

## **Introduction**

Newcastle-under-Lyme College officially merged with Stafford College on November 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 as a type B merger. The College Group includes Newcastle-under-Lyme College, Stafford College, Axia Training Solutions and Gradbach Farmhouse and Mill all now form part of NSCG: Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group.

## **Newcastle-under-Lyme College**

Newcastle-under-Lyme College is a tertiary college, the only one of its kind serving Staffordshire. The most sizeable part of its provision is the delivery of a wide range of vocational and academic programmes for 16-18 year olds. However, the offer is also typical of a medium sized General Further Education college and provision includes a substantial programme of Apprenticeship training; workplace learning for young people and adults; adult classroom based learning; higher education and provision for the unemployed. The College has grown significantly over the past 10 years and caters for a population of circa 3,600 full-time and nearly 1,700 part time students on its main site. Overall growth has continued each year since the College was built in 2010 and boasts some of the most advanced facilities in the country and is an attractive place to learn.

The College draws students in approximately equal measure from Newcastle-under-Lyme, a North Staffordshire town with a population of 127,000, and the conurbation of Stoke-on-Trent, with a population of 249,000.

The College is the single biggest provider of 16-18 education in North Staffordshire recruiting in almost equal numbers from the Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme areas.

Stoke-on-Trent has some of the most deprived wards in the country across all national indices of multiple deprivation:

- 15<sup>th</sup> out of 326 of the most deprived English districts
- 2<sup>nd</sup> most deprived area in the West Midlands out of 34 Local Authority districts
- 10% most deprived areas for income, employment, health and disability and education, skills and training
- 13<sup>th</sup> worst out of 150 Local Authorities in England for premature mortality with life expectancy significantly below the national average

Whilst Newcastle-under-Lyme is 150<sup>th</sup> out of 326 of the most deprived English districts, the wards surrounding the College site of Cross Heath, Knutton, Lower Milehouse and Silverdale share similar levels of deprivation:

- Cross Heath sits in the 3% most deprived wards nationally
- The Saints area of Knutton and Silverdale sits in the 10% most deprived nationally
- Cross Heath is in the bottom 10% of the child well-being index nationally

## **Education: Newcastle-under-Lyme and surrounding areas**

The populations of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent have lower than average levels of qualifications which is associated with high levels of worklessness and other socio-economic issues. Overall attainment at Key Stage 4 is improving in Newcastle-under-Lyme but Stoke-on-Trent continues to lag significantly behind the national rate.

Newcastle-under-Lyme contains wards characterised by low educational attainment with large numbers of people holding no qualifications and, consequently, with poor skills levels. The Saints area of Knutton and Silverdale is ranked in the poorest 0.3% nationally for education based on population with no skills or qualifications. In Stoke-on-Trent, prior to the drop in 2013, previous improvements in performance at GCSE in many of its schools has been masked by high numbers of pupils undertaking vocational qualifications alongside their GCSE studies.

The educational landscape of Stoke-on-Trent has undergone a significant transformation through the City's £270m Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. In total, 13 secondary schools were rebuilt or refurbished in the City. Five are academies, there are three voluntary aided schools and the remaining five either community or foundation/trust schools.

This contrasts sharply with the secondary school estate in Newcastle-under-Lyme which is older and often characterised by the need for additional investment to provide an appropriate environment for education and learning.

Overall the proportion of the working age population (16-64 years) in Stoke-on-Trent with no qualifications is 19.4%; greater than the Great Britain average of 9.7% and the regional average of 13.6%. Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent also have a lower proportion of working age population qualified to NVQ Level 3 and above than nationally, 47.7% and 40.9% respectively, compared to 52.4% nationally.

Keele and Staffordshire Universities are both situated within very easy travelling distance of the Newcastle College campus.

### **Stafford College**

Stafford College is a General Further Education College based in the town of Stafford and operates from a main campus in the town centre. The town centre campus comprises a refurbished Science & Technology Building, Tenterbanks Building housing Creative Arts and general teaching and the Riverbank campus - home to a modern library and computer facilities, Beauty Academy and Hospitality and Catering courses. The Riverbank restaurants, Beauty Academy and Sports Zone gym are open to the public. The College also has a smaller leased centre (half a mile away) housing Brickwork, Carpentry and Joinery, Plant, Motor Vehicle, Construction and Engineering.

The town centre campus comprises a refurbished Earl Street main building, Broad Eye Creative Arts building and the Riverbank campus - home to modern library and computer facilities, Beauty Academy and Hospitality and Catering courses. The Riverbank restaurants, Beauty Academy and Sports Zone gym are open to the public. The College also has a smaller leased centre (half a mile away) housing Brickwork, Carpentry and Joinery, Plant, Motor Vehicle, Construction and Engineering.

Stafford College is important educationally and economically to the area, being the fourth largest employer in the County town, with around 280 FTE staff. The College offers a broad range of courses that ensures access for local communities and the curriculum offer is responsive to LEP priorities and informed by local market intelligence. The College reports that over 90% of provision is within priority sectors and key growth areas include Healthcare, Media and Communication, Business Administration, Engineering, Medical Technologies, ICT, Tourism, Hospitality and Retail.

Stafford has a population of 60,000. The population of Stafford Borough is 131, 000 which is expected to grow to approximately 142,900 by 2033. The 16-18 cohort in Staffordshire is declining over the next few years, although it starts to recover from 2020. Stafford Borough covers an area of over 230 square miles and is centrally placed within the North Staffordshire sub-region of the West Midlands. It is a predominately rural district with Stafford and Stone as its key urban centres.

There were an estimated 22,184 young people under the age of 15 living in the Borough in 2011 - forming 18.9% of the Borough's population. At 2011, 94% of the Borough's population was estimated to be 'White British or Irish' the largest ethnic minority group is Indian (0.6%). (Mixed race 0.8%; Asian or Asian British 1.0%; Black or Black British 0.5%; Chinese or other 0.2%). In the Borough 68.9% of the working population have a level 2 skill with 27% having a degree level qualification.

There is a substantial military site on the north eastern edge of Stafford town. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has a base at Beaconside Barracks, MOD Stafford. The level of personnel is expected to have increase to around 1,100, together with their dependents, following the relocation of troops from Germany. Stafford Borough's location ensures that it benefits from excellent north-south transportation links. Two M6 motorway junctions are located adjacent to Stafford town providing good accessibility to the North West, the rest of the West Midlands region and beyond via the M6 and M6 Toll. However, connections in the east-west direction are less evident. Stafford town is also served by the West Coast mainline, with a significant number of trains stopping at Stafford and Stone, providing links to the major cities including London. The College primarily serves Stafford and a part of mid and south Staffordshire so its travel-to-learn area is large - extending to the edges of Wolverhampton and into Shropshire. The majority of the 16-18 students (46%) attending the college live in the Stafford area, with the rest coming mainly from Cannock Chase (27%) or South Staffordshire (11%). A small proportion of students are from minority ethnic groups - broadly representative of the local population.

### **Education: Stafford**

There are currently six high schools in Stafford, and several others within the College travel-to-learn area, all with sixth forms. Nearest general FE colleges are: South Staffordshire College (8 miles to Rodbaston / 10 miles to Cannock), Newcastle-under-Lyme College (17 miles), Stoke on Trent College and City of Stoke SFC (both 17 miles), Telford College of Arts & Technology (21 miles) and Burton and South Derbyshire College (30 miles).

The number of pupils aged 16 who achieve five or more GCSEs at grade A\* - C including English and mathematics in Staffordshire is slightly above the national average.

- Local employment rate is above the national average.
- The percentage of young people in Staffordshire not in education, employment or training (NEET) has been steadily falling in line with the national and regional trends. The NEET figure for the local authority is below the national average (*September 2016*).

Keele, Staffordshire and Wolverhampton Universities are all situated within easy travelling distance of the Stafford Campus.

## Earnings: Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent's reliance on a concentration of employment in declining traditional sectors has meant that the earnings of people working in the area tend to be below the national average.

NSCG places a high priority on supporting its most disadvantaged learners and for those in financial need the Colleges provide a discretionary bursary to all learners with a household income below £21,000 per annum called the Newcastle or Stafford Maintenance Allowance. The College subsidises the Maintenance Allowance scheme to ensure that no learner who is eligible is refused.

## HE Provision

The college has a mix of higher education students and receives funding through both indirectly funded and directly funded students. The college is a franchise partner with Staffordshire University and as such all Staffordshire University students are encompassed into their Access Agreement. Since 2016 we have delivered our own directly funded provision in the form of Pearson Higher National Certificates and Diplomas. We also offer a number of non-prescribed programmes in areas such as accounting and health care management.

The College has over 500 students on these prescribed HE programmes, with just around 25% of them being our own directly funded and covered by this statement. This is expected to grow as more subject areas are being developed and staff have a greater understanding of teaching and administering HE programmes.

This is only our second year of running directly funded provision, so data and statistics are embryonic. However, the breakdown of our students is as follows:

### Statistics

#### Gender

Female	56%
Male	44%

This is directly in line with national data – according to the most recent HEFCE data release, in 2015-16 women comprised 56 per cent of the UK-domiciled full-time first degree population.

#### Learning Difficulty/Disability

21% have declared, with the breakdown as follows

04 - Visual impairment	2
08 - Social and emotional difficulties, 04 - Visual impairment,	
09 - Mental health difficulty, 93 - Other physical disability	1
09 - Mental health difficulty	3

10 - Moderate learning difficulty, 95 - Other medical condition (for example epilepsy, asthma, diabetes)	1
12 - Dyslexia	2
12 - Dyslexia, 14 - Autism spectrum disorder, 96 - Other learning difficulty	1
13 - Dyscalculia	1
14 - Autism spectrum disorder	2
14 - Autism spectrum disorder, 09 - Mental health difficulty	1
14 - Autism spectrum disorder, 10 - Moderate learning difficulty	1
15 - Asperger's syndrome	1
94 - Other specific learning difficulty (e.g. Dyspraxia), 09 - Mental health difficulty, 12 - Dyslexia	1
94 - Other specific learning difficulty (e.g. Dyspraxia), 97 - Other disability	1
95 - Other medical condition (for example epilepsy, asthma, diabetes)	2
95 - Other medical condition (for example epilepsy, asthma, diabetes), 09 - Mental health difficulty	1
95 - Other medical condition (for example epilepsy, asthma, diabetes), 97 - Other disability	1
96 - Other learning difficulty	1
97 - Other disability	2
97 - Other disability, 95 - Other medical condition (for example epilepsy, asthma, diabetes)	1

Of these, 2 are receiving Disabled Student Allowance.

### **Age**

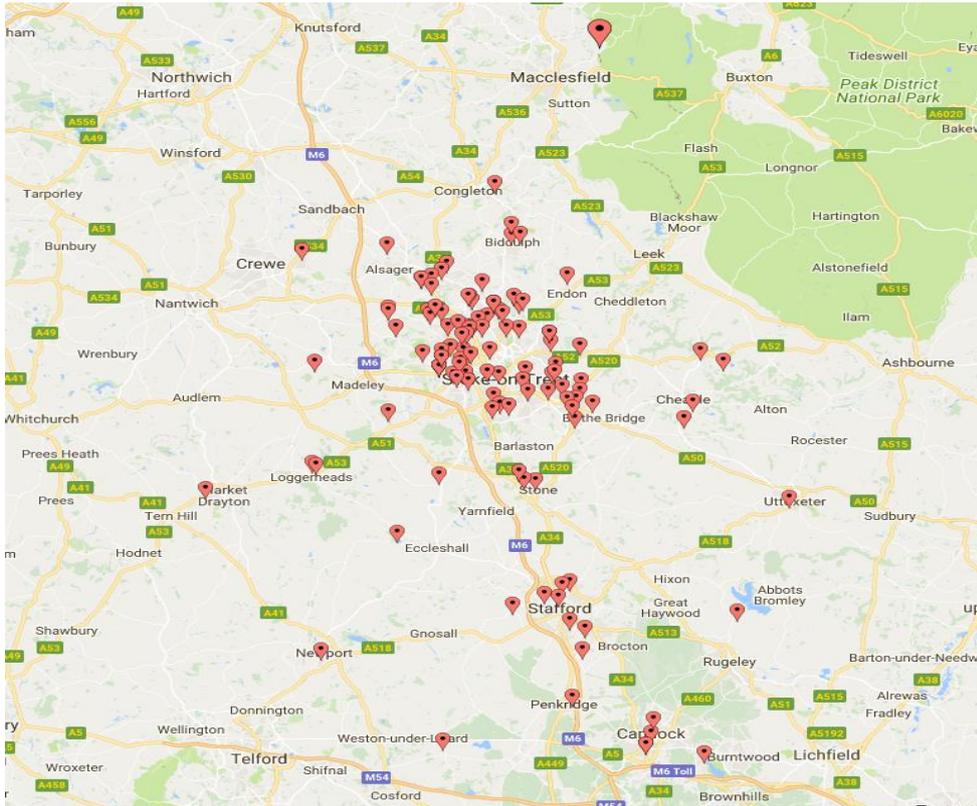
26% of students are over 21 and classed as mature students. This is expected to grow with the increase of some part time provision aimed at employers. However, many of our students progress directly from our own level 3 provision.

### **Ethnicity**

6% of learners declare themselves as BME. This is low compared to the whole college number of 12% and very low compared to per cent of all entrants to full-time first degrees in 2015-16 which was 29% according to the HEFCE data. However, according to the latest Staffordshire Equality and Diversity Strategy, 2.4% of the county's population was from a non-white ethnic group.

### **Residence**

85% of students live with their parents, with 15% living in their own home. Postcode distribution can be shown as follows:



### Highest Qualification on Entry

83% of our students hold a vocational qualification – most commonly, BTEC level 3.

### *Pre-Application and Admission*

We recruit predominantly from our own internal level 3 vocational provision. Many of these students tell us that they would not go to university if they couldn't continue studying with us. However, we are represented at local UCAS fairs and other careers events, and are trying to build links with local sixth forms and employers.

Every year we hold a HE welcome event at both sites. This focuses on transition and attendees learn about the difference between level 3 and level 4 study and what they need to do to be an independent learner. They also have taster subjects and an opportunity to talk to staff about finance and learning support well in advance of their course starting. Level 3 students are invited and this is supported by a large social media campaign aimed at older learners in certain subject areas.

### Applications

We operate a HE admissions policy which is underpinned by the five principles of Fair Admission as outlined in the Schwarz Report of 2004.

At the point of application, should an applicant declare that they are from any of the following groups, a member of the Student Services Team will make contact to discuss what support is available:-

- Disabled students
- Asylum Seekers and Forced Migrants
- LGBT
- Care Leavers

- Students with caring responsibility
- Student parents
- Estranged students
- Students from a minority ethnic groups

### **The Student Services Team**

The Student Services Team will ensure that applicants' needs are met, and will offer support to the applicant at any stage of their application and whilst they are part of our Higher Education Community. There are dedicated roles within the Student Services Team to ensure that we have a range of support to meet each applicant's needs.

### ***On Programme***

#### **Student Welfare Officers**

Our Student Welfare Officers can offer a range of support, including:

- Mentoring support
- Confidential and impartial 1:1 support to help you stay on track
- Support from outside agencies such as housing advice, mental health agencies, drugs and alcohol support agencies, specialised counselling such as bereavement counselling.
- Support for circumstances that may impact on the student's well-being such as relationship break up, homelessness, substance misuse.

Anyone that needs support will be given a named Student Welfare Officer so that they have someone that they can contact if they need any support and, if needed, a regular 1:1 appointment can be arranged.

We have a helpdesk number and a team email address so that we can ensure that all requests for help are responded to in a timely manner.

#### **Personal Tutors**

A key person for ensuring needs are met is a personal tutor. A Personal Tutor is a friendly member of the course team who students can approach if they need to talk to a member of staff or get help with any problems. They will also review progress, and ensure students are aware of deadlines and targets.

#### **Additional Learning Support Team**

The additional learning Support team provide support for students with additional support needs. We can support students who have:

- Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC)
- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia
- Dyspraxia
- ADHD
- Emotional or behavioural difficulties
- Learning disabilities
- Mental health difficulties
- Other medical conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes and asthma
- Physical disabilities
- Sensory impairments (vision and hearing)

- Speech and communication difficulties

All of our staff are appropriately qualified, and are observed as part of our quality review systems to ensure their skills are current and effective. The college has accreditation with DSA QAG (the Disabled Student Allowances Quality Assurance Guild) and has specialist staff trained to act as:

- Note takers (including specialist note takers for VI/HI students)
- Specialist 1:1 Study skills support tutors
- Specialist 1:1 support tutors for students with ASC
- Specialist mentors for students with ASC
- CSW (Communication Support Worker) support staff for students with HI

We can also provide specialist equipment including:

- Super Nova software
- Text in different formats such as Braille, large text or in other formats.

All reasonable adjustments to provision are made to ensure that students are not disadvantaged.

### **Other Specialist Support**

We know the importance of getting the right kind of support when it is needed and therefore we work with a range of other agencies to ensure that expert help and advice are available. We also have a college counsellor on-site five days a week.

### **Accessibility**

The college is committed to ensuring that the needs of students with disabilities are met. The college is fully accessible and offers a range of specialist facilities and equipment including:

- Accessible shower facilities in the main College, The Gordon Banks Sports Centre and The Skills and Technology Centre.
- Accessible parking facilities with dropped kerbs close to the main entrances
- Accessible toilet facilities on all floors
- Fire evacuation lift on upper floors
- Fire evacuation refuge points on all staircases
- Ground floor accessible bathroom
- Wide corridors suitable for wheelchair access
- Hearing induction loops embedded in key areas throughout the College.
- A portable loop system communicator is also available in classrooms
- Passenger lifts at convenient points throughout the main building designed to avoid steps and ramps.
- Software to support students with dyslexia

### **Progression**

We have fully qualified careers specialists at both sites who are available for whole group or 1-1 careers appointments and next steps guidance. We support students to progress to their next destination, whether this be further study with us, top up degrees elsewhere or employment. We have excellent links with a number of local HE providers who are invited in to talk about top ups. We also work closely with local employers throughout the programmes. These employers provide work experience, placements and live briefs and

help student awareness of roles within the industry. In a number of occasions these employers have offered employment to students post qualification.