

# Self-assessment Report 2023/24



monmouthshire  
sir fynwy

## Version Control

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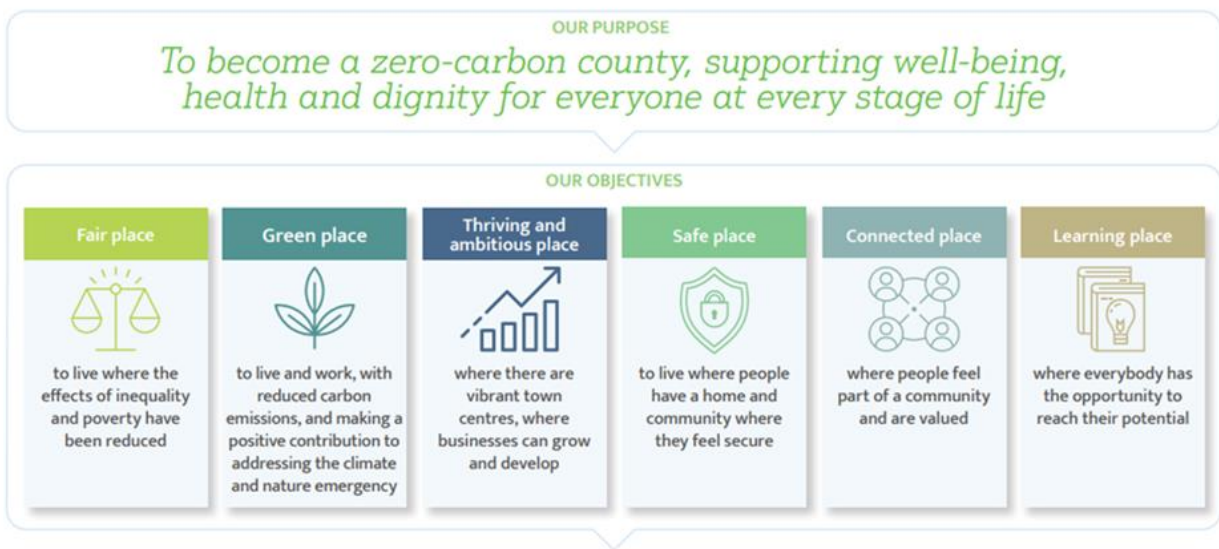
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# Introduction

We are clear about what we want to achieve, and this self-assessment is a critical tool in helping us achieve that. Our ambition for Monmouthshire County Council and the people it serves is set in our Community and Corporate Plan. We want to be a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life. We will do this working with, and alongside, our communities. These are ambitious goals and it's vital that we track and evaluate our progress. This will make sure we can respond to changing circumstances and opportunities and, most importantly, be held accountable for how well we are doing.

Local councils deliver hundreds of different services. Every household will have some experience of waste collection and highways. You may never need support from social services but, with an ageing population, it is vital part of everyday life for many thousands of residents when they are at their most vulnerable. Other services, such those delivered by our environmental health teams, will be less visible but work hard every day to keep us all safe. This evaluation cannot cover every single service. We have scrutiny committees and business plans in place to allow our councillors to hold senior officers and Cabinet members to account for those. Instead, it focuses primarily on how well we have delivered the six well-being objectives described in the Community and Corporate Plan.

## Our Community and Corporate Plan – at a glance



The report also evaluates some of the key governance aspects that underpin our work such as the effectiveness of our workforce planning, use of assets and our financial management arrangements. It dovetails with the Annual Governance Statement, which is coordinated by our Chief Internal Auditor on behalf of the leadership team, and draws on audit and inspection work carried out by regulators including Audit Wales, Estyn and the Care Inspectorate Wales.

Like many public services we are facing real terms reductions in our budgets as a result of external economic pressures. We have made over £70M of savings in recent years. We sometimes have to take difficult decisions to balance our books. This Authority has a good track record of developing proposal to deliver within its budget. This evaluation helps us understand the impact of the changes we make and allows us to learn from these changes so we can strive to continually improve what we do.

## Our Self-Assessment

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, requires councils to keep their performance under review through self-assessment. We need to publish a report setting out the conclusions of the self-assessment once every financial year. This report looks back over the period from April 2023 to March 2024.

Effective self-assessment helps the Council to continually learn and to achieve sustainable improvement and better outcomes for citizens, service users and its own workforce. This is focused on three questions:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know?
- What and how can we do better?

This is integrated with our annual reporting arrangements on the progress and impact we have made in meeting our well-being objectives, which is a requirement under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Further details on the process of the self-assessment are shown in Appendix 2.

We welcome views from residents on this assessment along with any areas of our work that you think should be considered by the scrutiny committees that hold decision-makers to account, please get in touch:



[improvement@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:improvement@monmouthshire.gov.uk)



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## Understanding our local place

Monmouthshire is a diverse county. As a council we need to ensure we are meeting the needs of a wide range of groups, from residents to businesses. We strive to better understand the challenges facing our residents.

The context that we operate in is complex. Having a clear and current understanding of the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being in Monmouthshire is essential for the Council to inform its purpose and priorities.

### Local place

How well do we understand our local context and place and has this informed our purpose and priorities?	How do we know?
<p>The Council has a good understanding of the well-being of its residents. We have access to and analyse a range of statistical information including but not limited to health, income levels and the local economy. We also get qualitative feedback about residents' perceptions of our area from the National Survey for Wales. Some services, such as social care, libraries and building control also gather feedback from service user surveys. However, we recognise that we do not have a comprehensive understanding of how well services and policies are meeting the needs of the people who use them given the breadth of services provided.</p> <p>A study by Audit Wales concluded that, like other councils, we needed to do more to understand the impact of our services on residents.</p> <p>We have 46 ward councillors who represent the interests of their communities and bring forward local intelligence. This is supplemented by the use of a public open forum at scrutiny meetings and Council to allow residents to raise matters of concern.</p> <p>We also consult directly when we are planning service changes or considering action in a particular area, for example, we engaged with over 1,200 people to understand how we could make our communities more age friendly.</p> <p>The Community and Corporate Plan sets a clear commitment to work with and alongside communities, empowering people to support each other and come up with long-term solutions.</p> <p>We have engaged extensively during the production of the replacement Local Development Plan. This will shape land use in the county. It will increase opportunities for the younger people to both live and work within Monmouthshire, creating a more balanced demography and socially and economically sustainable communities. We are also working in partnership on the production of town centre masterplans.</p> <p>Once every five years we also conduct an extensive well-being assessment and population needs assessment with partners across Gwent. The Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) has engaged widely in the development of the well-being assessment and plan for the area.</p>	<p>National Survey for Wales</p> <p>Customer Surveys</p> <p>Audit Wales Report - <i>Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes</i></p> <p>Informational from the National Statistics Office and other sources</p> <p>Population Needs Assessment</p> <p>Gwent Well-being Assessment &amp; Plan</p> <p>Community and Corporate Plan</p> <p>Replacement Local Development Plan</p> <p>Town centre masterplans</p>

## Our Outcomes

The Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28 contains six well-being objectives which focus on the longer-term future of the county and aims to address complex challenges, in line with the Future Generations Act.

In assessing each of the areas for development from our previous assessment under the six objectives, we have considered the extent to which:

- Our goals contribute to the achievement of the seven well-being goals identified in the Well-being of Future Generations Act
- We are taking all reasonable steps to meet them.
- They remain consistent with the sustainable development principle the five ways of working. More detail on the how the five ways of working are applied is provided in the progress on each goal later in this report.

It is important that outcomes are not considered in isolation since they can affect each other and need to be considered in an integrated way. How they integrate with each other is shown in Appendix 1.

We have included the following icons to illustrate each objectives contribution to the Well-being of Future Generations Act goals:



The long-term nature of some objectives means that the effects of some activity may not be clearly demonstrable over short timescales, and some activity will only have an impact over the longer term. Informed by the evidence gathered, we have assessed progress against each of our objectives on a scale of 1-6 based on the following principles:

Level	Definition	Description
6	Excellent	Excellent or outstanding – all performance measures have achieved the target set and all actions have been delivered
5	Very Good	Major strengths – a significant majority of actions and measures are on track. No more than one or two falling short
4	Good	Important strengths with some areas for improvement – the weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not been achieved
3	Adequate	Strengths just outweigh weaknesses – the evidence of success marginally outweighs areas that are not on track. Some actions are behind schedule and some measures are falling short of planned targets
2	Weak	Important weaknesses – the majority of measures and actions have not been achieved
1	Unsatisfactory	Major weakness – in most areas, performance is assessed as moving in the wrong direction and the vast majority of actions have not been delivered

**Objective template explained.**

**Evaluation Score:** This provides our assessment of performance against the objective using the evaluation scoring mechanism

<b>Why we focused on this?</b>	
Why we are focusing on this objective to improve well-being in Monmouthshire.	
How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?	How do we know?
Row 1 - This sets 'What we want to achieve' from the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	
Column 1 - This provides the self-assessment of our performance during 2023/24 based on 'what we want to achieve'	Column 2 - The evidence sources we have used to inform our assessment.

**Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment**

These are specific conclusions from the self-assessment that inform our action plan.

<b>Well-being of Future Generations Act impact</b>				
This provides an explanation of how our activity contributes to the Well-being of Future Generations Act well-being goals and ways of working. It also identifies the council's well-being objective(s) that were in place during 2022/23, revised well-being objectives in the Community and Corporate Plan were subsequently set in April 2023.				
<b>Measures of progress</b>				
Measure	Previous	Latest	Target for 2023/24	Comment
This provides an update using the measurement framework of the Community and Corporate Plan.	Previous data is 22/23 unless otherwise stated	Latest data is 23/24 unless otherwise stated	This is the target we set for 23/24	Any further explanation on the performance measure





## A Fair Place to Live

### What we want to achieve:


- Improved life chances for people regardless of income or background.
- Residents have better access to council services and support needed to live a healthy life.
- Citizens are able to participate in council and community decision-making and take actions which enable them to shape their own futures.

## Strategic Assessment

Monmouthshire, on average, is a prosperous and affluent county. None of our communities are in the most deprived 10% in Wales, and we have some of the highest levels of disposable income in Wales. However, Monmouthshire has a high level of income inequality, and these headline figures can mask pockets of deprivation that are all the more stark when seen alongside areas of relative wealth. We want to see improved life chances for people irrespective of their income or background. This is why we have gone above our statutory duty to provide breakfast and a healthy, freshly cooked meal at lunchtime to all primary school pupils to ensure everyone has access to a healthy meal, no matter their background. Wider economic issues including the cost-of-living are causing more people to fall into financial difficulties. 12% of people in Monmouthshire live in households in material deprivation. We do not want anyone to feel left behind. We're supporting our residents through our Money Matters campaign which signposts to additional sources of support, and we have also teamed up with Mind and Citizens Advice to set up cost-of-living support drop-in sessions across the county.

We want to make sure all our residents have equal opportunity in life chances. We have developed a Strategic Equality Plan which sets objectives that value, and aim to make the most of, the abilities and contributions of everyone in our communities, irrespective of age, gender, race, sexual orientation or any of the other characteristics that make us who we are. We want to celebrate the diversity of our communities and make sure everyone feels Welcome in Monmouthshire. We're committed to becoming a county of sanctuary for anyone seeking sanctuary, and will meet these individuals with welcome and understanding. We're lucky to have excellent social capital with many community networks working to support the place they live, as shown by our high volunteering rate. We have continued to support our fantastic volunteers and are working with community groups to help them access small grants to fund projects that matter to them.

## Community & Corporate Plan Objective: A Fair Place to Live

<b>A Fair Place to Live</b>	
<div style="background-color: #92d050; color: white; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold;">Fair place</div> 	<p><b>Evaluation Score:</b> Level 4 Good - Important strengths with some areas for improvement – the weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not been achieved.</p> <p>We have increased the support we provide to residents to improve their life chances and enabled our communities to develop the places they live. We have set plans to deliver most of what we to achieve. Our assessment shows we need to ensure all our interventions to achieve this objective are evidence-based, targeted, clearly communicated and evaluated to assess impact.</p>
<b>Why we focused on this?</b>	
<p>Nobody should be left behind in Monmouthshire or feel their voice does not count. Many of our residents are prosperous and very capable of looking after themselves and their loved ones. However, this is not the case for all and in a rural county inequality is often more hidden than in urban places. We will increase the intensity of our work to help those who need support to live the lives they want.</p>	
<b>How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?</b>	<b>How do we know?</b>
<b>What we want to achieve: Improved life chances for people regardless of income or background</b>	
<p><b>Support for residents and families on low income</b></p> <p>We have implemented universal free school meals for all 6000 primary school children in Monmouthshire. We have gone beyond the statutory requirements and are providing a breakfast and healthy freshly cooked meal at lunch time enhancing pupils’ well-being and learning. Uptake of meals overall has increased from 64% of pupils accessing free school meals in April 2023 to 75% in April 2024. This has varied in different areas of the county and has been lower in more deprived areas. Schools who have some of the highest rates of pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) (an average eFSM rate of around 30%) are seeing the lowest uptake rates of around 60%, whilst those with the lowest rates of eFSM pupils (around 5%) are experiencing the highest uptake at over 80%. We are working with schools, parents and learners to understand and remove any barriers that may face those in less deprived areas from accessing universal free school meals. This includes reviewing how meals are ordered, adjusting the types of food provided and assessing an opt-out rather than an opt-in approach to free school meals provision.</p> <p>We have continued to support those affected by the rising cost-of-living through a range of methods including the Money Matters campaign which signposts residents to sources of support; working with Mind Monmouthshire and Citizens Advice Monmouthshire to set up cost of living support drop-in sessions across the county which offer advice on ensuring people are getting all the money and benefits they are entitled to; and help and advice on getting back into work or more secure employment as well as emotional and well-being support.</p> <p>We have promoted the local advice and support from our Benefits service on Housing Benefit, Universal Credit, Discretionary Housing Payments and Council Tax Reduction so people get the maximum financial support they are entitled to. There has been a slight reduction in the number of</p>	<p>Universal free school meals roll out</p> <p>Money Matters campaign, drop-in sessions, help and advice</p> <p>Council Tax Reduction Scheme</p>

<p>Council Tax Reduction claims, which provides increased financial support to households. There remain some households who are still likely not receiving the full financial support they are entitled to.</p>	
<p><b>What we want to achieve: Residents have better access to council services and support needed to live a healthy life</b></p>	
<p><b>Provide low-cost play provision</b></p> <p>We have supported pupils in the school holidays with free or low-cost play provision. In the 2023 summer holidays, 3,363 hours of play provision were provided, 10,605 sessions were attended of which 2,821 were children eligible for free school meals. These sessions provided play and physical activity opportunities to young people. Through the sessions 816 meals and 413 food parcels were provided to families, providing access to food through the summer holidays to some families who need it.</p> <p>We have delivered Food and Fun schemes in five primary schools across the county. The scheme provides healthy meals and activities for children during the summer holidays. Attendances have increased from 2,005 in 22/23 to 4,316 in 23/24 and 8,632 healthy meals were provided. Youth Centres provided access to healthy meals on days the centres were open in the summer, with take-home food parcels also available for those who needed them. This is part of our commitment to reduce food insecurity ensuring all children and young people have access to a healthy meal.</p> <p>We are working with headteachers to identify those pupils who will most benefit from free or low-cost provision. We have increased the number of schools we work with from 11 in 22/23 to 21 in 23/24 and have begun to provide secondary as well as primary school provision. The offer of school holiday play sessions and meals is not taken up for every pupil who may benefit from them. We need to understand the potential barriers and develop the offer to increase uptake. We are also reviewing how we capture feedback from these sessions to ensure we are meeting the needs of the children attending.</p>	<p>School Holiday Play provision</p> <p>Food and Fun scheme</p>
<p><b>Work with partners to reduce food insecurity, develop cultural and community services</b></p> <p>We have developed and opened the new £2.9 million Magor and Undy Community Hub in partnership with The Magor and Undy Community Hub project (MUCH). The development was based on extensive involvement of the community and is designed based on residents' feedback. The site provides spaces for community use and commercial events, as well as potential for small business growth. The MUCH group now occupies and manages the community hub for the direct promotion of community use including social, culture, leisure, sporting and other community activities.</p> <p>We held a Celebration of the Arts which showcased how artists, performers, musicians and others contribute to Monmouthshire's vibrant culture and economy. We have worked with artists from across the county to provide access to funding and locations to showcase their work, including developing a 'Creative Cluster' of local artists. This is supporting our creative industry to provide new perspectives on communities, place, and their history, and play a vital role in the local economy. This is part of our commitment to create a new cultural strategy. The feedback</p>	<p>Celebration of the Arts</p> <p>Cultural Strategy development</p>

<p>will inform its development. The strategy will provide a focal point for networking, support, and inclusion for cultural activity across our communities.</p> <p>We have developed approaches to local and community food growing, procurement of food and networks with local suppliers. Every primary school has a kitchen where freshly cooked, nutrition-rich meals are produced five days a week. We also support a countywide Food Partnership. An example of partnership working is Community Fridges which provide indirect support for those experiencing food insecurity. They currently operate in Monmouth, Abergavenny, Caldicot, Goytre, Chepstow and Magor with Undy. These provide local access to food and each fridge saves around 2 tonnes of food going to landfill per month. Around 540 people visit a community fridge each week; this is an increase of around 480 seen previously.</p> <p>We have identified that residents who are accessing services such as community fridges may not be receiving the wrap-around support they need. We have appointed a food security engagement officer who is signposting families to wider financial support services, gathering data on demand and working with community food projects to ensure their sustainability. We need to develop a joined-up whole-authority approach to sustain the impacts of our interventions. We must focus on the long-term sustainability of our land and nature, and the health and well-being of our communities. This will be a key focus of our tackling poverty and inequality Action Plan.</p> <p>We have developed a Local Food Strategy that demonstrates the council’s recognition of Monmouthshire as the ‘Food Capital of Wales’. The strategy has been informed by evidence and consultation with the local experts, partners and stakeholders. It has three core themes: Improving local and ethical supply chains; Developing food as an economic sector; Community food: access, education, participation. It will enable a whole-authority approach focused on long-term sustainability and health and well-being.</p>	<p>Community Fridges</p> <p>Number of people accessing community fridges</p> <p>Local Food Strategy</p>
<p><b>What we want to achieve: Citizens are able to participate in council and community decision-making and take actions which enable them to shape their own futures</b></p>	
<p><b>Empowering citizens and communities</b></p> <p>We have implemented a small grant scheme, You Decide, which provided £80k to 75 local schemes to focus on projects they deemed important to their local areas. Around 7,000 citizens were involved, and projects included developing a small community growing area and addressing holiday hunger. We have reached out to communities of interest and provided support to build their own resilience. This includes supporting care leavers and young carers with £25k in funding and supporting diverse communities, which included members of Monmouthshire’s Muslim and Ukraine communities, with £10k. We have worked with established community groups who have experience reaching ‘hard-to-reach’ groups; and provided £5k to support community activity including cost of living support and family fun days.</p> <p>We ran the annual Make Your Mark survey that offered young people the chance to have a voice and make a difference in matters that affect them. Concerns raised included cost of living, health and well-being, climate change and loneliness. The youth service has worked with young people to understand and adjust provision to respond to the issues raised. Responses rates to the survey were lower than we targeted, with 43% of secondary school pupils taking part in the survey. We have identified recommendations to increase the response rate to the next survey including engagement with secondary schools and digital options to increase accessibility.</p>	<p>You Decide scheme</p> <p>Make Your Mark survey Volunteering Good Practice Guide</p>

<p>We have developed a Volunteering Good Practice Guide to enhance the growth of volunteers, provide continuous assistance, and to ensure a high-quality volunteering experience. We have run events and provided opportunities within our services, such as in museums. We have received over 100 responses to our annual volunteer survey. This has allowed us to identify what is working well, what improvements can be made and what additional resources we can provide to assist our volunteers in their roles.</p> <p>Volunteer programmes in the county have contributed to a range of benefits including reducing isolation, helping with mental health, educating visitors to the county, and providing volunteers with new skills. Latest data shows around 39% of residents in the county volunteer in some capacity, the second highest percentage in Wales. This demonstrates the commitment from residents in the county to provide their time in a whole range of volunteering capacity benefiting people, places and communities.</p>	<p>Annual volunteer survey</p> <p>Percentage of residents in the county who volunteer</p>
<p><b>Promoting Equality</b></p> <p>Council has approved a new Strategic Equality Plan for the period 2024-28. The plan sets objectives that value, and aim to make the most of, the abilities and contributions of everyone in our communities, irrespective of age, gender, race, sexual orientation or any of the other characteristics that make us who we are. The plan includes the things we will do to contribute to national action plans including: The Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan; LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales; Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Action Plan and the Action on Disability Action Plans. We have held events in county hall including Iftar and Black History month celebrations to promote the diversity of our county and demonstrate to colleagues and the wider community that our workplace is inclusive and welcoming.</p> <p>We have made the disability confident pledge and have been accredited with Disability Confident Employer (Level 2) status. The Disability Confident 3-year action plan sits alongside the accreditation. This will be implemented and monitored by the Accessibility Inclusion Group who meet on a quarterly basis. We need to increase the employment opportunities within the council for disabled people.</p> <p>We committed in our Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 to encourage local firms to become accredited disability confident employers. The number of local employers who have made the disability confident pledge has increased from 24 (March 2023) to 59 (April 24). This is helping to reduce the inequalities experienced by disabled people in accessing employment in the county.</p> <p>We passed a motion in September 2023 committing us to formally becoming a county of sanctuary. We have submitted an application to the UK-wide City of Sanctuary network and are awaiting confirmation that we have met the criteria for accredited membership.</p> <p>We have been successful in helping those fleeing the war in Ukraine to find properties in the area. Hosting, under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, has remained stable, with residents going above and beyond what was initially asked of them. We have exceeded the ‘population share’ of refugees identified by Welsh Government. Recognising the challenges faced by this community, we have established a specialised team comprising two homeless prevention workers, two Community and Well-being Officers, complemented by dedicated translation and administration support. Our approach involves close collaboration with local landlords to cultivate strong local networks and access to properties, addressing concerns related to affordability and financial assessments. This is part of our commitment to ensuring Monmouthshire is a place where all feel welcome.</p>	<p>County of Sanctuary status</p> <p>Support for those fleeing Ukraine</p> <p>Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28</p> <p>Iftar and Black History Month Celebrations</p> <p>Disability Confident Employer Level 2 status achieved</p> <p>Number of local employers who have made the disability confident pledge</p>

### Supporting Welsh Language

We have provided opportunities for our staff to participate in Welsh language courses from beginner level to advanced level. We have 40 members of staff undertaking Welsh language courses. We completed a staff survey to determine the Welsh language skills of the workforce. This shows 323 members of staff have some level of Welsh language skills and use these to provide a service in Welsh to residents. We are using the survey to target the development of Welsh language skills in designated roles. This is contributing to our Welsh Language Strategy objective to increase opportunities for the public to interact with public services in Welsh.

Latest national data shows an increase in the percentage of the population in Monmouthshire who can speak Welsh at 18.4%, up from 16.6%. We will continue to evaluate our role in developing the use of the language in the county in our 2023/24 annual report on our Welsh language strategy and will further develop the strategy to continue the growth of the language.

Number of staff taking part in Welsh language courses  
Number of Welsh speakers employed by the council

### Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment

**Carried over from the 2022/23 self-assessment:** Ensure interventions to achieve a Fair Place to Live objective are evidence-based, targeted, clearly communicated and evaluated to assess impact.

### Well-being of Future Generations Act impact

Contribution of Council goal to Future Generations Act Well-being Goals						
Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
✓		✓	✓		✓	



### Well-being Objective: A Fair Place to Live

Adopting community-focused approaches promotes **collaboration** which in turn will support well-being. By working with communities, empowering people and ensuring they can access support we hope to **prevent** problems from occurring. Opportunities are plentiful in our county, so it is vital that everyone can be **involved** to maximise benefits to well-being. This should have a **long-term** benefit to individuals and communities. Our actions will have an **integrated** benefit for many aspects of the act, they will promote a Wales of cohesive communities and overall, help to create a more equal Wales.

### Measures of progress

Measure	Previous <sup>1</sup>	Latest <sup>2</sup>	Target for 2023/24	Quick View	Comment
Number of children receiving universal free school meals <sup>i</sup>	2,583	6,064 (All primary school age children)	All primary school age children	↑	All primary school age children now have access to universal free school meals.
Number of attendances at MonGames <sup>ii</sup>	4,070	4,419	4,102	↑	
Number of attendances at Food and Fun <sup>iii</sup>	2,005	4,316	3,840	↑	
Number of attendances at Active Play <sup>iv</sup>	249	544	312	↑	
Percentage of people who feel they are able to influence decisions in their local area <sup>v</sup>	20	33	34	↑	Latest figure is for 2021/22, and the previous figure is for 2018/19 – this was not measured as part of the National Survey for Wales 2019/20 or 2022/23. 2023/24 data will be included when available.
The percentage of secondary school pupils who take part in the national Make Your Mark survey and Monmouthshire-specific ballot <sup>vi</sup>	71	43	72	↓	The reduction can be attributed to restrictions on carrying out the survey in one of our schools and difficulties in acquiring responses from sixth form students.
Percentage of people who volunteer <sup>vii</sup>	32	39	40	↑	Latest is 2022/23, previous is 2019/20. 2023/24 data will be included when available.
Number of local employers who make disability confident employer pledge <sup>viii</sup>	24	59	50	↑	
Percentage of the population who can speak Welsh <sup>ix</sup>	16.6	18.4	16.9	↑	Previous is 2022/23, latest is year ending December 2023. 2023/24 data will be included when available.
Number of Welsh speakers employed by the council	278	323	303	↑	

Quick View of Trend: ↑ Improving performance; ↓ Declining Performance; ↔ Unchanged Performance

Quick View of Target: Green – Target achieved; amber – just missed the target; red – fell some way short

<sup>1</sup> Previous data is 2022/23 unless otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> Latest data is 2023/24 unless otherwise stated.



## Green Place to Live

### What we want to achieve:

- Council operations are net zero by 2030 and local communities are supported to reduce their own carbon footprint
- Nature recovery, improved environmental and river health
- Sustainable local agriculture and farming practices with public services and residents consuming more local and seasonal produce

## Strategic Assessment


The natural world in all its guises is the backdrop to life in Monmouthshire. We need to celebrate the outstanding beauty of our county, but also need to ensure we are doing all we can to protect and conserve it. The need for nature recovery in Monmouthshire is clear; 34% of species show a decline in their numbers. We're committed to addressing this issue. We have delivered 14 projects as part of Nature Isn't Neat which reduced mowing and let wildflowers grow in green spaces. The health of our rivers has suffered in recent years. Phosphate targets for the Usk are being failed at a rate of 88% and the Wye at 68%. We have worked with partners to address this and are installing phosphate stripping plants at two areas in the county to improve the health of our rivers.

Carbon emissions per head of population in Monmouthshire are above the average for the UK. We want to support residents to reduce their own emissions. Our circular economy projects are doing just this. Our Benthylg libraries have resulted in a carbon saving for residents of 9,755kg, and during this year alone our reuse shops have diverted 33 tonnes of waste from going to landfill. We have also continued to reach above target recycling rates, and thanks to the efforts of residents, we recycled over 71% of waste during the year.

We are committed to becoming net zero by 2030. We know that this is an important, but complex challenge. We're undertaking a range of work to better understand the scale of the issue, including commissioning costed decarbonisation plans for our estate. We have also refreshed our Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy and have separated this into four clear action plans, including a decarbonisation plan. This better reflect the breadth of work being undertaken as we strive to meet our goal.



## Community & Corporate Plan Objective: A Green Place to Live


<b>A Green Place to Live</b>	
<p><b>Green place</b></p> 	<p><b>Evaluation Score:</b> Level 3 - Strengths just outweigh weaknesses – the evidence of success marginally outweighs areas that are not on track. Some actions are behind schedule and some measures are falling short of planned targets.</p> <p>We have delivered specific projects that are contributing to achieving our objective, however we will need to do more and quicker to meet our ambition. The range of work that we are undertaking is helping us to understand the scale of the challenge and the path we need to take to reach our goal. We remain ambitious in our aim of becoming net zero by 2030. However, unless there is significant public investment, the evidence that we are gathering suggests that reaching our target will be extremely challenging.</p>
<b>Why we focused on this?</b>	
<p>We recognise the outstanding beauty of Monmouthshire. As custodians of this stunning place we need to encourage residents and visitors to enjoy it, protect it and conserve it. The natural world in all its guises is the backdrop to our tourism and visitor economy. We will work with others to promote access to our special places whilst protecting the environment, support nature recovery, reduce our carbon emissions, reduce the risk of flooding and promote the circular economy. We also recognise that these are complex issues and it will take decades rather than years to see the full impact of the changes we are making.</p>	
<b>How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?</b>	<b>How do we know?</b>
<b>What we want to achieve: Council operations are net zero by 2030 and local communities are supported to reduce their own carbon footprint</b>	
<p><b>Reduce the carbon emissions generated from the council’s operations.</b></p> <p>We have implemented a range of measures to reduce emissions from our properties. Examples of schemes completed this year include outstanding solar car ports from Phase 1 (132kWp) and development of a large-scale roof mounted system being installed as a part of the new Abergavenny school project.</p> <p>We have completed surveys on a number of buildings to fit LED lighting, solar PV, and heat pump installation. We are developing the Refit phase 2 programme and progressed funding applications. This programme of energy efficiency works on our public buildings will make building under the scheme more energy efficient, reduce carbon emissions and save energy costs. We are sharing energy data with schools and leisure centres to monitor and forecast their energy use to inform changes to reduce their consumption.</p> <p>We are transitioning to Ultra Low Emission vehicles at the point of renewal and where services need and funding permits. We currently do not have the additional funding required to transition our fleet at the pace we planned. We have commissioned a costed decarbonisation plan for our built estate and fleet transition which will allow us to make evidence-informed decisions on the use of assets and financial investment to reduce our carbon emissions.</p>	<p>Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy</p> <p>Carbon emission reporting data</p>

<p>We have strengthened the way in which we communicate with our supply chains to support the achievement of our carbon reduction plans. We have worked in collaboration with councils across the Cardiff Capital Region and agreed a standardised approach to tender questions asked at selection and award stage. We have developed carbon reduction guidance and shared it with staff procuring goods in the council.</p> <p>We have achieved a 17.8% reduction in our own emissions in 2022/23 (44,248 tonnes of CO2 emissions) from the 2019/20 baseline (44,248 tonnes). This is largely due to a reduction in supply chain spend; indicative estimates show a reduction from 34,547 tonnes in 2021/22 to 29,780 in 2022/23. This method will not factor in any efforts to reduce supply chain emissions as an average factor is applied to each product group. Operational emissions for energy and fleet increased between 21/22 and 22/23 (13,889 tonnes to 14,527 tonnes). This can be attributed to the increase in the staff base and the inclusion of an additional reporting category for emissions arising from home working.</p> <p>We purchase our energy through a green tariff (100% renewable). In 22/23 we purchased 7,826,198 kWh of energy and generated 4,783,567kwh of renewable energy, 4,217,524kwh of which was exported to the grid. We avoided 1124 tonnes of CO2 through renewable energy generation, from solar panels on Council buildings and from the council's solar farm at Oak Grove Farm in Crick.</p> <p>We have developed and agreed an updated Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy. This includes an updated action plan on how we will reduce the council's carbon emissions. Progress will be monitored regularly by the Climate and Nature Emergency Steering Group. The range of work that we are undertaking is helping us to understand the scale of the challenge and the path we need to take to reach our goal. We remain ambitious in our aim of becoming net zero by 2030. However, unless there is significant public investment, the evidence that we are gathering suggests that reaching our target will be extremely challenging.</p>	
<p><b>Support communities to reduce their carbon emissions.</b></p> <p>We have completed research to identify potential Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure requirements and assess on-street charging options. This will inform our future plans for electric charging infrastructure. We have made limited progress in installing electric charging infrastructure, partly due to a limited collective agreement on the best approach.</p> <p>We have increased the percentage of municipal waste in the county that was sent for recycling, reuse or composting in 23/24 to 71.7% (provisional data). This is above the statutory target of 64% and our own target of 70%. This is due to continued participation of residents with household recycling. The overall amount of waste generated per person has decreased from 125kg in 22/23 to 119kg 23/24 (provisional data). This shows the commitment of our residents to reducing our impact on the environment.</p> <p>We are a Bronze accredited Carbon Literate organisation. We have offered carbon literacy training to staff and elected members, with additional spaces being offered to community groups through the Community Climate Champions. During 23/24 we delivered carbon literacy training to 28 officers, 18 elected members and 5 residents. We have not been able to target businesses or wider residents due to limited officer capacity and resources. We need to increase the reach of our Carbon Literacy to allow more staff to gain a better understanding of what it means to be carbon literate. We are developing a Carbon Literacy training video to extend our reach.</p> <p>We have continued to support the running of 3 Benthylg library of things in the county. Since opening, these have lent 1,638 items to residents, resulting in a cost saving of £18.9k and a carbon saving of 9,755kg. We also supported three Repair Cafes run by our communities, and reuse</p>	<p>Carbon literacy training</p> <p>Circular economy projects</p> <p>Waste &amp; Recycling rates.</p>

<p>shops which during the year diverted 33 tonnes of waste from going to landfill. These circular economy projects have contributed to our commitment to reducing the impact on our environment in the county. We have faced challenges finding key volunteers to support the running of these projects. We have achieved funding for two Circular Economy Project Officers to develop, expand and support our circular economy projects and the volunteers and community groups that drive them.</p>	
<p><b>What we want to achieve: Nature recovery, improved environmental and river health</b></p>	
<p><b>Enhance Nature recovery and biodiversity</b></p> <p>We delivered 14 projects across Monmouthshire for Nature Isn't Neat which reduced mowing and let wildflowers grow in green spaces. These mini meadows are vital for supporting biodiversity and give residents the chance to experience nature. We have faced some challenges in participation in nature recovery. We need to secure collective agreement on what needs to be done to preserve and support nature and biodiversity in Monmouthshire.</p> <p>We have reviewed our Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy to include a biodiversity and ecosystems resilience action plan. This sets out how we will maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems resilience through the council's operations. We have also reviewed our Green Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery Plan. This guides how we will improve the health and well-being of our residents through enhancing our green spaces.</p> <p>We continue to lead the Gwent Green Grid Partnership (GGGP). We have delivered £1.4m of work to improve and develop green infrastructure. This work is addressing nature and climate emergencies. We supported a range of work in Wye Valley AONB including green skills training and Youth Rangers. We are continuing to lead Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) to share best practice and resources. This partnership developed the Monmouthshire Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP). The action plan provides practical and achievable actions to help reverse the decline in biodiversity and ecosystem resilience in the county.</p>	<p>Nature Isn't Neat project</p> <p>Gwent Green Grid Partnership</p> <p>Biodiversity and ecosystems resilience action plan</p>
<p><b>Improvements to river quality</b></p> <p>We have developed an action plan on how we will work in partnership to improve the health of our rivers and oceans. Progress will be monitored regularly by the Climate and Nature Emergency Steering Group.</p> <p>We are a member of the Wye Nutrient Management Board Technical Advice Group which aims to identify and analyse options for delivering improvements for water quality. We are continuing our involvement with the Wye Catchment Partnership to protect water quality, water quantity and biodiversity. An Usk Catchment Partnership Core Group has been established. We have completed an Usk Catchment Farm Engagement Scoping Study and a review of partners resources to inform the Action Plan. A Knowledge Hub has been established with two council ecologists participating. We continue to assess Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) proposals associated with new developments requiring SuDS Approving Body (SAB) approval, against Welsh Government's National SuDS Standards.</p> <p>Natural Resources Wales' (NRW) announcement of water quality issues in Riverine Special Areas of Conservation, including the River Wye and River Usk, has significant implications for the progression of the RLDP. We have worked with partners to address this issue, which has caused</p>	<p>Rivers and oceans action plan</p> <p>Rivers partnerships</p>

<p>significant delay and restriction to development within the county. There is planned strategic phosphate mitigation work in the form of phosphate stripping being installed in Abergavenny and Monmouth to serve their settlements. This is enabling appropriate development to be permitted within these areas where it was previously restricted. A comprehensive review of the Environmental Permits of wastewater treatments across Monmouthshire has been complete; this will enable further development proposals to be permitted. We will ensure the candidate sites proposed within the Deposit Plan will not have an adverse impact on water quality within the River Wye or Usk.</p>	
<p><b>Flood alleviation</b></p> <p>We have continued to support our communities at risk of flooding. We have developed and updated emergency flood response plans for numerous sites across the county. We continue to respond to and investigate land drainage and flooding related issues daily and apply to Welsh Government for grant funding to deliver flood alleviation schemes in areas most at risk, with recent schemes completed in Tintern, Llantrisant, Llangwm, Llanbadoc, Shirenewton and Usk. We regularly engage with our communities through one-to-one sessions and community meetings.</p> <p>We aim to take a proactive rather than reactive approach to flood management. We're working with partners such as Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to progress Natural Flood Management at three high priority sites in the River Trothy. We also conduct proactive land drainage inspections and forecasting/responding to regular tidal flooding at Tintern. This activity is helping to limit the impact of flooding on our communities.</p> <p>We're developing a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan. This will assess flood risk on a catchment-based approach and will identify Strategic Flood Risk Areas (SFRA). The Strategy will contain a County Wide Action Plan as well as specific Actions for each SFRA. This catchment-based approach will enable closer collaboration with wider flood risk management partners such as NRW.</p>	
<p><b>What we want to Achieve: Sustainable local agriculture and farming practices with public services and residents consuming more local and seasonal produce</b></p>	
<p><b>Promote community growing and access to local produce</b></p> <p>We have drafted a Local Food Strategy; the accompanying action plan sets out how we will facilitate access to council land for growing food, including continuing to work with Allotment Associations to bring empty plots back into use and create new plots through the Allotments Support Grant. We created 32 allotment plots in the year through our own land and through private sites. We need to ensure that the values of our Local Food Strategy are embedded across the organisation. For example, we recently re-tendered our contract for school milk when we were unable to secure all of our environmental policy aims through a collaboration with other councils.</p> <p>We awarded 10 grants as part of the second round of Monmouthshire Food Partnership's small grants for community growing. These are providing community groups with resources to meet their ambitions. These include providing low-cost food, education and skills development and outdoor activity and well-being provision.</p>	<p>Local Food Strategy</p> <p>Monmouthshire Food Partnership</p>

<p>We have launched a Monmouthshire Food Partnership website, providing an inclusive information resource on the local food system and activity across the county. A Spring Food Fair was held in March. The fair was attended by 20 local traders and around 1500 members of the public and promoted local produce available in the county.</p>	
<p><b>Support farmers to adopt sustainable farming practices</b></p> <p>We are committed to transforming our agriculture to be more regenerative and sustainable. We are supporting the Regen Ben mentoring scheme, with 3 farms receiving mentorship. This is helping participating farms to develop a plan to move their operations onto more regenerative lines, building soil health and improving water quality. Talk Farm Regen Monmouthshire continues to attract support from volunteers in the local farming community.</p> <p>We have worked with local farmers as part of the Welsh Veg in Schools pilot scheme to bring more local produce into schools. This has provided pupils in 10 participating schools with nutritious, local food no matter their socio-economic background. The project has also supported the development of new safety standards and new logistics. Growers are expanding their enterprises, and new farmers are diversifying into organic horticulture in order to participate.</p> <p>We continued to work in collaboration with Hartpury University as part of their TaLK UK SPF project which supports agricultural businesses increase productivity through Agri-Tech. During 2023/24, 94 businesses received support through this project.</p>	<p>Welsh Veg in Schools pilot</p> <p>Agri-tech collaboration with Hartpury university</p>
<p><b>Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment</b></p>	

<p><b>Well-being of Future Generations Act impact</b></p>						
<p><b>Contribution of Council goal to Future Generations Act Well-being Goals</b></p>						
Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
	✓	✓		✓		✓
<p><i>Well-being Objective: A Green Place to Live</i> </p>						

Monmouthshire is a beautiful place, with a stunning natural and built environment. We have a collective responsibility to ensure this is available for future generations to enjoy so our plans must be focused on the **long-term** and look to **prevent** problems from occurring in years to come. **Involvement** is required with partners and communities to maximise the potential of the environment within the county. Working in **collaboration** with organisations who can enhance our environment will provide expertise in all aspects of our work, for example this will allow us to trial the latest technologies in renewable energies. Creating a healthy and resilient area for people to enjoy demands the **integration** of this objective as the environment within Monmouthshire forms such an important part of achieving a range of goals.

#### Measures of progress

Measure	Previous	Latest	Target for 2023/24	Quick View	Comment
Carbon emissions (kgCO <sub>2</sub> e) from the council's assets and operations <sup>x</sup>	48,576	44,248	40,500	↑	Latest figure is 2022/23, previous is for 2021/22. 2023/24 data will be included when available.
Capacity (MW) of renewable energy equipment installed on the council's estate	6.224	6.598	6.640	↑	Latest figure is 2023/24, previous is for 2021/22. 2023/24 data will be included when available.
Percentage of municipal waste sent for recycling, reuse or composting <sup>xi</sup>	70.0	71.7	70	↑	Latest figure is provisional data for 2023/24.
The number of allotment plots created by the council and through private sites supported by the council	New measure	32	31	↔	We have refocused this measure to provide clarity on where the council can implement action.

Quick View of Trend: ↑ Improving performance; ↓ Declining Performance; ↔ Unchanged Performance  
 Quick View of Target: Green – Target achieved; amber – just missed the target; red – fell some way short



## A Thriving and Ambitious Place

What we want to achieve:

- Vibrant town centres which bring people together and attract investment
- People of all ages and backgrounds have the skills to do well in work or start their own business
- Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure


### Strategic Assessment

Monmouthshire has a strong local economy and is well placed for growth in Welsh terms. Employment in our county is strong, with an employment rate of 76.2%, higher than both the UK (75.7%) and Wales (74.1%). We also have a highly qualified population, with over half of Monmouthshire's working age population qualified to level NVQ4 and above. However, the lack of higher education establishments in the county, combined with high property and rental prices, results in many young people leaving the county. We are building relationships with schools, local colleges and local businesses to enable more of our school leavers to progress into opportunities with local businesses, including through apprenticeships. Ensuring our young people are entering the labour market with the skills they need is vital to the success of our economy. This is a key focus of our Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy.

Our towns and high streets have faced many challenges in recent years, including more recently the cost-of-living crisis. Our town centre vacancy rate currently stands at 13%. We are committed to supporting our local businesses through these challenges and promoting the creation of new business; we provided support to 165 pre-starts and existing businesses throughout this year. It's important that we support the amenities that attract people to our towns. We have continued to make improvements to the accessibility of our visitor sites as part of our Heritage Strategy, and are working to understand and address barriers for those not attending.

Public transport is limited in the county. This results in an over-reliance on cars, which results in barriers to accessing training and employment for those who do not drive. We have developed a Local Transport Strategy which sets a clear ambition for transport infrastructure in Monmouthshire. We're also continuing to develop and improve our active travel network, with access to town centres and key destinations across Monmouthshire sitting at its heart.

## Community & Corporate Plan Objective: A Thriving and Ambitious Place

A Thriving and Ambitious Place		
<p><b>Thriving and ambitious place</b></p> 	<p><b>Evaluation score:</b></p>	<p>Level 4 – Good Important strengths with some areas for improvement – the weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not been achieved.</p> <p>We have developed our strategies to deliver the objective. We have provided support for residents and businesses to gain new skills, develop and grow and delivered projects to enhance connectivity. We are building from a strong economic and skills base. Our assessment shows we need to do to grow this base and provide targeted support and projects for people, business and places that need them most.</p>
<p><b>Why we focused on this?</b></p>		
<p>Our starting point is a comparatively strong one. Monmouthshire has a strong local economy and is well placed for growth in Welsh terms. There is strength in a number of key sectors which are highlighted and supported at a national level. Employment rates are high, as are qualification levels. But more can be done. Monmouthshire can be more vibrant. The conditions exist to achieve this. We will work with national, regional and local partners to increase investment, improve connectivity and continue the development of an economy which is thriving, ambitious and enterprising.</p>		
<p><b>How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?</b></p>		<p><b>How do we know?</b></p>
<p><b>What we want to achieve: Vibrant town centres which bring people together and attract investment</b></p>		
<p><b>Support vibrant town centres</b></p> <p>We are working in partnership with town councils and other key stakeholders to drive and oversee the development of the placemaking plans in Monmouth, Abergavenny and Magor with Undy. Initial discussions have taken place with local stakeholders about a new placemaking plan for Caldicot. Welsh Government Transforming Towns funding has been secured to support the development of the plans. There remains a challenge to resourcing the delivery of the full ambitions of these plans. We are focussing delivery on specific projects, in agreement with partners, within the resources available.</p> <p>We undertook a detailed audit of town centre vacancies in Chepstow and Monmouth to understand factors affecting higher vacancy rates in these areas and how the council and partners can best give support to minimise vacancies. This found that 13% of premises were vacant. We are working to decrease this figure through the town centre building improvement grant scheme which is being used to help bring empty/underused properties back into use. We are also working with Usk Town Council on the development of proposals for public realm improvements in Bridge Street and Twyn Square.</p>	<p>Placemaking plans</p> <p>Audit of town centre vacancies</p>	



<p>There is limited employment land remaining within our existing LDP. This is limiting the opportunities available for businesses to settle and grow in Monmouthshire. We have allocated 43 hectares of employment land within our Replacement Local Development Plan to ensure and encourage business growth and opportunity within the county.</p>	
<p><b>Continue to support the tourism sector</b></p> <p>We are implementing our Heritage Strategy. As part of this we are committed to improving the accessibility of our sites. We have commissioned an accessibility audit of Monlife attractions and visitor sites and have launched a small grants programme to support access improvements at visitor attractions and events in Monmouthshire. We are also developing pre-visit access information for all MonLife attractions to make it easier for people with specific access needs to check whether a certain site is accessible to them.</p> <p>We need to do more to attract visitors to our heritage sites. We have completed a visitors’ survey to understand how we can make the experience better for those attending and understand the barriers to why some do not attend. This will inform action moving forward. We continue to provide concessionary prices at our attractions, including for foster carers, to reduce the financial barriers to attending.</p> <p>We have supported our visitor economy businesses to access UK and overseas group travel and travel trade markers to help them even out peaks and troughs in demand and provide a source of advanced bookings and guaranteed income. The number of FTE jobs supported by tourism has increased by 7.6% between 2019 and 2022 (3,356); visitor numbers also increased by 2.3% (2.34m) and the economic impact of tourism increased by 3.7% (£285m). This demonstrates the tourism sector has continued to grow beyond the challenges of the pandemic and the importance of the tourism sector in supporting employment and the economy in the county. We need to continue to assist the tourism sector through difficult economic times and ensure an excellent experience for visitors.</p>	<p>Heritage Strategy</p> <p>Accessibility audit</p> <p>Visitor’s survey</p> <p>Tourism impact data</p>
<p align="center"><b>What we want to achieve: People of all ages and backgrounds have the skills to do well in work or start their own business</b></p>	
<p><b>Provide employment support and advice for businesses</b></p> <p>We continued to provide support to anyone interested in starting their own business via the Business Monmouthshire Project, making our residents more prepared for the challenges and equipping them with the knowledge they need to start a business. 165 pre-start and existing businesses were provided with assistance in 23/24, above our combined target of 160. This includes 80 potential entrepreneurs, which was above our target of 30, and 85 existing businesses in the county, which is below our target of 130. We have also improved our competitiveness index, increasing from 94.6 in 2019 to 96.3 in 2023.</p> <p>There is a decreasing number of self-employed people in our county; the current self-employment rate is 9.4%, compared with 14.1% pre-pandemic. We need to increase the uptake of support for those wishing to start or grow their own business to ensure a thriving local economy. We are developing a customer relationship management system that will enable us to strengthen our relationship with local pre-starts and existing businesses and ensure that they are aware of the range of support that is available and how they can access this.</p>	<p>Entrepreneur and business assistance</p> <p>Self-employment rate</p> <p>Employment support</p>

<p>We work with a range of partners to promote innovation and share best practice. The Leader and Chief Executive of our Council continue to play an active role in the Western Gateway. This partnership is helping us to collaborate with local government, business and academic partners to drive the local economy and promote our collective goal of net-zero. The Leader also oversees matters relating to Research and Innovation as part of the Cardiff Capital Region. A range of projects across a number of these are also being delivered through the Marches Forward Partnership, including development and the visitor economy, led by Monmouthshire.</p> <p>We have provided employment support to individuals who are economically inactive, ready for work or those in work looking to upskill; 115 people have been supported into employment throughout this year. Ready for work (Communities For Work+) has supported 108 people in to work and 36 people to gain qualifications, which has improved their economic chances. We have also provided counselling for 38 residents who are economically inactive and facing mental health barriers into work. Following support we need to improve the pathway to employment opportunities. This is a focus of our Economy, Employment &amp; Skills Strategy.</p> <p>We continue to support Monmouthshire’s food and drink business network and facilitate networking events every 8 weeks. Businesses attending have reported they appreciate the talks and networking opportunities to share challenges and learning and to make new connections. We provided support to 54 enterprises during 23/24, and 50 people have attended training or information sessions focusing on collaboration, business growth and routes to market.</p>	
<p><b>Support residents to gain the skills they need</b></p> <p>We are continuing to support our residents to gain the skills they need; during this year, 720 achieved new skills or upskilled. The Multiply programme has helped 146 participants to gain new numerical skills and is currently supporting 40 individuals to gain a GCSE mathematics qualification. We have also focused on vocational training, establishing weekly drop-in sessions to support those looking to gain a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card – we have supported 30 people to gain one throughout the year. Budget constraints are limiting further courses that we can fund to meet demand. We are strengthening relationships with training providers to ensure residents can access more in-county training opportunities. We need to improve the pathway to employment in sectors facing regular recruitment challenges such as construction. This is a key focus of our Economy, Employment &amp; Skills Strategy.</p> <p>We are building relationships with schools and local businesses to enable more of our school leavers to progress into opportunities with local businesses, including through apprenticeships. We have developed a STEM strategy that draws together the new STEM curriculum with the skill needs of current and potential businesses, and are working with these to further develop vocational opportunities and pathways. We have developed a Post-16 Transition Guide to share with our schools which provides an overview of transition for every young person in Monmouthshire and includes ideas around post-16 transition activities that schools and post-16 settings can do to enhance the experience for our young people. This guide aims to help prevent young people from becoming NEET (Not in Education Training or Employment).</p> <p>We have revised our Early Identification Tool, which helps us to identify those pupils most at risk of becoming NEET and cross references high risk young people across caseloads to ensure that provision and support is in place. This has been shared with schools and with teams supporting vulnerable learners. We have continued to work with Coleg Gwent to support our local NEET prevention partnership, Keeping in Touch Group. We</p>	<p>Skills programmes</p> <p>NEET strategy</p>

carried out engagement with all local colleges as part of our Youth Engagement & Progression Framework responsibilities. Monmouthshire has a significant number of colleges as post-16 destinations; we need to develop strong relationships with partners to support post-16 transition. The percentage of school leavers not in education, employment or training has remained unchanged at 1.8%, slightly above our 1.6% target. We need to use our learning to develop our NEET strategy.

Our Care Leavers support workers regularly attend Keep in Touch meetings to ensure that any care leavers who are Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET) and in need of support can access it via NEET prevention programmes. The percentage of care leavers who have completed at least 3 consecutive months of employment, education or training since leaving care was 52.5% in 23/24. We will improve our engagement with care leavers to reduce the number who become NEET.

**What we want to achieve: Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure**

**Support the development of a sustainable transport system**

We have developed a Local Transport Strategy which sets out a clear ambition for transport infrastructure in Monmouthshire over the next five years. We will develop a future facing integrated transport network that meets the transport needs of our communities in a sustainable way, with needs of both our residents and the environment at its heart. We know that having a transport system that meets the needs of our communities is vital in addressing the isolation and inequality that can occur as a result of the rural nature of our county.

We are improving bus stop infrastructure as funding becomes available, with the aim of providing frequent core bus services that are designed to best fit our towns. We want to ensure services that are reliable and direct with improved journey times to get people where they need to be. Lower frequency secondary, on-demand and community services will be formed around this core network.

We are lobbying Network Rail to make train stations physically accessible for all, supporting the South Wales Metro proposals, and continue to campaign for enhanced services frequencies. We endorse proposals for a new station at Magor and service frequency to two trains per hour to Chepstow. We are lobbying for the proposed Magor walkway station and working on proposals to improve bus access to Abergavenny, Chepstow, and Severn Tunnel Junction stations.

We are working with a provider to explore options of implementing a pool car pilot that will improve access to pool vehicles. Procurement is being undertaken to launch an initial scheme of 10 electric/hybrid vehicles. This scheme will help to reduce the carbon emissions produced in county and to help those facing difficulties in travelling around the county.

We have continued to maintain our key highways and ensured that the travelling public has a safe and efficient strategic road network. Throughout this year, 100% of planned programme maintenance was achieved. There remain a considerable number of backlog pressures for our highways infrastructure that we cannot afford to fund in our capital budget. These have varying levels of risk associated with them and impact on the condition of our road network. Independent condition assessments of key highways infrastructure are completed as required depending on condition, and these inform prioritisation of available capital budget to fund maintenance.

Local Transport Strategy

Highway planned programme maintenance

### Develop active travel routes

We have expanded our active travel network this year through the utilisation of £500k core funding and an additional £6.9m of funding achieved through the active travel fund. This is the second year in a row we have leveraged the most funding in Wales. We have utilised this to make improvements around the county, including dropped kerb installation to improve the active travel network. We also created or enhanced 20 active travel routes throughout the year, achieving above our target of 18. We currently have over 100 active routes in place and an additional 20 in development. This is increasing the opportunities to use active travel in the county and supporting residents and visitors to walk and cycle.

An active travel live counter dashboard is now fully operational, with 6 live counter sites uploading information twice daily. We now have baseline data measurements and will be able to monitor the usage of our network in comparison. Countryside counters have also been incorporated to provide a single source of foot and cycle traffic within MonLife. We are working to ensure future Local Development Plan sites have maximum active travel potential prior to habitation, with access to town centres and key destinations across Monmouthshire sitting at the heart of active travel development.

Number of active travel routes created or enhanced

### Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment

### Well-being of Future Generations Act impact

Contribution of Council goal to Future Generations Act Well-being Goals						
Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓



### Well-being Objective: A Thriving and Ambitious Place

This goal is aimed at the **long-term** viability of Monmouthshire as a thriving place to live, work and visit. The location of Monmouthshire as the gateway to South East Wales means we must embrace working with neighbouring areas to maximise opportunities. Keeping Monmouthshire thriving and well-connected promotes **integration** and impacts on the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the county. This requires **collaboration** with local businesses and other organisations, and **involvement** from the local community to maximise opportunities. Considering the global well-being of Wales is also important and this goal focuses on ensuring decisions are made with future generations in mind and takes a **preventative** approach to enable the retention of young people.

<b>Measures of progress</b>					
<b>Measure</b>	<b>Previous</b>	<b>Latest</b>	<b>Target for 2023/24</b>	<b>Quick View</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Annual economic impact of tourism (£) <sup>xii</sup>	182.79m	285.08m	3.8% growth pa	↑	Latest is 2022, previous is 2021. 2023 data will be added once available.
Number of pre-starts and existing businesses assisted during the year by the local authority and its partners	55	165	160	↑	These reflect annual figures and are linked to the funding available each year and the size and scale of projects delivered.
Number of working age people supported into employment during the year through action by the local authority	142	115	90	↓	These reflect annual figures and are linked to the funding available each year and the size and scale of projects delivered.
Percentage of school leavers not in education, employment or training <sup>xiii</sup>	1.8	1.8	1.6	↔	
Percentage of care experienced young people who have completed at least three months in education, training or employment	-	52.5	74.5	Newly adjusted measure	Measure amended in line with Welsh Government Performance Improvement Framework to include care leavers up the age of 21 from 19. Target will be revised in line with this change.
Percentage of local authority vehicle fleet which is ultra-low emission	8.4	10.2	9	↑	
Number of active travel routes created or enhanced	17	20	18	↑	These reflect annual figures and are linked to the funding available each year and the size and scale of projects delivered.
Number of active travel routes in development <sup>xiv</sup>	16	20	16	↑	

Quick View of Trend: ↑ Improving performance; ↓ Declining Performance; ↔ Unchanged Performance  
Quick View of Target: **Green** – Target achieved; **amber** – just missed the target; **red** – fell some way short

## A Safe Place to Live



### What we want to achieve:

- Increased supply of good quality affordable housing
- Reduce the number of people who become homeless
- A more energy efficient housing stock with a lower carbon footprint
- Communities in which everyone feels safe and respects each other


## Strategic Assessment

Monmouthshire is a really good place to live, but not for everyone. We are working with our partners to make sure everyone has a safe place to live. House prices here are some of the highest in Wales, with the average house price over £350k and 9 times average earnings in the county. This makes it difficult to buy or rent in Monmouthshire. That's why affordability is at the heart of our ambition in our proposed replacement Local Development Plan for our county. The delays in adopting this plan have limited the progress we have made in increasing the supply of affordable homes.

High property prices, a shortage of affordable private rented accommodation and the rising cost of living have all contributed to a rising homelessness problem in the county. Working collaboratively with housing partners in the county we have implemented a Rapid Rehousing, which has increased homeless prevention. We have worked with social and private landlords and started to re-purpose our own properties to increase the availability of temporary and settled homes for homeless households which has led to reduced use of use of B&B accommodation.

We want everyone to feel safe in Monmouthshire. Residents have voiced concerns about safety and rates of anti-social behaviour have increased slightly. We have worked with young people to address their concerns about knife crime and anti-social behaviour and have extended public space protection orders to prevent anti-social behaviour. We have worked with the Police and partners across the region to develop a strategy aimed at preventing the most serious types of violence across Gwent.

**Community & Corporate Plan Objective: A Safe Place to Live**

<b>Objective: A Safe Place to Live</b>		
<p><b>Safe place</b></p> 	<b>Evaluation Score:</b>	<p>Level 4 – Important strengths with some areas for improvement – the weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not been achieved.</p> <p>We have drafted our ambition for development in the county and implemented projects and support to deliver our objective. Our assessment shows that the delay in progressing our plans has limited the impact we have made to deliver our objective in the short term.</p>
<b>Why we focused on this?</b>		
<p>For most people, Monmouthshire is a really good place to live, but not for everyone. This needs to change. We will work with partners to create a safe place that people are proud to call home, increase the availability of good quality affordable housing, reduce homelessness and promote approaches to help homeowners to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.</p>		
<b>How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?</b>		<b>How do we know?</b>
<b>What we want to achieve: Increased supply of good quality affordable housing</b>		
<p><b>Produce a Replacement Local Development Plan</b></p> <p>We have drafted our Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) which will set the ambition for development within our county. We have ensured affordable housing sits at the heart of this plan by allocating 50% affordable housing on each site and introducing enabling policies which will allow for further affordable housing developments to come forward. This includes facilitating more single person accommodation in the county which is currently extremely limited and is a factor contributing to high numbers of homelessness.</p> <p>We have refreshed the Local Housing Market Assessment 2022-37 that has identified a net need for 499 additional affordable homes per year until 2027. The continued delay in progressing the RLDP has meant that the delivery of affordable housing has been limited in the short term due to limited remaining development land; just 46 affordable homes were approved during 23/24. We are focused on ensuring the RLDP can address as</p>		<p>Draft RLDP</p> <p>Local Housing Market Refresh 2022-37</p>

<p>much of this identified need as possible within wider policy constraints, whilst also being flexible to adjust to the needs of the market as they adapt.</p> <p>There is a risk that we will be unable to proceed with the Deposit RLDP if appropriate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller sites are not identified. Three sites have been identified for consultation by Cabinet following assessments by officers of council owned land. Cabinet’s decision on which Gypsy, Roma and Traveller sites will be included in the Deposit Plan and will be informed by the findings of this consultation.</p>	
<p><b>Work with partners to develop more empty properties back into use</b></p> <p>We have increased action to reduce the number of empty properties across the county and have taken an approach which seeks to positively engage with owners to offer advice and support to help and encourage them to bring their home back into use. This includes letters advising of various grants and loans available, including the Empty Homes Grant. These efforts have resulted in 36 applications to the Empty Homes Grant and 4 enquiries on leasing a property as temporary homeless accommodation. We have also introduced more formal mechanisms to help tackle high numbers of empty properties within the county. This includes a Council Tax Premium on long-term vacant properties. Overall, our approach has reduced the number of recorded long-term empty homes from 541 to 447 as at the 2024/25 billing stage; of these, 366 have been recorded as vacant for over 12 months and will now be subject to the council Tax Premium.</p>	<p>Number of applications received to Empty Homes Grant and temporary housing use</p> <p>Number of long-term empty homes</p>
<p><b>What we want to achieve: Reduce the number of people who become homeless</b></p>	
<p><b>Prevent homelessness through rapid rehousing</b></p> <p>Through Rapid Rehousing we have facilitated increased resources into homeless prevention, for example through additional staffing and the availability of the Homeless Prevention Fund. We are working with partner agencies such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Shared Benefit Service to support more people at risk of homelessness. A total of 261 awards were given during the 2023-2024 financial year to both households at risk of homelessness to help tackle arrears/debt and households experiencing homelessness to enable them to remain in their current accommodation or access alternatives.</p> <p>We have remodelled our Housing Support service to include dedicated substance misuse support, temporary accommodation support and re-settlement support. This also includes dedicated support for young people with higher need through the recent expansion of the Housing First scheme with Pobl and the introduction of MoYo – dedicated housing floating support for young people. These initiatives have contributed to the increase in the percentage of homeless applications who are successfully prevented from becoming homeless from 50% at year-end 22/23 to 71% at year-end 23/24. There is demand for further support we need to meet, particularly for younger people and those with mental health and substance misuse needs.</p> <p>We need to address remaining challenges including the lack of temporary, supported and permanent accommodation. The focus of our RLDP on affordable housing provision will help us to address some of this need, particularly the demand for single person accommodation, of which there is a limited supply. We are striving to provide more settled accommodation for the increasing number of homeless households in temporary accommodation, of which there were 161 at year-end 23/24.</p>	<p>Number of grants awarded</p> <p>Homelessness data</p>



<p>We collaborate across council services to prevent care leavers from becoming homeless. We regularly hold a Corporate Parenting Panel with a range of teams from across the organisation that coordinate and provide support to care leavers. Some care leavers are still experiencing homelessness. During the year, 8 care leavers experienced homelessness within 12 months of leaving care, an increase from 5 the previous year.</p>	
<p><b>Reduce the use of B&amp;B accommodation</b></p> <p>We are increasing the availability of both temporary and settled homes for homeless households through a range of means including partnerships with private landlords through Monmouthshire Lettings and more homes through new build developments and acquisitions. We have worked with housing association partners to make additional general needs social housing available for homeless households, and the proportion has increased from 47% in 2021/22 to 57% at year-end 23/24. We need to determine how much scope there is to allocate further social housing to homeless applicants without being overly detrimental to other housing need groups.</p> <p>We have started to acquire accommodation for temporary accommodation use and the first approval has been given to re-purpose a Council owned agricultural property. We have developed a proposal to re-purpose Severn View residential home for temporary accommodation. The increased support for those at risk of homelessness, combined with the increase in availability of both temporary and settled accommodation, have contributed to the reduced use of bed and breakfast (B&amp;B) accommodation; the number of homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation has decreased from 92 at year-end 22/23 to 46 at year-end 23/24. The number of 16 and 17 year olds in B&amp;B accommodation has remained at 0 for 23/24.</p>	<p>Homelessness data</p>
<p><b>What we want to achieve: A more energy efficient housing stock with a lower carbon footprint</b></p>	
<p><b>Work with partners to improve the energy efficiency of housing stock</b></p> <p>We continue to support low-income households access grant funding to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. We are working with partners to promote Eco4, a scheme which provides funding to allow low-income households and individuals living with medical conditions worsened by damp or cold to access energy efficiency improvements. We have completed the first round of installer procurement and during 23/24 we provided 10 Eco4 declarations confirming eligibility for the scheme. We are working with ABUHB to identify residents with respiratory or immune suppression illnesses who may be eligible for this scheme to ensure that they are able to get the maximum support to which they are entitled.</p> <p>We have drafted the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) which will set the ambition for development within our county. Each home developed under this plan will be net zero carbon. This will not only help to lower our carbon emissions but will also help to reduce energy costs for our residents.</p>	<p>Number of people supported to access Eco4</p>
<p><b>What we want to achieve: Communities in which everyone feels safe and respects each other</b></p>	
<p><b>Work with partners to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)</b></p>	

<p>We are working to improve the relationship between young people and local police by regularly inviting police to our youth centres to engage with young people and understand what is important to them. We have been working with young people in Monmouth to address concerns of knife crime and anti-social behaviour in the area; £10k of grant funding has been secured from the Police and Crime Commissioner’s Office to target young people involved in ASB. The rate of anti-social behaviour incidents per 1,000 population has increased from 10.6 to 13.1.</p> <p>We extended three Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) in Bailey Park, Abergavenny Lower and Monmouth Town to further tackle and prevent anti-social behaviour in the area to ensure our towns are safe and welcoming environments.</p> <p>We have worked with partners to develop a Gwent Serious Violence Prevention Strategy 2024/25. This has helped in identifying and addressing the serious violence priorities across the county of Monmouthshire. The Safer Monmouthshire Group is working with key partners and agencies to ensure interventions and activity are delivered across the county. This includes understanding the causes of serious violence to enable us to focus on preventing violence. There are data and intelligence gaps that have limited the development of the delivery plan. Addressing these is a priority and the strategy will be refreshed for 2025 onwards, informed by further evidence gathered.</p> <p>A Gwent regional violence against women and domestic sexual violence (VAWDASV) strategy has been developed and agreed. The strategy is now being implemented through partnership arrangements.</p>	<p>Gwent Serious Violence Prevention Strategy</p> <p>VAWDASV strategy</p>
<p><b>Work with communities to keep our county clean</b></p> <p>We, along with Town and Community Councils, held a dog fouling awareness day at Abergavenny and Goytre to reinforce the messages for dog owners to clean up after their pets. We developed and consulted on a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for dog fouling, that provides several controls to protect everyone’s enjoyment of open spaces and all public land in Monmouthshire. Informed by the consultation we have agreed and introduced stricter dog controls in public spaces across the county to help tackle dog fouling. These are supporting our public spaces to be clean, with limited impact on the environment.</p> <p>We investigated 619 Environmental Protection incidents (fouling, littering, fly tipping etc) during 2023/24, responded to 84% of them in 3 days. This included investigating 276 cases of fly tipping to gather evidence and inform proactive action to reduce fly tipping affecting our local environment. Evidence gathered resulted in one fixed penalty notice being issued and a cross-border prosecution case which included 4 fly tipping incidents in Monmouthshire.</p> <p>We worked with community groups and Keep Wales Tidy to provide support for local litter picks and implement litter picking hubs. We worked with the Keep Abergavenny Tidy litter campaign targeting businesses in Abergavenny; six businesses signed up to be a Litter Free Zone.</p>	<p>PSPO orders</p> <p>Environmental Protection incidents</p>
<p><b>Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment</b></p>	
Empty row for further development areas	

## Well-being of Future Generations Act impact

### Contribution of Council goal to Future Generations Act Well-being Goals

Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
	✓		✓	✓		✓



### Well-being Objective: A Safe Place to Live

It is important the council **collaborates** with partners and **integrates** with their plans to reduce homelessness and ensure people can stay in their own homes and communities wherever possible. **Involving** and working with partners and community members is essential to develop communities in which everyone feels safe and respects each other. The Replacement Local Development Plan has a focus on **long term** and has affordable housing and a well-connected net zero carbon development at its heart. A focus on **preventing** problems occurring is essential to creating a safe place that people are proud to call home.

### Measures of progress

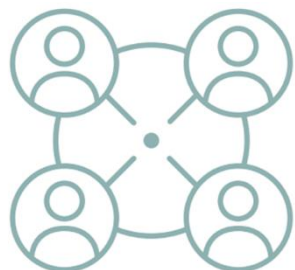
Measure	Previous	Latest	Target for 2023/24	Quick View	Comment
Number of affordable homes granted planning permission in year	50	46	N/A	↓	This is an annual target with the latest figure reflecting land availability in the legacy LDP and limitations resulting from phosphates. This target is currently under review to ensure alignment with the RLDP.
Average time (months) homeless households spend in Band 1 with a homeless duty before moving on to settled/permanent accommodation	10.2	11.5	<10	↓	
Percentage of homeless applications who are successfully prevented from becoming homeless	50	71	55	↑	
Number of homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation	92	46	75	↑	Data as at 31 <sup>st</sup> March.

Number of 16 and 17 year olds in bed and breakfast accommodation	0	0	0	↔	Data as at 31 <sup>st</sup> March.
Number of homeless households in temporary accommodation	117	161	176	↓	Data as at 31 <sup>st</sup> March.

Quick View of Trend: ↑ Improving performance; ↓ Declining Performance; ↔ Unchanged Performance

Quick View of Target: **Green** – Target achieved; **amber** – just missed the target; **red** – fell some way short

## A Connected Place Where People Care



### What we want to achieve:

- High quality social care which enables people to live their lives on their terms
- A healthy and active Monmouthshire where loneliness and isolation are reduced, well-being is promoted, and people are safeguarded
- A professional and passionate social care workforce


## Strategic Assessment

Monmouthshire has a track record of delivering innovative approaches and rich partnership working in health and social care. Working in this way remains vital to meet pressures on health and social care services, that will only grow with a forecast increase in the older population in Monmouthshire. We have worked to ensure timely hospital discharge, helped vulnerable older people regain their independence, developed a longer-term strategy for domiciliary care and opened a new purpose-built specialist care home. These have already increased the availability of care for residents who need it and set out our path for a longer-term strategy to meet increased demand. We have also developed a recruitment and retention strategy to maintain the social care workforce we need.

Early help is vital to prevent children coming into local authority care. That’s why we have been establishing a coordinated approach to early intervention in children’s social services and overseen a reduction in the number of children looked after. We have produced a new strategy to develop more in-county residential and supported accommodation placements. This will ensure that children can maintain local connections and much needed stability in their lives.

People live for longer and are healthier here than in most other places in Wales. Healthy life expectancy is above both the average for Wales and the UK. This hides inequalities at a local level with a gap in healthy life expectancy between those living in the most and least affluent parts of the county. We know that there are many factors that affect our health and well-being. For this reason, we committed to work with others across Gwent and the Institute of Health Equity to tackle these by becoming what is known as a Marmot Region. While we have continued to deliver schemes to support residents to be physically active and access healthy food, particularly targeted at those who need it the most.

### Community & Corporate Plan Objective: A Connected Place Where People Care

A Connected Place Where People Care		
<b>Connected place</b> 	<b>Evaluation Score:</b>	Level 4 – Good Important strengths with some areas for improvement – the weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not been achieved.  We have increased access to care and support in the county and provided services to support health and well-being of residents. Our evidence shows we are supporting higher levels and greater complexity of demand. Resourcing the preventive approaches required while meeting existing demand is a challenge to the delivery of our objective.
<b>Why we focused on this?</b>		
Monmouthshire will be a place where people’s contributions are valued, they feel part of a community and are connected to others. The health and social care system is facing significant challenges, and statutory services across the UK are struggling to cope with the volume and complexity of demand. Monmouthshire has a track record of delivering innovative approaches and rich partnership working. We recognise that well-being is about far more than treating people when they get sick. There are many factors that can affect our health including the environment, housing, what we do for work, how much we earn, our lifestyles, transport and community cohesion. These wider determinants of health, sometimes called the social determinants, can affect physical and mental health in either a positive or negative way.		
<b>How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?</b>		<b>How do we know?</b>
<b>What we want to achieve: High quality social care which enables people to live their lives on their terms</b>		
<b>Provide early help and preventative services for families</b>		

<p>We have established a co-ordinated approach to early intervention and prevention in Children’s Social Services providing support to children and families who need it as soon as possible. Our multi-agency panel arrangements provide a co-ordinated approach to referrals. Support offered includes community-based services such as School Based Counselling and The Integrated Families and Community Together teams. Support also includes a clear pathway to accessing emotional and mental health support for young people. A recent Care Inspectorate Wales Performance Evaluation Inspection of children’s services identifies there is a coherent approach to early help and prevention to support children and families. This enables families to receive support and provide their children with the safety, nurture and care they need. Services have developed that enhance the support available for children, young people, and their families. The report also identifies some areas for improvement to strengthen prevention in children services.</p> <p>Demand remains high across all early help services. We have put significant effort in to reducing waiting times. This includes volunteers and students being used to build capacity and resilience, and group work approaches being used to reach more young people. We have increased capacity and reduced wait times. For example, Building Stronger Families has reduced the waiting list from around 6 months to a few weeks. Evaluation and feedback of family support services indicates clear and positive outcomes for families. For example, during 2023/24, 100% of families reported a positive outcome following a Building Stronger Families team intervention.</p> <p>Early help services are the foundation for our long-term strategy to prevent and reduce the need for children to come into care. We have seen an ongoing reduction of children looked after that indicates the potential impact of preventative services. A lot of our prevention work is grant funded. We continue to review demand and work with partners to provide accessible and coordinated early help support.</p>	<p>Early help service evaluations</p> <p>Care Inspectorate Wales Performance Evaluation Inspection of children’s services</p>
<p><b>Increase placements available for children requiring support</b></p> <p>We have developed a Placement Development Strategy which sets out our planned expansion and development of in-county children’s residential and 16+ supported accommodation placements. The strategy is based on an analysis of current and predicted need. This sets out our plan to support the transition to not-for-profit care for children in Wales and our response to associated risks and challenges, including a national shortage of residential placements.</p> <p>The number of children who are placed outside of the county is increasing. We need to support children to remain closer to their communities. We review demand for placements on a regular basis. We predicted we need 32 additional residential and supported accommodation places on current demand. We have commissioned two children’s residential homes this year and a further residential home for 16-18-year-olds to support their independence. This will help to ensure children and young people can remain close to their communities and the benefits this brings with maintaining local connections. There remains a shortage of suitable placements for children who require them, especially those who require additional support or who are not able to be placed with foster carers.</p> <p>We have recruited 7 new foster carers during 2023/24. We have improved our offer for foster carers through aligning our allowances with other local authorities in Wales and through offering further financial support. However, our offer remains lower than other local authorities in Wales. This can make increasing the number of in-house foster carers in Monmouthshire challenging. There has been a decrease in the percentage of</p>	<p>Placement Development Strategy</p> <p>Children Social care performance data</p> <p>Care Inspectorate Wales Performance Evaluation Inspection of children’s services</p>

<p>placements of children who are looked after with in-house foster carers to 36.5%. We need to reshape our thinking about what support foster carers need both now and in the future as an integral part of providing placements in the county.</p> <p>A recent Care Inspectorate Wales Performance Evaluation Inspection of children’s services recognised we are developing more opportunities for residential and supported accommodation placements and are working to recruit and retain foster carers.</p>	
<p><b>Support adults to return and stay at home</b></p> <p>We have worked with partners in both primary and secondary health to both prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital and to support timely discharges. The regional Home First team provides support at the hospital front-door wherever possible. In Monmouthshire we have extended this and piloted an integrated practice approach between ward staff and community practitioners to promote discharge planning earlier in the patient's journey following admission. We are working with Age Cymru Gwent to pilot a new model for hospital discharge which focuses on shorter term intervention, seeking to enable individuals to return to live at home with no support (or the same level of support as pre-admission). This model is helping to reduce unnecessary re-admissions and to avoid delays in hospital discharge, while also allowing those who leave hospital to regain their independence.</p> <p>Despite these measures, ensuring well-coordinated and timely discharges and managing the pressure within the hospital system remains challenging. We convene weekly multi-disciplinary meetings to try to identify and unblock delays when they arise. The number of patients waiting for discharge from hospital for social care reasons varies during the year. In March 2024, 15 patients were waiting, the same number as in March 2023.</p> <p>We are growing the use of reablement wherever possible to support people to relearn how to do daily activities and to reduce their need for further support. Reablement provides intensive short-term interventions to support people to retain their independence. We provided 331 packages of reablement throughout this year, a significant increase on 184 for 22/23. Of the packages we delivered last year, nearly 70% of cases reduced or mitigated the person’s need for support, 14.2% reduced the need for support, whilst 55.3% mitigated the need for support.</p>	<p>Hospital discharge monitoring information</p> <p>Reablement service performance information</p>
<p><b>Ensure timely assistance is available for adults requiring support</b></p> <p>We have multi-disciplinary professionals available as the first access point for people who contact adults' social care. We received a slight decrease in reports for adults' social care (8,085 contacts) last year, although this remains high. Almost three quarters of these (5,951) were from people not already in receipt of care and support. These professionals provided advice and assistance to 3,635 contacts or, where appropriate, a decision was made for further assessment to be undertaken by the most relevant practitioner. Feedback from adults' social care services users shows 77.6% of adults reported that they received the right information or advice when they needed it; this is an increase from 75% for 22/23.</p> <p>We have focused on reducing the hours of unmet need in Adults’ Social Care through a range of activities and support working with care providers and our partners. For example, we have developed a micro-care project to increase the availability of care in the county. The project supporting self-employed carers to develop their businesses as well as providing the opportunity for greater oversight and governance of self-employed care</p>	<p>Adults Social care performance information</p> <p>Micro-care project</p> <p>Strategy for commissioned domiciliary care</p>

<p>workers operating within Monmouthshire. The number of micro-carers is steadily increasing. There are currently 24 carers registered (an increase from 9 previously), and these are supporting 81 people in their local community, delivering 368 hours of care and support in total each week.</p> <p>There has been a significant reduction in the hours of unmet need from 804 hours in March 2023 to 306 hours in March 2024 (this equates to 3.5% of the 8,714 hours of care provided each week). This reduction is due to a combination of our activities and external factors resulting in the demand and market for care at home stabilising across the region. This has improved access to care and support for those who need it. Feedback from adults' social care services users shows an increase in the percentage of adults happy with their care and support from 83.5% in 22/23 to 84.6% in 23/24. There remain challenges to respond to all people's care and support needs in as timely a manner as we would want due to continuing pressure across the social care and health system.</p> <p>We have analysed our existing commissioned domiciliary care arrangements, assessed future need and explored future options for development. We have an ageing population in Monmouthshire with an increased risk of comorbidities that will pose challenges to meeting and financing future care demand. Informed by this, we have developed a 10-year strategy for commissioned Domiciliary Care. We are focused on supporting the provider market and at the same time ensuring that wherever possible our in-house provision is supported for reablement as this is where we utilise our expertise to support residents to retain independence. The strategy supports developing place-based care through meeting the varying requirements in differing localities. This aims to support carers and those receiving care to be more engaged in their local community. The strategy will need to be regularly evaluated.</p> <p>We have completed a review of the My Day, My Life Service to inform how we support adults with a diagnosed learning disability to access day opportunities and activities. We used the recommendations from the review report, the comments made from people involved in the service and the wider public to develop a vision for the future development of the My Day, My Life Service and an implementation plan. There was a strong response from residents highlighting the need for, and importance of, services and support for people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable people. The changes are being implemented with people with learning disabilities and their families being central to how services are developed. We committed that people using the My Day, My Life service have access to a home base and a full range of meaningful day opportunities. We have agreed a new base for the My Day, My Life service in Monmouth and Abergavenny.</p>	<p>My Day, My Life</p>
<p><b>What we want to achieve: A healthy and active Monmouthshire where loneliness and isolation are reduced, well-being is promoted, and people are safeguarded</b></p>	
<p><b>Support residents living with dementia</b></p> <p>We have developed and opened in March 2024 Severn View Park, a specialist care home for people living with dementia. The home provides 32 bedrooms for long-term support and short-term support in the form of respite based on a relationship-centred care model. The new care home aims to maintain connections with the surrounding community. By creating opportunities for the residents through events and shared spaces, residents can maintain a sense of personal identity and inclusion.</p>	<p>Severn View Park Care Home</p> <p>National Exercise Referral scheme participation</p>



<p>We have delivered two programmes as part of the National Exercise Referral scheme to support the well-being of people living with Dementia and their carers. We have trained 12 community volunteers to deliver object reminiscence and memory cafes for older people and people living with Dementia. This has helped to reduce feelings of loneliness and has increased the self-esteem and confidence of those living with dementia.</p>	
<p><b>Work with partners to develop the social determinants of health</b></p> <p>We, as member of the Gwent Public Services Board (PSB), have formally agreed to become a ‘Marmot Region’, and to work in partnership with the Institute of Health Equity (IHE) to use the social determinants of health approach as the basis for the response to well-being and health inequalities in Gwent. The Gwent PSB has adopted the eight Marmot Principles as the framework for action to reduce inequalities across Gwent as part of the Gwent PSB Well-being Plan.</p>	<p>Building a Fairer Gwent Report Gwent PSB Well-being Plan.</p>
<p><b>Develop the county’s early years offer</b></p> <p>We are working to grow our early years offer to ensure families can access good quality childcare. Since April 2023, three new full day care providers have been registered, offering an additional 109 places for children under 5. Two of these settings have registered with Flying Start and are offering funded places for eligible two year olds. Many of our existing settings have also signed up to offer Flying Start childcare places and we currently have 4 maintained settings, 28 non-maintained settings and 6 childminders approved to offer Flying Start childcare places across Monmouthshire.</p> <p>This increased provision has resulted in all children eligible for Flying Start childcare who wish to take up the offer being able to access childcare in a setting of their choice. It also means that working families are now able to access Flying Start provision in day nurseries, enabling them to take up provision and continue/return to work. Children are often able to stay in the same setting for their early education and wrap around childcare, resulting in fewer transitions. We need to continue to grow this offer to keep up with increasing demand.</p>	<p>Childcare Sufficiency assessment</p>
<p><b>Promote healthier lives and increased physical activity.</b></p> <p>We have developed and implemented schemes to support residents to be physically active and access healthy food for those who need it. The National Exercise Referral scheme has provided pathways to positive lifestyle and exercise choices. Case studies of those participating has shown a positive impact, with reports of increased mobility, improvements in mood and a reduction in anxiety. Through the year 1,084 referrals were made to the scheme; 72% of those referred took up the scheme and the latest data shows 64% of people who took up the scheme continued until the 16-week review. The take up and continued participation rate in the scheme has fluctuated through the year. We have not been able to complete more interventions to increase continued participation in the scheme due to capacity constraints. We will continue to work with healthcare professionals to explore ways of increasing participation in the scheme.</p> <p>We supported over 145 members of the 60+ programme in Monmouthshire with a FIT4LIFE membership that includes gym, fitness classes and swimming. The Members on 60+ programme have reported that thanks to attending they have met friends and created social networks, as well as improve their health.</p>	<p>National Exercise Referral scheme participation</p> <p>FIT4LIFE membership</p> <p>Food and Fun scheme attendance</p> <p>Youth Service provision</p>

<p>We provided 91 youth service sessions throughout the summer with 407 hours of engagement achieved. During these sessions, which included open-access sessions at our four youth centres, trips, events, residential and outreach sessions, the Youth Service made 2598 contacts. This service provided young people, including vulnerable young people, with the opportunity to foster social connections, try new skills and find new hobbies.</p>	
<p><b>Support carers and young carers' needs</b></p> <p>We support a total of 168 carers and young carers and continue to work with them to understand their needs and how best to support them. We're working with regional partners across Gwent as part of the Bridging the Gap Gwent (BTGG) programme to provide a short-term respite service to carers; referrals have increased, particularly among parent carers and young carers, partly due to increased promotion. This service allows carers of all ages to have a short break from their caring responsibilities.</p> <p>We need to do more to engage with our young carers, particularly those under the age of 14 who are not able to receive emails directly and so are sometimes missing out on information or events. We will use all forms of social media available to us to promote our young carers' events to ensure we reach the maximum number of young carers.</p>	<p>Carers and Young Carers service</p>
<p><b>What we want to achieve: A professional and passionate social care workforce</b></p>	
<p><b>Develop our social care workforce</b></p> <p>We have developed a recruitment and retention strategy for our social care workforce, with a particular focus on addressing areas where there is high demand. There remains volatility in the workforce market; however, we have decreased the number of vacancies across social care from 53 in March '23 to 23 in March '24. We are prioritising recruitment to essential posts in social care, although recruiting to social care roles in both adults' and children's social services remains a challenge. We are contributing to the development of a Gwent workforce strategy, aligned to which we are developing a five-year Monmouthshire workforce plan. This is vital to ensure we have a workforce to deliver the care that our residents require.</p>	<p>Social care workforce recruitment and retention strategy</p>
<p><b>Uplift fees for care providers</b></p> <p>We have provided an uplift in fees for care providers as part of our budget setting process to increase the placements available for people who require care. We allocated £2.7 million to recognise the budget pressure from the review of care provider fees across Children's and Adults' social care. This ensures that providers can continue to pay the real living wage to attract and retain key staff to meet increasing demand. We need to ensure our fee rate remains a viable and attractive option for care home providers. This aims to ensure that residents have the opportunity to choose the best support for them. We need to evaluate whether residents are able to access the care they need.</p>	<p>Fees for care providers</p>
<p><b>Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment</b></p>	
<p>Ensure early and help prevention services are effectively able to meet current and prevent, as far as possible, future demand</p>	
<p>Increase the focus of council activities on improving the social determinants of health</p>	

## Well-being of Future Generations Act impact

### Contribution of Council goal to Future Generations Act Well-being Goals

Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
		✓	✓	✓		



### Well-being Objective: A Connected Place Where People Care

Adopting community-focused approaches promotes **collaboration** which in turn will support well-being. By working with communities, we hope to **prevent** problems from occurring. Opportunities are plentiful in our county, so it is vital that everyone can be **involved** to maximise benefits to well-being. This should have a **long-term** benefit to individuals and communities. Our actions will have an **integrated** benefit for many aspects of promoting a healthier Wales. They will promote a Wales of cohesive communities and overall, help to create a more equal Wales. There is also strong integration with our responsibilities under the Social Services & Well-being Act.

### Measures of progress

Measure	Previous	Latest	Target for 2023/24	Quick View	Comment
Percentage of adult service users who have had the right information or advice when they needed it <sup>xv</sup>	75	77.6	77.5	↑	
Percentage of child assessments completed within statutory timescales	92.3	95.9	92	↑	
Percentage of families reporting a positive outcome following a Building Stronger Families team intervention	87.5	100	88.1	↑	
Number of new in-house foster carers recruited in the year	1	7	5	↑	
Percentage of placements of children who are looked after by the local authority made with in-house foster carers	42.2	36.5	42.9	↓	

Number of patients waiting for discharge from hospital for social care reasons (measured on an agreed census date each month)	15	15	14	↔	As at Census date
Percentage of people successfully completing the exercise referral scheme at week 16 <sup>xvi</sup>	48	64	50	↑	
Percentage of adult service users who are happy with the care and support received <sup>xvii</sup>	83.5	84.6	90	↑	
The percentage of packages of reablement completed during the year that mitigated the need for support/ achieved a positive outcome	57.6	55.3	60	↓	

Quick View of Trend: ↑ Improving performance; ↓ Declining Performance; ↔ Unchanged Performance

Quick View of Target: Green – Target achieved; amber – just missed the target; red – fell some way short

## A Learning Place



### What we want to achieve:

- Improved school attendance and reduced levels of exclusion which remove barriers to learning for vulnerable pupils
- The benefits of the new curriculum in Wales are maximised through excellent teaching and learning
- A truly inclusive educational system that recognises learners' starting points, strengths and educational needs
- Continue our programme of school modernisation

## Strategic Assessment


Monmouthshire should be a place where everybody experiences the best possible start in life and has the opportunity to learn, developing the skills and knowledge they will need to reach their potential. The pandemic caused significant disruption to the education of our pupils. We are still seeing the consequences of this today. School attendance has declined since the pandemic. Our Education Welfare Officers have worked with vulnerable learners and we have a specific programme targeted at those with very low attendance levels.

We are seeing an increase in need for mental health and emotional well-being support for children and young people. There has been a rise in behaviours that challenge in our schools, with permanent exclusions becoming more common. This has required us to evolve and grow the learning and well-being support for our children and young people. We have restructured our education inclusion service and have worked with all schools with targeted training and regular Q&A sessions.

We provide monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. Learners in our secondary schools score higher than elsewhere in Wales. Our disadvantaged learners continue to experience lower attainment than those less disadvantaged, an achievement gap that was worsened by the pandemic. We have developed targeted support for these learners from education advisors and the wider community focused schools approach. This is aimed at ensuring all pupils can succeed irrespective of their socio-economic background.

The environment children and young people learn in is important to their development and well-being. We have been building a new 3-19 school in Abergavenny, and we have also developed plans and secured funding to increase our Welsh medium provision.

### Community & Corporate Plan Objective: A Learning Place

A Learning Place		
<b>Learning place</b>	<b>Evaluation Score:</b>	Level: 4 (Good) Important strengths with some areas for improvement – the weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not been achieved
		We have developed our approaches and increased our support to schools and pupils to achieve our objective. Our evidence shows the demand and complexity of support children and young people require, particularly vulnerable learner, has grown. Our assessment identifies the need to further adjust, develop and target our support to achieve our objective.
<b>Why we focused on this?</b>		

Monmouthshire will be a place where everybody experiences the best possible start in life and has the opportunity to learn, developing the skills and knowledge they will need to reach their potential. The pandemic has had a substantial effect on schools and pupils. The two years of uncertainty and significant disruption to learning have inevitably left a legacy. Before the pandemic we knew that our disadvantaged learners did not achieve the outcomes we would wish. The pandemic has worsened the learning experiences of many vulnerable students such as those eligible for free school meals. The emotional and mental well-being of pupils was often affected, with many experiencing increased uncertainty, anxiety and loneliness. In line with our guiding principles, it is vital that we develop more opportunities to listen and learn from our pupils and students. Since schools have reopened the education system in Wales has continued to evolve with reforms and developments including the new curriculum for Wales and the introduction of a new additional learning needs act.

**How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?**

**How do we know?**

**What we want to achieve: Improved school attendance and reduced levels of exclusion which remove barriers to learning for vulnerable pupils**

**Improve attendance and reduce exclusions**

We have focused on improving school attendance following a decline due to the pandemic. We have implemented a range of measures to improve attendance across our schools. For example, Our Education Welfare Service continues to offer a holistic approach to improving overall attendance in our schools. Education Welfare Officers are working with vulnerable pupils to bring them back into the educational setting, where possible, and are holding attendance consultations with schools regularly to promote attendance and provide bespoke support to families. We continue to grow Inspire Outreach to deliver support to young people identified with attendance of less than 50%. We have also supported 17 pupils throughout the year through the re-engage programme, which resulted in improvements in attendance for 92% of pupils engaged.

Education Welfare Service

School Attendance and exclusions

This has resulted in an improvement in overall the attendance level which means more children and young people are being provided with learning and support within our schools. Attendance in primary schools is increasing steadily; during 22/23 attendance was 92.9%. At the end of the Spring term 2024, attendance was 93.9%. This is near to pre-pandemic levels; we aim to increase this further. Secondary school attendance remains below pre-pandemic levels and has not increased in the last academic year. Attendance during 22/23 was 88.4%; at the end of the Spring term 2024 it was 89.1%. This is significantly below the pre-pandemic figure of 95.1%. We need evaluate our attendance support and develop our activity to improve secondary attendance.

Attendance figures for those eligible for free school meals (eFSM) has also been significantly affected by the pandemic. During 22/23, attendance of eFSM pupils was 5.7 percentage points lower than pre-pandemic figures in primary schools, and 11.3 percentage points lower in secondary schools. The low attendance of those eFSM has been identified by Estyn as an area for concern in one of our secondary schools. We need to increase attendance for those eFSM to ensure no pupil is left behind.

We have appointed a Vulnerable Learner Lead to provide a more focused universal offer of advice, guidance and monitoring to managing exclusions and supporting learners at risk of exclusion and supporting their inclusion and admissions. We need to further develop and resource this offer to ensure a consistent approach to supporting vulnerable learners at risk of exclusion, to prevent exclusions as far as possible. The number of permanent exclusions is increasing. During 22/23 there were 12 permanent exclusions across our secondary and primary schools, an increase from 5 for the previous year.

**Support pupils' well-being**

<p>We have implemented the whole school approach to emotional and mental well-being which helps schools to understand how they are best placed to promote well-being. We have introduced this in a phased approach and increased the number of schools engaged in the approach from 43% to 74%. This is increasing the support available for the well-being needs of our pupils and has a significant effect on children’s attendance and achievement in school. All schools and settings are engaged with Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs), and we currently have 67 practicing ELSAs who access regular supervision, operating across all bar one school in the county, making a positive impact on the Emotional Literacy of pupils.</p> <p>We have delivered Trauma Informed Schools Training to over 500 staff during this year. This approach focuses on understanding children/young people presenting with behaviours of concern, and raising the awareness and capacity of adults supporting vulnerable pupils. We have also developed and shared a Children Looked After (CLA) and former CLA policy with schools to ensure clarity in our approach to supporting CLA learners. These are helping us to deepen our understanding of what vulnerable learners need and to ensure an aligned and strengthened approach to supporting them. There has been an increase in episodes of behaviours that challenge in schools as a result of the continuation of trends that first emerged during the pandemic. This is challenging for schools, staff, and learners. There is a risk that this will also result in a worsening of educational attainment. We need to continue to develop and evolve our support to reduce and prevent behaviour that challenges.</p>	<p>Whole school approach to emotional and mental well-being</p> <p>Trauma Informed Schools Training</p>
<p align="center"><b>What we want to achieve: The benefits of the new curriculum in Wales are maximised through excellent teaching and learning</b></p>	
<p><b>Support excellent teaching and learning</b></p> <p>We have worked with the Education Achievement Service to provide challenge, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in schools. All schools are provided with a bespoke support package that complements the priorities identified within their own School Development Plans (SDPs), in line with the levels of support they require. These are regularly reviewed, and support is adjusted if required.</p> <p>Learners in our secondary schools score higher than elsewhere in Wales, on average. 26% of pupils across Monmouthshire are achieving 5 or more GCSE at levels A*-A, compared with 20.3% for Wales. We also have fewer pupils leaving school with no qualifications at 0.8%, compared with 1.4% of pupils across Wales. When schools evaluate their own performance, they assess this against similar schools. This is a more informative and detailed assessment of attainment and wider progress, given the varying make up and individual plans of schools, than comparing against Wales averages. When comparing our comprehensive schools with those of similar size and linguistic delivery across Wales, 2 schools outperform those similar in every category, and 1 outperforms in most categories (including literacy, numeracy, science, no qualifications, 5+ A*-A). One of our schools underperforms in most categories compared to similar schools.</p> <p>We have been working with two of our schools who were placed in statutory categories following Estyn reviews in 22/23. Follow-up reviews conducted during 23/24 found that both schools have made significant progress in addressing the recommendations set out by Estyn and have now been removed from statutory categories. Two of our schools inspected have been selected to produce case studies for dissemination by Estyn, the first on its approach to developing the Curriculum for Wales and the integration of the specialist resource base, and the second on its promotion of the Welsh language within the school community and beyond.</p> <p>We recognise the importance of listening and learning from our pupils. We are developing a participation policy and toolkit to fully involve children and young people and their parents or guardians in ALN developments, initiatives and evaluations. A Pupil Panel has been established in all</p>	<p>Attainment data</p> <p>School Development Plans (SDPs)</p> <p>Estyn inspection reports</p> <p>Participation policy and toolkit</p> <p>Pupil Panel</p>

<p>secondary schools and parental engagement activities have been completed. These are supporting pupils to contribute to teaching and learning approaches in schools.</p>	
<p><b>Develop opportunities for children and young people to learn and speak Welsh</b></p> <p>We are working with childcare providers to expand the availability of Welsh medium childcare provision. We have improved the range and quality of information available on the benefits of a Welsh language education, to allow parents to make more informed decisions. We have worked with Welsh medium childcare settings in Monmouthshire to make Welsh Flying Start places available at all settings, which has expanded the offer for parents. We need to expand the reach of our promotion on the benefits of the Welsh language and the opportunities available to our young people.</p> <p>We have established an immersion class at Ysgol Y Ffin and have secured funding to grow this provision across the county over the next three years. By opening Welsh medium education to all primary aged pupils through the provision of an immersion class, parents can choose a Welsh medium education for all their children with confidence, in the knowledge they will be well supported to develop their Welsh language skills. At the end of April 2024, 23 pupils have benefitted from Welsh medium immersion provision. This immersion class is also having a positive effect on the number of applications to Welsh medium schools; in April 2024, Ysgol Y Ffin allocated 26 pupils to the reception class, the highest number for the school.</p>	<p>Welsh language promotion</p> <p>Flying start places</p>
<p><b>What we want to achieve: A truly inclusive educational system that recognises learners’ starting points, strengths and educational needs</b></p>	
<p><b>Supports all learners to achieve their potential</b></p> <p>We have restructured our inclusion services to create a broader Inclusion Team. This has supported the delivery of the Additional Learning Need (ALN) Strategy, which aims to build sustainable and resilient provision. Our Inclusion support is now embedded as part of interconnected strategies and related toolkits, resources and policies for ALN, relationships, children looked after and reducing exclusions. We have worked collaboratively to ensure all schools and early years settings were prepared for their new responsibilities under the ALN Act through targeted training and regular online Q&amp;A sessions. A framework is being developed for the management of specialist resource bases (SRB) provision which will ensure a consistent, equitable approach across all settings.</p> <p>We are developing our Inclusion Strategy. This will outline our collective principles, approaches and service offer, and will help us to ensure consistent, high-quality delivery of inclusion services across Monmouthshire.</p> <p>We have established an ALN Quality Assurance system for mainstream schools to support excellent practice in the identification and management of pupils with ALN. An ALN Quality Assurance task and finish group has been established, protocols agreed, and training provided. We need to further develop the consistency of ALN provision across the county.</p>	<p>Additional Learning Need (ALN) Strategy</p>
<p><b>Improving outcomes for children eligible for free school meals</b></p> <p>We have worked with the Education Achievement Service to provide challenge, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in schools. This has particular focus on vulnerable learners, which includes those eligible for free school meals. There remains a gap in attainment between those pupils eligible for free school meals and those not. Latest data shows that, on average, pupils eFSM are performing below their peers not eFSM by</p>	<p>Attainment data</p> <p>School Development Plans (SDPs)</p>



<p>over 1.5 GCSE grades. This is a significant gap. We need to do more to support pupils eFSM and ensure that each pupil has an equal opportunity to succeed no matter their socio-economic background.</p> <p>Our Community Focused Schools lead continues to provide a vital role in working with schools and partners to develop activities and relationships for the benefit of the whole school community. This has included building relationships, signposting to support and benefits entitlements, poverty proofing schools and providing cost of living support. We are working with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) on Tackling All Aspects of Poverty and developing a whole authority strategy on supporting disadvantaged learners.</p>	Community Focused Schools
<p><b>Improve accessibility of adult education courses</b></p> <p>We are reducing financial barriers to our adult education courses to make them more accessible to our residents. We have reviewed our course funding model and have shifted to a grant subsidised model; this now means that all our community education courses are directly subsidised. We have also continued our partnership with Coleg Gwent to offer low-cost foundation-level learning, costing £10 for access to all franchise courses provided in Monmouthshire. We recognise the importance of removing any barriers to involvement in adult education and the effect it can have on adults gaining new skills and knowledge; in 23/24, 937 learners enrolled in our community education courses, an increase of 377 on 22/23 and above our target of 718.</p>	Adult education courses participation
<p><b>What we want to achieve: Continue our programme of school modernisation</b></p>	
<p><b>Build a new 3-19 school in Abergavenny</b></p> <p>We are progressing with construction of the new King Henry VIII all-through school in Abergavenny. The new building will be net zero in line with our commitment to decarbonise our operations. The school replaces Deri View Primary School and King Henry VIII Comprehensive School and will have the capacity for 1,200 secondary school age pupils, 420 primary age pupils and 200 places for post 16 education. There will also be suitable accommodation for 71 pupils with complex neurodevelopmental and learning needs within the school. It is anticipated that the development of this school will reduce the number of pupils attending an out of county secondary school. The school is scheduled to be completed by April 2025.</p>	King Henry VIII all-through school
<p><b>Increase Welsh medium primary school provision</b></p> <p>We are expanding our provision of Welsh medium education. We have secured a new site for Ysgol Y Fenni which will increase the capacity of the school from 210 to 420 pupils. We have secured funding and a site in Monmouth for a new Welsh-medium primary school. We have continued the development of this school which will open to Nursery, Reception and Year 1 pupils in September 2024. We were unable to open a satellite class in September 2023 due to low numbers of applications and difficulties in securing staff, particularly a head teacher. To continue the expansion of our Welsh medium provision, we need to focus on promoting Welsh medium education and securing appropriate staff to ensure a high-quality education for our young people.</p>	Welsh in Education Strategic Plan
<p><b>Develop a strategic review of all schools and their catchment areas</b></p>	School Catchment areas

We have reviewed secondary school catchment areas which were in place for the latest admission round, and we are undertaking a review of primary school catchment areas across the county. Both reviews have resulted in young people in Usk having improved access to attending a primary and secondary school within the county.

We have engaged with staff and pupils to establish the most appropriate way to develop education in the Chepstow area. We have developed a masterplan for the education estate in Chepstow, and with feedback from those attending, have created a vision for a new building on the Chepstow School site as part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. We will continue to engage regularly with Chepstow cluster headteachers to review options for consideration, and will also engage with residents to understand their views on education provision in the area.

**Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment**

Develop the support offer for schools and pupils to reduce and prevent exclusions

Develop the support offer for disadvantaged learners to achieve their potential

**Well-being of Future Generations Act impact**

**Contribution of Council goal to Future Generations Act Well-being Goals**

Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
✓		✓	✓		✓	



**Well-being Objective: A Learning Place**

The **long-term** nature of this goal is intrinsic to its success. Working with and **involving** children and young people, as early as possible, to identify their needs will give them the best chance of achieving their maximum potential. **Preventing** problems before they start will provide our young people with the best chance to develop. Using a **collaborative** approach and aligning services provides a rounded resource that works in harmony for the young person. Overall, this approach **integrates** the needs of our young people, ensuring they have the best opportunity to achieve their goals.

**Measures of progress**

Measure	Previous	Latest	Target for 2023/24	Quick View	Comment
Percentage pupil attendance at primary level (figure for those eligible for free school meals shown in brackets)	91.8 (88.1)	92.9 (89.3)	94.6 (92.6)	↑	Data measures in academic years. Previous is 2021/22 academic year. Latest is 2022/23 academic year.

					Target is for 2022/23 academic year.
Percentage pupil attendance at secondary level (figure those eligible for free school meals shown in brackets)	88.4 (80.9)	87.7 (78.7)	91.2 (82.4)	↓	Data measured in academic years. Previous is 2021/22 academic year. Latest is 2022/23 academic year.  Target is for 2022/23 academic year.
Number of permanent exclusions across primary and secondary schools	5	12	<5	↓	
Total number of enrolments by adult learners on community education courses including Coleg Gwent franchise courses	560	937	718	↑	

Quick View of Trend: ↑ Improving performance; ↓ Declining Performance; ↔ Unchanged Performance

Quick View of Target: Green – Target achieved; amber – just missed the target; red – fell some way short

## Using Our Resources

The council needs to remain relevant and viable for the next generation, while continuing to meet the needs of residents, visitors and businesses in the here-and-now. To support the delivery of our goals, we must make sure that all aspects of the council are working efficiently, effectively and in line with the sustainable development principle set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The Act specifies core areas in an organisation that need to adapt to meet the changing demands on our services and ensure their longevity and sustainability. We have evaluated our arrangements for these areas and included digital and data as another important enabler of how we deliver the council's services. The areas we have assessed are:

- Corporate planning, performance and risk management
- Financial planning
- Workforce planning (people)
- Procurement
- Assets
- Digital & Data
- Democracy & Scrutiny

### **Annual Governance Statement**

The council has a governance framework, our Code of Corporate Governance, for the year end March 2024. The framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

We have produced an Annual Governance Statement for the year 2023/24 that demonstrates that we have appropriate governance arrangements in place to meet the governance principles and that a review has been undertaken to assess the effectiveness of those arrangements. The draft statement was presented to Governance & Audit Committee in July 2024. This self-assessment of our resources integrates with the findings from the Annual Governance Statement and will also contain further actions and recommendations related to these arrangements.

**Corporate Planning, Performance and Risk Management – Evaluation Score: Level 4 Good**

<b>How effective is corporate planning?</b>	<b>How do we know?</b>
<p>We have developed and agreed a Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28. This sets a clear direction for the council. An Audit Wales review of our objective setting in the Community and Corporate Plan has found ‘The council has set its well-being objectives in accordance with the sustainable development principle and is aligning its key strategies and business plans to support their delivery, but it could further strengthen its approach by increasing the diversity of citizen involvement in future’.</p> <p>We have developed an accompanying performance measurement framework. This is allowing us to measure our performance on areas that can be directly affected by the council and the progress of wider outcomes that are not directly in the council’s control. We have set targets against these measures that demonstrate the ambition of the council to residents. This is allowing us to be held to account for performance and identifies where services are not performing as planned. We need to develop the measurement framework to increase the focus on outcomes, where possible. An Audit Wales review on our use of performance information found ‘The council provides some performance information to enable senior leaders to understand the perspective of service users, but information on outcomes is limited restricting their ability to manage performance effectively.’</p> <p>Supporting and Enabling strategies are being developed to ensure they are fit for purpose and support the new policy aims and objectives set out in the Community and Corporate Plan. These will be important to enable the delivery of the ambitions of the plan. We need to ensure there are clear mechanism and arrangements to monitor the impact of these strategies and regularly evaluate performance against outcomes.</p>	<p>Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28 and measurement framework.</p> <p>Audit Wales reports</p> <p>Enabling strategies</p>
<b>How effective is performance management?</b>	<b>How do we know?</b>
<p>The approval of the Community and Corporate Plan has ensured that there is a clear direction for the council. This has been embedded in our performance management framework. Regular reporting on performance has allowed performance to be held to account by officers, scrutiny and cabinet and demonstrated progress to residents. The Self-Assessment process has been embedded in the council’s performance management framework. The self-assessment process has facilitated the completion of a robust evaluation of performance. These performance management arrangements have helped to clearly identify areas of progress and areas for development. The performance of the council objectives has been assessed as ‘good’ for five objectives and ‘adequate’ for one objective.</p> <p>Service Business Planning principles, supporting templates and guidance are in place and regularly reviewed. Service Business plans are facilitating services to plan for the next three years, assess what went well, learn from what did not and measure the impact their service has made on people and places of Monmouthshire. Service business plan completion rates and quality have improved. Although these remains varied and require improvement. Latest monitoring shows 50% were updated within timescales and there is an increase in compliance with principles. Quality assurance on service business plans has shown that managers do not always</p>	<p>Community and Corporate Plan progress report</p> <p>Draft Self-assessment report</p> <p>Service business plans &amp; quality assurance</p>

<p>consistently apply a self-evaluative mindset when updating service business plans. Strengthening self-evaluation within plans will be vital to information gathering to inform the self-assessment report.</p>	
<p><b>How effective is risk management?</b></p>	<p><b>How do we know?</b></p>
<p>We have developed an updated strategic risk management policy and guidance. This defines the approach, process and responsibility for managing strategic risk in the council. This also defines risk tolerance and a risk appetite for the council. The revised policy received positive endorsement from Governance &amp; Audit Committee. The policy is being implemented in a phased approach to develop and strengthen risk management arrangements.</p> <p>The strategic risk register is updated regularly and available to all members and officers to view at any time. There are arrangements to formally review the whole strategic risk register and report it six monthly to scrutiny, Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet. This facilitates and demonstrates that risk management is embedded in the council and strategic risks facing the council are being robustly identified and managed. The risk assessment in service business plans is not always fully completed. This limits the ability of services to use their service business plans to robustly manage and mitigate risks and may impact the escalation of risks onto the strategic risk register.</p>	<p>Strategic risk management policy, appetite statement and guidance.</p> <p>Strategic risk register</p>
<p><b>How has the area for development from the last report been addressed?</b></p>	<p><b>How do we know?</b></p>
<p>Embed the delivery of the commitments in the Community &amp; Corporate Plan 2022-28 within the council's performance framework.</p> <p>The approval of the Community and Corporate Plan has ensured that there is a clear direction for the council. Our self-assessment of our performance framework shows the actions in the Community and Corporate Plan have mainly been embedded in the performance management framework. This also shows there is a need to further strengthen the alignment in some service business plans.</p>	<p>Community and Corporate Plan progress report</p> <p>Service business plans &amp; quality assurance</p>
<p><b>Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment</b></p>	
<p>Increase the focus on outcomes in the measurement framework of the Community and Corporate Plan</p>	

**Financial Planning – Evaluation Score: Level 4 Good**

<p><b>How effective is financial monitoring?</b></p> <p>We have closely monitored our finances at regular intervals throughout the year. Cabinet received an early financial update in July 2023 indicating significant pressures on the budget of £2.6 million. We implemented a structured approach to tackling the deficit through budget recovery proposals developed by services.</p> <p>Our financial monitoring at Month 9 indicated an overspend of £314k, due to a combination of a shortfall in services being able to meet their budgeted savings and pressures across frontline directorates. Improvements in service budget positions, driven by the budget recovery action enacted by services during the year, as well as improvement in the costs of capital financing as areas of the capital programme have experienced delays, have resulted in a net revenue budget surplus at outturn of just over £1.7m. This has resulted in less needing to be drawn from reserves to support the budget than budgeted.</p> <p>There remain significant areas of cost pressure within Adult social care, Children’s additional learning needs, Waste, and Homelessness/Housing. These services recorded a cumulative overspend of £5m for the year, and whilst a significant aspect of these cost pressures were accommodated in the 2024/25 budget, this continues to present an ongoing area of financial risk for the Council in the new financial year.</p> <p>At outturn, no capital schemes reported material over or under spends that require additional financing from the Council’s own resources. Capital slippage requests totalled over £28m. An Audit Wales review of our capital programme management found that our monitoring arrangements focus on budget and timescales with limited consideration of impact or learning.</p> <p>There is variability in the quality of our budget monitoring and forecasting across service areas. We have also not always completed budget forecasting reports in a timely way during the last year. This has impacted on the effectiveness of our in-year budget management.</p>	<p><b>How do we know?</b></p> <p>Financial monitoring reports</p> <p>Audit Wales reports</p>
<p><b>How effective is financial planning?</b></p> <p>We established a clear process and timetable to set a budget for the 2024/25 financial year. Our financial modelling identified an initial budget gap of £14.4m that needed to be addressed. We developed a range of proposals in line with a set of budget principles. The proposals were subject to public engagement, robust scrutiny and an assessment of their potential impact. This informed the development of the final budget proposals. This planning resulted in us setting a balanced budget for the 2024/25 financial year which included accommodating £13.5 million of budget pressures, making a planned £10.8 million of savings and introducing a council tax increase of 7.80%.</p> <p>Our capital planning is based on an established prioritisation process informed by evidence and assessment of risk to develop a programme within the financial constraints on the council. We have reviewed and agreed a current and forward capital programme for £35million of expenditure in for 2024/25. The core capital programme is being sustained and sets planned investment in the council’s infrastructure. There remains a considerable number of backlog pressures that sit outside the core capital programme.</p>	<p><b>How do we know?</b></p> <p>Budget setting reports 2024/24</p> <p>Audit Wales reports</p>

<p>These have varying levels of risk associated with them. An Audit Wales review of our capital programme management found that planning arrangements are generally robust, but the capital programme lacks clear outcomes.</p> <p>Despite setting a balanced budget, current and future budget pressures pose a risk to the deliverability of our objectives in the Community and Corporate Plan. The one-off use of revenue reserves to support the 2023/24 budget means our reserves are at minimum prudent levels to provide sufficient cover. We need to strengthen our financial modelling and develop our financial planning over the medium term. This will assist us to develop a proactive plan to address ongoing budget pressures and align our budget, as far as possible, with our objectives.</p>	
<p><b>How has the area for development from the last report been addressed?</b></p> <p>Develop a financial strategy and robust Medium Term Financial Plan which identifies how we will address the budget shortfall of £23m by 2026/27</p>	<p><b>How do we know?</b></p>
<p>We have developed a Medium-Term Financial Strategy that aligns with delivering our commitments set out in the Community and Corporate Plan. This was presented to Council for approval in July 2024. The medium-term financial plan to deliver the strategy will subsequently be developed and will inform the 2025/26 budget setting process</p>	<p>Medium-Term Financial Strategy</p>
<p><b>Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment</b></p>	

**Workforce Planning – Evaluation Score: Level 3 Adequate**

<p><b>How effective is workforce management?</b></p>	<p><b>How do we know?</b></p>
<p>We have a loyal, dedicated and talented workforce that continue to deliver our services and objectives for residents. This is demonstrated by our performance in 2023/24 and feedback we received in engaging on our recent people strategy.</p> <p>We have an established set of policy and procedures that guide our Human Resources function. These support standards and behaviours we expect employees to deliver. They also allow flexibility and opportunity for our workforce to develop their careers in Monmouthshire. If employees do not meet these standards, we have arrangements to manage and resolve these issues.</p> <p>We have strong well-being offer, including the 'Go To' group, Leaders Q&amp;A, Digital Cwtch, free counselling and a well-regarded occupational health service. We have received feedback this supports the well-being of those who use these services. Our sickness figures are broadly unchanged in recent years, although these are marginally above industry average. 25% of absences were down to mental health in 2019-20 compared to 24% in 2022-23. We need to understand if our well-being services are accessed by everyone who needs them. We also need to ensure our workforce management support is targeted and applied consistently to support our colleagues.</p>	<p>People Strategy</p> <p>Workforce management data</p>



<p>We lack a coherent approach to staff appraisal and mechanisms to assure these are happening consistently. This means some colleagues may not have a clear understanding of their contributions to the delivery of our priorities and a mechanism to feedback their views. We have learnt that a one-size-fits-all approach is not effective for the varying services the council delivers. We also need to capture the outcome of these appraisals to give us a clear understanding of training and development needs. We are applying this learning to develop a new approach to staff appraisal.</p>	
<p><b>How effective is workforce planning?</b></p>	<p><b>How do we know?</b></p>
<p>We have a flexible approach to workforce planning to attract and retain people to roles in the council. This long-standing agile working arrangements, for jobs that do not require employees to travel to their base every day and targeted recruitment campaign for certain jobs. These have had some success for example a reduction in vacancies within our social care workforce. We do not yet have all the arrangements in place to facilitate the organisation to plan the workforce it needs to meet current and future demands. The development and delivery of our new People Strategy identifies the action will take to improve the effectiveness of our workforce planning.</p> <p>We are experiencing recruitment challenges in specific sectors, most of which match wider national recruitment issues. We need to evolve our recruitment process to become a genuine talent acquisition process. We are developing an e-recruitment system, based on feedback from our recruiting managers. This will benefit recruiting managers who want speed, simplicity and agility.</p> <p>Our turnover was higher in recent years than we have typically seen. We need to understand the reasons for this and use this to develop our workforce planning. We need to develop our training offer to equip the workforce with the skills its needs for now and the future. We have implemented a new learning management platform in the social care directorate. This has improved the effectiveness of training management in the directorate. We have experienced technical and capacity restraints in rolling this out to other directorates. This has restricted our ability to improve how we plan, deliver and manage training consistently across the organisation.</p>	<p>People Strategy</p> <p>Workforce management data</p>
<p><b>How has the area for development from the last report been addressed?</b></p>	<p><b>How do we know?</b></p>
<p>Develop a people strategy aligned to deliver the commitments in the Community &amp; Corporate Plan 2022-28</p>	
<p>We have developed a People Strategy that creates the framework for us to support and develop our colleagues so that everyone's contribution can be maximised. The strategy highlights the opportunities and challenges we face. It also describes the things that need to be in place for our colleagues to thrive and succeed.</p>	<p>People Strategy</p>
<p><b>Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment</b></p>	
<p>Strengthen arrangements that support workforce planning and management</p>	

**Procurement – Evaluation Score: Level 3 Adequate**

<b>How effective is strategic procurement?</b>	<b>How do we know?</b>
<p>We have developed a Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy 2023-28. The strategy sets an enabling platform for the development of progressive policies that will achieve greater and more targeted social, economic, environmental, and cultural gains through working with our supply chains. We have not yet developed the supporting policies and procedures needed to set clearer expectations of what we require from our staff and suppliers to meet our ambitions in the strategy.</p> <p>We are developing a Socially Responsible Procurement Policy in collaboration with Cardiff City Council to implement our ambitions in the strategy. We need to accelerate its completion to provide clear guidance to officers and our supply chains when undertaking Socially Responsible Procurement. The policy will provide a well-being framework to ensure a consistent approach to the delivery of ‘Socially Responsible Procurement’ that encapsulates UK and Welsh Government legislative requirements and the council’s priorities. It will identify several measures to allow us to evaluate progress within each well-being theme.</p> <p>We need to develop the knowledge and skills of officers procuring goods, services and works so they deploy the necessary thinking and processes that are required to ensure value for money in procurement and deliver the aims of the strategy. We are providing a series of workshops and training for officers. We are also putting together a series of guidance notes. These will develop the thinking and processes officers require around the principles of “Buying Responsibly” and ensuring value for money procurement outcomes.</p> <p>We have commissioned a procurement technology review to automate and standardise as many manual interventions as possible. To achieve this will be a complex process and will require agreement on direction and resources to deliver it.</p>	<p>Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy 2023-27</p> <p>Draft Socially Responsible Procurement Policy</p> <p>“Buying Responsibly” Guidance</p> <p>Procurement technology review</p>

**Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment**

Strengthen arrangements that support officers undertaking procurement to meet the ambitions of the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy.

**Assets – Evaluation Score: Level 4 Good**

<b>How effective is strategic Asset Management?</b>	<b>How do we know?</b>
<p>We have developed an Asset Management Strategy 2023-2027 that informs the way decisions and day-to-day management of council land and property is undertaken. It sets five clear objectives for land and property to deliver the council’s objectives. It also establishes the supporting policy framework from which the strategy is implemented. The Asset Management Strategy is supported by an Asset Management Plan which identifies the actions to deliver the strategy. This will need to be evaluated annually to assess progress and impact.</p> <p>We have completed significant building projects in the last year improving services to residents and supporting community activity. For example, we have developed and opened in March 2024, Severn View Park, a specialist care home for people living with</p>	<p>Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Plan</p> <p>Severn View Park</p> <p>Magor and Undy Community Hub</p>

<p>dementia. The care home provides a bespoke environmental design, based upon innovating best practice standards for people with dementia and a relationship-centred care model. How effective is operational Asset Management. We have also developed and opened the new £2.9 million Magor and Undy Community Hub in partnership with The Magor with Undy Community Hub project (MUCH). The development was based on extensive involvement of the community and is designed based on resident's feedback. The site provides spaces for community use and commercial events, as well as potential for small business growth. The MUCH group now occupy and manage the community hub for the direct promotion of community use including social, culture, leisure, sporting and other community activities.</p> <p>We need to strengthen our governance arrangements to deliver the strategy to improve decision making and take a more proactive approach to our management of assets. Revised and updated governance arrangements set out in the strategy need to be implemented. We also need to evaluate the outcome and impact of our capital programme, as identified by Audit Wales.</p>	
<p><b>How effective is operational Asset Management?</b></p> <p>We are undertaking feasibility studies, technical assessments and surveys on property, infrastructure, and assets. These are informing our capital budget planning and maintenance schedules in line with established processes. Decision making on managing our assets will need to be strengthened in line with the mechanisms established in our asset management strategy. We have considerable number of maintenance pressures for our assets, including property and highways infrastructure and public rights of way, that sit outside any potential to fund them within the capital medium term financial plan. These carry significant risk.</p> <p>We have improved the coordination of property and facilities management activity in the organisation. For example, in developing agricultural cottages to alternative accommodation. Collaboration between departments can be further strengthened, and expectations managed to coordinate property and facilities management across council service areas.</p>	<p><b>How do we know?</b></p> <p>Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Plan</p> <p>Capital medium term financial plan</p>
<p><b>How has the area for development from the last report been addressed?</b></p> <p>Develop an updated asset management strategy aligned to deliver the commitments in the Community &amp; Corporate Plan 2022-28</p> <p>We have developed an updated Asset Management Strategy. The strategy is supported by an Asset Management Plan which outlines the actions to be undertaken in accordance with the strategy. The Asset Management Plan includes the agreed actions and objectives relating to the land and property functions and portfolios, including the governance arrangements under which the Investment Portfolio will continue to be monitored and evaluated. The Asset Management Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure it continues to provide the appropriate assurance that value for money and best consideration is being achieved.</p>	<p><b>How do we know?</b></p> <p>Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Plan</p>
<p><b>Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment</b></p>	

**Digital & Data – Evaluation Score: Level 3 adequate**

<b>How effective is the development of digital?</b>	<b>How do we know?</b>
<p>We have followed our digital roadmap to deliver digital projects that are focused on improving services for residents and customers. For example, we have developed an Assistive Technology Services to provide technological solutions to support and enable people to live comfortably and securely in their own homes.</p> <p>We have strong partnership arrangements in place for digital with the Shared Resource Service (SRS), neighbouring Local Authorities and national partners. These have led to the development of five collaborative digital and data projects led by the SRS, focused on customer services, use of Artificial Intelligence and data insight. These projects are utilising the knowledge and skills within this field in our partnership network and enabling sharing of learning on common issues across Local Authorities.</p> <p>We have not been able to fulfil all our digital ambitions in the year, particularly due to reductions in our digital team's capacity. We have ambitions to use digital solutions as a means to transform the way we work and deliver our ambitions in the Community and Corporate Plan. We are developing a digital and data strategy to focus our strategic direction to deliver our actions. An Audit Wales, review identified 'The council does not have a clearly articulated strategic approach to digital'. We also need to strengthen how we priorities projects based on the outcomes they can achieve and how we subsequently evaluate impact of digital, including efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p>We have established Information Security &amp; Technology arrangements ensuring that information held by the council to ensure that information remains confidential, maintains its integrity and is available to those who need to access it as part of our work. We actively support, advise, and train our workforce. Mandatory training is provided for GDPR and Cyber Security, alongside comprehensive guidance, and policies for all aspects of data management.</p> <p>We have developed a range of training for officers to improve digital literacy across the organisation. These included an essential skills framework for foundational digital skills and a digital induction which will be rolled out on our corporate training platform. We know that continuous development in digital skills is essential to achieve our ambition. We need to continue to develop digital training resources to allow staff to continue to improve their digital skills.</p>	<p>Digital Service Business Plan</p> <p>Digital and Data Strategy</p> <p>Information security and governance arrangements.</p>
<b>How effective is the development of data?</b>	
<p>We have followed our data action plan in the year to deliver data projects that are focused on providing insight using our data to inform our service delivery and policy development. For example, we have developed performance dashboards for each directorate and our Community and Corporate Plan. We have also developed data analysis on poverty and inequality, workforce, our budgets, and energy use. We have supported the use of geo-spatial to be automatically updated from internal systems and external sources through our Geographical Information Systems (GIS). These are providing data insights to inform future planning and service delivery.</p> <p>We have not been able to fulfil all our data ambitions in the year. We need to further harness and connect data as council wide asset. We also need to improve our data maturity across the organisation. We have ambitions to use data to inform how we transform the</p>	<p>Performance &amp; Data Insight Service Business Plan</p> <p>Digital and Data Strategy</p>

<p>way we work and deliver our ambitions in the Community and Corporate Plan. We are developing a digital and data strategy to focus our strategic direction to deliver our actions. We also need to strengthen how we priorities projects based on the outcomes they can achieve and how we subsequently evaluate impact of data, including efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p>We do not have all the skills we require to deliver our actions within the council. We need to build on existing partnership working and further develop our collaborations to achieve our digital aims. We have developed training for officers to improve data skills. These include training on the use of business intelligence tools. We need to continue to develop training resources to allow staff to continue to improve their data skills.</p>	
<p><b>How has the area for development from the last report been addressed?</b></p> <p>Develop a Digital Strategy aligned to deliver the commitments in the Community &amp; Corporate Plan 2022-28</p>	<p><b>How do we know?</b></p>
<p>We have developed a Digital and Data Strategy that sets our integrated ambition and priorities for using digital and data to improve services and outcomes for residents. It sets our longer-term aims and initial actions to deliver them. Our approach will grow in line with advancements we make and developments in the digital and data field.</p>	<p>Digital and Data Strategy</p>
<p><b>Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment</b></p>	
<p>Strengthen the capacity and capability to deliver the ambition in the digital and data strategy.</p>	

**Democracy & Scrutiny** – Evaluation Score: Level 4 - Good

<p><b>How effectively are resources being used?</b></p>	<p><b>How do we know?</b></p>
<p>The use of remote attendance at Council, Cabinet and committee meetings is fully embedded. This brings positive benefits for those with work or family commitments who are able to participate in meetings they would otherwise not be able to attend. Attendance at meetings was 94% in the 22-23 civic year compared in 86% in the previous year and 86% during the first year of the previous council term. Revisions to the changes of scrutiny committees have reduced duplication, for example budget and performance reports are now presented to Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee rather than having the same report presented to four separate meetings.</p>	<p>Attendance Figures</p> <p>Annual Governance statement</p>
<p><b>Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment</b></p>	

## Our work with others

To deliver the outcome required for the county we need to work together with a range of partners, stakeholders and our communities. The council will not have all the answers to solve the challenges facing the county and we will not be able to deliver the outcomes required on our own. Working collaboratively with others increases the likelihood of us developing effective and sustainable solutions.

### Stakeholders and partnership working

How effectively does the council work with stakeholders and partners on agreed outcomes?	How do we know?
<p>Working in partnership is one of the ways we can achieve our objectives while delivering value for money. We enter into collaborative arrangements thoughtfully and with a clear articulation of how they can help us achieve our objectives. Regionally we work with many large organisations in partnership including Welsh Government, Cardiff Capital Region, Regional Partnership Board and the Gwent Public Services Board to fulfil our commitments on, for example, decarbonisation, transport, health and social care, housing and regeneration. An Internal Audit review identified a reasonable level of assurance was in place for the authority’s governance arrangements based on a sample of partnerships. The audit identified we need to strengthen our guidance on the arrangements that partnerships need to have in place and assure ourselves these are subsequently adhered to. We have developed a partnership toolkit and need to complete its implementation. The audit focussed on assessment and planning. Our lead council officers for partnerships need to evaluate if the expected outcomes of the partnerships are being realised.</p> <p>The South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) was given the legal responsibility for preparing Regional Strategic Development Plans, Regional Transport Plans and for doing whatever is deemed necessary to enhance or promote the economic well-being of the area. The committee is made up of the leaders of the ten local authorities in South East Wales. All governance papers are published on the Cardiff Capital Region website. The arrangements are overseen by a joint committee comprising representatives from the ten local authorities with additional regulatory activity undertaken by Audit Wales</p> <p>Partnerships and collaborations of all scales and important to deliver improved outcomes in the county. We are committed to strengthening our collaboration with community and town councils and lean into the expertise and enthusiasm of the many volunteers and community groups that make this county so special.</p>	<p>Internal Audit review of Partnerships and collaborations.</p>
<p><b>Further areas for development identified through our 2023/24 self-assessment</b></p>	
<p>Evaluate if the expected outcomes of partnerships are being realised and impact on delivering the council’s objectives.</p>	

## Our Actions

Through the self-assessment, we have identified how well we are doing and what we can do better. Identifying these is not the end of the self-assessment process. We will look to build on and learn from the areas that are going well and address areas that we can do better.

The action plan focuses specifically on what and how we can do better for the significant conclusions of the assessment. All of the findings will inform the development of the council’s well-being objectives and delivery plans. They will inform how internal processes and procedures should change to support more effective planning, delivery and decision-making to drive better outcomes, and ways to deliver the council’s functions. These also integrate with further actions identified in the council’s Annual Governance Statement 2023/24.

The actions will be monitored through the year as part of the council’s performance management arrangements. The next self-assessment report will also include an assessment of the progress made on these actions.

Progress with 2022/23 Actions?

We have provided an update on progress against the actions we identified in the 2022/23 self-assessment report. A more detailed assessment of these arrangements is provided in the relevant section of the report.

Section	What can we do better	How	Progress
<b>Outcomes</b>	Ensure interventions to achieve a Fair Place to Live objective are evidence-based, targeted, clearly communicated and evaluated to assess impact	Develop clear plans to deliver the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	A poverty and inequality action plan is being developed to provide a clear focus for the council’s activity to deliver the Fair Place to live objective. This is due to be completed in December 2024. This action will be carried forward to the 2023/24 action plan.
<b>Outcomes</b>	To accelerate the delivery of the council’s Decarbonisation Strategy	Revise the council’s plans to deliver its commitment to be net-zero by 2030.	A revised Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy has been developed, aligned with the Community and Corporate Plan. The strategy will be delivered by four action plans on decarbonisation, Biodiversity and Nature Recovery, Rivers and Oceans and Community climate change.  How the strategy will be evaluated has been established. Our self-assessment concludes there are challenges to meeting our decarbonisation aims. The progress and impact of the strategy will need to be evaluated regularly.

<b>Section</b>	<b>What can we do better</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>Outcomes</b>	Use economic analysis commissioned to inform the development of an Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy	Develop an Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy to deliver the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	<p>An Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy and Action Plan has been developed, aligned with the Community and Corporate Plan.</p> <p>How the strategy will be evaluated has been established. The progress and impact of the strategy will need to be evaluated regularly</p>
<b>Outcomes</b>	Clearly articulate and evaluate plans to deliver high quality Adults and Children’s social care	Develop clear plans to deliver the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	<p>Plans have been created for significant parts of our Social Care provision that required development. These include a strategy for commissioned domiciliary care 2024 – 2034, including implementation plan and the approach for developing children’s residential and 16+ supported accommodation placements.</p> <p>The Chief Officer for Social Care, safeguarding and health also produced an annual report evaluating performance in Children and Adults Social Care and setting priority action for the future.</p> <p>The progress and impact of these strategies and priorities will need to be evaluated regularly.</p>
<b>Outcomes</b>	Ensure the delivery of the action plan which aims to address recommendations identified by Estyn	Deliver and assess progress on the Estyn recommendation Action Plan	<p>The themes from the inspection included pursuing excellence, creating a holistic vision and strategy for learners with additional learning needs, securing better outcomes for our learners eligible for free school meals (FSM) and improving the way we use data in our evaluations.</p> <p>The action plan to address the recommendations from the Estyn inspection is being implemented. The Community and Corporate Plan now provides a clear framework for action and evaluation of services to ensure that we are working most effectively in the areas of need. The progress against the Estyn recommendations will be included as part of the Chief Officer for Children &amp; Young People annual report. It is harder to form an overall view against our Estyn recommendations</p>



Section	What can we do better	How	Progress
			<p>due to their areas of focus: progression of FSM learners and excellent standards requiring more extensive access to schools to understand and evidence their progress. This action will be carried forward to the 2023/24 action plan.</p>
<b>Resources</b>	<p>Clear enabling strategies aligned to deliver the commitments in the Community &amp; Corporate Plan 2022-28</p>	<p>Develop Enabling strategies aligned to deliver the commitments in the Community &amp; Corporate Plan 2022-28</p>	<p>Enabling strategies have been developed. The enabling strategies developed are the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy, Medium-Term Financial Strategy, Asset Management Strategy, People Strategy and Digital &amp; Data Strategy. These are aligned to deliver the commitments in the Community &amp; Corporate Plan 2022-28. A further customer strategy is being developed.</p> <p>The progress and impact of these strategies will need to be evaluated regularly in line with the reporting arrangements established in the strategy.</p>
<b>Resources</b>	<p>Embed the delivery of the commitments in the Community &amp; Corporate Plan 2022-28 within the council's performance framework</p>	<p>Embed actions within service business plans.</p> <p>Review the self-assessment process to inform the development of service business plans and the next self-assessment report</p>	<p>The approval of the Community and Corporate Plan has ensured that there is a clear direction for the council. Our self-assessment of our performance framework shows the actions in the Community and Corporate Plan have mainly been embedded in the performance management framework. This also shows there is a need to further strengthen the alignment of some service business plans.</p> <p>The Self-assessment process has been embedded in the council's performance management framework. The self-assessment process has facilitated the completion of a robust evaluation of performance. Quality assurance on service business plans has shown that managers do not always consistently apply a self-evaluative mindset when updating service business plans. Strengthening self-evaluation within plans is a continuing action, this will inform evidence in the self-assessment report.</p>

<b>Section</b>	<b>What can we do better</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>Stakeholder and Partnership</b>	Strengthen how we work with and alongside communities in line with the commitments in the Community and Corporate Plan.	Develop a clear plan for involvement aligned to the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	<p>We have developed a portal that seeks to set out some of the key interfaces and ways that every citizen affected by what the Council does has the ability to shape and influence their community and County to work together for a fairer, greener, more successful County.</p> <p>Our self-assessment identifies many areas where we have involved residents in delivering our community and corporate plan in the last year. For example, we have engaged extensively during the production of the Replacement Local Development Plan and we are also working in partnership on the production of town centre masterplans.</p> <p>We recognise that we still need to strengthen involvement and co-produce a different approach to public participation.</p>

What and how can we do better 2023/24?

<b>Section</b>	<b>What can we do better</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>
<b>Outcomes</b>	Ensure interventions to achieve a Fair Place to Live objective are evidence-based, targeted, clearly communicated and evaluated to assess impact	Develop a poverty and inequality action plan to deliver the commitments in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28	Chief Officer Communities & Place	December 2024
<b>Outcomes</b>	Ensure early and help prevention services are effectively able to meet current and prevent, as far as possible, future demand	Complete an evaluation of the performance of early help and preventive services, as part of the Director of social care annual report and use the findings to inform future action	Chief Officer, Social Care, Safeguarding & Health	November 2024
<b>Outcomes</b>	Increase the focus of council activities on improving the social determinants of health	Use the recommendations in the Building a Fairer Gwent: Improving Health equity and the social determinants report to inform the council's service planning	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships	April 2025

<b>Outcomes</b>	Ensure the delivery of the action plan which aims to address recommendations identified by Estyn	Deliver and assess progress on the Estyn recommendation Action Plan	Chief Officer Children & Young People	As per action plan
<b>Outcomes</b>	Develop the support offer for schools and pupils to reduce and prevent exclusions	Develop an Inclusion Strategy for delivery of inclusion services across Monmouthshire	Chief Officer Children & Young People	November 2024
<b>Outcomes</b>	Develop the support offer for disadvantaged learners to achieve their potential	Developing a whole authority approach on supporting disadvantaged learners, including working with the EAS.	Chief Officer Children & Young People	November 2024
<b>Enablers</b>	Increase the focus on outcomes in the measurement framework of the Community and Corporate Plan	Review and revise the measurement framework of the Community and Corporate Plan	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships	September 2024
<b>Enablers</b>	Strengthen arrangements that support workforce planning and management	Develop and deliver the action plan in the people strategy	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships	As per action plan
<b>Enablers</b>	Strengthen arrangements that support officers undertaking procurement to meet the ambitions of the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy	Develop consistent guidance, training, and support for officers undertaking procurement	Chief Officer Communities & Place	October 2024
<b>Enablers</b>	Strengthen the capacity and capability to deliver the ambition in the digital and data strategy.	Develop and deliver the action plan in the Digital and Data Strategy	Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer Resources	As per action plan
<b>Stakeholder and Partnership</b>	Evaluate if the expected outcomes of partnerships are being realised and impact on delivering the council's objectives.	Implement the partnership toolkit to facilitate lead council officers for identified partnerships to evaluate if the expected outcomes of the partnerships are being realised.	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships & Partnership lead officers	March 2025


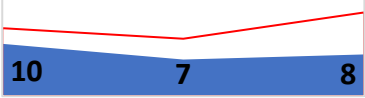


## Performance Measures

The use of performance measures is one of the important mechanisms we use to assess our performance. Each of our goals has specific performance measures set to monitor progress. Some further relevant performance indicators we use to assess our services' performance are set out in this section.

National indicators have been set as part of the Future Generations Act for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the well-being goals in Wales as a whole. While the national indicators will not measure the performance of individual public bodies or public services boards, it is important that they are considered to track the progress being made to improve well-being in Monmouthshire. Some of the national indicators that are relevant to the objectives we have set, where an update is available at a county level, are included in the table below.




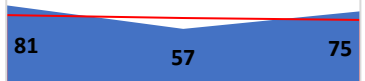



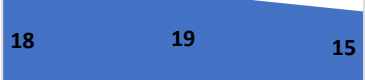



### Longer term measures in the Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28



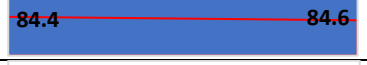


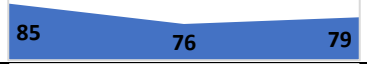






Alongside the specific measures included under each objective The Community and Corporate Plan also includes measures for each objective that we want to track because they will inform our work. We want to see positive movement in these measures, but they are things where our input is only part of a much bigger picture. The latest update of the measures can be seen below. The red comparator line in some graphs seen below displays the Wales average data, where available.

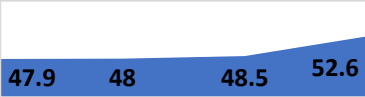
Longer term measures in Community & Corporate Plan 2022-2028	Monmouthshire trend <sup>3</sup> (Wales trend in red where available)	Latest
<b>A Fair place to live</b>		
Percentage of children living in relative low-income families <sup>xviii</sup>		17.4
Percentage of people living in households in material deprivation <sup>xix</sup>		8
Difference in average pay between men and women working in the county (£)		100
<b>A Green place to live</b>		
Food waste captured from the waste stream and sent to Anaerobic Digestion (tonnes)		5,062

<sup>3</sup> Annual trend data for the previous 5 years, where available. Some dips in data trends are a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

Longer term measures in Community & Corporate Plan 2022-2028	Monmouthshire trend <sup>3</sup> (Wales trend in red where available)	Latest
Average annual residual waste produced per person (kilograms) <sup>xx</sup>		125.39
Average level of nitrogen dioxide pollution in the air ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ), measured at Air Quality Management Areas in Monmouthshire <sup>xxi</sup>		6
Number of properties at medium or high risk of flooding <sup>xxii</sup>	Trend data not available	1825
Percentage of the Special Area of Conservation river catchment waterbodies that fail the phosphorus targets <sup>xxiii</sup>	Trend data not available	88 for Usk 67 for Wye
<b>A Thriving and Ambitious place</b>		
Average hourly town centre footfall <sup>xxiv</sup>		288
Percentage of vacant town centre premises <sup>xxv</sup>		8.8
Number of rail passengers using Monmouthshire train stations <sup>xxvi</sup>		625,374
Motor vehicle traffic by local authority (million miles) <sup>xxvii</sup>		947
Gross disposable household income per head (£) <sup>xxviii</sup>		22,720
<b>A Safe Place to Live</b>		
Median house prices compared to median workplace-based earnings <sup>xxix</sup>		9.22
Rate of households unintentionally homeless and in priority need per 10,000 households		67
Percentage of social housing allocated to homeless households		57

Longer term measures in Community & Corporate Plan 2022-2028	Monmouthshire trend <sup>3</sup> (Wales trend in red where available)	Latest
Average carbon emissions per capita in Monmouthshire (tonnes) <sup>xxx</sup>		9.1
Rate of anti-social behaviour incidents per 1,000 population		13.1
Number of rapes and sexual offences committed <sup>xxxii</sup>		200
Percentage of people feeling safe at home, walking in the local area, and when travelling <sup>xxxii</sup>		75
Percentage of homes that have an energy efficiency rating of C or above <sup>xxxiii</sup>		50.5
The percentage of those referred to the youth offending service who subsequently re-offend		18.4
<b>A Connected Place Where People Care</b>		
Percentage of children supported to remain living with their family (not including children looked after)		60.2
Number of children who are rehabilitated after a period of being looked after		15
Percentage of people who are lonely <sup>xxxiv</sup>		12
Percentage of people satisfied with their ability to get to/ access the facilities and services they need <sup>xxxv</sup>		86
Percentage of people satisfied with local area as a place to live <sup>xxxvi</sup>		95

Longer term measures in Community & Corporate Plan 2022-2028	Monmouthshire trend <sup>3</sup> (Wales trend in red where available)	Latest
Healthy life expectancy at birth (women) <sup>xxxvii</sup>		69.3
Healthy life expectancy at birth (men) <sup>xxxviii</sup>		68.7
Life expectancy at birth (women) <sup>xxxix</sup>		84.6
Life expectancy at birth (men) <sup>xl</sup>		81.6
Percentage of people participating in sporting activities three or more times a week <sup>xli</sup>		43
Percentage of people who attend or participate in arts culture or heritage activities three or more times a year <sup>xlii</sup>		79
Number of carers and young carers supported by the carers team		164
Number of job vacancies in social care workforce		23
<b>A Learning place</b>		
Rate of fixed term exclusions of less than 5 days per thousand pupils (days) -Primary Pupils <sup>xliii</sup>		15.3
Rate of fixed term exclusions of less than 5 days per thousand pupils (days) -Secondary Pupils		194.6
Rate of fixed term exclusions of more than 5 days per thousand pupils (days) -Primary Pupils		0.3
Rate of fixed term exclusions of more than 5 days per thousand pupils (days) -Secondary Pupils		5.2

Longer term measures in Community & Corporate Plan 2022-2028	Monmouthshire trend <sup>3</sup> (Wales trend in red where available)	Latest										
Percentage of adults with qualifications at Level 4 and above of the National Qualifications Framework	 <table border="1"> <caption>Monmouthshire trend data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Period</th> <th>Value</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>47.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>48</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>48.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>52.6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Period	Value	1	47.9	2	48	3	48.5	4	52.6	52.6
Period	Value											
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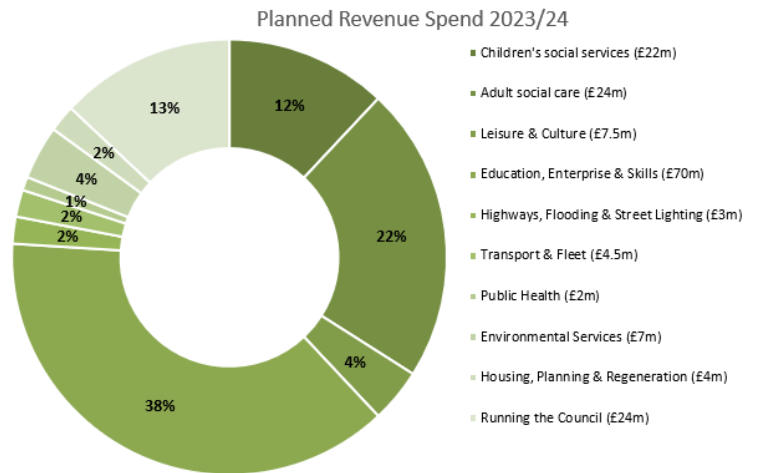
The use of mechanisms such as the Office of National Statistics' Measuring National Well-being programme (diagram 7 in What Citizens Said section below) are ways in which we are trying to broaden our understanding of well-being in Monmouthshire, in addition to service specific performance measurement.



## What we spent in 2023/24

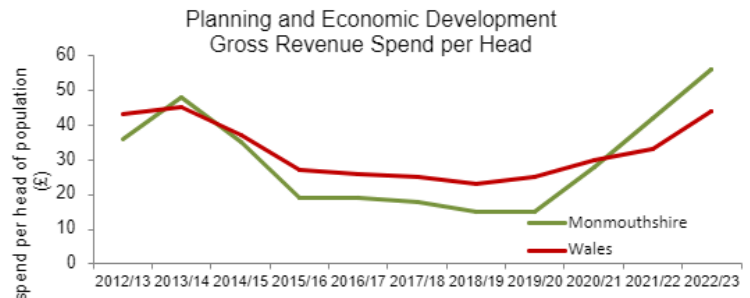
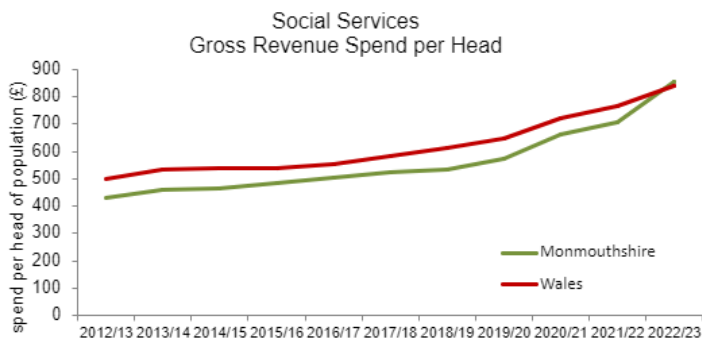
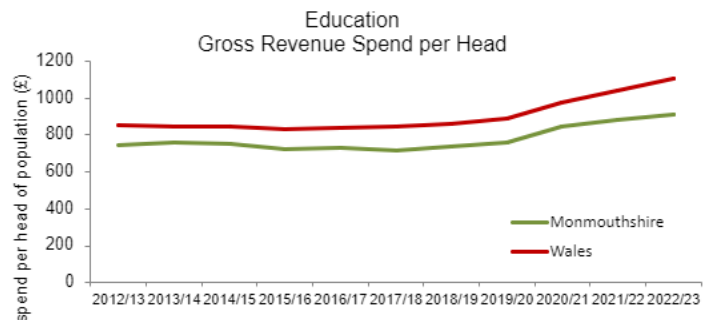
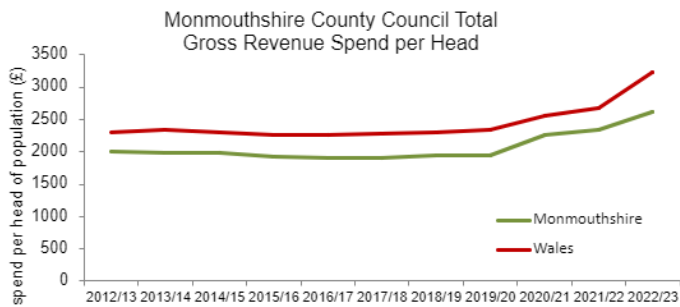
In 2023/24, the council's planned spend was £168 million to provide services for Monmouthshire residents.

The proportion of our spending on different services in 2023/24 is shown in the diagram. These services are paid for by a combination of central government grants, council tax, non-domestic rates and a contribution from the council Fund.



## How our revenue spend compares with other areas

The graphs below show how much we spend per head of population in some of our priority areas. In 2022/23, we had the lowest gross revenue spend per head of all councils in Wales and spent less per head on education services. However, we have increased our per head social services spending to above the Wales average and continue to spend above the average on planning and economic development. We have continued to work hard to make sure this money goes where it matters. For 2023/24 we received an increase in core funding, however our budget settlement from Welsh Government continues to be the lowest per head of population of councils in Wales.



## What citizens said

Involvement and working together with residents and communities in Monmouthshire is essential to develop and deliver solutions to achieve outcomes and ensure residents are involved in the decisions that affect them.

Through our self-assessment we have used the views of service users and residents to inform our assessment. Some of the specific engagement exercises we undertaken to involve citizens this year include:

**Budget engagement:** Monmouthshire County Council launched its draft budget proposals for 2024-2025 in January 2024. Monmouthshire's communities were invited to share their views on these possible changes in an open consultation process. A range of information on the proposals and their potential impacts was shared. Face-to-face budget consultation events took place, as well as online budget sessions. For those unable to join the livestream, the session was uploaded to the website to watch after the event. As part of the consultation process, residents were also asked to share their thoughts via a feedback survey on the budget proposals, which were shared across our social media platforms.



**Regeneration Proposals:** We are working in partnership with town councils and other key stakeholders to drive and oversee the development of placemaking plans in Monmouth, Abergavenny and Magor with Undy, and a Transforming Chepstow Masterplan. To inform these plans a range of consultation events were held including face-to-face engagement opportunities, displays were held in the local area on plans and designs and surveys provided. Initial discussions have taken place with local stakeholders about a new placemaking plan for Caldicot. We have invited expression of interest from eligible businesses in Monmouthshire town centres for the Monmouthshire Town Centre Property Improvement Grant. This is funded through the Welsh Government's Transforming Town Placemaking Grant and Monmouthshire County Council. The grant provides financial support for improvements to properties in the designated town centres of Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow and Monmouth.

**Education Provision:** We recognise the importance of involving residents and partners in discussions around the education provision for our young people. We engaged with residents as part of our review of primary school catchment areas, which has allowed more of our children and young people to attend a school within the county. We also engaged with residents as part of our proposals to relocate Ysgol y Fenni to the Deri View site which will double the capacity of the school; almost 90% of responders were in support of the proposal. 145 individuals engaged with us as part of our consultation to establish a new Welsh medium primary school in Monmouth. This included children and young people, teachers, governors, parents and partner organisations.

**Age-Friendly Monmouthshire:** We have committed to working towards Monmouthshire becoming an Age-Friendly County and joining the World Health Organisation's global network of Age-Friendly Communities. We invited all residents aged 50 or over to participate in a survey, sharing their experiences

and thoughts on everyday life in Monmouthshire and attended sessions at community hubs across the county to discuss the experience of residents. We have engaged with over 1,200 people. This voice of our older residents will be at the centre of efforts to create an age-friendly county. We will be working with local businesses, third sector organisations, statutory partners and the wider community to foster healthy and active ageing, making Monmouthshire more attractive to people of all ages, whether they be residents or visitors

**Local Transport Strategy:** Ensuring residents and stakeholders are involved in the development of strategies that will affect them is incredibly important. We held a public consultation for our draft Local Transport Strategy between November 2023 and January 2024 to allow residents and stakeholders to feed back on the proposed vision, objectives and strategic framework for the future development of Monmouthshire's transport network. The consultation received 336 responses, and found that in most cases, the majority of respondents agreed with the policy ambition set out in the draft strategy. The needs of our communities sit at the heart of the Local Transport Strategy and will drive the ambition moving forward.

**Strategic Equality Plan:** Making Monmouthshire a fairer place to live is a key priority for the organisation and sits at the heart of all we do. Throughout this year we developed our Strategic Equality Plan which sets out the seven key objectives we will focus on to ensure our county is a fair place to live for all. This draft strategy was subject to public consultation during January and February 2024. As well as a website survey, the consultation was sent to local groups with members possessing protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010. Responses received were largely supportive of the objectives and actions proposed.

**Customer Complaints and Compliments:** We monitor and learn from feedback received from customers. These are reported to the Governance and Audit Committee. Issues included the length of time we can take to respond to people. Not only is it important to deal with complaints effectively, investigating and putting things right for the complainant where necessary, it is also vital to learn from them to minimise the chances of the same problem occurring twice. Twelve complaints were referred to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales in 2022-23, the last year for which data is available, a decrease from twenty during 2021-22. Monmouthshire has one of the lowest levels of complaints reported to the Ombudsman at 0.25 per 1,000 residents. This ranges from 0.17 to 0.49 with an average of 0.33.

### **Measuring Individual well-being**

The Office of National Statistics' Measuring National Well-being programme also assesses personal well-being as part of the Annual Population Survey. The survey asks the questions:

- **Life Satisfaction** – overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- **Worthwhile** – overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
- **Happiness** – overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
- **Anxiety** – on a scale where 0 is 'not at all anxious' and 10 is 'completely anxious', overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

- The latest full annual results for Monmouthshire (from 2022/23) for these questions are shown in diagram below alongside the UK and Wales averages. This shows that the responses from Monmouthshire residents score slightly better than both the UK and Wales for almost all



measures.

### Staff engagement

As part of our process to collate the self-assessment, we held directorate and enabling-service workshops to provide an opportunity for staff to directly feed into the self-assessment via identification of their own strengths and areas for development. Workshop attendees were presented with evidence packs, collated from existing information sources such as scrutiny reports, external regulator feedback, and service business plans, and were facilitated to self-assess their performance. A range of evidence was gathered from the workshops, both in terms of successes and areas for development associated with our strategic goals and our enabling functions, but also on how to strengthen the self-assessment process.

We have also used evidence gathered from a range of staff events and groups. These include the Digital and in-person 'Cwtch' staff engagement sessions, along with fortnightly People Leaders Q&A session and the engagement on the development of our People Strategy. The use of networks and digital communication, surveys and feedback loops to senior managers, has extended the reach of contact with the workforce.

### Businesses

We have established stronger engagement networks with businesses in our area since the pandemic and are working to maintain and improve these connections. We have a better understanding of the types of businesses in our area. We have continued to engage with businesses through our new customer relationship management system which acts as a database of Monmouthshire businesses and a tool to promote the advice and guidance services that we can provide to pre-starts and existing businesses. Our Business Data & Communications Officer has continued to improve our links with businesses and has helped to improve feedback loops with businesses to ensure we are capitalising on the conversations that

are taking place and can improve our service as a result. This feedback will continue to inform our self-assessment.

### **Trade Unions**

We engage well with Trade Unions to achieve our outcomes. We have briefed them on the process we undertake to complete our self-assessment and shared our initial findings with them as part of our self-assessment process.

## What Regulators and Inspectors Said

We work closely with our regulators and inspectors to quality-assure our activities as this is vital to ensuring improvement. Their feedback is valued, and we use their assessments to help us focus on the things we need to improve across the council.

Each year, Audit Wales publishes an Audit Plan setting out the work they plan to undertake at the council. As part of the plan Audit Wales have undertaken a range of audits during the year. These included:

- Well-being Objective Setting Examination: The report concludes the Council has set its well-being objectives in accordance with the sustainable development principle and is aligning its key strategies and business plans to support their delivery, but it could further strengthen its approach by increasing the diversity of citizen involvement in future.
- Use of Performance Information, Service User Perspective and Outcomes: The report concludes the council provides some performance information to enable senior leaders to understand the perspective of service users, but information on outcomes is limited restricting their ability to manage performance effectively.
- Capital Programme Management: The report concludes capital programme management arrangements demonstrate some strengths but lack focus on outcomes and impact. This conclusion was reached because: planning arrangements are generally robust, but the capital programme lacks clear outcomes; and monitoring arrangements focus on budget and timescales with limited consideration of impact or learning.
- Digital Strategy Review: The report concludes the Council does not have a clearly articulated strategic approach to digital. The report recognises the Council currently does not have a digital strategy and its current digital work is detailed within individual service business plans and some project work. It also acknowledges the Council intends to develop a new digital strategy to help clarify the role that digital technology will play in the Council. We have now developed a digital and data strategy for 2024-2027.
- Assurance and Risk Assessment work in the council during 2023/24. This focused on the council's financial sustainability, capital programme management and governance arrangements.

We have developed responses to the recommendations in these reports and the progress in delivering these is regularly reported to the council's Governance & Audit Committee. Reports produced by Audit Wales are available to download on their website ([www.audit.wales/publications](http://www.audit.wales/publications)). This includes local government national reports.

We underwent an Estyn Inspection into Local Government Education Services in February 2020. The inspection recognised the clear vision and strong focus on ensuring 'the best possible start in life' and also identified the commitment to partnership working that has resulted in a good track record of improvement. It also identified areas for development, such as the performance of children eligible for free school meals, and a lack of clarity in how services for learners with special educational needs will be strengthened. The progress in addressing the four recommendations in the report has been evaluated in the Children and Young People's Chief Officer's Report 2023/24, with all four being assessed as making 'good progress'. The progress report can be found here [Children and Young People's Chief Officer's Report 2023/24 \(monmouthshire.gov.uk\)](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk). The full Estyn report, and other Estyn reports related to Monmouthshire and schools in the county, can be found on [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales)

Care Inspectorate Wales carried out a performance evaluation inspection of children's services in the council in February 2024. The purpose of this inspection was to review the local authority's performance in exercising its social services duties and functions in line with legislation, on behalf of Welsh Ministers. The findings recognise strengths and areas for improvement:

- Strengths recognised include, family support, and children’s participation. Positive leadership and good morale within the service were also highlighted and the inspection confirmed that the service had a good understanding of its relative strengths and difficulties.
- Areas for improvement identified included the impact of increased demand; ensuring that a strengths-based approach informs the initial stages of child protection process when appropriate; ensuring that direct work with children forms part of the case record and strengthening quality assurance.

We are taking action to address the areas for improvement and CIW intend to monitor progress through routine engagement with the service.

The full inspection report, and other inspection reports about Monmouthshire social services by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), can be found on [www.careinspectorate.wales](http://www.careinspectorate.wales)

### **Equality and Diversity**

The council has a long-standing commitment to equality and diversity. Our fourth Strategic Equality Plan, produced under the Equality Act 2010 sets the council’s objectives to ensure we deliver better outcomes for people with protected characteristics. This is clearly aligned with the evidence provided by the Well-being Assessment, and evidence provided by the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s report “Is Wales Fairer 2018”.

As well as this, it is important to us as it is the right thing to do. We produce annual monitoring reports that provide updates on progress on the action plan in the Strategic Equality Plan and evidence good practice being carried out across the council departments. These can be found [here](#).

### **The Welsh Language**

The Welsh language is central to the goals introduced as part of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, particularly for our contribution to a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. It also makes an important contribution to the Welsh Government goal of having a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, and accompanying Welsh Language standards, place a legal duty on councils to treat Welsh and English equally, to promote the Welsh Language and provide services to the public through the medium of Welsh. There are 176 standards that apply to the council. This is a significant challenge, but systems have been put in place to comply with these. We have a Welsh Language Strategy for 2022-2027, which identifies a vision of how the language will look in Monmouthshire in five years and is accompanied by targets to help achieve it. Our annual monitoring report 2023/24 reflects our progress against our Welsh language commitments under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards. The report can be found [here](#).

## Appendix 1 – Self-assessment process

### Legislation

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (“the Act”) provides for a new and reformed legislative framework for local government elections, democracy, governance and performance. The Act replaces the previous improvement duty for councils set out in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. The Act requires each council in Wales to keep under review the extent to which it is meeting the ‘performance requirements’, that is the extent to which it is exercising its functions effectively; it is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; its governance is effective for securing these.

The performance and governance provisions in the Act are framed within the context of the well-being duty in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which sets out a legally binding common purpose for public bodies to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

The mechanism for a council to keep its performance under review is self-assessment, with a duty to publish a report setting out the conclusions of the self-assessment once in respect of every financial year. Self-assessment will be complemented by a panel performance assessment once in an electoral cycle, providing an opportunity to seek external insights (other than from auditors, regulators or inspectors) on how the council is meeting the performance requirements.

### Why?

Self-assessment is a way of evaluating, critically and honestly, the current position to make decisions on how to secure improvement for the future. It is about the council being self-aware, understanding whether it is delivering the right outcomes, and challenging itself to continuously improve. It needs to be embedded as effective self-assessment helps the council to continually learn and achieve sustainable improvement and better outcomes for citizens, service users and its own workforce.

The WLGA have identified draft principles for self-assessment for councils to ensure that they have arrangements in place that:

- demonstrate self-awareness derived from evidence-based analysis that focuses on outcomes;
- are owned and led at a strategic level and are not an exercise in compliance;
- further develop a culture of challenge to facilitate improvement as part of an ongoing process;
- are integrated as part of the council’s corporate planning, performance and governance processes; and
- enable an organisation-wide assessment rather than an assessment of individual services.

Further developing this culture and embedding an evaluative mindset will be a key development point through the continued production of the self- assessment report.

### Process

The council has developed a process to undertake its third self-assessment under the Act, assessing performance in the 2023/24 financial year. The main component parts of the process and timeline are:

<b>April - May</b>	<b>May - June</b>	<b>June - July</b>	<b>July - September</b>	<b>September</b>
Desk-based evidence gathering	Directorate self-assessment Workshops	Council self-assessment report drafted	Draft report to Scrutiny and Governance & Audit Committee	Self-assessment agreed in line with council process.

This timeline ensures that the self-assessment can inform and be informed by the policy direction of the council and how it uses its resources efficiently and effectively, particularly the budget setting process.



Evaluative evidence to inform the assessment has been compiled at a directorate level. Most of the evidence has been collated by using intelligence already held corporately in an insightful way; this includes, for example, the Annual Governance Statement, audit and inspection reports, and service level business plans.



The evidence gathered has been explored further, and challenged where necessary, at directorate and enabling function based self-assessment workshops, to determine if the objectives (outcomes) of the council are being achieved.

**Self-assessment workshops**

Directorate workshops	Enabling functions workshops
Children & Young People	People, Performance & Partnerships – Performance, Data, Scrutiny & Workforce planning
Social Care & Health	Resources – Financial planning, Assets & Digital
Communities & Place	
MonLife	

The workshops were facilitated through the following questions:

- How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes? (Community & Corporate Plan objectives)
- How do we know? (Evidence)
- How effectively are resources being used to deliver our priorities? (Enablers)
- How effectively does the council work with stakeholders and partners on agreed outcomes? (Partnership working)
- What could we do better? (Actions – including a review of actions from the previous report)

The full evidence and conclusions from workshops have been collated and will be used by directorates and enabling functions to inform their services business plans.

Following the workshops, the evidence has been reviewed, further challenged, and collated into a corporate level evaluative self-assessment. This has been integrated with the council’s requirement to

report on the progress it has made in meeting its well-being objectives for the preceding financial year (2023/24) under the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The report is structured under these headings:

- Understanding our local place
- Outcomes (progress against our objectives):
  - How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?
  - How do we know?
  - Areas for development
- Enabling functions
  - Corporate planning, performance and risk management
  - Financial planning
  - Workforce planning
  - Procurement
  - Assets
  - Digital & Data
  - Democracy & Scrutiny
- Our work with partners
- Our Actions (including progress against previous actions)

The self-assessment report will be scrutinised by the council's Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee. A draft of the self-assessment report will be made available to Governance and Audit Committee to review the draft report in line with the requirements of the legislation. The self-assessment will be presented for approval at a meeting of full Council.

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<sup>i</sup> This measures primary school pupils who receive Universal Free Primary Schools rather than the number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals

<sup>ii</sup> MonGames is a skills and sports activity programme, usually run in the school holidays, aimed at children aged between 5-11

<sup>iii</sup> This is externally grant funded so risk that this model could change or stop

<sup>iv</sup> Active Play is a two-hour programme designed for children aged between 5-11 where they are able to take part in a range of physical activities and also arts and crafts

<sup>v</sup> National Survey for Wales - <https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales>

<sup>vi</sup> Make Your Mark: Monmouthshire's Local Ballot is an annual consultation for young people ages 11-25. See <https://www.monlife.co.uk/connect/youth-service/make-your-mark/make-your-mark-monmouthshire/> for more details

<sup>vii</sup> National Survey for Wales - <https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales>

<sup>viii</sup> Disability Confident is a UK Government scheme designed to encourage employers to recruit and retain disabled people and those with health conditions.

<sup>ix</sup> Measured by the Annual Population Survey for Wales. While this is not considered as accurate as the Census, it has the benefit of being updated more frequently allowing the authority to track progress.

<sup>x</sup> This includes both emissions from the council's operations and land-based and supply chain operations

<sup>xi</sup> Amount of municipal, or 'everyday' waste, set to be recycled, reused or composted as a percentage of total waste generated. [Annual reuse/recycling/composting rates by local authority \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>xii</sup> Measured using the STEAM which is a tourism economic impact modelling process

<sup>xiii</sup> Percentage of Year 11 school leavers who are NEET. [Pupil destinations | Careers Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>xiv</sup> Active travel means getting about in a way that makes you physically active, like walking or cycling. It usually means short journeys, like walking to the shops or school or cycling to work.

<sup>xv</sup> Adult Social Care Service User Questionnaire

<sup>xvi</sup> The National Exercise Referral Scheme is an evidence-based health intervention incorporating physical and behavioural change to support clients to make a lifestyle change to improve both health and well-being

<sup>xvii</sup> Adult Social Care Service User Questionnaire

<sup>xviii</sup> Relative low income refers to people living in households with income below 60% of the median in that year

<sup>xix</sup> Material deprivation is a measure of living standards. A person is considered to be living in material deprivation if they are unable to access a certain number of goods or services. Further information can be found here: [Material deprivation and low income | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>xx</sup> [Annual residual household waste produced per person \(kilograms\) by local authority \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>xxi</sup> [Air Quality Indicators, by Local Authority \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>xxii</sup> Measures combined numbers at risk from rivers, tidal and surface water. Source:

[Medium Risk; Less than 1 in 30 \(3.3%\) but greater than or equal to 1 in 100 \(1%\) chance in any given year for rivers and surface water flooding and less than 1 in 30 \(3.3 per cent\) but greater than or equal to 1 in 200 \(0.5 per cent\) for the sea.](https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Environment-and-Countryside/Flooding/High Risk; Greater than or equal to 1 in 30 (3.3%) chance in any given year. Data in baseline is for 2019.</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

Low Risk; Less than 1 in 100 (1%) for rivers and surface water flooding and 1 in 200 (0.5 per cent) for the sea but greater than or equal to 1 in 1,000 (0.1%) chance in any given year.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Compliance Assessment of Welsh River SACs against Phosphorus Targets Report No: 489.

<https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/water-reports/compliance-assessment-of-welsh-river-sacs-against-phosphorus-targets/?lang=en>

<sup>xxiv</sup> <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/annual-monitoring/retail/>

<sup>xxv</sup> <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/annual-monitoring/retail/>

<sup>xxvi</sup> Measure of entries and exits. Source: <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage>

<sup>xxvii</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1144656/tra8902.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1144656/tra8902.ods)

<sup>xxviii</sup> Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) is the amount of money individuals or households have for spending or saving. [Gross Disposable Household Income by area and measure \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>xxix</sup> [House price to workplace-based earnings ratio - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

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<sup>xxx</sup> Includes territorial emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O). Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2020>

<sup>xxxi</sup> Source: Gwent Police

<sup>xxxii</sup> National Survey for Wales - <https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales>

<sup>xxxiii</sup> [Energy efficiency of Housing, England and Wales, local authority districts - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

<sup>xxxiv</sup> National Survey for Wales - <https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales>

<sup>xxxv</sup> [Percentage of people satisfied with their ability to get to/access facilities and services they need \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales)

<sup>xxxvi</sup> National Survey for Wales - <https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales>

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Healthy Life Expectancy is the number of years lived in self-assessed good health

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Healthy Life Expectancy is the number of years lived in self-assessed good health

<sup>xxxix</sup> Source:

<https://www.infobasecymru.net/IAS/themes/healthandsocialcare/generalhealth/tabular?viewId=47&geold=1&subsetId=>

xl

<https://www.infobasecymru.net/IAS/themes/healthandsocialcare/generalhealth/tabular?viewId=47&geold=1&subsetId=>

<sup>xli</sup> National Survey for Wales - <https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales>

<sup>xlii</sup> National Survey for Wales - <https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales>

<sup>xliii</sup> Exclusions are split by the length/type of exclusion, into 3 categories: i) Fixed term exclusions: 5 days or less; ii) Fixed term exclusions: over 5 days iii) Permanent exclusions. These are measured for all pupils and those eligible for free school meals. Further detail can be found at <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2022/10/4/1666254621/permanent-and-fixed-term-exclusions-schools-september-2020-august-2021.pdf>