

Castleville – an overview

Castleville is a garrison town in the north midlands. It has a unitary borough council, with a population of circa 200,000 people; it is also home of the 1st Regiment of the Eton Rifles. The garrison, when all are at base, has a further population of 7,500.

Castleville itself is an old settlement going back to Roman Times, with a Roman Amphitheatre and what is left of Roman Barracks. The economy is based on manufacture industry, agriculture and tourism. The medieval centre of the town is quite prosperous.

The manufacturing is mainly small scale and specialist in the light engineering sector, especially medical and auto engineering. The agriculture is specialist, non-mechanised organic farming and the largest employer in the town is in fact a chicken farm and factory.

The town has one technical college and is within 25 miles of the nearest university.

Castleville is served by a local authority under severe financial pressures, struggling over the last few years with the challenge of reducing its spend by 40%. It has traditionally been a Labour led authority, but in recent years UKIP has won a number of council seats and has growing support.

Plans for local devolution have been agreed and public authorities are expected to work more closely together in the future. However, there has been a poor history of collaborative working between the different public agencies in the town.

Like most local authorities the majority of its controllable budget is spent on children's services and adult social care.

There are a number of specific problems in Castleville

1. One is the number of returning ex-military personnel, many of whom are homeless and have drug and / or alcohol problems. This is both expensive on the local authority and causes a level of tension in the local community. The recent census had over 1000 ex-military either homeless, or living in B and B accommodation.
2. Its children's social services department is failing but demand for services is growing exponentially, its children in care population is 177 per 10,000, whereas a neighbouring authority's numbers are only 60 per 10,000. A recent analysis has shown that it has disproportionate number of children going into care as a result of domestic abuse, where the parents have had drug or alcohol problems.
3. Furthermore, on the outskirts of the town there is a resettlement prison, which is disconnected from the community but returns some 750 men a year back into the surrounding community.
4. The tension in Castleville is compounded by the high level of migrant workers, both seasonal and regular, who work in the agricultural sector.

5. The health and wellbeing of Castleville residents is a major issue. Many of the local people struggle to see their local GP due to population increases in rural areas and many of the 'single handed' practices have closed due to retirement; the nearest hospital is 30 miles away.
6. Although there are some affluent families in Castleville, individuals living in the most deprived communities are more likely to be affected by public health issues, such as obesity, smoking and alcohol related diseases.

In Castleville deprived adults are 3.8 times more likely to die from coronary heart disease between the ages of 45-74, and 12.3 times more likely to die of an alcohol related condition. 45 per cent of adults living in the most deprived communities are smokers, compared with 11 per cent in the most affluent areas.

7. Older people in the community report high levels of loneliness and social isolation leading to anxiety, depression and addiction.

Castleville has its good points!

1. Although things have been challenging in Castleville, there is a strong sense of community amongst local people and there have been some attempts to engage with the new migrant population.
2. Castleville has a lot of green space with parks, rivers and playgrounds. Housing is affordable compared to neighbouring cities and, due to local food production, there is a ready availability of fresh local produce.
3. The social economy. Community action is on the increase. Volunteer groups have established a farmers' market in the car park of the abandoned supermarket. A vacant store became a cooperative gallery for neighbourhood artists. Another became a social enterprise, where young people were trained to repair used bicycles donated by community members for use by the youth, foster children and homeless families. However, there is only one sizable social enterprise. Most of the other local social entrepreneurial activity, while doing good, is on a small scale and there is clearly need for much greater scale to achieve impact.
4. Despite tensions with migrant workers, the agricultural sector, especially the organic side, has potential for growth – both for an increasing local tourist market and for further afield.