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TOGETHER ACTIVE

Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent

ANNUAL
REPORT
2022-23

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I’d like to extend an enormous thank you to our dedicated staff team, fabulous volunteers and all of the partners who’ve been involved in our work over the last twelve months...**this report is for you!**
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Chair & CEO Introduction

It has been a year of change for Together Active following my appointment as Chief Executive in July 2022 and Paul’s appointment as Chair in January 2023. Paul and I would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to our predecessors Jude Taylor (CEO) and Malcolm Armstrong (Chair). Jude and Malcolm steered the organisation through COVID and led Together Active to become the organisation it is today. We are grateful for their commitment and dedication and wish them the very best in their future endeavours.

We’re excited to be part of Together Active’s plans to strengthen and grow and over the last year we’ve achieved a huge amount. One of my highlights is the schools mental health pilot that proved how simple interventions using physical activity can shift the balance for a young person from being at risk of mental health crisis to feeling well and stable.

The continuation of Together Fund was another highlight. I visited several projects that received this funding to see firsthand the incredible work frontline, grassroots organisations are doing. Spending time with Liberty Jamboree to see neuro diverse young

people achieve qualifications in sports leadership was brilliant. Hearing from people at other organisations with experiences of domestic abuse, addiction issues and homelessness about how physical activity has aided their recovery has been incredible too. It is a reminder about why these grants are so important – our role as an active partnership is to ensure that these stories are heard and when policy decisions are made, they use the real life experiences of our communities to do so. Physical activity is part of a toolkit that improves people’s lives and needs to be visible in all of our key decision making about how we best support the people in our communities especially those who are most excluded and at risk.

Finally, I’d like to extend an enormous thank you to our dedicated staff team, fabulous volunteers and all of the partners who’ve been involved in our work over the last twelve months – **this report is for you!**

Carly Jones, CEO Together Active
Paul Muir, Chair of Trustees, Together Active





Who we are

We are a charity dedicated to a powerful mission: **designing out inactivity**. Our goal is to make being active an integral part of systems, processes, and interventions that support the most at-risk individuals in our communities. We firmly believe that physical activity has the power to transform lives, create opportunities, and reduce inequalities.

To achieve our mission, we focus on three key areas of work: **powerful communities, health and wellbeing, and social inclusion. These pillars guide our efforts as we strive to make a** positive impact on the lives of those we serve.

As the Active Partnership for Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent, our reach extends beyond the local level. While we are deeply rooted in our community, we are also part of a national network of organisations that share our vision. By collaborating with other Active Partnerships across the country, we can amplify the role of physical activity in supporting overall health and wellbeing.

While we do not directly deliver programmes and services ourselves, we work closely with individuals and organisations who are best positioned and skilled to provide the necessary support and access opportunities to our communities. By forging strong partnerships, we leverage collective expertise and resources to empower individuals to embrace an active lifestyle.

Passion drives us forward. We are passionate about physical activity in all its forms, recognising its incredible potential to make a difference. Whether it's through sports, recreation, active transportation, or innovative interventions, we champion the power of physical activity to enhance lives and create a more equitable society.

At Together Active, we are committed to making a lasting impact. We believe that by integrating physical activity into the very fabric of our communities, we can foster powerful change and improve the health and wellbeing of all individuals, particularly those who face the greatest challenges and disparities.



We are a charity dedicated to a powerful mission: **designing out inactivity.**

What we do

Together Active is a charity who works to embed physical activity in systems and support networks for the people of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. We want physical activity to be used as a tool to increase social inclusion, build powerful communities, and improve health and wellbeing.

We are part of an England-wide network of 43 Active Partnerships, working together to provide more equitable access to physical activity in all its forms.

We work in collaboration with local authorities, community groups, charities and the voluntary sector to help provide the right support at the right time to have the greatest impact.



Our year in numbers

Opening School Facilities

- // 19 Stoke schools received year 1 funding
- // £330,000 distributed
- // Average IDACI band: 2.6

School Games

- // Leadership and event volunteer training was delivered to 60 students from a range of schools / colleges
- // 286 schools taking part in County School Games Events
- // 2160 young people participating in County School Games Events

Training – CC and SP

- // Clinical Champion training delivered to more than 50 people
- // Two face-to-face Social Prescriber targeted Physical Activity training sessions were delivered to 13 link workers

Virtual Schools

- // Activity day at Burntwood rated a 67 out of 70 possible stars and Northwood scored 99 out of 105 stars
- // 55 young people attended across 2 events

Gen22:

- // By 31st of March over 30 young people volunteered in excess of 1000 hours!

Together Fund

- // £245,121 distributed to 61 projects across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent in 2022-2023
- // Of the funds just over 50% was allocated to the staffing/coaching of the activities; 22% to facility hire; 15% to kit and equipment and around 4% to workforce education/training

Long COVID Programme

- // 40 people across 4 locations in Stoke and Staffordshire took part
- // 4 point increase to WEBWMS (mental health)
- // 9 point increase to DAS1 (functional capacity)
- // Significant decreases in depression and anxiety scores (-6 and -4 points respectively)
- // 6 point increase in sit-stand test
- // 107 point increase in 6 minute walking test

Active Lives

3 Local authorities have seen active levels increase in children and young people in their area since before the pandemic occurred, whilst 2 have seen decreases, according to latest statistics.

Schools Mental Health

- // 39 young people across 2 schools
- // 14-point increase in mental wellbeing



- Reactions/likes, comments & shares: 346
- Facebook page reach: 41,468



- Tweet impressions: 71,838
- Total followers: 3,003



- New followers: 120



- Open rate: 52%
- Click thru rate: 32%

Social Media



Pre and Post Pandemic Active Levels in Schools CYP Active Lives Survey	2017-18	2018-19 Active Levels	21-22 Post Pademic Active levels	Change to pre-pandemic
England	43.30%	46.80%	47.20%	+
Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent AP	39.00%	44.60%	47.80%	+
Staffordshire	37.70%	44.90%	46.60%	+
Stoke-on-Trent	49.30%	41.20%	53.00%	+
Cannock Chase	36.60%	-	-	-
East Staffordshire	42.80%	46.00%	-	-
Lichfield	28.80%	51.30%	-	-
Newcastle-under-Lyme	37.30%	36.30%	42.70%	+
South Staffordshire	43.20%	45.10%	42.00%	-
Stafford	36.70%	53.30%	47.40%	-
Staffordshire Moorlands	35.80%	-	41.80%	+
Tamworth	42.10%	-	-	-

- Over 1600 respondents to the survey in the academic year 21-22 with 169 schools contacted over the academic year.

Health and Wellbeing

Better Health Staffordshire

Together Active are a key partner in BHS, a whole systems approach to tackling the causes of excess weight, promoting a healthy food environment and an active lifestyle, with initial pathfinder areas in Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire and Staffordshire Moorlands. We actively contribute to both strategic and operational BHS groups, leading the integration of physical activity insights and stakeholder involvement in local networks. We've facilitated four 'systems mapping' workshops and developed a Staffordshire BHS causal map to understand the complexities behind excess weight issues and barriers to healthy eating and physical activity. Citizen's Enquiry workshops have also involved local communities. Draft action plans with strong physical activity elements are complete for all three districts, and we've expanded BHS to Newcastle-Under-Lyme and South Staffordshire.

Active Environments

Where we live and work significantly impacts physical activity. Well-designed urban environments and accessible blue and green spaces can directly support people to be more physically active, by making it the easy, safe and attractive option. Unfortunately, societal changes have made physical activity less accessible.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) - Meecebrook Garden Town:

Together Active leads the physical activity aspect of an HIA for the potential 6,000-home Meecebrook Garden Town development. We are determining the potential positive and negative impacts of both new and existing communities in terms of leading an active and healthy lifestyle, drawing from available data, evidence-based policy, and stakeholder expertise. Our recommendations aim to mitigate negative effects, while also aiding our understanding of active environments and guiding future work.

Cannock Chase Wayfinding Project

The project progresses, despite challenges from the cost-of-living crisis. Contracts are signed, and a successful bid to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for Cannock Chase has meant the first 'spades in the ground' creating an access path to the start of the Toc H Trail. Data collection using 'people counters' is planned. Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles are leading conversations with Hednesford communities to design an accessible path, lookout stage, rest stops with QR codes, and relevant QR code content.

Active My Way (AMW)

This year saw AMW content expanded, covering topics like hormones and physical activity, supporting individuals with Down's Syndrome, aiding caregivers, and addressing low-level mental health conditions. We saw the first licensing deal of the AMW brand to Active Humber and North Yorkshire Sport, substantially increasing the size of the website and the footprint of the brand, strengthening our partnership with the organisations. We have also advocated for digital technologies in physical activity and supported strategic plans for iMin and active partnerships.

Clinical Champions and Social Prescriber Training

Together Active equips healthcare professionals and link workers to confidently discuss and prescribe physical activity. We've trained 13 link workers and social prescribers in behaviour change and motivational interviewing in North and South Staffordshire. Clinical Champions, comprising over 50 colleagues, received training with a focus on local insights and initiatives. This approach promotes greater awareness and competence, providing greater support to residents of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

School Mental Health Pilot

We collaborated with two Stoke-on-Trent schools in areas of the greatest need to design a 10-week programme addressing young people's mental health, and prevent further deterioration. After the programme, self-reported mental well-being increased by 14 points, particularly in confidence and self-esteem. Positive outcomes included improved relationships, a safe space for expression, increased physical activity participation, and enhanced communication among students. We aim to apply these learnings more widely to support mental health through physical activity.



Social Inclusion

Virtual Schools

We have been funded by the West Midlands Virtual Schools Foundation to deliver a small programme of activity and education, including 2 activity taster events for Virtual Schools to invite participants along to try local sport and activity opportunities. The Virtual Schools Foundation supports young people in foster care to access additional opportunities for out of school learning and leisure.

Our first event took place at Burntwood Leisure Centre on 4th Dec 2022. 27 young people in care attended and accessed Boxing, Squash, Archery, Dodgeball, and Glow in the dark Table Tennis delivered by Lichfield Get in2It programme, Tamworth Boxing Club and Lichfield and Burntwood Squash Clubs.

Our second event was held at Northwood Stadium, Stoke on Trent on 18th February 2023. 28 young people in care attended and accessed taster sessions in various Athletics events including track, jumps and throws, Boxing and Basketball all delivered by local clubs Stoke Athletics Club, Impact Boxing Academy and Hanley Hustlers Basketball Club.

Feedback from the foster parents and the children has been fantastic. We had a total of 35 feedback forms asking the young people to score a max of 5 stars for their experience of the day. Burntwood scored 67 out of 70 and Northwood scored 99 out of 105! and signposting for a number of young people into local clubs has taken place.

School Games

The Summer School Games Festival was delivered (Keele University, June 2022) with over 1,000 pupils and over 120 schools attending from all parts of the County and Stoke-on-Trent. Face-to-face surveys with pupils and teachers undertaken on the day showed 90% satisfaction amongst both samples. On the same day over 80 pupils (boys and girls classed as less active or inactive) took part in a Commonwealth Games Legacy Festival designed and created through youth consultation.

Leadership and event volunteer training was delivered to 60 students from a range of schools / colleges. Together Active working in partnership with School Games Organisers (from Stafford and Stone, South Staffordshire, East Staffordshire, South Stoke, and Lichfield and Burntwood) also organised a day-long Toughest Challenge event at Chasewater Activity Centre which involved over 70 pupils (targeted due to poor mental health following Covid or classed as less active) in a range of outdoor problem solving physical activities.



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Feedback from the foster parents and the children has been **fantastic**.

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Together Fund

The Together Fund is a continuation of the Tackling Inequalities Fund that was set up in April 2020 as part of a nationwide support package to help the sport and physical activity sector through the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis. Together Active manages the Together Fund across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. Renamed and Rebranded the Together Fund it continued to help groups that, were disproportionately affected by the pandemic and / or who are now being disproportionately impacted by the rise in the cost of living. The funding aims to support these groups to become more physically active and to sustain their levels of activity.

This additional National Lottery funding allowed us to commit a further £245,121 to another 61 projects across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent in 2022-2023.

Of the funds just over 50% was allocated to the staffing/coaching of the activities; 22% to facility hire; 15% to kit and equipment and around 4% to workforce education/training.

Of these 61 projects, half of these are working with organisations that are new to us and we have not funded before, and over a third of these are non-sporting organisations that are using physical activity to work with their audiences such as those with a disability, or long term health conditions, mental health issues, living in supported living situations such as older people, and those fleeing domestic violence.



Powerful Communities

Opening School Facilities

In the latest round of OSF, we have been able to work with 19 Stoke-on-Trent schools to develop programmes of activity specifically targeting students from deprived backgrounds, providing opportunities to take part in activities they normally wouldn't be able to. Student voice has been particularly important, which has led to some interesting and innovative approaches to the activities delivered. One school has chosen to have a Sports Day theme to their activities for SEND students, who have struggled with confidence issues when taking part in Sports Day and having to perform activities which aren't usually practiced.

Other schools activities include specialist dance sessions for SEND students, fitness and health sessions for girls, multiactivity sessions for FSM students, and introductions to fitness for students on FSM and their families. Many of the schools have

also incorporated staff training for sustainability, and we will be engaging with the schools to develop links into the community on an ongoing basis. A total of £330,000 has been distributed so far, with an additional 14 schools set to join over the next 2 years.

Warm Spaces

In 2022, we identified the cost of living crisis as a serious issue for the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable residents of Stoke-on-Trent.

We learned that there would be at least 50 Warm Spaces across the city, where people would be able to go for advice, support, food and warmth over the winter.

We were concerned about potential deconditioning of older people in particular who were accessing these spaces, and wanted to provide activities to keep people moving to preserve their health.

Working in collaboration with Nuffield Health and VAST, we were able to put together a small programme of activities across a small number of sites at no cost over a three month period.



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engaging with the schools to develop links into the **community**

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Future Plans

In 2023-24, we will be refreshing our strategy to reflect the learning we've gained through our role as a system partner. We have identified three strategic objectives that will be our focus over the coming years. These are:

- // Powerful Communities
- // Social Inclusion
- // Health and Wellbeing

These objectives will be underpinned by our core pillars that cut through everything we do:



Over the next twelve months we are putting insight and evidence front and centre of our work. We'll be investing in a strategic partnership with an external insight partner that will help us map the landscape in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent. We'll also be reaching into our communities to properly understand them. We know the people that are least heard are least counted and we won't be shying away from addressing that challenge as a key priority for the organisation.

We're planning to reshape the way we work in the coming year which will mean investing in growing our team and developing their knowledge and skills to help us become the expert in physical activity for our region.

Finally we'll be continuing to support key initiatives like Opening School Facilities and the implementation of additional safeguarding resource for National Governing Bodies at local level. We will maintain our focus on influencing systems by working in partnership with grassroots organisations to prove concept and stimulate effective system change that is based on what people want and need. We will continue pump prime new work and help small local organisations enhance their sustainability to ensure their experiences are what we use to compel policy and system change in the region.

Governance and finance

Governance

Together Active commissioned an external evaluation of our Board and Governance during 2022. As the charity was established in 2020, it was felt that this was the right time to review our current practices and identify ways to further strengthen our governance.

Overall the findings were very positive, with Together Active being seen to have effective governance procedures, particularly for a small entity. A number of recommendations were made to support us moving forwards, which are now being implemented.

"Together Active currently has strong foundations of good governance, with considerable expertise among the trustees... The Board is supported by committed and capable staff." (External Board Evaluation)

As an Active Partnership we are required by Sport England to meet the requirements of Tier Three of



A Code for Sports Governance. Together Active was confirmed as compliant in November 2021, although since then the Code has been revised. We have recently reassessed ourselves as continuing to be compliant with the existing criteria, and with some of the new requirements, and are currently working towards complying with the remaining new requirements during 2023.

In October 2022 our longstanding Chair, Malcolm Armstrong, stepped down from the Board. Malcolm was an extremely committed and knowledgeable Chair who led the organisation through the transition to becoming an independent charity, and through the Covid pandemic. In January 23 we welcomed Paul Muir as our new Chair. Paul has significant experience of the housing, health and social care sectors and is committed to reducing inequalities in physical activity.

Finance

Financial Information: 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

	Budget (£)	Actual (£)
Balance Carried Forward from 2021-22	£1,019,853	£1,019,853
Income	£653,470	£773,127
Expenditure	£1,082,890	£859,092
Net Carry Forward to 22-23	£590,433	£933,888
Of which Restricted Funds	£2,680	£335,540
Of which Unrestricted Funds (Reserves)	£197,430	£168,840
Of which Unrestricted Funds (Free)	£0390,323	£429,508

The Unrestricted Funds (Reserves) carry forward is the amount needed to cover our liabilities as of 31.03.23. A copy of Together Active's full, audited accounts and Trustees' Annual Report for 2022-23 will be available on our website once completed.



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