

Draft Priority Areas for Community Cohesion

1. Help more people take part in community life

Key actions

- Support community-based outreach and local champions to help people take their first steps into community life
- Improve how events and opportunities are shared and promoted including through local media, local networks, faith venues, schools and trusted spaces
- Develop a city-wide volunteering plan that brings together the city council, voluntary organisations, schools and businesses

2. Support communities to organise and take ownership

Key actions

- Prioritise securing resources for community connectors and organisers who can link services and support residents to become more involved in their local communities
- Support small resident-led projects that meet local needs and build skills in leadership and collaboration
- Encourage shared ownership of local initiatives, including partnerships between the council and community groups

3. Embed cohesion across the council and partners

Key actions

- Train staff and partners to understand how their work affects community cohesion (e.g. through building trust, agency, and a sense of fairness) and to make every contact count
- Include cohesion impacts in decision-making processes
- Share learning across departments to build a consistent approach to trust and engagement
- Celebrate and reward examples of good partnership working that improve relationships with residents

4. Take services to where people are

Key actions

- Build on the success of community lounges by increasing utilisation and expanding outreach in local spaces such as markets, libraries, sports clubs and faith venues
- Work with partners to offer regular pop-up sessions for advice, information and local engagement in trusted settings
- Make sure digital services are easy to use but never a substitute for face-to-face contact
- Support outreach that brings together different services so that residents can get answers in one place
- Encourage frontline staff to use each interaction as a chance to listen and build understanding

5. Tackle disinformation and misinformation

Key actions

- Support trusted community figures, local media and neighbourhood groups to share clear and accurate information
- Support community-led storytelling or citizen journalism that highlights positive local experiences
- Develop a coordinated approach across local partners to respond to and address mis/disinformation on social media
- Train staff and partners on how to respond constructively to rumours or misinformation in their day-to-day roles
- Make transparency and openness part of every service's approach, showing residents how and why decisions are made

6. Give people a real say in decisions and take ownership

Key actions

- Devolve decision-making powers to local neighbourhoods enabling these communities to have a more direct role in setting priorities and shaping the delivery of local initiatives
- Expand participatory budgeting and citizen juries so residents can more widely influence spending and priorities
- Coordinate consultation activity across the council and partners to reduce duplication, make engagement easier for residents, and ensure community feedback is shared and used consistently to inform decisions
- Ensure feedback loops are built in so people can see what changed as a result of their input
- Support young people to have a voice in decision-making through youth boards, school programmes and creative projects
- Embed co-delivery alongside co-design so residents help implement local solutions

7. Spot and respond to community tensions early

Key actions

- Strengthen coordination between the council, police, health and community partners to recognise and share early signs of tension or division
- Develop clear local processes for responding quickly and appropriately when issues arise
- Support training for staff and community representatives to recognise and report emerging concerns
- Build capacity and support for community groups to be able to respond to issues as they arise
- Jointly review incidents openly to learn what worked and improve responses in future
- Ensure that appropriate support services are in place for victims of hate crime
- Act as strong partners in the wider West Midlands network tackling threats to cohesion

8. Celebrate and reimagine Stoke-on-Trent's identity

Key actions

- Build on the momentum of the Centenary celebrations to undertake a city-wide conversation about the city's next chapter
- Involve schools, young people and community groups in shaping how the city's story is told and celebrated
- Develop a joint campaign by the council, police, local organisations to show that pride in Stoke comes from its people, kindness and creativity, celebrating what unites us
- Create a shared plan for how partners respond together when individuals or organisations promoting inclusion are targeted

9. Support local enterprise and opportunity

Key actions

- Work with education providers and business networks to offer training and support for people who want to start or grow small businesses
- Focus on reaching people in areas of high deprivation who may not currently see enterprise as an option
- Encourage partnerships between schools, colleges and local employers to raise awareness of routes into work and entrepreneurship
- Promote social and community enterprises that reinvest locally and strengthen neighbourhoods

10. Invest in spaces that bring people together

Key actions

- Map where social infrastructure is strongest and weakest across the city to understand where support is needed most
- Work with housing associations, health providers, private businesses, schools, and faith groups to identify spaces that could be opened up for wider community use
- Support community partners to manage and maintain local spaces where possible