



## The Staffordshire Business Pledge for Literacy

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**The National Literacy Trust's local campaign Stoke Reads, and Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce are proud to be working together on this Literacy Business Pledge.**

The Pledge builds on the proven commitment of Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce to improving the community, and the Trust's ability to marshal business support through the Vision for Literacy Business Pledge and activities in communities across the UK.

**Just 53% of disadvantaged pupils had achieved a Level 2 qualification by age 19**

Together we believe we can make a real difference to the lives of the people of Staffordshire, giving them the literacy skills they need to succeed.

We are taking the lead in encouraging businesses large and small to recognise the positive impact they can have on their employees, on their communities and on education to help improve the life chances of the people of Staffordshire, and in so doing to create the skilled and educated workforce we require to maintain economic progress.

### **A need for business leadership**

The UK is facing a huge literacy challenge. The skills gap is apparent at just five years old, where our poorest children start primary school 19 months behind their better-off peers in language and vocabulary and struggle to catch up from then on. This need is especially pressing in Stoke-on-Trent, where a quarter of all children live in low income families. We know every child deserves the best possible start in life, and that language, communication and literacy are vital routes to boost children's life chances and unlock their full potential in education and employment.



Stoke Reads, a long term community literacy project run by The National Literacy Trust, its partners in schools and the local community, has done much to boost literacy outcomes across the city. Despite this, significant challenges remain. In 2018, for example, just 42% of disadvantaged pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2. According to the National Literacy Trust's literacy vulnerability survey, conducted in partnership with Experian, there is now a clear picture of the literacy challenge in the city. It shows that 13 of the 30 wards in Stoke-on-Trent are in the top 10% nationally for literacy vulnerability, and a further 12 out of the 30 sit in the top 20%.



### What can businesses do about the literacy challenge?

The Stoke-on-Trent Literacy Business Pledge provides a framework for businesses to tackle the literacy challenges throughout the city by working with the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce and National Literacy Trust. You can help by being a business that:

#### Supports the drive to raise literacy levels in the local community by

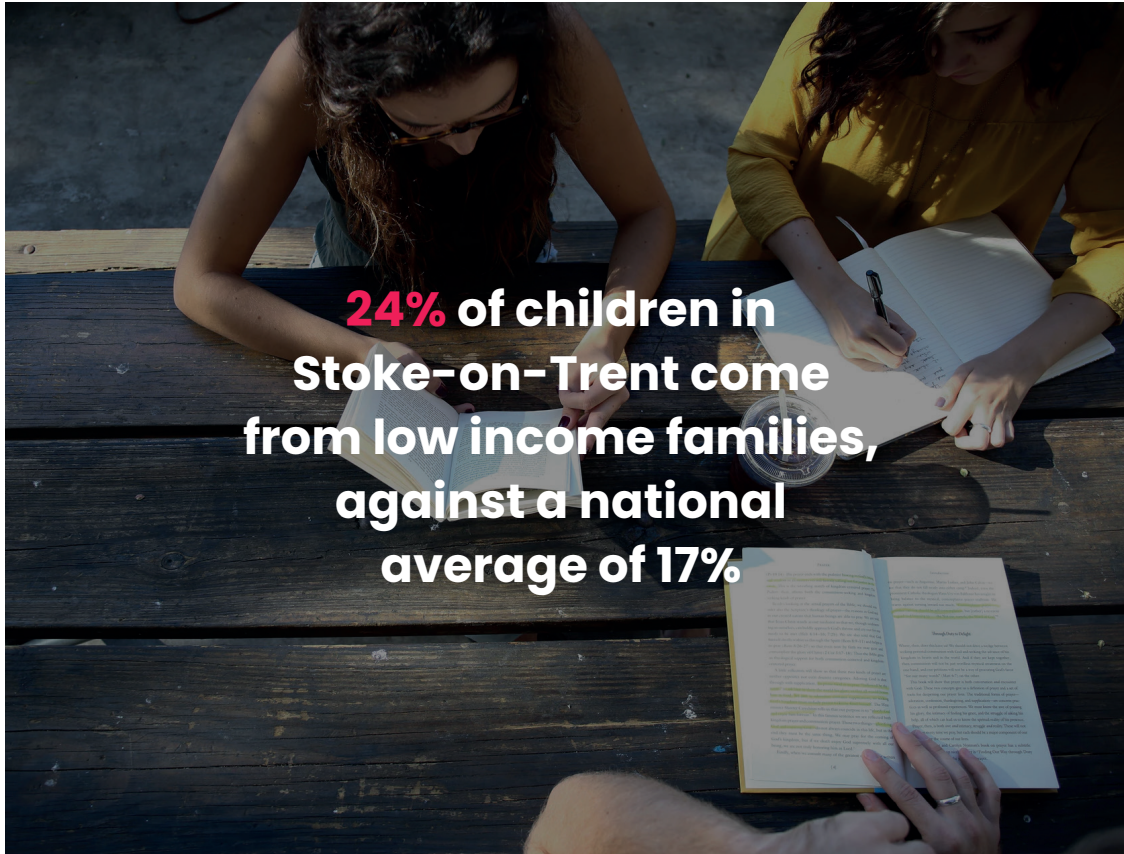
- Funding our programmes in the area
- Supporting local schools, libraries and community partners by providing access to NLT programmes and resources
- Providing work experience and employment opportunities for young people in the community especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds

#### Engages employees in tackling the literacy challenge by

- Raising the profile of literacy in the workplace
- Where required supporting staff with their literacy needs
- Engaging employees who are parents and support them to supporting their children
- Encouraging employees to engage in fundraising opportunities to support our work
- Encouraging employee volunteering on our programmes, and acting as role models in the community to promote volunteering to others

### Ensures Partnership Action to promote literacy by

- Utilising networks of clients and suppliers to who can help further raise awareness of the literacy challenge and build support to tackle it
- Increasing and encouraging widespread awareness of good business practice by providing positive case studies of successful initiatives that encourage and celebrate literacy
- Becoming a signatory of our national Vision for Literacy Business Pledge



**24% of children in Stoke-on-Trent come from low income families, against a national average of 17%**

## Covid-19

The COVID-19 Pandemic is likely to have further significant impact on literacy levels in young people across the region. School closures are expected to reverse all progress made to narrow the attainment gap in the last decade. As a result, the poverty attainment gap could widen by as much as 75%, meaning that disadvantaged children could fall as far as 16 months behind their peers. (*Education Endowment Foundation (2020) Impact of school closures on the attainment gap: Rapid Evidence Assessment*)



Access to books was made even more difficult as a result of COVID with school and library closures having a significant impact on the 1 in 11 (9.3%) disadvantaged children who don't own a single book, compared to 1 in 16 (6%) children nationally. This equates to 380,000 children who do not own a book of their own.

We believe the business community can play a significant role in tackling these challenges. The Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce and the National Literacy Trust are launching the Staffordshire Business Pledge for Literacy to create and support this business drive for change.

## Next Steps

### Step 1 – Complete our Staffordshire Business Pledge Form

The Pledge Form asks businesses to pledge their support to tackle the Staffordshire Literacy Challenge. This will include a contact in the business who will act as the company champion and ask what activities your business might currently do that is supporting the challenge. They will also highlight other areas that businesses could get involved in to support the challenge. Business will be able to request more information on these specific areas.

### Step 2 – Send a copy of your completed form and company logo

Your logo will be used in a pledge document to celebrate businesses who have committed to support the challenge and to encourage more businesses to get involved. Send your completed Pledge Form and company logo to [info@staffordshirechambers.co.uk](mailto:info@staffordshirechambers.co.uk)

### Step 3 – A Guidance Document will then be sent to businesses who completed the Pledge Form

We will send you a guidance document highlighting additional areas of support you can get involved in and how to get involved. We will also be running a number of events to raise awareness further and how to tackle the challenge that all Pledge businesses will be invited to.

### Step 4 – Staffordshire Chambers will then contact you after 6 months to see how you are getting on



**Staffordshire**  
Chambers of  
Commerce.