

Annual Wellbeing Report

2024/25



Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd /
This document is also available in Welsh



**STRONGER
FAIRER
GREENER**



Leader's Introduction

I am pleased to present Cardiff Council's Annual Wellbeing Report for 2024/25. This report provides a clear and honest self-assessment of our performance over the past year, highlighting the progress we've made towards our ambition of building a Stronger, Fairer, Greener Cardiff. It reflects both the areas where we are making real strides and where further improvement is needed, helping to shape our priorities for the year ahead.

There is much to be proud of. Cardiff's young people continue to excel, with GCSE and A-Level results once again surpassing the Welsh average¹. We've invested in new schools and specialist provision to ensure every learner has the opportunity to succeed. In Children's Services, we're delivering on our strategy of shifting the balance of care from crisis to prevention. Our growing reputation as an Age-Friendly City is gaining international recognition, and in Adult Social Care, the Trusted Assessor model is helping people return home from hospital quickly and safely, supported by the most stable workforce the service has seen in many years. We've also stood by our residents through challenging times. Our leadership on the Real Living Wage remains central to our efforts to tackle poverty and promote fair work. On climate and the environment, we've reduced our operational carbon emissions by 18%² and advanced major sustainable transport and energy schemes, include Phase 1 of the Cardiff Heat Network and Phase 1A of Cardiff Crossrail.

However, we are under no illusions about the scale of the challenges we continue to face. In education, schools are working hard to address persistent issues around attendance, exclusions, and pupil wellbeing, while demand for Additional Learning Needs provision and home-to-school transport continues to rise. Children's Services remain under pressure, with the number of children in care beginning to fall after a decade of growth, but many now requiring more complex and costly support. In Adult Social Care, Cardiff's ageing population is driving significant demand, with further increases expected as the number of older residents grows and more people require support with complex conditions such as dementia. The housing emergency remains acute, with rising demand for affordable housing and unprecedented private rental costs placing exceptional pressure on residents and services across the city. These pressures are compounded by the wider economic climate and the Council's financial outlook, with a budget gap of £122 million to close over the next four years, driven by demand and cost pressures in key services.

Such are the pressures facing our public services we, as a Cabinet, have recognised that to continue to deliver vital services for the people of Cardiff, we will need to reconsider and, in some cases, redesign the services the Council delivers. Developing and delivering a programme of reform to respond to the medium-term demand and financial pressures, while maintaining high standards of service performance and good governance, will be a strategic priority for the Council over the year ahead.

¹ For grades A* to A and A* to C in WJEC qualifications.

² Excluding procurement.

Of course, we cannot do this alone. Many of the successes highlighted in this report have been achieved in partnership – with Cardiff & Vale University Health Board in developing integrated health and care services, with housing associations in building affordable homes, with the police and community partners in keeping neighbourhoods safe, and with universities, businesses and government in securing jobs and investment for the city. This spirit of ‘Team Cardiff’ will be just as vital in addressing the challenges ahead.

As part of our commitment to transparency and continuous improvement, the Council undertook an independent Panel Performance Assessment in July 2025. This was not only a statutory requirement, but a valuable opportunity to test and validate our own self-assessment. The panel’s findings reinforced our understanding of where we are as an organisation and where we need to go next. They concluded that Cardiff is a “good and ambitious council” highlighting the strength and stability of our governance, the professionalism of our staff, and the inclusive, constructive relationships between Members and officers. The Council was recognised as being held in high regard by partners and communities, with a culture described as “‘can do’ and optimistic, underpinned by a strong sense of civic pride”. This external endorsement strengthens our confidence in the direction we are taking, and the panel’s recommendations will help guide the next phase of our improvement journey.

In summary, this Annual Wellbeing Report shows that Cardiff has strong foundations, clear priorities, and the dedication of a committed workforce and supportive partners. With these in place, I am confident that we will continue to deliver for the people of Cardiff and make further progress towards our ambition of a Stronger, Fairer and Greener city.



Cllr Huw Thomas
Leader of Cardiff Council

Contents

2 **Leader's Introduction**

5 **About this Report**

14 **Overall Assessment**

18 **Wellbeing Objective 1: Cardiff is a great place to grow up**

30 **Wellbeing Objective 2: Cardiff is a great place to grow older**

38 **Wellbeing Objective 3: Supporting people out of poverty**

46 **Wellbeing Objective 4: Safe, confident and empowered communities**

56 **Wellbeing Objective 5: A capital city that works for Wales**

62 **Wellbeing Objective 6: One Planet Cardiff**

74 **Wellbeing Objective 7: Modernising and integrating our public services**

About this Report

■ What is the Annual Wellbeing Report?

The purpose of the Annual Wellbeing Report is to provide an end-of-year self-assessment of Council performance in delivering its Wellbeing Objectives for 2024/25.

These Wellbeing Objectives, including the steps the Council will take to achieve them, and how performance will be measured, are set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-27:

- 1. Cardiff is a great place to grow up**
- 2. Cardiff is a great place to grow older**
- 3. Supporting people out of poverty**
- 4. Safe, confident and empowered communities**
- 5. A capital city that works for Wales**
- 6. One Planet Cardiff**
- 7. Modernising and integrating our public services**

This Annual Wellbeing Report is the product of a comprehensive self-assessment process, as set out below, and draws on service performance, governance and risk, resources, and other sources of performance information provided for each Wellbeing Objective. Each chapter of this report provides a strategic assessment by Wellbeing Objective, along with a summary of successes, challenges, and priorities for the future.

The analysis and evaluation of performance contained within the Annual Wellbeing Report and the Mid-Year Performance Assessment form a central component in the process of setting the Council's priorities and actions for improvement for the year ahead, which are set out in the [Council's updated Corporate Plan 2025-28](#).

In undertaking the mid-year and end-of-year assessments, the Council fulfils its statutory duties in relation to both the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and the publication of the reports ensures that Cabinet receive an update on the delivery of their policy agenda and the performance of statutory services.

■ Statutory Requirements

The Annual Wellbeing Report fulfils the Council’s following statutory requirements:

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires the Council to set and publish Wellbeing Objectives, take all reasonable steps to meet those objectives and publish a statement about Wellbeing Objectives. These duties are fulfilled through the Council’s Corporate Planning process. The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act also requires that the Council publishes an annual report of progress, which is done through the Annual Wellbeing Report. Core elements of the Act are the Sustainable Development Principle and the Five Ways of Working. These are: long-term, prevention, integration, collaboration, and involvement. The table below sets out how the Five Ways of Working have been applied in the setting of our Wellbeing Objectives and how they have informed evaluation of progress.

Way of Working	How has it been applied as part of the Council’s approach to planning?	How has it been applied as part of the Council’s approach to reporting and managing performance?
<p>Long-term</p> <p><i>The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the long-term needs.</i></p>	<p>The Wellbeing Objectives and steps in the Corporate Plan were informed by a wide-ranging evidence base which considers immediate issues and longer-term trends. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cardiff’s Local Wellbeing Assessment • Cardiff Future Trends Report • Cardiff & Vale Population Needs Assessment • Medium Term Financial Plan (MTEP) • 2020 Future Generations Report • Cardiff’s city-wide dashboard 	<p>The progress made in achieving the Wellbeing Objectives and steps were informed by a review of trends, considering both short-term performance indicators and longer-term population level indicators. This includes considering the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Performance Indicators included in the Corporate Plan – Corporate Performance Dashboard – which presents trend data where available • Long-term outcome indicators included in Cardiff’s city-wide dashboard • Views of citizens included in the Consultation Overview Report which, for some consultation questions, presents trend data for the last five years.

Way of Working	How has it been applied as part of the Council's approach to planning?	How has it been applied as part of the Council's approach to reporting and managing performance?
<p>Prevention</p> <p><i>How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their Objectives.</i></p>	<p>In everything that the Council sets out to achieve, a focus is placed on intervening early, addressing the root causes and aiming to, wherever possible, prevent problems before they happen, thereby improving outcomes, and managing demand and budget pressures facing services. Each Wellbeing Objective contains steps which are characterised by early intervention of this nature. Examples of this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shifting the balance of care in Children's Services; • Supporting older people to live independently at home through strengths-based preventative services; • Working to ensure that appropriate young people are in receipt of a prevention service from the Youth Justice Service; • Preventing homelessness whenever possible and ending rough sleeping. 	<p>A number of the Corporate Plan steps focus on prevention, with corresponding measures in place to measure impact or effectiveness.</p> <p>For example, a key part of the preventative agenda within Adult Services relates to supporting people to live independently, which is measured by a clear set of key performance indicators including K2.08: The percentage of clients who felt able to live independently in their homes following support from Independent Living Services.</p> <p>Equally, the Youth Justice service closely monitors the numbers of young people in receipt of a prevention service (K1.44) and keeping them from becoming first-time entrants (K1.45).</p> <p>Homelessness services aim to reduce the total number of rough sleepers in Cardiff (K3.18) by working with those at risk of becoming homeless, measuring prevention through the KPI K3.14: The percentage of households threatened with homelessness successfully prevented from becoming homeless.</p>
<p>Collaboration</p> <p><i>Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its Wellbeing Objectives.</i></p>	<p>The complex challenges facing public services cannot be met by one organisation, sector or public service alone – a whole-system response from the city's public services is needed. Building on the progress made in this area during the pandemic, strengthened partnership arrangements are in place to respond to increased demand and new, complex issues that are arising.</p> <p>The Council's Wellbeing Objectives were developed in close collaboration with public service partners within the Cardiff Public Services Board (PSB) seeking to adopt the same seven Wellbeing Objectives in its Local Wellbeing Plan 2023-28. This reflects the shared aspirations and common understanding of challenges facing the city and a clear view on the areas of work that require partnership working between the city's public services.</p>	<p>The Wellbeing Report recognises the progress made, in collaboration with named partners, throughout the report. Formal Planning and Performance Monitoring arrangements are also in place for statutory partnerships including:</p> <p>Cardiff Public Services Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: Local Wellbeing Plan 2023-28 • Monitoring: PSB's Annual Report 2024/25 <p>Cardiff & Vale Regional Partnership Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: RPB Joint Area Plan (2023-2028) • Monitoring: RPB Annual Report 2024/25

Way of Working	How has it been applied as part of the Council's approach to planning?	How has it been applied as part of the Council's approach to reporting and managing performance?
<p>Integration</p> <p><i>Considering how the public body's Wellbeing Objectives may impact upon each of the Wellbeing Goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.</i></p>	<p>The Wellbeing Objectives cut across departmental silos, focussing on what all Council services can do to improve the wellbeing of the people of Cardiff.</p> <p>The development of the Wellbeing Objectives involves close cross-departmental and cross-portfolio working and involves the wider political governance of the Council, including Scrutiny Committees and the Performance Panel. This process ensures that interdependencies, opportunities and risks between Wellbeing Objectives can be identified and acted upon.</p> <p>As noted above, the development of the Wellbeing Objectives has been undertaken in close collaboration with public service partners, with clear alignment on policy and delivery through the Cardiff PSB and the Cardiff & Vale Regional Partnership Board.</p>	<p>The development of the Annual Wellbeing Report is considered by a number of organisational stakeholders, ensuring an integrated assessment of performance. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A progress and performance session with Cabinet Members and lead officers, chaired by the Leader of the Council, which consider a wide range of performance and budget issues. • Consideration of the draft Annual Wellbeing Report by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Performance Panel, convened by the Chair of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee • Governance & Audit Committee • Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee • Trade Unions • Cabinet, having received and responded to the recommendations of each Committee • Council
<p>Involvement</p> <p><i>The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the Wellbeing Goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.</i></p>	<p>The Council is committed to ensuring that the voice of the citizen is at the heart of decision-making through an ongoing programme of consultation and engagement work. This includes the annual Ask Cardiff Survey, engagement work with children and young people, the Budget Consultation and other public engagement undertaken over the course of the year. A Consultation Overview Report has been created to summarise the key findings of consultation exercises undertaken, broken down by Wellbeing Objective.</p>	<p>The Corporate Plan includes 15 citizen voice indicators across the Wellbeing Objectives, the results of which informed the assessment. Example citizen voice indicators include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The percentage of people with children satisfied with the quality of their local school (K1.25) • The percentage of people satisfied with services provided by Adult Social Care (K2.13) • The percentage of Council tenants satisfied with the service provided by their social landlord (K4.06) • The percentage of customers who agreed with the statement 'Overall the Hub met my requirements/ I got what I needed' (K4.18)

- **The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021** established a new legislative framework for local government elections, democracy, governance, and performance. The Act requires each council in Wales to keep under review, through self-assessment, the extent to which it is meeting its **performance requirements** and publish a report setting out the conclusions of its self-assessment once each financial year. Specifically, the Council must **review its ability to use its resources economically, efficiently, and effectively**.

This Annual Wellbeing Report, produced through the self-assessment process outlined below, sets out the Council's conclusions as to the extent to which it has met the performance requirements (that is, exercising its functions effectively, using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively, and that its governance is effective for securing the above) during the financial year.

- **The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023** places a new social partnership duty on public bodies including local authorities. The Act requires the Council, in carrying out sustainable development, in so far as is reasonable, to seek consensus or compromise with their recognised trade unions, when setting their Wellbeing Objectives (in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) and making decisions of a strategic nature about the reasonable steps they intend to take to deliver those objectives set.

The Council has acted in accordance with the requirements of the Act. In setting its Wellbeing Objectives for 2025/26, the Council engaged with Trade Union partners on 17 February 2025, and this now forms part of the Corporate Plan development process. This is part of a wider commitment to engagement with Trade Unions, which involves a schedule of meeting where Trade Unions are regularly consulted, particularly in relation to decisions subject to consideration by Cabinet. The Council also has in place an extensive engagement infrastructure allowing engagement with Trade Union colleagues, ensuring the principles and requirements of the Act are a demonstrable feature of Council activity. During 2024/25, four Works Council meetings were held, 11 Trade Union Partnership (TUP) Meetings, as well as well as several Service Area Joint Committee Meetings (SAJC).

The Panel Performance Assessment – a requirement of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 – noted that the *“panel received mainly positive feedback from the Trade Union representatives who were able to attend discussions. Trade Union representatives noted constructive engagement mechanisms with the council, Chief Executive and key members of SMT [the Council's Senior Management Team] and felt that the council was meeting the objectives of Social Partnership, as set out in the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.”* (Panel Performance Assessment Report, Cardiff Council, July 2025).

This Annual Wellbeing Report discharges the requirement to produce a report evidencing how the Council, as a public body, has complied with the Social Partnership Duty. A draft Annual Wellbeing Report was shared with the Trade Union Partnership Meeting on 23 June 2025 ahead of a formal period of consultation. In July 2025, Cabinet adopted a Socially Responsible Procurement Policy and delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Resources to approve any updates to reflect national guidance and/or meet new legislative requirements³. From 2026/27 there will be an annual procurement report which reports against the provisions in the Act relating to public procurement and social value.

³ [Decision - Socially Responsible Procurement Policy: Cardiff Council](#)

A summary of the legislative requirements relating to planning and delivery is set out below.

Act	Planning and Performance Requirement	Compliance Arrangement
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015	Set and publish Wellbeing Objectives	Completed through the publication of the Corporate Plan
	Take all reasonable steps to meet those objectives	Completed through the publication of the Corporate Plan
	Publish a statement about Wellbeing Objectives	Completed through the publication of the Corporate Plan
	Publish an annual report of progress and review Wellbeing Objectives	Completed through the publication of the Annual Wellbeing Report 2024/25
	Publish its response to any recommendation made by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales	None received to date
Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021	Keep performance under review: the extent to which it is exercising its functions effectively; using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and its governance is effective for securing the above.	Completed through the publication of the Annual Wellbeing Report 2024/25
	Consult on performance: with local people, staff, trade unions and partners	Completed, with reference to key findings included in the Annual Wellbeing Report 2024/25
	Report on performance: produce a self-assessment report every year, containing an assessment of performance (service, finance, governance) and improvement actions identified	Completed through the publication of the Annual Wellbeing Report 2024/25
	Arrange a panel performance assessment and respond to a panel performance assessment report	The Panel Performance Assessment took place in July 2025 with the Council responding to recommendations in September 2025.
Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023	Seek consensus or compromise with recognised trade unions when setting Well-being Objectives	Completed through consultation with Trade Union representatives at the Trade Union Partnership meeting held on 17 February 2025
	Produce a report evidencing how the Council, as a public body, has complied with the Social Partnership Duty	Completed through the publication of the Annual Wellbeing Report 2024/25

The Council considers that, through the publication of its Corporate Plan and Annual Wellbeing Report, **it has met the relevant statutory duties listed above.**

■ How is the Annual Wellbeing Report developed?

The assessment of performance contained within the Annual Wellbeing Report is developed through a thorough process of self-assessment involving the political and managerial leadership of the Council, drawing from a wide range of sources of performance information.

Sources of Performance Information

Sources of performance information which contribute towards the performance assessment contained within the Annual Wellbeing Report include:

- **Performance against the Council's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** – The Council's [Corporate Plan](#) contains a suite of performance indicators which measure progress made in delivering the Wellbeing Objectives. Where applicable, targets are set against these performance indicators to demonstrate the desired level of achievement. Performance indicators are assigned a RAG status based on their result: **GREEN** where the indicator is on or above target, **AMBER** where the result is no further than 10% from the target, and **RED** where the result is more than 10% from the target.
- **Progress against the steps in each Wellbeing Objective** – Each Wellbeing Objective within the Corporate Plan also contains a set of 'steps' or actions. Monitoring the progress of these steps provides an understanding of what has been achieved and where further work is required. The year-end performance against both the Corporate Plan key performance indicators and steps can be found on the Council's [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).
- **Performance against city-wide outcome indicators** – A set of city-wide outcome indicators for each Wellbeing Objective has been agreed with the Council's Public Services Board partners. These can be accessed via [Cardiff's city-wide dashboard](#), which also includes information about population trends and the city's demography.
- **Consultation and Engagement** – The Council has a number of established consultation and engagement mechanisms such as the Annual Ask Cardiff Citizen Survey, the Budget Consultation, the Child Friendly City Survey as well as other surveys and consultation exercises which take place over the course of the year that provide residents, businesses and other city stakeholders an opportunity to share their views on a wide range of Council services and initiatives. In addition, the Council's [Annual Compliments and Complaints Report](#) provides valuable insight into where Cardiff's citizens feel the Council needs to improve. The Corporate Plan contains a number of key performance indicators that relate to citizen insight and satisfaction with services, and the findings of consultation and engagement work forms an important part of the Council's self-assessment process, along with the policy development and budget-setting process. The Council also produces an annual [Consultation Overview Report](#), which synthesises the findings from a range of surveys and citizen engagement exercises undertaken by the Council and its public sector partners.
- **Finance Monitoring** – The Council's [Outturn Report 2024/25](#) serves to inform of the Council's financial position in respect of the year ending 31 March 2025 and its findings contribute to the assessment contained within the Annual Wellbeing Report.

- **Governance** – The Council’s Governance Framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values by which the Council is directed, controlled, and the means through which it accounts to, engages with, and leads the community. The Council’s [Annual Governance Statement](#) sets out an assessment of the Council’s framework of governance, risk management and internal control.
- **Risk** – Delivering objectives requires frequent management of risks at both operational and strategic levels, particularly in the dynamic external environment in which the Council is operating. The Council’s [Year-End Risk Report](#), along with its Corporate and Directorate Risk Registers, provide an overview of the current risks and the actions in place to mitigate them.
- **Scrutiny Committees, and Governance & Audit Committee** – The Council responds to the issues raised and recommendations made by the Committees, which help inform policy development and performance improvement.
- **Inspection Reports** – The Council is subject to a number of inspections from regulatory bodies including Audit Wales, Estyn (Education) and the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). Their findings help the Council to assess areas of strong performance, as well as identify areas that require improvement.
- **Panel Performance Assessment Report** – The Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021 requires a council to make arrangements for an independent panel, appointed by the council, to assess the extent to which the council is meeting the performance requirements at least once during an election cycle – a Panel Performance Assessment (PPA). The Panel Assessment took place in July 2025. A report setting out the conclusions and recommendations of the Assessment, and the Council’s response to the recommendations, will be considered by Cabinet on 18 September 2025. The Annual Wellbeing Report draws on the report as a source of evidence in its self-evaluation of performance.

Self-Assessment Process

The Annual Wellbeing Report is developed through engagement with directors and a self-evaluation, assurance, and challenge process. The process features enhanced roles for both Scrutiny Committees and the Governance & Audit Committee. This process includes:

- A directorate self-evaluation of service performance, resourcing, and governance challenges and priorities, answering the following questions:
 - What is going well?
 - What are the key risks and challenges facing your services?
 - What are the next steps?
- Performance and budget challenge and assurance sessions convened by the Chief Executive and the Section 151 Officer with each director considering the findings of their directorate self-assessment.
- A progress and performance session with Cabinet Members and lead officers, chaired by the Leader of the Council.

- Consideration of the draft Annual Wellbeing Report by:
 - The Performance Panel, convened by the Chair of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee, and involving the Chairs of each of the Council’s Scrutiny Committees
 - Governance & Audit Committee
 - Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee
 - Trade Unions
 - Cabinet, having received and responded to the recommendations of each Committee
 - Council

All correspondence from the Performance Panel and Committees relating to this report can be viewed on the Council’s [Decision Register](#).

Performance improvement and evaluation does not only take place at the end of the financial year. A mid-year self-evaluation report is considered by Cabinet, drawing on performance information at month 6 and performance is monitored quarterly through updates to the steps and performance indicators in the Corporate Plan, and the areas of risk, budget, audits, consultation, and performance are all considered holistically throughout the year to drive improvement.



Overall Assessment

The Council is making good progress delivering the Stronger, Fairer, Greener programme and, overall, is delivering effective and efficient services for the people of Cardiff, with some excellent practice, many good services and some that require further improvement. This work is supported by a sound performance, governance, financial and wider control framework, which ensures that any issues are identified quickly and a performance culture which supports open and honest debate, focussed on improvement and a positive culture and working relationship between Members and officers.

The Council is working in and building effective partnerships across the city, city-region and beyond, as part of a Team Cardiff ethos. Over the past year the Council has continued to play its public service leadership role, working with partners to develop preventative, integrated cross-Council and cross-public service teams at the same time as managing immediate and significant demand pressures at the front door. The Council has also worked with partners in the private and public sector to take forward an ambitious regeneration programme, and to play its capital city role in Welsh economic and cultural life, in what remain challenging economic conditions.

It is doing so in the face of rising and increasingly complex demand, alongside cost and workforce pressures, and looking ahead will need to close a budget gap of £122m over the next four years. Over the past year, the Council has undertaken a comprehensive service and budget review, recognising that, to continue to deliver vital services for the people of Cardiff, it will need to reconsider and, in some cases, redesign the services it delivers. Developing and delivering this programme of reform to support the medium-term demand and financial pressures, while maintaining high standards of service performance and good governance, will be a strategic priority for the Council over the year ahead.

■ Areas of Progress and Improvement

The Council has continued to make meaningful progress across all Wellbeing Objectives, demonstrating a strong and co-ordinated approach to delivering positive outcomes for the city's communities:

- Educational attainment remains a key strength, with Cardiff remaining above the Welsh average in GCSE and A-Level results for grades A* to A and A* to C in WJEC qualifications.
- Cardiff has seen a demonstrable shift in the balance of care for children and young people through work across all aspects of Children's Services. Key advancements include the expansion of the in-house fostering service, redesign of the 'front door' service, improved support for social workers, and the successful implementation of the Striving for Excellence in Children's Services Strategy.
- Cardiff's reputation as an Age-Friendly City continues to grow, with its innovative practices gaining international recognition. Strengthened support for carers, including expanded services and targeted volunteer initiatives, further reinforces this commitment.

- The Council's Trusted Assessor Model is showing evidence of success, facilitating more appropriate hospital discharges and reducing social work backlogs. Workforce stability in Adult Social Care has notably improved, with vacancy rates at a historic low of 12.75%, enhancing service responsiveness and hospital discharge performance.
- Targeted interventions to alleviate poverty have delivered measurable outcomes, with substantial increases in Universal Credit support and employment assistance – benefitting 8,800 individuals and 1,382 people, respectively – exceeding expectations and strengthening Cardiff's commitment to economic inclusivity.
- Cardiff University estimates the Real Living Wage has contributed £100m to the city's economy since 2012, highlighting its positive economic impact.
- Despite challenging market conditions, over 1,800 homes have been completed through the Council's housing development programme, with steady progress continuing across the city.
- Cardiff's libraries have received high praise for the quality of services provided to residents. The latest assessment underscores strong user support and event attendance as core strengths of the service.
- Major projects, such as the Cardiff Central Enhancement Programme and ongoing support for cultural and sporting events, have solidified Cardiff's position as a leading UK capital for business growth and global investment.
- During the year, the Council played an active role in the creation and safeguarding of 5,822 jobs, significantly exceeding the target of 750.
- The Council has made substantial strides towards environmental sustainability, achieving an 18% reduction in operational emissions – excluding procurement – while advancing sustainable transport and energy infrastructure projects. Notably, Phase 1 of the Cardiff Heat Network is nearing completion and Phase 1A of the Cardiff Crossrail has secured Full Business Case approval from UK Government.
- Cardiff's air quality continues to improve, with pollutant levels well below legal limits. The city has been recognised as one of the top 10 UK cities for clean area by Auto Trader, the only Welsh city to receive this distinction.
- The Council staff survey highlighted positive feedback across all areas and services. Employees expressed strong pride in their work, a clear understanding of how their roles contribute to the Council's objectives, and high levels of satisfaction regarding wellbeing support.
- The Council has maintained its place as a Top 100 employer in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index survey, the highest-placed Welsh Local Authority overall.

■ Corporate Improvement Priorities

The following have been identified as corporate improvement priorities for the year ahead:

1. **Delivering the change programme:** The Council has developed and established a new change programme, focussed on areas of high and rising demand and financial pressures, on services whose model will need to change to ensure sustainability and on how the council's corporate enablers need to adapt to support transformation. The programme is focussed on the following priority areas:
 - a. **Ensuring the Council's workplaces, technology and culture** are dynamic and inclusive, designed to support staff to deliver high-quality services.
 - b. **Delivering preventative, joined-up public services** in response to increasing and increasingly complex demand pressures in services for children and young people, older people and more vulnerable adults.
 - c. **Ensuring economic and environmental strategies and services are aligned and supporting growth** at the city and city-regional level and front-line services are operating in an integrated, efficient manner.

Delivering the change programme, including ensuring that it is effectively aligned with and responding to the medium-term demand, financial and workforce challenges facing the authority, will be a priority for the year ahead.

2. **Ensuring continued service and financial resilience:** The Council faces significant immediate and medium-term budgetary challenges. The Budget 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan Update Report set out a revised indicative revenue budget gap of £122million across the period of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). These pressures are due to a combination of increased complexity and scale of demand on services (see above), inflationary pressures driven by employee-related costs, the costs of goods and commodities purchased by the Council (such as energy, food and fuel) and the cost of construction, materials and commissioned services. Embedding and delivering the new change programme allied to a continued focus on delivering operational efficiencies will be central to ensuring service and financial resilience over the medium term.

- 3. Continuing to improve performance in key services:** The Council needs continued focus on improving performance in key and statutory services, supported by a focus on good governance and management, including:
- a. Continuing to improve educational attainment for pupils in Cardiff's schools, particularly pupils who are more vulnerable or disadvantaged.
 - b. Maintaining performance standards in Children's Services and supporting the city's children looked after.
 - c. Making progress towards meeting statutory recycling targets and improving street cleansing performance across the city.
 - d. Continuing to respond to the housing emergency, including extending access to housing through building and securing additional affordable housing and housing tailored to support independent living, along with continuing to improve performance in housing repairs.
- 4. Workforce:** In response to a range of workforce challenges the Council will continue to focus on the delivery of the Workforce Strategy 2023-27, prioritising proactive workforce planning, the further development of a supportive work environment, a continued emphasis on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and an enhanced programme of staff engagement. Tailored approaches to recruitment and retention are having a positive impact in key services such as Adult and Children's Services. In response to sickness absence rates being above target, support continues to be provided for areas with high absence rates, particularly in respect to managing long-term sickness absence, alongside enhanced interventions to the health and wellbeing support for staff. Over the year ahead the Council will review and refresh the Workforce Strategy to ensure that it is effectively aligned with and supporting the Council's change programme.

Wellbeing Objective 1: Cardiff is a great place to grow up

Our priorities in 2024/25 were:

- 1.1 Being a Child Friendly City: Advancing the rights of children and young people
- 1.2 A Learning Entitlement: Providing high-quality education and learning opportunities for all
- 1.3 Wellbeing, Equity and Inclusion: Ensuring all children and young people are ready and able to learn, and enjoy positive health and wellbeing
- 1.4 Delivering Sustainable Communities for Learning
- 1.5 Shifting the balance of care: place, people, and practice
- 1.6 Protecting the wellbeing of vulnerable children, young people and families

Summary of Corporate Plan Performance Position at Year-End



Steps and KPIs rated Red in Quarter 4 are addressed in the narrative below, and the full comment and results against each step and KPI can be found in the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

■ Overall Assessment

The Council considers good progress has been made in delivering its commitments to make Cardiff a great place to grow up in a context where children and young people, and the services upon which they rely, are experiencing new and significant challenges.

The Council continues to demonstrate a sustained improvement in the quality and effectiveness of education in Cardiff. Pupil attainment is above or well above the Welsh average, a significant improvement from a decade ago, school inspection outcomes are good, especially in the primary sector, and a partnership approach is in place to support pupils and schools access the wider opportunities Cardiff can offer.

Good progress is being made in reforming the school improvement arrangements to ensure they continue to effectively support schools and the delivery of good quality outcomes for learners. As part of Cardiff Council's strategic move to a locally led model of school improvement, the implementation of the Dysgu Caerdydd system has now reached a key milestone, with 100% of Cardiff schools formally signed up to the new framework. The model was co-constructed following extensive engagement and with strengthened managerial leadership arrangements in place for this key agenda.

The Council is working in close partnership with schools, communities, public service partners and with children and young people to develop responses to a range of complex and interconnected challenges, including high levels of attendance and exclusions, delayed pupil development and early years, rising concerns relating emotional health and wellbeing. As is the case across Wales and the UK, rising demand for pupils with Additional Learning Needs is presenting an immediate demand and financial challenge to schools and the education system across the city, while, over the medium term, demographic changes and falling pupil numbers present a strategic challenge to the financial sustainability of the education system.

Through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Investment Programme, formerly the 21st Century Schools programme, nine new school buildings have been completed since May 2017, with six new schools expected to open by 2027 (two high schools and four special schools). In addition to this, proposals for a further four schools have been approved and are anticipated by 2030. Despite the major programme of investment in schools, increased investment in asset maintenance and an effective programme of delivery, the condition of some school buildings remains a concern and the pressure on the asset maintenance budget remains an area of significant challenge.

In Children's Services, Cardiff has seen a demonstrable shift in the balance of care for children and young people through work across all aspects of service, including the expansion of the in-house fostering service, improved support for social workers and the implementation of the Accommodation Strategy. More children are being placed with local authority foster carers and in-house residential provision will lead to improved outcomes for children.

Even so, the demand and financial pressures on Children's Services continues to increase. Over the past decade the number of children in care increased to over 1,000, contributing to a budget increase of £47m, up from £52m to £99m for the service over the past decade (a 57% increase in real terms). Though the number of children in care is now falling (despite referrals into the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) having continued to grow), the complexity of the support many children require and the cost of this support and accommodation has grown.

Though many services for children and young people delivered by the Council and partners are performing well, the Council recognises that opportunities exist to more effectively join up a number of systems. Moving forward, when different teams are working with the same young person, the Council will work to develop a single view of that young person and the services they are accessing. This will provide a shared understanding of their needs and help inform a coherent pathway of support. And so, working across Council and partner services to develop effective preventative approaches will be a key priority for the Council over the medium term.

■ Areas of Progress

- The Council has made good progress on delivering its Sustainability Plan to maintain its position as a UNICEF Child Friendly City, and the number of Rights Respecting Schools has continued to increase.
- Pupil attainment in Cardiff remains above the Welsh average for GCSEs and A-Level results for grades A* to A and A* to C in WJEC qualifications.
- All Cardiff learners with a Statement of SEN (Special Educational Needs) under the SEN legislation have been transferred to the new ALN (Additional Learning Needs) system by the end of the third year of the four-year implementation programme.
- The Youth Service delivered a successful Summer Transition Programme, alongside a wide range of other initiatives to enhance the wellbeing and learning of young people throughout the year, to support young people into education, employment and training. In total, 4,028 young people left Year 11 in 2024/25. Of these, 91.4% were tracked into education, 4.1% were tracked in training, 1.9% were tracked into employment, with the remaining 2.6% NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training). This is an improvement on the previous year.
- Cardiff has worked hard to improve the school attendance position since the pandemic and is continuing to provide enhanced support to priority schools. Year-end 2023/24 data shows that Cardiff is ranked 5th out of 22 local authorities in Wales for secondary attendance (at 89.7%). For primary attendance, this is 92.4% and ranks 9th in Wales, ahead of Swansea and Newport. Both results improved on the previous year.
- Good progress has been made with the Council's school building programme, with sites at both Willows and The Court progressing as planned with completion dates expected in 2026. The Council has stabilised issues at Fairwater Community Campus after the contractor, ISG Construction Ltd, filed for administration. Though this resulted in delays, construction recommenced in November 2024 and a new main contractor is being sought via a tender exercise.
- The Council has designed a new 'front door' function, in partnership with public service partners, which will streamline contacts to early help and preventative services, along with statutory services, ensuring that children, families, and professionals who need advice or support are directed to the right place the first time.
- The implementation of the Accommodation Strategy has allowed the Council to care for more children looked after using in-house provision rather than through the use of external providers.

- Within the context of a national shortage of experienced social workers, the Council has managed to maintain a low vacancy rate for permanent social work posts in Children's Services. While the 2024/25 result (22.5%) is an increase on the 2023/24 result (15.8%), the current position remains significantly lower than historical vacancy rates (for example, down from a high of 38.7% in June 2020).
- The Council piloted its Single View of the Child Project, enabling practitioners in Children's Services to see a more holistic view of children and young people by bringing together information from multiple Council and public services into one place

■ Areas of Challenge and Risk

- Though showing improvement, attendance levels have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, with variation between schools and persistent absence remaining a concern in some secondary schools. The number of fixed-term exclusions per 1,000 pupils in primary schools has also not met its target of less than 16.5, with a result of 25.67; in secondary schools the rate of exclusions is higher but closer to target, with a result of 96.6 against a target of 99.3.
- The number of Electively Home Educated children has risen from 219 to 618 over the last five years, in line with national trends.
- Though 120 new specialist school places for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) have been created during the year, with work beginning in October 2024 for a further 72 spaces, this additional capacity has not kept up with demand, resulting in learners being placed in costly external provision in order to meet their needs. The shortfall in specialist provision is placing significant demand and budgetary pressure on the city's schools and other services. The rise in ALN learners requiring placements outside mainstream provision is also driving significant budget pressures in home-to-school transport.
- While the percentage of all pupils making a successful post-school transition is close to target, results for children looked after and those who are EOTAS (those Educated Other Than At School) are far short of their targets. Outcomes for EOTAS in particular have fallen further from target each year for the last three years.
- Schools face significant immediate and long-term budgetary challenges, driven by demographic changes in the city and record levels of inflation.
- The condition of the Education estate has been escalated to the Council's Corporate Risk Register, highlighting concerns around asset condition and the significant sums needed to maintain school buildings in the context of limited resources and funding.
- Securing ongoing school improvement in the context of budgetary challenges, increased demand and delivering national reforms in curriculum and Additional Learning Needs remains challenge.
- Despite the Accommodation Strategy resulting in reducing spend on external placements, Children's Services still face acute budgetary pressures, driven by high demand and increased case complexity, resulting in more high-cost children's placements.

1.1 Being a Child Friendly City: Advancing the rights of children and young people

Cardiff became the first British city to be awarded Child Friendly City status by UNICEF in October 2023. To maintain its child-friendly status, the Council has effectively delivered its three-year Sustainability Plan with notable progress made in a number of key areas, including:

- Increasing the number of staff completing Child Rights training and developing the Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) training.
- The completion of a community mapping exercise, led by the Youth Service, to understand the structure of youth provision across Cardiff's communities.
- Hosting workshops on reducing domestic and peer-on-peer violence, attended by almost 2,000 young men.
- Appointing a Cardiff Youth Council member to the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee.

The Council continues to support schools to become Right Respecting Schools, with 80.50% of schools (103 schools) now accredited Rights Respecting Schools at Quarter 4. Of these, 61 schools have achieved either a gold or silver level of accreditation. While both figures fall short of their full-year targets, these indicators have demonstrated a consistent upward trend over the last few years and are expected to continue to rise this academic year. Silver and gold schools verify significant progress to implementing a rights-based approach to education through an external quality assured assessment process.

At Quarter 4, 80.8% of council staff have completed the Child Rights Training against a corporate target of 85%. The Sustainability Plan splits this target over three years; with the target for year 2 (the current year of the plan) being 70%, showing that compliance is on track to hit its full target of 85% by year 3 (2025/26).

1.2 A Learning Entitlement: Providing high-quality education and learning opportunities for all

The Council continues to demonstrate sustained improvement in the quality and effectiveness of education in Cardiff. Attainment outcomes for pupils were above or well above the Welsh average for GCSE and A-Level results in the summer of 2024 for A* to A and A* to C results in WJEC qualifications. Of the 128 schools maintained by the local authority, four are in an Estyn follow-up category at the end of Quarter 4, including one school in special measures; while this is an increase from two schools at Quarter 3, this is still below the target for this measure (<5% of schools). A total of 14 schools were inspected in the 2024/25 academic year, including 11 primary schools and three secondary schools.

The Council remains committed to delivering a refreshed Cardiff 2030 Vision in the new academic year (2025/26) in line with new School Improvement arrangements which have been developed in collaboration with headteachers and chairs of governors. This new improvement model will aim to ensure sustainability and continuity in the level of curriculum support for schools, and a three-year change programme has been developed to transition to the new model.

The Cardiff Commitment, which provides career engagement activities and events for young people across the city, was named Public Sector Organisation of the Year at the 2024 Social Mobility Awards, recognising its significant impact in driving social mobility across the city. The Cardiff Commitment team have continued to co-ordinate a range of activities and workshops across the city aimed at sparking pupil interest in career options, many of which have been highly rated by the pupils in attendance. For example, 82% of pupils said the Open Your Eyes Week activities were 'good' or 'excellent' with teachers also rating the sessions positively, giving an average pupil engagement score of 4.3 out of 5. Although activities have been well received by those schools which have engaged, at Quarter 4 only 73% of schools (against a target of 85%) have engaged with Cardiff Commitment partners. Reasons for this include capacity constraints within the team caused by uncertainty of posts funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), and an intentional focus on schools within Cardiff's Southern Arc.

The Curriculum Team, which works to provide rich learning experiences for pupils in Cardiff, have continued to deliver high-quality events for pupils to take part in, ranging from STEM subjects to health and wellbeing to expressive arts. Over 1,000 pupils have taken part in art-based projects, and over 1,000 more engaged with sustainability initiatives delivered as part of the Council's One Planet Cardiff commitments.

In the 2023/24 academic year, 98.2% of school leavers made a successful transition into further education, employment, or training; this is a positive result which is just short of the target of 98.5%. However, post-school outcomes are not consistent across other cohorts, particularly for those Educated Other Than At School (EOTAS) and Children Looked After (CLA), for which the successful transition rate is 65% and 84.7% respectively. While the CLA result is consistent with historical results, the EOTAS result represents a significant downward trend over the last 3-4 years (down from 88.5% in 2021/22, for example).

To support the development of senior leaders in education, including headteachers, a Cardiff Headteachers Programme has been designed in collaboration with the Central South Consortium; the programme is due to be launched in September 2025. The programme includes a bespoke training and development offer designed for new headteachers in Cardiff, which is aligned to the National Professional Learning offer. A similar programme will also be developed for newly appointed deputy headteachers.

Governor Services have expanded their network of champions to support its diversity initiative, promoting the importance of school governors and their role in both the school and local community. In Quarter 4, events were held to generate interest in governor roles, with over half of the attendees expressing an interest in the roles, and a small number going on to apply for roles, with three of these leading to appointments. At Quarter 4, 70 of 122 governing bodies surveyed have appointed to an Equity and Diversity governor role and ongoing promotion will continue in the coming year to further increase this.

1.3 Wellbeing, Equity and Inclusion: Ensuring all children and young people are ready and able to learn, and enjoy positive health and wellbeing

The Council has risen to the challenge of demand pressures on the education system, prioritising the wellbeing of pupils. Following a decline in attendance rates during the COVID-19 pandemic, both primary and secondary schools have shown improvement in the 2023/24 academic year. Primary school attendance rose to 92.5%, up from 91.7% in 2022/23, while secondary school attendance increased to 88.9%, compared to 88.2% in the previous year. However, attendance rates are not consistent across the city, with some schools further from the target than others. Persistent absence (where a pupil is absent more than 50% of the time) has also reduced across both primary and secondary schools, although this is still not meeting the target for secondary schools (a result of 3.4% against a target of <2.5%). These consistent year-on-year improvements suggest a gradual return to pre-pandemic attendance levels and highlight the effectiveness of initiatives led by schools, the Education Directorate, and the Education Welfare Service (EWS). During the year, EWS has continued to drive improvements through the 'Back on Track' media campaign, regular persistent absence reviews, and targeted attendance support for schools. For those schools targeted with enhanced support, 5 of the 6 primary schools have shown an improvement and 6 of the 7 secondary schools have shown an improvement. In Quarter 4, Welsh Government confirmed a 5-year extension of the EWS Grant, allaying the risk around the resourcing of this function.

For the Council's cohort of pupils who are Educated Other Than At School (EOTAS), collecting accurate attendance data has been an improvement priority during the year. An Attendance Collection Tool has been developed by the Children Looked After Virtual School, and greater communication has been established between the Council and EOTAS providers resulting in a more robust attendance monitoring system.

The rates of fixed-term exclusions have shown improvement in both primary (19.9 per 1,000 pupils) and secondary (83.3 per 1,000 pupils) schools in the 2023/24 academic year. However, exclusion rates are still above their pre-pandemic levels; in 2018/19, primary exclusions were at a rate of 15.0 per 1,000 pupils and secondary exclusions were at a rate of 49.9 per 1,000 pupils. The main reasons for exclusions are disruptive behaviour, violence, and verbal abuse.

Transition from the former Special Educational Needs (SEN) Statement system to the new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system has been completed. This has been achieved well ahead of the timescale set by Welsh Government (July 2025) as part of the reform of the ALN system across Wales.

The Council is committed to improving the resources available for emotional health and wellbeing support for schools and learners. During the year, all schools have been offered support with implementing the Welsh Government Framework on Embedding a Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing (WSAEMW) through the completion of a self-evaluation, identifying the areas of improvement to be addressed. Support has been provided to schools in the form of 1-to-1 sessions, cluster meetings, and network meetings. As of March 2025, 87% of schools have an action plan in place, making the Cardiff and Vale region the highest performing region in Wales.

The Council is supporting schools to improve reporting on incidents of bullying, hate crime, hate incidents, harassment, racism, and gaslighting. Though a single system is used across Cardiff to record incidents, recording practice is not consistent across all schools. As of Quarter 4, 63 schools are using the system in a way which allows the generation of aggregated reports, with 654 total incidents reported between January and March 2025. The Education directorate continues to work with schools to improve recording and reporting consistency.

The number of children who are Electively Home Educated (EHE) in Cardiff has almost tripled over the last five years, creating significant challenges within the education system. In 2019, there were 219 children in this cohort, a figure which has risen to 618 at Quarter 4 2024/25. The most common reason for EHE is recorded as “Lifestyle/ Ideological/ Philosophical”, although in Quarter 4 “Anxious/ Phobic” was the most common reason for newly registered EHE learners. The EHE Team continues to work with schools and families to track and monitor this cohort, and to encourage a return to mainstream schooling where appropriate. In instances where a family’s home provision is not deemed adequate, the EHE team issue a School Attendance Order, requiring that the child return to mainstream school.

The “Passport to the City” initiative continues to provide Children Looked After (CLA) with opportunities to engage in cultural, educational, and recreational activities, fostering inclusion and personal growth through experiential learning. During the year, CLA learners were supported in accessing a wide range of activities and resources across the city, with collaboration from a number of services and partners including Cardiff International White Water, the Wales Millenium Centre, Cardiff City Stadium, the Principality Stadium, and BBC Studios. A Passport to the City app is in development which, once live, will allow users to view the various events and activities taking place across the city.

The Team Around the Cluster pilot has seen a significant rise in self-referrals from families, driven by increased awareness of the Community Focused Schools initiative in pilot schools. The Contact Officer role is able to connect families with key services such as Early Help, Children’s Services, the Youth Service, SNAP Cymru, Shelter, the Money Advice Team, and local authority housing teams, facilitating impactful, targeted support for those in need. This model allows for lower-level, preventative interventions via school-based advisors in cases which may have otherwise escalated to statutory services. A common theme emerging during the year for which families are seeking support is around perceived neurodevelopmental needs.

1.4 Delivering Sustainable Communities for Learning

The Council has made significant investments into places of learning, both in developing new school sites and maintaining existing schools. The Council has also demonstrated its responsiveness to new challenges, for example through the creation of additional ALN places. However, challenges remain in relation to the school estate, including lower admissions numbers in some schools and a substantial outstanding maintenance backlog.

Cardiff's changing population profile presents challenges for both new and existing schools. Despite over 6,000 new dwellings having been created in Cardiff over the last 10 years, birth rates have reduced by 23.6%, resulting in surplus places in primary schools. Meanwhile, the need for specialist school places to meet the needs of learners with ALN is outpacing the creation of additional ALN places, meaning many pupils are currently placed in independent provision at significant cost to the Council, and is also contributing to significant cost pressures in Home to School Transport costs. The Council continues to deliver additional ALN places through the School Organisation Programme, although in 2024/25, performance was just short of target; with 120 places delivered against a target of 132. However, work began in October 2024 to develop additional ALN places, outside of the programme, including 42 spaces for primary schools and 30 spaces for secondary schools.

Through the Education Investment Strategy Caerdydd 2024-2033, the Council has laid out its strategic framework for investment in Cardiff's education system. Planning follows a flexible, adaptable model built upon a rolling programme of development, rather than a structure of fixed 'bands' of projects used in the programmes to date. The strategy is aligned to Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) with a focus on carbon net zero new builds and major refurbishments.

While The Court School and Willows High School projects are making good progress, in September 2024, ISG Construction Ltd, the contractor responsible for delivering the Fairwater Community Campus, which forms part of the Council's Band B Programme, filed for administration. Fairwater Campus is a significant infrastructure project for Cardiff, and one of the largest education schemes in the UK, providing state-of-the-art learning facilities for multiple schools, both for mainstream and Additional Learning Needs provision. In November 2024, following extensive negotiations, construction onsite recommenced with the main subcontractor, BESL, and the position will be considered by Cabinet during 2025/26.

The condition of some school buildings remains a challenge. In Quarter 4 the condition of the education estate was escalated as a corporate risk following some significant health and safety issues that have led to closure and relocation. In total, there were 51 school closure days in 2024/25 due to building issues. A bid of £15m is being processed to address the most pressing condition issues in Cardiff's schools. Throughout the year, schemes will focus on urgent health and safety issues that cannot be mitigated, and enhanced governance has been put in place to identify and manage such issues on a weekly basis.

Schools continue to face significant budgetary challenges. Despite the Council providing funding to schools above the Welsh Government settlement level, inflation has devalued the spending power of schools whilst increasingly complex demand – such as the high number of pupils with Additional Learning Needs with associated home-to-school transport costs – has placed further pressure on school budgets. Further to this, a changing demographic profile across the city, characterised in part by lower birth rates, is increasing the number of vacant places within schools, primarily in earlier years in primary schools. Costs of repairs and utilities also contribute towards financial pressures in schools. The Council has a School in Deficit Protocol in place – a collaborative process through which schools work closely with the Council’s Education directorate and Corporate Finance team – to ensure that budgets are being managed sustainably.

1.5 Shifting the balance of care: place, people, and practice

The Council has continued to effectively deliver its Striving for Excellence in Children’s Services Strategy, resulting in a demonstrable positive shift in the balance of care for children and young people. The Strategy is split into three workstreams: place, focused on ensuring a range of support in the community and a variety of homes for children are available in Cardiff, people, focused on securing a primarily permanent social care workforce and deploying it where it’s needed, and practice, focused on using innovative delivery models and effective partnership working to improve outcomes for young people. A key driver for this work is placement sufficiency for children and young people with complex needs. The Council aims to increase provision for children looked after in Cardiff in line with Welsh Government’s commitment to remove profit from the care of children looked after.

The initiatives underway include:

- the implementation of the Right Place Model. Two homes have been identified as the hubs for the model, one for young children and one for older children with the former having been successfully registered by the Care Inspectorate Wales and the latter currently in the registration process. The assessment model is under development, and next steps will involve understanding the psychological support which should be offered through this model of delivery,
- improvements to the Fostering Service, including streamlining of the foster carer onboarding process and a programme of communication and promotion of foster care,
- maximising the benefits of locality social work, keeping services for children close to home,
- ensuring that the Council is working with families using the lowest safe level of intervention, supporting children to remain with, or return home to, their families where it is in their best interest to do so, and
- the delivery of the Accommodation Strategy to increase provision for children in Cardiff, including both the Council’s in-house capacity for placements for children looked after and working with providers to deliver services on our behalf.

The success of efforts to promote the Council's in-house Fostering Service are evident by the trends observed over the last three to four years which demonstrate an increase in the number of children placed with local authority carers, and a decrease in children placed with external carers. A similar pattern is sought for residential care, and the Council is working on delivering this through the implementation of Phase 2 of the Accommodation Strategy. This new approach is set out in the Homes for Children Commissioning Strategy⁴. Over the year ahead, the Council will be working with not-for-profit providers to deliver new homes in Cardiff for Cardiff children. In addition, Children's Services have made good progress in supporting children to return home from care, where it is appropriate to do so, with 104 children returned home in 2024/25, far surpassing the target of 70.

In addition to local demand pressures which the Striving for Excellence in Children's Services Strategy is working to address, some national policy decisions are resulting in additional pressures on the Children's Services system, including Welsh Government's commitment to remove profit from the care of children looked after, and the widening of the National Autism Strategy to include all forms of neurodiversity. Meanwhile, as rising demand and financial pressures affect all areas of the public sector, partners are also reducing their services, leaving Children's Services increasingly as the service of last resort.

Throughout the year, the Council has continued to work with the University Health Board to develop joined-up provision of services for children with serious mental health and emotional wellbeing issues. A new model for delivery has been agreed with partners and is in place. Pathways have been developed to set out how children and young people can access support in Health, highlighting where support can be found, how teams work together, and who staff can contact in crisis. In addition, a new clinical lead for the Children's Services Goleudy Team has been appointed.

The Council has updated its Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2025-28, focused on ensuring that children in the local authority's care are given the same opportunities, and can be supported to achieve the same outcomes, as other children. This has involved close collaboration with a wide range of Council services to develop a comprehensive offer of support. The refreshed strategy was shared with the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee (CPAC) in March 2025 and once finalised, will be taken to Cabinet.

Though progress has been made on the delivery of the Children's Services Workforce Action Plan to address the national social care workforce crisis, in 2024/25 social worker vacancy rates have increased (to 22.5% at Quarter 4), failing to meet the target of <15%. However, these levels are still a significant improvement on historical performance (from 2023 and earlier). In addition, the service is continuing the work to "grow our own" social workers, with 15 students due to achieve their social work qualifications later in the calendar year.

The delivery of the Youth Justice Strategy, 'Building Safer Futures Together', and its associated Implementation Plan, has continued with partners throughout the year. The primary goals of the strategy are to reduce youth offending and to improve outcomes for young people engaged with the service. While both the number of first-time entrants into the youth justice system (41 in 2024/25, against a target of 60) and re-offending rates (16.7% at Quarter 3 (latest result), against a target of 40%) are low, there remains an acknowledgement that whilst some of the city's most vulnerable children have been rightly diverted from the youth justice system, there is great pressure on all services in Cardiff to have an increased focus on preventative, trauma-informed support for a growing cohort of young people with complex needs.

⁴ [Homes for Children Commissioning Strategy](#)

1.6 Protecting the wellbeing of vulnerable children, young people and families

Safeguarding remains a top priority for the Council and significant work has been undertaken during the year to evaluate and develop processes internal and partnership processes, improving the child's journey through the social care system.

Following a review of the points of contact into Council services for those seeking help and support for families, children, and young people, the new Cardiff Family Advice, Support and Protection Hub (FASPH) has been developed, with a launch date planned for April 2025. This new function integrates both the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Family Gateway into a single-entry route, simplifying the service offer for families and for professionals, and streamlining the contact and referral processes. The new model has been designed to drive up the use of early intervention and preventative services in instances where referrals may have previously been sent straight to social services.

In 2024/25, Children's Services saw a positive improvement in the percentage of child protection enquiries completed on time (up to 54.4% in Quarter 4 from 41.1% in Quarter 1). Though this is still short of the full-year target of 60%, work will continue in 2025/26 to build on the progress to date and further improve completion times against the corporate performance target. The percentage of children re-registered on the Child Protection Register within 12 months has also missed its target (a result of 8.2% against a target of 6%), however it is important to note that this measure deals with very small numbers of children, meaning that even a single large family being re-registered can significantly impact the result.

In Quarter 4, the Council successfully rolled out its Single View of the Child Project with selected officers in Children's Services, including those that will be a part of the new FASPH model. This project utilises data warehousing and data visualisation tools to ensure that social care practitioners can access the information they need on children and young people when they need it.

Wellbeing Objective 2:

Cardiff is a great place to grow older

Our priorities in 2024/25 were:

- 2.1 Supporting older people to stay active and connected in an Age-Friendly City
- 2.2 Supporting older people to live independently at home through strengths-based preventative services
- 2.3 Working in partnership to deliver high-quality sustainable care and support
- 2.4 Supporting unpaid carers and valuing their role
- 2.5 Ensuring our services meet the needs of the most vulnerable

Summary of Corporate Plan Performance Position at Year-End



Steps and KPIs rated Red in Quarter 4 are addressed in the narrative below, and the full comment and results against each step and KPI can be found in the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

■ Overall Assessment

The Council considers that it has made good progress against its commitments to make Cardiff a great place to grow older with demonstrable progress in delivering a whole-system approach to prevention and reablement and supporting people to live independently in their communities.

As is the case across the UK, over the next decade the number of older people in Cardiff is set to increase significantly, with the number over the age of 65 projected to increase by 16.5%, the number over 85 by 28.84% and the number of 90 by 17.2%. The number of people over 65 living with dementia is projected to increase by 30.2%, and those with severe dementia by 35.9%. These increases in the number of older people, and particularly those with dementia, is already driving increased demand and cost pressures. In response the Council has set out an Ageing Well Strategy, a whole system approach focussed on Prevention, Reablement and Right Sizing and a move from crisis management to effective care planning. This approach is embedded in a programme of service change which is aimed at delivering sustainable adult social care services into the future. This programme of change has seen the adoption of a Trusted Assessor model and the increasing use of Occupational Therapists to assess and prescribe care, allowing social workers to focus on the more complex cases and both reducing the number of people waiting for assessment and reducing the need for care through the use of aids, equipment and technology enabled care.

The Council's preventative agenda is underpinned by a cross-council approach, notably in collaboration with the housing development programme, which will deliver 620 apartments for older people across 12 schemes, some of which will have care on site. A wide range of activities and events to keep older people active and connected are delivered through our network of community Hubs. There are also strong partnership arrangements with the care sector, voluntary and community partners and, critically, with the University Health Board. Progress has been made in delivering this approach, as evidenced by the rate of pathway of care delays resulting in delayed discharge from hospital per 100,000 population being lower in Cardiff than in any other Welsh local authority. Given the immediate and long-term demand and associated financial pressures facing the Council and its partners, continued improvement in this area will remain a corporate priority for 2025/26.

■ Areas of Progress

- Cardiff's profile as an age friendly city has continued to improve, with examples of Cardiff's Age-Friendly practice published on the World Health Organisation's Age-Friendly World website.
- Good progress has been made in the Council's support for carers. 94% of eligible carers were offered a carer's assessment during the year and Carers Corners can now be found in all Hubs and Libraries, providing information leaflets for those with caring responsibilities. The Care'diff newsletter has increased in circulation during the year and a new volunteer service providing support to unpaid carers, Caring Friends, has been launched.
- Adult Services has seen a year-on-year reduction in the percentage of permanent social worker vacancies. This was just 12.75% at Quarter 4, the lowest rate achieved to date.
- The Council's Trusted Assessor Model is showing evidence of success, supporting more appropriate discharges from hospital and reducing social work backlogs and assessment waiting times.
- Cardiff performs well within the wider Welsh context with regards to hospital discharge. As of May 2025 Welsh Government reported that care delays in Cardiff were 34 per 100,000 adult population; this is the best result in Wales, and well below the Welsh average of 54.
- There has been an increase in the percentage of people satisfied with Adult Social Care – up to 71% from 66% last year.

■ Areas of Challenge and Risk

- As Cardiff's population ages, in line with nationally observed trends, demand is projected to increase for Adults Services, particularly for those living with dementia and those who need support with daily activities. This will continue to place strain on the health and social care system in the coming years.
- While the supply of care is generally good, there are a number of issues facing the sustainability of the domiciliary care market. There is significant overcapacity within the sector in Cardiff, with insufficient work to support all providers and some expressing concerns about the viability of their businesses. There is also very heavy reliance on migrant workers amid tightening immigration rules which could impact on long-term workforce sustainability. Demand is high for care home placements for the those with complex care needs and costs are rising as a result.
- The Council has faced delays in delivering disabled adaptations, with the average time taken being 214 days against a target of <185 days. While this represents an increase over the last five years, there has been a gradual reduction since the peak of 266 days in quarter 1 of 2024/5. The increase is driven by an increase in demand and limited capacity of contractors to deliver adaptations.

2.1 Supporting older people to stay active and connected in an age-friendly city

The Council remains committed to supporting older people into employment and staying engaged within their community. During the year, the Council has made good progress in delivering its priorities outlined in the Age Friendly Action Plan, along with the ongoing work to provide training and engagement opportunities for older people across the city.

The Council has published its Age Friendly Action Plan 2024-28⁵ which was developed in consultation with partners and older people in Cardiff. The Plan has been approved by Cabinet and has been well received by the community, with seven examples from Cardiff being promoted as best practice by the World Health Organisation's Age Friendly World website. The Plan includes eight priorities, including for example, health, housing, transport, and employment.

To support older people into employment, and to prevent discrimination against them, the Council has developed and promoted a training and employment support offer for those over the age of 50. Individuals are supported by Employment Mentors who can help them become work ready. The Council has also been working with employers, including internal Council services and third sector partners, to encourage them to sign up to the Age-Friendly Employer Pledge.

The Hubs-for-All approach has now been fully embedded across Cardiff, allowing individuals with care needs to attend sessions in the Hubs and providing much needed respite for carers. The Hubs for All service now allows self-referral and is one of a range of person-centred day opportunities enabling people to remain active and involved in their local community. In Quarter 4, Welsh Government featured Cardiff's approach within its good practice learning event.

There remains a strong focus within the Council and among its public sector partners on preventative services, ensuring that the right support is provided at the right time to prevent more intensive, and more costly, care needs arising further down the line. A review of hospital admissions in 2024/25 has demonstrated the impact of the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) within the South-West cluster, with the area now showing the lowest readmission rates in Cardiff where it previously had the highest. The Council is also working to encourage the use of social prescribing by GPs in partnership with the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board and Primary, Community, and Intermediate Care (PCIC).

⁵ [Age-Friendly Cardiff Action Plan 2024-28](#)

2.2 Supporting older people to live independently at home through strengths-based preventative services

Cardiff's Ageing Well Strategy, published in 2022, set out a clear policy direction and range of activity to support older people to live well in their communities. Despite growing demand pressures on Adult Services, the Council remains committed to supporting individuals to live independently at home through strength-based preventative intervention.

The Council has made good progress in increasing its service capacity and in reducing backlogs of work, however some key performance indicators are falling short of targets due to resourcing constraints and the increasing complexity of demand.

To ensure that individuals who need support are directed towards the right services at the right level of intervention the Council has rolled out the Trusted Assessor model, upskilling Occupational Therapists (OTs) to enable them to carry out wellbeing assessments and prescribe care. Due to the skills of the occupational therapists in finding alternative solutions, 31 % of cases assessed by them did not require ongoing care. This Trusted Assessor approach also helps free up social work capacity to focus on the most complex cases. By preventing duplication, this approach has already reduced the number of cases awaiting a social work assessment by the Community Social Work Team to just 21 cases, down from a peak of 428 cases waiting in 2021.

Cardiff's Independent Living Service operates the First Point of Contact for Adult Services. A Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) approach is taken with trained contact officers, visiting officers, occupational therapists and social workers available to ensure the most suitable support is available. The service has faced challenges during 2024/5 with increased complexity of service users and staff shortage which has resulted in a dip in the normally high number of cases resolved at the First Point of Contact. In 2024/25 there was a drop in the percentage of new cases where a more comprehensive assessment was not required. The result at Quarter 4 was 57 % against a target of 70 % and down on the 2023/24 result of 69 % . Plans are in place to improve this going forward.

Outcomes from the visiting service remain good, 96 % of people felt more able to live independently in their own homes following support from Independent Living Services.

A review of services is currently underway, which will focus on taking a whole system approach to prevention and reablement, a new prevention toolkit has been developed providing alternative solutions to care such as technology enabled care (TEC). Initial feedback about the toolkit is very positive. Next steps will be to respond quickly to requests for support in the community, with the development of a rapid response team. This review, and the associated changes and improvements that are planned, represent a whole system shift to ensure a responsive and robust service is in place and will align closely with the UHB's Integrated Community Care project.

The Council has an ambitious new build programme which is delivering high quality community living schemes for older people, to support independence. One scheme, Addison House in Rumney, has already been delivered and this work continues with contractors on site at St. Mellons, Leckwith, Butetown and Channel View. Further schemes also in the pipeline including at the Maelfa in Llanedeyrn while a Wellbeing Village is planned for Michaelson. These schemes will offer purpose build apartments specially designed to support independence and a range of communal facilities to help older people age well in place. Some larger schemes will have care based on site to support those with higher needs.

The Council has seen an increase in the time taken to deliver disabled adaptations over the last two years, from 141 days at the end of 2022/23 to 214 days at present. This is above the target timeframe of <185 days, although performance during the year has improved, bringing the result closer to target. Delays in the disabled adaptations process are due to significant increases in demand, from around 900 cases per year prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, to around 1,500 per year presently. This demand has outpaced the budget allocated to adaptations, further compounded by limited capacity amongst contractors to deliver adaptations in a timely manner, resulting in a waiting list of around 400 cases at the end of last year which are still being responded to. A range of activities are being taken to resolve this issue, including commissioning additional contractor capacity and prioritising essential work.

2.3 Working in partnership to deliver high-quality sustainable care and support

The Council continues to work closely with its public sector partners, particularly the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board (UHB), to ensure care and support processes result in a smooth, safe, and timely transition from hospital, with demonstrable progress being made as evidenced in the performance of several key indicators. A co-ordinated cross-service system has been essential in achieving this and freeing up of hospital beds.

The Council's Independent Living Service supports in the hospital through a "Pink Army" of contact officers who provide assistance with discharge on the wards, while the Council-operated Integrated Discharge Hub (IDH) co-ordinates a range of services and professionals to support discharge. These services, combined with a clear discharge to recovery and assess process, have resulted in Cardiff's pathways of care delays being consistently being lower than the Welsh average.

Improvements made to discharge pathways have resulted in a reduction to the time taken for the IDH to triage cases, with 60% of cases in Quarter 4 triaged within one working day. Any delays in triage are caused by unpredictable spikes referrals. In total throughout the year, this work has resulted in 1925 individuals being discharged from hospital with care arrangements in place, freeing up space in the hospital. A key focus moving forward is on improving processes and communication with UHB colleagues to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals the IDH receives. Overall, Cardiff performs favourably in its transfer of care processes from hospital when compared to other parts of Wales. For example, care delays in Cardiff were 34 per 100,000 adult population in May 2025; this is the best result in Wales, and well below the Welsh average of 54.

In December 2024, to improve quality monitoring, the Council launched its domiciliary care provider self-assessment tool while a quality framework for care homes has also been developed which aligns with the Care Inspectorate Wales published ratings. Providers have been engaged with and are supportive of the changes proposed to quality scoring. More work is needed however to encourage care providers to embrace Technology Enabled Care (TEC).

Cardiff has a good supply of domiciliary care and while there were some variations in the average number of people waiting for domiciliary care at month end, with 36 waiting at Quarter 4, this reflects demand. Flow through the services remained good. Of those waiting for care, most were still dealt with promptly, for example at Quarter 4 only 4 individuals were left waiting for more than two weeks. In addition, the average time taken from referral through to the start of domiciliary care was 10 days at Quarter 4, exceeding the target of 12 days.

To ensure that the Council considers the views of its citizens in the provision of their care, a Service User Engagement Action Plan has been developed, with telephone surveys conducted to listen to the views of service users and incorporate them into service planning. Feedback from these exercises is regularly fed back to senior management in Adult Services, and core themes and actions arising will inform future interventions. Overall, the percentage of people satisfied with their service in 2024/25 was 71 %, representing a significant improvement from the score of 66 % in 2023/24.

The Council has continued to work to improve the resilience of its social care workforce through the delivery of the Adult Services Workforce Strategy and the work of the Cardiff Cares Academy. In response to a national shortage of social workers, the Council has developed its 'grow your own' approach, which involves supporting individuals with their qualifications and training. The success of this work, and complementary work to attract and retain social workers, is evident in the 2024/25 results for the percentage of permanent social worker vacancies in Adult Services. At year end, social worker vacancies stood at 12.75 %, the best result achieved to date as part of a continuous improvement trend over the last two years. A scheme to improve choice for services users has resulted in the development of 18 microenterprises to deliver low level care and support, with more enterprises going through the verification process this number is expected to increase significantly in the coming year.

The Council continues to provide support to the wider care sector by monitoring and encouraging care providers to pay the Real Living Wage, and improving the support offered by the Cardiff Cares Academy in recruiting care workers. In 2024/25 new mentoring processes have been established for potential care workers, along with an enhanced training offer including first aid, food safety, and manual handling. A volunteering programme has also been developed allowing prospective candidates to gain experience in care settings across Cardiff.

Adult social care continues to experience significant financial pressures linked to increasing case complexity and rising demand. For example, 10% more wellbeing assessments were undertaken in 2024/5 when compared to the previous year. While the number of care and support plans completed increased by 900 to 8,667. The cost of commissioning care has also contributed to financial pressures. With high inflation levels and the introduction of the Welsh Government's Real Living Wage commitment for registered carers, there has been a significant impact on annual price uplifts across the sector.

2.4 Supporting unpaid carers and valuing their role

The Council continues to ensure it listens to unpaid carers and their families so that the right kinds of support can be offered. Work to encourage carers to recognise the role they play and self-identify is being progressed in newsletters, including the Care'diff newsletter and through Hubs and libraries and healthcare settings. Staff have also been trained to identify and support unpaid carers that access their services. A new volunteer service, Caring Friends, was also launched and has been well received. The Council has also become more effective in ensuring that eligible carers are offered a carer's assessment by making the offer a mandatory part of certain processes. As a result, 94% of eligible carers in Quarter 4 were offered a carers assessment.

2.5 Ensuring our services meet the needs of the most vulnerable

The Council aims to support people with dementia to live safely at home wherever possible. A training offer has been developed for carers to equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to provide high quality care to those living with dementia. In 2024/25, the Council partnered with Effro, a project delivered by the charity Platfform to support people living with dementia, and the University Health Board's Dementia Learning & Development Team to deliver an array of learning and development opportunities.

Though still short of the 85% target, by the end of 2024/25, 71.3% of staff had completed the Dementia Friends Training. The current completion rate of 71.3% is the highest result to date, representing a steady positive trend over time. To improve compliance and reach as many people as possible, face-to-face courses have been arranged for front-line staff in 2025/26 to supplement the online training module.

Wellbeing Objective 3: Supporting people out of poverty

Our priorities in 2024/25 were:

- 3.1 Supporting those most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis
- 3.2 Supporting people into work
- 3.3 Continuing our Living Wage City ambition
- 3.4 Preventing homelessness whenever possible and ending rough sleeping

Summary of Corporate Plan Performance Position at Year-End



Steps and KPIs rated Red in Quarter 4 are addressed in the narrative below, and the full comment and results against each step and KPI can be found in the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

■ Overall Assessment

The Council has continued to deliver a range of effective services to support people out of poverty. The Council's Into Work and Advice Services provide impactful support to citizens, evidenced by the scale and effectiveness of engagement. Securing financial sustainability for Into Work and Advice Services as part of a wider reform of employment support services will be a priority for the Council for the year ahead. The Living Wage City initiative is also continuing to deliver real benefit to workers across Cardiff.

Rising costs experienced by households, coupled with a shortage of affordable housing across all tenures in the city, is causing exceptional pressures on the homelessness service and across a range of other Council and partner services. The number of people who are becoming homeless and the demand for emergency and temporary accommodation has increased. While much good work has been done to address the housing emergency, over 1,800 households remain in temporary accommodation and a number of hotels are still being used as temporary hostels. Over 9,000 households are now on the Council's housing waiting list. The rental rate in the private rented sector is at unprecedented levels, far exceeding the Local Housing Allowance (the rates that housing-related benefits can be awarded) making this sector unaffordable for many. The shortage of housing of all tenures is creating demand pressure and financial pressure across many council services (including Adult and Children's Services). The need to rapidly extend access to housing, through building and securing additional affordable housing, property acquisitions from the open market, and housing tailored to support independent living, remains a corporate priority.

■ Areas of Progress

- Extensive efforts have been put in place to support people through the transition to Universal Credit as well as to raise awareness among stakeholders whom the service engages with. Almost 8,800 people were helped with Universal Credit support during 2024/25, over 2,000 more people than during 2023/24 (an increase of 32%).
- At least 1,382 people have been supported into employment by the Into Work Advice Service, exceeding the 2024/25 target of 1,300 and marginally more than were supported in 2023/24 (1,342).
- Cardiff University estimate the value of the Real Living Wage to be £100m for the Cardiff economy since 2012.
- The refreshed Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-26 was approved by Cabinet in February 2025. This Strategy sets out the strategic direction for homelessness prevention and housing-related support in Cardiff and sets out the key priorities for the Council and its partners to make homelessness rare, brief and unrepeated.

■ Areas of Challenge and Risk

- Funding for much of the work carried out by the Into Work Advice Service and Money Advice Team is grant-funded and short-term. Although Shared Prosperity Funding has been extended until March 2026, uncertainty remains relating to the continuity of a key service going forward. Without this funding these services would need to be reduced significantly.
 - Financial constraints associated with in-year budget pressures and a significant budget gap impacted the Council's aspirations regarding the number of new trainee and apprentice roles created, with 64 placements created against a target of 100.
 - The challenging economic climate has led to a reduction in real Living Wage accredited businesses as companies choose not to renew their commitment, or cease trading. During 2024/25, 3,000 fewer workers received a pay rise onto the real Living Wage than during 2023/24.
 - Despite a significant increase in the number of temporary accommodation units available, hotel use has continued for both individuals and families. Arrangements are being progressed to end the use of hotels for housing families, planned for summer 2025.
-

3.1 Supporting those most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis

In response to the economic crisis, the Council's support offer continues to be delivered effectively. During 2024/25 the Money Advice Team identified additional weekly benefit of over £17m for its clients. Over the same twelve months, almost 8,800 people were helped with Universal Credit financial support, vastly exceeding the target of 5,000 and over 2,000 more people than during 2023/24.

This increase is a result of the start of the managed migration for people in receipt of 'legacy benefits' (such as Income Support or Housing Benefit) to Universal Credit. This will continue to take place until at least March 2026. Extensive efforts have been put in place to support people through this transition. All front-line Advice and Hub staff have been trained on the change to Universal Credit, and advice has been provided to private landlords, local councillors, trade unions and front-line teams across the Council to raise awareness, and increase knowledge and understanding.

During 2024/25, 61,744 calls were made to the Advice Line, a 42.5% increase compared to 2023/24. Despite this, there has been a significant improvement in the response rate with 87% of calls answered this year compared to 73% last year. A review of the capacity of the Advice Line was carried out in early 2025 which identified an opportunity to extend the support available in 2025/26, with plans in place to include additional support relating to Adult Learning and Wellbeing Support Service.

The migration to Universal Credit is likely to contribute to an increase in Council tenant rent arrears. Universal Credit housing costs are paid in arrears directly to the claimant with the initial payment often taking five weeks to be paid. Work to support tenants of all tenures struggling to pay their rent continues. The rent arrears pathway makes best use of all grants to support those struggling to pay their rent for any reason with practical interventions. This reduces evictions and results in tenants being able to remain in their homes. A Rent Arrears Panel has been set up and is working well with early intervention being key to its success. Housing support workers are providing mediation between landlords and tenants with payment plans being explored in the first instance; this change in process has been helpful in identifying the root cause of arrears, providing education around paying priority bills/rent and the consequences of falling into arrears. A dedicated Money Advice Officer has been embedded in the Homeless Prevention team, to carry out affordability assessments for customers to show whether a payment plan is affordable. For cases where a payment plan is not an option, cases are discussed by the Panel to seek alternative solutions.

3.2 Supporting people into work

The Into Work Advice Service continues to provide a dedicated service to the city's residents, supporting those who are out of work and those who want to upskill into higher paid and more sustainable work. During 2024/25, just over 62,000 instances of into work support were provided to people through the Employment Gateway. Although this figure exceeds the annual target, it is the lowest number of interventions since 2020/21.

Whilst the demand for employment and training support remains high, there has been a significant change in the level of assistance required over the past 12 months. Due to new online 'how to' courses run by the service's Job Club team covering how to search for jobs, write CVs, claim and manage Universal Credit, there has been a decrease in people requiring light-touch support. At the same time, there has been an increase in customers with more complex barriers to employment. The service is also anticipating an increase in care leavers reaching out for support following the end of Welsh Government's two-year Universal Basic Income pilot in summer 2025.

At least 1,382 people have been supported into employment, exceeding the 2024/25 target of 1,300 and slightly higher than the result for 2023/24 (1,342). 58% (798) of those supported into work were from an ethnically diverse background, compared with 46% (approx. 635 people) in 2023/24 and 38% (approx. 424 people) in 2022/23. During 2024/25, 12.9% of those supported through targeted intervention ceased engagement without a verified positive outcome. This is an ongoing challenge for the service, although the Quarter 4 result of 9.26% (below the target of 10%) is encouraging. The service continues to work with harder-to-reach client groups including disabled people, those aged over 50, people who are homeless, those with criminal records and refugees. The service continues to develop its training and volunteering opportunities, with the aim of further tailoring support to these client groups.

Over 350 new employers received assistance to find suitable candidates for their roles during the year. Recommendations originally set out in the Race Equality Taskforce continue to have an impact with the percentage of Into Work clients who identify as being from an ethnically diverse background increasing again to 54% in 2024/25; above both the 2022/23 figure of 36% and the 2023/24 figure of 48%.

The Academy model continues to support many people into dedicated career pathways. The Teaching Assistant Academy supported 70 people into employment during 2024/25, including some who gained experience through the Council's award-winning School Holiday Enrichment Programme. In 2024/25, 246 people completed the training and 53 gained employment in the construction sector. Specific 'Get into...' employment training has also been developed for sectors where there is a lack of skilled workers and recruitment is proving challenging. Throughout 2024/25, 107 'Get Into...' programmes were delivered for employment sectors including administration, retail, hospitality, railway maintenance and barbering with 42 specifically focussing on the care and construction sectors.

The Into Work Advice Service are working with Ardal, the Council's procurement service, on the development of its new Socially Responsible Procurement Policy. Targeted social value requirements are being included within Invitations To Tender, obliging contractors to work in partnership with the Advice Service on a contractual basis to deliver maximum impact for local communities. A plan has been developed specifically for the new indoor arena to capitalise on the opportunities afforded by major developments through, focusing on benefits for the immediate surrounding communities. The Advice Service and Ardal are continuing to work together to assess and influence contractors' social value commitments for each element of the development.

The Into Work Advice Service has seen a marked increase in the number of people in employment requiring support since the introduction of Universal Credit and has been working in partnership with the Money Advice Team to support those who are affected by the migration to Universal Credit, ensuring transitional protection is in place. In-work Employment Mentors continue to provide one-to-one support to individuals, developing bespoke action plans to support with training and employment needs. Although far fewer individuals in employment were supported with mentoring provision during 2024/25 than during the previous year (734 compared with 1,147 in 2023/24), more went on to achieve a qualification (342 in 2024/25 compared with 154 in 2023/24) or secure different employment following support (264 compared with 263).

Within the Council, fewer posts have been advertised and subsequently filled through Cardiff Works than targeted during 2024/25 (2,588 against a target of 2,800). This is due to the budgetary pressures facing the Council. Financial constraints have also led to the Council creating fewer new apprenticeship and trainee placements than hoped. Whilst overall, there were 153 apprentices and trainees working across the Council at the end of March 2025 exceeding the target of 150, across the year only 64 new placements were created against a target of 100.

Though Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) has been extended until March 2026, a full-service review of the Into Work Advice Service will commence in 2025/26. The impact of this funding not being replaced will result in the service being significantly reduced.

3.3 Continuing our Living Wage City ambition

Cardiff's success as a real Living Wage City was recognised at the 2024 UK Living Wage Champions Awards in July. The Cardiff Living Wage City Steering Group won the Local Champion Award for its support to grow the Living Wage movement in the capital over the past year. Research undertaken by Cardiff University has calculated that since 2012, the uplift to the real Living Wage has injected an additional £100 million into the local economy. Despite these achievements and the accreditation of 25 new organisations during 2024/25, the challenging economic conditions mean that the target of 260 accredited Living Wage employers in Cardiff by November 2024 was not met, with 225 organisations accredited at the end of March 2025. Similarly, the number of workers receiving a pay rise as a result of accreditation has fallen from over 13,000 through the whole of 2023/24 to around 10,200 at the end of March 2025, below the target of 14,000. This is primarily a result of organisations not renewing their accreditation, the majority of whom have gone out of business. This situation is reflected across the UK. The focus in the first half of 2025/26 will be delivering a social media campaign promoting the benefits of becoming an accredited real Living Wage employer.



⁶ [Cardiff Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022 to 2026 - Refresh 2025](#)

3.4 Preventing homelessness whenever possible and ending rough sleeping

The refreshed Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-26⁶ was approved by Cabinet in February 2025. This Strategy sets out the strategic direction and priorities for homelessness prevention and housing-related support for the Council and its partners. This refresh was undertaken following the Council's declaration of a Housing Emergency in December 2023 and in preparation for changes to be introduced by the Welsh Government as laid out in the White Paper "Ending Homelessness in Wales".

The Council continues to take a preventative approach to homelessness – the average waiting time for a homelessness prevention appointment during 2024/25 was eight days, down from a peak of 39 days at the end of 2022. This year-end result is rated red as it is above the target of less than seven days; however, the quarterly results have been at or below target during the last three quarters, only the high Quarter 1 result is causing the year-end result to be over target. 77% of households who were threatened with homelessness were successfully prevented from being homeless during the year; this was the same result as in 2023/24 although below the target of 80%. 37% of people presenting to the service for the first time had become homeless that day.

This shows a slight improvement from 2023/24 when 39% of people presented as homeless on the day. Respondents to the homeless consultation, who had become homeless, were asked what had stopped them from contacting the Council earlier. Over 50% said that they either were not aware of the services available or that they did not know who to contact. In response to this, promoting the support on offer will be a priority within the Housing Support Programme Strategy over the year ahead.

Work continues to prevent and relieve youth homelessness in Cardiff. The Young Persons' Gateway is a collaboration between the Council's Children's Services and Housing Service, providing housing and support to those threatened with, or experiencing, homelessness. A full review was undertaken in August 2024, which found that the Gateway model required change to better meet the needs of young people given the increased levels and complex need. Improvements are being implemented, focusing on reducing demand for services, improving transition for care leavers, and increasing both temporary and permanent accommodation options.

Thirteen additional Housing First units have been made available for young people during 2024/25. The scheme aims to prevent young people entering adult homeless services which can have a negative impact on wellbeing and can put young people at risk of further negative behaviours. The new Tai Ffres project, a collaboration with United Welsh Housing Association and Llamau, has delivered 34 units of move-on accommodation from the Young Persons' Gateway this year across three sites with five more units expected by the end of summer 2025. By 2027 the project is expected to deliver 102 units of move-on accommodation in total. An additional seven units of move-on accommodation has been dedicated to young people at the new Gasworks 2 site. The YMCA also opened Adref, 18 units of high-quality accommodation for young people.

The first Council-run supported accommodation for young people opened in Cathays in late 2024. Accommodation previously used for students has been converted into 14 self-contained units providing temporary accommodation for young people. Staff are available on-site 24/7 to offer support, and the scheme can accommodate young people with complex needs. There has, however, been significant delays with the Citadel project which will provide new supported housing for young people with complex needs. Agreements with Network Rail have now been made in principle; however, the main contract work has still not started. The timescales for the schedule of works are being discussed and agreed. Due to the demand for this type of accommodation, the Council plans to open another project by converting Tŷ Countisbury (previously for adults) into a scheme for young people.

Cardiff Council remains committed to ensuring that any instance of rough sleeping is rare, brief, and not repeated. The average number of people sleeping rough on the city's streets during 2024/25 was 34. However, the number has been falling since September 2024, and the Council is doing all it can to ensure that that trend continues. Almost half of rough sleepers have no recourse to public funds or have no local connection. This limits the support that can be provided to these individuals by the Council. Where those who present to the services have no local connection to Cardiff, they are referred back to their originating local authority for help and support where possible.

The LETS (Landlord Enquiry & Tenants Services) Team is the first point of contact for landlords and work to improve access to the private rented sector in the city. To date, the Council has leased 93 properties from private landlords through the Welsh Government Leasing Scheme (37 in 2024/25), providing a range of affordable housing across the city as rents are set at the Local Housing Allowance level. Of these properties 49 were previously empty homes. A further 42 properties are being considered for the scheme.

The Council is committed to increasing accommodation capacity to address homelessness pressures. Managed schemes provide secure tenancies with support available on site for those who need it, allowing individuals to move on more quickly from homeless accommodation. There are 156 residents in the current schemes, with no evictions recorded since implementation, and there are plans in place to develop seven new managed schemes over the next four years.

Extensive development at the Gasworks site in Grangetown in partnership with Wates Residential has delivered two schemes, with over 200 modular units providing much needed temporary accommodation for families and young people. A further three new temporary accommodation schemes for families have also been developed in partnership with Housing Associations, providing 90 units of accommodation, and a number of larger property acquisitions, including a hotel with over 150 units, have been approved. Despite this increase in accommodation, immediate supply is not keeping up with current levels of demand. Consequently, a number of hotels are being used to deliver additional temporary accommodation. At the end of March 2025, 151 homeless individuals and 37 homeless families were being supported in hotel accommodation. It is widely acknowledged that hotel accommodation is not the preferred housing solution, particularly for homeless families, which is why the end of hotel use for families is planned for summer 2025.

Wellbeing Objective 4:

Safe, confident and empowered communities

Our priorities in 2024/25 were:

- 4.1 Leading the response to the Housing Emergency
- 4.2 Investing in communities
- 4.3 Ensuring children and adults are protected from risk of harm and abuse
- 4.4 Creating safe and inclusive communities
- 4.5 Promoting the Welsh language
- 4.6 Supporting grass-roots and community sport across the city
- 4.7 Delivering high-quality parks and public spaces

Summary of Corporate Plan Performance Position at Year-End



Steps and KPIs rated Red in Quarter 4 are addressed in the narrative below, and the full comment and results against each step and KPI can be found in the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

■ Overall Assessment

The Council has made good progress in creating safe, confident and empowered communities within Cardiff, with three-quarters of actions under this objective rated as green throughout 2024/25. Over the past decade the Council has developed a network of community and public service hubs which are popular, well-used and are supporting the delivery of local public services responsive to the communities in which they are based. This ensures that the Council retains a local presence in the community to deliver a range of services including library services; money and into work advice; and homeless and housing support. Local regeneration projects are continuing to improve the quality of the built environment in district and community centres. The Council has also made good progress delivering community housing schemes, with over 1,800 new homes delivered through the housing development programme, and a new housing partnership agreed.

Partnership working with South Wales Police, partners and communities is seen as an area of good practice by the Council and Public Services Board, including responding to anti-social behaviour in hot-spot areas, enhanced work to tackle exploitation and on wider community cohesion issues. Over the past three years the Council has led a city-wide response to a series of asylum and refugee crises, including the Ukraine and Afghan crises and the accelerated dispersal programme. Given the ongoing pressures in the UK migration system and Cardiff's role as a UK dispersal hub, this area will remain a corporate priority for the year ahead.

■ Areas of Progress

- Over 1,800 new homes have been delivered through the Council's housing development programme.
- 162 empty private sector properties have been brought back into use or additional dwellings created across the city, 153 of these properties had been empty for over 12 months.
- Cardiff's library provision was commended for the top-quality services provided to residents around the city. Cardiff met all 13 core entitlements of the standards and six of the seven targeted quality indicators in full and one in part.
- The Council's Living Well with a Learning Disability Strategy for Adults was approved by Cabinet in March 2025.
- The city's Home Office-funded Prevent Team achieved 'exceeding' ratings across all areas of the Home Office's 2024/25 Performance Assessment and has secured funding to lead regional work in 2025/26.
- Cathays Park and Maltings Park in Splott were awarded Green Flag status, bringing the total number of Council-run Green Flag parks in Cardiff to 20.

■ Areas of Challenge and Risk

- The pressure on the housing market, especially the rising cost and lack of availability of homes in the private rented sector, remains a strategic challenge for the Council, causing significant demand and cost pressures in housing and homelessness services and across numerous other Council services.
 - Council tenants' satisfaction with the Council as their landlord decreased by 7.2% from 2023/24 to 66.2%.
 - Work on the Council's new Regeneration Strategy to support district and local centres has not progressed due to capacity issues within the team and recruitment difficulties.
 - The number of adult protection enquiries continues to rise (a 9.5% increase in demand in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24), making it increasingly difficult to process enquiries within seven days.
-

4.1 Leading the response to the Housing Emergency

The Council is actively working to expand the availability of affordable, energy-efficient, and low-carbon housing across the city. To date, 1,834 homes have been completed through all delivery routes, including through Cardiff Living in partnership with Wates Residential, since the start of the programme in 2017, and 364 new homes have been delivered in year. Additionally, 71 development sites have been identified which can deliver up to 4,700 new homes—well above the Council's target of 4,000 homes by 2035. Following the conclusion of the competitive dialogue process for the second housing partnership, Cabinet approved the preferred developer in December 2024, and the formal appointment of Lovell Partnerships took place in January 2025.

Work continues to bring empty homes back into use, enhancing the available housing stock. The Council has increased the Council Tax premium on long-term empty properties; with effect from the start of 2024/25, the new premiums are 100% after 12 months, 200% after 24 months and 300% after 36 months. It is hoped that over time this increase will encourage homeowners to bring these long-term empty properties into occupation. In the first quarter of the year an annual mailshot to all owners of empty properties was undertaken. A higher-than-normal response rate was received (17.8%), enabling the service to provide bespoke advice and assistance on how to bring empty properties back into use. As a result of this proactive work, during 2024/25 162 empty private sector properties have been brought back into use or additional dwellings created across the city, 153 of these properties had been empty for over 12 months.

Good progress has been made in driving up housing standards in the private rented sector with the Rent Smart Wales scheme tackling rogue agents and landlords. The Council has also continued to intervene where enforcement action is needed against landlords or where safety hazards in homes need to be addressed.

The Council is deploying innovative housing solutions to address issues such as over-crowding, under-occupation, lack of family accommodation and lack of adapted properties. A new strategy has been developed to promote mutual exchanges, and the right sizing officer is working on several potential matches, outcomes of these are anticipated in 2025/26. Monthly meetings are ongoing to identify households who may benefit from extensions, and specific criteria is being established for referrals into the extension scheme. To date, nine structural alterations have been completed to enlarge properties and address issues of overcrowding.

The new Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) 2023 was launched in October 2023 with all social landlords in Wales responsible for meeting and maintaining their homes to these standards. WHQS 2023 contains all the requirements of the previous standard, but with greater emphasis on addressing decarbonisation in the social housing stock and ensuring that homes are of a higher quality and more affordable to heat. Clear project management arrangements are in place to oversee implementation of the new standard. Officers are working closely with Welsh Government to fully understand the new standard and the associated financial and deliverability challenges. The cost of implementing the new standard will be significant and additional funding will be required to undertake the necessary programme of works. The WHQS compliance policy has been completed and submitted to Welsh Government along with estimated costs for delivering the standard. A new asset database is being built, and surveys of the housing stock have commenced, 10% of the stock has been surveyed already with a target of completing at least 10% in the coming year.

Unfortunately, council tenants' satisfaction with the Council as their landlord fell to 66.2% of respondents to the Tenants' Survey 2024, a 7.2% decrease on the outcome from the 2023 survey. Feedback from the survey has been reviewed and actions to increase satisfaction are being implemented into the Directorate Delivery Plan for 2025/26.

High demand for responsive repairs resulted in a significant backlog of works which increased complaints from tenants. Good progress has been made in reducing the backlog from a peak in June 2024 of 4,372 unallocated jobs to 1,873 at the end of March 2025. Works were carefully prioritised and over the course of the year, 98% (against a target of 95%) of emergency repairs to Council properties were completed on time (within two hours) while 76% of urgent repairs were completed on time against a target of 70%. It should be noted, however, that the target time for urgent repairs was increased from five days to 15 days during the year to respond to the very high levels of demand. A full action plan has been put in place to improve all aspects of the responsive repairs service. Complaints about the service are regularly reviewed and areas of improvement are identified and addressed, and a Tenants' Voice event on repairs is currently planned for Quarter 1 2025/26 which will involve the Repairs Academy, Repairs Online and general repairs. Also, as a result of additional resources and process changes in the Dry Homes team, a 52% decrease has been achieved in the number of cases of damp in Council properties, reducing the figure from 1,446 in April 2024 to 692 cases at the end of the financial year.

The Repairs Academy has been working in partnership with the Into Work Service taking on work experience candidates. Candidates have successfully been paired with operatives across different trades and positive feedback has been received from both mentors and candidates. Work has taken place to identify future skillset gaps and utilise the knowledge and skills of existing operatives to train future apprentices. As a result, two bricklaying apprentices have been appointed, and all six apprentice positions have been filled.

Fire safety in all homes is a top priority. Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) continue to engage with Welsh Government in the development of their Building Safety Programme for medium- and high-rise buildings in the private sector. Following the completion of the consultative work, the focus is on how Councils can resource the proposed regime. It is acknowledged that there is a shortage of suitably qualified officers available and a significant skills gap that will take some time to address. The Joint Inspection Team (JIT) established by Welsh Government is developing a schedule of high-rise buildings that it will inspect during 2025/26, with the schedule being agreed by the JIT steering group. SRS along with colleagues in Swansea are in discussion about resourcing enforcement matters that arise from the JIT high-rise inspections.

Regarding Council properties, work is underway to replace the cladding on high-rise blocks, with three blocks completed to date and funding secured for work on a further two blocks. In addition to regular site familiarisation visits to different high-rise blocks of flats by South Wales Fire & Rescue Service, live fire service training has been completed at Channel View and fire risk assessments for low-rise blocks and non-communal blocks of flats continue to be undertaken. A full review of the way that the service carries out Fire Risk Assessments, and records and communicates fire actions, is underway with a view to improve response times, and increase visibility of outstanding actions and prioritise them effectively.

4.2 Investing in communities

Each year, library services across Wales are assessed against the Welsh Public Library Standards which are administered by Welsh Government. Cardiff's provision was commended for the top-quality services provided to residents around the city. Cardiff met all 13 core entitlements of the standards in full, and of the seven quality indicators which have targets, six are being achieved in full and one in part. The annual assessment reported that Cardiff offers a high-quality service to its customers. User support and event attendance continue to be key strengths of the service, and it was noted that staff make efforts to ensure these are inclusive for customers with a wide range of needs and interests.

A range of performance indicators reinforce that the existing network of libraries and Hubs are highly valued community assets, being both well attended – with over 2.3 million in-person visitors recorded in 2024/25, over 100,000 more than in 2023/24 – and achieving good customer satisfaction ratings. However, performance indicators measuring virtual activity are all below target. Unfortunately, due to the installation of a new Library Management System, the public-facing public catalogue with links to all of the digital resources was not available for a five-week period which has affected the number of visits to and downloads from our digital library. After exceeding the target for the last two years, the number of page views on the Hubs website also fell well short of target – just below 208,000 against a target of 420,000. Following an investigation, it is believed that page views are likely to be continuing at the previous rate. However, the addition of a new cookie policy statement to all Council websites, including the Hubs site, allows users to reject analytics meaning that some page views are no longer recorded.

Progress continues to be made with the ongoing development of Community, Youth and Wellbeing Hubs. Heads of terms have been agreed for the new Ely & Caerau Health and Wellbeing Hub, being delivered in partnership with Cardiff & Vale UHB. The full business case is due to be submitted by August 2025. Engagement with young people has taken place for the Ely Spaces for Young People project. Next steps are being discussed with Cabinet Members and ward councillors. Plans for the City Centre Youth Hub have progressed with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Stage 3 design work drawing to a conclusion in late 2024. However, the project cannot move forward until matters relating to the property being held in trust are resolved. A partnership proposal for the Riverside Hub Scheme was agreed with Cardiff & Vale UHB in early 2025. A project brief has been prepared and is going out to tender for a multi-disciplinary design team. Work to co-ordinate a shared priority pipeline of integrated health, housing and regeneration schemes for design and delivery on strategic sites such as those at Lisvane, Plasdŵr and the Michaelston Hub is progressing well with formal governance and a new board agreed with Cardiff & Vale UHB.

External funding totalling almost £2.7million was secured to deliver regeneration initiatives in communities across the city. Unfortunately, work on the new Regeneration Strategy has not progressed due to capacity issues within the team and recruitment difficulties, although the post was eventually filled in mid-March. The Strategy is now anticipated to be completed by September 2025. Similar issues have also delayed the completion of the refreshed South Riverside Business Corridor placemaking plan and the start of scoping work to inform a new placemaking plan for the Roath/Adamsdown Business Corridor. A funding bid to the Transforming Towns scheme has been prepared for the Cowbridge Road East regeneration scheme; however, this cannot be submitted until the refreshed South Riverside Business Corridor placemaking plan is with Welsh Government for consideration.

4.3 Ensuring children and adults are protected from risk of harm and abuse

Corporate awareness of safeguarding is high, and the percentage of staff who have completed Safeguarding Awareness Training stands at 93.6%, the highest rate achieved to date and well above the target of 85%.

While the Council has fallen short of its target to complete all adult protection enquiries within seven days, across 2024/25, 97.7% were completed within this time, which remains very good performance. Delays have occurred due to staffing shortages and a significant increase in demand (approximately a 9% increase in enquiries when compared to 2023/24, with some significant peaks in some months).

Work to implement the Safeguarding Adolescents from Exploitation (SAFE) model continues to progress. This has included several networking and awareness-raising events, both in-person and online, with a focus on key issues such as 'cuckooing', knife crime, and violence against women and girls.

The Council's Living Well with a Learning Disability Strategy for Adults⁷ was completed and approved by Cabinet in March 2025. The Strategy outlines how the Council can best respond to the demand, and support the needs of, adults with learning disabilities, who are estimated to make up approximately 2-3% of the population.

⁷ [Cardiff's Living Well with a Learning Disability Strategy for Adults 2024-2029](#)

The Council's Adult Services has ambitious plans to develop new supported living schemes, with a five-year plan in place in partnership with Registered Social Landlords and the Council's own housing development team. Some delays have been experienced this year with timelines for new build schemes; however good progress is still being made in identifying new pipeline schemes. The Council has also agreed a new preferred site for the Complex Needs Day Service, which provides support to individuals with a learning disability and co-occurring health or behavioural issues. Architectural design work has begun on the new Day Centre base for the service.

In line with the National Autism Training Framework for Wales, four tiers of training have been set out based on the level of awareness required in different public sector roles. A delivery framework for this training is in place for 2025/26, which also includes additional content on neurodiversity, trauma, and ADHD. Following the Council's pledge to work towards becoming a neurodivergent-friendly city in September 2023, work is taking place to produce a Neurodivergent Friendly Strategy; this is due to be considered by Cabinet in the summer of 2025.

Cardiff Council works closely with the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board to support those with mental health issues. In November 2024, the Mental Health Seibiant Sanctuary service was launched which is accessed via the NHS 111 phoneline. This service provides non-clinical, community-based trauma-informed support as an alternative to A&E. Six months after going live, the Health Board are currently undertaking an evaluative review of the service, with initial findings suggesting more could be done to increase the numbers accessing the service.

Targeted work to reduce health inequalities across the city has been ongoing throughout the year in partnership with Public Health Wales, focussing on healthy weight and exercise, childhood vaccinations, and bowel screening. The partnership approach to increasing vaccination rates in place in Cardiff was recognised by the Vaccination Saves Lives Awards 2025, with Cardiff winning the Team Award, led by the local Public Health Team.

4.4 Creating safe and inclusive communities

During 2024/25 the Community Safety Team have further developed their evidence-led and proactive approach to targeting local issues using locality performance monitoring dashboards, along with 'what works' in terms of delivered interventions. Targeted ward profiles are being created for the areas with the highest demand: Adamsdown & Splott; Butetown; Ely & Caerau; and the city centre. These profiles will record all the proposed projects in a ward(s), monitor the effectiveness of interventions, and identify emerging risks, providing a proactive approach to long-term crime and anti-social behaviour issues. The work is having a positive impact; the percentage of residents who agree that public services are successfully dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime in their local area has increased from 26% in 2023/24 to 30% in 2024/25.

Cardiff is proud to be an open and inclusive city and will continue to lead as a City of Sanctuary in welcoming refugees and asylum seekers. The decision by the Home Office in late 2023 to accelerate asylum dispersal led to significant demand pressures on the local authority. At the start of 2024/25, a new intensive approach was introduced to support people who have recently gained refugee status with their housing and other needs. The Council engaged with private sector landlords and connected clients to relevant support services such as Into Work and Advice Services, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), and Adult Education. This targeted approach has reduced the duration of refugees' stay in temporary accommodation by 50%.

The delivery of the regional Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2023-28 was impacted by recruitment challenges. However, the new regional advisor post is now in post and is working with relevant stakeholders to agree approaches and ensure delivery. Work on honour-based abuse will continue into next year with a slight delay on finalising the Female Genital Mutilation Strategy. In order to recommission the specialist Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence service provision, a review of the current RISE service delivery was undertaken. Following the findings of the review and the subsequent market event held in December, a decision was made to progress with commissioning specialist provision under a whole system approach to collaborative delivery. Slight delays occurred in early 2025 due to embedding new commissioning legislation and two of the current contractors merging. The commissioning is anticipated to be back on track by summer 2025.

Good progress continues to be made in Cardiff to deliver the four areas of the national CONTEST Strategy (Prevent, Protect, Prepare, Pursue). Cardiff is a Prevent priority area and the city's Home Office-funded Prevent Team works proactively to safeguard individuals at risk of radicalisation. The team achieved 'exceeding' ratings across all areas of the Home Office's 2024/25 Performance Assessment and has secured funding to lead regional work in 2025/26.

Shared Regulatory Services have made good progress in delivering the actions contained within their Business Plan 2024/25 and to safeguard the health, safety and economic wellbeing of consumers, businesses and residents. 27 successful prosecutions have been concluded for a variety of offences including housing, animal welfare, rogue trader, health and safety, underage sales and illegal vape cases. 95.8% of food premises inspected during the year achieved a food hygiene standard of 3 or above.

4.5 Promoting the Welsh language

Cardiff Council's vision is to create a truly bilingual capital city, and progress continues to be made with promoting the Welsh language, both within the Council and across the city. At the end of March 2025, 1,480 employees reported they have Welsh language skills. This is an increase of 10% since 2023/24 (1,344) and represents 18.82% of its corporate workforce. If the current increase is maintained, the percentage of the Council's workforce with Welsh language skills will be 21.7% by 2027.

1,417 members of staff have completed Welsh language courses in 2024/25 with a total of 4,775 completing Welsh language courses since 2022. This is 59% of the current workforce which means the 2027 target has already been met.

The Council has co-ordinated the Cymraeg i Bawb (Welsh for All) partnership which promotes access to Welsh-medium education across Southeast Wales. Welsh Government confirmed in early 2025 that funding will be made available to expand this pilot across all of Wales. The third annual Gyrfa Gymraeg Welsh language careers fair will take place in June 2025. Delivered with Cardiff's colleges and universities, the fair provides Year 12 pupils from across South Wales with the opportunity to discover more about Welsh language education, training and employment opportunities.

4.6 Supporting grass-roots and community sport across the city

The Central South Regional Sports Partnership was officially incorporated as the Central South Active Partnership Limited (CSAP) in August 2024. Through the Council's Joint Venture Agreement with Cardiff Metropolitan University, the Council has representation on CSAP and has a commitment to protect the existing budget for the next financial year with potential for growth. The Joint Venture Agreement has been reviewed following the 10-year celebration event to ensure it is fit for purpose to deliver the Cardiff Physical Activity & Sport Strategy 2022-27⁸ and integrates with the regionalisation of sports development; the revised agreement is being finalised.

Local community sport clubs continue to be supported by the Council and partners. Development officers from Cardiff City FC, Glamorgan Cricket and Cardiff Rugby are working in partnership with Sport Cardiff to deliver the annual sports plan through the Joint Venture Agreement with Cardiff Metropolitan University. Some of the high-level projects being delivered in the plan prioritise women and girls, and areas of deprivation. They tackle gang activities including anti-social behaviour and knife crime through sports interventions, and seek to integrate ethnically diverse communities through physical activity and sport activities. New activities for the over 60s have been delivered such as walking football, 'penguin exercise' and walking rugby with links to the GP referral team. School-based competitions for 'non-traditional' sports continue to be well supported by schools. Targeted work to reduce the gender gap between male and female sports is working well through various girls' initiatives.

With funding secured from Welsh Government to install solar panels at leisure centre sites, work began at Maindy, Fairwater and STAR Leisure Centres in early 2025. Work is anticipated to complete in autumn 2025 including new roofs at both Maindy and Fairwater Centres. Applications for additional grants have also been submitted which will enhance the project further in relation to battery storage. GLL re-opened parts of Pentwyn Leisure Centre in August 2024 including upgraded gym facilities with a new activity programme. Work on the new 25-metre swimming pool, which will have an adjustable depth and be heated by an air source heat pump, commenced in February 2025. The site is remaining open to the public throughout, and the work is expected to be complete by the end of the year.

⁸ [Physical Activity and Sport Strategy](#)

4.7 Delivering high-quality parks and public spaces

The Council has made good progress in improving public and green spaces in Cardiff. Twenty parks and green spaces managed by Cardiff Council have been awarded prestigious Green Flags including for the first time Cathays Park and the newly refurbished Maltings Park in Splott. A new 'natural' play area in Sanatorium Park in Cardiff has been created and work on the 1,000m² skate park next to Eastern Leisure Centre in Llanrumney is progressing well. Work on the development of a National Park City for Cardiff took a step forward in early 2025 when the organisers of the National Parks City Cardiff movement achieved 'Emerging National Park City' status.

The Council approved plans in November to protect eleven parks across the city following a public consultation with over 95 % of the 906 respondents in favour of the proposals. The necessary work is now being undertaken to complete the dedication of the parks as Fields in Trust. Ownership, management and maintenance of the sites will remain with Cardiff Council. These eleven parks join the ten council-owned sites and two sites managed by community councils already permanently protected by Fields In Trust in Cardiff.

Work to increase Cardiff's tree canopy has been very successful with 36,552 trees and approximately 3km of new hedgerows planted between November 2024 and March 2025 with help from more than 4,200 volunteers. 280 new semi-mature trees were planted on streets with low or no tree canopy cover. Since its establishment in 2021, the Coed Caerdydd project has resulted in over 118,000 new trees being planted at 280 different sites across the city, including parks, schools, and highway land.



Wellbeing Objective 5: A capital city that works for Wales

Our priorities in 2024/25 were:

- 5.1 Leading the economic development in Wales
- 5.2 Leading the economic development in Cardiff
- 5.3 Supporting the cultural sector and major events programme

Summary of Corporate Plan Performance Position at Year-End



Steps and KPIs rated Red in Quarter 4 are addressed in the narrative below, and the full comment and results against each step and KPI can be found in the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

■ Overall Assessment

The Council considers it has worked effectively with public and private sector partners to deliver its commitments to make Cardiff a capital city that works for Wales. This includes the further expansion of the city centre as a commercial hub and the development of Cardiff Bay as a leisure destination. In particular, the Indoor Arena and wider Atlantic Wharf regeneration projects represent major investments into the city economy which will provide a catalyst for the next phase of development of Cardiff Bay.

Cardiff's economic performance remains the strongest in Wales and compares well with UK Core Cities, with long-term trends showing encouraging progress. Unemployment has more than halved over the past decade (from 10.3% in 2012 to 3.9% in 2024), although the rate has been more variable since the pandemic and remains slightly above both the Welsh (3.2%) and UK (3.8%) averages. Gross Value Added (GVA) per head continues to follow an upward trend (up 20.4% between 2018 and 2023 to £40,064), exceeding the increases seen across Wales and the UK. Gross disposable household income has also increased over time (£19,106 in 2022), though it remains below the UK average (£22,789).

The Council also recognises that the wider economic conditions remain challenging. Inflationary pressures, rising interest rates and global uncertainty present risks to the Council's regeneration ambitions and continue to impact business confidence and investment in the city.

The Council considers that delivering sustainable and inclusive economic growth in Cardiff is central to improving quality of life for all citizens and communities, to tackling poverty and to delivering a preventative approach to relieve pressure on all public services in Cardiff, the Capital Region and in Wales. Over the year ahead the Council will work with partners across all sectors in the city to restate this case through a refreshed and collectively owned vision and narrative for economic success in Cardiff.

■ Areas of Progress

- Major infrastructure investments have progressed, including securing £40 million for the Cardiff Central Enhancement Programme and advancing enabling works for the new Indoor Arena in Cardiff Bay.
- Over 100 businesses have been supported through the Shared Prosperity Fund, with Cardiff recognised as the UK's leading hub for business growth in 2025.
- During the year, the Council played an active role in the creation and safeguarding of 5,822 jobs, significantly exceeding the target of 750.
- Cardiff and the wider region were promoted internationally at MIPIM 2025 and through high-profile events such as Wales in London Week, helping to attract global investment.
- The city has continued to lead on culture and events, delivering the first Cardiff Music City Festival, preparing for the 2028 UEFA European Championship, and securing the 2028 National Eisteddfod.

■ Areas of Challenge and Risk

- The city continues to face significant pressures from national economic conditions, including high inflation, rising interest rates, and constrained public sector budgets, all of which impact investment, regeneration and service delivery. Securing long-term funding and attracting sustained investment will be essential to maintain momentum.
- The delivery of new Grade A office space remains a challenge, with no new commitments in 2024/25 as high construction and finance costs continue to limit development viability at current rent levels. Supporting market conditions and investor confidence will be key to unlocking future commercial development.
- The uncertainty surrounding the continuation of the Shared Prosperity Fund presents a key risk to Cardiff's ability to sustain local economic development, business support and regeneration initiatives beyond 2025/26.
- The closure of St David's Hall and City Hall is a cause of financial pressure for the Economic Development directorate due to lost income. These challenges are expected to persist until refurbishment works are completed and both venues reopen.

5.1 Leading the economic development in Wales

Cardiff remains the economic powerhouse of Wales, playing a critical role in generating jobs and wealth both for the city and the broader region. The city accounts for 19% of Wales' Gross Value Added (GVA) and the wider Capital City Region (CCR) contributes over half of the country's total economic output. Cardiff's GVA per head has, generally, risen year-on-year, reaching £40,064 in 2023 (the latest data available), above both the Welsh and UK averages. However, despite the city's solid economic foundations, its productivity remains behind that of some of the UK's major cities⁹. The city's current unemployment rate¹⁰ stands at 3.9%, slightly above the UK average of 3.8%.

The Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) partnership successfully transitioned to a Corporate Joint Committee in April 2024, with new responsibilities for regional transport and strategic planning, significantly enhancing the region's capacity to co-ordinate and implement strategic initiatives aimed at improving economic wellbeing. In line with this, the Regional Transport Delivery Plan focuses on key schemes and interventions to be developed and delivered over the next five years, up to 2030, while also identifying longer-term proposals for development funding.

The CCR successfully participated in MIPIM, an international real estate event, in March 2025, with Cardiff and the wider region being promoted as a key investment destination. While the project was funded by the CCR, it was presented as both an "Invest in Cardiff" proposition and a broader CCR initiative. This aligns with the ongoing regional place promotion efforts, including the development of recommendations related to tourism, which are expected to be reported to the CCR in later in 2025.

⁹ Of the UK's major cities, Cardiff has the third highest GVA per hour worked and the fifth highest GVA per job filled. These positions have remained relatively consistent over the past decade.

¹⁰ Based on January 2024 to December 2024 data.

Approval to develop plans create an Investment Zone around Cardiff and Newport was secured as part of the UK October 2024 Budget. Work continues to develop the Investment Zone proposition, which is still awaiting approval from both the UK and Welsh Governments. The CCR has supported a proposal that includes Cardiff South and Cardiff Parkway as Non-Domestic Rates zones.

The Shared Prosperity Fund continues to meet expectations, with significant progress made in delivering projects. Over 100 businesses have now benefited from business grant schemes, and more than £1 million has been distributed to local businesses, with Cardiff receiving a further £14 million allocation for 2025/26. The revenue allocations for the Shared Prosperity Fund for 2025/26 have been confirmed, based on the strategy outlined in the Cabinet report from October 2024. Efforts to secure a longer-term continuation of regional funding, similar to the Shared Prosperity Fund, beyond 2025/26 are ongoing.

5.2 Leading the economic development in Cardiff

Cardiff continues to lead economic development in Wales through a broad programme of regeneration, infrastructure investment, and business support activity. Despite ongoing financial pressures, including inflation and funding constraints, progress has been made across a wide range of city development schemes.

A major milestone was achieved with the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Cabinet's approval of the full business case for the Cardiff Central Enhancement Programme, unlocking £40 million of investment. This will significantly improve capacity and accessibility at Cardiff Central Station, with works on track for completion by summer 2028, ahead of Cardiff hosting the 2028 UEFA European Championship.

As a result of business support and inward investment projects in which the Council has played an active role, 5,822 new jobs have been created and safeguarded during the year – significantly exceeding the target of 750. This reflects the impact of targeted interventions and partnership working to drive economic growth and secure investment in the city.

City centre regeneration has continued through initiatives such as the Canal Quarter, with Phase 1 works completed and a concept design for Phase 2 developed. The Council is exploring alternative sources of investment – including Section 106 contributions as part of a wider area regeneration approach – to support the project's next stage. Additionally, work on Cardiff Market is progressing, with the timing of enabling works being reviewed to avoid disruption during the 2025 Christmas trading period.

City centre footfall reached 44.8 million during the year, slightly behind the target of 45 million. While this reflects ongoing challenges in restoring pre-pandemic activity levels, overall trends remain broadly positive. However, the delivery of 'Grade A' office space continues to face challenges. In 2024/25, no new Grade A office space was committed (against a rolling two-year target of 200,000 sq.ft.). Council officers continue to work closely with investors, developers, occupiers and property advisors to bring forward commercial opportunities. Market engagement has highlighted that high construction and finance costs – when set against Cardiff's current headline rents – have limited the viability of new development. Despite this, projected demand for high-quality office accommodation remains strong, with rental values expected to increase steadily over the next two years. Strategic infrastructure projects, including the Cardiff Central Enhancement Programme and Crossrail, are also expected to improve connectivity and boost the commercial investment case in the medium-term.

In Cardiff Bay, development proposals at Atlantic Wharf are progressing, with key Cabinet decisions due in summer 2025. While financial close for the new Indoor Arena is now expected in early 2025/26, enabling works are well underway and due to be completed by summer 2025, with construction scheduled to commence in autumn 2025. Engagement with the developer for the Graving Docks continues, although progress remains dependent on funding viability. Planning activity is progressing for the International Sports Village scheme, with a Cabinet report due later in 2025 on energy and car parking infrastructure to support the long-term sustainability of the site. Meanwhile, restoration and re-use of historic buildings on Bute Street is advancing, including work on Customs House and the Old Post Office.

In the east of the city, an important step forward was taken with the Welsh Government's approval of the Cardiff Parkway outline planning application following the call-in process. The development will deliver a new railway station, park and ride, and a mixed-use business park. Proposals are now being progressed to include Cardiff Parkway within the Investment Zone, with the site potentially benefiting from rates retention to support further development.

5.3 Supporting the cultural sector and major events programme

Work to enhance Cardiff's event and cultural offer has continued throughout the year, helping to reaffirm the city's position as a leading destination for high-profile events. Following the successful launch of the Cardiff Music City Festival in September 2024 – which showcased over 200 artists across 25 venues – a full evaluation is now underway. A new funding application to the Welsh Government is in development to secure multi-year support for the festival.

Preparations continue for the 2028 UEFA European Championship, including active engagement with Cardiff's twin city, Stuttgart, which hosted the 2024 tournament. Cardiff has also been formally confirmed by the Welsh Local Government Association as the host city for the 2028 National Eisteddfod, marking ten years since the event was last held in the capital.

Following the lease agreement signed in April 2024, progress continues on the transition of St David's Hall to Academy Music Group (AMG). The venue has remained closed since September 2023, after an inspection revealed the need to replace the building's roof panels. The first planning application, covering minor alterations to the auditorium to allow for standing and removable seating, was submitted in December 2024. Further heritage-related planning applications are expected to be determined imminently, enabling refurbishment works to begin on site.

Meanwhile, City Hall also remains closed for essential maintenance and is not expected to reopen until early 2026. The closure of these buildings has led to substantial income shortfalls within Culture, Venues, and Events and has resulted in the Economic Development directorate incurring a £1.912 million annual overspend.

Looking ahead, work is ongoing to develop a new Tourism Strategy for the city, including engagement with FOR Cardiff on place promotion and forthcoming consultation on a potential Tourism Levy. In parallel, a new Cultural Strategy is in development, with both strategies scheduled for completion by the end of 2025.



Wellbeing Objective 6: One Planet Cardiff

Our priorities in 2024/25 were:

- 6.1 Responding to the Climate Emergency
- 6.2 Transforming Cardiff's public transport and active travel systems
- 6.3 Putting sustainability and wellbeing at the heart of the city's growth
- 6.4 Enhancing Cardiff's flood defences
- 6.5 Building resilience into our highway network
- 6.6 Making Cardiff a world-leading recycling city
- 6.7 Working as one team to keep our streets clean

Summary of Corporate Plan Performance Position at Year-End



Steps and KPIs rated Red in Quarter 4 are addressed in the narrative below, and the full comment and results against each step and KPI can be found in the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

■ Overall Assessment

The Council has made good progress delivering the One Planet Strategy, with progress evident in reducing the Council's carbon footprint and the delivery of sustainable transport, housing retrofit, and recycling and renewable energy projects. Though good progress is being made, it is becoming clear that reaching a net-zero carbon position by 2030 will prove to be challenging for both the Council and the city and will almost certainly not happen without a step-change in government and private sector investment.

Following the publication of its Recycling Strategy 2022-25, the Council has been working to implement a major programme of reform to waste and collection services to improve efficiency and resilience. The year-end recycling performance for 2024/25 has been provisionally reported as 64.01%. Whilst this represents sustained improvement - up from 56% in 2019/20 and 60% in 2023/24 - it falls short of the 70% statutory target. As the largest local authority in Wales, Cardiff has very specific characteristics which make meeting statutory recycling targets challenging, and further work is underway to meet the 70% target.

The Council recognises that performance against the headline indicators of street cleanliness has fallen short of target. Performance has been impacted by workforce availability during the period, and the service is being restructured to address areas of challenge and tackle the underlying causes of poor street cleanliness. Once implemented, the new workforce arrangements, allied to enhanced performance arrangements, are expected to have a positive impact on performance.

Although fly-tipping incidents fell year-on-year, the number of incidents responded to within five working days was 91% in 2024/25 - below the 95% target. Having exceeded 95% every year since the indicator was introduced in 2019/20, the service is now rolling out a series of actions to improve performance.

■ Areas of Progress

- The Council's operational emissions – excluding procurement – have decreased by 18% against the 2019/20 baseline, with a 19% reduction in the most recent year driven by reductions made in street lighting and waste management.
- Phase 1 of the Cardiff Heat Network is nearing completion, with initial customers expected to be connected and supplied with heat from late autumn 2025.
- The Cardiff Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) has been published, providing a pathway to decarbonising the city's energy system.
- Good progress has been made in delivering the Council's programme of investment in public transport and active travel: Phase 1A of the Cardiff Crossrail has secured Full Business Case approval from UK Government; Welsh Government have funded the concept design of proposed bus corridors; and Phase 1 of the Roath Park Cycleway is completed, continuing the expansion of Cardiff's cycleways.
- Cardiff's air quality continues to improve, with pollutant levels well below legal limits. City-wide annual average NO₂ concentrations¹¹ have improved markedly, falling from 19.7µg/m³ in 2019 to 9.6µg/m³ in 2024, while city-wide annual PM₁₀ concentrations have dropped from 10.5µg/m³ in 2023 (the first year of recording) to 8.5µg/m³ in 2024. The city has been recognised as one of the top 10 UK cities for clean air by Auto Trader, the only Welsh city to receive this distinction.
- Cardiff received the Gold Sustainable Food Places Award in October 2024, becoming the first place in Wales to achieve all three award tiers.
- The review of the Local Development Plan (LDP) has progressed well. Formal consultation on the Deposit Plan has been completed, with a focus on engaging under-represented groups in the planning process.

■ Areas of Challenge and Risk

- Modelling indicates a rise in the Council's procurement-related emissions, leading to a net 20% increase in overall operational emissions against the 2019/20 baseline. Whilst the data needs to be viewed with caution, this highlights the need to focus on reducing emissions within the Council's supply chains.
- Despite the good progress, achieving a net-zero position within the Council and across the wider city will require support from Welsh and UK Government to unlock the quantum of capital investment needed.

¹¹ At roadside monitoring locations

- Several projects within the Wellbeing Objective, particularly relating to transport and flood defences, have faced delays due to design complexities, delivery challenges and securing long-term funding, while rising costs are also a concern.
 - Continued resource constraints have led to ongoing delays in reviewing the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty (BRED) Forward Plan and the Cardiff Local List of Buildings and Sites of Architectural or Historic Interest.
 - The ambitious active travel KPIs have fallen short of target: sustainable modes of travel accounted for 49% of journeys to work in 2024/25 – unchanged from 2023/24 but below the 58% goal and down from a pre-pandemic peak of 51% in 2019/20. However, recent figures exclude a surge in home working – from 8% pre-pandemic to 35% today – which, when factored into the modal split, lifts sustainable travel to 65%, exceeding the target.
 - Year-end recycling performance stood at 64.1%, falling short of the 70% target.
 - The number of wards where highways and land inspected are meeting a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness is not hitting Corporate Plan targets, while the percentage of reported fly-tipping incidents cleared within five working days has also fallen short.
-

6.1 Responding to the Climate Emergency

Since declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019 and publishing the One Planet Cardiff (OPC) Strategy in 2021, the Council has committed to becoming carbon neutral in its operations and working in partnership to achieve a carbon neutral city. In February 2025, the Council published its third annual review of the OPC Strategy. The review highlights that the Council's operational emissions – excluding procurement – have reduced by 18% against the 2019/20 baseline, including a 19% decrease in the most recent reporting year. These reductions reflect the progress made across several service areas, particularly in street lighting and waste management.

However, modelling indicates a significant rise in procurement-related emissions, which offsets these gains and results in a net 20% increase in overall operational emissions. This increase is due to both high levels of spending – linked to inflation, increased demand for services, and large-scale capital projects – and recent national changes in how procurement emissions are calculated, with a much wider range of activity now captured. While these changes improve accuracy, they also make year-on-year comparisons more challenging and contribute significantly to the reported rise. Nonetheless, the data highlights the need to reduce emissions in the Council's supply chains.

To support this, work is underway to embed carbon considerations into the Council's governance framework, with a programme of change being piloted in 2025/26. This includes a new interactive management dashboard designed to visualise the extent and type of carbon emissions generated by directorate and a Net Zero Toolkit to guide officers in delivering low-carbon projects and services.

Updates on priority projects include:

- Heat Network:** Significant progress has been made on the construction of Phase One of the Cardiff Heat Network, which will deliver low-carbon heat to key buildings in Cardiff Bay. Mechanical installation work at the Viridor site is complete, and work is nearing completion on the final section of the pipe network. Temporary infrastructure has been established to enable the provision of water and power to the backup energy centre, mitigating delays linked to third-party access rights. Initial customers are expected to be connected and supplied with heat from late autumn 2025.
- Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP):** A LAEP for the city was published in July 2024, following extensive stakeholder engagement. The LAEP provides a comprehensive pathway for decarbonising the city's energy system and achieving a net zero position. The plan identifies urgent priorities, including retrofitting existing buildings for energy efficiency and expanding renewable energy generation. The findings of the LAEP will inform a revised, better evidenced and more focused strategy and action plan to address the Climate Emergency – the 'Green Growth Proposition' – which will be presented to Cabinet later in 2025.
- Housing Energy Efficiency Retrofit:** Progress has continued across both Council-owned and private rented housing. Direct enforcement action through Shared Regulatory Services has led to energy efficiency improvements in 202 privately rented homes – exceeding the target of 100. However, only 679 measures were installed in Council housing this year, falling short of the target of 750. This shortfall is largely due to the ongoing suspension of roof and window upgrades. It is also important to note, however, that these figures may be subject to retrospective updates as data systems are refreshed. More broadly, it is recognised that the uptake of domestic retrofit measures across the wider city, beyond those directly funded by the Council, remains below the levels required to meet net-zero commitments. In response, research has been undertaken to identify the barriers and opportunities, and domestic retrofit will form a key strand of the forthcoming Green Growth Proposition.
- Electric Vehicles:** The Council's fleet currently includes 116 electric vehicles, short of the target of 130. Budget constraints limited the scale of fleet replacements during the year; however, a comprehensive fleet utilisation review is nearing completion to prioritise future replacements. An Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy, approved in October 2024, outlines the opportunities for increasing public access to charge points, based on demand forecasts. Funding bids have been submitted to Transport for Wales to expand Cardiff's electric vehicle infrastructure in 2025/26.
- Healthy, Local and Low-Carbon Food:** Cardiff received the Gold Sustainable Food Places Award in October 2024, becoming the first place in Wales to achieve all three award tiers. The award submission was led by Food Cardiff, a city-wide food partnership made up of individuals and organisations working together to transform the local food system. Building on this success, the city will continue to promote a shift toward healthier, more sustainable food options, with work underway to develop an updated Cardiff Food Strategy. The Council and its partners have continued to support a wide range of sustainable food initiatives, including the Cardiff Capital Region-funded innovation programme. This work has supported the development of local food growing, low-carbon distribution models, and healthier food environments. The Council has also collaborated with public health partners to explore the impact of restricting High Fat, Sugar and Salt (HFSS) food advertising, particularly around schools. Policies supporting local food production have been included in the draft Replacement Local Development Plan.

- **Renewable Energy in the Severn Estuary:** In March 2025, the Independent Commission on Tidal Energy in the Severn published its final report with recommendations for financing and delivering tidal lagoon schemes. The report launch attracted national attention, with events held in both the Senedd and Westminster.

6.2 Transforming Cardiff's public transport and active travel systems

The Council's transport vision sets out a transformative programme of investment in public transport and active travel. While significant progress has been made, a number of projects have experienced delays due to complexities in design, delivery and securing long-term funding.

- **Cardiff Crossrail:** Phase 1A of the Cardiff Crossrail has secured Full Business Case approval from the UK Government, with work now progressing through the Detailed Design stage. However, development of the Business Case for Phase 2 has slowed due to the need for additional modelling and assessment work. Completion is now targeted for 2025/26, subject to securing further funding. The lack of clarity over long-term funding for subsequent phases, Metro enhancements, and new stations remains a key issue. As mitigation, work continues on business case development to support future funding bids, alongside close collaboration with Transport for Wales and Welsh Government. Masterplanning work around Cardiff Central Station also continues to ensure integration with Crossrail proposals.
- **Taxis:** In July 2024, the Council launched the Cardiff Hackney Emissions Reduction Grant Scheme (CHERG), supporting drivers to transition to lower-emission vehicles. The pilot scheme has now closed, with a final report and recommendations expected in Quarter 1 of 2025/26. A draft Taxi Strategy has also been produced, with stakeholder engagement completed in December 2024. A review of consultation responses is currently underway.
- **Bus Services:** Post-pandemic recovery in bus patronage remains a challenge, with usage levels 10-20% below pre-Covid figures. To address this, the Council published a draft Bus Priority Infrastructure Plan in March 2024. The plan sets out a Core Bus Network of six strategic corridors, aiming to improve bus journey times and reliability for passengers. It also promotes integration with rail, light rail, cycling, and walking networks. Welsh Government has funded the concept design stage of the proposed bus corridors, which is ongoing, but further investment is needed for construction.
- **Llanrumney Bridge Crossing Scheme:** Following the granting of planning permission in June 2024 and completion of the Section 106 legal agreement, discussions have progressed with developers regarding broader development opportunities. A revised proposal was submitted in March 2025, aiming to secure the delivery of key infrastructure, alongside additional benefits that support the Council's wider Transport Strategy. The updated plans are subject to further planning consideration.

- **Active Travel:** Significant progress continues to be made on Cardiff's cycle network, supported by Welsh Government grant funding. Phase 1 of the Roath Park Cycleway has been completed, including new crossing facilities at the junction of Penylan Road, Ninian Road, Marlborough Road and Wellfield Road, as well as a new path through Roath Recreation Ground. Design of the first phase of the cycle route from the city centre along Newport Road to St Mellons (Cycleway 2.1) is in progress, with public engagement to commence later this year. The section of the route from Llandaff to Llantrisant Road, crossing Western Avenue and passing north of the Cardiff Metropolitan University campus (Cycleway 4.2) is being refined to address ecological and access concerns, with positive stakeholder engagement ongoing. Early design work is also underway on routes connecting Cardiff Bay and Callaghan Square with Splott and Tremorfa (Cycleways 3.1 and 3.2). Construction of Cycleway 3.2 is expected in 2025/26, aligned with the new Willows High School development. Meanwhile, the proposed route west of the city centre (Cycleway 5) is being considered as part of the wider WelTAG study for the Western Corridor. Alongside infrastructure delivery, schools continue to play a vital role in support the shift to active travel. In 2024/25, a total of 128 schools were supported to implement their Active Travel Plans, meeting the annual target.
- **Sustainable Travel to Work Performance:** The latest Key Performance Indicator results show continued progress toward sustainable travel to work targets, though some remain challenging due to post-pandemic changes in travel behaviour. The modal split for journeys to work shows that 49% travelled by sustainable modes in 2024/25, against a target of 58%. This figure does not reflect the significant increase in home working since the Covid-19 pandemic, however, with 35% of people now working from home compared with 8% previously. When home working is included in the sustainable travel total, the figure rises to 65%, exceeding the target. For specific modes, walking accounts for 16% of work journeys, cycling for 11%, and public transport for 21%, compared with targets of 18%, 17% and 23% respectively. These results highlight both the complexity of shifting travel behaviours and the need for sustained investment and policy support.
- **Wales 20mph Default Speed Limit:** In response to Welsh Government's review of the 20mph default limit, the Council has assessed local requests for changes using the national assessment tool. As a result, four roads have been identified to revert to a 30mph limit. The Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process is now underway, with implementation expected during Quarters 1 and 2 of 2025/26.
- **Road User Charging Options:** Following the Council's April 2023 resolution to explore road user payment schemes, option development and scoping work for the Outline Business Case (OBC) has progressed. However, a bid for Welsh Government funding to continue OBC development in 2025/26 was unsuccessful, delaying progress. The Council will continue to seek alternative funding, including through engagement with the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee, to support the business case development.

6.3 Air Quality

Poor air quality remains the UK's largest environmental risk to public health. The principal pollutants of concern – Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and Particulate Matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) – are primarily caused by road transport, particularly diesel vehicles.

The 2024 Air Quality Annual Progress Report, published in December 2024, presented ratified monitoring data for 2023 and showed continued improvement in Cardiff's air quality. This trend has been reinforced by the latest 2024/25 data, which indicates that pollutant levels remain well within legal limits. This trend has been reinforced by the latest 2024/25 data, which indicates that pollutant levels remain well within legal limits.

City-wide annual average concentrations of PM₁₀ - particulate matter less than 0.01mm in diameter - were recorded at 8.5µg/m³, comfortably below the target of 15µg/m³. Similarly, annual average Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) concentrations at roadside monitoring locations across the city stood at 19.7µg/m³, compared to a target of 25µg/m³. Within Cardiff's designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAS), NO₂ concentrations averaged 27.6µg/m³ - remaining under target of 30µg/m³.

Progress has also been recorded across all four of Cardiff's Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAS) – City Centre, Stephenson Court, Ely Bridge, and Llandaff – where pollutant levels are now below legal thresholds, averaging 27.6µg/m³ in 2024/25, below the target of 30µg/m³. A notable example is Castle Street, where long-term transport interventions have reduced NO₂ levels from over 40µg/m³ to 30µg/m³. While the corporate target of Castle Street was 28µg/m³ – based on modelled forecasts at the time the Clean Air Plan was developed – 30µg/m³ remains within the original modelling margin of error and, importantly, is well below the legal limit of 40µg/m³. In December 2024, the Welsh Government approved funding to make these changes permanent, helping to sustain and enhance air quality improvements while enhancing the street environment.

Cardiff's efforts to improve air quality have been recognised nationally, with Auto Trader naming the city one of the top 10 UK cities for clean air. Looking ahead, the Council is reviewing its Clean Air Strategy and Action Plan. This work will include updated assessments of Cardiff's AQMAS, forecasting future NO₂ concentrations and revisiting the sources of pollution. These steps will support the identification of targeted interventions to ensure continued progress toward cleaner air for all residents.

6.4 Putting sustainability and wellbeing at the heart of the city's growth

Delivering sustainable, well-connected, and high-quality communities remains a core ambition for Cardiff through the continued development of the Cardiff Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP), which will shape the city's growth to 2036. The Deposit LDP and Revised Delivery Agreement were approved by Cabinet and Council in January 2025, with an eight-week formal consultation launched on 18 January. This process included in-person engagement and proactive outreach via social media to ensure inclusive participation, particularly among groups traditionally under-represented in the planning process. All responses will be considered ahead of formal submission of the Plan to the Welsh Government for Examination in autumn 2025.

Progress has continued across Cardiff's Strategic LDP sites, with all sites now holding valid planning permission, either wholly or in part. Good placemaking and design principles remain central to planning decisions, supported by improvements in service performance. In 2024/25, 95.57% of householder planning applications were determined within agreed timescales, against a target of 80%, alongside 93.75% of major applications, against a target of 85%. This performance was aided by the roll-out of new digital tools to improve processing efficiency.

In line with the city's ambitions for inclusive growth, affordable housing delivery remains a key priority. Over the past two years, 35.34% of housing completions on greenfield sites have been affordable, exceeding the 30% target. On brownfield sites, affordable housing completions reached 17.01%, slightly below the 20% targets. This shortfall reflects current housing market conditions, including high interest rates and reduced development viability, which have impacted delivery on brownfield land. However, 22.16% of all housing completions in 2024/25 were affordable, surpassing the 20% annual target. Looking ahead, the Council's commitment to deliver 2,800 affordable homes by 2030, combined with anticipated improvements in market conditions, is expected to support increased affordable housing delivery in future years. Progress will continue to be closely monitored.

While consultation on the Cardiff Local List of Buildings and Sites of Architectural or Historic Interest was completed in summer 2024, progress has been delayed due to resourcing challenges within the Planning Service, including vacancies in key conservation roles. As a result, reporting and related Article IV Directions have been rescheduled to later in 2025, with recruitment underway to ensure progress resumes in 2025/26.

The Council's statutory Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty (BRED) Forward Plan has also experienced delays. However, following the successful recruitment of a Planner (Ecology) in December 2024, the review is now scheduled to begin in 2025/26. The Replacement LDP will incorporate enhanced biodiversity and green infrastructure policies, underpinned by updated assessments including a Green Infrastructure Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment.

6.5 Enhancing Cardiff's flood defences

With the increasing impacts of climate change, the threat of flooding remains one of Cardiff's most significant and immediate environmental challenges. The Council continues to address this risk through a range of measures, underpinned by its statutory duties as Lead Local Flood Authority. These responsibilities are set out in the Cardiff Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, as required by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the Flood Risk Regulations 2009.

An updated Sustainable Water, Flood and Drainage Strategy for Cardiff¹² has been developed to reflect a more comprehensive, city-wide approach to flood risk management. The revised Strategy, which sets out how the Council will assess flood risks and invest in sustainable drainage solutions, was approved by Cabinet in May 2025.

Work has also progressed on coastal flood defence improvements in Cardiff East, meeting detailed and complex requirements set out by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Responding to these requirements, along with the time needed to secure the necessary approvals, has impacted the pace and cost of construction. To help mitigate this, the Council is working closely with NRW, consultants and the contractor to agree design changes that will simplify construction, make use of existing materials, and reduce the need for extensive excavation.

6.6 Building resilience into our highway network

Substantial progress has been made to improve the condition and resilience of Cardiff's road and footway infrastructure. Key performance indicators continue to demonstrate strong outcomes, with all categories of road condition well within target. As of year-end:

- 3.63% of principal (A) roads are in overall poor condition, remaining below the 4% threshold.
- 4.42% of non-principal classified (B) roads are in poor condition, against a target of less than 6%.
- 4.22% of non-principal classified (C) roads are in poor condition, also below the 6% threshold.

These figures reflect the effectiveness of the Council's risk-based asset management approach, which prioritises interventions based on asset deterioration and surface condition. This strategic method ensures resources are focused on delivering the greatest value and providing maximum resilience.

In addition, year-end data shows a significant uplift in civil parking enforcement activity, supporting the wider goals of network efficiency and safety. Patrol times and the number of Penalty Charge Notices issued have increased by 19% compared to 2023/24, 38% on 2022/23, and 57% on 2021/22. This upward trend reflects ongoing improvements in operational deployment and the benefits of enhanced reporting tools and public engagement.

¹² [Flood Risk Strategy](#)

6.7 Making Cardiff a world-leading recycling city

Over the course of 2024/25, Cardiff has continued to take steps toward becoming a world-leading recycling city. A major milestone was achieved with the successful launch of Phase 5 of the segregated recycling scheme on 6 March 2025, marking the full implementation of city-wide segregated recycling. As a result, 132,000 households are now separating their recyclables using reusable sacks and a glass caddy, improving material quality and increasing recycling rates.

The year-end recycling performance stands at 64.01%, falling short of the statutory target of 70%. However, there are positive signs of improvement: dry recycling rates reached their highest levels since 2018/19, and composting performance peaked in Quarter 4. A number of external factors impacted the overall performance, including a stockpile of recyclable material awaiting processing and spoiled material that could not be reported. Recycling centre performance also narrowly missed its target, with 84.60% of waste reused or recycled against an 85% target. This shortfall was primarily due to higher-than-expected levels of residual waste at Bessemer Close Household Waste Recycling Centre.

To meet the statutory recycling target of 70%, the Council has developed a strategic programme of interventions. The 2025/26 delivery plan includes extending garden waste collections to 52 weeks, ending the 'Pay as you Throw' service, eliminating general waste-only trade customers, fully embedding segregated recycling, and enhancing communication, education and enforcement.

6.8 Working as one team to keep our streets clean

The Council continues to implement a comprehensive reform programme for its Street Scene cleansing and enforcement services, with a particular focus in 2024/25 on the digitalisation of cleansing operations. An updated software solution has been launched to enhance these services which provides real-time insights into service performance, identifies areas for improvement and optimisation, and streamlines the allocation of scheduled work to cleansing teams, ensuring timely service delivery. While there has been a slight delay in integrating the system with mobile and desktop apps, full functionality is expected by Quarter 2 2025/26.

Alongside digitalisation efforts, cleansing and enforcement services are being restructured, with a Cleansing Improvement Programme now in place to enhance service delivery across the city. As part of this, a new Litter Bin and Fly Tipping Strategy is being developed to promote consistent standards and guide enforcement.

The Council recognises that performance against the headline indicators of street cleanliness has fallen short of target. Performance has been impacted by workforce availability during the period of restructure, with recruitment into impacted posts suspended until the process has been completed. The restructure will realign the activities of Neighbourhood Services to address areas of challenge and tackle the underlying causes of poor street cleanliness. As part of these service reforms, the new digital system will enable more effective deployment of cleansing activity in areas of highest priority. The restructure has been subject to a series of delays, which included a period of industrial action during 2023/24, and the impact of this delay is reflected within the performance metrics. The restructure, however, is now scheduled to be completed by October 2025 and recruitment to key cleansing and environmental enforcement posts is currently underway. The introduction of other measures has also been brought forward to improve street scene performance, including the introduction of gull-proof sacks for households using black bags and targeted education and enforcement for problematic streets. Work continues to understand the reasons for, and causes of, the fall in street cleanliness in partnership with Keep Wales Tidy.

Though the number of fly-tipping incidents in 2024/25 (5,593) fell in comparison to the previous year (5,931), the number of fly tipping incidents responded to within five working days has fallen, following a sustained period of very good performance. Performance during 2024/25 has been impacted by sickness absences levels and resource constraints limiting the ability of the service to backfill posts. A local audit also identified opportunities for productivity improvement and measures are currently being progressed to unlock greater capacity within the workforce, designed to improve performance.

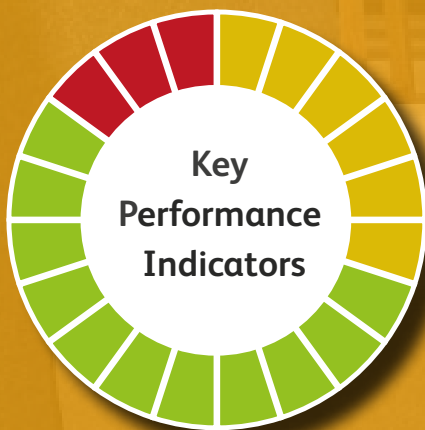


Wellbeing Objective 7: Modernising & integrating our public services

Our priorities in 2024/25 were:

- 7.1 Delivering leaner and greener Council buildings
- 7.2 Improving the Council's digital offer and enhancing the use of data
- 7.3 Supporting a highly-skilled and productive workforce with the wellbeing of staff at its core
- 7.4 Using the power of the public purse to support the city's economy
- 7.5 Ensuring the Council represents and responds to the diversity of Cardiff's communities

Summary of Corporate Plan Performance Position at Year-End



Steps and KPIs rated Red in Quarter 4 are addressed in the narrative below, and the full comment and results against each step and KPI can be found in the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

■ Overall Assessment

Overall, the Council continues to make progress in modernising and integrating its support and corporate and enabling services. This is supported by robust performance, governance, financial and a wider control framework and a performance culture which supports open and honest debate, focussed on improvement. The Council considers that it manages its finances effectively, and a key feature of the Council is strong corporate understanding of the financial and performance challenges facing the Council's key services, and good engagement, support and challenge as part of the approach to corporate improvement.

The decision to approve a new core office, modernising the working environment for Council staff, marked a major milestone in the Council's modernisation journey. Allied to this, the continued channel shift to the use of digital channels for citizen access along with greater application of digital and data across all services demonstrates the impact of the Council's digital strategy.

The Council faces significant medium-term budgetary challenges due to a combination of increased complexity and scale of demand on services, pay and cost pressures and, as a result, will need to close a budget gap of £122m over the next four years. In response to these pressures the Cabinet put in place a comprehensive programme of service and budget reviews, with a focus on identifying opportunities to drive efficiencies over the short term and to identify how services need to change and adapt to be sustainable over the medium term. This process took place over the course of 2024/25. In addition to supporting the development of the Council's Corporate Plan and budget for 2025/26 the review process also identified the areas requiring significant service change to help manage the medium-term pressures facing the Council, which form the basis of a new change programme supporting the delivery of the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Delivering the change programme, including ensuring that it is effectively aligned with and responding to the medium-term demand, financial and workforce challenges facing the authority, will be a priority for the year ahead.

The Council has continued to deliver its workforce strategy effectively, with positive results to the staff survey and continued good practice in employee networks, in line with the new change programme. Moving forward, the Council will review and refresh the workforce strategy to ensure it is aligned with the new change programme, including responding to the medium-term skills, values, diversity and development requirements of the workforce.

■ Areas of Progress

- The number of citizens downloading the Cardiff Gov App has continued to steadily increase, since the App was introduced in 2020/21. In 2024/25 there was a 22% increase on the 2023/24 outturn, approximately 10,700 above the set target and 30,000 active users each month.
- Customer contacts have continued to increase via digital channels, over 1.1 million more contacts were made digitally in 2024/25, a 10% increase from 2023/24.
- The Council's website is now 99% compliant with legal accessibility requirements and is ranked 10th out of 370 UK councils for compliance, up from 56% and 76th in the UK in 2022.
- Robotic Process Automation, a technology which streamlines repetitive administrative tasks to allow Council staff to focus on more complex, high value tasks, has been successfully piloted in benefits section, accounts payable and children's services.
- A full business case for the Core Office strategy was approved in principle in October 2024 by Cabinet with the decision to progress with a new County Hall in Atlantic Wharf.
- The Council has consistently achieved its targets relating to the strategic estate as set out in the property strategy.
- The new Corporate Property Strategy 2025-30 was approved by Cabinet setting out a comprehensive land and property programme for the next five years.
- The Council staff survey showed very positive responses across all areas and services, including staff taking pride in the job and work they do, understanding how their role contributes to the Council's actions and in relation to their wellbeing.
- The Council has maintained its place as a Top 100 employer in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index survey, the highest placed Welsh Local Authority overall.
- The Equality, Diversity & Inclusion strategy 2024-28 was approved by Cabinet.
- Participation and engagement levels of the most seldom heard groups identified in the Participation Strategy increased in Council consultation activity.
- Over 70% of respondents to the annual Ask Cardiff survey were satisfied with Cardiff as a place to live and an increase in levels of satisfaction were seen for a number of areas including libraries/Hubs (72.1%), recycling and waste collections (52.2%) and public transport (42.6%).

■ Areas of Challenge and Risk

- The Council faces significant immediate and medium-term budgetary challenges due to a combination of increased complexity and scale of demand on services, pay pressures and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.
- Sickness absence remains a challenge for the Council, with the outturn performance above target at 12.16 days lost per FTE, and long-term sickness remaining an issue in a number of areas.
- City Hall remains closed due to essential maintenance works and therefore places an income shortfall to the Council.
- The number of people satisfied with the services the council provides increased marginally by 3.5 percentage points to 42.7%. Though below the target of 70% this performance is consistent with other local authority areas and tracks a broader trend across public services.

Financial resilience

The Council continues to experience significant financial pressure with a budget gap of £40.4 million identified for the 2026/27 financial year, and £122 million across the period of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (2026/27-2029/30).

The 2024/25 outturn report reflected a balanced budget. The Directorate position was an overspend of £4.360 million (reduced from £6.974 million at month 9). The most significant overspends were in Education (£3.388m) due to continuing demand and price pressures within Home to School Transport as well as the continuing trend of demand for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) placements resulting in increased pressure within Out-of-Maintained Schools; Economic Development (£1.912m) caused by shortfalls in income primarily for St David's Hall and City Hall functions and catering due to the ongoing closure of both buildings; and Children's Services (£0.866m) relating to residential placement and support costs for the authority's children looked after cohort.

The Council continues to face an extended period of unprecedented challenges in terms of financial resilience which will require close monitoring and management during this year and into the medium term. In response, to ensure that the Council is still able to deliver vital services for the people of Cardiff, a comprehensive programme of service and budget reviews was completed in the first half of 2024/25, completed by service managers across the Council and overseen by the Council's Cabinet. This has been translated into a programme of work focussed on the following priority areas:

1. **Ensuring the Council's workplaces, technology and culture** are dynamic and inclusive, designed to support staff to deliver high-quality services
2. **Delivering preventative, joined-up public services** in response to increasing and increasingly complex demand pressures in services for children and young people, older people and more vulnerable adults.
3. **Ensuring economic and environmental strategies and services are aligned and supporting growth** at the city and city-regional level and the front-line services are operating in an integrated, efficient manner.

Embedding and delivering the new change programme will be a corporate priority for 2025/26 and the council recognises the opportunity to strengthen the connectivity between the Change Programme, MTFP and workforce strategy to ensure that any sustainability gap is clearly identified.

7.1 Delivering leaner and greener Council buildings

The Council's land and property estate is considerable, with over 720 properties owned and managed. The cost of managing, operating and maintaining the Council's operational estate is approximately £40 million, the second largest call on the Council's budget after staff costs.

The Council has consistently achieved targets relating to the strategic estate as set out in the property strategy, however the general fund capital receipts achieved in 2024/25 is below target at £1.3m against a target of £1.5m. This was caused by a number of capital receipt transactions rolling over to 2025/26 due to external factors. The new Corporate Property Strategy 2025-30¹³, approved by Cabinet in January 2025, outlines a comprehensive land and property programme for the next five years. The new strategy focuses on the continued modernisation of a smaller low carbon operational estate, whilst also setting the key themes and principles of managing the Council's leased portfolio. The planned programmed maintenance requirement of Priority 1 items in the operational estate is in excess of £56m. The value of the works programme is broadly split 90% education estate, 10% corporate estate. The strategy establishes new property targets to measure performance over the 2025-30 period, with progress towards these targets reported to Cabinet via the Annual Property Plan. The Annual Property Plan for 2025/26 will be considered by Cabinet in September 2025 alongside this report.

The full business case for the Core Office Strategy was approved in principle in October 2024 by Cabinet with a decision to progress with a new County Hall in Atlantic Wharf. This reduces the level of capital investment required over the longer term, with a new building costing around half of the costs associated with modernising the current County Hall, also providing significant savings on running costs and delivering office space that is better suited to modern working practices.

7.2 Improving the Council's digital offer and enhancing the use of data

Over the last 12 months the Council has focussed on improving the Cardiff Gov App, providing improved accessibility, performance and notifications. The number of citizens downloading the Cardiff Gov App has continued to steadily increase, with a 22% increase on the 2023/24 outturn, approximately 10,700 above the set target and 30,000 active users each month. Likewise, customer contacts through digital channels have continued to increase with over 1.1 million more digital contacts made in 2024/25 compared to the previous financial year, which represents a 10% increase. More services will be made available across all of the Council's digital platforms – the App, website and the Council's chatbot Bobi – increasing choice for residents and service users, whilst reducing delivery cost.

¹³ [Corporate Property Strategy 2025-30](#)

The Council has significantly improved the accessibility of its website. In May 2022, the website was only 56% compliant with legal accessibility requirements and ranked 76th out of 370 UK councils. As a result of the improvements made, the website is now 99% compliant and is ranked 10th out of UK councils.

The Council has continued to promote digital services to citizens and encouraged further take up. Short surveys have also been conducted with members of the public to gain a greater understanding of customer habits, needs and the barriers they face. This information will be used to inform an updated digital strategy, which is scheduled to be considered by Cabinet later in 2025.

The Council continues to use social media channels to engage citizens, however, whilst numbers engaging with the Council's social media are increasing, both numbers of Facebook and Instagram followers did not meet their targets. The number of Instagram followers was 19,637 against a target of 19,720 and the number of Facebook followers was 64,679 against a target of 65,347. The slowing down of growth in followers is attributable to changes in algorithms by Meta but there is a recognition, however, that there may also be a level of saturation with the level of followers through certain platforms levelling off.

To streamline repetitive administrative tasks and take advantage of technologies, the Council has been deploying the use of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and the use of "virtual workers", technology which allows Council staff to focus on more complex, high value tasks. Processes in within the benefits section, accounts payable and children's services have been automated, with further opportunities to deploy this technology being developed. A scoping exercise has taken place to identify areas suitable for further investigation into automation and these will be progressed in the new financial year.

The Council is exploring the use of Artificial intelligence (AI) and its potential to improve services and generate efficiencies. A Teams Premium trial took place during Quarter 1, which provided staff with additional functionality such as AI recaps, autogenerated actions and transcripts. Pilots are also taking place with the use of Microsoft CoPilot as well as Magic Notes, a web application designed to help social workers and other frontline staff by generating detailed assessments from audio recordings of their sessions. These initiatives aim to further streamline operations and enhance service delivery.

The Council has continued the delivery of its Data Strategy, with improved data collection, quality, presentation and visualisation underpinning a shift from data collection to data analysis and data-informed decision making. This is supported by a team approach across data, performance, digital, and technology teams and with partners in the University Health Board. Notable practice includes the sector-leading 'Single View of the Child' project (see WBO1,) as the leading project in a programme of data analysis projects supporting the delivery of the Council's new change programme.

7.3 Supporting a highly-skilled and productive workforce with the wellbeing of staff at its core

The Council approved its Workforce Strategy 2023-27 in March 2023. The strategy focuses on seven thematic areas and notable progress has been made in a number of areas, including:

- Identifying roles where attracting and retaining staff is challenging so that appropriate responses can be developed and progressed.
- Reviewing recruitment processes and application procedures to make applying for Council jobs easier.
- Embedding workforce planning within the Council's planning and performance framework through Directorate Delivery Plans with greater emphasis on budget implications and restraints.
- Publishing key HR data sets for managers every quarter to enhance their workforce planning.
- Reviewing the senior management structure to ensure it is fit for purpose and take into account succession planning.
- Implementing a new Leadership & Development programme, in partnership with Cardiff & Vale College.
- Transitioning training to a blended approach to enable employees to access training at appropriate times for employees and aligning to the needs of the organisation, e.g. twilight Welsh language courses for schools.

Sickness absence remains a significant challenge for the Council with an outturn position of 12.16 FTE days lost per person to sickness absence against a target of 9.5 days lost per FTE. This is an increase on the 2023/24 position of 11.73 days lost, but a small improvement on the forecasted figure of 12.43 at the end of Quarter 3. Stress (non-work-related) and musculoskeletal issues account for approximately a third of all sickness absence and non-work-related stress remains the highest reason for long-term sickness absence. Long-term sickness accounts for 69% of all sickness, one percentage point shift from 2023/24. Continued support is provided to directorates and managers in relation to managing sickness absence in line with the Attendance & Wellbeing Policy, with a focus on areas with high levels for sickness. Though above target, the Council's sickness absence performance is comparable to or better than other local authorities in South Wales.

The Council has maintained its place in the Stonewall top 100, retaining its Gold Award status, and has been praised by the lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer rights charity for "creating a welcoming workplace, where LGBTQ+ employees can bring their full selves to work".

The employee survey took place in September 2024, with a response rate of 46.5%. Overall, the survey captured positive responses, with results suggesting that staff take clear pride in the job and work they do and that they understood how their role contributed to the Council's actions and wellbeing. In response to staff voice, a response to the issues identified will be included in each Directorate Delivery Plan for 2025/26. A staff engagement strategy has also been agreed, and a programme of engagement has been put in place. This will be progressed through the Council's well established engagement structures – the Senior Management Forum and the Cardiff Managers Forum – with corporate and directorate-led engagements events also being scheduled to engage with key groups of staff.

The Council recognises that, as part of the ongoing programme of work to support and develop the workforce, there is an opportunity to review the workforce strategy to support modernisation and improving diversity across the organisation, in particular within senior management.

7.4 Using the power of the public purse to support the city's recovery

The Council spends over £600 million a year procuring a range of goods, services and works from over 8,000 suppliers and contractors. The size and scale of the Council's spend affords opportunities to leverage wider social and environmental gain. Throughout 2024/25 approximately 50% of the Council's spend was with Cardiff-based organisations, 65% within the Cardiff Capital Region and 71% with Welsh-based organisations. The spend figures were below the targets set out in the Corporate Plan. These figures only include the minimum local spend and do not account for full supply chain spend. In response, the Council has updated the Contract Procedure Rules to encourage Directorates to use local suppliers for procurements below the Procurement Act threshold. Additionally, an Ardal Selling to the Council guide is being developed, set for release in summer 2025, to support businesses in navigating the process. The Council is also collaborating with Business Wales to strengthen local supplier capacity and ensure they can effectively compete for contracts.

The Council has continued to make good progress in embedding community wellbeing benefits requirements into contracts and tenders. Work was undertaken throughout the summer to migrate the social value (community wellbeing benefits) portal to the new Thrive online community wellbeing benefits monitoring system. This was launched in October 2024 and enables the Council to better capture and monitor the delivery of social value. The value of community wellbeing benefits committed to for 2024/25 was above its annual target at £6.4 million and on track to meet the £27.5 million target over the term of the five-year Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy.

7.5 Ensuring the Council represents and responds to the diversity of Cardiff's communities

The Council's new Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2024-28¹⁴ was approved by Cabinet in September 2024, following a comprehensive consultation and engagement period. Actions relating to CEDAW (UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) were included in the EDI strategy and a performance monitoring framework is being established, focusing on aligning reporting requirements with corporate performance for all actions within the strategy.

A review has been undertaken of the Council's equality training offer and additional training in unconscious bias, microaggression and neurodiversity has been added to the training suite. For the first time, a new mandatory equality, diversity and inclusion training module has been launched and all Operational Managers are now required to undertake training on how to complete equality impact assessments (EIAs). Latest compliance figures demonstrate that 85% of all Operational Managers had completed the training.

¹⁴ [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024 to 2028](#)

The Race Equality Taskforce was concluded in July 2024, and a full update was produced to capture the progress made against their recommendations. The Taskforce was reconvened to review the progress, and a delivery report has been published. As a result, the Taskforce commended the progress to date by public sector partners in advancing race equality in Cardiff, while also recommending a focus on four key areas for continued improvement:

- Diversifying the Council's Workforce: Increase representation of ethnically diverse staff in leadership by monitoring data, supporting under-represented groups, and enhancing exit interview transparency.
- Diversifying School Staff: Address the low percentage of ethnically diverse staff by adopting blind recruitment, setting equality objectives, and reducing barriers for ethnically diverse applicants.
- Strengthening Social Value: Enhance social value initiatives to improve employment for disadvantaged, ethnically diverse communities with better data monitoring.
- Probation Service: Provide an update on the impact of the reforms to duty solicitor practices once Cardiff's local criminal justice partnership has developed a tailored or alternative approach for ethnically diverse groups.

These recommendations have been embedded into the EDI strategy and progress will be monitored as part of the EDI strategy arrangements.

In Quarter 1 the Council successfully launched a new Cohesion Fund to support projects which foster local cohesion by bringing diverse communities together, promoting understanding and building stronger more connected neighbourhoods. Applications were received from 103 grassroots organisations across the city and 24 projects were selected for funding, allowing 348 volunteering opportunities to be created and a reach of over 27,300 people.

The delivery of the Participation Strategy continues to encourage the participation of seldom heard groups in surveys and democratic processes. The number of ethnically diverse residents responding to the consultation on the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy was over 25% of total respondents and the percentage of ethnically diverse groups responding to the budget consultation 2025/26 was 17% up from 7.6% in 2019/20. For the same period, the number of people over 75+ responding increased from 3.7% to 7.5% and the number of disabled people responding increased from 9% to 11.1%. Whilst more work is needed to achieve a response rate which reflects the population, the strategy is demonstrably increasing participation rates amongst seldom heard groups.

Over 70% of respondents to the annual Ask Cardiff survey were satisfied with Cardiff as a place to live and an increase in levels of satisfaction were seen for a number of areas including libraries/Hubs (72.1%), recycling and waste collections (52.2%) and public transport (42.6%). Respondents living in the Southern Arc showed the lowest levels of satisfaction, with anti-social behaviour (32.5%) and frequency of vandalism & graffiti (31.7%) cited as key issues. The number of people satisfied with the services the council provides increased marginally by 3.5 percentage points to 42.7%, up from 39% against a target of 70%. This, however, is consistent with a national trend of relatively low satisfaction with public services.

During 2024/25 4,353 complaints were recorded. This continues an upward trend and is a 16.9% increase on 2023/24 when 3,724 complaints were recorded. 69.6% of complaints were responded to on time. The highest number of complaints was again received by Street Scene, with 2,240 complaints, marking a 27.3% increase from 1,760 the previous year. An increase was also noted in the number of complaints received by the Ombudsman, with 219 complaints in 2024/25, up from 144 the previous year. However, of these 219, only 16.9% (37 cases) were identified where further action was required by the Council, either early resolution settlements such as additional apologies or redress payments, or reconsideration of policies. In 2023/24, 28 of the 144 cases (19.4%) required further action by the Council. The low number of cases which required further action demonstrates that, despite the overall increase in complaints, the Council continues to handle the vast majority of issues effectively and appropriately at a local level. The Annual Complaints & Compliments Report 2024/25 is due to be considered by Cabinet in October 2025 following the receipt of the Ombudsman's Annual Letter.



