

Appendix 1 – detailed analysis of challenges and opportunities

Our Borough stands at an exciting juncture, poised for growth and equality. We are committed to harnessing the resilience, agility, and ingenuity of our residents, businesses, and anchor institutions to build a brighter future. The challenges we've faced through Covid-19 have only strengthened our resolve and revealed new opportunities for innovation and community strength. Our collective actions over the next decade will set the stage for a vibrant and thriving Borough, benefiting generations to come.

Populations and Demography

Local partners have a role to play in tackling inequality. Stockport is the 8th most polarised Borough in England in terms of deprivation (out of 317 local authorities) and borough-wide averages mask acute and highly localised challenges. Source: Economic Plan

Stockport's population is older than other many other areas in England.

- The population aged 16-39 accounts for 47% of people in Stockport compared to 50% in England.
- Similarly, the working age population (aged 16-64) accounts for 60% of people in Stockport compared to 64% in Greater Manchester and 62% in England.
- The working age population has also remained relatively stagnant over the last decade, with -1% change since 2010 in Stockport compared to 4% across Greater Manchester and 3% nationally.
- The population aged 0 to 15 accounts for 20% of Stockport's population, which is slightly below Greater Manchester (21%) but above the national average (19%).
- On average, men die 11 years earlier in our most disadvantaged community compared to our most prosperous area, and there is a significant difference in how early people start to experience life limiting illnesses.

As with many of our other demographics, the age of the population is not consistent across the borough. In parts of Stockport town centre residents are up to 22 years younger than some of the borough's suburbs such as Windlehurst. The average age mirrors Stockport's deprivation patterns – with the most deprived neighbourhood's typically having the lowest median age.

Mapping the education attainment of learners in secondary schools for English and Maths shows that the lowest levels of attainment are located in the areas with highest deprivation, whereas schools in Cheadle Hulme and Bramhall have over 80% of pupils achieving the equivalent of grade C or above in both English and Maths.

Stockport has the second lowest child poverty rate of all GM Borough's after Trafford. Despite this, one in four children (25.4%) live in poverty after housing costs. The highest concentration of child poverty is in Brinnington, Stockport town centre and Reddish.

Disadvantaged¹ children and young people living in Stockport on average achieve lower grades at GCSE than our children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) according to attainment 8² data.

¹ Disadvantaged pupils are those who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) at any time during the last six years and children looked after (in the care of the local authority for a day or more or who have been adopted from care).

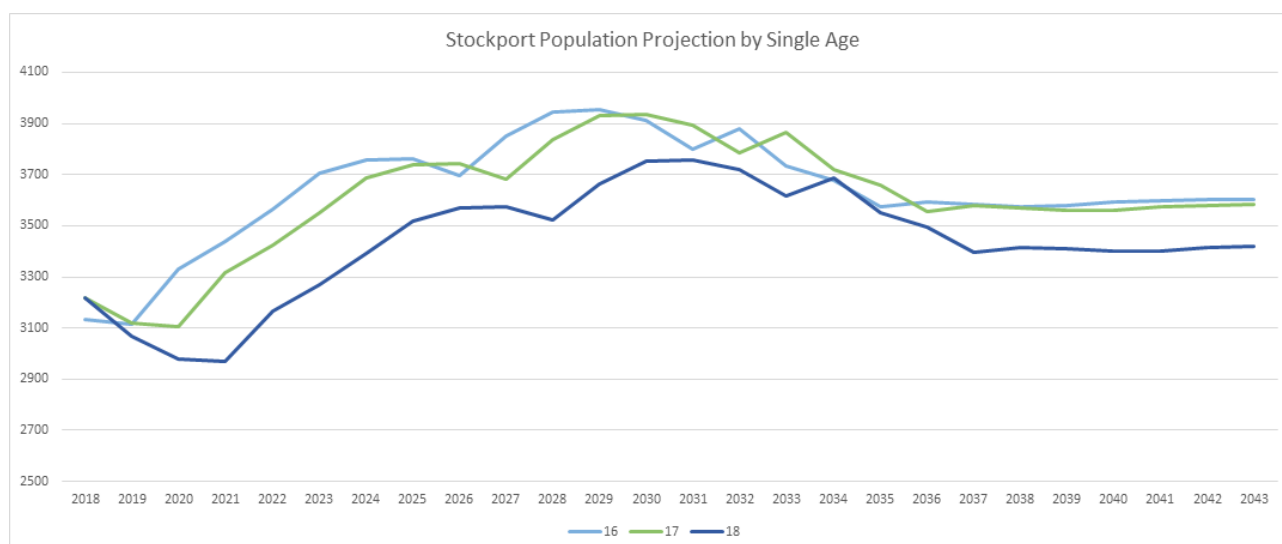
² An Attainment 8 score is a measure published annually showing the average academic performance of a secondary school. It is calculated by adding together pupils' highest scores across eight specific school subjects. While these

A good example is a child who is behind in their reading at five years old. That child is seven times more likely to be behind in their maths when they are seven and 11 times more likely to be behind in their maths when they are 11. If you take a child who gets to secondary school not reading at the level you want at secondary school—we think there will be more of those this year—only one in 10 of those children go on to achieve a good clutch of five GCSEs. It is not something you can pick up later. You get this compounding deficit, and you get compensatory learning.

EXCERPT FROM PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE: THE ROLE OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN ADDRESSING CHILD VULNERABILITY, WITNESS EVIDENCE FROM SIR KEVAN COLLINS.

Forecasted demand

The ONS population estimates forecast that the 15-19yrs population in Stockport will grow by 8.8% by 2030, DfE projections estimate that growth in this population could be as much as 12.7% whereas GP registrations of all school age pupils in Stockport indicate that growth is around 11.1%. GMCA are currently estimating the Greater Manchester populations of the same age will grow by 11.4% in the same period.



Actual and forecasted numbers of 16, 17 and 18 year olds by academic year – Source: Public Health

In terms of Stockport residents attending Stockport schools, we know the number of pupils leaving KS4 and entering the post-16 skills system has/will be approximately:

Academic Year	Total Cohort	No SEND	Identified as having SEND	EHCP
2019	2892	2360	532	234
2020	3067	2393	674	289
2021	3116	2431	685	268
2022	3254	2531	723	336

numbers are not made publicly available on a pupil-by-pupil basis, scores taken from across a school year group are averaged to produce a school's overall score.

2023	3473	2523	950	373
2024	3570	2658	912	319
2025	3669	2663	1006	341
2026	3576	2629	947	310
2027	3665	2660	1005	345
2028	3858	2891	967	345*
2029	3845	2965	880	295*
2030	3828	2941	887	330*

Actuals and forecasts for pupils entering the post-16 skills system, (* may have significant variation due to policy and practice changes relating to the assessment of EHCPs) Source: SMBC pupil forecasting model

Of our pupil population in Primary and Secondary schools, 17.92% had a special educational need or disability compared with 16.8% based on a mean average of CIPFA nearest neighbours. 5.33% of pupils had an Education Health Care Plan in comparison to 4.2%, whilst 12.63% had their needs met through SEN Support in comparison to 12.6%.

Autism; Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH); Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN); and Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD), represent the four biggest areas of growth in the past five years. SEMH specifically bucks national trends, whereby nationally SEMH numbers have risen to 1 in 5 children having a primary need of SEMH, in Stockport 1 in 4 children have a primary need of SEMH. This equates to approximately 396 more pupils with SEMH in Stockport than another typical authority in England.

Post-16 education, training, or employment – Access, visibility, and awareness

Of all learners that left KS4 in July 2022:

- Approx. 91% remained in full-time education;
- Of the above who remain in full-time education, approx. 32% attended provision outside of Stockport (68% access places in Stockport);
- Approx. 1% entered training ;
- Approx 4% started an apprenticeship;
- Approx 3% were not in any kind of education, employment, or training, the vast majority of these learners have some form of identified vulnerability.

The national rise in learners leaving KS4 in coming years will affect choice and availability of places across provision external to Stockport and as such we must look at how we can create more places, above that of anticipated population growth, to provide choice and opportunity for those learners who would ordinarily have sought places outside of Stockport but who cannot secure a place.

We must plan on the assumption that as much as 80% of Stockport learners in full-time education will need to access a place in Stockport – this equates to approx. 472 additional places (3845 pupils forecasted to leave KS4 in 2029 minus 3254 pupils leaving KS4 in 2022 multiplied by 80%) compared with 2022 by 2028. This is equivalent to an uplift of 14% and equates to an additional small sixth form campus.

Careers education, information, advice and guidance is provided in schools, across key stages, and is supported by The Gatsby Benchmarks which are:

- A stable careers programme
- Learning from careers and labour market information
- Addressing the needs of each student
- Linking curriculum learning to careers

- Encounters with employees and employers
- Experience of workplaces
- Encounters with further and higher education
- Personal guidance

The quality of support for young people can vary and schools would benefit from support in working towards the Quality in Careers Award. The Quality in Careers Standard is the national quality award for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) in secondary schools, colleges and work-based learning.

Stockport Council's Education and Careers Advice Service (ECAS) target those young people in year 11, who are most in need of support, to ensure a positive transition into education, employment and training. Those identified possess either an EHC Plan, are in receipt of SEN support, are children in care, or who are for other reasons at risk of becoming NEET. They are targeted in all Stockport mainstream schools and PRUs and receive one to one bespoke support to transition into the next phase of their life.

The increase in pupil numbers generally and those who have some form of SEND, has put a significant extra pressure on post-16 provision in local colleges and training providers who are reporting significant demand for young people to access their provision. The impact of Covid has also exacerbated anxiety and mental health issues with young people. Whilst it is clear that increased capacity is needed generally in the system, specific capacity and resource are needed at foundation level, level 1 and 2 courses. Consideration also needs to be given as to how the post-16 system engages with and prioritises the placement of disadvantaged learners. In a competitive market for places it is these learners run the risk of being at the back of the queue and potentially without their choice of provision, particularly if they have not achieved level 2 maths and English.

The low uptake of technical education pathways seen nationally, particularly in digital, health and healthcare science emphasises the need for more cohesive and integration among schools, post-16 providers, and employers. This points to 1. a lack of awareness and value perception; these technical education pathways are not as well-promoted, understood, or valued as traditional academic routes, leading to fewer students choosing these options, 2. insufficient career advice and guidance; Students and parent/carers alike have not been receiving enough information about the benefits of technical education and how it aligns with viable career opportunities, 3. disconnect between education/training providers and employers: any kinds of gap between the skills taught in technical courses and the actual needs of employers diminishes the attractiveness and perceived value of these pathways.

Work experience or career exploration

There is a crucial distinction between traditional work experience and creating engaging workplace interactions that excite young people about future careers. Work experience programs have historically focused on placing students in a work environment to observe and occasionally assist in daily tasks. However, this traditional approach may not always effectively engage or inspire young students, especially if the work does not align closely with their interests or is not presented in an engaging way.

Young people – particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds – have reported that they want more. They want to learn and practice skills like speaking and listening and want a greater focus on the practicalities of applications for jobs. Employers, for their part, still talk of skills gaps and of young people ill-prepared for the realities of the workplace.

Careers Education: Now and Next was compiled and published by the Careers and Enterprise Company giving the most clear-eyed view of the challenges facing the country as it seeks to build

its future workforce. The data shows clearly how the improving careers system in England can help. When it comes to work experience however, the evidence argues for reinvention.

For businesses, it's about moving away from a rigid view of two weeks of work experience, for which the opportunity has disappeared in too many secondary schools. Instead, there needs to be an ongoing, meaningful relationship with schools and colleges, capturing imaginations as soon as young people enter secondary school.

For schools and colleges, it's about embedding this activity in the curriculum, focussing on the skills that young people will find useful whatever industry or sector they set their sights on. It's also about seeing work readiness as a key part of school life. In the mainstream not at the margins.

Linked to the Gatsby benchmark's, career exploration has the potential to engage and inspire however as outlined already, individualised careers advice, information and guidance (for student and parent/carer) needs to be better and focussed of the interests and talents of the student. Furthermore cohesion and integration between students, education/training institutions and employers needs to be better.

Beyond, fairs, presentations, open days, career exploration in schools does not have to be transactional and instead may be subtly represented through curriculum development/enrichment, integrated technology, project-based learning, and employer/student mentorship programmes.

Recruitment, Retention, and Future Skills

Workforce problems persist across public services, from loss of experienced staff to high turnover and vacancies. The government's focus has been on recruiting more staff: 50,000 more nurses, 6,000 more GPs and 20,000 however, this approach is welcome and necessary.

Public service effectiveness depends therefore on keeping existing workforces skilled, motivated – and, crucially, in post.

Key drivers for retention difficulties include:

- Public sector pay;
- High Workloads;
- Cost of living including housing and childcare;
- Some key roles involve unsociable hours;
- There can be limited avenues in some roles for development and progression.

Nationally a partially effective workforce strategy, deployed in recent years, is for teachers;

The Department for Education operated a demand-led teacher workforce model to calculate the number of teacher and training places that are needed. This model was linked to an overall strategy for recruitment and retention and used to evaluate the impact of those policies at a national level where sufficient information is available to do so. There have been successes in this work however there remain shortfalls across certain subject areas which have not been filled in recent recruitment rounds.

Similar initiatives have been implemented for nursing and for policing and we would welcome a broader national strategy for all public sector jobs.

We need to examine as a group what local levers are available to grow, develop, and attract the very best talent to Stockport.

Whilst there are issues which can only be resolved through national government policy, there is a lot we can do locally to address these challenges. One such local lever is scaling the childcare

offer in Stockport. Access to affordable childcare is a major barrier to parents and carers, particularly women being able to work, study and train. The cost of childcare can be a barrier to employment for single parent households, most of whom are female. In many cases, and especially for single mothers, the cost of childcare outweighs their wages, making it financially restrictive for mothers to return to work. From April 2024, eligible working parents of 2-year-olds can access 15 hours childcare support. By September 2025, most working families with children aged between 9 months and 5 years old will be entitled to 30 hours of childcare support.

The LA has a statutory duty to Secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment. The Statutory guidance requires us to have consideration of:

- Supply and demand for places across the Borough;
- The state of the local labour market including the sufficiency of the local childcare workforce;
- The quality and capacity of childcare providers.

Put simply, to scale capacity where demand outstrips supply, there needs to exist an available workforce, that workforce needs to have a depth of knowledge and experience, and childcare providers need to have sufficient quality and capacity to absorb and mitigate an uplift in workforce (and inevitable dilution of knowledge and experience in a setting). If the workforce does not exist, and/or is not of sufficient quality, and/or the providers expanding don't have sufficient quality and capacity to absorb the impacts of increased workforce then scaling will be limited and/or quality of provision will be impacted.

We have yet to see the impact of scaling activity of childcare places across Stockport. As such this could be a risk to work and skills in the future.

More broadly across all sectors (public and private), Stockport has the highest number of recruitment difficulties in the public sector compared with other GM authorities, with 79% of businesses reporting they struggled to recruit staff. Stockport's employers especially had problems recruiting 'professional / managerial' roles, as 43% of them reported that getting people for these roles presented a challenge. This was followed by 'skilled and technical' (38.7%), 'clerical' (23.2%) and 'unskilled and semi-skilled' (14.1%). Notably, recruitment problems for every role were greater in Stockport compared to the Greater Manchester average.

The hardest-to-obtain technical skills from candidates were 'specialist skills/knowledge to perform the role' and 'knowledge of products/services offered by their organisation' with 46.3% and 45% of businesses reporting these. These two skills areas exceeded the others by far. In third and fourth place came 'advanced IT skills' (16.2%) and 'basic IT skills' (15.3%).

Regarding soft skills, 'ability to manage own time and prioritise own tasks' (33.3%), 'sales' (31.5%) and 'managing own feelings or the feelings of others' (29.6%) were the most difficult to find in candidates. 'IT skills' (both advanced and basic) and 'sales' were identified as being in short supply more often in Stockport than in Greater Manchester.

The training courses with highest demand in Stockport were 'basic functional skills for business' (33.6%), 'digital marketing' (31.4%) and 'sales & business development' (30.5%). Other popular training courses were 'business leadership & management' (30%) and 'specialised functional skills for business' (25.9%). Compared to Greater Manchester, businesses in Stockport were substantially more interested in 'digital marketing' courses and less interested in the 'soft skills' and 'business leadership and management' courses.

The below table shows a sample of occupations by total number of vacancy postings in Stockport from 2017 – 2022. Source: Adzuna.

Vacancies	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Social Care worker	1702	1845	1757	2246	3048	2546
Customer service advisor	1686	1442	1050	336	1054	1297
General nurse	1623	1325	1350	1318	1214	1015
Mental health nurse	880	779	622	359	NO DATA	NO DATA
Administrator	654	447	524	342	710	884
Teacher	NO DATA	NO DATA	255	NO DATA	NO DATA	565
Teaching assistant	NO DATA	NO DATA	470	426	718	835

Diversifying Stockport's economy is vital for future resilience. A potential lack of business dynamism and poor survival rates risks undermining Stockport's recent growth. Despite hosting a micro-business dominated economy, there is a lack of evidence of an entrepreneurial start-up culture. Existing employment specialisms are forecast to decline, making economic diversification an urgent necessity. Key employment sectors such as manufacturing, and utilities are forecast to shrink by over 5,000 jobs by 2040. Current trends around automation in key sectors, such as logistics and distribution, further strengthens the need for diversification, and there is an opportunity to harness and grow green economy technologies and businesses. *Source: Economic Plan*

The Council has declared a climate emergency. Issues of congestion, air quality and the carbon footprint of our buildings and business activities need to be addressed if we are to meet regional and national net zero targets. Greening our borough also represents an economic opportunity. The development of skills to support the 'green economy' is a key priority. In addition to supporting climate adaptation, we will enable businesses and residents to take advantage of new opportunities in the green economy. Supporting businesses to help make the necessary adaptations to achieve net zero targets are part of the Economic Plan. *Source: Economic Plan*