

# Communities

# Strategy

# 2020



Stockton-on-Tees  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



# The power of communities



We are pleased to introduce our 2020 – 2023 Communities Strategy. This is the first Communities Strategy for the Borough and it builds on the incredible success and work of the Locality Forums that have been delivering the “Brighter Borough For All – Tackling Poverty” Framework since 2012.

The Strategy sets out our vision and hopes for our communities and specifically that they will:

- Be cohesive, strong and welcoming

And that they will join us in:

- Tackling poverty across the Borough
- Ensuring people across the Borough aren't lonely

We are confident that there is a commitment and desire amongst our communities to be part of delivering what is set out in this strategy and we are confident that it is right for our Borough.

We are proud that **community cohesion** is strong in the Borough and that people report a strong sense of belonging here. We want it to stay that way. We believe that by building the strong, proactive and creative community network set out in this strategy we will continue to see strong, cohesive communities across the Borough.

We also know that there are many organisations working to tackle poverty in the Borough and we recognise this challenge cannot be met by any one organisation on its own. This strategy recognises that there are many people and groups across the Borough who are giving their time and energy to tackle poverty and we want to provide a framework to harness this community power. We want to make sure that everyone who wants to do something can and to make sure that no effort goes to waste.

And finally we want to support the work that is being done to **tackle loneliness** across the Borough which is being driven and led by the Health and Wellbeing Board. We know that community involvement and support can play a big role in tackling loneliness and we want to support this.

We would like to thank everyone who has worked with us since the introduction of the Brighter Borough for All strategy in 2012. We continue to celebrate and benefit from all of the fantastic work which you have done. We hope you'll agree that in this Communities Strategy and the underpinning framework of seven new Community Partnerships we are building on your good work.

We believe that this approach gives our communities the power, with our support, to develop community activity and engagement even further.

We are excited to see what happens next and look forward to working with you over the next three years.

Councillor Bob Cook  
Leader, Stockton-on-Tees  
Borough Council



# Why do we need a

# Communities Strategy?

We are an ambitious Council and we have big plans for Stockton-on-Tees. We want the Borough to be:

- A place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm
- A place that is clean, vibrant and attractive
- A place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed

We recognise that we can't achieve this vision on our own. So, whilst we have a Council Plan which focuses on what we plan to do as a Council, we also have a number of partnership strategies that set out the exciting work we're doing with others, to bring the vision to life. The Communities Strategy is just one of these important plans.

Here at the Council, we have an instinct to collaborate and we work hard to be an effective partner, so you can be sure that we are coordinating and driving all the benefits from these closely related plans and strategies to make sure that together they deliver the greatest possible benefit to the Borough.







This Communities Strategy is a vital part of the overall plan for the Borough as it is where we set out a shared vision and hope for our communities and specifically that they will:

- Be cohesive, strong and welcoming
- Join us in the task of tackling poverty across the Borough
- Join us in the task of ensuring that people in the Borough are not lonely

The Communities Strategy enables us to set out a framework for enabling and empowering community involvement which will build on the successful platform of our strong, vibrant and powerful communities. We will support the new Community Partnerships by:

- Handing over the power to our communities to further develop community integration, inclusion and support.
- Establishing new projects to promote and increase intergenerational cohesion and cross-cultural cohesion.
- Keeping a focus on tackling poverty; we will work together to look at new ways of supporting those in need.
- Encouraging innovative approaches to bringing all aspects of the community together to tackle loneliness and isolation.
- Providing positive and proactive community members with the opportunity to come together and collaborate with likeminded people.
- Continuing to develop the successful work being undertaken across the Borough by providing practical support, resources, connections, information and encouragement to help communities make things happen.
- Making sure that, as far as possible, work is co-ordinated across the Borough so there is no duplication, wasted effort or missed opportunity.

# Cohesive, strong and welcoming communities

**We are proud that community cohesion is strong in the Borough and that people report a strong sense of belonging here and we want it to stay that way.**

In our most recent residents survey carried out in 2019 the results to questions about 'belonging to the Borough' and 'community cohesion' remain strong with levels of satisfaction increasing. This is a great platform for us to build on. The sense of belonging to the local area and to the Borough, community cohesion, and the sense that people pull together to improve the local area have all increased since the last survey in 2015.

- 80% of residents feel they belong to their local area, up from 77% in 2015. This sentiment is highest amongst the oldest age group of 75+ where it is 88% but the strong reports of belonging are consistent across all groups of residents.
- The sense of belonging in the Borough as a whole has also increased. There has been an increase in feelings of belonging to the Borough since 2015 from 65% to 70%. Understandably, residents who are more positive about their

local area have a stronger sense of belonging. In particular 87% of residents who think people from different backgrounds get on well together also feel they belong to their local area.

- 68% of residents agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area, this is up from 56% in 2015. Those aged 65 and over are more likely to agree with this statement with 76% of this age category agreeing.
- 50% of residents think that people pull together to improve the local area, which marks an improvement from 44% in 2015.

These results are extremely encouraging and provide a great basis for growing community involvement and we believe that by building the strong, proactive and creative community network set out in this strategy we will continue to see strong, cohesive communities across the Borough.





# Tackling poverty

**This strategy recognises that there are many people and groups across the Borough who are giving their time and energy to tackle poverty and we want to provide a framework to harness this community power. We want to make sure that everyone who wants to do something can and we want to make sure that no effort goes to waste.**



Inequality remains a challenge in Stockton-on-Tees. We have a Borough-wide population of 197,200 residents and have affluent areas alongside areas of deprivation. Nine of our wards are in the 10% most deprived wards in the country and we're not happy with that fact. Poverty remains a real challenge for too many people in the Borough.

We're committed to fighting this discrepancy and we are working to tackle poverty in the Borough at the Council and with our partners. For example our Economic Growth Strategy sets out how we are working with businesses to create sustainable and good employment opportunities to reduce unemployment and increase not only households in employment but also raise the average weekly earnings of £570 which are currently below the national average of £586.50.

The Adults Strategy describes how we are working with health and care partners to help those who need particular support.

With 577 children in local authority care and above national average numbers of children living in

poverty at 34% we are striving to bridge the gap in inequality. The Children and Young People Strategy sets out how we are working with schools, colleges and other partners to make sure our children have the best start in life and a good education that sets them up for life. We currently have 10.2% of children leaving school with no qualification which is higher than the national average of 7.8% with 45% of pupils achieving Level 5 or above in English and Mathematics GCSE.

In this Communities Strategy we recognise that there are many people in our communities who are giving their time and energy to tackle the direct effects of poverty and we think this is incredibly important. We commit through this strategy to support this work and to help maximise the benefit of this community power. Over the years we have seen the valuable work of our communities in supporting foodbanks, affordable warmth schemes, clothing collections, Christmas appeals, benefits schemes and information sessions, and support for vulnerable people in our communities. This work is invaluable and we will support it.



**7,860**  
children are in  
low income families (20.6%)  
England = 16.8%



**5,900**  
people unemployed (5.4%)  
England = 3.9%



**9,219**  
households are in  
fuel poverty (11.3%)  
England = 10.9%

# Loneliness



**We recognise that our communities are carrying out vital work to support the drive to tackle loneliness across the Borough. The Health and Wellbeing Board has set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy the impact of loneliness and is providing a strategic lead in tackling this across the Borough. We know that community involvement and support can play a big role in tackling loneliness and we want to support this.**

Loneliness is not currently routinely measured in the general population. However, the national Community Life Survey carried out in 2016-17 identified that 5% of adults in England reported feeling lonely “often” or “always”. If this is applied to the local population this would equate to over 7,500 adults in Stockton-on-Tees who may be experiencing loneliness.

We believe that the Community Partnerships can play an active role in addressing this issue. Building on the success of projects such as the Big Get Together events arranged by the Locality Forums, we see a clear opportunity for the Community Partnerships to fulfil an important role.



# How will we deliver this strategy?

The strategy will be underpinned and delivered by a network of seven new Community Partnerships which will work together with two Borough-wide specialist partnerships. We have identified seven natural community groupings across the Borough:



The seven communities will be supported by seven Community Partnerships. The Partnerships will be made up of members of the community, Councillors, voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations, young people from the Borough-wide “Bright Minds Big Futures” initiative and faith group representatives. They will work to facilitate community involvement and to develop, drive and co-ordinate a community plan for their area.

Community Partnership	Population	Wards
Billingham Communities	35,526	Billingham Central, Billingham East, Billingham North, Billingham South, Billingham West
Ingleby Barwick Communities	23,051	Ingleby Barwick East, Ingleby Barwick West
Norton Communities	20,466	Norton North, Norton South, Norton West
Stockton West Communities	25,057	Grangefield, Bishopsgarth & Elmtree, Fairfield, Hartburn
Stockton Central Communities	38,767	Hardwick & Salters Lane, Newtown, Parkfield & Oxbridge, Roseworth, Stockton Town Centre
Thornaby Communities	25,876	Mandale & Victoria, Stainsby Hill, Village
Stockton Rural Communities	27,744	Eaglescliffe, Yarm Western Parishes, Northern Parishes

The seven Partnerships will meet on a regular basis to co-ordinate activity in their communities. The Community Partnerships will also meet collectively four times a year to share best practice and explore areas for co-operation across the Borough. For example it is proposed that in the first year the joint meetings will be:

- to share ideas for building cohesive communities
- to meet with the Leader of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to ensure that the seven Community Plans are fully co-ordinated with all the other closely related plans and strategies and to make sure that together they are delivering the greatest possible benefit to the Borough
- to share ideas on tackling poverty
- to celebrate success and share plans for the following year at The Big Community Get Together at the end of the first year



# Infinity Partnership

**Infinity brings together organisations in Stockton-on-Tees that are committed to promoting and progressing financial inclusion.**

Infinity aims to ensure that everyone in the Borough has the opportunity to access and use the financial services they need to avoid or overcome disadvantage or poverty caused by financial exclusion.

The work of Infinity includes:

- ensuring that the income of households is maximised through information and support about claiming welfare benefits and other entitlements
- promoting access to services that can prevent households getting into debt
- addressing the causes and the impact of debt for households in the Borough
- co-ordinating the work of different agencies to address specific poverty related issues, including fuel poverty, funeral poverty and welfare benefit take-up
- raising issues of social policy to address the underlying causes of poverty at a local, regional and national level

Membership of Infinity includes Voluntary and Community Sector agencies, Statutory agencies and Banks and Building Societies.



## Housing, Neighbourhood and Affordable Warmth Partnership

**This partnership aims to bring together appropriate stakeholders to support access to good quality affordable housing, located within pleasant, safe and sustainable neighbourhoods where affordable warmth is increasingly available to all.**

The work of the group includes:

- ensuring that the housing and affordable warmth agenda makes a positive contribution to the achievement of strong and sustainable local communities
- developing and renewing relevant plans and strategies, including Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Affordable Warmth
- facilitating joint planning and working on issues
- seeking to influence policy development on a local, regional and national level



All the Partnerships will be supported and facilitated by the Council's Community Engagement Team and each partnership will have a social media presence which will be established and supported by the Council to engage with people in the community and to promote activities, events and ways to get involved.



All the Partnerships are supported by the Council's Community Engagement Team. If you'd like to get involved or learn more then please contact us on 01642 528830 or email [engagement@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:engagement@stockton.gov.uk). We look forward to hearing from you.

You can also find the Partnerships on Facebook:

**Billingham Communities:**

@BillinghamCo

**Ingleby Barwick Communities:**

@InglebyBarwickCo

**Norton Communities:**

@NortonCo

**Stockton Central Communities:**

@StocktonCentralCo

**Stockton West Communities:**

@StocktonWestCo

**Thornaby Communities:**

@ThornabyCo

**Stockton Rural Communities:**

@StocktonRuralCo