

Monmouthshire County Council Self-Assessment Summary 2025-26



monmouthshire
sir fynwy



Summary

We want to be a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life. We are committed to working with, and alongside, our communities to achieve this. This is the clear purpose established by our Community and Corporate Plan. The annual self-assessment is one of the ways we report on progress and identify where we need to make further improvements. Importantly it allows us to be held to account by elected councillors and local people.

Local authorities deliver a wide range of services. This evaluation cannot cover every one of them. Instead, we have focused on the six objectives in our plan. Beyond the detail you see here, we have scrutiny committees, business plans and performance measures in place. These allow us to be held accountable for all aspects of our work. We also rely on the work of our internal audit team, peer assessment process and external regulators such as Audit Wales, Estyn and the Care Inspectorate Wales to provide an independent lens.

During the year we underwent a Panel Performance Assessment process. The assessment provided an independent peer view of the Council. The Panel's overall conclusion described Monmouthshire

as: An ambitious, well-run Council with communities at its heart and a reach that reach that transcends boundaries. The process provided areas of assurance and recommendations for areas of development that we are responding to.

This is a summary of a fuller self-assessment which is available on our website. The assessment also evaluates the effectiveness of the things that are not always visible to residents. These include financial management, use of assets, procurement and HR. Looking at these helps us identify areas for development for the years ahead. You can find these towards the end of this summary.

Our objectives



How well do we understand our local context and place?

Monmouthshire is a great place to live, work and visit. We have made a clear commitment to work with and alongside communities, empowering people to support each other and come up with long-term solutions. We have launched the Let's Talk Monmouthshire website and have over 1,000 residents and organisations signed up to make it easier for people to have conversations about the policies and changes that affect them. We have also established a Let's Talk forum for people who are passionate about the county and want to represent their communities in more in-depth conversations. In Autumn 2025, over 1,000 people completed our

residents survey for the second year. This further helped increase our understanding of peoples' perceptions of their local council and the place they live

We have also engaged residents, businesses and town and community councils in the production of partnership placemaking plans to improve Monmouthshire's town centres. The placemaking process has strengthened partnership working and created a shared understanding of local challenges and opportunities.



How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?

We have assessed progress against our objectives using a six-point scale. This scores each objective from 1 (unsatisfactory) through to 6 (excellent). After the local elections in May 2022, we took time to understand what matters to people and put the foundations in place for improvement. This included new strategies for the climate, the economy and food. We have been delivering these strategies, and our assessment evaluates the impact they have made so far over the last three years.

Many of the things we are committed to, such as improving the health of the Wye and Usk rivers, achieving net zero and tackling inequality are complex challenges that will not be solved quickly. This assessment shows a positive trajectory of improvement. The arrows next to each of the objectives below indicate the change in assessment over the last year while the colours correlate with the scores.



↔ A fair place to live

Our rating:
4 (Good)

We have focused on improving life chances, reducing the effects of poverty and disadvantage and ensuring residents can access support, improve their health and help shape the future of their communities.

We have expanded childcare provision, increased the number of eligible children accessing early education from 82% to 97% since 2022/23, and continued to focus Flying Start where need is greatest.

We have gone beyond our statutory duty by providing both a free breakfast and a freshly cooked lunch to all primary pupils who choose to receive them. Uptake of universal free school meals has increased from 64% in 2022/23 to 68.6% in 2025/26, although this still varies between areas and requires further targeted work.

We have also continued to provide practical support to those who need it most through targeted initiatives such as Food and Fun, free or subsidised play provision, warm spaces, emergency food aid and practical cost-of-living support in communities across the county.

We have made good progress in improving access to services and opportunities that support health, participation and inclusion. We have committed to becoming a Marmot region, increased the number of people completing the National Exercise Referral Scheme, developed our Cultural Strategy and opened the Magor and Undy Community Hub.

We have strengthened local volunteering and community capacity through the Be Community programme, launched Let's Talk Monmouthshire to improve engagement, achieved Disability Confident Employer Level 2 status and became the first accredited Council of Sanctuary in Wales.

There are some areas we have identified for improvement. We need to ensure our interventions are clearly communicated, better targeted and more consistently evaluated. We need to increase take-up of support where inequality is greatest and continue to work with communities to develop a shared understanding of community resilience.





Green place

To live and work, with reduced carbon emissions, and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency

↔ A green place to live

Our rating:
4 (Good)

Monmouthshire's natural environment is central to our quality of life, local identity and visitor economy. We need to protect and conserve the county's outstanding landscapes, improve biodiversity and river health, reduce carbon emissions and strengthen resilience to climate change. These are complex, long-term challenges and the full impact of our actions will take time, but it is vital that we continue to act now to safeguard the environment for current and future generations.

Generally, residents' views of Monmouthshire as a green place to live are positive. Fifty-nine percent of residents said their local area has a clean environment, 65% said local air quality is good and 75% said there are enough green spaces in their area.

We have refreshed our Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy and translated it into clearer action plans. We have completed costed decarbonisation surveys across our estate and reduced estate emissions by 17.8% from the 2019/20 baseline. We have continued to invest in low carbon technologies, renewable energy and ultra-low emission vehicles. We have also maintained strong recycling performance, with 71.3% of municipal waste sent for recycling, reuse or composting, exceeding the statutory target, and independent assessment shows our work on waste reduction and food to be particularly strong.

Our evidence shows that the scale of the challenge to meet our decarbonisation ambitions remains significant. This is a similar picture across the UK. Overall emissions

increased between 2022/23 and 2024/25, largely due to procurement and construction activity, and our current rate of reduction is not sufficient to reach net zero by 2030 without substantial further investment. We have made important progress and are building the evidence, plans and partnerships needed for the next stage, but the path to net zero remains extremely challenging.

We have made good progress in supporting nature recovery, improving environmental resilience and strengthening local food systems. We have enhanced 47 hectares of public land for biodiversity, delivered 13 green infrastructure projects, supported 25 nature recovery projects and continued to work through catchment and nature partnerships to improve habitats and river health. We have developed action plans for biodiversity, nature recovery, rivers and flood risk, and have continued to support communities through nature-based projects and local green space activity.

We have developed a Local Food Strategy and made practical progress on sustainable food. We have improved or revived over 220 allotment plots and more than 200,000 portions of Welsh organic vegetables have been supplied to pupils through the Welsh Veg in Schools scheme.

We recognise river health remains a major concern and some resident perceptions of the local environment are lower. We also recognise the scale of the challenge to reduce our carbon emissions and resources required to deliver the pace of change required.



Thriving & ambitious place



Where there are vibrant town centres, where businesses can grow and develop

↔ A thriving and ambitious place

Our rating:
4 (Good)

Monmouthshire should be a place where people, businesses and communities can thrive. Monmouthshire starts from a comparatively strong economic position, with high employment and qualification levels, however this is not experienced equally by everyone or in every place. We therefore need to build on these strengths in a way that is inclusive, sustainable and rooted in the needs of our towns and communities.

We have made good progress putting in place the strategies, partnerships and investment needed to deliver this objective. We have worked with residents, businesses and town and community councils to develop placemaking plans for our towns, creating a clearer shared understanding of local priorities and a basis for targeted regeneration activity. We have strengthened the strategic framework for promoting the county through our Destination Management Plan and linked this with wider work such as the Cultural Strategy.

We have also continued to use Welsh Government and UK Government funding to improve town-centre buildings, public-facing assets and the visitor offer. This is helping to increase footfall, support local trade and make our towns more attractive places to live, work and visit.

We are building on Monmouthshire's strong skills and employment base while responding to areas where more targeted action is needed. We have continued to support residents to move into work, gain qualifications and develop businesses. During the year, council-supported programmes helped 120 people into employment, while 90 pre-start and existing businesses were supported and 10 new businesses were created.

We have also made strong progress supporting young people at risk of becoming disengaged from education, employment or training, with 44 NEET young people supported into employment. The proportion of school leavers who are NEET remains above where we want it to be. We know that retaining young people in the county remains a challenge. We have ensured our Deposit Replacement Local Development Plan is focussed on

addressing these challenges. We have secured funding to develop a new Monmouthshire Skills Centre which will also help support post-16 pathways for learning.

Transport and infrastructure remain critical enablers of this objective. We have adopted a new Local Transport Strategy, strengthened regional transport planning, established an infrastructure project team and secured significant external funding for transport and active travel schemes. Since 2022, we have secured £35 million to implement transport projects. We have also secured more than £24 million for active travel, with more than 100 active travel routes now in place and usage of routes increasing by 4.1%. We have also improved the frequency of buses in some areas and continue to support major regional rail and road proposals that would improve connectivity.

We continue to face significant challenges in maintaining our highways network, with further deterioration in the condition of roads last winter and the maintenance backlog remaining beyond available resources. We have taken a planned approach to prioritising investment, responding to urgent need and reviewing how pothole repairs are delivered and communicated. The funding gap remains substantial and continues to limit the pace at which overall road condition can improve





↔ A safe place to live

Our rating:
4 (Good)

Monmouthshire should be a place where everyone has access to a safe, secure and affordable home and feels part of a community where they are respected and protected. This matters because having a stable home is fundamental to health, well-being and life chances, while safe and cohesive communities help people to feel connected, supported and able to thrive.

We have made progress in increasing the supply of affordable homes and putting in place the longer-term framework needed to improve the supply and affordability of housing. Our Replacement Local Development Plan has been developed with affordability and net zero housing standards at its core and includes a strong policy ambition. During the year, 102 additional affordable homes were delivered, and the number of affordable homes granted planning permission increased to 66. This shows positive progress, however we recognise the gap between current delivery and the level of need in the county which the development plan aims to address.

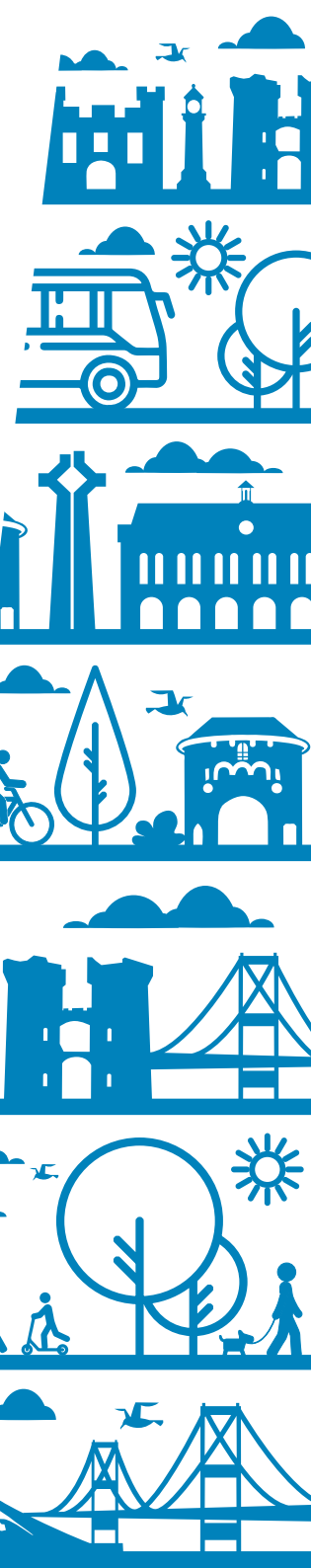
We have made strong progress in reducing the use of temporary accommodation and improving homelessness prevention. By applying a Rapid Rehousing approach, increasing prevention capacity and remodelling our housing support services, we have increased the proportion of homelessness applications successfully prevented from becoming homeless to 69.7%

We have worked with social landlords, private landlords and through property acquisition and repurposing to

expand the availability of temporary accommodation. This has contributed to a 93.5% reduction in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation since 2022/23 and no families or 16- and 17-year-olds currently placed in bed and breakfast. However, homelessness demand remains high, the number of households in temporary accommodation remains significant, and the average time people spend waiting for settled accommodation has increased substantially, showing that permanent housing supply remains a critical pressure.

We have continued to support a more energy efficient housing stock and safer communities. Through schemes such as Eco4, Solar Together and Nest, we are helping residents, particularly lower-income households and those affected by cold and damp homes, to improve energy efficiency and reduce costs. We have also worked with partners to respond to community safety concerns, including work with young people on knife crime and anti-social behaviour.

Most residents continue to feel safe in their local area, Eighty-nine percent of residents taking part in our annual resident's survey told us that they feel safe during the day. Although concerns about anti-social behaviour remain and resident confidence after dark is lower, at 65%. We will maintain a strong focus on prevention, partnership working and targeted reassurance in communities where concern is greatest.



Connected place



Where people feel part of a community and are valued

↑ A connected place where people care

Our rating:
5 (Very Good)

Monmouthshire should be a place where people's contributions are valued, they feel part of a community, and they can access care and support that helps them live well on their own terms. The quality, availability and resilience of care and support are critical to peoples' well-being now and in the future.

We are delivering care and support while also building the preventative and community-based approaches needed for the future. Demand for social care services continues to increase and needs are becoming more complex, particularly as more residents require support later in life and with higher levels of need. This creates an ongoing risk to our ability to meet people's needs as quickly and consistently as we would want and brings significant financial pressures.

We have continued to respond to this through innovation, partnership working and the development of more preventative models of support, including reablement, assistive technology, early help, community-based well-being support and stronger pathways that help people remain independent for longer. Although pressures remain significant, we have made progress across children's services, adult care, well-being and workforce development to deliver our objective.

In children's services, we have strengthened early help and family support, and we have achieved greater stability in the number of children looked after. We have also made good progress in developing more in-county placements for children and young people, improving the ability to keep them close to their communities and support networks. We have strengthened the foster carer offer and contributed to a more cohesive fostering community. Recruiting and retaining foster carers remains challenging, reflecting similar pressures seen across Wales and the wider UK.

We have made progress in developing and adapting services and increasing provision in response to rising demand for adult social care. We have also increased the focus and capacity of preventative services. We have increased reablement activity with over half of packages mitigating the need for further support.

We have strengthened commissioned domiciliary care and reduced unmet care hours substantially, from 804 hours a month in March 2023 to around 271 hours a month over the last year, meaning we are now able to fulfil more domiciliary care need. Feedback from adult social care service users shows slightly lower satisfaction with care and support than previous years, with 83% of adults reporting they were happy. We have also opened Severn View Park, a new specialist care home that increases local capacity for people living with dementia and provides both long-term, reablement and respite care.

We are also strengthening wider well-being and community support. We have developed strategic approaches such as the Living Well Strategy and our work to become a Marmot Region, helping to focus action on prevention, resilience and the wider determinants of health. We have expanded assistive technology, which is helping more residents live safely and independently at home, and we have increased the delivery of housing adaptations that improve quality of life and confidence.

We have supported young people's mental health through youth service programmes, with all participants in the Emotional Logic programme reporting improved emotional well-being, and we have significantly expanded participation in nature-based health and well-being projects.

We continue to recognise and support carers, with stronger information, signposting and practical support. We are aiming to reduce waiting times for carers assessments. We have developed our social care workforce through recruitment, retention and new models such as micro-care, which has grown from eight carers in 2022 to 59 carers, between them delivering over 900 hours of support each week.





↑ A learning place

Our rating:
5 (Very Good)

Monmouthshire should be a place where every child, young person and adult can learn, develop skills and achieve their potential. A strong start in life helps children and young people build confidence, resilience and ambition, while lifelong learning enables residents to adapt, retrain and contribute throughout adulthood. This means we must ensure all learners, particularly those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged, receive the right support at the right time.

We have strengthened the systems, strategies and provision needed to meet increasing learner needs. We have updated key policies and guidance and strengthened multi-agency support for vulnerable pupils. Primary attendance is close to pre-pandemic levels, at 93.9%. Secondary attendance has also improved, at 89.5%, although it is still below pre-pandemic levels. Attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals remains a challenge, especially in secondary schools.

We have responded to increasing complexity and behaviours that challenge by reshaping inclusion services, improving data, establishing an inclusion panel and working with schools to use managed moves, additional learning provision and other support to avoid escalation. Fixed-term exclusions remain high and continue to place pressure on schools and specialist provision. However, all permanent exclusions issued during the last year were rescinded through stronger multi-agency work and alternative support arrangements.

Teaching, learning and curriculum development remain strong overall. Learners in secondary schools continue to achieve their expected results. Estyn inspections demonstrate that many schools are developing broad, balanced and purposeful curricula that reflect their context and meet pupils' needs. Variation remains, particularly for lower-attaining pupils and disadvantaged learners, so our support and challenge will continue to focus on where improvement is most needed.

We have strengthened inclusive education helping to create a more consistent and equitable approach for learners with additional learning needs and other barriers to learning. We are reducing reliance on out-of-county provision by

expanding local specialist provision, including a Social, Emotional and Mental Health Specialist Resource Base, and by developing additional provision within schools. Demand for additional learning needs support is increasing, and schools face ongoing financial and capacity pressures.

We have also increased opportunities for learners and residents. The Inspire programme supported 285 young people to gain an additional qualification or life skill during the year. Estyn recognised the Youth Service for supporting young people's confidence, resilience and life skills, and young people were able to express their views through the Make Your Mark ballot and youth conference. Adult and community learning has become more accessible through subsidised courses and partnership work with Coleg Gwent, with 963 enrolments during the year.

We have made progress in school modernisation and Welsh-medium education. The new King Henry VIII all-through school in Abergavenny, provides modern, inclusive net zero learning facilities for pupils aged 3 to 19, including specialist accommodation for pupils with complex neurodevelopmental and learning needs. We have also improved and remodelled pupil referral service accommodation in south Monmouthshire, completed the new Trellech nursery building, opened Ysgol Gymraeg Trefynwy and secured a new site for Ysgol Gymraeg y Fenni.



How effectively are resources being used to deliver our priorities?

Over the past year we have developed enabling strategies to ensure we align all of our resources to deliver the priorities set out in the Community and Corporate Plan. We have evaluated these and concluded that we have sound arrangements in place to enable and support service delivery.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act defines the core set of activities that are common to the corporate governance of public bodies. We have assessed each of these using our evaluation framework:

Corporate planning, performance and risk management.
We assessed this as **level 4 (Good)**. Unchanged from last year



Financial planning. We assessed this as **level 4 (Good)**.
Unchanged from last year



Workforce planning (people). We assessed this as **level 4 (Good)**.
Unchanged from last year



Procurement. We assessed this as **level 3 (Adequate)**.
Unchanged from last year



Assets. We assessed this as **level 5 (Very Good)**.
Unchanged from last year



Digital and data. We assessed this as **level 3 (Adequate)**.
Unchanged from last year



Democracy and scrutiny. We assessed this as **level 4 (Good)**.
Unchanged from last year



Further detail on these is available as part of the full evaluation available at: www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/improvement.

What do you think?

We have used some of the feedback we have received from other organisations to shape this report and would be delighted to hear your views to help us inform future assessments. Please get in touch: improvement@monmouthshire.gov.uk

How effectively does the council work with stakeholders and partners on agreed outcomes?

Working in partnership is one of the ways we can achieve our objectives while delivering value for money. Key partners include Welsh Government, the Cardiff Capital Region and the Gwent Public Services Board. Our recent peer Panel Performance Assessment recognised Monmouthshire's strong social capital and outward-facing partnership culture. The assessment encouraged us to channel these strengths and recommended we develop a shared understanding of community resilience in the Monmouthshire context.

Areas for Development

As a result of the self-assessment, we have identified a number of areas for development. These include:

- Work with communities and stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of community resilience.
- Consolidate existing and prioritise future projects to deliver better outcomes through our change programme For Purpose on Purpose
- Strengthen workforce and succession planning

Measuring Progress

We use a wide range of performance measures to evaluate our progress against our priorities. These are found throughout the assessment. We also track progress against a range of outcome measures at population level. Key measures are presented regularly to Cabinet and the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee so that we can actively manage performance and adjust delivery where we are falling short of our expectations.

