



Report on the Delivery of the Corporate Priority of Tackling Poverty

Scrutiny Programme Committee

17th January 2023

1. Executive Summary

Tackling poverty was identified as one of Swansea Council's six well-being objectives defined in its **Corporate Plan** published in 2017:

Tackling Poverty - so that every person in Swansea can achieve their potential.

This is a cross-directorate commitment taking a 'tackling poverty is everyone's business' approach. In the last twelve months, we have:

- Responded to the Cost of Living crisis with more funding and support made available;
- Adapted our programmes and service delivery in response to COVID-19 impacts;
- Helped more people to find employment and improve their skills;
- Continued to deliver more affordable and energy efficient housing;
- Expanded our work with communities and partnerships focused on tackling poverty.

In 2017, Swansea Council published **Working towards prosperity for all in Swansea: A tackling poverty strategy for Swansea**. This corporate strategy represented the Council's commitment to reducing poverty and the impacts poverty has upon the people of Swansea.

Since 2017, progress has been made against our ambitions for tackling poverty but there has also been a lot of change, most significantly in the past three years. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic challenges - including the Cost of Living crisis - have affected not only our efforts to implement our strategy but our ability to refresh our strategic approach.

As the Cost of Living crisis has continued to escalate in this reporting year, the number of grants for individuals and organisations have increased. The table below provides a summary of the related grants that have been administered through the Council so far:

Grant	Funder / Partner	Amount	Who does it help
Cost of Living Payment – Main Scheme (Closed September 2022)	Welsh Government	£11,466,450 paid to 76,443 people	Eligible people / households struggling with the cost of living.
Cost of Living Payment – Discretionary Scheme (Ongoing to 31/03/23)	Welsh Government	£1,451,392 paid to 39,914 people	Eligible people / households struggling with the cost of living.
Fuel Support Scheme (Applications close 28th February 2023)	Welsh Government	£4,067,400 to 20,337 people	Supporting low-income households with energy costs.
Unpaid Carers Grant (Closed September 2022)	Welsh Government	£1,725,000 paid to 3,450 people	Supporting unpaid carers.
Self-Isolation Payments (Closed July 2022)	Welsh Government	2022/23 - £1,196,250 paid to 2,374 people	Supporting people with the cost of self-isolation.

Grant	Funder / Partner	Amount	Who does it help
Swansea Spaces (Warm Hubs)	Welsh Government	£83,831 in 2022/23	People struggling with the Cost of Living in particular energy costs. The grant supports organisations and groups with the increased costs of providing a warm hub.
Period Dignity in Schools and Communities Grant	Welsh Government	£211,853 in 2022/23	People struggling with accessing period dignity products. The grant supports schools, organisations and services to provide products.
Direct Food Support	Welsh Government	£121,213 in 2022/23	People experiencing food poverty and food insecurity. The grant supports organisations that are involved in tackling food poverty / providing crisis food provision.
Household Support Grant (Food Poverty)	Welsh Government	£83,440 in 2022/23	People experiencing food poverty and food insecurity. The grant supports organisations that are involved in tackling food poverty / providing crisis food provision.
Men's Sheds Grant	Swansea Council	£25,000 in 2022/23	Men's Sheds groups and people engaged in their activities.
Community Calling	Hubbub, O2, SCVS	700 reconditioned smart phones with calls and data in 2021/22	People who are digitally excluded and would benefit from the scheme. Digital Skills Training offered to recipients via Lifelong Learning.
Surplus Bed Scheme	Welsh Government, NHS, NPT	Over 500 surplus beds from Bay Field Hospital in 2022	People in bed poverty.

As we enter a period of revisiting our priorities and plans for tackling poverty, this is an opportunity to reflect back on the progress that has been made as well as beginning to gather views about what the future holds. Some of the challenges we faced when the Tackling Poverty Strategy was published remain relevant while others have changed significantly.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress made against the corporate Tackling Poverty priority in the last twelve months.

2. Context

2.1 Definition of poverty

While there is no single, universally agreed definition of poverty, in Swansea we define it as:

- Income below the Minimum Income Standard;
- Inadequate access to necessary services of good quality;
- Inadequate opportunity or resource to join in with social, cultural, leisure and decision-making activities.

As of this report, the Minimum Income Standard (the amount of income that a person or household needs to meet living standards) is £25,500 a year for a single person and £43,400 for a couple with two children.¹ The Minimum Income Standard itself is not a measure of poverty but is a measure of the household income deemed by the public a sufficient income to afford a minimum acceptable standard of living.

In general terms, poverty means being unable to afford the essential resources that allow you to live a minimum acceptable standard of living. It can be defined by the issues of living in poverty in the diagram opposite, characteristics that are common for people in poverty who either cannot afford or face challenges with these issues.



Fig. 1 – Seven characteristics of poverty²

Poverty is multi-dimensional, complex, growing and impacting more people in Wales. It can take several different forms that will present their own unique challenges:

- **Situational poverty** – linked to the individual's situation such as a loss of employment;
- **Generational poverty** – being part of a family living in poverty for two or more generations (a long-term cycle of poverty);
- **Absolute poverty** – being in complete destitution with an absolute lack of resources including food, housing, etc.;
- **Relative poverty** – struggling to live well based on living in households with income below 60% of the median in that year;
- **Material Deprivation** – being unable to afford every day essential items or services
- **Rural poverty** – defined by living in a rural area and situations arising from that environment including isolation, lack of access to technology, etc.;
- **Urban poverty** – defined by living in urban areas and situations arising from that environment including overcrowded homes, high competition for jobs, etc.³

Other common terms or descriptions of poverty include **in-work poverty** (households where at least one adult is in work yet still living in poverty), **child poverty** (children are at highest risk of poverty in Wales), **pensioner poverty** (people who have retired and struggling to live

¹ 'A Minimum Income Standard: UK in 2022' - Joseph Rowntree Foundation, September 2022 www.jrf.org.uk

² Information from Audit Wales 'Time for Change – Poverty in Wales' report published November 2022.

³ Definitions are derived from a range of sources including Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Stats Wales.

above the poverty line with only their pensions to support them) and **persistent poverty** (when a person has been in relative poverty for at least three of four consecutive years).

Welsh Government define a person to be living in relative poverty (or relative income poverty) if they live in a household where the total household income from all sources is less than 60% of the average UK household income (as given by the median). In 2020-21 around 20% of all people in Wales lived in relative poverty.

The End Child Poverty Coalition and the Centre for Research in Social Policy at Loughborough University released research in July 2022 showing the reality of Child Poverty in the UK. Child Poverty figures in Swansea show that 32.7% of children were living in poverty in 2020/21, up 3.9 percentage points from 2019/20. By comparison, 34% of children in Wales were living in poverty in 2020/21, up 3 percentage points from 2019/20.

2.2 Current position

With almost 1 in 5 people in Wales⁴ classed as being in relative income poverty prior to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current Cost of Living crisis, those that were already experiencing financial hardship are more likely to have been pushed further into poverty and those that were at risk of poverty have been more likely to experience it.

Bevan Foundation's report **A Snapshot of Poverty in Summer 2022** looked at impacts of surging costs and slow income growth for households in Wales. Key findings of the report are:

- **Families are struggling to make ends meet** – More than 1 in 8 Welsh households (13%) either sometime or often struggle to afford everyday items. In total, 45% of Welsh households never have enough money for anything other than the basics.
- **The majority of people are cutting back on essential items** – 57% cut back on heating, electricity and/or water, 51% cut back on clothing for adults, 45% cut back on transport costs and 39% cut back on food for adults between January and July 2022.
- **Children are going hungry** – the number of people in households with one or two children who are having to cut back on food for children has nearly doubled since the previous Snapshot Report in November 2021, with 1 in 10 families with one child and 1 in 5 families with two children cutting back on food for their children.
- **Household debt has remained static** – the number of people that are reporting that they are in arrears on a bill or that they have borrowed money has not increased significantly since November 2021. In total, 14% of people have been in arrears on a bill for more than one month with 25% borrowing money.
- **A third of people have no savings** – 22% of people in Wales had no savings at the start of 2022, whilst 10% spent all their savings on day-to-day items between January and July 2022. Only 31% of people had savings in January 2022 and did not use them to cover day-to-day items.
- **More people are worried about losing their home** – 11% of people are worried about the prospect of losing their home over the next three months. This rises to a quarter of private rental sector tenants and 17% of social housing tenants.
- **The Cost of Living crisis is affecting people's health** – 43% of people in Wales have seen their mental health deteriorate as a result of their financial position whilst 30% have seen a deterioration in their physical health.
- **People are pessimistic about their prospects over the next three months** – nearly two thirds (63%) of people expect to have to cut back on at least one essential over the next three months, up more than 20% points from November 2021.

⁴ Based on Relative Income Poverty: April 2019 to March 2020 report by Welsh Government

- **More work to do to raise awareness of support** – many people are not aware of all the support to which they are entitled from UK, Welsh and local governments. This means that there are families struggling financially that are missing out on vital assistance that could make a difference.

3. Poverty in Swansea

3.1 Impacts of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on society since it began in early 2020. As well as the significant health implications for our population, the economic impacts have also been substantial. Some industries like hospitality were hit hard, many communities were disproportionately affected and the long-term effects on areas like mental health and life expectancy are still to be understood.

In Swansea, we have seen a range of evidence and insights relating to the economic impacts of COVID-19 including:

- Strains on health and care workforces across sectors affecting staff wellbeing, recruitment and retention;
- Increased demand reported by food banks and crisis food support projects reflects an increase in the numbers of people struggling to make ends meet;
- Greater demand for benefits and welfare rights advice linked to people being unable to work or losing their jobs;
- Changes to working practices such as increased waiting times, backlogs and demands for service due to restrictions placed on service delivery;
- Organisations prioritising emergency responses to the pandemic had to pause, cancel or postpone investment into other key initiatives and programmes of work;
- Important sectors such as hospitality being adversely affected by restrictions and changing rules around social distancing.
- Increased arrears in respect of monies owed to the Council by citizens across all services.

As a global pandemic, COVID-19 has had broad, sweeping impacts across many sectors and services. While we continue to monitor the long-term implications of COVID-19 and deal with the more immediate challenges such as winter pressures on health and care services, the impacts on poverty will continue to emerge over time.

3.2 Cost of Living crisis

The current crisis – where the cost of everyday essentials (e.g. groceries, household bills, etc.) is rising faster than average household incomes – has been escalating since 2021. This has been impacted by several factors on global and national levels including the energy crisis, labour shortages, supply chain issues and rising rates of inflation. The Bank of England has warned that the UK is facing its longest recession since records began a century ago.

This means that most people have seen their household income not keeping pace with rising prices of essential goods and services. Families are struggling to make ends meet which is impacting on wellbeing and the ability to provide for loved ones. The Snapshot of Poverty in Summer 2022 report highlights a range of impacts of this crisis including:

- Majority of people cutting back on essential items and services;
- Children are going hungry as families cut back on food costs;
- A third of people have no savings available to them;
- More people are worried about losing their home in the next three months;
- Physical and mental health is impacted by financial position;
- Many people are not aware of the support and help they are entitled to receive.

In Swansea, we have seen evidence of the impacts of the Cost of Living crisis from a range of sources and statistics including:

- An increase in the use of Food Banks and other charitable initiatives⁵;
- The need to develop Warn Hub provision in Swansea, as we are seeing across the UK⁶;
- Increased numbers of people and families struggling to make ends meet⁷;
- Increase in the availability of poverty-related grants and schemes;
- Changes in jobs as people seek more sustainable employment opportunities;
- Increased demand for crisis related services including from people in employment;
- Increased demand reported by Citizens Advice including for energy advice⁸;
- The Council's Cost of Living Help webpage has had over 100,000 page views since it was established in early September 2022.

3.3 Population Needs

3.3.1 Each regional area provides a unique set of opportunities, strengths, challenges and issues that we can look at in a systematic approach. By understanding and reviewing the health and wellbeing needs of the population, we can make the right decisions and priorities to achieve better outcomes and reduce inequalities.

3.3.2 The **Census 2021** results were first published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in June 2022 with updated and unrounded data published in November 2022. Current data from the Census shows that a third (33.3%) of households in Swansea are deprived in at least one dimension. More detailed population data based on topic summaries (such as housing, education and labour market) are due to be released in the coming months.

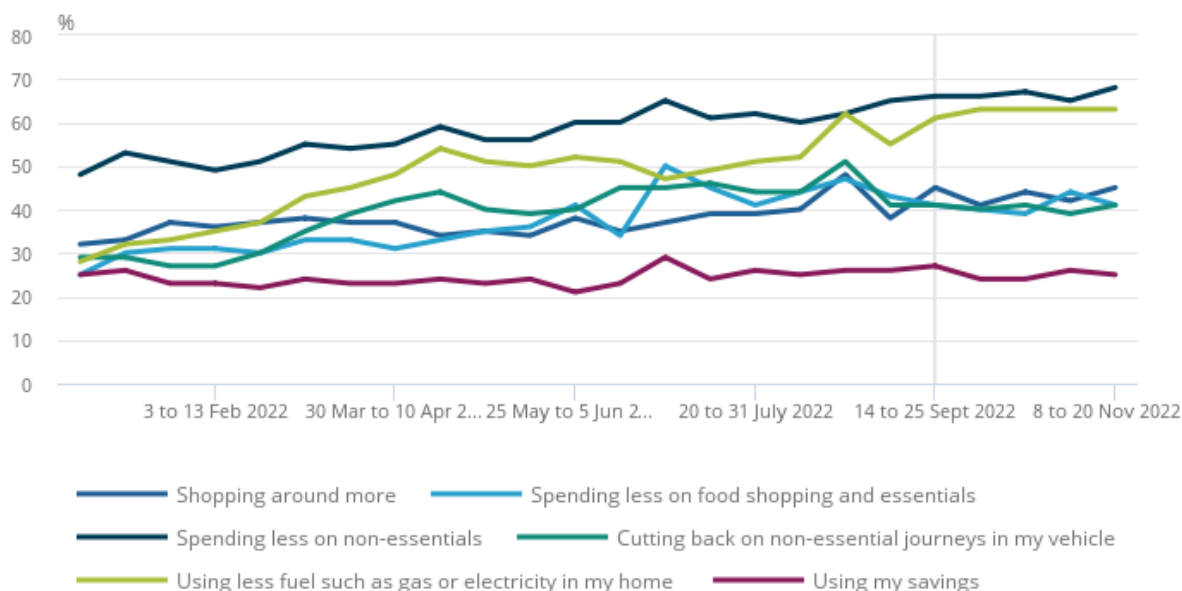


Fig. 2 – ONS graph on people taking action in response to Cost of Living crisis

⁵ Statistics available at www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats

⁶ A list of Swansea Spaces is available at www.swansea.gov.uk/swanseaspaces

⁷ Source: Bevan Foundation 'A snapshot of poverty in Summer 2022' published July 2022.

⁸ Source: Citizens Advice 'Wales: Cost of living briefing' published July 2022

On a national perspective, the Cost of Living crisis was highlighted as an important issue for 93% of adults with people seeing an increase in the price of food shopping (95%), gas or electricity bills (68%) and the price of fuel (55%)⁹. Fig. 2 above shows that more people are taking more drastic actions to deal with financial hardship including reducing spend on non-essential items and using less fuel and energy at home.

3.3.3 The Swansea Public Services Board (PSB) produced its annual **Assessment of Local Wellbeing** in May 2022 which provides a breakdown of the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing in Swansea. As well as providing evidence and data trends relating to poverty in Swansea, it covers the broader definition of the people of Swansea (geographical communities, population density, population characteristics, and so on) and their needs in relation to wellbeing.

The recent cost of living crisis and the significant rise in energy bills will have a significant negative impact on households across Swansea. The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally impacted the well-being of people, households and communities in a multitude of ways since March 2020, including the prospects for children and young people, the impacts on physical and mental health, income and employment, crime and abuse, equality, connectivity and lifestyles – to name but a few. More recent and ongoing world geo-political events, whilst clearly mostly affecting those directly involved, will ultimately have consequences for people’s well-being locally.

Swansea Assessment of Local Wellbeing 2022 Report

3.3.4 The West Glamorgan **Population Needs Assessment** (PNA) is a joint exercise undertaken by health and social care partners in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot to gather information on people’s wellbeing and the barriers preventing them from achieving a sense of wellbeing. The chapters published at www.westglamorgan.org.uk highlight a range of impacts that poverty has on health and wellbeing, including:

- Suicide rates are two to three times higher in the most deprived neighbourhoods compared to the most affluent;
- 1 in 4 people experiencing a mental health problem is struggling with debt while people with mental health problems are three times more likely to be in financial difficulty;
- In January 2021, 43% of unemployed people reported poor mental health (compared to 27% of people in employment);
- Older people have been impacted financially by the pandemic, and those who wish to remain in the workforce are at higher risk of redundancy or exclusion from developing working practices;
- Deprivation is associated with childhood obesity with 14.2% of children who are obese in the most deprived fifth of areas compared with 8.2% in the least deprived fifth;
- Caring has an impact on participation in the workforce and unpaid carers who give up work to provide care can find themselves living in poverty as a result;
- Disabled people have disproportionately fallen behind with household bills during the COVID-19 pandemic, because of their disadvantaged position in the labour market, poor housing and increased costs associated with being disabled’.

⁹ Source: Office for National Statistics ‘Opinions and Lifestyle Survey’ published November 2022.

Mental health is affected by the social, economic and physical environments within which people live and homelessness, poor accommodation and poverty have a detrimental impact on mental health and wellbeing. These factors will have a different impact at different points in life. People in poverty will have an increased risk of mental health problems.

Mental Health Chapter, West Glamorgan Population Needs Assessment 2022

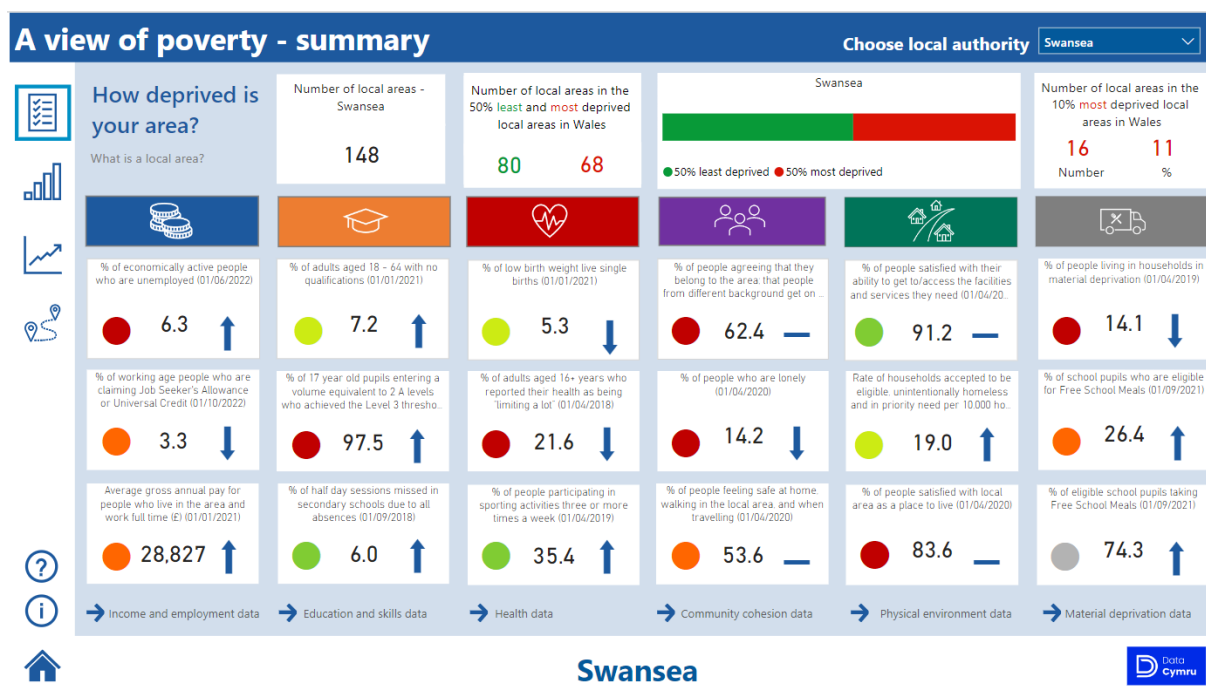
3.3.5 The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is designed to identify the areas of Wales that are most deprived. It ranks small areas according to their relative deprivation levels across eight types of deprivation to produce an overall index. There are 1,909 small areas known as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) in Wales and 148 of them are in Swansea.

The WIMD can be used for:

1. Identifying the **most deprived** small areas
2. Comparing **relative** deprivation of small areas
3. Exploring the **8 types** of deprivation for small areas
4. Comparing the proportion of small areas within a **larger area** that are very deprived
5. Using **indicator data** (but not ranks) to compare absolute change over time

The percentage of people living in Swansea in income deprivation - as defined by the Income Domain of WIMD - in 2019 was 17%. This compares to the Wales average of 16%. Swansea ranks joint 7th across the 22 Welsh Local Authorities in terms of the percentage of LSOAs in the most deprived 10% of LSOAs in Wales. Of the 10% most deprived LSOAs in Wales, 17 are in Swansea.

3.3.6 This year, Data Cymru launched a new online portal - **Data Cymru Poverty Dashboard** - collating key data about poverty in Wales which breaks down to a dashboard view of the key statistics at a local authority level. This tool can be accessed for information at <https://www.data.cymru/dashboards/viewofpoverty>. Below is the latest snapshot of local data which highlights key data sets related to poverty:



4. Corporate Priority

The corporate well-being objective for 2021/22 is “Tackling poverty so that every person in Swansea can achieve their potential” because:

- We are committed to reducing poverty and the impacts that poverty has upon its citizens. Poverty can limit aspirations, damage relationships and ensure a loss of life chances.
- We want a Swansea where poverty is not a barrier to doing well at school, having a healthy and vibrant life, developing skills and qualifications and having a good job and income.
- We want to ensure equitable access to necessary services of good quality by targeting resources where they have the most effect, with decisions made involving service users.
- We want all residents to have the opportunity and resources to join in with social, cultural and leisure activities and decision-making.
- We want people to maximise their income and get the most out of the money they have.
- We want people to avoid paying the 'Poverty Premium', the extra costs people on low incomes must pay for essentials such as fuel and transport.
- We want to ensure removal of barriers to employment.
- We want to ensure inclusion of people from Swansea's most disadvantaged communities so that we reduce inequalities between and within communities.

To demonstrate how we are progressing with achieving this objective, we report on **Corporate Performance Indicators** that show the contribution we are making to this priority detailed in Section 6.

5. Corporate Plan Tackling Poverty Steps

5.1 Tackling Poverty – ‘Everyone’s business’

5.1.1 Our first step towards achieving the ‘Tackling poverty’ priority is to **work in partnership to tackle poverty including the revision and implementation of Swansea Council's Tackling Poverty Strategy ensuring that tackling poverty is everyone's business.**

Work has started on refreshing the corporate Tackling Poverty Strategy using an evidence-based, coproduction approach working with people who have lived experience of poverty to define and shape our vision for the future. This will inform the specific outcomes, objectives and planned activities for the Council to undertake in order to tackle and alleviate poverty in Swansea. Adopting a coproduction approach will help us to ensure that the language we use is clear, appropriate and reflects the experiences of people in poverty. It will also identify the actions to be taken in tackling poverty including those that are the responsibility of the Council to implement.

The refreshed Tackling Poverty Strategy is planned to be published in mid-2023.

5.1.2 In 2021/22, we continued to develop local tackling poverty networks and forums including:

- Swansea Poverty Partnership Forum (quarterly, led by Swansea Council);
- Swansea Food Poverty Network (bi-monthly, led by Swansea Council);
- Financial Inclusion Steering Group (quarterly, led by Swansea Council).

We have built positive relationships with and between the partners and stakeholders involved in these groups ensuring improved coordination of information is available to all members and opportunities for collaboration are realised. We recently began the process of seeking insights from these networks to inform our strategy development approach. This process commenced with a survey of key questions and will continue to include targeted workshops, presentations at network events and capturing case studies and service user stories.

5.1.3 The Swansea Council Poverty Forum meet monthly and bring together colleagues from across the Council to focus on a range of tackling poverty outcomes and collaborative activities. In the last twelve months, this has included:

- Coordinating ‘Talk Money Week’ participation and communications;
- Informing Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) projects;
- Shaping the Swansea Spaces (Warn Hubs) response and grant funding approach;
- Informing the ongoing development of the Swansea Neath Port Talbot Community Action Network Referral System;
- Promoting key messages across the forums and services such as encouraging take up of Cost of Living Payments and Support;
- Presentations to support collaboration with partners such as BAME Mental Health, Christians Against Poverty and Swansea Bay Credit Union.

5.1.4 On 20 October 2022, the Swansea Poverty Truth Commission (SPTC) was officially launched at the Taliesin Arts Centre, Swansea University Singleton Campus. This is the first



commission of its kind in Wales and the event brought together community, civic and business commissioners from across Swansea to kick off the process of putting people with lived experience of poverty at the heart of policy and decision making.

5.2 Community Cohesion

Our second step is to **enhance community cohesion and reduce inequalities of income, resource and opportunity by ensuring that residents can fully participate in society and contribute to their communities.**

5.2.1 Community cohesion refers to how everyone in a geographical area lives alongside each other with mutual understanding and respect. This approach recognises our increasingly diverse communities which face challenges due to economic migration, intergenerational differences, the impact of poverty and the growing influence of extremism. The National Community Cohesion Delivery Plan 2022-23 was published in April 2022, to continue to strengthen, mainstream and sustain both local and regional community cohesion approaches through:

- Engagement and awareness raising;
- Training and capacity building;
- Tension monitoring and mitigation;
- Inclusive policy and decision-making;
- Prevention of hate, exploitation and extremism.

The Community Cohesion Regional Co-ordinator currently manages a team of three Community Cohesion Officers based in Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend, working with service providers and community groups towards a common vision.

5.2.2 Supporting and enabling people to participate and contribute to their local communities is an important action across this priority.

The Council has continued to provide £25,000 funding towards Men's Shed initiatives across Swansea for the third year in succession. These are community spaces for men to connect, converse and create through activities that help to tackle isolation and loneliness. In the last twelve months, funding has been provided to seven new and existing schemes across areas including Manselton, Dunvant, Clydach and Penllergaer Valley Woods.

“Men's Sheds have a very positive impact on health, well-being and in reducing social isolation by drawing on the wealth of skills and experience that exists within our communities.

This is the third year that the council has been able to provide substantial direct support via our Tackling Poverty team to these fantastic projects.

I've been lucky enough to visit many of these groups in Swansea to see the life-changing impact they can have on those involved.”

Cllr Alyson Pugh, Councillor Champion for Health and Wellbeing

5.2.3 Since 2015, Swansea Council has implemented Local Area Co-ordination as a strategic community-based approach. Since 2021, we have full coverage across Swansea with 23 dedicated, locally-based Coordinators. The shared vision for this approach is that ‘all people

live in welcoming communities that provide friendship, mutual support, equity and opportunities for everyone’.

Local Area Coordination recognises the power of taking time to get to know people, families and the connections, resources and opportunities within communities. Walking alongside individuals enables them to stay stronger, confident and interdependent for longer, delaying – or even removing – their need for formal service support. It is a connected, integrated, preventative and strength-based role which provides a valuable bridge between community and Local Authority.



Local Area Coordination is part of a person-centred, strengths-based approach to tackling poverty. Coordinators have the trust, connections and local knowledge to support individuals struggling with poverty and the associated impacts. Implementing local and hyper-local support in partnership with communities, businesses and volunteers – building on local strengths and assets – can become a sustainable approach to not only reducing poverty but improving prosperity and wellbeing of our population.

Each Coordinator works with around 50 individuals, some of them more regularly than others, meaning a total of approximately 1,150 individuals in Swansea with a Coordinator walking alongside. In the last twelve months, the team have produced over eighty stories describing positive changes in peoples lives as a result of introduction with Local Area Coordinators. Over 1,800 individual informal contacts have been made and another 2,000 contacts with people attending groups so far this year.

CASE STUDY: Sue’s Story

Sue has walked alongside her Local Area Coordinator (Dan) since 2015 when she ran the Daffodil Club, which met each week in a local pub. During the COVID pandemic, the Club suffered like many other community groups; it had to close its doors and sadly a third of its membership died in the same period.

Dan contacted Sue in the spring of 2021 and she explained how the Club was in danger of folding and remaining members were scared to venture out, let alone meet as a group. Sue felt isolated as she had lost her husband and her pet in the last year. She also had to move home due to poor mobility and expensive upkeep of her home. These life changes affected her confidence in remaining as group leader and her motivation to carrying on.

Together, Sue and Dan began exploring her strengths and reviewed how she was able to overcome similar challenges previously. Her goal remained the same; to have a social group of likeminded people meeting in their local community for fun, support and friendship. What emerged was a plan, which began with Sue looking for a meeting place somewhere more central in St Thomas, to attract people from Port Tennant and hopefully have a bus stop close by. Sue also felt it could be enhanced by having a café or similar involved, opening up possibilities for a wider age range and variety of activities.

Once COVID restrictions allowed people to meet safely again indoors, Sue and Dan visited St Thomas Church. Sue was delighted with the newly refurbished space and amenities. It had disabled access and facilities inside as well as a bus stop outside. Sue discovered their ‘pay-as-you-feel’ community meal promotion so anyone who wanted could have a meal. This was the catalyst for restarting meetings of the Daffodil Club.

Local Area Coordinators have recently supported the set up - by community members - of eleven community projects, all of which were provided a small grant which enabled them to get started. These projects include Warm Wednesday Brunch in West Cross, Art Group in Gowerton, Community Garden in Mynnydbach and Gently Exercise Class in Manselton.

5.2.4 Through an application and selection process, Swansea was selected by the Children's Society to be one of four areas across the UK to pilot the Coordinated Community Support Programme¹⁰. The programme is a collaboration between the Children's Society, Swansea Council and a wide range of local and national partners. The programme aims to provide the support, guidance and resources local community organisations need to better coordinate crisis provision in their community. In the last twelve months, the Swansea project team have continued to deliver a range of projects including working with the Independent Food Aid Network to produce their cash-first advice leaflet for Swansea.



5.3 Access to Services

Our third step is to **ensure that services are accessible, inclusive, timely and effective, and that those with lived experience are involved in coproducing solutions.**

5.3.1 The Socio-economic Duty came into force in Wales on 31 March 2021. It aims to improve decision-making and help those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. The Council has a comprehensive Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) that not only considers in detail the likely impact of a policy decision on the various statutory responsibilities but also considers:

- involvement activity setting out those the service has engaged with in determining its strategic policy such as partners, service users and those it is co-producing with;
- an assessment of the cumulative impact/mitigation to ensure the policy is considered in the round showing how it links across services provided across the Council;
- how the Council will monitor and evaluate impact to be able to make changes swiftly;
- an action plan setting out activities the Council will take as a result of the IIA.

¹⁰ More information is available at www.coordinatedcommunitysupport.org.uk/content/swansea

5.3.2 Making services accessible for people who are in poverty includes making more information and support available online but this can be a challenge for people who are unable to afford broadband or suitable IT equipment such as phones and laptops that can access the internet. This in turn makes it more challenging for people to find their way out of poverty, for example if they cannot access online job sites to find suitable employment.

Working in partnership with Swansea Council for Voluntary Service (SCVS), this year we have continued to support the Community Calling Campaign set up and run by O2 and environmental charity Hubbub. This project has provided over 700 smartphones and tablets to individuals without digital access, while encouraging local businesses and individuals to donate more devices which are data-wiped and cleaned before being redistributed.



5.3.3 The Council continues to improve internet access and availability for homes and businesses including helping people to access grant programmes such as Access Broadband Cymru Grant and Open Reach's Fibre First Programme which has started rolling out full fibre broadband in Sketty, Gowerton and Ravenhill as part of a national £25m investment scheme.

5.3.4 The Council is currently developing its Digital Strategy and digital inclusion is a key link to ensuring that our strategic approach to digital considers the needs of our population including people who are in or at risk of poverty.

5.3.5 The Passport to Leisure (PTL) Scheme 2022/23 has so far supported 1,563 beneficiaries with discounts for residents on low incomes to access a wide range of sports and leisure venues throughout Swansea, ranging from all council libraries to sports centres, theatres and swimming pools as well as discounts from a number of private companies such as EXIST Skate Park, Taliesin Arts Centre and Swansea Rugby Football Club.

5.3.6 We have commissioned Co-production Lab Wales to work with us on our Co-production and Involvement Project to support practical implementation of co-production, enhancing current good practice, and increasing capacity and confidence to apply a co-productive approach across the Council. This will involve upskilling and developing strong enabling leadership that supports our aspirations to be a co-producing organisation. It will grow awareness, working knowledge, skills and networks across the organisation and wider and will increase the involvement of communities and partners in decision making to ensure services meet the needs communities have identified.

5.3.7 Working with people who have lived experience of poverty is an essential part of our ongoing service delivery and plans are under development for a range of participation and engagement activities – including Experience Mapping – to inform our refresh of the Tackling Poverty Strategy.

5.4 Early Years

Our fourth step is to **work with our Health partners to ensure that, through our Early Years Strategy, children in their early years and at Foundation Phase achieve their expected language, emotional, social and cognitive development and are ready for learning and for school.**

5.4.1 The impact of poverty on early years (i.e. the development of children from birth up to five years old) is significant as studies show that about 1 in 3 children in the UK are living in poverty¹¹. This can impact on the child's health, social, emotional and cognitive development as well as their behaviours and educational outcomes. Children born into poverty are more likely to experience a wide range of issues from poor nutrition to mental health problems.

We believe it is important to address the impacts of poverty on children as soon as possible in their development. Poverty can have a negative impact of their education, health and overall well-being, along with their future housing and employment prospects can be negatively impacted upon.¹²

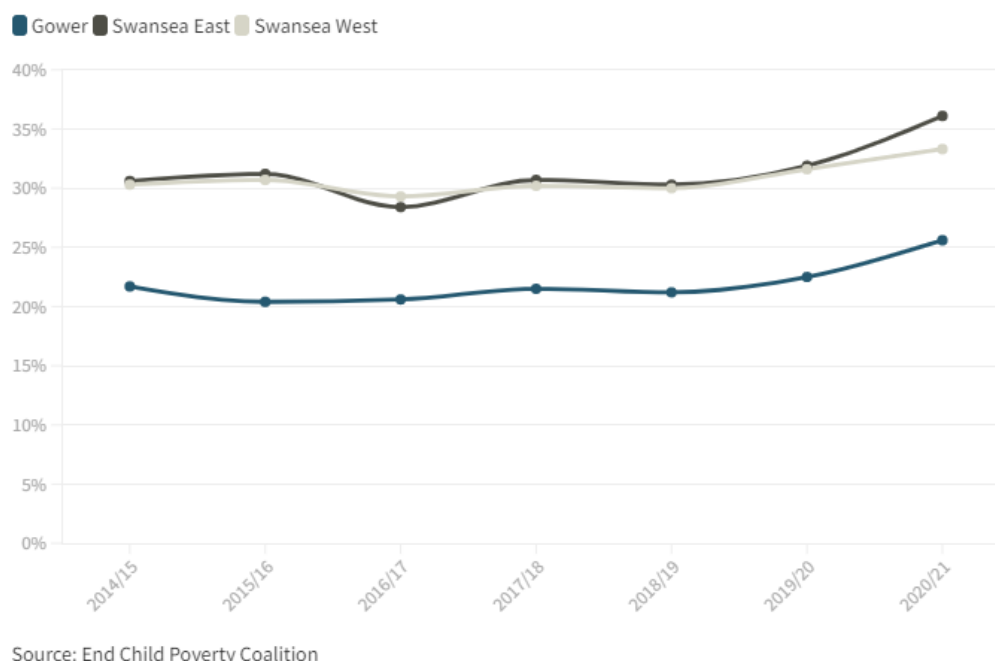


Fig. 3 – Trends of changes in child poverty across Swansea areas

The Council provide a range of services and support for children and families including those in or at risk of poverty.

5.4.2 Flying Start is the Welsh Government flagship early years programme for families with children who are under 4 years of age, targeted in identified areas that are among the most disadvantaged in Wales. In Swansea, this includes Birchgrove, Blaenymaes, Clase, Hafod, Pentrechwyth, Portmead and Townhill.

5.4.3 Families First is a Welsh Government funded programme that can provide families with help, advice and support to prevent any issues or problems from getting worse. These projects work with families to decide what help they need for the family to thrive. The Swansea Central Team work with a range of stakeholders providing local services and activities.

The Speech and Language Therapies Team provide advice, recommendations and strategies to support children's talking by:

¹¹ Report from the End Child Poverty Coalition published July 2022.

¹² Insight from Children in Wales www.childreninwales.org.uk

- Providing training for the childcare setting workforce and parents to support children with their talking;
- Supporting parents and families of children with identified communication difficulties within their home (as well as in their childcare setting where appropriate);
- Identifying children with long term speech, language and communication needs for support further interventions via the Speech and Language Therapy Service at Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB).

5.4.4 The Council's Sport and Health Team deliver training in Physical Literacy sessions for Swansea schools, childcare and community settings. Physical Literacy is about developmentally appropriate activities that best support children's physical development inclusive of children who may have motor development delays or a disability. Our qualified tutors deliver projects that benefit specific target groups including areas of poverty, ethnically diverse groups, early years, parental engagement and disability groups.

5.4.5 Early Help Hubs across Swansea are the main point of contact for those seeking advice and support where they have worries about the wellbeing of children, young people and their families. The Early Help Hubs bring together community resources from the Council's Early Help service under one roof to provide guidance, signposting or support based on the need. The Hubs have multi-agency partnership links to assist with ensuring the correct support for the family is accessed at the right time. There are five Early Help Hubs across Swansea in a locality based model covering East, Penderry, Townhill, Valley and West.

“Our aim is that the right services are available at the right time and in the right place for every child and young person according to their need.

The Early Help Hubs will provide preventative and support services to achieve better outcomes for children, young people and families through effective packages of support to those who need it.

By bringing in these services under one roof within these five communities it will make it easier for those that need support to access it.”

Dave Howes, Director of Social Services

5.6 Education, Training and Employment

Our fifth step is to **work with our partners to reduce inequalities in educational, training and employment outcomes throughout the life course.**

5.6.1 Poverty can have detrimental impacts on people's ability to complete education, access essential skills training and gain meaningful employment. Some of the actions we have taken this year include:

- Presentations to all headteachers in Swansea on the poverty agenda, including local statistics.
- Headteachers and governors have been reminded to be mindful of the affordability of their school uniform policies. The local charity GROW provides recycled school uniform at a very low cost.

- Period products have been issued to schools for distribution to learners from the Welsh Government's Period Dignity Grant; a meeting has also been held recently with groups of learners from schools to better understand their requirements from the grant.
- Universal free school meals have been rolled out to all Reception pupils from September 2022 and work is ongoing to roll out to Years 1 and 2 early in the New Year.
- School uniform grant continues to be promoted with parents/carers and payments are made by bank transfer in the majority of cases to make the process as easy as possible for parents. Schools work with the parents/carers of learners who do not have a bank account to ensure they get their entitlement.
- Holiday payments continue to be made to those entitled to free school meals, and these will continue until the end of this financial year.
- The Council has coordinated and supported a number of schools to deliver Food and Fun schemes in the summer holidays, providing nutritious meals and stimulating activities.
- The use of Pupil Development Grant is monitored at school level to ensure it is narrowing the gap between those on free school meals and those who are not.

5.6.2 Below are some of the various grant schemes that have been delivered by the Council to support children and young people who are affected by poverty:

Free School Meals Holiday Payments 22/23

- Funded by Welsh Government
- Scheme is open and ongoing until end of February 2023
- 9,932 applications received since April 2022

School Uniform Grant 22/23

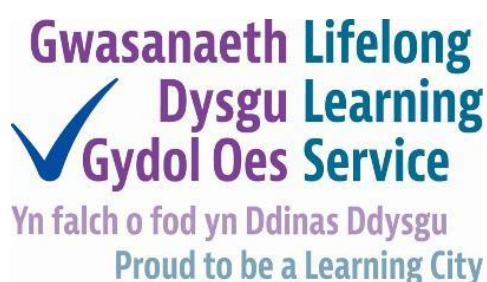
- Funded by Welsh Government
- Scheme is open and ongoing
- 7,472 applications received since July 2022

“We are keenly aware of the pressures facing families at the moment and are looking at options across the council to help.

The council made a series of policy commitments in June to support our communities and the freeze in school meal prices was one of these which I'm pleased we are delivering.”

Robert Smith, Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills

5.6.3 Supporting adults to overcome the barriers in education, training and employment is a focus of the Lifelong Learning Service, which promotes lifelong learning concepts and provides learning opportunities for working-age adults to progress or develop new career paths that contribute to their self-actualisation. This supports people who are in or at risk of poverty by helping to develop their skills and qualifications so that they can improve their personal prosperity through achieving employment and career progression.



The Lifelong Learning team is a part of the Tackling Poverty Service and is responsible for delivering essential skills development – numeracy, literacy, digital, employability skills, family learning and learning for life (including music, art, well-being, IT and photography courses) within communities. This includes developing and delivering bespoke accredited and non-accredited learning as well as promoting the benefits of a lifelong learning approach through events and exhibitions.

The courses and programmes of learning offered to Swansea residents aged 16+ includes:

- Essential Skills – Literacy and Numeracy (from non-readers to Level 2)
- Essential Skills Embedded – Jewellery Making, Cookery, Needlecraft, etc.
- Digital Skills – from absolute beginners to Level 2 accredited IT programmes.
- Family Learning – working with parents, grandparents and carers to support children’s learning and to raise essential skills of adults.
- Adult Community Learning (ACL) Programme.

During the last twelve months, the Lifelong Learning Services team have:

- Continued to contribute to the overarching vision and ambitions for Swansea as a UNESCO Learning City;
- Delivered a wide range of courses, taster sessions and learning opportunities while looking after the wellbeing and prosperity of our learners;
- Developed and delivered bespoke programmes designed to meet the needs of learners and/or partners;
- Continued to be a member of the Adult Learning Partnership Swansea (ALPS) working in collaboration with adult community learning partners;
- Participated in an Estyn review of adult community learning in Swansea in November 2022;
- Delivered the learning festival in September 2022 as part of Adult Learners Week including the public event in Castle Square.

Lifelong Learning Service – Learners Reporting	
Academic Year 2021/22	Academic Year 2022/23 (Autumn Term)
Learners across all programmes: 1,681 Improved skills: 94% Progression to further learning or employment: 73% Accreditation: 89 awards	Learners across all programmes: 735

CASE STUDY: Guy and Emma’s Digital Journey

Guy and Emma regularly attended a Lifelong Learning Essential Skills class in Portmead, Swansea but when lockdown happened, classes had to shift to remote learning. Although sometimes they find learning difficult, they were keen to continue despite only having access to mobile phones. This initially involved phone calls and lessons carried out over speaker-phone. Neither had used email before so, with practice and careful instruction, they were delighted when they managed to send their first email. This opened more learning possibilities and they were able to stay in touch with their tutor via email.

Their next achievement came when they were able to join Google Classrooms and use GSuite to access work and activities. Over time, they managed to complete and achieve an Agored Cymru Entry Level Qualification. They both said how much they’ve enjoyed the classes even though they were completed remotely. The classes helped them to have

something to focus on in difficult and strange times, having a positive impact on their well-being, knowing that they were not on their own during this time.

At the start of the autumn term this year, Guy and Emma signed up again but in order to make their learning more accessible, they were able to join the Lifelong Learning Service scheme to borrow a laptop with portable Wi-Fi access. They are now able to view their work more clearly and now have access to the internet, which they did not have previously. They were also able to attend an online class via Google Meet and can now access lessons via video and regular live online sessions.

This has helped to expand their learning by enabling them to research information and explore learning sites (enabling them to complete the 2021 Census online). Their confidence in digital learning has grown and they have joined an online IT course called 'Learn My Way' to improve their skills further. Guy and Emma have both completed Essential Skills Wales qualifications with the Lifelong Learning Service and have started part time employment within a local charity shop.

5.6 Person-centred employment

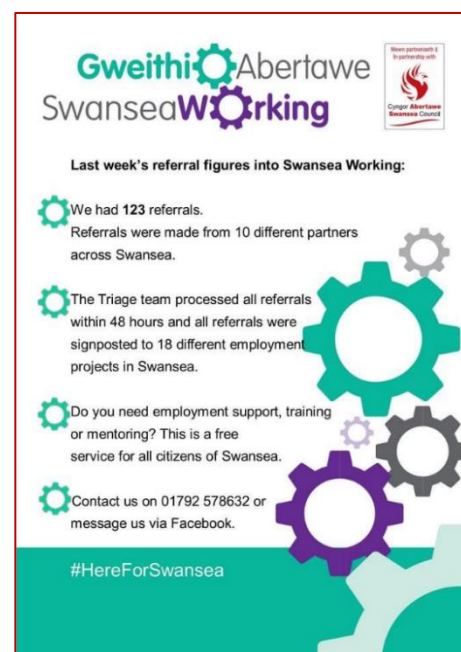
Our sixth step is to **provide a coordinated person-centred approach to supporting people to overcome their barriers to employment.**

5.6.1 Applying a person-centred approach to employability support puts the focus of our service teams on supporting people to achieve their aspirations and tailoring solutions to their needs and unique circumstances. This is a principle that is embedded in our employability services and the way our teams engage with people looking to achieve employment. Some of the actions we have taken in the last twelve months include:

- Continued our mentor support and triage service around the principle of person-centred employability support;
- Supporting the BAME Mental Health Support employability hub to explore the issues facing people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in achieving employment;
- Improving social media and marketing content to reach a wider audience with our employability promotions while supporting efforts to tackle digital inclusion;
- Working with large employers and Council departments to assist in shaping post-COVID recruitment approaches;
- Participating in community park events in collaboration with Safer Swansea Partnership to bring employability information closer to people in their communities.

The Employability & Skills team is a part of the Tackling Poverty Service and is responsible for delivering services and programmes to improve the personal prosperity of people in Swansea by developing their skills, qualifications and opportunities.

5.6.2 The Communities for Work (CFW) programme is responsible for delivering two Welsh Government funded programmes tackling poverty through sustainable employment, providing intensive employment mentoring and support. The first programme provides a triage service and mentors for Adults (over 25 years old) and Young People (aged 16-25). The second



programme works with a wider cohort of people who are not eligible under the first scheme (for example, people who are unemployed for less than 12 months). The Young Persons Guarantee (YPG) works with young people aged between 16 and 24 with the aim of significantly increasing employability support for this age group. It is delivered in line with the Children and Communities Grant (CCG) which focuses on the support needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities, through a range of early intervention, prevention and support mechanisms.

5.6.3 The Swansea Working team is responsible for delivering a partnership approach to supporting people to gain employment, providing a range of support services such as employment engagement/action plans, individual training, developing Curriculum Vitae and in-work support. This includes delivering a range of events, promotions and help for people looking for work in Swansea.

5.6.4 During this year, the TPS Employability & Skills team have:

- supported 243 people into work by the end of October 2022, the highest level of 'into works' since the beginning of the programme;
- worked with 1,803 people accessing employment support via the Triage process since April 2022;
- achieved 756 sustainable Employment Opportunities, sourced via the Employer Engagement Officers, since April 2022;
- coordinated the ICT Chromebooks Scheme to offer digital support to clients with 46 individuals using Chromebooks finding employment;
- delivered marketing activities including newsletters distributed to 120,000 households, attendance at local events and Swansea Working promotional materials including lamppost banners and digital car park screens.

Employability Mentors have continued to work with high caseloads this year. The team continue to support community networks and hubs (which reopened earlier this year following the restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic) including Jac Lewis Foundation, BAME Mental Health Support and City Centre Hub, working in collaboration with partner agencies.

CASE STUDY: Employability Mentor

SH completed an SIA qualification with support from our Employability Mentor and had had a job offer as a security guard at Caswell Beach car park. For him to be able to accept this job offer, he needed to have means of transport.

To overcome the lack of transport barrier which would allow him to accept this offer, the Mentor contacted JT's Motorcycles to enquire about CBT course, as he had a provisional licence and he was over 24 years of age so he could meet the criteria to drive 125cc motorcycle with a valid CBT. JT's Motorcycles had a spare place on a course that weekend on the Saturday so the Mentor secured his place and called SH to advise of date, time and documents he would need to take with him.

SH was struggling with poverty and desperately needed this job as he was frequently visiting food banks. This job would enable him to support himself and give him a sense of pride so the Mentor completed a requisition form with support from the Finance Team. Once his transport was organised, the Mentor also helped him to get all-weather clothes to be able to take the job. When he started work, SH visited his Mentor with his new bike and clothes, to offer his thanks as he felt without his CBT and clothing, he would have not been able to come off benefits and improve his personal circumstances.

5.6.5 Workways+ tackles the barriers that prevent individuals from finding employment. The project provides support with job searching, Curriculum Vitae (CV) development, application forms, interview skills and access to training. Participants in the scheme must be over 25 years old, unemployed for 12 months+ and live outside CF Postcode areas. Participants are also matched with local businesses to gain vital experience needed to find long term employment.

5.6.6 Workways Short Term Unemployed (STU) supports participants who are over 25 years old, unemployed for under 12 months and have a work limited health condition or low skills.

5.6.7 In Swansea, Pathways to Work - funded by the UK Government - is open to local residents who are either long-term unemployed or aged 16-plus and economically inactive. It offers employability support, support for improving skills (including digital skills), volunteering and paid placements.

5.6.8 The Employment Hub in the Quadrant Shopping Centre has played an important role in this partnership approach. It was launched earlier this year and this has resulted in an increase in referrals into Employability Support. The Employability Hub has resulted in 603 new referrals for employability support in a six month period. It has recently relocated to another unit in the Quadrant.



There have been over 30 partner, employer, recruitment, Cost of Living and information events held at the venue. There have been over 150 job offers and entries to employment because of the Employment Hub.

5.6.9 In addition to our internal paid placements scheme and corporate apprenticeship programme, Beyond Bricks and Mortar (BB+M) is an important initiative to secure community benefits from all suitable council activities in Swansea for the lasting benefits of our communities. It involves introducing community benefit clauses – such as targeted recruitment and training – into Council contracts to ensure that members of our communities (especially young people and those who have been out of the job market for some time) are given opportunities of meaningful training and employment.

5.6.10 Other employability activities undertaken this year include:

- Working with prison leavers, care leavers and partners on targeted initiatives;
- Delivering group sessions with Forest schools;
- Participating in engagement activities and events;
- Sponsoring and attending the Wales Air Show;
- Supporting Ukrainian refugees including bespoke engagement sessions and;
- Sector specific recruitment days;
- Deliver a budgeting programme in the run up to Christmas to develop craft skills, learn how to budget and save money over the Christmas period.

CASE STUDY: Employability Support

Swansea Working referred a client to the Employability Mentor and after initial introductions, he met with his mentor at a library near home. He explained that he was seeking employment in the security sector and had previously served in the Armed Forces. He was now sixty-three and had been unemployed for two years after doing cash-in-hand jobs.

Due to his time in the Army, he had developed chronic Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and was taking anti-anxiety medicine. The mentor brought up various charities who provide support and confidential advice to veterans struggling with mental health difficulties. The client was not very talkative at first, eventually speaking up about his mental health.

After discussing different paths he could take into the security sector, the client decided to start by completing an SIA door supervisor course, which we could pay for in full to protect his livelihood. He was excited by the challenge however and expressed that after quite a long time not having a clear goal, it felt like he finally had purpose and direction. During this time, an Employer Engagement Officers found an employer in the security sector who was offering part time work as an event steward. They were happy to contract the client part time while he prepared for his SIA course. Following the course, they would then be able to provide him with lots of employment opportunities so he could essentially work full time.

On the final day of the client's SIA course, the client explained to the mentor that he had taken their advice to use a veterans helpline. This really helped his mental state and had changed his perspective on counselling. He was surprised that not only did he receive assistance with his employment search but that the mentor had supported him with his mental health difficulties.

5.7 Welfare Reform

Our seventh step is to **help to address the impacts of welfare reform and socio-economic disadvantage by supporting people to claim the full benefits and financial support that they are entitled to, reduce costs and make the most of the resources that they have, improving access to opportunities to improve their financial wellbeing.**

5.7.1 The Welfare Rights team is a part of the Tackling Poverty Service and is responsible for providing a second-tier service specialising in welfare benefit and tax credits law, supporting those who are providing a front-tier service and working with claimants on benefit issues.

The Welfare Rights Team continue to maximise individuals' income by claiming additional benefits where possible, but much of the work is around maintaining income and preventing claimants being sanctioned because they have been placed in the wrong work-related requirement group.

This year, the team has expanded as a result of additional temporary grant funding to offer people a more direct service (Tier 1). Since 1st April 2022, the team has dealt with:

Enquiries	620
Appointments	70
Support Workers Trained	104
Benefits secured	£484,233.23
Value of debt addressed	£87,066.21

During this year, the Welfare Rights team have:

- provided advice to individuals who have received various grants which have been administered by Welsh Government;
- continued to support the Family and Friends Fostering Team and Special Guardians;

- delivered a variety of training courses to maintain and increase welfare rights knowledge of the work force of Swansea;
- provided a welfare rights service to support Local Area Coordination, helping local people in Swansea many of whom have complex needs;
- commissioned Kin Cymru to provide a public facing welfare rights advice line service;
- maintained the Welfare Rights Adviceline three days a week, providing benefits advice, support and assistance to those working in statutory and voluntary organisations which increases and maintains their clients benefit income.

CASE STUDY: Lola's Story

The Early Help Hub, who at the time were supporting Lola's daughter, introduced her to Beth, her Local Area Coordinator. Lola was struggling with anxiety and isolation and was facing extreme financial hardship. She lives with severe anxiety; it influenced her life so much that she barely felt comfortable leaving her house, let alone holding down a job. She suffered financially as she was unable to work. As she didn't have a physical disability, she didn't realise she would be entitled to further financial help/benefits.

Beth spent time building up a trusting relationship with Lola; she eventually felt safe talking openly about her financial hardships. This was clearly contributing hugely to her anxiety. Lola ended up falling into substantial debt, taking out multiple loans, falling into rent arrears and needing food banks on a regular basis. Lola didn't feel able to pursue or even think about her 'good life' with Beth; she was just living day-to-day in fear and distress, hoping she had enough money at the end of each month.

Beth requested support from Sheila from the Welfare Rights Team. She initially supported Lola with successful DAF applications to address the immediate hardship. Lola was claiming the bare minimum, but over time, Sheila supported her to access Personal Independence Payments (PIP). She now receives £659.30 in PIP and a monthly increase in her Universal Credit (UC) of £343.63. Overall, Lola's monthly income increased by £1,002.93. Sheila was also able to access some back payments, which enabled Lola to have treats with her children, bringing both her and them pleasure.

Lola feels more relaxed knowing she can not only afford the essentials for her children but she has enough to spend on fun family activities outside the home. She doesn't have to worry that one bus or taxi trip to the seaside with her kids will leave her with nothing.

5.7.2 In September 2022, the Council launched a dedicated web-page on its internet site with advice on the financial support available to help people dealing with the Cost of Living crisis.

The screenshot shows the Swansea Council website's 'Cost of living help' page. The header includes the Swansea Council logo and navigation links for Residents, Business, Council, and Do it online. The main heading is 'Cost of living help', with a sub-heading 'Swansea Home > Residents'. A paragraph of text explains that the page provides information on the cost of living and offers a link to 'search for advice and support'. Below this, there are six content boxes, each with a title and a brief description of the support available:

- Cost of living payments available:** There are payments available from both the UK and Welsh governments to help with the cost of living.
- Energy costs and household bills:** Support and advice on paying your energy and other household bills.
- Swansea Working:** Looking for work? We can help you.
- Debt and money worries:** The most important thing to consider if you are struggling with money is whether you are receiving all of the benefits you are entitled to.
- Food and essential items:** Find out where you can access free food and other essential items such as period products.
- Housing:** Support is available to help find you somewhere to live, prevent you from becoming homeless and help you with your rent and other bills.

5.7.3 The Revenues and Benefits team is a part of the Finance Directorate and is responsible for the administration of some benefits, the collection of council tax and business rates as well as undertaking financial assessments for a number of other schemes. At the start of 2022/23, the Revenues and Benefits service completed the 2021/22 Winter Fuel payment on behalf of Welsh Government, having dealt with 18,100 applications and paid £2,760,000 to 13,800 Swansea citizens.

During 2022/23, in addition to the Self-Isolation Payments, Unpaid Carers Payment, Cost of Living Payment and Fuel Payment illustrated in the section 1, the Revenues and Benefits Service has been administering the following schemes on behalf of the Welsh Government:

Council Tax Reductions 22/23

- Funded mostly by Welsh Government with a substantial contribution from the authority
- Scheme is open and ongoing
- 20,967 current beneficiaries of the scheme, £22,576,881.61 paid to those Swansea residents

Arising from the administration of these grants and the service's core roles is a significant amount of customer contact. Since 1st April 2022, the Revenues and Benefits Customer Service Team has dealt with:

Telephone calls	76,204
Face to face meetings with customers	5,118
Emails	60,137
Total number of customer contacts	141,459

Waiting times for telephone calls have been particularly challenging but additional temporary staff have been employed to deal with peaks of work. However, the high volumes of calls are not expected to decrease significantly for some time (if at all) during the Cost of Living crisis.

5.8 Homelessness

Our eighth step is to **prevent homelessness and support people to maintain their tenancies to help provide stability and security for families and communities, through the development and implementation of a new Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-2026.**

5.8.1 The vision for homelessness prevention in Swansea has been amended to reflect the Welsh Government's priorities for homelessness to be "rare, brief and unrepeated," and the Housing Support Programme Strategy now includes strategic objectives for Housing Support Grant funded services as part of an overall Housing Support Programme that encompasses both the statutory homelessness duty funded through the revenue settlement and non-statutory preventative services funded through the HSG.

5.8.2 A rapid rehousing approach has been adopted. The focus of rapid rehousing support is to help people move into settled accommodation ensuring the right support is in place. All Local Authorities are required to develop a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan in partnership with key stakeholders. The 5-year transition plan will set out how the Council will move towards providing more sustainable models of accommodation and support that meet the needs of everyone; minimise the use of temporary accommodation to a system that assesses needs quickly and identifies the most appropriate option that meets the needs and wishes of the individual.

A report on Homelessness is being submitted to Scrutiny Programme in December 2022 with further details about the wider strategic approach and performance in relation to this theme.

5.9 New energy efficient Council homes

Our ninth step is to **continue to invest to improve existing council housing, provide energy efficiency improvements / decarbonisation to reduce fuel bills and fuel poverty for council tenants and help meet local and national targets for decarbonisation.**

5.9.1 There are many ways of improving energy efficiency of new and existing homes including adding insulation, improving heating & cooling systems, upgrading appliances / lighting / equipment, and employing renewable energy systems. More efficient homes contribute to decarbonisation targets as well as being cheaper homes to run and maintain.

5.9.2 The Council has recently met the deadline for bringing its properties up the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS). Welsh Government is now set to introduce new targets into its Welsh Housing Quality Standard for social housing which will make it a requirement for homes to be highly efficient (with a SAP score of 92), affordable and virtually carbon neutral places to live. The Council has provided a response to the WHQS 2023 consultation and it is anticipated a revised statutory standard will commence in April 2023, with a future policy focus on providing residents with affordable warm homes while decarbonising properties to make social housing in Wales net zero carbon.

5.9.3 The Council has already introduced energy saving measures into the specification of its major repair schemes such as external wall insulation, high performing loft insulation that goes beyond industry standards, new more efficient double glazing and highly efficient heating systems. In order work towards the new standard, the Council is currently designing a number of schemes in 2022 which will include renewable technologies such as photovoltaic solar panels, batteries to store the electricity generated by the panels as well as air source heat pumps for localities which are not on the mains gas network.

There are approximately twelve schemes in varying stages of development where the Council intends to begin rolling out in 2023/24. These will assist the Council with developing the skills and knowledge required as well as gauge tenant experience with this technology. The schemes represent a small proportion of the housing stock and achieving this across the Council's housing stock will require major additional government funding.

5.10 Affordable Housing

Our tenth step is to **build more energy efficient Council homes and support the building of affordable housing to help meet housing need, regenerate estates and bring wider economic and employment benefits.**

5.10.1 Affordable homes include social rented housing owned by local authorities and Registered Social Landlords as well as intermediate housing where prices or rents are above those of social rents but below market housing prices or rents. The Council's More Homes Programme has set a ten-year delivery ambition of 1,000 new affordable homes to be directly delivered by the Council, along with a further 4,000 properties delivered by Registered Social Landlords (RSL) in Swansea.

5.10.2 The Council has developed a high specification for the properties it is building - the "Swansea Standard". The aim is to deliver energy, efficient, environmentally conscious homes that exceed current regulatory performance standards to achieve net zero carbon buildings. The homes will reduce operating energy and Co2 emissions over the building's life-time. The construction form is a 'fabric first' approach – focussed to achieve at least a 25% improvement above the thermal performance prescribed in current Building Regulations. The envelope consists of a highly insulated timber-frame with high-performance doors & triple glazed windows - ensuring homes retain heat in the winter and help keep people cool in the summer.

The aim is to provide homes that are comfortable and make a positive contribution towards health and well-being, which are highly energy efficient and cost-effective to operate, providing a positive contribution towards the drive to eradicate fuel-poverty.

5.10.3 Following on from the completion of 34 new build Council homes in 2020/21, progress during the last twelve months includes:

- Completion of Hill View Crescent in Clase – providing 25 new homes;
- Completion of Bryn House – former education centre in Uplands. Converted into four 1 bedroom flats, while the demountable outbuildings were demolished and replaced with four passivhaus pods, which are used as temporary accommodation;
- Development of 6 bungalows at West Cross is due for completion in December 2022;
- Conversion of a former social services property in Gorseinon into two 3 bedroom homes is due to complete in February 2023;
- Conversion of two decommissioned District Housing Offices (Penlan and Eastside) to create 10 one-bed and two-bed flats is due to start in January 2023;
- An on-going acquisition programme which has focused on purchasing ex-council properties to rapidly increase the social housing stock. So far during 2022/23 28 properties have been purchased. Overall, since the acquisition programme began in 2018, 99 ex-council properties, which were sold via the right to buy, have been purchased and returned to the Council's housing stock;
- Demolition of the former Clase District Housing Office has now been completed to enable the Creswell Road development of 9 new homes, with construction targeted to commence in 2023/24;

- The former Education site at Brondeg House has also been acquired by the HRA and the existing building has been demolished to make way for new affordable housing.
- Gorseinon Business Park has been acquired and demolition of the existing buildings will commence in January 2023 with further work to prepare the land for housing development taking place in 2023/24.

Future plans include preparing for the development of two large schemes, where the Council will seek a development partner to assist bringing them forward, including land at Milford Way, Blaenymaes and Brokesby Close, Bonymaen, along with a number of smaller plots in locations such as Penrhos Place (Gendros) and Heol Dynys (Ravenhill).

These schemes will form part of the Council's developments over the next four years and are anticipated to provide in the region of 300 new homes.

In addition to the Council's own building programme, we continue to work closely with RSLs partners to ensure we maximise the delivery of affordable housing through the allocation of Welsh Government Social Housing Grant (SHG) through the Programme Development Plan, which is managed by the Council. Swansea's allocation of SHG from Welsh Government was £23.7m for 2022/23.

5.10.4 Work also continues in conjunction with the Planning Department to maximise the number of planning applications approved by the Council that achieve the stated % threshold of mixed-use tenure affordable homes on residential development sites in accordance with planning policy.

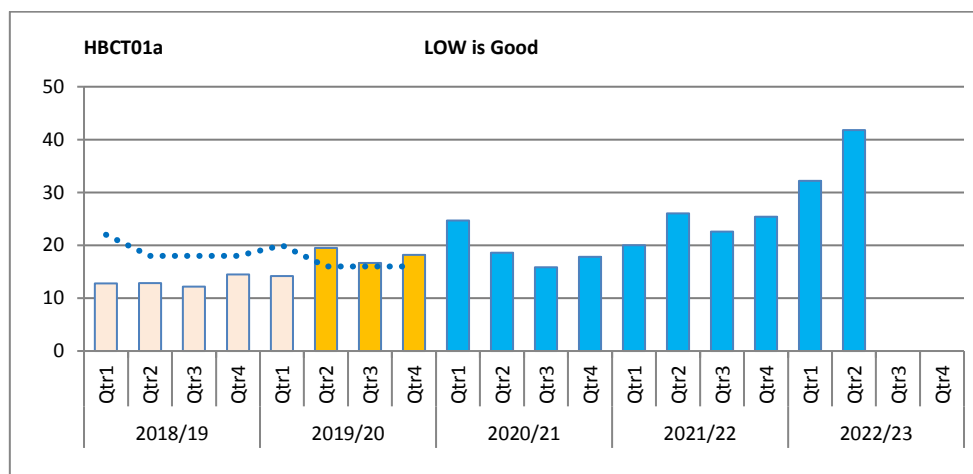
6. Corporate Performance Indicators

6.1 Benefit Entitlements

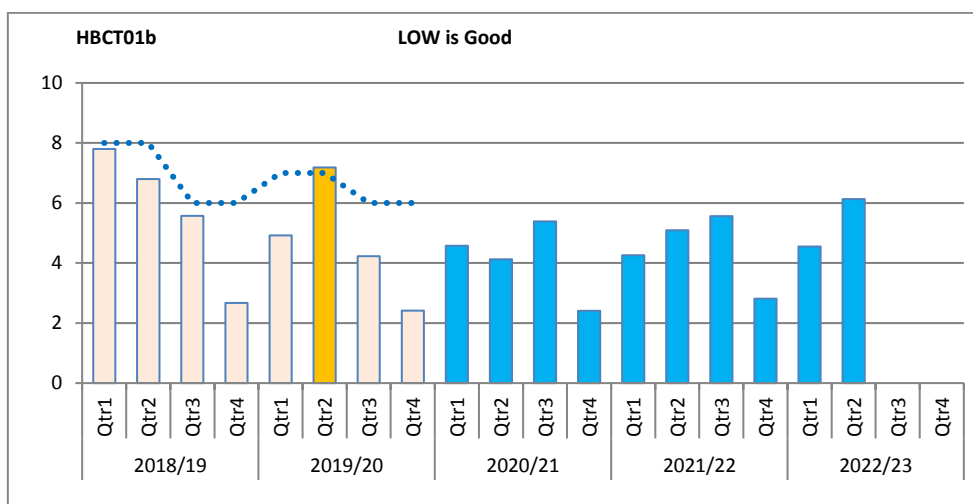
Our aim is to help people to access the benefit entitlements that will support them in dealing with the issues of poverty. Housing Benefits (HB) are designed to support eligible people who are unemployed, on low income or claiming benefits to pay rent (where they are not claiming Universal Credit). The Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme is designed to support eligible people who are on low income or claiming benefits to pay some or all of their Council Tax.

The performance data is collected to indicate how long customers are waiting before their applications for these benefits are processed. The Council is required to provide HB data to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) on whose behalf we administer the Housing Benefit scheme locally.

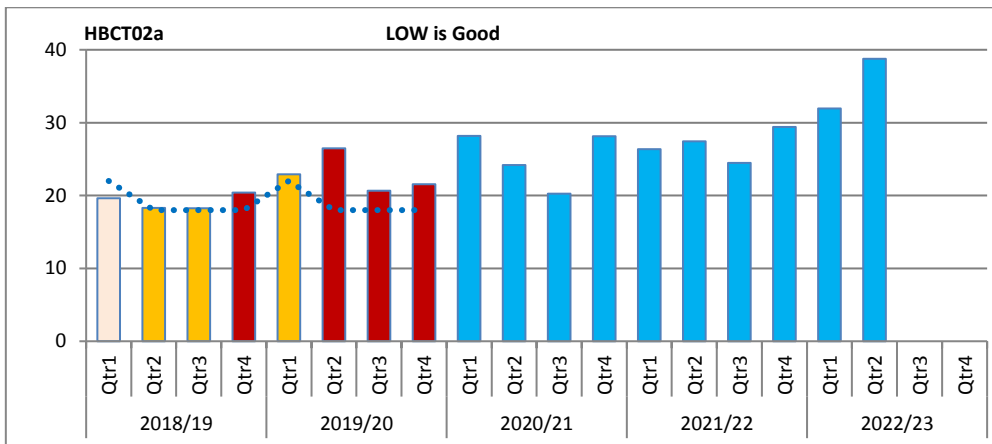
HBCT01a - Housing Benefit speed of processing: Average time for processing new claims



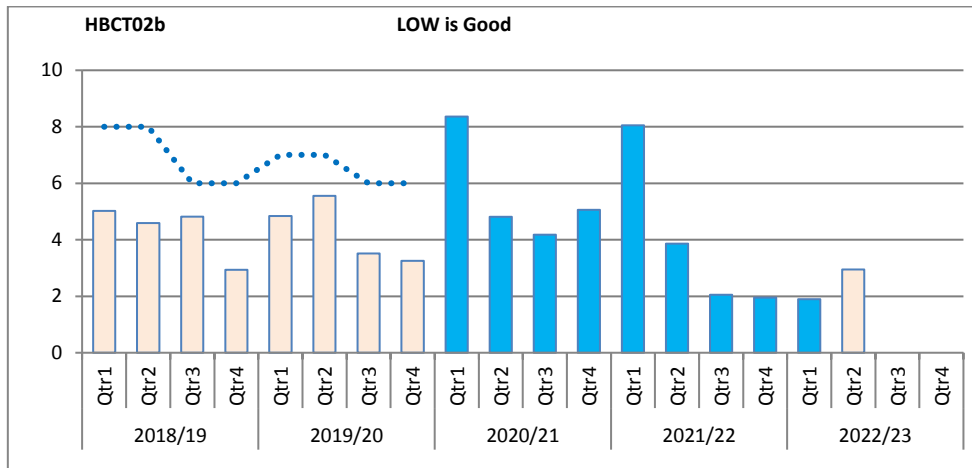
HBCT01b - Housing Benefit speed of processing: Average time for processing notifications of change in circumstances



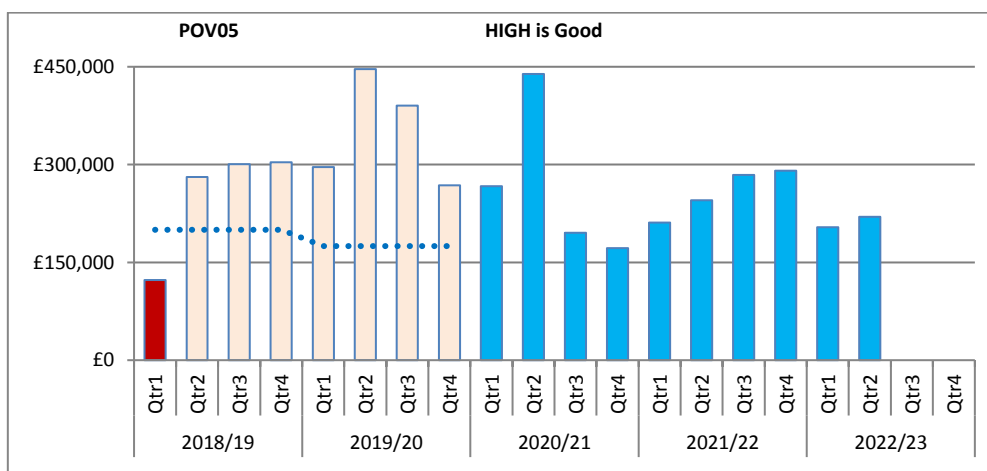
HBCT02a - Council Tax Reduction speed of processing: Average time for processing new claims



HBCT02b - Council Tax Reduction speed of processing: Average time for processing notification of change in circumstances



POV05 - The amount of welfare benefits raised through securing rights and entitlements by the Welfare Rights Team



As a result of additional work arising from the grant payments and the loss of some experienced staff to other services, the numbers of days taken to process new applications

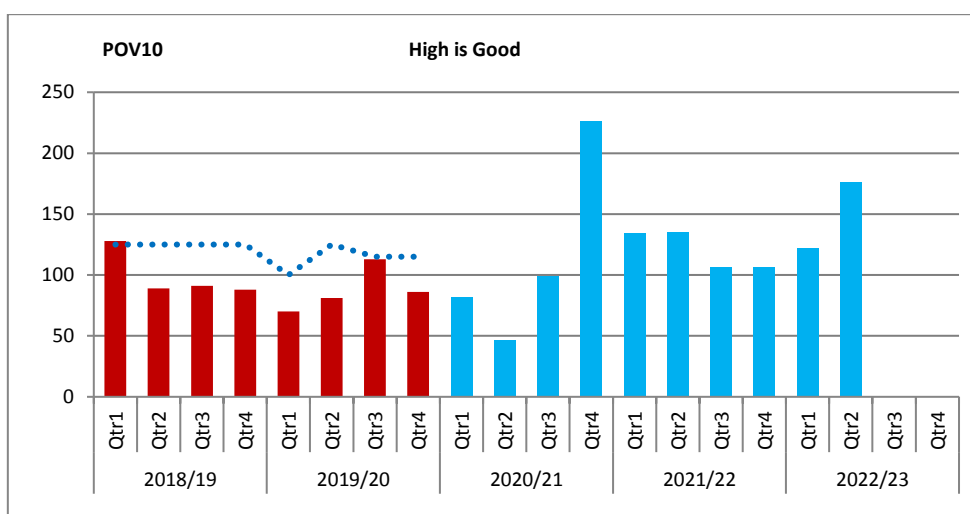
for HB/CTR and changes in circumstances has increased over the early part of the financial year and the summer. Performance is slowly improving since September 2022 and additional staff are being recruited however we do not expect to be back at previously high performance levels for some time. If further additional work is given to the Revenue and Benefits service (such as more grant schemes to administer) or the inability to maintain staffing levels, progress will be slower.

6.2 Employability

Our aim is to help people to overcome social, cultural, economic barriers enabling individuals to access employment opportunities. Employability means developing the skills, knowledge and experience of individuals that improve their chances of being suitable for paid work. We want to help adults of working age to gain employment and be successful in their chosen lines of work, which will enable them to contribute to their community, the local economy and support themselves and their families in dealing with the issues of poverty.

The performance data is collected to indicate how many people have been helped by our teams to gain employment through mentoring and support.

POV10 - The number of people gaining employment through Employability Support

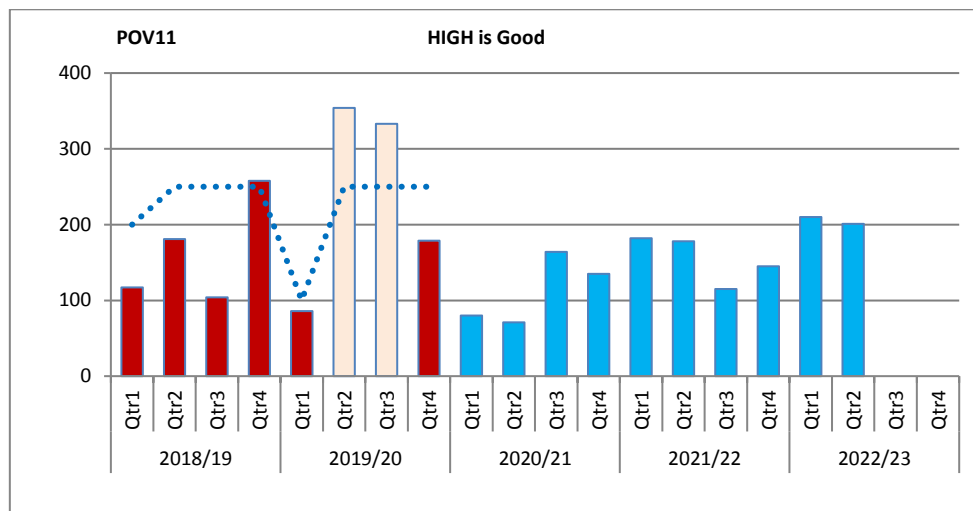


The number of people gaining employment through Employability Support has risen over the last twelve months. This covers the outcomes achieved by the following programmes; Swansea Working; Communities for Work; Communities for Work Plus; Workways STU; and Workways Plus.

6.3 Qualifications

Our aim is to help working age adults to achieve the qualifications required to achieve suitable, meaningful employment which will support them in dealing with the issues of poverty. People who improve their accredited qualifications and develop their skills and capabilities are more confident and better prepared for improving their earning potential and being successful in getting work that meets their needs and ambitions.

POV11 - The number of accredited qualifications achieved by adults with Local Authority support



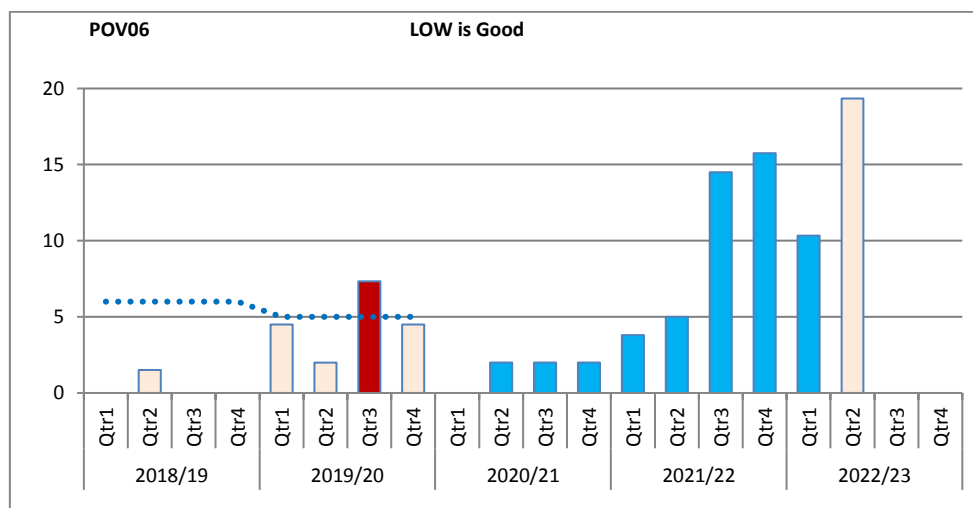
Whilst attendance at Swansea Working courses has improved and this shows on comparison to last year, the training course offer has expanded meaning more clients can access the courses.

6.4 Homelessness

Our aim is to help people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to. This is in line with Welsh Government’s priority for homelessness to be “rare, brief and unrepeatable”.

The Housing Act 1996 places a legal duty on local authorities to assist people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The Council’s Housing Support Programme Strategy – which incorporates the strategic approach to homelessness – aims to ensure that every person has access to good quality advice, accommodation and support at the earliest possible opportunity in order to prevent homelessness. This target specifically aims to ensure that we reduce the number of families with children that are placed in Bed & Breakfast accommodation and to reduce the time families spend in Bed & Breakfast accommodation.

POV06 - The average number of days all homeless families with children spend in Bed & Breakfast accommodation



During the COVID-19 pandemic, people who were homeless and impacted by the Coronavirus were able to stay in local hotels and Bed & Breakfast sites with the support of the Council. The pandemic continues to have an impact on the availability of temporary accommodation; move on is slower due to wider pressures on the availability of affordable housing, and households continue to present at a time of crisis where little/no prevention work is possible prior to temporary accommodation being needed. We have also seen a number of Ukrainian families present as needing emergency accommodation which has placed added pressure on stock levels. The Housing service continues to work towards 'always a bed' although this is reliant on continued funding from Welsh Government.

7. National Strategic Drivers

7.1 Wellbeing of Future Generations

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act places a duty on public bodies – including the Council – to carry out sustainable development and deliver against key wellbeing objectives.



The five principles of sustainable development under the Act are:

- Collaboration
- Integration
- Involvement
- Long-Term
- Prevention

We recognise that the Council's strategic approach to tackling poverty aligns with the goals and principles of the Act. The Corporate Priority of 'Tackling Poverty' is intended to focus our actions on prosperity, resilience and equality for people who are in or at risk of poverty, while contributing to cohesive communities and improving the health and wellbeing of the population.

7.2 Time for Change – Poverty in Wales

In November 2022, Audit Wales published the ['Time for Change' – Poverty in Wales](#) report for the Auditor General. This report was the first of three strategic investigations into the national approach to tackling and alleviating poverty. Swansea Council contributed to the investigation, which ran between April 2021 and September 2022, through a series of interviews, focus groups and providing key strategic documentation for review. A number of positive reflections on the approach to tackling poverty by the Council were noted in the report including:

- Taking a council-wide co-ordination approach bringing together senior officers to address the issues relating to poverty;
- Having clear reporting data on the total investment of Welsh Government grant funding directed toward poverty initiatives;
- Establishing the Swansea Poverty Truth Commission, the first of its kind in Wales;
- Partnering with neighbouring councils and other stakeholders on our campaigns and planning activities;
- Developing a comprehensive Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) to inform policy decision-making;
- Developing a Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy for supporting people that have overdue personal debt with the council.

The report identified eight recommendations for improvements to be made by Welsh Government and local authorities across Wales in relation to tackling and alleviating poverty. Further detail is in Section 9 Way Forward of our actions in response to the recommendations.

8. Additional developments

8.1 Prevention

While the Council's priority for tackling poverty focuses on supporting people dealing with the impacts of poverty, we must also ensure we continue supporting people to become resilient and achieve outcomes that they want to see in their own lives, which will in turn reduce demand on services.

A preventative approach means prioritising people staying healthy, happy, independent, and connected to their communities for as long as possible. Where people do need help to do this, they are supported earlier and more effectively.

We see a clear link between the prevention and tackling poverty corporate objective because preventing people's needs from escalating is an important approach to:

- Building resilience and capacity of individuals to address their own wellbeing needs;
- Building the strengths and assets of local communities to support individuals;
- Removing barriers facing individuals such as access to early interventions;
- Reducing the demand on services which can be mitigated through early interventions;
- Giving people the knowledge, skills and confidence to take full control of their lives.

As we engage with our population to refresh our strategic approach to tackling poverty, we will seek their views on how prevention can play a part in this priority as well as the wider benefits and opportunities from focusing in on early intervention and prevention.

8.2 Volunteering

One of the key features of the COVID-19 pandemic was the response of the volunteer community during the challenges of lockdowns and increased demand on public services. There were many stories of people stepping up within their communities to help those in need, providing essential support to supplement public services and third sector organisation.

Work is underway on the development of Swansea Council's Volunteering Strategy based on existing Council-led volunteering opportunities in departments like Social Services and Cultural Services. However, there is an opportunity to enhance the potential of volunteering to support people and communities to reduce poverty, improve prosperity and mitigate the risk to service delivery.

We see an opportunity to using the implementation of volunteering to tackle poverty by:

- Delivering volunteering tasks and activities that address the impacts of poverty, such as improving wellbeing;
- Helping unemployed people to develop skills and experience that can lead to future job opportunities;
- Improving the strengths and assets of local communities through social enterprises, community interest groups and volunteer-based initiatives.

Development of the Swansea Council Volunteering Strategy is one of the work plan items for the Safeguarding and Tackling Poverty Corporate Delivery Committee (CDC).

9. Way Forward

9.1 Corporate Plan Refresh

We are entering a period of strategic review of the Corporate Plan including the Tackling Poverty priority which will allow us to revisit the steps to tackling poverty. We will work with colleagues across the organisation to develop this corporate priority including preparing an IIA and Performance Indicators to feed into the 2023-27 Corporate Plan.

9.2 Strategy Refresh

The Tackling Poverty Strategy was due to be refreshed during 2022 but as a result of the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the Cost of Living crisis, this has been delayed. We plan to undertake a period of engagement and consultation with our partners and stakeholders – in particular with our population across Swansea – to inform and refresh our strategic approach. Our aim is to co-produce and publish a refreshed Tackling Poverty Strategy in 2023.

We recognise the need for working with colleagues, partners and stakeholders – including people with lived experience of poverty – to inform this approach. Using a person-centred, strengths-based approach means that there are many potential ways to tackle poverty including:

- Improving wellbeing and reducing health inequalities;
- Improving educational attainment;
- Improving opportunities for community participation;
- Helping people to maximise incomes and reduce costs;
- Promoting economic growth that is accessible, inclusive and benefits everyone;
- Providing more access to green spaces and opportunities to grow food.

A big part of this effort is to focus on prevention as a key approach to tackling poverty (as well as the wider benefits to the health and wellbeing of our population). We will also align closely with the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) strategic programme, Prevention and Community Coordination (PCC), to develop a regional, strategic approach in this area.

Our next steps are to take these key approaches to our population, partners and stakeholders to gather their views.

9.3 Recommendations from the 'Time for Change' report

The Audit Wales review into poverty in Wales highlighted eight key recommendations for Welsh Government and local authorities to action. We have reviewed our local position against these recommendations and identified the following key actions:

	Recommendation	What we are going to do
1	National strategy and targets for tackling and alleviating poverty	1. Work with Welsh Government on the national strategy, targets and performance measures.

	Recommendation	What we are going to do
2	Local strategies, targets and performance reporting for tackling and alleviating poverty	2. Refresh Tackling Poverty Strategy, aiming to publish by mid 2023. 3. Develop Tackling Poverty Performance Framework, aiming to publish by mid2023. 4. Develop a Swansea-centric dashboard of data and intelligence relating to tackling poverty.
3	Leadership on the poverty agenda	5. Engage with Welsh Local Government Association Poverty Group 6. Communications campaign to promote tackling poverty leadership roles and structures with our partners, networks and communities aligned to publication of the refreshed Tackling Poverty Strategy.
4	Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of grant-funded programmes	7. Develop a Tackling Poverty Data Framework to publish by mid 2023.
5	Experience mapping to create inclusive services for people in poverty	8. Deliver programme of engagement and 'experience mapping' activities with people with lived experience of poverty. 9. Review and identify opportunities and draft proposals for addressing digital and social inclusion.
6	Single web landing page for people seeking help	10. Review feedback on web page and undertake continuous improvement of content.
7	Streamlining and improving application and information services for people in poverty	11. Develop collaborative plan of community enablement activities and commitments as part of the corporate 'Tackling Poverty and Enabling Communities' priority. 12. Launch Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy to publish by April 2023.
8	Complying with the socio-economic duty	Action 4 above.

More detailed activities will be defined as part of the refresh of the Tackling Poverty Strategy and our action planning involving people with lived experience of poverty.

9.4 Performance Framework

Linking the performance of our services and actions to the outcomes for our population gives us an opportunity to clearly evidence the impact we are making in our efforts to tackle poverty in Swansea. Given the nature of the actions required, there are a number of cross-cutting outcomes owned by various departments and Corporate Performance Indicators that are linked to this priority.

We will develop a **Tackling Poverty Performance Framework** to define how we align the objectives, outcomes, indicators and measures relating to tackling poverty. A framework is required due to the complexity of how poverty align with other aspects of our service performance such as wellbeing.

This framework will provide the foundation for ongoing monitoring, measurement, demonstration and reporting of performance across departments and service delivery teams as well as aligning with relevant data from our partners and stakeholders. It will also help us

to identify trends and validate our successes by articulating more clearly how effective we are in tackling poverty (as well as the value of our total investment in tackling poverty).

9.5 Human Rights

Swansea declaration as a Human Rights City is part of the journey towards achieving a vision of vibrant, diverse, fair and safe communities built on the foundations of universal human rights. Tackling poverty emerged from the development of the proposals for the Human Rights City as the key priority for development, based on addressing the rights of people to live their lives.

We will allow us to explore different ways of ensuring that we meet the needs and rights of our population in the way we approach tackling poverty in the future.

9.6 Promotion and engagement

It is expected that through the course of the Swansea Poverty Truth Commission, challenges to the perceptions of poverty will start to be addressed. Commissioners with lived experience of poverty working with Civic and Business Commissioners will focus on topics of their choosing. This is, however, just one approach to working closely with people with lived experience of poverty to shape our actions and services in the future.

One of the ongoing challenges in making this a priority for everyone is addressing the feelings about being in poverty. Such feelings can prevent people in need from reaching out for help that is readily available to them. In addition to our plans for Experience Mapping, we intend to explore the language and behaviours relating to poverty to ensure that our approaches are aligned with the needs of our population.

We see opportunities to raise the profile of our services and efforts in tackling poverty, embedding principles of co-production to get our messages right and increasing the effectiveness of our actions.