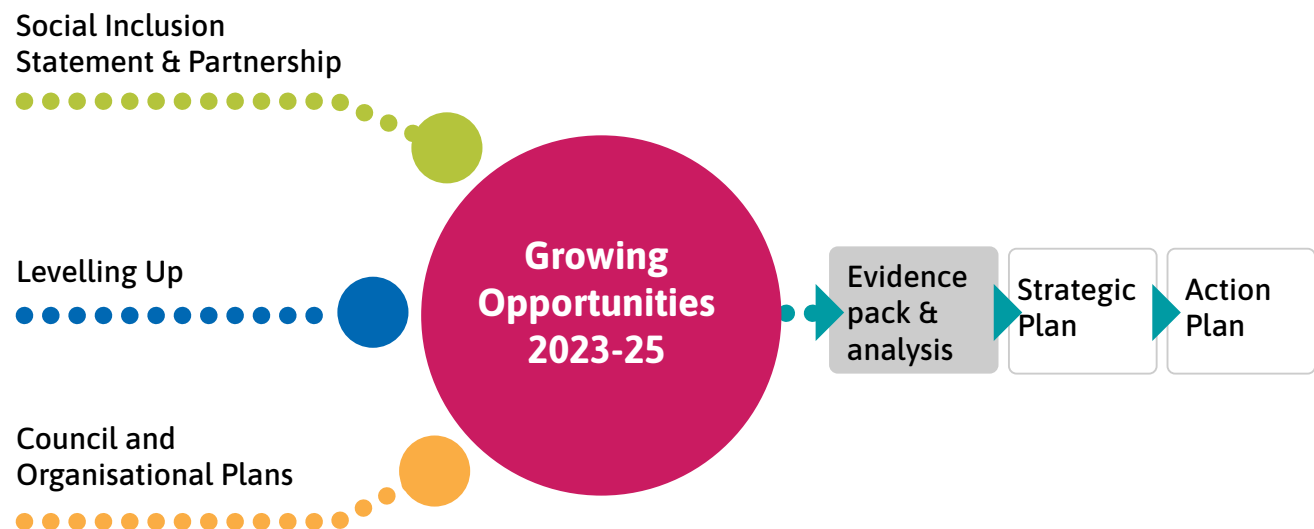
How the Plan works

This plan seeks to better understand the contributors to the inequalities and create choice and opportunity for our residents.

It aims to build upon the considerable efforts of a range of organisations that already exist within the district and target effort and activity to enhance opportunities and quality of life for everyone but especially those most disadvantaged.

The Plan has been developed through extensive research and analysis and through a process of consultation with public bodies, the Voluntary Community Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) and other community stakeholders. It identifies opportunities, sets priorities, explains why they were chosen and outlines what we intend to do about them.

This plan brings together the work of three different agendas as shown in the following diagram:



It should be read alongside the following:

1. Creating Opportunities Evidence Pack
2. Creating Opportunities Action Plan 2023/25



How did we get here?

Social Inclusion Statement 2019-24

There is no specific definition of social exclusion, however, socially excluded households are likely to be characterised by their circumstances. These include limited access to employment, education and training opportunities, poor housing or limited health services, minimal or high interest financial products and services, an un-safe neighbourhood and lower incomes.

We know socially excluded groups can face challenges as a result of ill health, low incomes, being in a minority or marginalised group, lower levels of educational attainment or perhaps worklessness and will typically be living in poverty.

The Stratford-on-Avon Social Inclusion Statement 2019-24 enabled district level, multi-agency, targeted interventions and funding in priority areas.

Our key achievements include:

- Delivering the Covid Recovery Plan
- Coordinating £250k of Cost-of-Living Interventions: Act on Energy, Food banks, Citizens Advice outreach.
- Improving the UBUS rural transport within the district
- Sourcing £900k of community funding, for district wide projects
- Delivering the Community Builder project
- Supporting projects in the new communities of Meon Vale and Upper Lighthorne
- Facilitating Older People's Forums (Senior Citizens Action Networks)

Levelling Up

Levelling Up is a national challenge made relevant for Warwickshire in the Countywide Approach to Levelling Up, published in July 2022.



Crucially, this is about joining up across agencies, targeting effort and building a supportive relationship with communities across the following twelve, national missions:

- **Pride in Place**
- **Health**
- **Wellbeing**
- **Crime**
- **Local Leadership**
- **Living Standards**
- **Digital Connectivity**
- **Transport Infrastructure**
- **Housing**
- **Education**
- **Skills**
- **Research & Development**



The Creating Opportunities Plan, alongside Stratford District's new council plan and the Countywide Approach to Levelling Up in Warwickshire will complement each other in identifying and tackling residents' most pressing needs.

The countywide approach

Warwickshire County Council have adopted a local definition that identifies four overarching themes:

- Increasing Opportunity and Social Mobility
- Reducing Inequalities (in Living Standards, Transport and Connectivity)
- Building Community Power
- Creating Sustainable Futures

For Stratford-on-Avon District, this presents an opportunity to continue and strengthen the work already started by the Social Inclusion Partnership and complements the wider aims of the district council.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council Plan

The District Council Plan's core areas of focus align closely to the themes identified in this plan and are as follows:

- Local economy
- Affordable, well built and maintained homes
- Health and wellbeing
- Climate change
- Delivery of service
- Residents and communities

Stratford-on-Avon District Council is currently developing a new council plan. This will set out priorities for the council along with key related strategies and objectives.



Partner organisations

Whilst Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwickshire County Council will facilitate the Creating Opportunities Plan, this is truly a joint effort that connects the work of all the following organisations, as members of the Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) and/or leads of relevant services:

SIP Members:

Act on Energy
Age UK Coventry & Warwickshire
Citizens' Advice South Warwickshire (CASW)
Dept. of Work & Pensions
Equality and Inclusion Partnership (EQUIP)
Orbit Housing Association
South Warwickshire & Worcestershire Mind
Spring Housing Association
Stour Health & Wellbeing Partnership
Stratford-on-Avon District Housing Forum
Stratford Foodbank
Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Stratford Town Trust
Voluntary and Community Action Stratford-on-Avon (VASA)
Warwickshire Association of Local Councils (WALC)

Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action (WCAVA)

Warwickshire County Council
(inc. Public Health, Community Safety, Transport, Economy, Education, Community Partnerships),
Warwickshire Rural Community Council (WRCC)

Wider Partners:

Alzheimer's Society
City Save
Everyone Active
Stratford Time Bank
Stratford Youth Collective
Think Active
Welcome Here
Young People First
Youth Council

In addition to the SIP, key partnerships that we will work with to support the Plan include:

- Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Board
- South Warwickshire Place Partnership
- South Warwickshire Community Safety Partnership
- Warwickshire Community Safety Agreement to strategies



Growing Opportunities – Who and Where?

Using the metrics set out by the government for each of the Levelling Up missions, we have compiled a dedicated evidence pack which summarises a rich range of data and intelligence. Along with anecdotal evidence and local experience, these have informed the Creating Opportunities priority themes, groups and communities for Stratford-on-Avon District.

Priority Themes and Groups

- Communities and residents at risk of isolation or exclusion (social, digital or physical) due to poor transport links, rurality or lack of community infrastructure and/or cohesion
- Young people & adults with or at risk of poor mental or physical health
- Older people in need of services and support
- Under-represented groups, including refugees and those defined under the nine protected characteristics in the Equalities Act 2010
- School leavers in need of work-related skills and training
- Adults and children living on a low income, using food banks, on benefits and/or receiving free school meal support

Priority Communities

The national Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMDs) measure a range of factors in small areas in England called lower-layer super output areas (LSOAs), or neighbourhoods. These have an average population of 1500 people or 650 households. The Index of Multiple Deprivation combines information from the seven domains that make up the indices to show the LSOAs where there is greatest need.

Between 2015 and 2019, 37 LSOAs in Stratford-on-Avon had become relatively more deprived. This reflects an increasing number of residents in the district who are facing challenges, and these communities will be our priority areas.

Additionally, recognising the specific needs involved, this plan will continue to work closely with new communities as they emerge, such as Upper Lighthorne, Meon Vale and Fernleigh Park.

Evidence:

ONS subnational indicators explorer website

Levelling Up Mission Statements

2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation



2019 IMD Score for the most deprived LSOAs in Stratford-on-Avon District

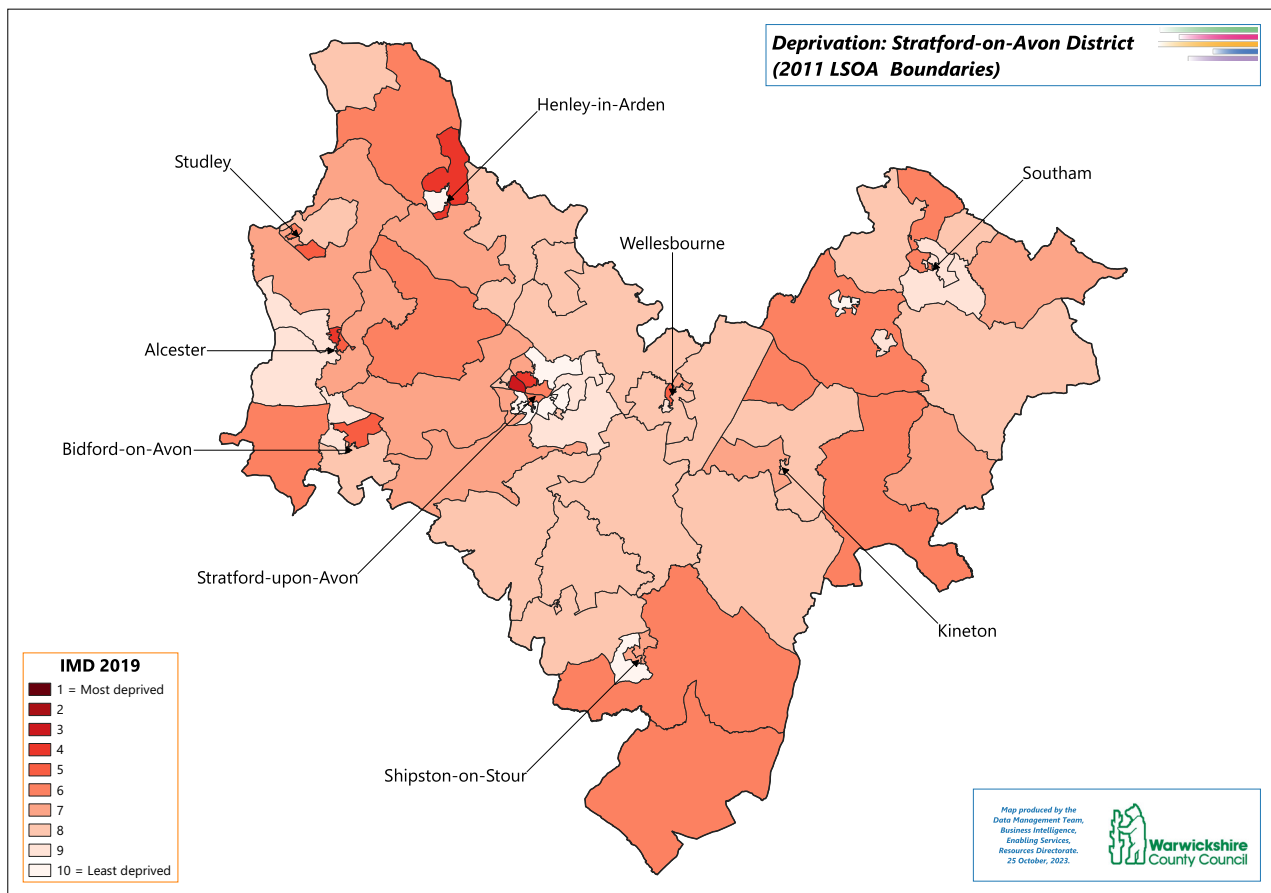
1 = the most deprived in the district based on an overall score which combines scores measured across all 7 domains of deprivation: Income/ Employment/ Education, Skills and Training/ Health and Disability/ Crime/ Barriers to Housing and Services/ Living Environment

LSOA code	2019 Ranking	2019 Overall Score	2015 Ranking	2015 Overall Score	Ranking Change
Stratford Mount Pleasant East	1	27.01	2	23.82	+1
Alcester North & Conway	2	22.79	3	22.17	+1
Maybird	3	21.68	1	24.20	-2
Henley East and Beaudesert	4	21.64	7	18.73	+3
Studley South	5	21.43	6	20.05	+1
Alcester East & Island	6	21.03	4	21.23	-2
Bidford East, Waterloo & Broom	7	20.33	5	20.58	-2
Wellesbourne West	8	19.29	9	17.35	+1
Deppers Bridge, Chester & Kings	9	17.22	18	14.82	+9
Long Compton	10	17.17	12	16.69	+2
Old Town & Town Centre South (Stratford)	11	16.84	11	16.72	-
Dunnington and Salford Priors	12	16.42	21	14.08	+9
Studley North	13	16.06	13	16.37	-
Lighthorne & Lighthorne Heath	14	15.90	8	17.38	-6
Burton Dassett	15	15.70	22	13.47	+7

Further analysis of the fifteen LSOAs will inform the action plan.



Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 Stratford-on-Avon (includes all 7 domains of deprivation). Darker areas indicate greater deprivation.





Creating Opportunities – Identifying Priority Themes for 2023-25

The Creating Opportunities Plan seeks to build on the work of the Social Inclusion Partnership.

Our Social Inclusion intervention priorities between 2019 and 2024 were:

- Improving education, employment and training; increasing income and reducing debt
- Combating social and rural isolation
- Supporting older people
- Empowering communities to harness local resources and expertise to help themselves
- Improving health and wellbeing
- Delivering Afghan Relocation & UKRS Refugee Resettlement Scheme

Since the creation of our last Social Inclusion Statement, the challenges our communities face have evolved. Nationally, we have moved through Covid-19 and are focused on supporting the most vulnerable families through the Cost-of-Living challenges.

We want to ensure our priorities reflect what our communities care about and need and in doing so bring the Social Inclusion and Levelling Up agendas together under Creating Opportunities.

Following a series of workshops held by the Social Inclusion Partnership and with input at county and district levels, the SI Priorities have been updated for 2023-25

The Creating Opportunities priorities have been aligned to the relevant Levelling Up mission, as shown on the next page.



Stratford-on-Avon Creating Opportunities Priority Themes 2023-

Reducing rural inequalities

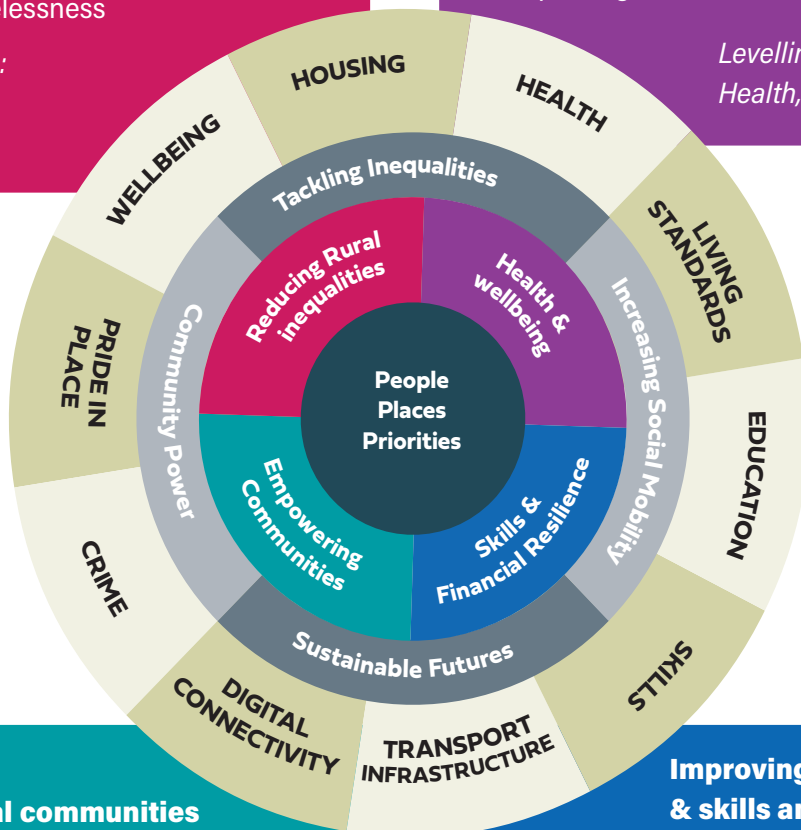
- Improving access to services
- Addressing social isolation
- Tackling digital exclusion
- Championing affordable housing and choice and tackling homelessness

*Levelling Up missions:
Housing, Transport
Infrastructure, Digital*

Improving Health & Wellbeing

- Improving services and support for older people
- Making physical activity a part of life for everyone, particularly the Inactive
- Improving mental health

*Levelling Up missions:
Health, Wellbeing*



Empowering and strengthening local communities

- Empowering local communities to help themselves
- Supporting new and existing communities to become strong and resilient
- Growing the capacity and capability of voluntary and community groups to reduce social inequalities
- Supporting displaced Afghan and Ukrainian citizens and refugees worldwide to resettle in the district
- Empowering and engaging young people in the community

Levelling Up missions: Crime, Pride in Place

Improving education & skills and increasing financial resilience

- Increasing income and access to work
- Managing the pressures of the rising cost of living
- Addressing poverty and supporting 'Just About Managing' families
- Increasing access to free school meal and additional support

Levelling Up missions: Skills, Education, Living Standards



Making it happen

Creating Opportunities is a long-term commitment that will require ongoing effort and support from our communities and the Social Inclusion Partnership.



Creating Opportunities Action Plan

This plan is supported by a dedicated and detailed action plan which should be read alongside it.

Efforts to address these objectives will be multi-agency and targeted to the priority groups and places identified above.



Related strategies

In addition to the Action Plan, the SIP will build links and connect to a range of other strategies and activities which support the priority themes, including:

- Sustainable Homes, Sustainable Communities, Housing Strategy 2021-26
- Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- South Warwickshire Economic Plan
- Warwickshire Education Strategy and Services
- Warwickshire County and Stratford-on-Avon District Local Transport Plans



Funding

This plan will be used to both source and coordinate funding to support Growing Opportunities including:

- Levelling up fund
- Shared prosperity fund
- Rural prosperity fund
- Expand VCSE funding



Tracking progress

Given the long-term nature of this work, it will be essential to measure the impact we are having. The SIP will own the Action Plan and track progress made against it over the next two years. The Action Plan will then be refreshed annually on a rolling basis to ensure it remains relevant.



Levelling Up Mission Statements

The nine statements below summarise, for each of the national Levelling Up missions, the opportunities for Stratford-on-Avon District. For the evidence and data which underpin each opportunity, please refer to the accompanying evidence base.

Reducing rural inequalities



Housing

Housing has a great impact on health and wellbeing and educational attainment. Ensuring both sufficient supply and decent quality housing is a long-term commitment for both District and County Councils.

In 2020-21 there were more than double the net additions to district housing stock, compared to national figures. Median house prices in the district continue to run higher than those in other parts of Warwickshire with the greatest increases in detached properties, likely due to the high levels of satisfaction in the district as a place to live. We want to do further work to understand the impact of additional stock and the availability of affordable housing.

Both home ownership and private renting in the district remain expensive in comparison with other parts of the UK. The median house price in Stratford on Avon in March 2023 was £375,000 compared to £285,000 in England. In the year ending March 2023, the lower quartile monthly private rent in the district was £150 more than the national figure.

We want to help deliver the aims of Stratford-on-Avon District's Sustainable Homes Sustainable Communities Housing Strategy and support access to safe, secure and affordable accommodation.



Transport infrastructure

Stratford-on-Avon is one of the largest districts in the country at 979km², therefore good transport networks are vital to enable residents to access local services, jobs and health provision.

With an average journey time of 14.7 minutes by public transport or walking to an employment centre, according to ONS figures from 2019, the district is worse than the UK median, but in line with the national median for cycling (11.4 mins) or driving (8 mins).

In terms of geographical isolation measured by distances to large employment centres and local facilities, Long Compton is in the 1% most deprived in England and a further 22 district LSOAs are in the most deprived 10% of LSOAs nationally.

We want to increase transport options for residents, reduce journey times and allow for greater social connection, especially for rural communities through solutions such as community transport.

The district has a selection of transportation which helps to combat rural and social isolation, but residents have identified improved public transport as a top priority and the district will be working closely with the county to support Warwickshire County Council's Local Transport Plan.



Digital connectivity

High-speed digital connectivity is increasingly essential for day-to-day life, as well as helping to support productivity and increase social connection.

While there is an opportunity to expand gigabit-capable broadband connectivity across the district, the latest data shows 100% of 4G coverage by at least one mobile network operator.

Most residents (95%) access the internet at home. A small proportion (3%) do not have access to the internet at all.

We need to be mindful of those residents who either do not have access to technology at home or prefer to receive their information via traditional media such as posters, print media and mail. These individuals are at risk of digital exclusion, and we need to ensure that there are locations where they can access information and online services, such as libraries and warm hubs.

Improving health & wellbeing



Health and Wellbeing

Health outcomes across all age ranges are generally positive in Stratford-on-Avon District, with life expectancy for both males (81.4) and females (85) higher than the national average. The under 75 mortality rate from all causes is significantly lower for persons in Stratford-on-Avon District compared to the England average.

The percentage of adult smokers is lower than that of England (9% compared to 13% in 2021) and rates of early-stage cancer diagnosis are also considerably better in the district (57.1% compared to 52.3% nationally in 2020), enabling more proactive treatment.

However, nearly two-thirds of district residents (64.2%) qualified as medically obese between 2020-21, slightly higher than England's average of 63.5% and in some areas of the district nearly 1 in 10 residents on the 2021 census indicated that they had bad or very bad health. With an ageing demographic there are challenges around mobility and overall health and wellbeing, including dementia and related care needs.

We want to increase access to physical activity and align our efforts to the wider prevention and early intervention agenda whilst seeking opportunities to reduce inequalities in health outcomes and improve mental health for all. We plan to support and align our work with the Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Empowering and strengthening local communities



Crime

Everyone should be and feel safe in their communities. Whilst the overall crime rate for the district is significantly lower at 25% fewer crimes recorded than the national average, burglary and vehicle crime are both slightly higher and local residents reported feeling less safe in recent years.

We want to tackle the perception and fear of crime within communities and increase the confidence residents have in their place. By aligning our work with Community Safety activity, we have an opportunity to tackle the root causes of crime so that Stratford-on-Avon is a safer place to live.

This section of the Creating Opportunities Plan will use the Warwickshire Community Safety Agreement 2022-26 as a primary driver. The agreement's priority themes are as follows:

- Address the causes of violence
- Tackle discrimination in all its forms
- Safe, Healthy and Empowered communities.



Pride in place

Being proud of where you live is an important factor in motivating people to act in a way that sustains and strengthens local communities and increases human connection.

According to a 2022 residents' survey, a large majority of residents (86%) are satisfied with their local area. However, dissatisfaction leapt from 4% in 2019 to 9% in 2022, with 7% fairly dissatisfied and a further 2% very dissatisfied. These dissatisfaction levels are the highest seen over the ten-year period.

Analysing results by geography and age, Stratford Town and Wellesbourne/ Kineton residents (both 81%) were less likely to be satisfied. Residents in Henley and Studley areas were more likely to be satisfied (both 92%). The younger the resident, the less likely they were to be very satisfied with the area as a place to live.

We want to build on local strengths and foster pride in those places where community networks are not as strong, such as large developments, new settlements and new urban extensions. We plan to involve communities in decision making, work alongside them to take practical action, and enable them to lead and drive positive change locally, utilising innovative techniques to build connections and work together on the things residents care about. An additional focus will be sustaining town centres and high streets.

Improving education & skills and increasing financial resilience



Skills

Having desirable skills and qualifications is key to securing good jobs. Generally, the mix of skills in the district is positive, with a significantly higher proportion of the population aged 16-64 with level 3+ qualifications.

While this number compares favourably with the national average, we know that there are barriers to accessing apprenticeships and training courses and the number of school leavers over 19 engaging with further education or apprenticeships is only 65% of the national figure.

We recognize that training and work experience have the capacity to broaden horizons and skills, providing valuable preparation for the world of work. Volunteering is another option to develop workplace skills. We want to increase aspirations across the district and expand further education, training and apprenticeship opportunities to all residents, especially those in priority LSOAs.

The district council will be working closely with the County Council to support the Warwickshire Careers Strategy 2019/20-2024/25.



Education

In the district, schools and academic performance across all key stages are generally good, with the percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths by the end of primary school higher than the national average.

However, for Key Stage 1 readiness disadvantaged pupils in the district perform 29% less well than their national non-disadvantaged peers. We want to do more to understand the specific challenges disadvantaged children face and how we can alleviate the barriers.

Disadvantaged pupils in receipt of free school meals have more than double the absenteeism rates of other pupils across both primary and secondary levels and are reaching standards lower than their peers nationally and across the region.

We want to work with partners to understand the reasons behind high absenteeism and increase the support available to parents.

The district will be working closely with the county to support the Warwickshire Education Strategy.



Living standards

Good jobs and good pay significantly impact living standards, health and quality of life. Stratford-on-Avon District benefits from a strong economy with gross value added per hour worked, and the employment rate for 16-64 year-olds both above the national average.

However, closer inspection reveals some concerning inequalities. Citizens Advice South Warwickshire saw a 34% increase in clients in the district seeking advice about employment during 2022-23 in comparison with the previous year. While the median gross weekly pay for all those working in Stratford-on-Avon is above the median for England, there is a wide range of pay. Twenty per cent of employees have a gross weekly pay below £346, compared to the top twenty per cent who earn over £964. There is a significant gender disparity in earnings, with men's gross median weekly pay nearly a hundred pounds more than women's.

We want to address the employment gap by supporting people such as those with disabilities, health conditions or childcare responsibilities to access good jobs. We will need to identify and help to address potential barriers, such as the cost of childcare. To increase the living standards in the district we want to tackle the causes of cost-of-living pressures, to help those facing food and fuel poverty, while simultaneously increasing access to employment, ongoing training and educational opportunities. South Warwickshire Economic Plan will inform our actions in this priority area.



Glossary

Census Official count or survey of the population. The Census takes place every 10 years and gives a picture of all the people and households in the UK. It is undertaken by the Office for National Statistics and was most recently completed in 2021. (ons.gov.uk)

Community stakeholder

Someone who has a vested interest in the health, well-being, advancement and success of the community. They usually have first-hand knowledge about their community and their role is to help promote and advance the interests of the community.

Fuel poverty This relates to households that cannot meet their energy needs at a reasonable cost. How fuel poverty is measured in the UK. [Office for National Statistics](https://ons.gov.uk) (ons.gov.uk)

Gross pay An individual's total earnings before taxes or other deductions.

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) The official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England. It is the most widely used of the Indices of Deprivation and ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area). The IMD combines information from the seven domains to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation. The seven domains are:

- Income Deprivation
- Employment Deprivation
- Education, Skills and Training Deprivation
- Health Deprivation and Disability
- Crime
- Barriers to Housing and Services
- Living Environment Deprivation.

[English Indices of Deprivation 2019 FAQs](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
(publishing.service.gov.uk)

Levelling Up The Levelling Up White Paper (2022) sets out how the government intends to spread opportunity more equally across the UK Levelling Up. (gov.uk)

Lower-Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) Made up of between 400 and 1,200 households, LSOAs usually have a population between 1,000 and 3,000 persons and are a standard area that allows for comparison between areas over time. (ons.gov.uk)

Median The value or quantity at the midpoint of a range of data.

Public body A formally established organisation that is publicly funded to deliver a public or government service, though not as a ministerial department.

Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) A partnership of public, voluntary, charity and community sectors across the district. The partnership aims to tackle social exclusion, including initiatives to address social isolation, loneliness, health and wellbeing, unemployment, older people and supporting local communities.

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) A non-governmental organisation that is value-driven, and which principally reinvests its profits to further social, environmental or cultural objectives.



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