

Council Plan 2024-28

Championing our economy, our environment, our people, our communities and our council



Foreword

County Durham, the jewel in the North East's crown, the historical land of the Prince Bishops, of industrial and technological innovation, economic reinvention, world class education and renowned cultural offer. Durham has been nominated as the lead on culture, creative, tourism and sport ahead of the new North East Mayoral Combined Authority. County Durham is a place with a strong cultural identity and pride in place built over the generations. It is a place like like no other.

This plan sets out our bold ambitions to build upon the considerable strengths of our people and communities, our culture and our economy, to make County Durham an even better place to live, work and visit. It outlines how we will achieve our vision of more and better jobs, people living long, healthy and independent lives within safe, vibrant communities, a county that is carbon neutral, and a council which is both efficient and effective.

As we celebrate ten years of Public Health being part of the local government family, we proudly put health and wellbeing at the centre of our plans for the future with a focus on the key public health priorities of tobacco, healthy weight, alcohol and mental health. This is important, because for all of the county's great attributes, we are still blighted by the legacy of the post-industrial decline in areas previously dominated by mining and heavy industry. Issues of inequality and deprivation are a very real challenge in many of our communities.

So, our plan seeks to build on our strengths, but also tackle our challenges. Focussed on five key themes, structured around the economy, environment, people, communities, and the council - interlinking to make County Durham thriving, safe, caring, and green. It sets out how we will tackle inequality and discrimination, provide opportunity, and ensure no one is left behind.

Despite the history, natural beauty and strength of place, we are aware that the county, our partners and this council face many challenges. This includes responding to unexpected events such as the cost-of-living crisis and the impact of climate change, as well as planning for known changes driven by an ageing population, and growing demand and expectation for public services. We also recognise economic opportunities such as greater use of digitisation, artificial intelligence and automation alongside the move toward a low carbon economy. We cannot meet all these challenges or leverage these opportunities alone.

We are blessed with strong and progressive partnerships, forged on the strength of pride in this unique county. This plan builds on the work of the council, our partners and our communities over recent years. It underpins the County Durham Vision 2035 and sets out our contribution to the collective drive to achieve long-term change across the county.

Our plan shows we are looking to the future, working hard to achieve our ambitions and creating a resident-focused culture that actively listens to the needs and feedback of our communities.

Welcome to our plan.



Amanda Hopgood

Councillor Amanda Hopgood
Leader of the Council



John Hewitt

John Hewitt
Chief Executive



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Durham County Council Plan

2024
2028

Our vision

A place where there are more and better jobs, people live long, healthy and independent lives and our communities are well connected and supportive.

The above is set out in our Vision for County Durham 2035, which was developed with residents and partners, setting out our vision and long-term ambitions for the county. To help us manage our contribution to this partnership vision, we have a strategic planning framework.

The framework helps the council set ambitions and objectives from the highest corporate level to the bottom functional level. It consists of a series of plans which are aligned throughout the organisation (golden thread). At the top of the framework is the Council Plan (underpinning the County Durham Vision).

The Council Plan

The council plan describes how we will achieve this vision. Written in line with the council's financial strategy (the MTFP), Our plan is based on a strategic assessment of need using our intelligence platform [Durham Insight](#) as our evidence base. It also sets out how we will become more efficient and fit for the future.

Supporting strategies

These are key to achieving our ambitions across specific key areas. Examples include Inclusive Economic Strategy, Climate Emergency Response Plan, Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Housing Strategy, Workforce Development Strategy. Links to the relevant strategies are provided throughout this document.

Service and improvement plans

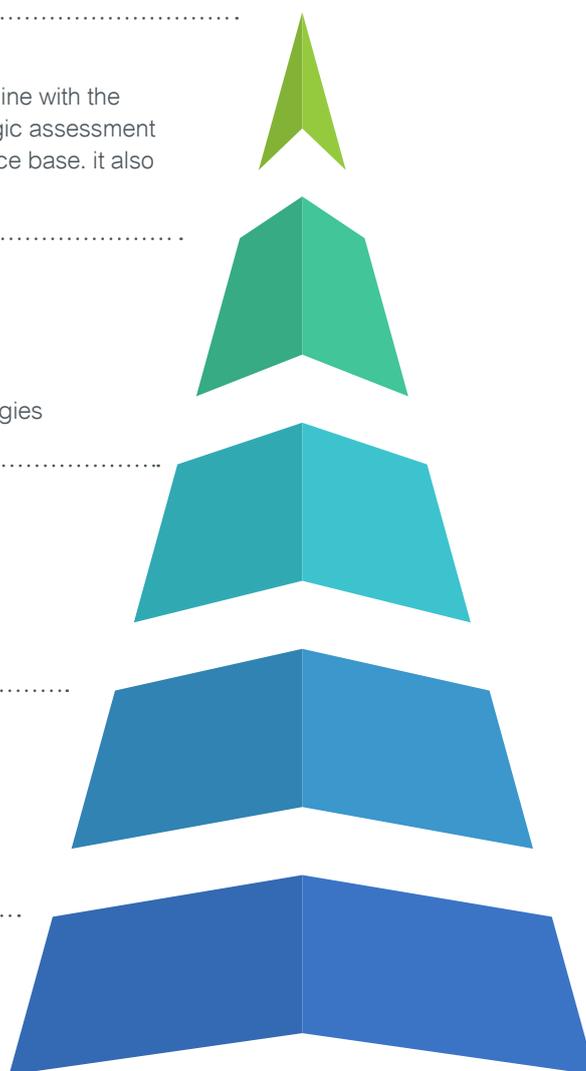
Service plans describe the role of each service in delivering the vision, alongside any plans to improve our existing high quality services.

Project plans

Project plans contain more detail of a specific programme. Every employee is given tasks as part of the supervision process.

Teams and individuals

The annual Performance Development Review (PDR) process sets out an individual's contribution to achieving our corporate objectives.



To support the framework, we have developed a suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set out in Appendix 1, to monitor progress to achieving our vision. These indicators are included at the end of relevant sections of this plan. Performance is monitored regularly at service level in addition to being formally reported four times a year to Cabinet and the council's scrutiny committees.

Our ambitions

Our economy

- A range of employment sites
- A strong, competitive economy
- A broader experience for residents and visitors
- Young people accessing good quality education, training and employment
- Helping all people into rewarding work
- Fewer people affected by poverty and deprivation

Our environment

- A physical environment contributing to good health
- A carbon neutral county
- Reduced impact of waste and pollution on our environment
- A protected, restored and sustainable natural environment

Our people

- Children and young people enjoying the best start in life, good health and emotional wellbeing, and a safe childhood
- Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will achieve the best possible outcomes
- Promotion of positive behaviours (e.g. reducing smoking and alcohol consumption, promotion of healthy weight and mental health)
- Further integration of health and social care services
- Tackle the stigma and discrimination of poor mental health and build resilient communities
- Support people to live independently for as long as possible - more homes for older and disabled people
- Support people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and protect adults with care and support needs from harm
- Protect and improve the health of the local population, tackling leading causes of illness and death

Our communities

- Improve standards across housing stock
- Towns and villages which are vibrant, well-used, clean, attractive and safe
- Good access to workplaces, services, retail and leisure opportunities
- Communities able to come together and support each other
- More high-quality housing which is accessible and meets the needs of our residents
- Rural communities which are sustainable whilst retaining their distinctiveness
- Narrowed inequality gap between our communities

Our council

- Effectively managed resources
- A workforce for the future
- Services co-produced with service users
- Use data and technology more effectively
- A healthy workforce

Our approach to wellbeing

Wellbeing includes everything that is important to people and their lives. Put simply, it is 'how we are doing' and 'how satisfied we are with our lives'.

It affects, and is affected by, our relationships; health (mental and physical); what we do; where we live; personal finance; economy; education and skills; governance; and environment. These factors change over time for all of us, and sometimes we need help.

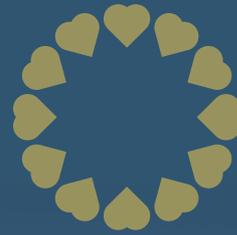
Alongside services offered by organisations like the council and the NHS, we can often find help within our communities; provided by local people, charities, and voluntary groups.

The [County Durham Approach to Wellbeing](#) is based on the best public health evidence for improving people's wellbeing through implementing community centred approaches. The Approach to Wellbeing is about putting people at the heart of everything we do and underpins our work to achieve the [County Durham Vision](#).

As a council, implementing the approach to wellbeing will mean that we make sure that:

- People can understand the information we provide whether that is digitally or on paper
- We understand and reduce the barriers people experience in accessing information and services
- We get better at listening to people in our communities and involve them as part of the solutions using their local knowledge and experience to help shape solutions
- We are more connected with communities by having two-way conversations and are open and honest about what people can and cannot have their say on or influence
- We begin to support people more holistically taking into account all of their needs and make every contact count
- We use evidence, good practice, learn together and share information
- We listen to and empower our workforce about where changes are needed to direct changes and support them to volunteer in our communities

Equality and inclusion are at the heart of our vision and core values and we are committed to promoting equality and diversity, as an employer, in the services we deliver, in partnership and in the decisions we make



Equality and inclusion



We will improve employment opportunities for disabled people

As a [Disability Confident Leader](#), we will continue to improve recruitment and retention rates of disabled people within the council. The Disability Staff Network underpins our approach to inclusion and has ambitious plans including the implementation of a buddy system to provide tailored support for any employee with a disability who needs this. Our employability programmes, such as [DurhamEnable](#), work with jobseekers and local employers, to break down the barriers to paid work faced by people with disabilities, neurodiversities, and long term health conditions and this further supports our leadership status.



We will build inclusive communities

We will work with our communities to support their development and give them more control over the factors and decisions which affect their lives. As our communities have differing needs, strengths and potential, and we recognise one size does not fit all, we will target support towards those most in need and help to build capacity and resilience.

By working more effectively with other organisations and interested parties such as parents / carers and service users, to collectively shape services and initiatives that matter, means we are doing things with communities rather than to them.

This is known as our Approach to Wellbeing.



We will build an inclusive and welcoming employee culture

We are committed to creating and sustaining a modern and supporting working environment for our employees and tackling inequalities, prejudice and discrimination. We aim to be an inclusive organisation, with improved staff engagement and effective staff networks.



The council plays a key role in improving the lives of everyone who visits, lives or works in the county and we take this role very seriously

Our Achievements

The last few years are amongst the most challenging we have ever experienced. The Covid-19 pandemic, severe storms hitting the county, and the more recent cost-of-living crisis, have all driven demand for our services. In addition, inflationary pressures are reducing the council's spending power.

However, we have never wavered from our ambitions and, through it all, have continued to strive to improve the lives of our residents.

Our achievements

Our economy

- New multi-million pound Bus Station opened in Durham City
- Signed the devolution deal to create a new North East Mayoral Combined Authority
- The new history centre (The Story) at Mount Oswald
- Started building North East Technology Park (NETPark) Phase 3 to create more office and laboratory space for innovative businesses
- Completed new business space at Station Place, Newton Aycliffe.
- Continued to provide financial advice and support to low-income and vulnerable residents
- Embarked on a major transformation programme of some of our leisure centres
- Hosted an exciting Year of Culture events programme including the biennial Lumiere light festival held in Durham City and extending to Bishop Auckland
- Approved plans to reopen the DLI Museum and Art Gallery

Our environment

- Achieved highest accreditation (Green Standard) in an independent audit of environmental impacts and performance for all service areas of the council (Investors in Environment)
- Launched our low carbon depot at Morrison Busty: incorporating a solar farm, battery storage and energy efficiency works
- Carried out a £1.5 million upgrade to the 23 miles of the National Cycling Network that runs through the county
- Reducing carbon emissions from council operations including retrofitting buildings to reduce energy costs, installing solar panels and investing in electric vehicles

Our people

- The Suicide Prevention Alliance action plan was commended by the Local Government Association and used as an example of best practice at a regional level.
- Achieved significant and sustained outcomes for families participating in our Stronger Families Programme
- Opened a new children's home as part of our strategy to address sufficiency of places for looked after children
- Launched 'The Breakthrough Service' to provide specialist interventions to vulnerable adults with hoarding behaviours and self-neglect
- Supported more than 120 people into employment in the care sector through our Care Academy
- Maintained Excellent status in Better Health at Work Awards
- Marked White Ribbon Day for the elimination of violence against women with a 16-day campaign

Our communities

- Refurbished Abbey Leisure Centre and Peterlee Leisure Centre (part of the council's transformation programme)
- Co-ordinated and delivered free holiday activities and healthy food, including free swimming for children aged 18 and under at weekends and during school holidays
- Developed our warm space network into 'Welcome Spaces' to reflect the social inclusion benefits
- Launched 15 Family Hubs to provide 'one stop shop' access to family support (from conception to age 19, or 25 years for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities)
- Invested £2 million through our 14 Area Action Partnerships in communities through the towns and village project

Our council

- Gained White Ribbon accreditation for reducing harms from domestic abuse. The council has more than 150 domestic abuse champions and has trained more than 1,000 employees
- Refreshed and implemented our first point of contact offer at the Customer Access Points - focusing on digital inclusion and self-serve
- The County Durham Pound, a scheme to create social value opportunities has received national recognition

About County Durham

Durham is a forward-thinking county with a strong sense of community. It sits at the heart of the North East, with the biggest population and the strongest economic connectivity from the Tyne to the Tees. It is a great place to live, learn, visit and do business. The county has fast and reliable transport links: A1(M), A19(T), A66(T), East Coast mainline, and two international airports nearby. There is also a local port at Seaham Harbour, major ports on the Tyne and Wear, and a freeport at Teesside.

Having transformed its economy over the past 30 years, from mining and heavy industry to a focus on green technology, innovative business and manufacturing, high tech opportunities such as NETPark, and our heritage, culture, and visitor economy, the county is moving forward. Our industrial past has left us with some challenges around deprivation and inequality.

Although Durham City and our large towns act as major centres, the county is largely rural. The Durham Dales covers around one third of the county and is part of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which is one of the most remote and unspoilt places in England. As well as a stunning landscape and intriguing imprints of a mining and industrial past, the area is also a UNESCO Global Geopark due to its outstanding geology.

County Durham is largely rural, 222,606 hectares with a population of about 522,100. 21.5% are over 65 and 19% are under 17



57% Rural area
7% Population
0.3 per hectare

7% Rural town and fringe area
37% Population
2.7 per hectare

11% Urban area
56% Population
12.1 per hectare

You can access further data, information and analysis about the county and the communities in it at [Durham Insight](#)

County Durham's major cultural attractions



We believe our fascinating history, local attractions, beautiful countryside, and coastal landscapes, will help us become a major tourist destination



1 Killhope Lead Mining Museum



7 Beamish Museum



12 Gala Theatre



2 High Force Waterfall



8 Tommy statue



12 Durham Town Hall



3 Durham Dales Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



9 Binchester Roman Fort



12 Durham Light Infantry Memorial



4 Barnard Castle and Bowes Museum



10 Bishop Auckland Town Hall



13 International Cricket Ground



5 Raby Castle



11 Locomotion



14 Sedgefield Racecourse



6 Empire Theatre



12 Durham Cathedral



15 Auckland Castle, Spanish Gallery, Kynren

County Durham has unique characteristics

Heritage Coast



High Force



Hardwick Park



Durham Dales



We have:

- A large and diverse county with some of the lowest population densities in the country: of 300 recognised settlements, only 23 have a population of 5,000 or more
- Some of the most remote and unspoilt countryside in England, with nationally recognised dark skies ideal for stargazing. The Durham Dales, part of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a UNESCO Global Geopark due to its outstanding geology, is an area of great ecological significance
- Dramatic landscape along the Heritage Coast with beaches, rugged cliffs and imposing headlands, internationally recognised for its rare plants and wildlife
- Durham Castle and Cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Durham University, a globally outstanding centre of teaching and research

About the council: service delivery

We have an annual budget of around £1.3 billion which helps us provide more than 800 services to more than 522,100 people. The following are examples of services delivered over the last year:



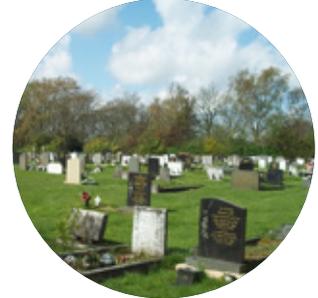
16,400 adults supported by social care



148 allotment sites



Nearly 10,000 engagements with our archives



2 crematoria, 46 cemeteries
96 closed church yards



12 children's homes



Corporate parent to over 1,200 children



3m visits annually to our leisure centres



5,000 people learning to swim in our pools



262 schools



15,500 children and young people receiving additional educational support



over 5,000 children supported by early help and social care services



Over 800,000 sq ft business space managed



5,000 food businesses inspected



3,050 older people receiving residential or nursing care



9 major events organised last year



3,845 km of highways and 487 road bridges

About the council: service delivery



Supported living and extra care establishments



57,000 Council Tax Reduction claimants



Over 200,000 library members



9 parks and 12 Green Flag Awards



Over 83,000 street lights



750 people in supported living



3,250 people receiving home care, 2,100 telecare and 1,050 day care



3,526 km of public rights of way



1 million bins emptied each month



18,000 new benefit claims processed each year



15 family hubs



Over 500,000 calls answered by customer services each year



More than 80,000 visits to our Customer Access Points



290 EV charge points (more to follow)



45 hectares of woodland planted since 2020



More than 2,500 births and 5,000 deaths registered each year

Our economy



We want to create a sustainable, inclusive economy with a diverse range of jobs to meet all skill levels, with targeted learning programmes from school age, aligned to the needs of businesses and innovation opportunities

Our focus is to ensure as many people as possible contribute to and benefit from growth. We are supporting growth in all parts of the county, which is creating new business and job opportunities, and showing the potential of the county. We continue to support local new and existing businesses with a broad range of services, access to business networks, and support for people who are looking for work and want to improve their skills.

We have strong economic foundations; we are developing specialisms in emerging sectors including fintech, space technologies, and advanced materials, our global university is expanding, and our visitor economy is growing. This is generating private investment, strengthening local business networks, and supporting opportunities in other parts of the economy.

Workforce health and connectivity are key challenges, so we continue to work with partners to

overcome barriers to work, improve local transport systems and broadband networks, and develop a wider range of jobs and business premises across the county.

Our aim is to create more and better jobs across the county. We will do this in an inclusive way, working in partnership to support growth and diversification, enhancing our villages, towns and tourist attractions, and reducing carbon emissions.

Our unique landmarks, landscapes, and history are strengths. We will harness the social and economic potential of our distinctive communities, cultural projects, and creative ways to drive growth. We will promote the county, turn challenges into opportunities, and maximise the county's potential in order to bridge the gaps with national levels of performance.

Our priorities

- Supporting people into education, training, jobs and to excel in their careers
- Attracting additional businesses and jobs to strategic employment sites at Durham City Innovation District, Forrest Park, Jade business park, Integra 61, and the North East Technology Park (NETPark)
- Investing in opportunities to regenerate and improve the vibrancy of towns and villages
- Delivering strategic infrastructure including road, rail, and broadband upgrades
- Supporting new and growing enterprises, innovative businesses, and improved levels of business productivity
- Developing opportunity sectors
- Securing inward investments
- Promoting the county to visitors, businesses, and investors
- Develop the next phase of the 62 hectare Aykley Heads site to create a Durham Innovation District
- Supporting the development of more visitor attractions and year-round tourism



Our measures of success

- Increase job opportunities and employment levels
- Reduce unemployment and economic inactivity
- Higher levels of education and skills levels
- More private sector businesses
- Improve business and sector productivity
- Increase investment in research and development
- Greater employment land take-up
- Increase the number of business premises
- More inward investment
- More vibrant town centres
- Larger visitor economy

A full list of measures is available in [Appendix 1](#)



Relevant documents

[Inclusive Economic Strategy](#)

[County Durham Plan](#)

Our environment

We want to protect our natural environment for future generations, create a built environment that supports good health, make the county carbon neutral by 2045 and restore and enhance our local wildlife and habitats



We live in a beautiful county. It has large areas of attractive countryside, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (a UNESCO designated Geopark), a heritage coast and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Although our landscapes are of great ecological significance, they are under threat from climate change impacts, such as sea-level rises, coastal erosion, and flooding.

The climate crisis is a global issue, but we can act locally. The council has declared both a climate emergency and an ecological emergency - pledging to become carbon neutral by 2045 and do more to stop the decline of wildlife and habitats.

We are reducing the carbon emissions from our operations and have changed land practices such as peat restoration and tree planting.

We are also working across our services to deliver actions that will both safeguard and improve the health and vitality of biodiversity on council owned green space and land, and are implementing a countywide Local Nature Recovery Strategy to improve habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.



Our priorities

Move toward a carbon neutral County Durham by 2045

- Continue to work with and encourage all residents and businesses to reuse, recycle, and adopt sustainable practices
- Reduce spikes in pollution experienced by certain areas at certain times
- Develop infrastructure to make cycling and walking viable modes of transportation and encourage residents to embrace it
- Improve the air quality in Durham City Centre
- Decarbonisation of council buildings
- Encourage the use of our natural environment to improve health and wellbeing

Our measures of success

- Reduce the council's carbon emissions to net zero by 2030
- Help make County Durham net zero by 2045
- More waste diverted from landfill
- More household waste that is re-used, recycled or composted
- Reduce the percentage of non-recyclable materials in household recycling collections
- Increase levels of cycling and walking
- Increase satisfaction with cycle routes and facilities

A full list of measures is available in [Appendix 1](#)



Relevant documents

[Air Quality Action Plan](#)
[Climate Emergency Response Plan](#)
[Ecological Emergency Response Plan](#)

Our people



We want our residents to be healthy and to live independently for as long as possible. We want to reduce health inequality, improve mental health and create a sustainable high-quality care market

Good health is important. But in some parts of County Durham, people spend less time in good health and die younger than in other parts of the country. Also, more people have long-term health issues. Much of this ill-health is due to the county's industrial past and inequalities across the county.

Ill-health increases demand for our services. We are joining-up our health and social care services and helping our older and disabled residents live independently in their own homes for longer with a focus on prevention and early intervention. We are also encouraging healthy choices and want to create a county which is smoke-free, has low levels of addiction, and where people are a healthy weight and have high levels of good mental health.

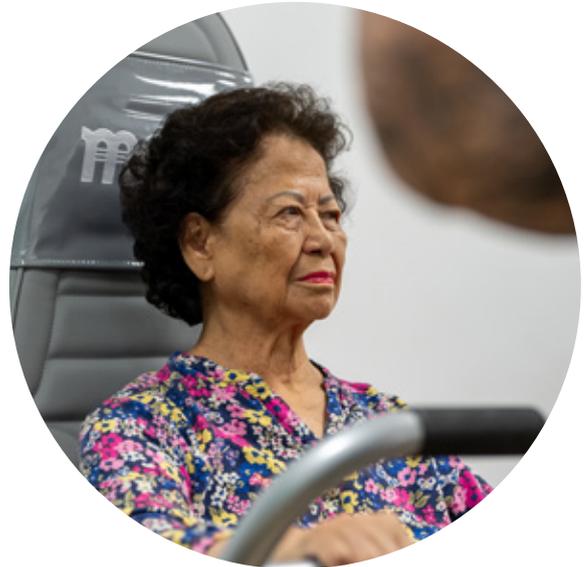
We recognise challenges within the care sector and are reviewing our approach to commissioning to ensure a sustainable and high-quality care market.

The health and welfare of children is a top priority for us and we work to ensure their safety and protection. Our commitment extends beyond providing support to children in crisis; we strive to create a nurturing environment where children can grow, develop, and thrive. Through the promotion of family-based care settings and delivering tailored support services, we aim to provide every child with the opportunity to reach their full potential.

We will make it clear what help and support is available to our residents and how to get it.

Our priorities

- Ensure a joined-up service for health and social care
- Reduce the harm caused by drug and alcohol addiction through targeted support and appropriate treatment programmes
- Improve health and wellbeing, with reduced health inequality
- Safeguard vulnerable individuals from abuse and support victims of anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder
- Ensure we meet the needs of children and young people affected by domestic abuse in safe accommodation
- Increase benefit take-up to support people whose circumstances make them vulnerable
- Help people live well for longer by making smoking history, enabling healthy weight for all, improving mental health and reducing alcohol harms.
- Develop Family Hubs and the Best Start in Life Programme to deliver integrated family support
- Make better use of technology throughout our social care system helping people to live independently
- Deliver more homes for older and disabled people



Our measures of success

- Increase in healthy life expectancy
- More children who are a healthy weight
- Fewer residents who smoke
- More people are able to live independently in their own home for longer
- More people with aids and assistive technologies in their homes (aged 65+)
- More older people still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement / rehabilitation services
- Fewer adults admitted on a permanent basis to residential or nursing care
- More children in care living in a family setting
- Fewer children's social care re-referrals
- Increase benefit take-up
- More families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes
- More children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan attending a mainstream school
- Fewer suicides

- Increase completion rates for drug and alcohol treatment programmes
- Undertake a review of the provision of home to school transport
- Invest in additional capacity to improve support to children with special educational needs and disabilities
- Ensure commissioning approach ensures a sustainable and high-quality care market
- Ensure we meet our sufficiency duty in providing accommodation for children looked after

A full list of measures is available in [Appendix 1](#)

Relevant documents

[Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)
[Mental Health Strategy](#)
[Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy](#)
[Growing up in County Durham Strategy](#)
[Suicide Prevention Alliance Action Plan](#)

Our communities



We want to develop our towns and villages to be places where people want to be. With housing that meets need, high streets that are vibrant, safe, and attractive social hubs, and with direct links between population centres and employment and leisure

Our communities, with their distinct identity and heritage, are where people live, work, and raise families. And we want to make them better. The county is growing, and it is important that that growth is sustainable and of benefit to both urban and rural areas of the county.

We are continuing to invest in our town and village centres and place-based regeneration while respecting the landscape and natural assets, ensuring they remain quality environments for people to live and visit. As more people move into the county, we need more homes.

We also want private rental homes to be of a higher standard and more homes suitable for people who are older or disabled. It is also important these homes are future proofed to remain suitable as their needs increase.

We are working to transform derelict and abandoned spaces into assets that enhance the overall attractiveness and liveability of our communities, bringing more vacant properties back into use and are regulating private landlords to improve housing conditions.

We will encourage people back into our town centres through events, leisure, and culture.

Through our Leisure Transformation Programme, we are delivering a mix of new building projects and refurbishments to existing buildings to improve our leisure facilities where it is financially viable to do so.

Our plans will also introduce new activities which reflect changing trends and support the economic recovery of the county.

We will also ensure all our communities have access to fast and reliable broadband. By improving digital connectivity, we will open up access to more and better paid jobs across the county, particularly in areas difficult to reach by public transport.

To achieve our ambitions, we will maintain our strong relationships with our communities and residents, with transparent and responsive approaches to the issues that matter the most of them.

Our priorities

- Better transport links in rural areas
- More digital connectivity
- Community engagement and co production
- Establishing Local Network panels to further engage and empower local communities
- Developing neighbourhood interventions to tackle low level crime and antisocial behaviour, housing and environmental issues to make our communities safer
- £52 million leisure transformation programme with projects completed or underway at Abbey, Spennymoor, Teesdale and Peterlee Leisure Centres, a new track and pavilion at Shildon and permission approved for a new leisure, wellbeing hub and library at Bishop Auckland.
- Building more council homes
- Delivering the Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone, Future High Street Fund and Stronger Towns Fund
- Supply Seaham Garden Village development with geothermal heat from mine water treatment scheme
- Introduce an corporate employee volunteering scheme in Durham County Council



Our measures of success

- More properties improved or brought back into use
- Reduced levels of anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder
- Residents having greater confidence in both the police and council dealing with Crime and Anti-social behaviour
- More people who think the police and local authorities are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime issues in the local area
- Greater access to employment sites and key service locations by public transport
- Reduced vacancy rates in town centres
- More new housing and affordable homes
- High levels of cleanliness in relation to litter and dog fouling
- More properties with access to gigabit-capable broadband
- A well maintained road network with a greater proportion of structurally sound 'footways'
- Fewer incidents of fly-tipping

A full list of measures is available in [Appendix 1](#)



Relevant documents

[Digital Durham Programme](#)

[Housing Strategy](#)

[North East Transport Plan](#)

[North East Bus Service Improvement Plan](#)

[Towns and Villages Programme](#)

[Safe Durham Partnership Plan](#)

Our council



We want a council which is efficient and effective, financially sound and forward looking. A council which is delivering high value local services that meet the wants and needs of our residents in a sustainable manner by a motivated workforce trained for the future

Our council is resident focused. We actively listen to their views and place their interests at the heart of everything we do.

Our staff are our most important asset and we want to be an employer of choice attracting highly skilled motivated people who want to work with us. After the NHS, we are the largest employer in the county and one of the largest providers of training and apprenticeship opportunities in the county. We plan to attract and keep our staff through a range of staff benefits, modern-day working practices, training opportunities and career pathways which give everybody the chance to progress.

With increasing trends for remote working and automation, and more residents expecting digital

services available 24/7, we have needed to rethink the way in which many of our services are delivered, the culture of our organisation and the skills we need for the future.

Improving the digital accessibility of our services is crucial in building a highly regarded council. Through continuous improvement and responsive service delivery we aim to exceed customer expectations and guarantee a service that is of the highest quality.

Financial responsibility is our top priority. Our dedicated focus on effective resource allocation, financial sustainability, and delivering value to our community sets us apart.

We closely monitor performance and value for money, and achieve the targets outlined in our Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), demonstrating our commitment to responsible financial management.

Through efficient revenue management, we can maximize financial resources, maintain fiscal stability, and deliver the services and infrastructure our community relies on.



Our priorities

- Balancing our budget
- Providing high quality, value for money services
- Digital by design - providing online services with an alternative for those unable to access the internet
- Creating a more data-driven council
- A workforce that can meet future challenges
- Health and wellbeing of our workforce - achieve Better Health at Work Award Ambassador Status



Our measures of success

- Achieve our savings targets
- Achieve an unqualified audit opinion
- High collection rates (council tax and business rates)
- More benefits processed within target time
- Lower sickness absence rate
- Lower employee turnover
- Greater proportion of digital contact

Greater satisfaction with service delivery

A full list of measures is available in [Appendix 1](#)



Relevant documents

[Workforce Development Strategy](#)

[Apprenticeship Strategy](#)

[Digital Strategy](#)

[Medium Term Financial Plan](#)

Council finances

Finances

The council has been required to achieve significant savings over the last 16 years due to government funding reductions and budget pressures. The need for savings will continue in future years as inflationary and demand pressures outstrip our ability to raise council tax and due to expected restrictions in government funding uplifts.

For a number of years local government has received one year financial settlements which complicates effective long term financial planning and there remains uncertainty around a likely implementation date of the Fair Funding Review.

Council tax

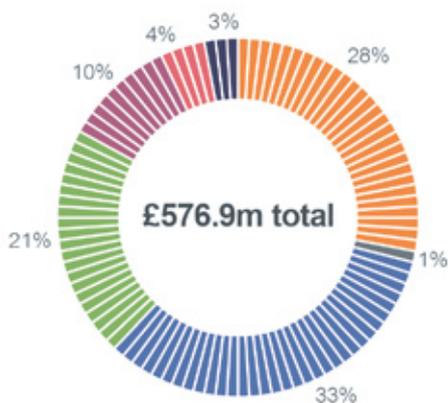
Council Tax is based upon historic property values. All properties are placed in one of eight valuation bands, determined by market value as at 1 April 1991. The proportion of properties in each band varies significantly across the country, impacting upon the tax raising capacity of individual local authorities. Across England, 65% of properties fall within bands A to C, but across County Durham it is around 83%.

This means County Durham has a much lower tax base than the national average and is therefore unable to generate as much council tax as those local authorities. This means a 1% increase in council tax would raise an additional £2.65 million across County Durham but a 1% increase in more affluent areas with high tax bases would raise in excess of £10 million.

Government funding

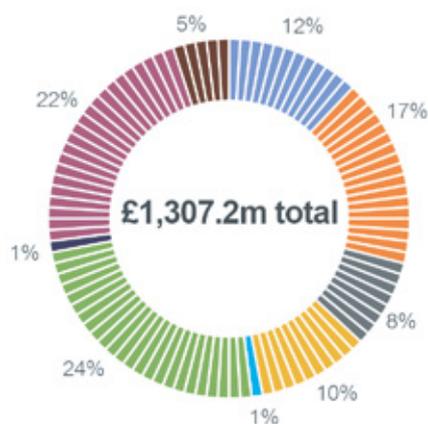
The council is facing increasing demand and significant cost pressures and will continue to face difficult decisions on spending and service provision.

The current Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) includes agreed savings of £5.9 million. However, we anticipate that further savings of £50.2 million will be required by 2027/28 to balance the books.



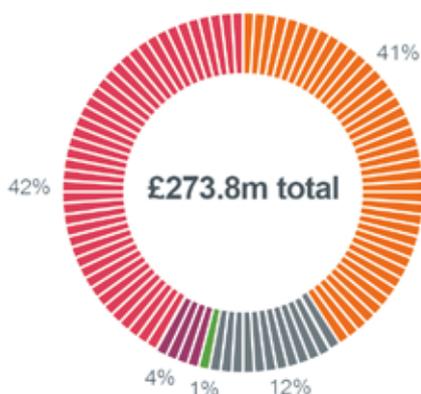
2024/25 Net Cost of Services

Adult and Health Services	£160.1m
Chief Executive	£4.6m
Children and Young People's Services	£189.2m
Neighbourhoods and Climate Change	£122.3m
Regeneration and Economic Growth	£54.9m
Resources	£25.7m
Other	£20.1m



2024/25 Financing of Revenue Expenditure

Specific Govt Grants (exc. Housing Benefit and DSG)	£158.8m
Government Grant	£220.5m
Other Grants	£105.9m
Sales, fees and charges	£135.9m
Rents	£10.9m
Recharges	£313.8m
Other Income	£17.7m
Council Tax	£283.6m
Business rates	£59.9m



2024/25 Government Grants Budget by Service

Adult and Health Services	£112.2m
Children and Young People's Services	£33.1m
Neighbourhoods and Climate Change	£4m
Regeneration and Economic Growth	£9.5m
Resources	£115m



2024/25 Service, Fees and Charges Budget by Service

Adult and Health Services	£52.7m
Chief Executive	£0.5m
Children and Young People's Services	£20.2m
Neighbourhoods and Climate Change	£16.1m
Regeneration and Economic Growth	£33.5m
Resources	£8.4m

The council spends the majority of the budget in caring for vulnerable adults and children. Revenue expenditure covers all the day-to-day expenses incurred by the council to provide services.

Relevant documents

[Revenue Programme](#)

Capital spending

The council has a significant capital budget of £681 million for the period 2023/24 to 2026/27.

This budget is utilised in investing in long term assets which includes highways, schools, leisure centres, libraries etc. The investment normally covers purchase, improvement and repair in areas such as property, buildings or equipment.



**Regeneration,
Economy and
Growth**
£402m



Resources
£12m



**Children and Young
People's Services**
£139m



**Adults and Health
Services**
£3m



**Neighbourhoods
and Climate Change**
£125m

Relevant documents

[Capital Programme](#)

Appendix 1: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

To support the framework, we have developed a suite of KPIs to monitor progress to achieving our vision. Performance is monitored regularly at service level in addition to being formally reported four times a year to Cabinet and the council's scrutiny committees. Access to our latest performance reports can be found [here](#).

Our economy

Economic Growth KPIs

- Major planning applications determined within 13 weeks
- Inward investments secured
- Investment secured for companies
- Occupancy of Business Durham floor space
- Private sector employments per 10,000 population
- Private sector businesses per 10,000 population
- GVA per filled job
- Employment land approved and delivered

Business Support KPIs

- Businesses engaged by Business Durham
- Businesses supported by regeneration projects
- New businesses supported by Community Economic Development (CED) Team
- Organisations involved in the Better Health at Work Award

Employability and Skills KPIs

- Jobs created or safeguarded (a) due to Business Durham activity, (b) through regeneration schemes
- Registrations to employability programmes
- Participants on employability programmes who progressed to employment, education or training
- Employment rate for (a) 16-64 year olds, (b) those with a disability
- Residents with higher level skills
- 16-17-year-olds in an apprenticeship

Cultural Offer KPIs

- People attending cultural events ran and commissioned by Culture, Sport and Tourism
- People attending council owned cultural venues (Killhope and town halls)
- Average % occupancy at Bishop Auckland Town Hall, Gala and Empire of (a) cinema screenings, and (b) theatre performances
- Average % yield at Bishop Auckland Town Hall, Gala and Empire of (a) cinema screenings, and (b) theatre performances
- Council owned/managed heritage assets classed as 'at risk'
- Heritage assets 'at risk' categorised as 'Priority A' and/or in 'very bad condition'
- Active borrowers (libraries)
- Digital borrowers (libraries)

Visitor Economy KPIs

- Visitors to the county
- Money generated by the visitor economy
- Jobs supported by the visitor economy
- Visitor attractions served by public transport
- Tourism businesses actively engaged with Visit County Durham

Managing Money Better (MMB) KPIs

- Households receiving energy advice from MMB Initiative
- Money (£'s) saved per household as a result of energy efficiency advice provided by the MMB initiative

Education KPIs

- Uptake of free early education entitlement for 3-4-year-olds
- Children meeting expected standards in maths and reading at Key Stage 2
- Average grade of achievement within GCSE English and Maths to a Grade 5
- Disadvantaged cohorts meeting basic threshold measures in English and Maths
- Young people in education, employment and training

Our environment

Waste KPIs

- Household waste re-used, recycled or composted
- Waste diverted from landfill
- Residual household waste (kg per household)
- Contamination rate

Sustainable Transport and Active Travel KPIs

- Cycling and walking levels
- Satisfaction with cycle routes & facilities
- Linear kilometres of appropriate design standards for Active Mode Routes
- Park and Ride passenger journeys

Carbon Reduction and Air Quality KPIs

- County Durham to become net zero by 2045
- Council's carbon emissions
- NO₂ levels within Durham City Air Quality Management Area that are below the govt threshold of 40µg/m³
- Trees planted

Our people

Childrens' Social Care KPIs

- Early help cases open
- Children's social care referrals per 10,000 population
- Children's social care re-referrals
- Children's social care assessments completed within 45 days
- Children in need per 10,000 population
- Children on a child protection plan per 10,000 population
- Children looked after per 10,000 population
- Care leavers aged 16-24
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as a percentage of all children in care
- Social worker vacancies
- Children in care in a family setting
- Families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes

Education KPIs

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieving a good level of development
- Pupils attending a school judged 'good or better' by Ofsted (a) primary schools, (b) secondary schools
- Children who are electively home educated
- Children eligible for free school meals
- Take-up on free school meals

SEND KPIs

- Children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- New requests for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
- Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) completed within 20 weeks
- Pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) attending a mainstream school
- Pupils on Special Education Needs (SEN) support

Adult Social Care KPIs

- Referrals into adult social care
- Initial assessments for Adult Social Care completed within 28 days
- Care Act assessments completed
- Service users receiving an assessment or review within the last 12 months
- Individuals who achieved their desired outcomes from adult safeguarding
- Satisfaction of people who use services with their care and support
- Satisfaction of carers with the support and services they receive
- Hospital discharges receiving reablement
- Older people still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement / rehabilitation services
- Average age people can remain living independently in their own home
- Adults aged 65+ per 100,000 population admitted on a permanent basis to residential or nursing care
- Service users receiving Direct Payments
- Service users receiving (a) home care, telecare (c) day care
- Requests resulting in a service – adult social care
- Workforce turnover rate – adult social care
- People in adult social care – quality of life
- Short term service provision – adult social care
- People who services who found it easy to find information – adult social care
- Carers who found it easy to find information about services

Housing Vulnerable People KPIs

- Care Connect customers
- Care Connect calls answered within 3 minutes
- Care Connect calls arriving at the property within 45 minutes
- Potential clients contacted within 3 weeks of initial referral for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)
- Households prevented from homelessness and helped (a) to stay in their home, and (b) to move to alternative accommodation
- Households where homelessness has been relieved, and the client moved into alternative accommodation
- Households where there has been an acceptance of the main homeless duty
- Successful move-ons from Local Lettings Agency accommodation at the end of their licence agreement
- People aged 65+ with aids and assistive technologies in their homes
- Approvals on new housing sites of 10 units or more, a minimum of 66% of the total number of dwellings meet accessible and adaptable standards (building Regulations requirements M4(2)).
- Approvals on new housing sites of 10 units or more, a minimum of 10% of the total number of dwellings meet a design and type for older persons

Housing Vulnerable People KPIs

- Children who are a healthy weight and (a) aged 4-5, (b) aged 10-11
- Gap in breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks between County Durham and national average
- Mothers smoking at time of delivery
- Smoking prevalence in adults (aged 18+)
- People reporting a low happiness score
- Suicide rate per 100,000 population
- Admissions under the Mental Health Act
- Female healthy life expectancy (a) at birth, (b) at 65 years
- Gap between County Durham and England in female healthy life expectancy (a) at birth, (b) at 65 years
- Gap between County Durham and England in male healthy life expectancy (a) at birth, (b) at 65 years
- Successful completion of treatment. (a) alcohol, (b) opiates (c) non-opiates

Physical Activity KPIs

- Visits to Leisure Centres
- Leisure memberships

Our communities

Digital Durham KPIs

- Properties with access to gigabit-capable broadband

Housing Delivery KPIs

- Net affordable homes
- Net delivery of new housing
- Chapter Homes properties sold

Housing Standards KPIs

- Empty homes brought back into use as a result of local authority intervention
- Properties covered by Selective Licence Scheme that are licensed, or legal proceedings instigated
- ASB incidents per 10,000 population within the Selective Licensing Scheme

Clean and Attractive Communities KPIs

- Fly-tips per 1,000 population
- Land with acceptable levels of cleanliness (a) litter, (b) dog fouling
- Green and open space with acceptable levels of cleanliness (a) litter, (b) dog fouling
- Average vacancy rate of town centres

Transport Connectivity KPIs

- Satisfaction with ease of access
- Satisfaction with bus operators
- Households which can access key service locations using public transport
- Residents who can access employment sites by public transport
- Timetabled bus services no more than 5 min late or 1 min early
- Local passenger journeys on public transport

Highways and Footways Maintenance KPIs

- Roads where maintenance is recommended (a) A roads, (b) B roads, (c) C roads, (d) unclassified
- 'Footways' structurally unsound
- Bridge condition (a) principal roads, (b) non-principal roads
- Category 1 highway defects repaired (a) category 1 within 24 hours, (b) category 2.1 within 14 days, (c) category 2.2 within 3 months
- Highways Maintenance Backlog
- Satisfaction with highways maintenance
- Footway maintained and repaired over and above the core programme

Road Safety KPIs

- Road Traffic Collisions: (a) all fatalities, (b) all seriously injured
- Road Traffic Collisions: (a) child fatalities, (b) children seriously injured

Protecting Vulnerable People from harm KPIs

- Domestic Abuse incidents reported to the Police per 1,000 population
- Harbour clients feeling on case closure (a) more confident, (b) their quality of life has improved
- Children and young people completing an intervention with Harbour and reporting feeling safer
- Children and young people reviewed as at risk to Child Sexual Exploitation

Crime KPIs

- Respondents who agree that police and council are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter to them.
- Crime rate per 1,000 population
- Theft offences per 1,000 population
- Offenders who re-offend in a 12 month period
- Proven re-offending by young people
- First time entrants to the youth justice system aged 10 to 17 per 100,000 population aged 10 to 17
- Violent crime incidents which were alcohol related

Anti-Social Behaviour KPIs

- Reports of anti-social behaviour, (a) all, (b) environmental (b) nuisance, (c) personal
- ASB enforcement action taken

Finance KPIs

- Council tax collected
- Business rates collected
- MTFP savings achieved (£s)
- Audit opinion: statement of accounts
- Non-ringfenced reserves as (a) % of net revenue expenditure, (b) % of service spend
- Total core spending power per dwelling
- Level of Band D council tax rates
- Council tax revenue per dwelling
- Social care spend as a % of core spending power
- Debt servicing as % of core spending power
- Total debt as % of core spending power

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction KPIs

- Benefit take-up
- Time to process new claims (a) housing benefit, (b) council tax reduction
- Time to process change of circumstances (a) housing benefit, (b) council tax reduction

Financial Support KPIs

- Budget spend: Discretionary Housing Payments
- Households receiving at least 25% reduction in council tax

Customer Contact KPIs

- Customer contact that is digital
- ACD calls answered within three minutes
- CRM service requests meeting performance standard

Customer Satisfaction KPIs

- Complaints upheld
- Independent investigations upheld
- Complaints upheld by the Ombudsman
- Complaints upheld by the Ombudsman (annual KPI)
- Data breaches reported to the Information Commissioner's Office

Registration Services KPIs

- Births registered within 42 days
- Deaths registered within 5 days
- Appointments made for (a) births within 5 work days, (b) deaths within 2 work days, (c) marriage / civil partnership within 5 work days
- Appointments seen on time

Workforce Equality KPIs

- Top 5% of earners: female
- Workforce aged 50 years or over

Recruitment and Retention KPIs

- Vacancies which are re-adverts
- Leavers with <2 years' service
- Employee turnover

Workforce Development KPIs

- Performance Development Reviews completed in line with deadline
- Managers who have completed the managers' training programme
- Employees enrolled on apprenticeship programme
- Apprentice levy utilised as a council (excluding schools)
- Apprentice retention rate

Health, Safety and Well-being of our Employees KPIs

- Days lost to sickness absence per FTE (excl. schools)
- Employee accidents / incidents (a) with no / minor injury, (b) RIDDOR reportable
- Incidents of work-related ill-health