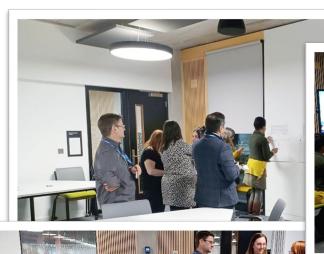# STAFFS CAN

5th March 2024

What we focused on at Staffs CAN

Speed Networking

What does *Civic* mean to you?

Raising Voices Taking Action

Public Engagement Innovation Grants

Staffs CAN Review

What we did

Eleven people came to this Staffs CAN with a mix of community members, and representatives from across the community.

This Staffs CAN offered an opportunity for people to network with each other and also contribute their thoughts towards the question *What does civic mean to you?*.

The session finished with updates from the [Public Engagement and Research (PEaR) Team](#).

Speed Networking

The session opened with an opportunity for people to network with each other. One of the benefits of Staffs CAN is meeting new people and building networks. We wanted to take some time and focus on this during this Staffs CAN.

What does *Civic* mean to you?

Staffordshire University is part of [The NCIA Action Learning Programme](#). The NCIA Programme aims to enhance the engagement, impact, and efficiency of higher education institutions in their community-focused initiatives, nurturing societal, economic, and environmental gains. It also aims to optimize universities' roles in tackling societal issues and aligning with policy objectives.

Staffordshire University has been involved in the programme and has spoken at length with other representatives from universities across the country about the meaning of 'Civic' and what it means for a 'Civic University'. There is an understanding of what this might mean to higher education institutions, but it maybe isn't as clear what it means to community members.

At this Staffs CAN we aimed to answer this question.

Activities

During the session people were asked to take part in a few different activities, created by the team from NCIA, to help think about what the word 'Civic' meant to them and their community. The first involved people reading statements related to, or extending, the meaning of civic. These were:

- o Civic
- o Civic Activities
- o Civic Mission
- o Civic Engagement
- o Civic Impact

Following this, we asked the questions.

'How can universities and community organisations be encouraged to work more closely together?'

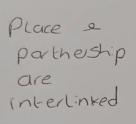*'How 'Civic' is Staffordshire University?'*

Staffs CAN attendees discussed these questions and outlined responses to each through group discussion.

Finally, we asked people to rank words and meanings related to the term 'civic, (e.g., Civic as something which is people-centred and relational), this was done from lowest priority to highest priority. These terms were:

- Process
- Policy
- People
- Partnership
- Purpose
- Place
- Practice

The full breakdown of these activities and responses will be made available at a later date once the information has been circulated fully with the NCIA team.

Place e
partheship
are
interlinked

PARTNERSHIP.

Civic involves mutual agreements on shared priorities
Relational behaviour needs to translate into place-based partnership with other 'anchors' of the community.

PLACE

Civic as physical location
We are choosing to interpret civic as 'local' activity which is focused on realising benefits in a university's location. This could be local or regional engagement, but not national or international.

PURPOSE.

Civic as a pathway to public benefit
How universities negotiate, describe, activate and evaluate the value they create though their civic activity, and frame their purposes for civic work

POLICY.

Incentives or disincentives for civic action
Exploring the policy and funding mechanisms which enable or hold back civic activity.

PRACTICE.

Civic as practical action
The practical ways in which universities can embed civic practices and behaviours into their academic activity and how they can use their 'anchor' role (procurement, employment practices, facilities etc) to benefit people and place.

Opportunities to get involved with

Raising Voices Taking Action: Chat for Change Events

Ryan updated the room regarding the project.

Raising Voices: Taking Action is led by a mixed group of people with lived and learnt experiences of poverty. The group includes [All the Small Things CIC](#), [Expert Citizens CIC](#) and Staffordshire University.

The project follows on from previous projects [Get Talking Hardship](#) and [Raising Voices](#).

Raising Voices: Taking Action brings people together in Stoke-on-Trent.

- to talk about what causes poverty, and what makes it worse.
- to build our power to take action to tackle poverty.

We hope that through a united effort, people in diverse communities can join forces to deal with the causes of poverty in Stoke-on-Trent.

Chat for Change

To help us take action we will be holding Chat for Change events, across the city. Chat for Change is an opportunity to Join other people to talk about poverty in a safe place over a hot drink and a piece of cake.

Chat for Change events are free to all. Bring your kids, friends, and family. Share your ideas and find out about how we can take action on

poverty together! Chat for Change sessions will be held across the city, in different community spaces.

We are currently looking for community organisations and charities who would like to host a Chat for Change event. If you're interested in hosting one of these events or if you'd like to get involved with the project, please contact:

- Penny Vincent, All the Small Things CIC, allthesmallthingscic@gmail.com
- Phil Parkes, Expert Citizens CIC, volunteer@expertcitizens.org.uk
- Ryan Fox, Staffordshire University, Ryan.fox@staffs.ac.uk

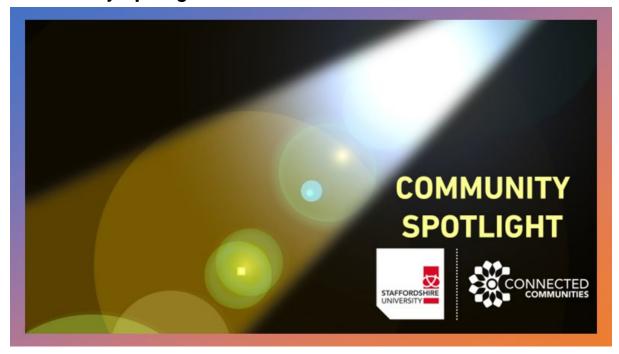## Public Engagement in Research Grants Panel

Our team have recently launched Public Engagement Innovation Grants (PEIG) for members of staff to apply for at Staffordshire University. The grants are designed to enhance knowledge exchange through innovation in public engagement in research, or community engagement activities.

We asked members of the Staffs CAN network to join the decision-making panel for the grants to make sure that community voices could be involved with the process.

On 21st March the panel met to make the decisions on which would be successful. In total 7 grants have been awarded PEIG funding.

We want to take the opportunity to thank all members of Staffs CAN that showed and interest and especially to the two members that supported us to make decisions. We hope to involve members of the Staffs CAN Network in future activities such as this!

Community Spotlight

[The Connected Communities Newsletter](#) asks for contributions from communities across Staffordshire, to spotlight the work that they do and what they have got coming up that people can get involved with or support.

If you would like to shine a spotlight on your community, email connectedcommunities@staffs.ac.uk