



## **Tackling Poverty Service**

### **Annual Report on the delivery of the Corporate Priority 'Tackling Poverty and Enabling Communities' 2023**

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## 1. Executive Summary

Swansea Council's Corporate Plan 2023/28 – titled 'Delivering a Successful and Sustainable Swansea' – sets out six key council priorities, one of which is **Tackling Poverty and Enabling Communities** so that every person in Swansea can achieve their potential.

In this latest version of the Council's Corporate Plan, this objective was amended to add 'enabling communities' to recognise a strengths-based approach where the strengths of individuals, communities and networks can be capitalised upon to help tackle poverty.

Poverty is multi-dimensional, complex, growing and impacting more people and communities in Wales. Evidence from across Wales and in our local communities shows that poverty and the impacts of poverty are continuing to affect our population in many different ways.

In the last twelve months, the Council has:

- Delivered more grant opportunities for people and organisations to tackle poverty and respond to poverty challenges;
- Raised awareness of poverty and the support that is available for people and communities in Swansea;
- Continued delivering services that deliver help for people and communities impacted by poverty;
- Responded to the unique challenges facing the people and communities of Swansea during the Cost of Living crisis;
- Commenced refreshing our strategic direction and defining our vision for the future of poverty in Swansea.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress made against this Corporate Priority in the last twelve months.

## 2. Context

### 2.1. Definition of 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.

A lot has happened since this iteration of the strategy was published in early 2017 including the global COVID-19 pandemic and the Cost of Living crisis. Poverty is increasing across Wales and there is a clear need for more action to be taken.

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

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

The MIS (the amount of income that a person or household needs to meet living standards) is an established and recognised measure of poverty that is reviewed and updated annually in the UK by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. It is based on an understanding of what a basket of essential goods and services will cost, based on what the general public defines is essential. The MIS itself is not a measure of poverty but is a measure of the household income deemed by the public to be a sufficient income that allows you to afford a **minimum acceptable standard of living**.



In 2017:	In 2023:
A single person would need to earn at least £17,900 a year before tax.	A single person would need to earn at least £29,500 a year before tax.
A family of two working-age adults with two children would need to earn at least £40,800 a year before tax.	A family of two working-age adults with two children would need to earn at least £50,000 a year before tax.

At this time, the Council has been undergoing a refresh of the Tackling Poverty Strategy. A public survey was conducted between 21 August and 30 September 2023. The findings suggest improvements that could be made to our definition of poverty and we are currently developing the revised draft of the Tackling Poverty Strategy ready for public consultation in the coming months.

## 2.2. Current position

With around 1 in 5 people in Wales<sup>1</sup> in relative income poverty prior to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and 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.

**2.2.1.** Joseph Rowntree Foundation's report **Destitution in the UK 2023** looked at the accelerating picture of destitution, where someone experiences a lack of access to at least two of six items needed to meet the most basic physical needs to stay warm, dry, clean and fed (shelter, food, heating, lighting, clothing and footwear, and basic toiletries). Key findings of the report<sup>2</sup> are:

- Around 3.8m people in the UK experienced destitution in 2022, of which about 1 million were children;
- Most of these are UK nationals (72%) but people who have migrated to the UK were over-represented among those experiencing destitution;
- Destitution remains high in South Wales along with areas in the North of England, Midlands and West Central Scotland.

The report also highlights strong links between destitution and disability, the disproportionate impacts on Black, Black British, Caribbean or African households, and complications arising when a person is deemed to have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).

**2.2.2.** Bevan Foundation's report **A Snapshot of Poverty in Summer 2023** looked at impacts of surging costs and slow income growth for households in Wales. Key findings of the report<sup>3</sup> are:

- Around 15% of households in Wales are struggling to afford essential items;
- Around 26% of people in Wales are eating smaller meals or skipping meals;
- Around 29% of people borrowed money between April and July;
- Around 13% of people were in arrears on at least one bill for at least one month;
- Around 45% of people reported that their financial position had negatively affected their mental health.

The report also highlights that some groups of people have been especially hit hard by the Cost of Living crisis, including people on benefits, renters, disabled people and parents of children under 18 years old.

## 2.3. National Strategic Drivers

**2.3.1.** The **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act** is about improving our national social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being. It details ways in which public bodies must work and work together to improve the wellbeing of Wales.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Relative Income Poverty: April 2019 to March 2020 report by Welsh Government

<sup>2</sup> Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation 'Destitution in the UK 2023' published October 2023.




<sup>3</sup> Source: Bevan Foundation 'A snapshot of poverty in Summer 2023' published July 2023.

The Act<sup>4</sup> puts in place a **sustainable development principle** which means that public bodies in Wales must act in a manner that ensures that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.



The Act also established the creation of Public Services Boards (PSB) in each Local Authority area, responsible for assessing the state of wellbeing in that area and producing a plan to improve economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being. The **Swansea Public Services Board** is our local PSB.



**2.3.2.** There are five things that public bodies must do to show that they are applying this principle, and the table below explains how those five Ways of Working apply to this Corporate Priority:

Way of Working	Description	How it applies to this Corporate Priority
<p><b>Collaboration</b></p> 	<p>Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.</p>	<p>Tackling poverty and enabling communities cannot be effectively delivered without strong relationships and close working between people, communities, organisations and service providers.</p>
<p><b>Integration</b></p> 	<p>Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.</p>	<p>We recognise that tackling poverty and enabling communities requires a "One Swansea" approach which aligns the priorities and commitments of multiple public service organisations. This is one of six Wellbeing Objectives for Swansea Council.</p>
<p><b>Involvement</b></p> 	<p>The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.</p>	<p>People with lived experience of poverty are best placed to provide the insight and direction for our tackling poverty and enabling communities services. Embracing the principles of co-production will help us to shape these services while enabling people to become more actively involved in their communities.</p>

<sup>4</sup> Based on information on Acts of the National Assembly for Wales on [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

Way of Working	Description	How it applies to this Corporate Priority
<p>Long-term</p> 	<p>The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the long-term needs.</p>	<p>Poverty can impact people in both short and long term ways, including generational poverty spanning multiple generations of the same family. We recognise that helping people in the short-term (such as people in poverty crisis) can only be effective if we consider how to help someone escape poverty in a safe and sustainable way.</p>
<p>Prevention</p> 	<p>How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.</p>	<p>Preventing poverty is a key challenge, as we understand that for many people, experiencing poverty could be preventable with the right information, advice and support in place. Tackling issues like isolation and mental health can improve people's chances of falling into poverty.</p>

**2.3.3.** In 2016, the **Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act** came into force, which provides the legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales. The fundamental principles of the Act<sup>5</sup> are:

- Voice and control – putting the individual and their needs, at the centre of their care, and giving them a voice in, and control over reaching the outcomes that help them achieve well-being.
- Prevention and early intervention – increasing preventative services within the community to minimise the escalation of critical need.
- Well-being – supporting people to achieve their own well-being and measuring the success of care and support.
- Co-production – encouraging individuals to become more involved in the design and delivery of services.

**2.3.4.** In 2022 - 2023, Audit Wales completed a series of reviews looking at poverty in Wales and published the following **Audit Wales Review of Poverty** reports of their findings:

- 'Time for Change' Poverty in Wales (November 2022);
- 'A missed opportunity' – Social Enterprises (December 2022);
- 'Together We Can' – Community resilience and self reliance (January 2023);
- Digital Inclusion in Wales (March 2023);

These reports combined showed areas where further work on tackling poverty is recognised across Wales and provides a national strategic driver for change. The following recommendations were highlighted from these reports:

<sup>5</sup> Based on information on Acts of the National Assembly for Wales on [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

Report	Recommendation
'Time for Change'	R1 - Welsh Government to update the current Child Poverty in Wales Strategy setting up national targets, actions and performance measures.
'Time for Change'	R2 – Local Authorities to provide a comprehensive focus on tackling poverty through their Wellbeing Plans.
'Time for Change'	R3 – Local Authorities to designate a cabinet member as the council’s poverty champion and designate a senior officer accountable for the anti-poverty agenda.
'Time for Change'	R4 – Welsh Government to address weaknesses in the way that funding for tackling poverty programmes is administered and monitored.
'Time for Change'	R5 – Local Authorities to improve their understanding of lived experience of poverty through meaningful involvement and experience mapping, such as the use of Poverty Truth Commissions.
'Time for Change'	R6 – Local Authorities to create a single landing web page on their council websites which provide links and information relating to poverty.
'Time for Change'	R7 – Local Authorities to note the lack of a single gateway into services which means people often have to provide the same data multiple times when applying for similar services.
'Time for Change'	R8 – Local Authorities review their integrated impact assessments or equivalent to ensure that there are effective forms of assessment of socio-economic impact.
'A missed opportunity'	R1 – Local Authorities to conduct a self-evaluation of current Social Enterprise engagement, management, performance and practice, and develop an action plan to address the identified gaps and weaknesses.
'A missed opportunity'	R2 – Local Authorities to implement regular review, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the above action plan.
'Together We Can'	R1 – Local Authorities to conduct a self-evaluation of current engagement, management, performance and practice in relation to strengthening community resilience and self-reliance, and develop an action plan to address the identified gaps and weaknesses.
'Together We Can'	R2 – Local Authorities to implement regular review, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the above action plan.



### **3. Poverty in Swansea**

#### **3.1. Impacts of COVID-19 pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on society since it began in early 2020 until the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced the end of the global pandemic in May 2023. 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.

**3.1.1.** 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 across all services.

#### **3.2. Impacts of 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 warned that the UK is facing its longest recession since records began a century ago.

**3.2.1.** 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 2023 report highlights some of the 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;
- 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.

**3.2.2.** 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 initiatives<sup>6</sup>;
- The need to develop Warm Hub provision in Swansea due to rising energy costs<sup>7</sup>;
- Continued high numbers of people and families struggling to make ends meet<sup>8</sup>;
- 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 advice<sup>9</sup>;
- 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.** 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 (employment, education, health and disability, and household overcrowding). Data such as the graph below illustrates the experiences of people during the Cost of Living crisis.



*ONS graph on people taking action in response to Cost of Living crisis*

<sup>6</sup> Statistics available at [www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats](http://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats)

<sup>7</sup> A list of Swansea Spaces is available at [www.swansea.gov.uk/swanseaspaces](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/swanseaspaces)

<sup>8</sup> Source: Bevan Foundation ‘A snapshot of poverty in Summer 2023’ published July 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Citizens Advice ‘Wales: Cost of living briefing’ published July 2022

**3.3.2.** This year, the Swansea Public Services Board produced its **Local Wellbeing Plan 2023 - 2028** 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 focus for this Wellbeing Plan builds on the PSB's long-term objectives, which are:

- **Early Years** - to ensure that children have the best start in life to be the best they can be;
- **Live Well, Age Well** - to make Swansea a great place to live at every stage of life;
- **Climate Change and Nature Recovery** - to restore and enhance biodiversity, tackle the causes, and reduce the impact of climate change;
- **Strong Communities** - to build cohesive and resilient communities with a sense of pride and belonging.

**3.3.3.** 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 online at [www.westglamorgan.org.uk](http://www.westglamorgan.org.uk) highlight a range of impacts that poverty has on health and wellbeing, including:



**Partneriaeth**  
Ranbarthol  
Gorllewin  
Morgannwg

West  
Glamorgan  
Regional  
**Partnership**

- 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'.

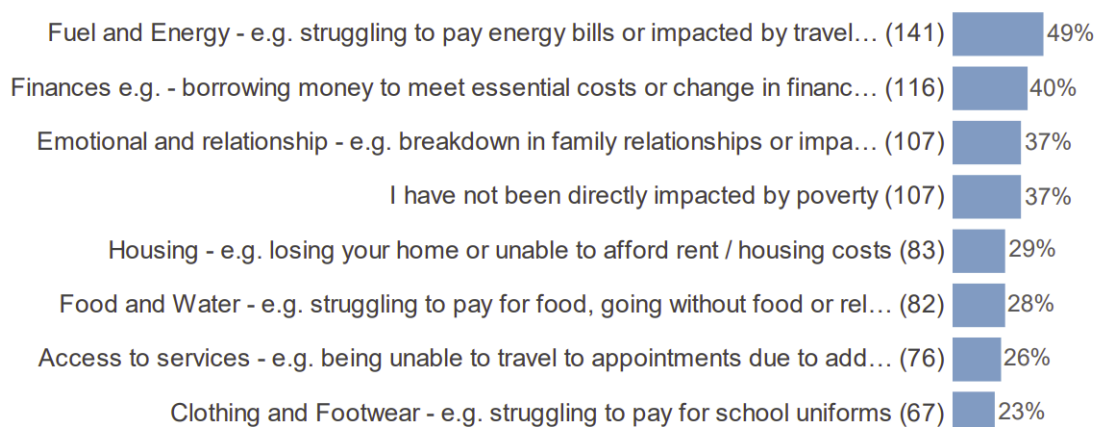
**3.3.4.** The **Tackling Poverty Strategy Survey 2023** ran from 23 August 2023 to 30 September 2023. The survey was online and printed copies in English and Welsh were available at the network of libraries across Swansea as well as delivered to partner organisations across Swansea upon request.

The initial findings from the survey have shown:

- The current definition of poverty in Swansea could be improved by making it easier to understand, recognising the impacts of poverty, and more clearly express what it means to be in poverty beyond just financial measures;
- When considering what actions could be taken to tackle poverty, the most agreed responses were:
  - Improve access to affordable, safe and secure homes (97%);
  - Tackle and prevent homelessness (97%);
  - Improve access to services including referring processes, signposting and raising awareness of available support (96%);
  - Use clear early intervention and prevention approaches that help people to avoid falling into poverty (96%).
- There needs to be a clearer picture of the strategic direction, with a well defined and easy to understand vision for the future;
- Key priorities based on the comments made by responders (in no particular order):
  - Child Poverty;
  - Community Support;
  - Digital Inclusion;
  - Health and Wellbeing;
  - Homelessness;
  - Information, advice and guidance;
  - Stigma and Discrimination.

When we asked what characteristics of poverty people in Swansea had experienced the most, the diagram below shows the most agreed responses.

If you have been impacted by poverty, which of these issues have you been most impacted by? Please select more than one if applicable:



We have included a selection of quotes and comments from the survey in this report to provide further evidence of the insights and lived experience of poverty by the people of Swansea (section 5.1.1).

### 3.4. Poverty Data

**3.4.1. 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:

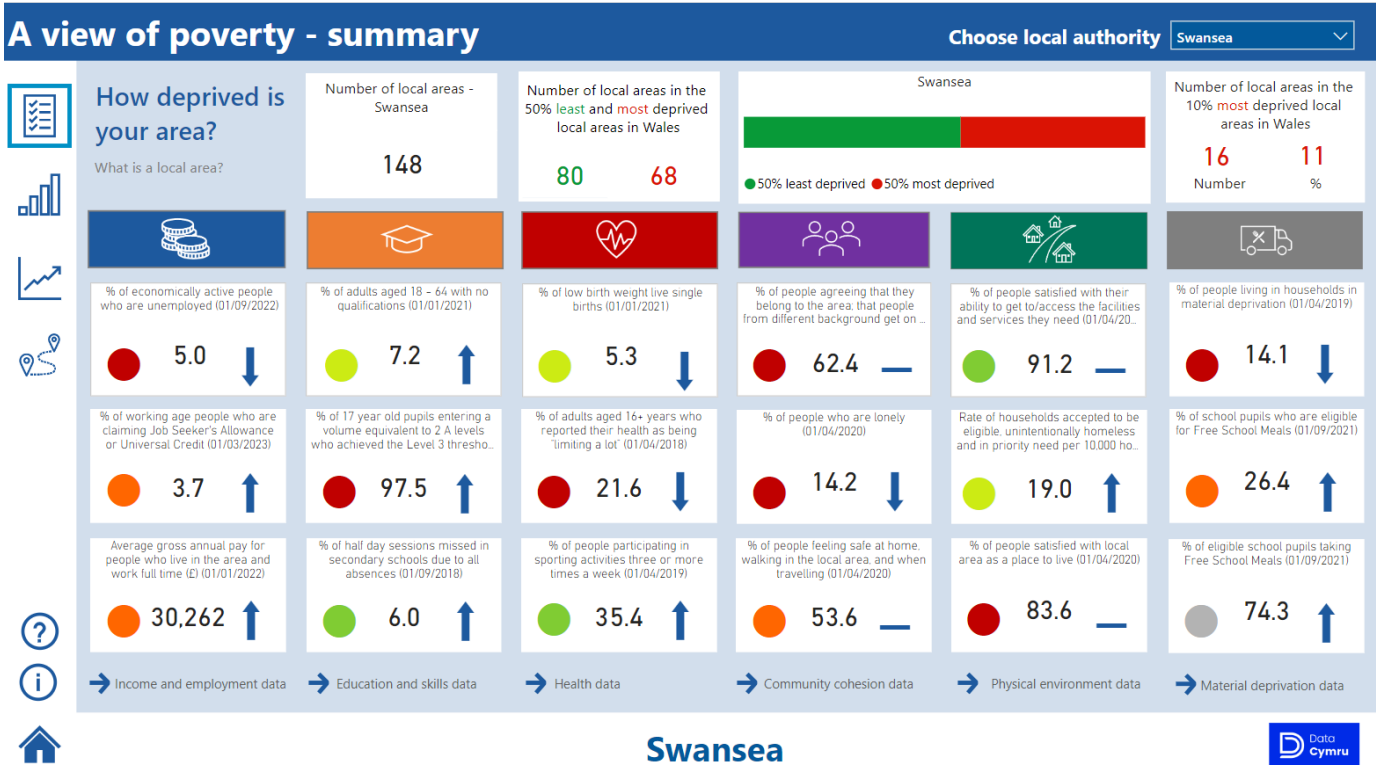
- Identifying the most deprived small areas;
- Comparing relative deprivation of small areas;
- Exploring the 8 types of deprivation for small areas;
- Comparing the proportion of small areas within a larger area that are very deprived;
- Using indicator data (but not ranks) to compare absolute change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

According to the WIMD, 17 of the most deprived LSOAs across Wales are within the Swansea local authority area, which accounts for 0.9% of all LSOAs in Wales:

Name of Area	WIMD Code	Rank in Swansea	Rank in Wales
<a href="#">Townhill 2</a>	W01000863	1	16
<a href="#">Townhill 1</a>	W01000862	2	18
<a href="#">Penderry 3</a>	W01000832	3	22
<a href="#">Castle 1</a>	W01000742	4	23
<a href="#">Penderry 1</a>	W01000830	5	31
<a href="#">Townhill 3</a>	W01000864	6	32
<a href="#">Castle 2 North</a>	W01001955	7	36
<a href="#">Mynyddbach 1</a>	W01000817	8	37
<a href="#">Townhill 5</a>	W01000866	9	41
<a href="#">Penderry 4</a>	W01000833	10	48
<a href="#">Townhill 6</a>	W01000867	11	58
<a href="#">Bonymaen 1</a>	W01000738	12	81
<a href="#">Morrleston 5</a>	W01000810	13	95
<a href="#">Penderry 2</a>	W01000831	14	147
<a href="#">Morrleston 7</a>	W01000812	15	154
<a href="#">Penderry 6</a>	W01000835	16	157
<a href="#">Llansamlet 8</a>	W01000801	17	179

**3.4.2. The Data Cymru Poverty Dashboard** national online tool collates 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 which highlights key data sets related to poverty:



**3.4.3. The Audit Wales Data Dashboard** national online tool is designed to support decision making in councils and improve how they target their work. This tool can be accessed for information at <https://www.wao.gov.uk/news/poverty-wales-data-tool-published-today>. Below is the latest snapshot of local data which highlights key data sets related to poverty alongside a local authority and national comparison:

Home	Audit Wales Website	Cymraeg
<b>Overview of local authorities</b>		
<p>It would be impossible to summarise all aspects of poverty on a single page, but we have included some of the key aspects here to give an overview by local authority. Use the drop down boxes to compare up to two local authorities.</p>	<b>Unitary Authority</b>	<b>Select comparator</b>
	Swansea	Cardiff
		<b>Wales Average</b>
Adults (16+) in material deprivation (2020)	14	13
Amount of arrears of council tax outstanding (March 2022)	10801	9114
Children living in relative low income families (2021)	19	21
Employment Rate (2021)	72	75
Number of face to face providers per 100,000 population (2020)	2	6
Change in average weekly gross income 2011-2021 (real terms)	1	-1
Median energy costs in 2021(£)	749	677
Median energy efficiency (2020-21)(0=least efficient, 100= most efficient)	65	68
Average credit score (2022) (0=lowest, 999=highest)	753	775

## 4. Corporate Priority

### 4.1. Why this priority is a well-being objective?

Between 2023 and 2028, the Cost of Living crisis and ongoing economic challenges will continue to impact on individuals, families and communities across Swansea. The Council has an important role to play in helping people to alleviate poverty, improving their personal prosperity through better skills and jobs, and address the key issues influencing poverty such as homelessness.

We also see a role for our communities in supporting people to deliver early interventions, improve the wellbeing of local people and build collaborative relationships with service providers. Our vision for this priority is **to create welcoming, strong, resilient, connected and prosperous communities as part of our response to tackle and alleviate poverty in Swansea.**

This is a wellbeing objective because we need to:

- continue responding to the global economic pressures – including the Cost of Living crisis – that are impacting on our communities;
- target support for people in poverty or at risk of poverty in order to alleviate poverty and tackle the longer-term impacts on our society;
- focus on helping people to avoid the need to access services by promoting early interventions and preventative action;
- embed the lived experience of people in poverty across our services to ensure that we understand and meet those needs;
- create communities that are safe and resilient where people's rights and needs are respected;
- improve the personal prosperity of individuals through opportunities to develop skills, improve employability, access jobs and look after their own wellbeing.

### 4.2. The longer-term challenges this well-being objective will help address

Levels of poverty which remains persistently high and impacts on life expectancy, health outcomes and adverse effects on the poorest areas.

People's experiences of poverty covering a range of common issues including access to essential resources such as housing, fuel, energy, clothing, footwear, food, and water, as well as support with finances, exclusion from services, and emotional and relationship issues.

The extra costs that people on low incomes must pay for essentials – such as transport, fuel and food – due to the poverty premium, compounded by the ongoing Cost of Living crisis.

The role our communities play in tackling poverty and preventing people's needs from escalating to the point where they need services or interventions.

Changes to population and demographics as well as local population needs as our communities have more older people, become more urbanised and require more homes to be built.

Opportunities to work closer with communities to tackle these important challenges, building on the networks, strengths and assets of our local areas.

#### **4.3. The steps we will take to meet this well-being objective**

**Strategic direction** – We will develop methods of working with people with lived experience to co-produce and publish our aligned strategic visions, outcomes and priorities for Tackling Poverty and Community Enablement.

**Cost of Living** – We will reduce levels of poverty and mitigate the impacts of being in poverty by rolling out government grants, providing welfare rights advice and implementing schemes including the ‘free bus ride’ initiative and Swansea Spaces.

**Tackling and preventing homelessness** – We will implement the Housing Support Programme Strategy to support people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

**Making more homes available** – We will offer more energy efficient and affordable homes to help minimise household costs, as well as increasing the availability and quality of social housing, to help more people access accommodation that is suitable for their needs.

**Improving people’s prosperity** – We will deliver programmes of employability, skills development and community enhancements that help people to improve their prospects for the future and volunteer to contribute to their local communities.

**Focus on early intervention** – We will collaborate with communities to help them play a stronger role in preventing escalation of individuals’ needs and integrating with partners / local sources of support to mitigate demands on services.

**Empowering communities** – We will embed the principles of human rights across our work with communities, empowering local people to get more involved in the co-production of services, community cohesion and social value.

**Keeping communities safe** – We will tackle anti-social behaviour through targeted initiatives and support for people who are vulnerable or at risk by improving the presence of enforcement and using events/technologies to protect people & property.

**Building community assets** – We will continue to grow the assets of all communities across Swansea by using a strengths-based approach to increase resilient community-led initiatives (such as social enterprises) and establish integrated community hubs aligned with our Local Library Plan.



#### **4.4. 2023/24 Targets**

By the end of 2023-2024, we will have:

- Published our refreshed Tackling Poverty Strategy, working co-productively with our partners and people with lived experience of poverty;
- Developed a Tackling Poverty Performance Framework that aligns objectives, outcomes and performance measures related to tackling poverty;
- Began a review of the Council's Housing Allocations Policy to ensure focus on providing suitable homes for vulnerable people, unintentionally homeless and people who may be struggling with poverty;
- Agreed a strategy to support homeless individuals as the COVID-19 hotel use ends, whilst continuing with our 'always a bed' pledge;
- Supported the establishment of the Swansea Sustainable Food Partnership;
- Published our Corporate Volunteering Policy to develop and manage voluntary action within the organisation.

Further information on our current position against the steps above and our targets for 2023/24 is detailed in Section 5 and Section 7.

#### **4.5. How we will measure progress**

The following measures represent the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) relevant to this Corporate Priority:

- Amount (value) of grants allocated to businesses for applying for Cost of Living funds.
- Amount (value) of benefit entitlements claimed through Welfare Rights Advice.
- Time taken (days) to process Council Tax Reduction and Housing Benefit applications.
- Time taken (days) to process Council Tax Reduction and Housing Benefit changes of circumstances.
- Number of people who gain employment through Employability Support.
- Number of adults who achieve accredited qualifications through Adult Learning.
- The number of beneficiaries who have attended the Get Swansea Online programme.

Further information on our current position against these KPIs is detailed in Section 6.

## The contribution this well-being objective makes to the national goals

A prosperous Wales	A resilient Wales	A more equal Wales	A Wales of more cohesive communities	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	A healthier Wales	A globally responsible Wales
Direct	Indirect	Direct	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect

## How we will maximise our contribution to the national goals through the way in which we work

**Preventing problems from occurring or from getting worse** – we will use early interventions, strategic partnerships, and community-led initiatives to take a preventative approach to not only poverty but the wider impacts of poverty to ensure that escalating needs are addressed before service interventions are required.

**Addressing long-term challenges** – we will strike a balance between the short term needs of people in poverty (such as the need for housing and essential resources like food and clothes) with helping people to improve their personal prosperity and long-term aspirations for the future.

**Working in partnership with others** – we will work with partners and stakeholders including local communities themselves to reflect the diversity of our population and the opportunities available from collaboration and service integration.

**Avoiding conflicts between public body objectives** – we will develop a framework for linking our national, regional and local outcomes that demonstrates the contributions of our services and transformation programmes to public body strategies, policies and objectives.

**Involving people** – we will embed principles of human rights and coproduction across our tackling poverty and enabling communities programmes and initiatives, mapping the experiences and capturing the voices of people with lived experience of poverty.

## The contribution this well-being objective makes to PSB Well-being Objectives

Early Years	Live well, age well	Climate Change and Nature Recovery	Strong communities
Direct	Direct	Indirect	Direct

## 5. Corporate Plan Steps

### 5.1. Step 1 – Strategic direction

The focus of this step is to improve our strategic direction and approaches to tackling poverty and enabling communities, so that we can develop our strategies and plans to meet the needs of our population.

**5.1.1.** This year, the Council's Tackling Poverty Development team (part of the Tackling Poverty Service) have been leading on the refresh of the current **Tackling Poverty Strategy**. A lot has changed since the last published version of the strategy in 2017 and during this year, we have been listening to the people of Swansea to find out what they think about poverty. They have shared their ideas and priorities for tackling poverty through a range of activities including:

- Completion of a dedicated survey which was live from August to September 2023 (contributions were made online and through paper forms);
- Face-to-face public engagement events at venues including the Employment Hub in the Quadrant Shopping Centre;
- Presentations through partnership forums, networks and events where we listened to the views of organisations involved in tackling poverty and representing the people of Swansea;
- Conversations with individuals, families and communities through our existing participation and engagement channels.

Our survey received 309 responses including from other 30 organisations. Many of the comments and quotes provided to us through the survey are from real people impacted by poverty in Swansea such as some of the quotes below:

It is all about speaking to people to help them with what they need.

Have often gone days without eating due to financial issues.

As an elderly person I struggle to pay bills, buy food and generally live.

Tackle problems which contribute to people falling into poverty proactively.

Poverty has devastated my life and my family.

Having to fight for everything has made me want to end my life.

At this time, we are drafting the refreshed Tackling Poverty Strategy and this will be followed by a public consultation in early 2024 prior to approving and publishing the new strategy.

**5.1.2.** In readiness for the launch of a refreshed strategy, we are planning to increase the involvement of people with lived experience of poverty in our work. This will require more engagement and support for people who have used our services and those of our partners. We want to give more opportunities to listen to the voice of people who have been affected by poverty when we are planning and developing our services, programmes and initiatives.

**5.1.3.** The **Swansea Poverty Truth Commission** (SPTC) was officially launched at the Taliesin Arts Centre, Swansea University Singleton Campus in October 2022. This is the first commission of its kind in Wales and brings together community, civic and business commissioners from across Swansea to put people with lived experience of poverty at the heart of policy and decision making.



**5.1.4.** This year, we have continued to develop and coordinate 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.

**5.1.5.** The Swansea Council Poverty Forum continues to meet monthly and bring together colleagues from across the Council to focus on a range of tackling poverty outcomes and collaborative activities. This year, the forum has:

- Promoted and shared key messages across our partnerships, circulation lists and networks such as encouraging involvement in our Tackling Poverty Strategy Survey exercise;
- Developed internal schemes and poverty-related communications such as new Money Guiders information and training for Council staff;
- Coordinated a range of activities and contributions on key events and activities such as Welsh Government's public consultation on the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales.

## 5.2. Step 2 – Cost of Living

The focus of this step is to improve the help and support we provide people who are impacted by the ongoing Cost of Living crisis. There are a wide range of activities across the Council that contribute to this step due to the complex and often significant impacts that this crisis has had on the people of Swansea.

**5.2.1.** Since September 2022, the Council’s website - which is maintained by the Web Team (Digital and Customer Services) – has included a link on its landing page to a **Cost of Living help page** (<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/costoflivinghelp>). This page provides lots of information, resources and links for people who are struggling with the Cost of Living crisis:

Swansea Home > Residents

### Cost of living help

We have put together these pages to help provide information on the cost of living. We will add more information when we receive it. If you are still struggling with costs, then you can find people to talk to who can give you further advice using our [search for advice and support](#).

<b>Swansea Spaces</b> Places in Swansea that are offering a warm welcome to residents.	<b>Cost of living payments available</b> There are payments available from both the UK and Welsh governments to help with the cost of living.	<b>Energy costs and household bills</b> Support and advice on paying your energy and other household bills.
<b>Swansea Working</b> Looking for work? We can help you.	<b>Debt and money worries</b> 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.	<b>Food and essential items</b> Find out where you can access free food and other essential items such as period products.
<b>Housing</b> Support is available to help find you somewhere to live, prevent you from becoming homeless and help you with your rent and other bills.	<b>School costs</b> Help is available for everything your child needs for school.	<b>Travel and transport</b> Discounts are available on buses and trains. We also offer free bus travel for everyone during school holidays.

Since it launched in September 2022, the Cost of Living help web page has had 112,545 views and continues to be updated with the most recent information and advice. This includes links to partner websites such as UK Government, Welsh Government, Citizens Advice and the National Waterfront Museum.

**5.2.2.** This year, the Council has continued to administer and coordinate a number of poverty grants aimed at helping people and organisations respond to the Cost of Living crisis and wider impacts of poverty in Swansea. In total, the Council has so far administered over £400,000 in tackling poverty grants to local people and organisations. Recently, a new Enabling Communities Grant was launched which saw the Council add up to £500,000 in available grants this financial year.

Below are some of the key tackling poverty grants we have delivered in 2023:

### 5.2.3. Swansea Spaces (Warm Hubs Grant) 2022/23

<b>Description</b>	Welsh Government funding for organisations to provide warm hub provision in response to the Cost of Living crisis.
<b>Grant Value</b>	2022/23 - £83,831
<b>Grants Awarded</b>	2022/23 - 70 successful applications
<b>Grant Spend</b>	Enrichment Activities / Resources, Travel Costs, Refreshments and Food, Kitchen Equipment, Volunteer Expenses, Charging Equipment, Overhead Contributions, Internet Access, Furniture
<b>Grant Administrator</b>	Tackling Poverty Service



In November 2022, Welsh Government allocated grants to local authorities across Wales to support the creation of Warm Hubs as safe and warm places within the local community that people can go to keep warm during the Winter. With domestic fuel prices increasing rapidly, people struggled to keep their homes at a healthy temperature, particularly people at home all day, the elderly and vulnerable.

We established a Swansea Spaces Directory where organisations, services and community groups could submit information about their spaces. The funds supported Swansea Spaces themselves and the people who attended them, including the provision of hot drinks, snacks or meals, and enrichment activities as well as the additional costs of providing the spaces.

We provided a hot meal twice a week often to people living alone and would not cook for themselves. It has taken the worry away from people who struggled to heat their homes, if only for two days a week.

**Trallwn Community Centre**

The safe space provided has also allowed us as an organisation to gather new members, support these members and build strong working relationships and confidence with members of the community who are lonely and isolated and who haven't previously engaged with services.

**Sadies Butterflies Swansea**

Our intention is to continue maintaining the online Swansea Spaces directory ([www.swansea.gov.uk/swanseaspaces](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/swanseaspaces)) and promoting/enhancing these spaces through alternative grant funding opportunities.



#### 5.2.4. Direct Food Support Grant 2022/23 and 2023/24

<b>Description</b>	Welsh Government funding for organisations tackling food poverty and food insecurity.
<b>Grant Value</b>	2022/23 - £121,213 2023/24 - £87,850
<b>Grants Awarded</b>	2022/23 - 80 successful applications (2 funding rounds) 2023/24 - 48 successful applications
<b>Grant Spend</b>	Kitchen / Cooking Equipment, Food Supplies, Baby Food Supplies, Volunteer Expenses and Training, Fareshare Membership, Storage Solutions, Community Growing Equipment, Fridges, Freezers, Overhead Contributions, Supermarket Vouchers, Toiletries, Easter Hampers, Cooking Tuition.
<b>Grant Administrator</b>	Tackling Poverty Service

The purpose of the Direct Food Support Grant is to support people facing food poverty by strengthening existing community food initiatives including a focus on activity that helps to address the root causes of food poverty.

At this time, the Direct Food Support Grant 2023/24 has been fully allocated. Monitoring and feedback for the 2023/24 grant is scheduled to take place at the end of the financial year.

“It has given the opportunity to support those in financial need to look more closely at their use of utility costs and where they can reduce usage, as well as helping to identify areas where families can budget more effectively in their food shop and by bulk cooking.

**Action for Children**

“Feedback from guests that without this provision they wouldn't have a hot meal. Being able to provide a choice of meals offers dignity and respect.

**Zac's Place**



## 5.2.5. Period Dignity Grants 2022/23 and 2023/24

<b>Description</b>	Welsh Government funding for organisations provide period dignity products in schools.
<b>Grant Value</b>	2022/23 - £147,649 (Total grant £211,853) 2023/24 - £115,372 (Total grant £211,853, administration fee 12.5%)
<b>Grants Awarded</b>	2022/23 - 77 Primary Schools, 2 Special Schools, 14 Secondary Schools, 1 PRU 2023/24 – 77 Primary Schools, 2 Special Schools, 14 Secondary Schools, 1 PRU
<b>Grant Spend</b>	Period Dignity Products (mainly eco products), Training, Underwear
<b>Grant Administrator</b>	Education

<b>Description</b>	Welsh Government funding for organisations provide period dignity products in communities.
<b>Grant Value</b>	2022/23 - £64,204 (Total grant £211,853) 2023/24 - £70,000 (Total grant £211,853, administration fee 12.5%)
<b>Grants Awarded</b>	2022/23 - 34 successful applications (Communities) 2023/24 - 32 successful applications (Communities)
<b>Grant Spend</b>	Period Dignity Products, Training, Underwear
<b>Grant Administrator</b>	Tackling Poverty Service

The purpose of the Period Dignity Grants is to ensure period dignity for all and prioritising people from low-income households, providing products free of charge and accessible in the most practical and dignified way possible. This supports the Swansea Takes On Period Poverty (STOPP) vision to make Swansea a Period Positive city (with the support of [www.periodpositive.com](http://www.periodpositive.com)) where period products are freely available in all public facilities such as schools, libraries (including venues like Swansea Museum), community centres and other private businesses.

At this time, the Period Dignity Grants 2023/24 have been fully allocated for both Schools and Communities. Monitoring and feedback for the 2023/24 grant is scheduled to take place at the end of the financial year.

The reusable products have been beneficial because we know that people will not have to worry month to month about having to get period products.

**Cae Rowland**

This has helped to empower women in our community by giving them the confidence and support they need to manage their periods with ease and comfort.

**Chinese Autism in Wales**



### 5.2.6. Holiday Food Fund – Summer 2023

<b>Description</b>	Levelling Up funding allocated to support the provision of Holiday Food Support targeting school aged children / families with school aged children that are struggling with the cost of food.
<b>Grant Value</b>	£140,080.27
<b>Grants Awarded</b>	43 successful applications
<b>Grant Spend</b>	Food parcels, Food for events and cookery workshops, Food Vouchers, Volunteer Expenses and Coordination.
<b>Grant Administrator</b>	Tackling Poverty Service

During the pandemic, Welsh Government temporarily extended the Free School Meals offer to include for payments during school holidays administered by local authorities. This offer was withdrawn on 28 June 2023, shortly before the summer holidays.

The Council allocated funding to provide additional support to help mitigate child food poverty and food insecurity during the school summer holiday 2023. This resulted in an estimated 65,000 meals being provided during the summer holiday 2023.



It enabled us to offer much needed food packs to families who we know are struggling, during a period of time when funding for free school meals was withdrawn and families were already struggling due to the cost-of-living crisis.

**Goleudy Community Fridge**

One asylum seeker mother told us that they went to Tesco to buy food. Her daughter said that it was the only time that they had ever been able to use a big trolley for their food shop.

**Swansea Asylum Seekers Support**

**5.2.7. The Revenues and Benefits Service** (Finance Directorate) is responsible for various and diverse functions worth approximately £370m of transactions in any normal year. Our functions relate to both collection of income and payments to vulnerable citizens and include:

- Administration and payment of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction and Discretionary Housing Payments;
- Collection of Council Tax, Business Rates and recovery of Housing Benefit overpayments;
- Determining eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM) and Uniform Grants on behalf of the Council's Education Service;
- All aspects of financial assessments and payments for social care and collection of service users' contributions towards the costs of their care - on behalf of the Social Services Department;
- Providing technically specialist front facing customer services for its services - face to face/telephone/e-mail/skype/Microsoft teams.

Below are details of the additional grants we have delivered in 2023:

#### **5.2.8. Fuel Support Scheme 2022/23**

<b>Description</b>	Welsh Government funding for households to receive a £200 payment towards fuel payments.
<b>Grant Value</b>	2022/23 - £5,782,800
<b>Grants Awarded</b>	2022/23 – 28,914 successful applications
<b>Grant Spend</b>	Contributions towards home energy bills and fuel poverty.
<b>Grant Administrator</b>	Revenues and Benefits

#### **5.2.9. Energy Bills Support Schemes Alternative Funding 2022/23**

<b>Description</b>	UK Government funding for households to receive a £200 payment towards fuel payments.
<b>Grant Value</b>	2022/23 - £52,000
<b>Grants Awarded</b>	2022/23 – 260 successful applications
<b>Grant Spend</b>	Contributions towards home fuel bills.
<b>Grant Administrator</b>	Revenues and Benefits

#### **5.2.10. Alternative Fuel Payments Alternative Funds 2022/23**

<b>Description</b>	Welsh Government funding for households to receive a £200 payment towards fuel payments where they use alternative fuels as their main form of heating.
<b>Grant Value</b>	2022/23 - £160,000
<b>Grants Awarded</b>	2022/23 – 400 successful applications
<b>Grant Spend</b>	Contributions towards home fuel bills
<b>Grant Administrator</b>	Revenues and Benefits

**5.2.11.** The Welfare Rights and Financial Inclusion team (Tackling Poverty Service) is responsible for providing specialist advice and guidance on **welfare benefits** and tax credit law. Our remit is to increase benefit knowledge and awareness of those working in Swansea which will increase resources to support residents with their benefit issues. In 2023-24, we introduced a first stage welfare rights service to clients of Social Services. In addition, we provide a welfare rights and financial inclusion service to individuals who are engaged with Communities for Work Plus.

The team currently:

- Runs a dedicated Advice Line three days a week for any service/organisation in Swansea seeking advice or information in relation to their client's benefits;
- Provides appointments for benefits checks, form filling, and dealing with complex cases such as social security appeals and legal issues including benefits decision-making;
- Delivers training to staff on relevant topics such as Universal Credit, aiming to help staff to develop and increase working knowledge of the welfare rights system;
- Produces materials and information relating to welfare benefits such as guidance on completing forms including Personal Independence Payments (PIP);
- Provided targeted advice and support to frontline teams such as Local Area Coordinators and Employability Mentors;
- Undertakes targeted campaigns and collaborative working with partners and colleagues across the Council.

Since April 2023...	
Number of contacts via the Advice Line	726
Number of appointments offered	276
Number of successful appeals	32
Number of training courses delivered	14
Number of people accessing Financial Inclusion support	192

In 2022/23, the team helped to secure £1,379,411 benefits and so far this financial year (2023/24) that number has already reached £1,307,888. This is achieved through providing benefit checks to identify benefits that people are entitled to, but not claiming; assisting with completing complex claim and review forms and challenging decisions. Whilst this can increase individuals' income, it is also about maintaining their income and ensuring that claimants are in the correct work related requirement group and prevent clients from losing their benefit entitlement through sanctions.

In 2022/23, the team helped people to address debt to the value of £219,963 and so far this financial year (2023/24), that number has reached £117,656. This has involved helping people with budgeting advice and financial support to reduce overheads, identifying cheaper providers, entitlement to grants, benefit checks to ensure claimants are receiving their correct entitlement.

**5.2.11.** The Council funds **The Switched On: Energy Awareness Hub** on High Street through our partnership with The Environment Centre in Swansea – further information can be found at ([www.environmentcentre.org.uk](http://www.environmentcentre.org.uk)).

This service offers free and impartial advice on utility bill payment, behaviour change to reduce energy demand and grant availability for invest to save opportunities which deliver greater energy efficiency in private rented and owned properties.



**5.2.8.** The Council's Sport and Health team (Cultural Services) through various streams of external funding has developed a programme of activities at zero or heavily subsidised cost to allow access to sport and physical activity sessions within local communities in a number of settings. Our activities run during school holidays for young people, both at leisure centre sites and in many parks and open spaces. The target "Us Girls" and "Streetgames" sessions attracted over 400 individuals during the summer alone with the annual number of individuals approaching 1,000.

Our subsidised Active Older Adults programme has on average 20 sessions per week throughout the year. Sessions include a variety of safe, supervised activities at leisure centres and a variety of walking routes. Free hot drinks are available to finish as part of the social interaction outcome of the scheme.

**5.2.9.** Like other cultural venues and libraries, the Dylan Thomas Centre (Cultural Services) is a Swansea Space providing a warm social space for people to meet. Free period products are available, and we have a baby change bag with spare nappies and wipes.



We run a year-round programme of free family engagement activities, with our Learning Space open for either self-led or tutor led sessions focused on school holidays. Our Learning Space is also available for people to drop in throughout term time on days it's not booked for a school or community workshop. Tutor-led workshops typically take place on a Friday to tie in with the Free Bus Ride scheme. We also provide digital versions of many activities on our website for those unable to travel to the Dylan Thomas Centre. These activities repurpose used items such as envelopes, so are sustainable and very low cost.





**5.2.10.** Access to Swansea Museum (Cultural Services) is free to families and open every day of the week apart from Mondays. Our family activities are available through the galleries and also include a free activity pack to take home.

During school holidays, extra children's activities are laid out in the education room. Family workshops are provided for free every Thursday in school holidays. Our Education Room was also open as a Swansea Space during the winter.

School visits to the museum are heavily subsidised, with Swansea schools paying only £50 per class for a delivered workshop (there has been no increase in prices for several years). Our autumn Theatre na Nog partnership project is often subsidised by schools applying to the Art Council – Go and See funding programme.

The museum worked in partnership with Storyopolis during Summer Term 2023 on a project funded by Winter of Wellbeing. The project involved nine classes from Dylan Thomas School looking at the Cost of Living crisis.

**5.2.11.** Being able to travel across Swansea in an easy and affordable way is an important consideration for people experiencing poverty, whether that is to visit family and friends or to access essential services. This year, the Highways and Transport team offered **free bus travel** on all local bus services for journeys made wholly in Swansea on selected dates during the following periods:

- Easter school holidays;
- Whitsun school half-term holidays;
- Summer school holidays;
- Mid November and the month of December - including the Sunday of the Christmas Lights Event in the city centre – and during the Christmas school holidays.



**5.2.12.** Parking in the city centre is an important consideration for people accessing services and support in Swansea. At this time, the Council's **City Centre Parking** service (Highways and Transport) is running the 1,2,3,4,5 offer currently which means that people can park in the city centre for £5.00 all day or £2.00 on Sundays. The Park and Ride scheme also allows up to four people per car to park for £1.00 all day.

**5.2.13.** Our **Passport to Leisure** (PtL) scheme is administered by the Revenue and Benefits team (Finance Directorate) and offers discounts on a wide range of sports and leisure venues throughout Swansea, along with various discounts in private companies. At this time, there are 1,446 live PtL cards in Swansea.

### 5.3. Step 3 – Tackling and preventing homelessness

The focus of this step is to improve the outcomes for people who are or at risk of homelessness, in terms of both preventing people from becoming homeless and helping individuals and families who do become homeless to find suitable accommodation solutions. Someone could be homeless if they:

- are sleeping rough or do not have 'a roof over their head';
- are at risk of violence or abuse where they are living, from a partner, ex-partner or family member, or someone near where they live;
- cannot afford to stay where they are living;
- are in very temporary accommodation;
- are staying with friends or 'sofa surfing';
- have been illegally evicted;
- are in accommodation that is in very poor condition or is dangerous;
- have nowhere to put your houseboat or caravan.

Our aim is that homelessness in Swansea is rare, brief and unrepeatable.

**5.3.1.** This year has been a very challenging in terms of preventing homelessness. We have seen an increase in both homeless presentations and the numbers of households applying on the Council's Waiting List. The Council's Community Housing Services and Strategic Housing teams (Housing and Public Health) are leading on tackling this issue.

Consequently, we have seen an increase in the number of people being placed in temporary accommodation and people occupying temporary accommodation for longer periods of time. Key reasons for this increase include a change in housing legislation, the Cost of Living crisis, a rise in the numbers of refugee cases, and the lack of affordable housing options particular with finding accommodation in the private rented sector.

**5.3.2.** To meet the increased need during 2022/23, we have delivered additional units of permanent and temporary accommodation via our **More Homes Programme**. As an example of this, we have recently converted former office accommodation in Penlan into 6 temporary accommodation flats suitable for families and this will help reduce the need for us to place families into Bed & Breakfast (B&B) accommodation. In addition, we are currently working with partners and exploring further units of temporary supported accommodation as part of our strategy to move away from a reliance on B&B for single persons.

**5.3.3.** Prevention is getting more difficult as households are struggling to afford their mortgages or rent payments and private landlords are leaving the sector. In order to mitigate against this, so far this year we have committed £410k of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) to preventing homelessness, as well as a further £230k in the Housing Options Prevention Fund.

**5.3.4.** The **Housing Rents Management Strategy 2022-2026** aims to effectively prevent rent arrears to ensure that Council tenancies are sustained. The strategy includes a specific objective and subsequent actions in respect of minimising rent

arrears when they occur and supporting Council tenants to sustain tenancies and prevent eviction which further embeds the approach of eviction being a last resort. As a result of this strategy, we have been able to ensure that evictions have been kept extremely low.

**5.3.5.** We have developed a rapid rehousing approach to provide additional support to those needing to move on from temporary and supported accommodation. This approach has enabled us to move people on from temporary accommodation into more permanent accommodation and sustain their tenancies. The Council's **Housing First Scheme** is part of this rapid rehousing approach and as a result, rough sleeping in the City has been kept to a minimum.

**5.3.6.** There are high levels of need for social housing and the supply is not currently meeting demand. To ensure all available units of accommodation are maximised and that offers of accommodation reach those most in housing need, we have commenced a review of the **Housing Allocations Policy**. The new policy is likely to be implemented in 2024/25.

We understand that, to tackle poverty, there has to be a multi-agency approach. We have continued to work closely with our partners such as Registered Social Landlords (RSL), the voluntary sector and the Housing Justice system to ensure priorities are aligned to respond to the current housing and homelessness pressures and help those most in need.



## 5.4. Step 4 – Making more homes available

The focus of this step is to improve the amount and quality of homes that are available for people to make it easier and more affordable for people to live safely and independently. Affordable homes include social rented housing owned by local authorities and RSLs as well as intermediate housing where prices or rents are above social rents but below market housing prices or rents.

**5.4.1.** The Council's **More Homes Programme** has set a ten-year delivery ambition of 1,000 additional affordable homes to be delivered by the Council's Strategic Housing Division (Housing and Public Health). This includes a mix of new builds, acquisitions (via Section 106 agreements and a buy-back programme of former right to buy properties) and conversions of existing buildings into new units of accommodation. This is alongside an estimated further 4,000 properties delivered by RSLs in Swansea over the same period.

New build	88
Acquisitions	140
Conversions	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>

The table opposite shows the number of properties (units) delivered through the More Homes Programme since its inception in 2018/19 up to October 2023:

**5.4.2.** The Council has developed a high specification for the properties it is building - the **Swansea Standard** – to ensure that new build properties are built to Welsh Government [Welsh Development Quality Requirements](#) (WDQR) standards and Homes as Power Stations, providing highly energy efficient (SAP rating A), low carbon homes with ground or air source heat pumps, photovoltaics (PV) panels, storage batteries and Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery (MVHR) units.

The homes will reduce operating energy and Co2 emissions over the building's lifetime. The construction form is a 'fabric first' approach which consists of a highly insulated timber-frame with high-performance doors and windows, ensuring homes retain heat in the winter and help keep people cool in the summer. Providing homes that are comfortable, highly energy efficient and cost-effective to operate, while making a positive contribution towards health and well-being, is part of our commitment to providing a positive contribution towards the drive to tackle fuel poverty.

**5.4.3.** A Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Budget review is currently underway to identify the future budgets required and funding available to achieve the 1,000 home target in light of recent increases in construction/material costs and competing demands on capital budgets in light of new Welsh Government decarbonisation targets in the **Welsh Housing Quality Standards** (WHQS 2023).

**5.4.4.** The first phase of WHQS was completed in December 2021 with a total investment to the existing housing stock of £546m. Investment in energy efficiency measures improved the thermal performance of properties to an average SAP score of 68 across the 13,700 stockholding.



The pending introduction of WHQS2023 increases social landlords obligations to improve existing stock to deliver further thermal upgrades to building fabric, decarbonise properties and provide residents with affordable heat and energy. The Council approved a four-year capital programme to reflect revised WHQS2023 duties on 2 March.

**5.4.5.** Last year, our WHQS programme included almost 80 project schemes as part of the £30m capital investment in the stock which contributes to tackling poverty in social housing.

**5.4.6.** The capital programme for WHQS2023 for 2023/24 is £37m and further £140m investment up to 2027/28 is to maintain existing standard and develop decarbonisation programmes, including the use of renewable technologies, to meet future WHQS2023 policy objectives.

The immediate statutory WHQS2023 target is ensure every property in our stock portfolio achieves an SAP score of 75 by 2029. This will be followed by upgrading all existing properties to a target standard of EPC Band A, SAP 92 and EIR 92 during the 2030's. The exact date of final programme delivery will be decided upon in negotiation with Welsh Government, based upon the profile and size of the council's housing stock, scope of work to undertaken and finance available to deliver programme.

In practical terms, Welsh Government and Swansea Council's policy objective is to undertake deep retrofit work to all its properties to insulate them to the very highest target levels which will reduce heat loss that will result in lower heating energy usage by the resident. The use of renewable technology to provide PV solar energy panels and battery storage will reduce the demand for grid electric power and light. Solar panels in pilot schemes have provided approximately 50% of the householders' electric energy needs which has significantly reduced utility suppliers costs. On completion of thermal upgrade work and solar power installation, future capital programmes will concentrate on further decarbonising properties by replacing existing gas boilers with either a green gas solution such as hydrogen or bio methane or install heat pumps.

In addition to the HRA funding outlined, Welsh Government provide additional grant aid to fund programmes. Presently, Major Repairs Allowance Grant (MRA) provides an additional £9.2m funding each year Optimised Retrofit Programme of £3m to support decarbonisation until 2024/25.



**5.4.6.** Our progress during the last twelve months includes:

- Completion of six 2 bed new build low-carbon bungalows in West Cross in March.
- Conversion of a former social services property in Gorseinon into two 3 bed homes completed in May.
- Conversion of the decommissioned District Housing Officers in Penlan and Eastside completed in October. Penlan has been converted in to five 2 bed flats and one 1 bed flat and will be used as temporary accommodation for families.

- Eastside DHO has been converted into four 1 bed flats and will be allocated a general needs accommodation to permanently rehouse people on the waiting list.
- An on-going acquisition programme which has focused on purchasing ex-council properties to rapidly increase the social housing stock. So far during 2023/24, 28 properties have been purchased and the original budget of £3m has been extended to enable the programme to continue to year end with the aiming of adding an additional 10-15 units. Overall, since the acquisition programme began in 2018 and including purchases during 2023, 140 ex-council properties – which were sold via the right to buy – have been purchased and returned to the Council’s housing stock.
  - Plans are well underway for a number of new build schemes to commence in 2024/25 including:
    - Creswell Road – 9 units;
    - Brondeg Housing – 13 units;
    - Heol Dynys – 22 units.
  - The Council is working with architectural design consultants BDP to develop plans for sites at Brokesby Road, Bonymaen. A public consultation exercise took place in January which provided residents with the opportunity to comment on the draft plans. A planning application was submitted in October. The delivery timetable of these sites will be agreed following the completion of the HRA budget review.
  - In addition, the More Homes Programme contains a number of smaller sites including:
    - land at Gower Road, Sketty;
    - Penrhos Place, Gendros;
    - Gorseinon Business Park;
    - the former Gorseinon Junior School, which will be brought forward for development in future years.

Future plans include preparing for development of land at Milford Way Blaenymaes, where the Council will seek a development partner to assist bringing them forward.

**5.4.7.** In addition to the Council’s own building programme, we continue to work closely with RSL partners to ensure we maximise delivery of affordable housing through the allocation of Welsh Government Social Housing Grant (SHG) and through the Programme Development Plan. In the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP), Swansea’s allocation of SHG from Welsh Government was £23.7m for 2022/23.

**5.4.8.** 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.

**5.4.9.** The UK Government **ECO4 Grant Scheme** allows people to claim up to £50,000 grants towards home energy efficient upgrade, including cavity wall insulations, boiler upgrades and solar panels. In Swansea, the ECO Flex scheme is coordinated by the Energy Efficiency Coordinator (Housing and Public Health) in line with the Electricity and Gas (Energy Company Obligation) Order 2022 (ECO4 Order).

The scheme supports households who are most likely to experience fuel poverty and those vulnerable to the effects of a cold home.

The Council have actively sought energy related funding and advice for private sector householders including landlords, procuring three energy partners to deliver the ECO Flex programme. This is a household referral mechanism within the wider The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) an obligation on energy suppliers aimed at helping households cut their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions. There have been several tranches of ECO and we are currently on ECO4.

**5.4.9.** We have been successful in obtaining **Warm Homes Funding**. Since the beginning of 2023, we have delivered through our energy partners over 230 separate measures to 93 households which has included solid wall insulation, first time central heating, air source heat pumps and PV using local contractors, equating to over £1,100,000 on inward investment. This does not include our joint efforts with Nest, Welsh Government's initiative which offers similar measures to the more vulnerable. The Council has also facilitated a mail shot for Nest every year, which has helped hundreds of Swansea's private sector families.

## 5.5. Step 5 – Improving people’s prosperity

The focus of this step is to improve the way we help people to develop their skills, qualifications and employment prospects so that they can find well-paid, meaningful jobs and improve prospects for their future. We can consider this journey as “lifelong” covering education for children (up to age 16) and education for young people and adults (over the age of 16).

Poverty can have detrimental impacts on people’s ability to complete education, access essential skills training and gain meaningful employment. 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 poverty<sup>10</sup>. This can impact on the child’s health, social, emotional and cognitive development as well as their behaviours and educational outcomes.

**5.5.1.** Children born into poverty are more likely to experience a wide range of issues from poor nutrition to mental health problems. The Council’s **Education Service** has taken a range of actions to help those in school who are affected by poverty including:

- Delivering the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) at school level to ensure it is narrowing the gap between those on free school meals and those who are not by focusing on:
  - high-quality learning and teaching;
  - Community Focused Schools;
  - early childhood play, learning and care;
  - high aspirations supported by strong relationships;
  - health and wellbeing;
  - leadership;
  - Curriculum for Wales and qualifications;
  - supporting post-16 progression.
- Rolling out free school meals in line with Welsh Government targets for all primary pupils by 2024, which so far has been rolled out to Year pupils across Swansea (with plans to rollout to Years 4, 5 and 6 as soon as possible in 2024);
- Making changes to menus, kitchen equipment and catering arrangements in order to meet the needs of schools and pupils whilst ensuring that healthy and nutritious meals continue to be served;
- Delivering a presentation to Cross Phase Headteacher meeting in June 2023 focused around considering the cost of the school day for parents and carers (plans are in place for another headteacher session on poverty in Spring 2024);
- Offering training to schools through our regional school improvement service, Partneriaeth, on costing the school day, which encourages schools to consider factors such as the cost of school trips, access to technology for homework and pressures on pupils to keep up with styles and trends.

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

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<sup>10</sup> Report from the End Child Poverty Coalition published July 2022.

### 5.5.2. Free School Meals Holiday Payments Grant 2022/23 & 2023/24

<b>Description</b>	Welsh Government funding to help families with school age children entitled to free school meals to access food during school holiday periods.
<b>Grant Value</b>	2022/23 - £2,606,689.80 2023/24 - £243,796.80 to date
<b>Grants Awarded</b>	2022/23 – 53,491 successful applications 2023/24 – 5,602 successful applications to date
<b>Grant Spend</b>	Direct bank payments
<b>Grant Administrator</b>	Education

Welsh Government withdrew the Free School Meals Holiday Payments scheme in the Summer of 2023. The Council stepped in to establish the Holiday Food Fund to provide opportunities for families of school age children entitled to free school meals to be able to access food during the summer holiday period.

### 5.5.3. School Uniform Grant 2022/23 & School Essentials Grant 2023/24

<b>Description</b>	Welsh Government funding to help families with school age children to afford essential resources such as school uniforms and equipment.
<b>Grant Value</b>	2022/23 - £1,837,537.04 2023/24 - £848,328.90 to date
<b>Grants Awarded</b>	2022/23 – 5,476 successful applications 2023/24 – 4,600 successful applications to date
<b>Grant Spend</b>	Direct bank payments to allow the purchase of school uniform, sports kits / outdoor learning equipment, IT equipment, equipment (such as bags and stationery), specialist equipment (such as design and technology resources).
<b>Grant Administrator</b>	Education

School uniform grant continues to be promoted with parents/carers and payments are made by bank transfer 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.

In partnership with the charity GROW Cymru, the Council have established the **ABC123 Project** to accept donated uniforms that are no longer required, launder them and then re-sell them at a fraction of the cost of new uniforms. This has helped make school uniforms more affordable for parents struggling with the Cost of Living crisis.

**5.5.4. Flying Start** is a Welsh Government funded programme that aims to give 0-4 year olds in Swansea a “flying start” in life. The original scheme aimed to provide intensive support services for children aged 0-4 years old and their families. The focus of the programme is on promoting language, cognitive, social and emotional skills, physical development, and the early identification of high needs.

This is achieved through the delivery of health support and guidance, parenting groups and support, early language groups and support and funded part-time childcare for up to 12.5 hours per week term time only in 18 school based settings.

In addition, we have recently launched our Welsh Government funded Flying Start childcare only expansion programme. This has required a change to our current model of service provision for childcare. In addition to our 18 school-based settings we now also engage with privately operated childcare and are providing further reach to newly eligible addresses in Swansea. Areas for this phase of the roll-out are based on the WIMD data as provided by Welsh Government.

**5.5.5. 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. It is designed to improve outcomes for children, young people and families, helping families to decide what help they need for the family to thrive.

Families First places an emphasis on early intervention, prevention and providing support for whole families rather than individuals. The programme promotes greater multi-agency working to ensure families receive joined-up support when they need it. Areas of support provided through this programme include:

- Preventative Family Support;
- Additional Learning Needs (ALN);
- Contextual safeguarding support for young people;
- Family Centre based provision.

**5.5.6.** Our libraries remain a key asset in our local communities to help encourage and promote learning and skills development. This year, Swansea Libraries (Cultural Services) has worked in partnership with the Fusion Programme – a Welsh Government initiative supporting cultural opportunities to help improve lives – to deliver a number of key projects:

**5.5.7.** The **Digital Art for Health and Wellbeing Workshops** were delivered in partnership with the Council's Lifelong Learning Service and with Digital Communities Wales as an accredited course aimed at both volunteers and individuals currently out of work. It was targeted for people looking to enter sectors such as Health and Social Care, Learning/Education and a range of Community Support roles. The result of which to allow participants to both acquire/cascade and use these new skills within their own and future roles. Eighteen participants were put forward for digital learning accreditation as part of the optional accreditation build into the workshops.

**5.5.8.** The **Participating in Museum, Heritage and/or Cultural** activities were delivered in partnership with the Dylan Thomas Centre, Your Voice Advocacy, Gower College Swansea (GCS) and supported by our Lifelong Learning Service. This was a new accredited course specifically aimed at ALN/Neurodiverse individuals and groups. The aim was to use creative activities for skills development and accreditation. The first of the courses from the initial pilot project is now underway with students from GCS attending with another course due to start in November.



**5.5.9. The Creative Volunteering (Digital) Project** was delivered in partnership with Itec Digital Training at Swansea Central Library. The aim of the project was to support young people via digital creative activities and workshops, as well as developing transferable work-related skills that young people could take into the world of work. Some of the skills they developed included:

- Film making / photography training;
- Digitisation archive of vinyl records;
- Project development / problem solving;
- Sound and audio recording workshop;
- Podcast and interviewing techniques;
- Research and interview skills.

Extremely beneficial in a number of ways. Not only by allowing them to have an active role in a live project, learning skills that will help them in future job opportunities, but largely in confidence building and allowing them to take pride in the work they put towards the role. I found that the sessions were something that they really looked forward to attending each week, with them even now asking me if we can come back!.

**Itec Digital Training**

**5.5.10.** Education and skills development is part of the journey towards achieving good, well-paid employment. **Employability support** involves a wide range of services to help people improve their chances at finding suitable, meaningful and well-paid work. 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 embedded in our employability services and the way our teams engage with people looking to achieve employment.



**5.5.11.** The **Communities for Work Plus (CfW+)** programme was relaunched in April 2022 because of Welsh Government merging the following employability programmes into one scheme; Communities for Work and Young Person's Guarantee (YPG). This programme is delivered in Swansea by the Employability & Skills Team (Tackling Poverty Service).



The relaunched programme provides a mentoring service for eligible young people (aged between 16 and 24) and eligible adults (aged 25 and over). Eligibility is focused on helping people who are not currently employed or may experience barriers to finding work. Through a triage process, clients are assigned to mentors who help them with building confidence, learning new skills, gaining work experience, writing Curriculum Vitae (CV) and so on.

We have been looking at your stats and wanted to share with you the good news that the CfW+ Swansea team have hit the milestone of achieving over 1,000 Job Entries... This is a fantastic achievement.

**Welsh Government CfW+ Programme Officer**

We work with many organisations to target our support at people or communities who need extra help to overcome the barriers to employment. This includes prison leavers, young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS) and people who have experienced difficulties in accessing services.

There is also an employer engagement team within this programme that builds positive relationships with local employers and businesses. This can help to bridge the gap between people looking for work and organisations looking for staff. We run employer engagement events across our community hubs as well as within employer premises.

**5.5.12.** Some of the actions we have taken in the last twelve months include:

- Supported 308 people into work by the end of September 2023, the highest level of 'into works' since the beginning of the programme (the current total since April 2023 is now 360);
- Continued our mentor support and triage service around the principle of person-centred employability support for all residents who request this support;
- Participating in community park events in collaboration with Safer Swansea Partnership to bring employability information closer to people in their communities.
- Enrolled 558 residents into the programme through our Engagement Team including through employment sessions and mini job fayres;
- Engaged with the public at events, hubs, library drop-ins and in offices (these opportunities have been referred to mentors, who have provided the best support possible to enable their participants to progress and move into work);
- Delivered Community Hub activities such as Interview, CV, wellbeing, IT and 'Meet the Team' sessions, helping to increase footfall at our local hubs;
- Developed and maintained excellent working relationships with local employers, some still only come to us for their recruitment needs due to our friendly, reliable and professional approach;
- Continued to work in all Job Centres across Swansea and increase our partnership working with DWP;
- Worked closely with Lifelong Learning Services team to support participants learning needs.



The Quadrant Hub in the City Centre continues to be an effective provision for attracting perspective participants, with over 160 referrals a month supported.

The Monitoring team triage referrals to mentors, as well as to other partner organisations, when deemed necessary. They also oversee the database, audit participants' online folders and collect case studies from the team, which highlight the excellent work being carried out. The Monitoring team also process DBS applications and they provide relevant stats for reports including reporting to Welsh Government.

**5.5.13.** During this year, the Employability & Skills team have:

- worked with 553 people accessing employment support since April 2023;
- achieved 477 sustainable Employment Opportunities, sourced via the Employer Engagement Officers, since April 2023;
- loaned Chromebooks to 119 employability programme participants up to the end of February, which have proved very effective in helping users to access training, complete job applications and find employment;
- helped 61 clients have find employment following the use of a Chromebook since the programme commenced in Swansea on 16 February 2021.

#### **CASE STUDY: Helping a young client find work after university.**

A young graduate from Swansea University contacted the CfW+ team after struggling to find employment after completing her studies. The triage team asked Sarah, our Employability Mentor, to meet with her.

The client was beginning to have difficulties covering her basic costs with no income and was finding it difficult to cope with receiving rejections, often not hearing back from employers. She was beginning to become anxious about how she could continue to support herself. She had a qualification in Human Resources but was facing barriers around a lack of work experience and paid employment.

Sarah helped her to revise her CV and coached her on strategies for applying for work including using recruitment agencies. They also discussed and practiced interview skills together. With this support, the client was successful in applying for an administrative post in the HR Department at Cardiff Council.

While the client was waiting for personnel checks and a start date, her financial circumstances worsened. Sarah was able to offer support through a Foodbank and to explore other options available to support her. When the client finally received a start date, the team were able to purchase tickets for commuting on the train and on the buses within Cardiff for the three weeks of her induction. This made it possible for her to accept the job and commute to work.

The client has since obtained full time employment with Cardiff Council, which would be the starting point for her career in HR.

**5.5.14.** In Swansea, **Pathways to Work** – funded by the UK Government and delivered by Economic Regeneration team (Planning and City Regeneration) – 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. Since April 2023, this scheme has helped 91 people into work.

**5.5.15.** In addition to our internal paid placements scheme and corporate apprenticeship programme, **Beyond Bricks and Mortar (BB+M)** is an important initiative and delivered by the Economic Regeneration team (Planning and City Regeneration) to secure community benefits from all suitable council activities in Swansea. 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.

During 2022/23, the BB+M team delivered 4,034 targeted recruitment and training weeks made up of the following outputs:

- 49 new jobs;
- 16 new apprenticeship opportunities;
- 8 paid work placements;
- 7 non-paid work experience placements.

**5.5.16.** Once someone achieves a good, well-paid job, the learning and skills development journey continues through lifelong learning. **Lifelong learning** is about a person's ongoing, voluntary and self-motivated pursuit of learning for either personal or professional reasons.



**5.5.17.** The Council's **Lifelong Learning Service (LLS)** team (Tackling Poverty Service) is responsible for delivering a wide variety of adult learning in the community in a range of subjects, including music, art, craft, photography, engineering and yoga. Our Tutors bring a diverse set of experiences, qualifications and skills to help develop people's confidence and capabilities.

**5.5.18.** Our LLS academic year 2022/23 included learning for 1,129 unique learners across 239 courses. This involved a range of courses, taster sessions and learning opportunities while looking after the wellbeing and prosperity of our learners. 136 accreditations were achieved during 2022/23 across the following key areas:

- Family Learning – supporting parents and carers to help their children in school;
- Essential Skills – accredited literacy and numeracy classes;
- Digital Literacy (15 different ICT classes as well as daily telephone support);
- Adult Community Learning (ACL) – a broad range of learning opportunities from gardening to calligraphy, from cookery to hair design, and so on.

Statistics from ACL courses	Statistics from Family Learning & Essential Skills (FLES) courses
99% of learners improved their skills. 100% increased their confidence. 43% improved employability prospects. 64% improved their mental health and wellbeing. 76% improved digital skills. 75% increased social interaction and contact.	77% of learners intend to progress to further learning either within LLS or with other providers.  49% of learners achieved 2 or more awards on our accredited ES/EMP programmes.

**5.5.19.** Partnership working is key to the success of lifelong learning in Swansea. The Council is a member of the **Adult Learning Partnership Swansea (ALPS)** with colleagues from further and higher education institutions as well as voluntary sector representatives.

Last year, adult community learning in Swansea underwent an Estyn Inspection and the findings were published earlier this year. There were some valuable findings and positive mentions about our work such as how we established and supported a group of minority ethnic women learners which improved their wellbeing and opened up their lives to new opportunities.



This course has encouraged me to feel that I can contribute meaningfully to the class and develop skills I was unaware of. An excellent thought-provoking brain expanding course.

**Learner, Creative Writing Course**

The ALPS partnership has recently launched a new website showcasing all of the lifelong learning courses across all partner organisations. This new website – [www.learningswansea.wales](http://www.learningswansea.wales) or [www.dysguabertawe.cymru](http://www.dysguabertawe.cymru) – showcases course information and directs potential learners to online enrolment and registration systems.





**5.5.20.** In September 2015, Swansea Bay City Region received the **UNESCO Learning City** Award for building a learning city, the first in the UK. This has been a continuing commitment of the Council and its partners as it aims to support people and organisations to foster a culture of lifelong learning to improve the prosperity of Swansea. This year, a new multi-organisational Steering Group has been established to begin planning for the next Festival of Learning ahead of the upcoming ten-year anniversary of this achievement in 2025.

**5.5.21.** During the last twelve months, the LLS team has:

- Utilised external funding to widen the breadth of the LLS curriculum offer to meet demand of individuals and provide accessible engagement opportunities.
- Collaborated with ALPS partners to create a website of learning opportunities on offer across Swansea; this website will support individuals to enter adult learning provision at an entry point which is accessible/meets their needs.
- Worked alongside CfW+ colleagues to deliver self-employment and other courses to improve participants skills, qualifications and employment prospects.
- Continued to support partner organisations by offering accredited programmes – through programme development, delivery, quality control and IQA support – such as the Paul Popham Foundation.
- Developed and delivered bespoke programmes designed to meet the needs of learners and/or partners.



### **CASE STUDY: Floristry for Work – a floral journey.**

A young person from Swansea enrolled on the Council's Floristry for Work course to learn more about the industry, meet like-minded people and grow her confidence and skills around everything to do with the flower world.

With the support of her Tutor (who is a 5 times Gold Medal Winner at the Chelsea Flower Show), she wanted to develop her passion for floral arranging which began by providing flower arrangements for her local church and winning a novice award at the Gower Show.

During her courses, the learner (who had recently finished school) managed to get work providing flowers for funerals and a wedding, using the support and skills she gained from the courses. She got a job as a trainee florist and recently started a new placement at another local florist while continuing her learning with the Council.



## 5.6. Step 6 – Focus on early intervention

The focus of this step is to improve how we identify the early signs that someone is at risk of poverty or other escalating needs, so that we can help them early and prevent needs from escalating or reaching a point where they need more intensive support.

**5.6.1. 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 (Child and Family Services) 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. Their work is focused on ensuring that children, young people and families in Swansea can be supported to live happy, healthy and safe lives with help from the right support, at the right time if and when they need it.



**5.6.2.** Since 2015, the Council has implemented **Local Area Co-ordination** as a strategic community-based approach. The shared vision for this approach is that all people live in welcoming communities that provide friendship, mutual support, equity and opportunities for everyone. Since 2021, we have had full coverage across Swansea with a team of 23 dedicated, locally-based Coordinators (Tackling Poverty Service).

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.

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 2,000 contacts with people attending groups so far this year.



### **CASE STUDY: Sara's story of Local Area Coordination.**

Sara was introduced to Bri, the Local Area Coordinator, by an Occupational Therapy Technician. Sara has a degenerative spinal condition which necessitates wheelchair use and is supported by a carer, her partner. Sara's 25 year old son, Lee, also lives with them and Lee has schizoaffective disorder.

Bri found Sara to be isolated, not going anywhere or doing anything. She described herself as 'being down and depressed', always arguing, particularly with her son. Whilst Sara lived without purpose, Lee was fixated for large chunks of each day to his PlayStation, which was leading to increasing tension in the house. Sara and Lee have no roots in their area and had little idea of what was happening in the community, and more importantly, were clueless about how and where to start connecting.

Bri did an exercise identifying where Sara's possible interest areas might be (social, physical, musical, spiritual, entertainment and so on). He encouraged Sara to feel that there was much going on locally and citywide. Bri introduced Sara to social events in the village, where she has forged friendships, enjoys a break from home and enjoys the adult discussion of other women.

Whilst Sara and Bri discussed Good Life opportunities, Lee was mostly a silent but interested observer across the room. Bri felt to get Lee motivated and mobilised would also be a key jigsaw piece in improving both Sara and Lee's own mental health.

Bri initially accompanied Lee to the start of a new men's group, then to the Community Farm and to the Jac Lewis Foundation, a preventative wellbeing and mental health project. Lee contributed confidently to discussions in the men's group. On his first visit to the farm, Lee began to come out of his shell, demonstrated various practical skills including wall building. Lee now rarely misses Thursdays on the farm, often cycling to get there.

At the Jac Lewis Foundation, Bri introduced Lee to personal counselling and physical fitness opportunities that he has benefited from. Furthermore, Sara began to accompany Lee there and has now taken advantage of the counselling opportunities for herself.

Sara feels part of her community and is exploring other activities and connections. She has also become eager to explore helping others by involvement with training for the Samaritans. Some family challenges lie ahead but Sara and Lee are increasingly confident that their experience with Local Area Coordination over the last 11 months has stood them in good stead to help navigate those challenges.

The work the Local Area Coordinator has done with me and Lee has been life changing for the better.

**Sara**

**5.6.3.** The Council's Sport and Health team (Cultural Services) delivers 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.

The Swansea Physical Literacy Partnership project provides:

- Early years Physical Literacy sessions for children in the foundation phase;
- Twilight Physical Literacy Course for Teachers and Practitioners at their school or community setting;
- Promotion of and sign posting to UWTSD Developing and Supporting Physical Development in Early Childhood Courses (Level 3 and Level 4);
- Mentoring for staff on the courses in their own settings;
- Physical Literacy Equipment and Resource bags;
- Ongoing support and communication to create 'a whole setting approach' to deliver Physical Literacy sessions;
- Feedback for continuous improvement of training and practice. The results showed increases in fundamental movement skills, ability levels, confidence and enjoyment of sports activities for children.

Pupil attention and behaviour in class showed an improvement as well as development of fine motor skills and gross motor skills. Teachers and practitioners gained confidence to deliver physical activity sessions and they felt supported and that they were being listened to. This created strong relationships between schools, private childcare settings, flying start settings and the Sport and Health team.

Those involved understand the fundamentals of delivering physical literacy and the legacy this creates to provide a platform for children to be active throughout their whole lives. This project considers the holistic development of both children and adults to create healthier, happier communities within Swansea putting an emphasis on fundamental movement skills for life improving the health and well-being of those involved.

**5.7.5.** In September, the Council teamed up with the National Waterfront Museum for a one year pilot project to create a new hub involving more than 20 organisations coming together to offer advice, support, guidance and networking opportunities. Residents are free to stop by and speak with members of staff present at the **Collaboration Station** who in turn offer tea, coffee, and an opportunity to be signposted to the services they need or events that may be of interest to them.



The Council's Partnerships and Involvement team (Partnerships & Commissioning) are coordinating the use of this new, intimate office space for drop in sessions including a monthly One Stop Information Shop service.

This is a partnership event held on the first Monday of every month, which started in October 2023 and enables up to 40 partner organisations and services to provide an information stall in the colonnade of the National Waterfront Museum. Partners can offer advice and support across a range of areas such as health, well-being, employment, poverty and housing. It's a free event and community members are welcome to turn-up anytime between 11am and 2pm so no appointments are necessary. This is a great way for people to access support on all kinds of issues that are important to them.

The new One Stop Shop will be an opportunity for lots of partners and charities to network and support the community with advice ranging from health to money issues, career support to bereavement. The service will be free to all to take part and attend and we hope it should be a great way to share information.

**Zoe Gealy, National Waterfront Museum**

**5.7.6. Isolation and loneliness** are two key impacts of poverty that can have a detrimental effect of people's wellbeing. Approaches like Local Area Coordination play a key role in helping people to explore their strengths and discover ways to get out of their homes and into their communities. We provide many opportunities to support people who are isolated and feeling lonely, such as volunteering and connecting people to others in their area with shared interests.

**5.7.7.** One of the most significant impacts of poverty is the impact on a person's emotional health and wellbeing. Our teams have been involved in the development of the **Emotional and Mental Wellbeing Strategy** developed by the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership in April 2023. Approaches like Local Area Coordination play a key role in identifying and supporting people with their emotional and mental wellbeing so we will continue to engage in this regional collaborative work.

## 5.7. Step 7 – Empowering communities

The focus of this step is to improve the support provided to communities help them to become more resilient, self-reliant and involved in making their local areas more engaging, prosperous and welcoming places.

Communities themselves face challenges that are preventing them from making a more significant contribution to tackling poverty. There are many organisations play key roles in the prosperity of our local regions and areas, such as Social Enterprises (businesses which trade for a social or environmental purpose). The Council’s focus over time is to ensure that we take a more “influencing” approach rather than “doing” things to communities.

**5.7.1.** In response to the Audit Wales report ‘**Together We Can**’, the Enabling Communities Group has started development of a focused action plan to take forward the recommendations and actions of this review. The actions include:

- Defining community resilience and self-reliance that will inform our strategic direction;
- Co-producing a corporate approach and ways of working to influencing community resilience and self-reliance;
- Developing our community partnerships, networks and knowledge of community assets, leaders and organisations;
- Commencing a co-productive approach to improving council services that interface with the communities of Swansea.

***Communities** can refer to groups of people connected by location (such as people living in a certain area), characteristics (such as people from ethnic backgrounds) or shared interests (such as a volunteering community).*

**5.7.2.** In response to the Audit Wales report ‘**A missed opportunity**’, the Enabling Communities Group has started development of a focused action plan to take forward the recommendations and actions of this review. The actions include:

- Defining the regional vision and approach to Social Enterprises in Swansea;
- Improving our knowledge and data about Social Enterprises operating in Swansea;
- Developing approaches to promoting, monitoring and reporting on the work of Social Enterprises;
- Working on ways to improve information sharing, skills and training opportunities relating to Social Enterprises.

This year, the Council has delivered a wide range of services, projects and initiatives that have targeted specific communities or actions which help communities respond to specific challenges.

**5.7.3.** On 1 November, the Council launched a new **Enabling Communities Fund** to provide activities, school holiday food and warm welcoming places in Swansea this winter. This new grant scheme combines three previous funding initiatives, allowing applicants to apply for one or more of these schemes by completing one form:

- COAST (Creating Opportunities Across Swansea Together);
- Swansea Spaces (Warm Hubs);
- Holiday Food Fund.

**5.7.4. Creating Opportunities Across Swansea Together (COAST)**

<b>Description</b>	UK Shared Prosperity funding for organisations to provide fun, enjoyable activities aimed at improving wellbeing for children, young people and families and 50+.
<b>Grant Value</b>	2022/23 - £581,765.76
<b>Grants Awarded</b>	2022/23 - 140 successful applications
<b>Grant Spend</b>	Range of sport and health, cultural, environmental, ICT and social activities across the Summer for children, young people and families and 50+.
<b>Grant Administrator</b>	Partnership and Commissioning

This year, the Creating Opportunities Across Swansea Together (COAST) programme – which supersedes the Summer of Fun programme led by the Council’s Partnerships and Commissioning Team in previous years – ran its Summer 2023 grant initiative.

Funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, this grant received 140 successful applications for a range of sport and health, cultural, environmental, technology and social activities for children, young people and families, and for older people aged 50 and over.



Without the COAST funding we would not have been able to deliver the activities across the summer holidays and I know many of the young people and families that attended would not have been able to participate in other activities due to accessibility or other issues.

**COAST Grant Recipient**



Many parents don't speak the Welsh language at home, so this activity funded by Coast is seen as not only keeping the children fit and active and introducing new friendships; but also helping them with their language during the school holidays so when they returned to school in September it wasn't so much of a shock.

**COAST Grant Recipient**

Some of the fun, enjoyable activities aimed at improving wellbeing delivered during July and August included:

- National Play Day (2 August) events at venues such as the National Waterfront Museum;
- Graffiti Workshop for young people with Foster Wales Swansea;
- Air Assault Games in the community at Ravenhill Park;
- Days out and walking trips with Action for Elders and the Ageing Well Partnership;
- Fun activities for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) groups including rock climbing, surfing and outdoor sensory sessions.



**5.7.6.** The Participation and Involvement team (Partnerships & Commissioning) are working towards achieving **Age Friendly City recognition** as part of our coordination and facilitation of the Ageing Well Steering Group. Upholding the Human Rights Principles for Older People is very much part of the foundations of this work, along with providing weekly face to face engagement opportunities to reduce loneliness and isolation, reconnect community members and services and ensure older adults aged 50+ are listened to and involved in shaping fit for purpose services.

Some of the community activities that are delivered through the Ageing Well Steering Group include:

- Movie & Cuppa Afternoon in the Waterfront Museum every Monday from 12-2pm and currently participant numbers range from 45 – 80+ each week;
- LGBTQ Cuppa & Chat in the Coast Café every Wednesday from 10.30 – 12.30 with 30+ participants;

- TenPin Bowling, 4 lanes booked each week and able to accommodate 20 participants each week;
- Marina Engagement Walk & Cuppa every Thursday from 10.30am until 1pm, which are structured into 3 varied distances/difficulty routes to support a mix of abilities. Participant numbers range from 70-100 each week. All officers, a number of partners and several community members are now “Guided Walking Leader” trained by “Sight Life UK” (12 trained) to support the participation of community members with visual impairment or sight loss;
- Cuppa & Chat at the Swigg in Swansea Maina every Friday, which incorporates opportunities to engage in local, regional and National consultations. Sessions include opportunities to engage with partners such as Age Cymru, Tend & Mend, South Wales Police, Welfare Benefits & Financial Inclusion team, and so on.

**5.7.6.** Swansea Libraries (Cultural Services) have long standing community presence and they remain “go to” places for information about local communities. Staff are happy to continue using these valuable community-based assets as disseminators of council information, consultations and engagement.

#### **CASE STUDY: Community response to Murrison Gas Explosion**

On 13 March, the community in Murrison experienced a tragedy when a gas eruption at a residential address resulted in a devastating and fatal explosion. This impacted dozens of homes around Clydach Road, with over 50 homes evacuated and many experiencing significant damage to their properties.

The Council took the lead on coordinating the emergency response and many partners were involved in the immediate response to the crisis, including organisations such as Wales and West Utilities. Teams from Housing, Highways and Transport worked to deal with the immediate issues of ensuring the site was safe and secure while works and investigations continued.

The Community Response was coordinated by a multi-organisation group established by the Tackling Poverty Service and Swansea Council for Voluntary Service. Local were already coming forward with offers of food, clothing and essential items for displaced residents, with The Dingle on Field Close acting as a hub for donations and support. Local people showed incredible compassion and charity during this difficult time.

A Community Support Point was established at Murrison Library to listen to local people, find out what they need and put in place the support to help them. This can include advice and guidance on various subjects like financial support, as well as wellbeing support and any other services that may help individuals and families affected. Library staff and others were on hand to help any residents but particularly those who could not return to their homes right away.

The response from the local community was incredible and SCVS organised a fundraising effort to coordinate the many donations and charitable activities that raised thousands of pounds for impacted people. Emotional support came from many sources including Helping Hands and The Jac Lewis Foundation, as well as SCVS organising opportunities for residents to meet up and support each other. The Local Area Coordinator – Byron – spent many hours visiting local residents to share information and offer support. Local schools, churches and businesses all contributed to the community response.



**5.7.7.** The Council's Sport and Health team (Cultural Services) has a key service aim of developing stronger communities through using sport and physical activity as a tool within holistic community development, to improve individual and community quality of life. We aim to engage with, set up and sustain community clubs and organisations to build capacity in providing local opportunities for sport and physical activity. The key aspects include recruiting and training volunteers, accessing external funding, linking school activity to community activity, improving access to facilities and promoting benefits of a healthy lifestyle.



During the first 6 months of 2023/24, over 250k of additional funding has been secured for community clubs and associations in Swansea from the national **Be Active Wales Fund**, which is aimed directly at local capacity building and aiding sustainability.

Success and evaluation of the levels of community activity and levels of inequality of participation are measured and evaluated through the Welsh Government funded School Sport Survey and Adult Sports & Physical Activity survey, which is facilitated Partnership with Sport Wales on alternate years.

**5.7.8.** The Dylan Thomas Centre (Cultural Services) and Your Voice Advocacy are continuing their co-production work. Your Voice Advocacy have recently trialled and worked with us to develop an Agored Cymru qualification. The **Participating in Museum, Heritage and Cultural Activities unit** is the first qualification of its kind for adults with a learning disability. Accreditation was supported by Fusion and Lifelong Learning Services. The qualification is being rolled out to young adults studying in GCS visiting the Dylan Thomas Centre and Central Library to complete the unit.

**5.7.9.** The Dylan Thomas Centre and Swansea Museum are partners in House of Memories Cymru, a dual-language dementia awareness programme. It includes a bilingual app – **My House of Memories** – as well as training, workshops, and activities. Its aim is to enable families and caregivers to support people living with dementia through person-centred care.

Fourteen museum partners across the country have worked together to create the Welsh Government funded app, populated with digital objects chosen by our museum partners for their significance to Welsh heritage as well as their potential to stimulate memories and conversation. By representing Welsh heritage, we aim to connect elders to traditions and events that may spark memories from the past. This is part of Liverpool Museums' wider House of Memories programme, which features museum objects from across the UK as well as the USA and Singapore.

**5.7.10. Museum Community Project** work is undertaken with targeted groups who are more likely to face inequality. Recent examples of work through Swansea Museum (Cultural Services) include video heritage with Mixtup – a youth club for young people with mixed abilities based in Swansea – and a separate video project with YMCA Swansea which included young people from a few different groups including Young Carers and Good Vibes, the LGBT+ youth forum.

**5.7.11.** The Council's Community Development Team (Cultural Services) support community centre volunteer management committees and groups throughout Swansea by providing local people with the skills, advice and guidance. This helps those **groups and committees** to become involved in providing a service ensuring that they remain vibrant, inclusive and responsive to the needs of their community.

The examples below are just some of the community groups and committees we have helped to get set-up, established and grow:

#### Rosehill Community FC (RHC FC)

This organisation engages hundreds of children from the Townhill ward, many of whom have additional needs. We supported RHC FC through completion of the Community Asset Transfer process (approved in principle by Cabinet in October) with the lease of Pentyla Playing Fields.

In delivering weekly football sessions and free family fun activities, RHC FC are providing much needed support for hyper-local families (without transport) who live in walking distance of these fields. Officers have signposted RHC FC to funding sources to maximise the wider support they can offer in terms of addressing poverty. Cultural Services Officers have also encouraged RHC FC to engage with other avenues of support via South Wales Police, Community Safety, Sports Development, Local Area Coordinators, Environmental Health, Parks and Nature Recovery Officers.

#### Friends of Coed Gwilym Park (FoCGP)

The FoCGP is a community-led initiative that fundraised and worked in partnership with the Council to agree a lease and build a Community Pavilion within Coed Gwilym Park. FoCGP run a community café 7 days a week, deliver a weekly photography club/ afternoon tea for senior citizens (as well as other activities such as Chess and Sudoku), engage with local schools, and hold free family fun days in the park.



#### Friends of Brynmelyn Park (FoBMP)

The FoBMP have brought an abandoned community garden in Brynmelyn Park back to life. The group are planning to run community gardening sessions, to share knowledge and skills and foster community cohesion in the area. FoBMP have also transformed the community garden outside Dyfatty Community Centre. They are a new group, but so far have been awarded funding via their Local Ward Members Community budget, SCVS and Local Places for Nature/ Keep Wales Tidy.

#### Friends of Pontlliw Park (FoPP)

FoPP deliver weekly gardening sessions and community sessions in Pontlliw Park Pavilion, which were established using Swansea Spaces funding. They are working with the community to continue combating social isolation and promoting wellbeing. The group have recently been awarded Mynydd Y Gwair Windfarm funding to make further improvements and additions to the pavilion, benefiting the wider community.

### Birchgrove Community Centre:

The Food Bank at Birchgrove Community Centre takes place weekly and is provided by local donations. The food bank is a real benefit to the community, providing vital food supplies to the people who need it most.

Holiday Food Parcels also took place during the summer school holidays and was provided funding through the Local Councillor. These food parcels were specifically delivered to members of the community who needed them the most during the holiday period where children would not receive free school meals.

### Manselton Community Centre:

The community centre has received the follow funding this year:

- Magic Little Grants – £500 for an Over 50's one off event;
- Austin Bailey Foundation Funding – Monthly Community Lunches;
- Holiday Food Fund & COAST Fund – food and activities during school holidays;
- Street Games (Pears Foundation Funding) – food and activities for children during the school holidays;
- Direct food support from Swansea council – provides meals during term-time;
- Brownies – community coronation parties;
- Awards4ALL – buffet and disco for community;
- Awards4ALL – Halloween disco provided by the community.



### Port Tennant Community Centre

Local Councillors provided help and funding to the centre for a weekly parent and toddler group run by people of the local community. The benefit is that it allows an important session such as this to take place on the doorstep of the community and means travelling is not needed. The social element of the session for parents to speak with other parents is invaluable.

### Mayhill Community Centre

Mayhill Community Centre run a youth club (Evolve) funded by the Council weekly on a Monday night, which has continued throughout 2023. They also hold a foodbank and Warm Hub café.

The LifePoint Church link with Swansea Foodbank and also access various pots of funding (supermarkets, etc.) for their Thursday afternoon foodbank. They give food, household items and clothes / uniforms to the local community. They also had Swansea Spaces funding to become a community café and now provide tea, coffee and cakes for free.

**5.7.11.** Helping people to overcome **digital exclusion** (the challenges people face when they do not have access, skills or confidence to use the internet) is an important way that we can support people who are in or at risk of poverty. Being digitally included means being willing and able to use digital tools or services independently (such as job searches or completing online skills training).

Our Lifelong Learning Service (Tackling Poverty Service) deliver Digital Basic Skills courses such as IT Classes for Absolute Beginners as well as a telephone support service for people seeking help with basic tasks such as using smartphones and tablets. Since May 2023, this has reached and supported 370 people both face-to-face and via telephone support.

Swansea Libraries (Cultural Services) deliver and host a range of courses and training opportunities in libraries across Swansea, including Learn Direct Courses. This included hosting a SCVS Digital Volunteer at the Swansea Central Library, which has so far helped 28 people in 5 sessions this year.

**5.7.12.** As our communities face continuing challenges such as poverty, **community cohesion** is about encouraging everyone in a geographical area to live alongside each other with mutual understanding and respect. A cohesive community is an area where those from different backgrounds share positive relationships, feel safe in their neighbourhood and have a sense of mutual respect and shared values.

The Council hosts our Community Cohesion team (Partnerships and Commissioning) which includes a Regional Coordinator that covers the areas of Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend.

#### **CASE STUDY: Funding for Music Art Digital (MAD) Swansea.**

With support from the Community Cohesion fund, MAD Swansea were able to deliver activities for community members, with support from Youth and Community Workers; including digital inclusion, cost of living support, campaigns and creative activities; addressing isolation and loneliness and supporting connected and cohesive communities.

The safe space has been accessed by people marginalised by systemic oppression and discrimination including Black and non-Black people of Colour, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people, young people and people who are unemployed/in insecure work.

Some of the help that this funding was able to provide included:

- Cost of living support - free toiletries and food; information and support (Youth/Community Workers and established local networks) including support to access fuel payments, recognise and avoid scams (building resilience).
- Digital inclusion - access to learning (including Learn My Way, supporting English language skills/digital literacy/progression to ESOL courses); promoting connected/digitally connected and cohesive communities.
- Enrichment activities (eg. music/creative arts) - group workshops supporting wellbeing, positive relationships, cohesive communities, belonging and providing opportunities for people to express their identity, culture, language and heritage
- Campaigns/activities including LGBT+ History Month; promoting access to information, rights, community voice and cohesion.



### 5.7.13. Community Cohesion Small Grant Fund 2022/23

<b>Description</b>	Regional funding to help community groups to create inclusive spaces in their local area.
<b>Grant Value</b>	2022/23 - £10,000 (£8,524 was awarded in Swansea)
<b>Grants Awarded</b>	2022/23 - 19 successful applications
<b>Grant Spend</b>	Community events and activities
<b>Grant Administrator</b>	Community Cohesion

The Community Cohesion team launched a Small Grants Fund in 2022/23. Grants were awarded to community groups that met the key cohesion objectives of creating inclusive spaces, promote events for important social and cultural times of year, groups that help identify and mitigate tensions and provide support to communities during changes to the current social and political climate.

#### **CASE STUDY: Funding for Sunflowers Wales - Swansea.**

Funding from the Community Cohesion grant fund supported Sunflowers Swansea to deliver several activities for the Ukrainian community. This included weekly dancing classes in the Swansea Multicultural Hub. These classes have been a great success and are a really popular activity run by the group. Weekly English classes for children take place alongside these dance classes.

The funding has allowed the group to commemorate significant social and cultural times of year including:

- Art class of making Welsh daffodils;
- Marking the anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine;
- Croeso festival in Swansea;
- Taras Shevchenko Readings (the national Ukrainian poet).



## 5.8. Step 8 – Keeping communities safe

The focus of this step is to improve communities so that they feel like safe places to live and work. We recognise that people who are vulnerable or at risk will be particularly affected by issues like Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) so communities want to ensure that their people and properties are protected and supported to develop safely and securely.

**5.8.1. The Safer Swansea Partnership** ([www.safer Swansea.org.uk](http://www.safer Swansea.org.uk)) is working together to make Swansea a safer, more cohesive and confident place to live, work and visit. Reducing Neighbourhood Crime and ASB is one of six key Safer Swansea Partnership priorities. The partnership is coordinated by the Council's Community Integration and Partnership team (Partnerships and Commissioning).

Membership of this partnership include the following statutory members:

- South Wales Police;
- Swansea Council;
- Swansea Bay University Health Board;
- National Probation Service;
- Wales Community Rehabilitation Company;
- Mid & West Wales Fire and Rescue Service;
- Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service.



**5.8.2. The outcomes that the partnership are working to achieve are:**

- Seek to reduce the number of repeat victims to incidents of ASB and neighbourhood crime;
- Comprehensive ASB profile for Swansea to inform operational tactics;
- Evening & Night Time Economy strategy links to Safer Swansea priorities and works to reduce the impact of ASB;
- Aim to promote and raise awareness of the correct procedures to report ASB;
- Improve the way issues and concerns are and escalated to Problem Solving Groups and outcomes monitored;
- Seek to reduce the number of deliberate fire incidents/ off road biking incidents.



## 5.9. Step 9 – Building community assets

The focus of this step is to improve the strengths and assets within communities so that they are able to lead on and develop their own solutions to the challenges faced by local people.

Community assets can refer to buildings or lands which are of value to a community, such as green spaces or community centres. But it is really about any resource that can be used to improve the quality of community life. This requires a strong relationship between communities, the Council and other organisations to gain the greatest value from the resources that are at the disposal of the community, whether they are physical, human, social, financial, environment or cultural assets.

### 5.9.1. Men’s Sheds Grant 2022/23 and 2023/24

<b>Description</b>	Swansea Council funding to support and develop Men’s Sheds projects in Swansea
<b>Grant Value</b>	2022/23 - £25,000 2023/24 - £25,000
<b>Grants Awarded</b>	2022/23 - 8 successful applications 2023/24 - 15 successful applications
<b>Grant Spend</b>	Growing Supplies, Overhead Contributions, Tools and Equipment, Building Improvements, Volunteer Expenses, Refreshments, Storage Solutions, Training.
<b>Grant Administrator</b>	Tackling Poverty Service

In recognition of the wealth of skills and experience which exists within communities, and of the positive impact of Men’s Sheds on health, well-being and in reducing social isolation, this year the Council continued to make funding available for the development of existing and new Men’s Sheds in Swansea.

The network of Men’s Sheds in Swansea continues to grow, attracting wider audiences and providing opportunities for people to socialise, engage in activities, learn new skills and improve their wellbeing. People of all ages, genders and abilities are welcome to any of these groups.

It has been fundamental to the successful function & running of the group.  
Provided us with tools & equipment for longer term.

**Summit Good**

Seeing our lovely flowers & plants has encouraged people to call in for a chat and they have returned week after week. Calling in to chat about flowers, extending the chat and having someone to listen has literally saved lives.

**The Old Blacksmiths**



### 5.9.2. Allotment Support Grant 2022/23

<b>Description</b>	Welsh Government funding to help establish Allotment Associations (community-led organisations who lease Council land for allotments).
<b>Grant Value</b>	2022/23 - £45,995.15
<b>Grants Awarded</b>	2022/23 - 13 successful applications (from 16 sites)
<b>Grant Spend</b>	Acquiring leasehold of Council land, establishing allotments.
<b>Grant Administrator</b>	Cultural Services

This grant enables communities to increase their community-led assets and increase the number of plots available across Swansea, encouraging and engaging new members in our communities. The scheme contributes to improving bio-diversity and sustainable practices in local areas.

The Council own sixteen allotment sites, which are all leased to allotments associations through a Community Asset Transfer policy and are signed up with the National Allotment Society. Under the Allotments Act 1925, local authorities are required to establish “statutory” allotments as part of its commitment to increase the availability of good quality allotment plots.

**5.9.3.** Following the completion of a Corporate Volunteering Policy, work will commence on the development of the Council’s Volunteering Strategy, being coordinated by the Tackling Poverty Development team (Tackling Poverty Service). This strategy is being developed based on existing Council-led volunteering opportunities in departments like Social Services and Cultural Services (for example,

**Words from a**  
**VOLUNTEER**

I volunteer because I don't want to see things I enjoy, things I care about, things I love, end because there is no one to run them.

Sometimes it's hard work, sometimes it's a thankless task and sometimes it's frustrating. BUT now and then someone will come up to me and say "thank you I've had a wonderful day" or "thanks for your hard work I'd go mad if I couldn't come here" then it's all worth while and I feel happy and fulfilled that I have been able to do something for someone.

Dian

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**Words from a**  
**VOLUNTEER**

As a volunteer I have gained valuable skills and had experiences that I would not have had otherwise. All skills I have gained are transferable to any job.

Before my volunteering started I had very low confidence and self worth. I am a much more confident person now.

I love and enjoy all my volunteer work and I feel valued by everyone. I am a part of a few different teams due to doing volunteering with a few organisations. I have made some amazing friendships thanks to all this work.

Made with PosterMyWall.com

Swansea Museum offers placements and volunteering opportunities including school work experience). 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 across the Council to tackle poverty by:

- Delivering volunteering tasks and activities that address the impacts of poverty, such as improving wellbeing;
- Helping 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.

**5.9.4.** Local Area Coordination (Tackling Poverty Service) plays an important role in all the local communities of Swansea, helping to implement 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.

**CASE STUDY: Our Local Area Coordinator helps the community.**

Joe – our Local Area Coordinator for Pontardullais, Pontlliw, Tircoed, Garnswllt, Felindre and Waun-gron – has developed strong working relationships with the men and woman working and volunteering at Canolfan Y Bont on Dullais Road, Pontardullais. He made himself known within the community, meeting hundreds of individuals.

Having the food bank located in the Canolfan has been a great benefit to Joe, helping him to meet those often most at need. The individuals receiving food parcels are at times struggling with many other aspects of their lives. Local Councillors would often help whether it be with the foodbank or upcoming events thus creating opportunities to build positive working relationships with them.

Joe was kindly given space at Canolfan to work as and when required, helping him to meet new people. He would regularly promote events, talk with community members about what they wanted from their communities and discuss ways in which we could look for funding to start new groups and so on.

Joe often interacts with people who come into the onsite ‘Bec the Bake Café’, where some customers would sit in the corner, often with their backs to everyone as they had become so isolated and would confide that they felt they had no purpose to their life anymore. Joe’s presence helped to make this a safe space and through his support, these people developed their confidence, skills and became a thriving part of their community.

Together with the team at Canolfan and local volunteers, Joe helped to organise several successful litter picks, with close to 100 people turning out. They set up new community-led groups, sourced funding for projects and so much more.

Although staff and volunteers at Canolfan have a vast breadth of knowledge and experience, there are individuals that required a different approach. Canolfan has become a great way to receive new introductions, and in some situations safeguard the most vulnerable of individuals. The team reported that, with the backing of Local Area Co-ordination, more vulnerable people were able to get the appropriate level of support as they often felt they weren't listened to as a service, they also reported a rise in number of visitors, increased group attendance and overall improvement of community resources.

I do not believe that Canolfan Y Bont would have the presence in the community that it does if it hadn't been for the intervention of Local Area Co-ordination. As a Partnership we feel privileged to have the expertise and support of our Local Area Co-ordinator to guide us in our work to support the local community.

**Catherine Harris, Canolfan Y Bont Manager**

**5.9.5. Social Enterprises** are businesses which trade for a social or environmental purpose. Across sectors, these businesses are different in terms of how they operate, who they employ, where they work and how they make a difference in their local community. In response to the Audit Wales Report 'A missed opportunity' – Social Enterprises, we conducted a self-evaluation of the Council's current approach to get the best from our work with and funding of Social Enterprises. An Action Plan is in development and will align with our planning and reporting for 2024.

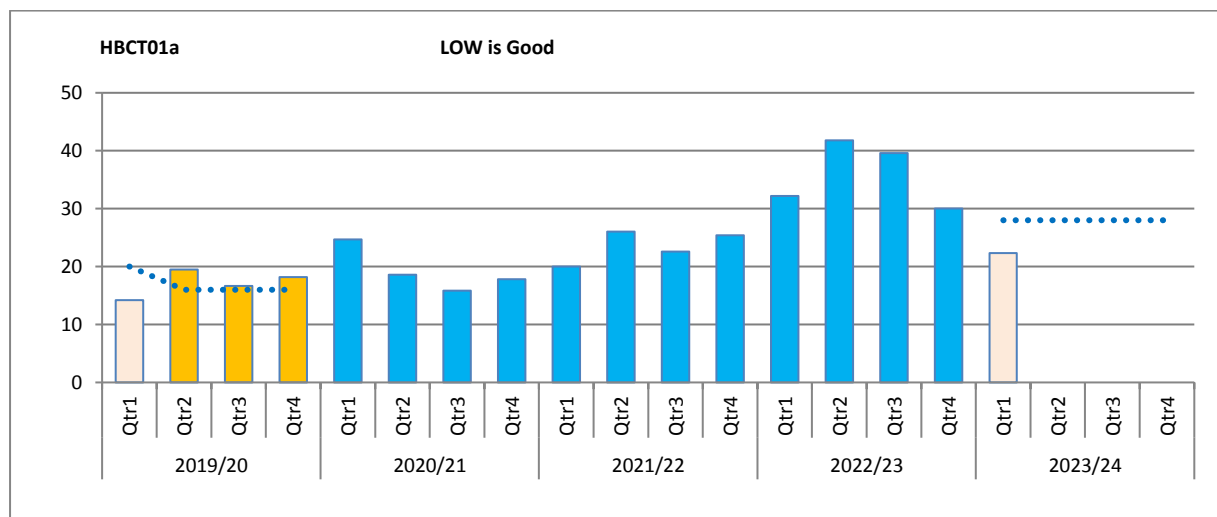
## 6. Corporate Performance Indicators

### 6.1.1. Indicator – Time taken (days) to process Council Tax Reduction and Housing Benefit applications

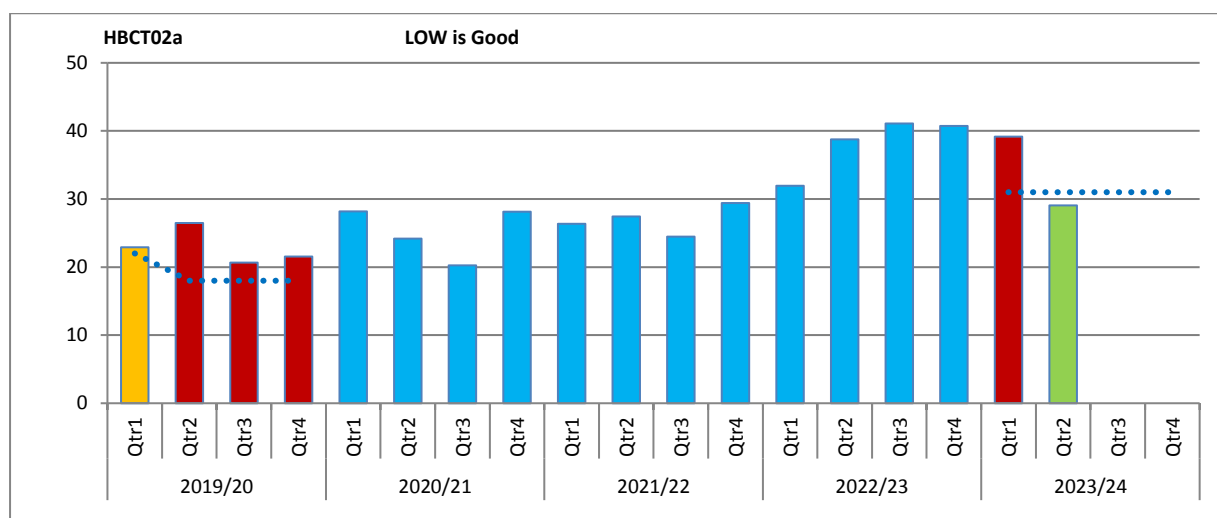
Our aim is to help people to access the benefit entitlements that will support them in being able to afford a place to live. Housing Benefits (HB) are designed to support eligible people who are unemployed, on low income or claiming benefits to pay rent (where they are not claiming Universal Credit). 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 data collected indicates how long customers are waiting before their applications for these benefits are processed. The Council provides HB data to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) on whose behalf we administer the scheme locally.

So far this reporting year, we are processing CTR applications in 23 days and HB applications in 22 days.



*HBCT01a - HB speed of processing: Average time for processing new claims*



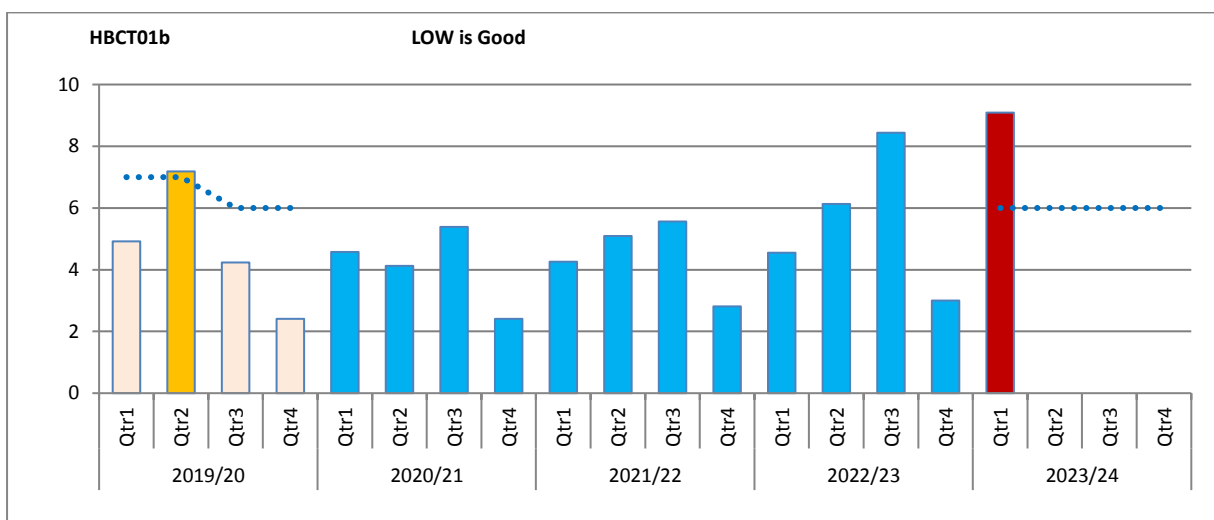
*HBCT02a - CTR speed of processing: Average time for processing new claims*

### 6.1.2. Indicator – Time taken (days) to process Council Tax Reduction and Housing Benefit changes of circumstances

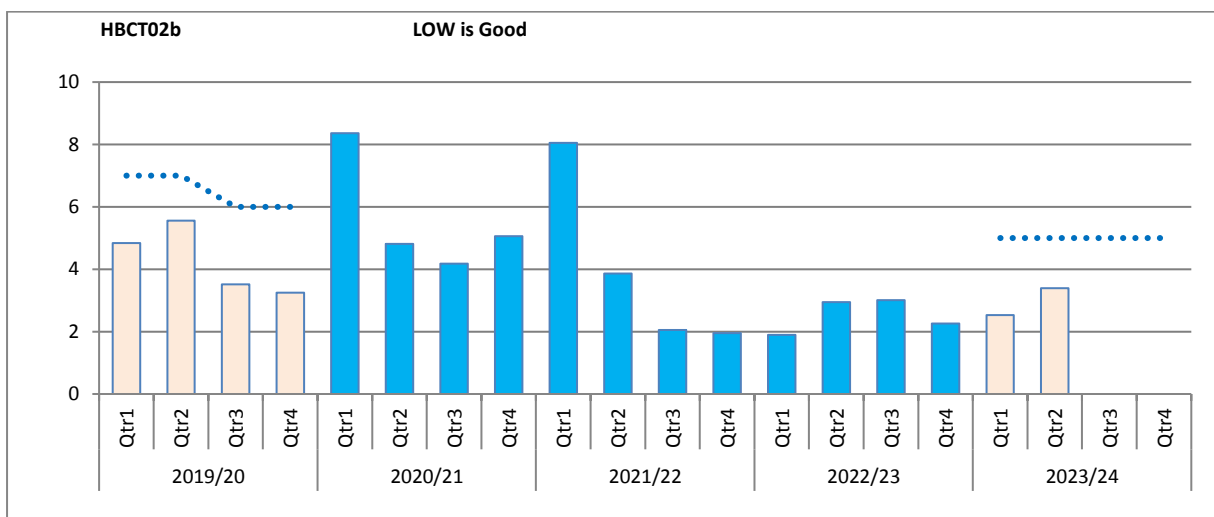
Our aim is to help people already in receipt of CTR and HB benefits to quickly change details relating to their circumstances, so as to avoid any delays or disruptions in them receiving their benefits.

The data collected indicates how long customers are waiting before their requests to change circumstances relating to CTR and HB benefits (including personal details such as addresses) are processed.

So far this reporting year, we are processing CTR changes of circumstances in 2 days and HB changes of circumstances in 9 days.



*HBCT01b - HB speed of processing: Average time for processing notifications of change in circumstances*

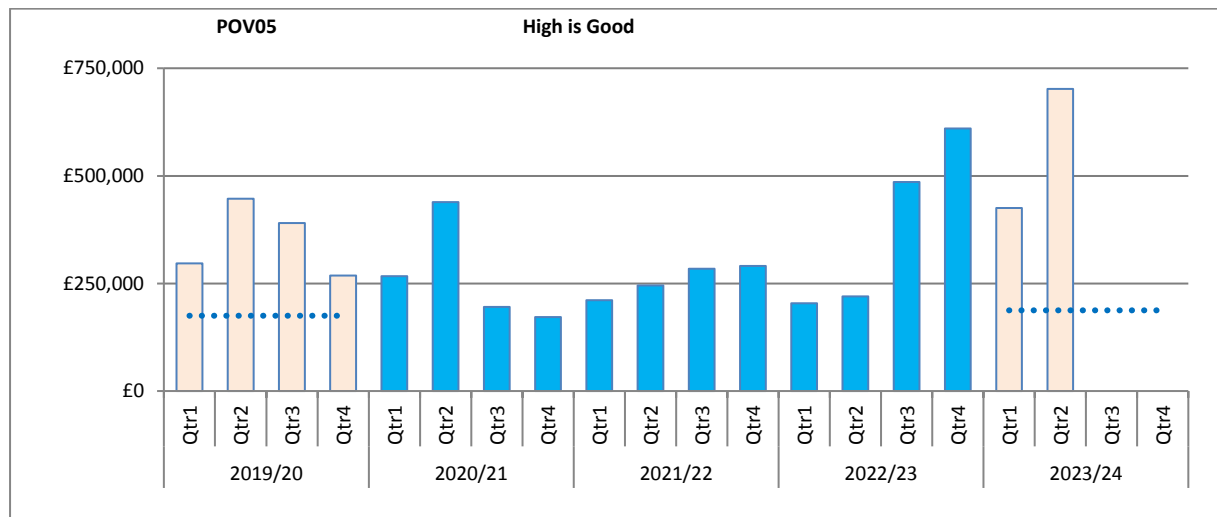


*HBCT02b - CTR speed of processing: Average time for processing notification of change in circumstances*

### 6.1.3. Indicator – Amount (value) of benefit entitlements claimed through Welfare Rights Advice

Our aim is to provide specialist advice and support to help people understanding their welfare rights and access the benefits which they are entitled to receive.

So far this reporting year, we have raised £1,091,134.10 in welfare entitlements including a peak of over £350,000 in one month (September).



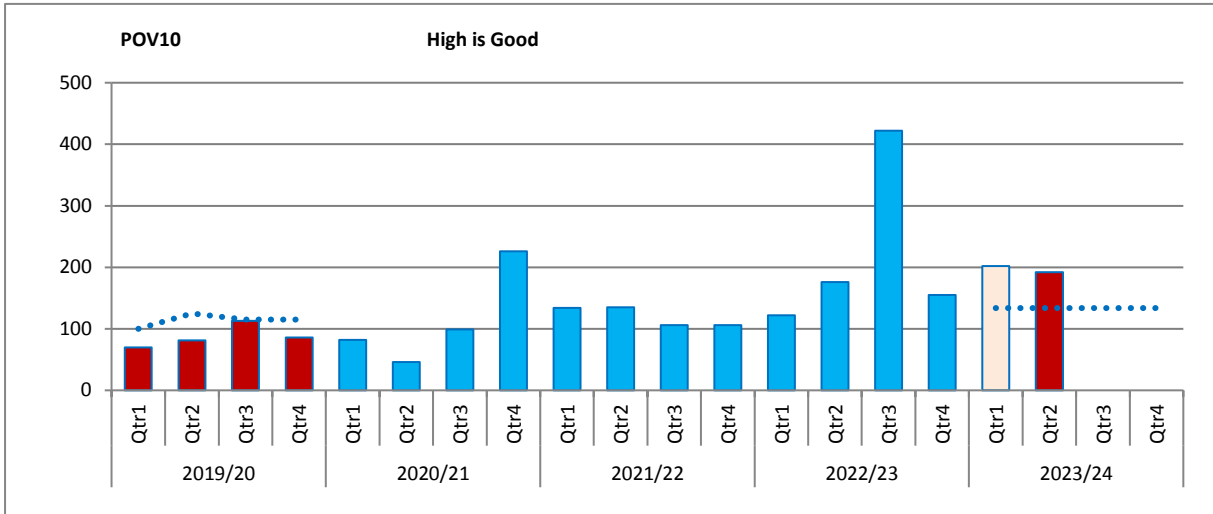
*POV05 - The amount of welfare benefits raised through securing rights and entitlements by the Welfare Rights Team*

### 6.1.4. Indicator – Number of people who gain employment through Employability Support

Our aim is to help people to overcome social, cultural, economic barriers enabling individuals to access employment opportunities.

The data collected indicates how many people have been helped by our teams to gain employment through mentoring and support. This covers the outputs of our employability support programme CfW+ and Pathways into Work (it no longer includes Workways STU and Workways Plus as both schemes ended in July).

So far this reporting year, we have supported 451 people into work.



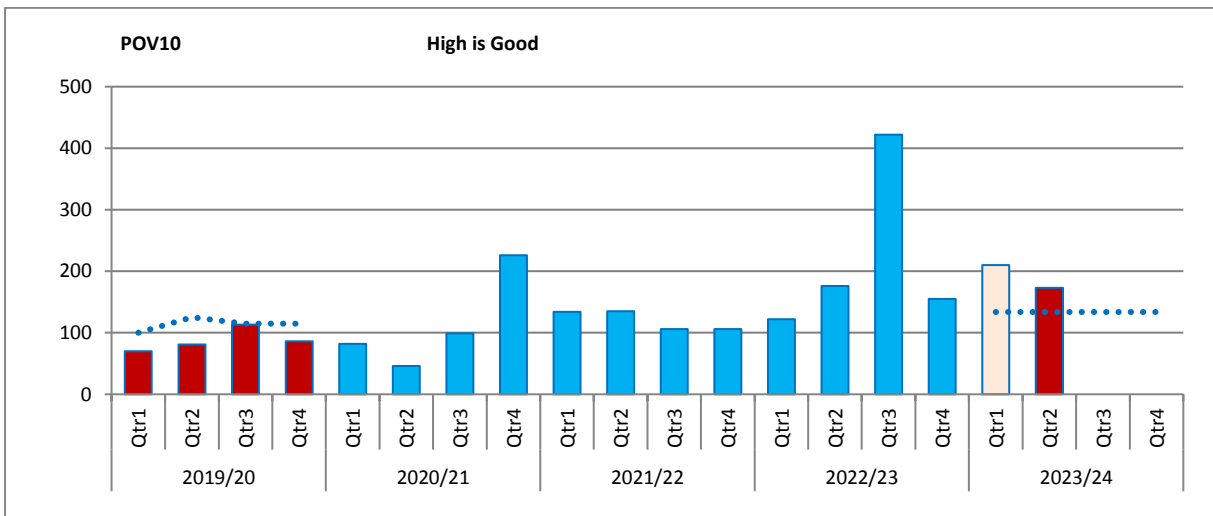
*POV10 - The number of people gaining employment through Employability Support*

### 6.1.5. Indicator – Number of adults who achieve accredited qualifications through Adult Learning

Our aim is to help working age adults to achieve the qualifications required to achieve suitable, meaningful employment.

The data collected indicates how many people have been helped by our teams to successfully complete accredited training programmes and courses. This covers the outputs of our employability support programme CfW+ and Lifelong Learning Service.

So far this reporting year, we have supported 318 people to achieve accredited qualifications.



*POV11 - The number of accredited qualifications achieved by adults with local authority support*



#### **6.1.6. Indicator – Amount (value) of grants support organisations and services to tackle poverty**

Our aim is to provide grant funds to organisations and services which directly support people in poverty, in order to get the money to where it is most needed by leveraging the existing relationships, networks and connections of those organisations.

This is a new indicator starting from April this year and we are measuring the amount of money that comes (via grants and awards to the Council) which are then disseminated to organisations and services across Swansea via our Tackling Poverty Development Team (Tackling Poverty Service).

So far this reporting year, we have received £432,380 through the grants defined in Section 5 above, with all funds having been either allocated or in the process of allocation.

#### **6.1.7. Indicator – Number of beneficiaries who have attended the “Get Swansea online” programme**

Our aim is to provide support and training to people to improve their basic digital skills, following on from the successful ‘Get Swansea Online’ initiative.

This is a new indicator starting from April this year and we are the number of people who access either our training courses or our telephone support for Digital Skills via our Lifelong Learning Service team (Tackling Poverty Service).

So far this reporting year, we have helped 370 people to get involved in improving their Digital Basic Skills through training and support.

## 7. Additional Developments

### 7.1. Human Rights City

**7.1.1.** Swansea Council and our PSB partners declared Swansea a **Human Rights City** (HRC) in December 2022. Following this declaration and after 18 months of foundation work, the Council with PSB partners hosted an engagement event. People with lived experience, young people, businesses and third sector leaders as well as community members were invited to have their say on what are the main issues and potential actions Swansea could make against each of the HRC priorities.

The HRC priorities are:

- 1) Tackling Poverty;
- 2) Vulnerable Children & Families;
- 3) Tackling Discrimination;
- 4) Domestic Abuse and Violence;
- 5) Human Rights Awareness.



The report from this engagement event will feed directly into any new strategies, policies, programmes and initiatives that are being developed by the Council and PSB partners relating to any of the priorities, whilst also feeding directly into our HRC action plans.

**7.1.2.** Simultaneously, the Council is developing a plan to put Human Rights at the heart of its decision-making. This is using a Human Rights principled approach of participation, empowering, embedding, accountability and non-discrimination.

**7.1.3.** We worked with The British Institute of Human Rights to develop a training programme on a Human Rights based approach. To date, over 80 Cabinet Members, Councillors, Directors, policy officers and senior management across the council and PSB partners have taken part. We worked with Swansea University and the HRC Steering Group to produce two guides – one for residents and visitors (detailing what your Human Rights are and why they are important) and one for organisations and public bodies (guiding them on how to embed a Human Rights based approach in their organisations).

Swansea Council's two action plans for HRC priorities and the plan to put Human Rights at the heart of the Council's decisions will be published in early December to mark one year since declaring Human Rights City status, Human Rights Day and 75 years since the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

**7.1.3.** In September 2013, the Council agreed that children’s rights should be embedded within the Council policy framework, and that a duty be placed on the Council’s Cabinet to have ‘due regard’ to the UNCRC when making decisions. This means that when Swansea Council develop new policies or strategies, review or change existing policies and strategies, or develop or change Council services, thought must be given to how those decisions affect the rights of children in Swansea.

Swansea Council has a **Children’s Rights Scheme** which sets out the actions required to achieve this. This approach is now being replicated within the Human Rights City work in Swansea, which will allow for a clear benchmark on rights based practice across all Council services and across all ages. Participation is one of the principles of this approach and there are multiple mechanisms co-ordinated/facilitated across the work of the Council to hear the voice of children and young people, as well as ensuring that they are involved in decision that impact their lives.

## 7.2. Shared Prosperity Fund

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a central pillar of the UK government’s Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment. Swansea Council has been nominated to act as the lead authority on behalf of the South West Wales region.



The programme in the region has been designed to ensure that funding is directed to projects that make sense to people and businesses. This will be achieved through four modes of delivery:



- Anchor Projects – major in-house projects focusing on core Levelling Up themes:
  - Communities and Place;
  - Supporting Local Business;
  - People and Skills.
- Grant Schemes – thematic grant initiatives integrated into Anchor Projects or as stand along schemes.
- Standalone Projects – projects established through rounds of competitive bidding which deliver outcomes that are gaps emerging from Anchor Projects and Grant Schemes.
- Procured Projects – projects delivering specified activities to a set scope.

At this time, a number of departments and teams have taken advantage of SPF opportunities to contribute to this investment opportunity, which is detailed as part of the **South West Wales Regional Investment Plan**.

Some of our initiatives are planned for 2023/24 and 2024/25 including:

- Further iterations of the COAST Programme holiday events schemes;
- Continued development of the Council’s volunteering strategy and approach;
- Piloting new initiatives such as Community Growing;

- More resources providing holistic support for people in poverty crisis such as Financial Inclusion support;
- Investment in partnership working and collaboration with people with lived experience.

## 8. Way Forward

### 8.1. 2023/24 Targets

Target	RAG	Latest Position
Published our refreshed Tackling Poverty Strategy	Green	On course to publish by March 2024 subject to public consultation and approvals.
Developed a Tackling Poverty Performance Framework	Green	On course to complete draft by March 2024 with further work to align with refreshed strategy.
Review the Council's Housing Allocations Policy	Orange	Work has commenced, completion pushed back to 2024/25.
Agree strategy to support homeless individuals	Red	Work is ongoing but delays are a result of increased demand on homelessness services. This action has been rescheduled for 2024/25.
Establish the Swansea Sustainable Food Partnership	Blue	Completed.
Published our Corporate Volunteering Policy	Green	On course to complete by March 2024 subject to final approvals.

**8.1.1.** Our target to publish a refreshed Tackling Poverty Strategy is on track for completion in 2023/24. At this time, we have completed the engagement phase of strategy development and a draft strategy is under review with officers prior to approval to proceed for public consultation. Our revised timescale for publication and launch of the strategy is March 2024, pending final approvals and turnaround times.

**8.1.2.** Our target to develop a Tackling Poverty & Enabling Communities Performance Framework is on track for completion to coincide with the launch of the refreshed Tackling Poverty Strategy in March 2024. This performance framework will align the key themes, outcomes, indicators and performance measures across the scope of the Corporate Priority, so that all parties involved in contributing to Tackling Poverty and Enabling Communities (as well as the refreshed strategy) can understand how their performance contributes to delivering our aims and objectives.

**8.1.3.** Our target to review the Council's Housing Allocation Policy has been pushed back to 2024/25 following replanning. A review has commenced but will require additional development and consultation prior to publishing the refreshed policy.

**8.1.4.** Our target to develop an agreed strategy to support homeless individuals has been impacted by prioritising our efforts to supporting an increase in the number of people presenting as homeless this year. While we are continuing to respond to this challenge and make strategic decisions about our approaches to homelessness, work to develop and agree a strategy remains ongoing.

**8.1.5.** Our target to support the establishment of a Swansea Sustainable Food Partnership has been met through the award of Welsh Government's Sustainable Food Partnerships Grant in August, of £97,000 allocated to the Council. We have allocated this funding to The Environment Centre as the host organisation and the partnership has been established in line with the grant conditions.

**8.1.6.** Our target to publish a Corporate Volunteering Policy is on track for completion in 2023/24. While the draft policy has been developed and reviewed, work is currently progressing on supplemental documentation including a Volunteer Managers Toolkit and Handbook. These documents are essential to align the policy with best practice so once they have been finalised, the policy can be approved and work will commence on a corporate strategy for implementing the policy across the Council.

## **8.2. 2024/25 Targets**

In preparation for our corporate reporting requirements, we are proposing the following targets for this Corporate Priority in 2024/25:

**8.2.1.** Co-produce a Tackling Poverty Action Plan involving people with lived experience of poverty, aligning our commitments to action including responding to Audit Wales' review of poverty in Wales.

**8.2.2.** Increase the Council's promotion of tackling poverty, championing our actions and accomplishments as well as raising awareness of the themes and opportunities for tackling poverty.

**8.2.3.** Review the Council's role and approach to supporting communities through its transformation programmes, locally-based services such as Local Area Coordination and commitment to enabling communities to become more resilient and self-reliant.

**8.2.4.** Deliver our Shared Prosperity Fund commitments including our Anchor Project initiatives that contribute to tackling poverty and enabling communities.

**8.2.5.** Prepare for launching and promoting our UNESCO City of Learning 2025 programme in partnership with lifelong learning organisations and institutions.

As a result of replanning activities, we are proposing the following 2023/24 targets for this Corporate Priority roll over into 2024/25:

**8.2.6.** Complete a review of the Council's Housing Allocations Policy to ensure focus on providing suitable homes for vulnerable people, unintentionally homeless and people who may be struggling with poverty.

**8.2.7.** Agreed a strategy to support homeless individuals as the COVID-19 hotel use ends, whilst continuing with our 'always a bed' pledge.



### 8.3. Next steps

In addition to our targets for next reporting year, we are proposing the next steps to allow us to progress with our aims and ambitions for this Corporate Priority, some of which are directly linked to our emerging priorities for the refreshed Tackling Poverty Strategy:

- Enhance existing processes for engaging with people with lived experience of poverty that supports those people to become more actively involved in contributing to this Corporate Priority;
- Develop more communication outputs, formats and opportunities to support our efforts for tackling poverty and enabling communities, including a focused campaign raising awareness of stigma and discrimination around poverty.