

#STOKE-ON-TRENTTOGETHER

#StokeonTrentTogether: a statement from Councillor Abby Brown

This statement was released in 2021 when Councillor Abby Brown was Leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

“Stoke-on-Trent is an area with high levels of deprivation, however it is also an area that is renowned for its friendly and caring population. At the start of the pandemic offers of support from the local community poured in to the Council. To harness this colossal goodwill, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, in partnership with VAST, developed a consortium of Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to setup the Stoke-on-Trent Together initiative and provide support to the most vulnerable people in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.



The Covid pandemic has resulted in one of the most challenging operating environments many organisations have ever, and will ever, face, however this is nothing compared to the individual struggles of residents across the city over the past 12 months. The partnership between the city council and VAST brought together a diverse range of skills, knowledge and expertise in order to provide a responsive and proactive approach to helping the people of Stoke-on-Trent. VAST have played a central role in developing, delivering and maintaining this programme by leading on developing the website, IT systems, supporting volunteers and collating information to ensure support is available across the city. More significantly they have provided leadership for the sector and effective coordination in order to ensure that organisations, of all sizes, received support to help them meet the challenges.

The pandemic also led to ground-swell in volunteers offering support – with clear commentary that people want to give something back to those who have helped them during difficult times. VAST were critical in ensuring this goodwill was directed into the areas where it was most needed and keeping volunteers informed about opportunities. The success of this approach enabled us to successfully secure funding to develop Community Health Champions to maintain our community volunteers over the coming year.

The long-term impact of the collective efforts of the team within the city council and VAST over this time cannot be overstated. The development of a single coordinated route to community-based support will continue beyond the pandemic, continuing to harness local energy to meet the needs of the city through the recovery. The close working relationship with the voluntary and community sector, with strategic leadership from VAST, will provide the foundation for our recovery from the effects of the pandemic.