

# Adroddiad Blynnyddol y Cyngor 2024/25

Gorffennaf 2025

# The Council's Annual Report 2024/25

July 2025



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## Introduction from the Leader

I am pleased to present Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual Report for 2024/25, a year that has tested our resilience and adaptability. Across the County, our communities, staff, partners and businesses have worked together to overcome significant challenges, while delivering the best support we can for each one of the 188,000 residents who call Carmarthenshire home.

As ever, the context in which we operate remains complex. Our County continues to grow and change, and as an organisation we work to keep pace with that. We continue to face the harsh reality of over a decade of insufficient public sector funding, which has placed unprecedented pressure on our ability to deliver the essential services our residents rely on. The cost-of-living crisis, a fluctuating economy, and demographic shifts have all added complexity to that increasing demand.



Despite these pressures, the achievements of the past year demonstrate the power of strategic vision, partnership, and innovation. Our commitment to our four well-being objectives has guided every action: giving children the best possible start in life, enabling residents to live and age well, fostering prosperous and resilient communities, and further modernising as a resilient, efficient Council.

In education and early years, we have continued to champion inclusivity, raising standards across our schools and expanding childcare provision, ensuring that every child, regardless of background, can access opportunity.

Our transformation programme in Children and Families Services has delivered significant investment, driving improvements despite an increase in demand. Innovative health and leisure programmes have engaged thousands of people, supporting physical and mental well-being.

For our wider community, addressing poverty and supporting those facing hardship has been a key priority. Through the efforts of our Hwb advisors and Hwb Bach y Wlad service, eligible residents have been supported to claim over £7.5 million in benefits. We have brought empty homes back into use, sustained new tenancies, and made progress in affordable housing, drawing down over £17 million in Social Housing Grants and adding 361 new homes to our stock.

Our robust approach to health and social care has seen results; reducing hospital admissions and enabling individuals to return home faster with the right support in place. The Home First pathway and increased investment in preventative services are key examples of effective integration and early intervention, bringing tangible improvements to the lives of vulnerable residents.

Carmarthenshire's economic recovery and growth have been enabled through securing over £58 million in funding, supporting over 2,300 businesses, and creating or safeguarding thousands of jobs. Strategic projects such as Pentre Awel continue at pace, providing state of the art facilities and innovative opportunities to our communities.

At the same time, our commitment to decarbonisation and biodiversity is unwavering, with a 37% reduction in targeted carbon emissions since our baseline year, and over half of Council homes now meeting higher energy performance standards.

We recognise too the importance of Welsh language and culture to our identity and have responded decisively to the decline in Welsh speakers by implementing new strategies and action plans, supporting staff learning, and championing vibrant arts initiatives.

Throughout, we have maintained a focus on governance, equality, and engagement, listening to our residents and staff, and embedding the sustainable development principle at the heart of everything that we do. The feedback that you provide through the annual Residents Survey is invaluable to us as we prioritise our work and commitments going forward. Modernisation and transformation have accelerated through digital transformation, automation, and smarter ways of working, delivering both efficiencies and improved experiences for those we serve.

I extend my thanks to all who have contributed to these achievements, our dedicated workforce, our partners, and most importantly, the people of Carmarthenshire. Despite facing complex challenges, we have shown that by working as one team, rooted in our core values, we can deliver for our communities, today and for future generations.

As we look to the year ahead, we do so with renewed determination to meet challenges head-on, to innovate, and to ensure Carmarthenshire remains a place where every individual can thrive.

**Cllr Darren Price**

**Leader of Carmarthenshire County Council**



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# Introduction

Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC) is a large, complex organisation with a workforce of approximately 8,400 employees and a budget of over £900 million (revenue and capital). Due to continual financial pressure on public services year on year for over a decade, we continue to face unprecedented pressure in the delivery of services to the approximately 188,000 people who call Carmarthenshire home. In doing this, we strive to make progress against our four well-being objectives.

The purpose of this annual report is to provide an overview of the progress we've made during 2024/25 against these well-being objectives, which are:

- 1. Enabling our children and young people to have the best possible start in life (Start Well)**
- 2. Enabling our residents to live and age well (Live and Age Well)**
- 3. Enabling our communities and environment to be healthy, safe, and prosperous (Prosperous Communities)**
- 4. To further modernise and develop as a resilient and efficient Council (Our Council)**

These objectives are designed to address the most pressing challenges for the County, whilst maximising our contribution to the seven national well-being goals. Each objective has a set of outcomes which support us to measure our progress and guide our activity as an organisation. These will be referred to throughout this report and our Corporate Strategy for 2022-2027 provides a detailed overview. They were developed in 2022/23 following an extensive needs assessment and period of consultation.

The primary purpose of this report is to provide residents, service users, and key stakeholders with a good understanding of how we've been performing. It also satisfies the statutory duty placed on us through the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021, the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, and the Social Partnership Duty as noted in the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.



# Measuring Progress and Self-Assessment

Our well-being objectives are firmly rooted in a principle which promotes a focus on all public bodies working together to progress outcomes that improve the quality of life of residents and communities, both now and in the future.

To effectively measure our progress against achieving our objectives, we look at a range of data and evidence including the findings of our self-assessment and the findings of regulatory reports to build as comprehensive a picture as possible of our progress both in terms of trends over time and in relation to how we compare with other local authorities in Wales.

For us to do this effectively we have developed a data suite of indicators and measures, which, when considered together cover a wide range of different sources allowing us to reflect on the evidence available to us in the round. The range of data covers the following and will be referred to throughout this report and can be viewed in full in Appendix 5:

## Population Indicators

Mainly includes publicly available data that has been identified to develop an understanding of trends and Carmarthenshire's position relative to the other local authorities in Wales. Sources include (but are not limited to): Annual Population Survey, Public Health Wales, Welsh Government, Department for Work and Pensions.

## Performance Measures

Inclusive of statutory returns, internal Council measures and primary intelligence in the form of consultation findings that we utilise to measure and monitor performance on a regular basis. These are the direct responsibility of the Council.

Our well-being objectives also frame our approach to self-assessment. This approach provides the context within which we exercise our functions, use resources, and ensure governance is effective:

- It ensures that our self-assessment is strategic, focusing on the organisation, rather than individual services and on the extent to which the Council is achieving its well-being objectives and intended outcomes.
- It allows us to reflect at a strategic level on how all our functions (including corporate activities) are contributing to the achievement of our well-being objectives, how we are operating and what action we need to take to improve further and continue to provide effective services now and for the long-term.
- Using well-being objectives as the overarching framework encourages a more holistic view of Council performance, recognising that many services 'join-up' and contribute to one or more well-being objective.
- We continue to manage individual service performance via Divisional Business Plans. This forms an important part of the Council's approach to performance management as detailed in our Performance Management Framework which is based on a Plan/Do/Review cycle.

# Key Principles

## Core Values and Behaviours

The Council's vision underpins everything that we do as an organisation.

***'Developing Carmarthenshire Together: One Council, One Vision, One Voice.'***

When considered together, the vision and our core values and behaviours help us to make the right decision and shape how we work together to deliver services and do the best job that we can.

Our six core values form the overarching principles which frame our twenty behaviours, these behaviours describe the individual actions and approaches for how we work and treat others. Our values are as follows but can be viewed in full along with our behaviours [here](#);

- Working as one team
- Focus on customers
- Listen to improve
- Strive for excellence
- Act with integrity
- Take personal responsibility

## Governance

As a Council we are responsible for ensuring that our business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. We must also ensure that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently, and effectively and to secure continuous improvement in this regard.

We are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the Governance of our affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of our functions, including having appropriate arrangements for the management of risk.

The Council sees Corporate Governance as "doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner." The [Governance Framework](#) comprises the systems, processes, cultures, and values by which we are directed and controlled and also the way it accounts to, engages with, and leads the Community. It enables us to monitor the achievement of our strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

Our Annual Governance Statement as included in our [Statement of Accounts](#) details how we have complied with the various elements of our Governance Framework.

## Equality and Diversity

The Council is committed to ensuring that we are fair and equitable to all in everything that we do. Our [Strategic Equality Plan](#) sets out the principles of our commitment to equality and diversity and outlines how we intend to fulfil our responsibilities as an employer, a service provider and as a community leader.

As a public body we need to ensure that everybody has equal access to our services and is treated fairly by our services. The fundamental principles of human rights also need to be at the core of service delivery. We are required to focus on achieving measurable equality outcomes through specific improvements in policies and the way our services and functions are delivered.

We are committed to treating our staff, and the people of Carmarthenshire, fairly. We will make sure that we do not discriminate against people because of their age, disability, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, belief or non-belief, social class, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, responsibility for dependents or for any other unfair reason.

We are committed to ensuring the delivery of excellent public services to everyone living, working, studying, and visiting Carmarthenshire. This is underpinned by our four equality objectives for 2024-2028:

- Being an employer of choice;
- Enabling our residents to live and age well;
- Embedding Community Cohesion in our organisation and our community; and
- Protecting and strengthening equality and human rights.



## The Council

At the local elections in 2022, Carmarthenshire's residents returned 75 county councillors representing our 51 wards. The Council's Cabinet consists of 10 Councillors, which includes the Council's Leader. They have responsibility for ensuring progress against our well-being objectives. Each Cabinet member has a portfolio for which they're responsible.



**Cllr Darren Price**

Council Leader



**Cllr Linda Evans**

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Homes



**Cllr Philip Hughes**

Cabinet Member for Organisation and Workforce



**Cllr Alun Lenny**

Cabinet Member for Resources



**Cllr Carys Jones**

Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs and Planning Policy



**Cllr Aled Vaughan Owen**

Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability



**Cllr Edward Thomas**

Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure



**Cllr Hazel Evans**

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Leisure, Culture and Tourism



**Cllr Glynog Davies**

Cabinet Member for Education and Welsh Language



**Cllr Jane Tremlett**

Cabinet Member for Health and Social Services

# About the Council - Key Statistics



**75**  
County Councillors  
representing  
**51**  
community wards



Just over  
**8,400**  
employees  
Split over  
**5**  
departments



Budget of over  
**£900m**  
(revenue and capital)



Keeping our website updated (over

**4.6 million**

user sessions by the public on our  
website per annum)



Taking over  
**179,000**  
calls & responding to over  
**26,000**  
electronic enquiries annually in our  
contact centre



Deal with over  
**330,000**  
invoices a year



Determine an average of  
**1,300**  
Planning Applications  
a year



Responsible for the  
highway network in  
Carmarthenshire of  
**3,500 km**



over  
**84,000**  
tonnes of municipal  
waste collected during  
the year



We manage just over

**9,300**

Council houses



Over

**3,300**

clients supported with  
a Social Care Service



We have

**18**

libraries in the County  
(including mobile and  
community run)



We run

**6**

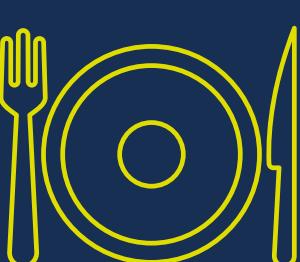
leisure centres in the  
County



Helping as many as possible of our

**8,000**

businesses in the County



**25,000**

school meals a day



Our registrars on average annually  
record around

**2,300** Deaths,

**2,600** Births

and over

**630**

Marriages and Civil Partnerships



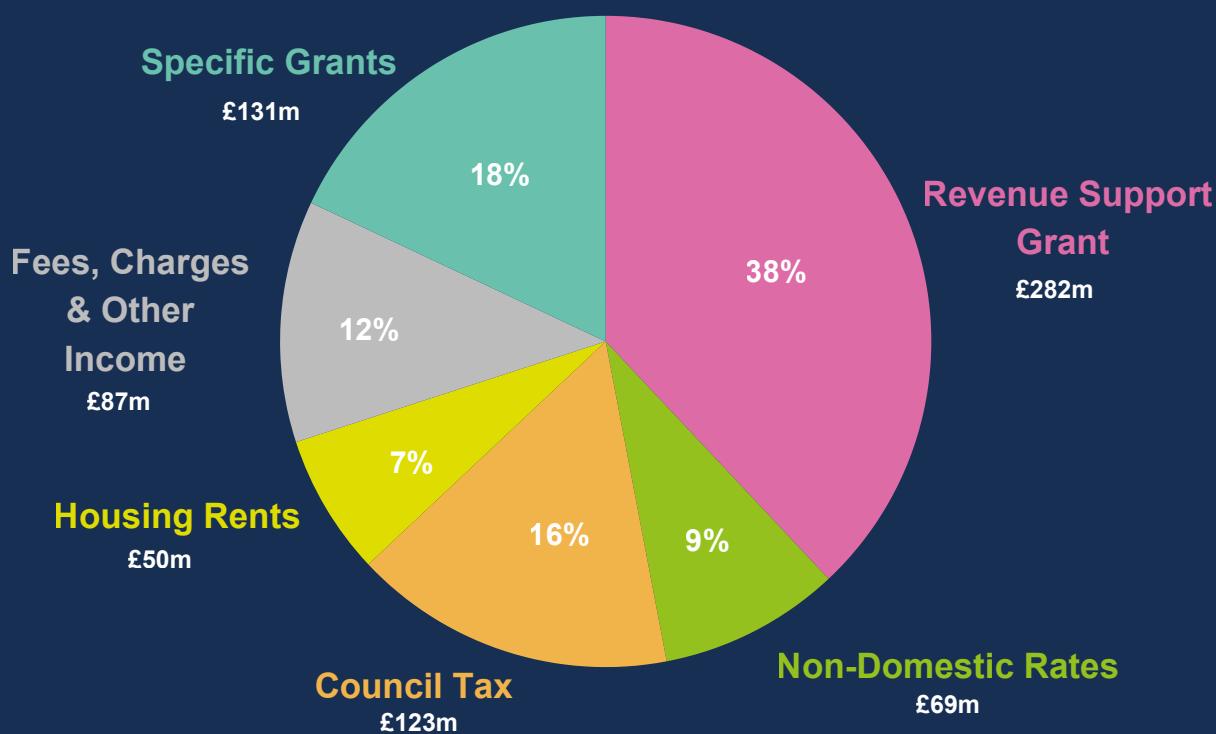
1 nursery school,  
94 primary schools,  
12 secondary schools,  
1 special school and  
3 pupil referral units  
which provide education for over

**27,000**

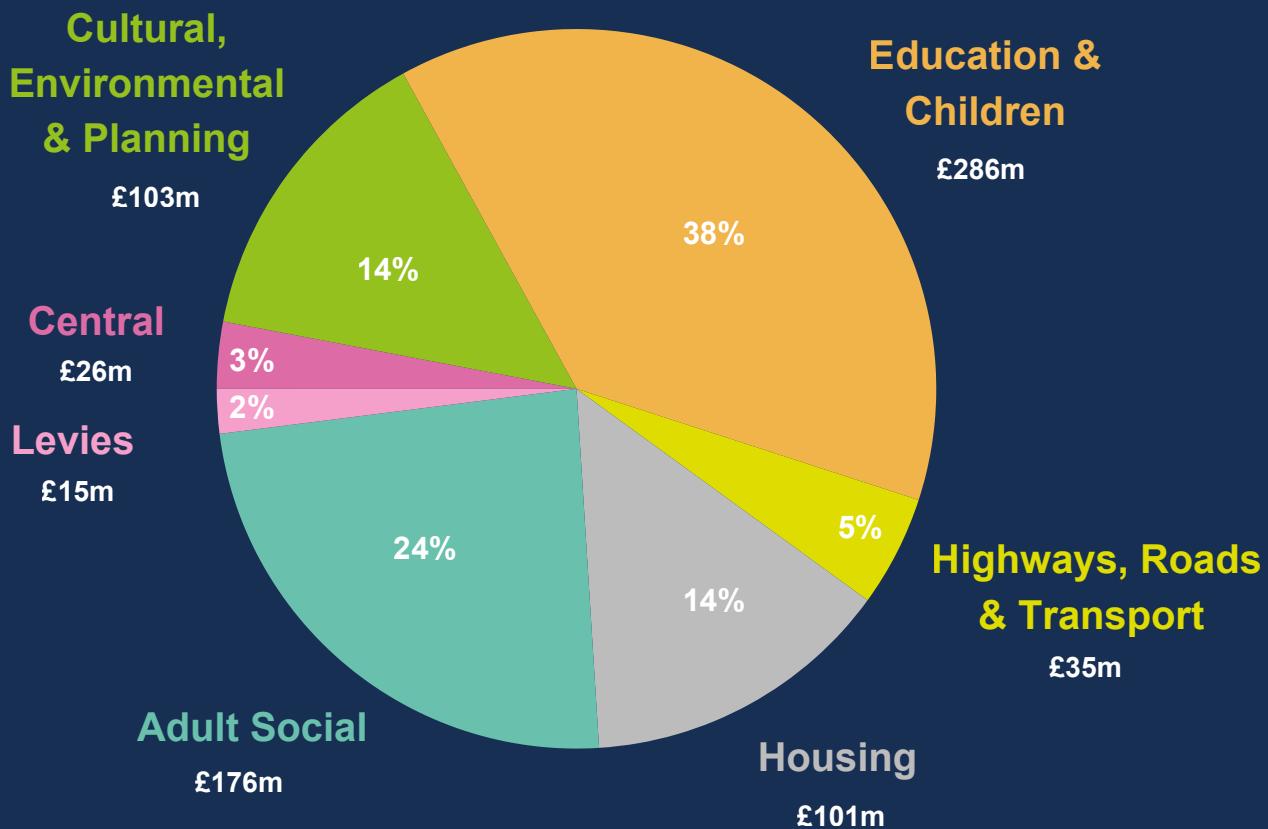
pupils

# Revenue Budget 2024/25

## Sources of Funding



## Services Provided



**Total Expenditure / Income £742m**

# Well-being Objective 1

## Enabling our children and young people to have the best possible start in life (Start Well)

### Overview of Progress

The Council believes that every child deserves the best start in life regardless of their background. Ensuring that children have a strong early foundation sets them on a path which limits the effects of inequality across health and well-being outcomes, educational achievement, and economic status. For the Council, this is rooted in providing the right support to children and families when and where they need it, focussing on prevention and early intervention, providing access to enriching health and wellbeing initiatives, and an education system which supports children to be the best that they can be.

Over the last year, the Council has continued its efforts to address some significant challenges. Whilst the level of children in poverty has decreased in the County, it is thought that around 30% are still living in poverty. This is not an issue exclusive to Carmarthenshire, and we are committed to doing everything we can to alleviate the effects of poverty for our residents as noted under well-being objective 2. Nutritious free school meals provision remains a priority with 25,000 meals provided every day in Carmarthenshire's schools. This provision also plays an important role in ensuring that children maintain a healthy and balanced diet. In time, this should contribute positively to the level of childhood obesity in the County, which currently sits at 30% for 4 to 5-year-olds. The raft of sport and leisure initiatives, such as 'Actif Anywhere for Schools' and the 'Splash Phase' swimming programme, have significantly increased physical activity engagement among children. Particularly with those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Children and Families Services are under pressure because of high demand particularly due to the complexity of that demand and workforce shortages. In recognition of this, the Council has made significant investments, including a transformation programme with a focus on long-term sustainability for the service. Carmarthenshire continues to have the lowest number of children looked after<sup>[1]</sup> compared to other Local Authorities in Wales, and there were slightly less children in foster placements at the end of year compared with the previous year. However, there continues to be a shortage of foster carers both locally and nationally which impacts placement stability. The Council is proactively addressing this through targeted recruitment campaigns. Good progress has been made within Children's Homes, and we have committed to ensuring that all residential care is provided within the County by 2026. Early intervention and preventative services continue to provide high quality support that achieves good outcomes for families, despite the challenges around rising demand and complexity of need.

The childcare offer across the County has increased, and phase 2 of the Flying Start Childcare expansion has been fully rolled out. Phase 3 will be rolled out during 2025/26.

Despite facing funding challenges and the ongoing effects of the pandemic, good progress has been made within Education. Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reforms have been rolled out, broadening specialist support with a positive Estyn inspection follow-up demonstrating the progress achieved. Furthermore, school infrastructure has seen developments through the Modernising Education Programme, including new facilities for Welsh-medium provision and ALN education. Curriculum development in line with the Curriculum for Wales has also remained a priority, promoting inclusive, community-rooted learning with an emphasis on literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. School attendance remains a concern, with the County reporting the lowest attendance levels in Wales. The County also has a comparably higher level of Electively Home Educated learners who require tailored support. We are proactively addressing these challenges through targeted marketing and support.



## **In Summary**

Children and Families Services across Wales are under pressure to respond to unprecedented demand. This has coincided with national workforce shortages, a collapse in the availability of placements for children, and a reduction in funding to the Local Authority. To address this, the service has seen an unprecedented investment in workforce, prevention, and care costs.

Responding to this is vitally important and a Transformation Programme for Children and Families Services has provided £7.5 million additional revenue funding for improvements and efficiencies, alongside £2 million in capital investment in new children's homes. The Programme's workstreams focus on the areas identified for investment. This will help achieve the vision for Children and Families Services and provide support to ensure sustainability in the future. The focus for this year has been delivering the first year of this transformation programme.

In recognition of the importance of being active at a young age, we have implemented a range of health initiatives aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles and preventing the development of chronic diseases later in life. This includes a focus on health education to raise awareness of the importance of preventative health measures and early intervention.

Collaborative and partnership working has seen the development of comprehensive health services and support to the community. There has also been a focus on increasing access to mental health services, including counselling and support groups in response to growing demand.

## **How are we doing?**



- Despite a 36% increase in the number of looked after children in Carmarthenshire between 2022/23 (190) and 2023/24 (259), we continue to have the lowest number of looked after children per 10,000 population under 18 years of age in Wales with 70.60. This is well below the Welsh rate of 116.10. At the end of 2024/25, this increased slightly to 269. The comparative data for this per 10,000 population will not be available until late 2025, but we have been low in the context of other local authorities for many years.
- There were 205 looked after children in foster placements as of 31 March 2025, compared to 208 the previous year. There continues to be a shortage of foster carers both locally and nationally, which impacts on placement stability. The department works collaboratively across the region with Foster Wales, and a national foster carer recruitment campaign received significant media attention.

## Outcome: Reducing the inequalities faced by children from disadvantaged backgrounds which may affect their later life chances.

Our focus is on early intervention and prevention. This includes reducing inequalities faced by disadvantaged children, supporting families in challenging situations to create safe and stable home environments, and helping families to access local health and well-being services.

### Children's Homes

This is an area with multiple complex challenges and holds considerable risk, all of which change quickly and require urgent, creative responses.

Our key achievements over the past 12 months include:

- A commitment to ensure all residential care is provided within Carmarthenshire by 2026.
- Our Placement Commissioning Strategy sets out our strategic intent and a detailed plan for implementation, including forecasting costs for each element of the plan.
- Recruitment at our new children's homes progresses well with 75% of posts filled and team managers appointed. The use of agency staff has dramatically reduced.
- Maximising our in-house capacity by ensuring both Hafan and Ross Avenue children's homes are fully occupied.
- The design for a new-build children's home has been agreed. Two designs (for one and two storey buildings) provide templates for the whole region and will assist in the implementation of the elimination of profit policy. A clear timeline of two years for our new build children's homes has also been established. A feasibility study is underway and will be completed by June 2025.

### Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking (UAS) Children and Young People

We are currently supporting 62 UAS children and young people: 19 in-county and 43 out-of-county.

We have 27 under 18s and 35 over 18s. The number of over 18-year-olds is increasing faster than under 18-year-olds, resulting in reduced income from the Home Office. This places more pressure on our budget. Our key achievements include:

- Creating a specialist team of social workers, support workers, and personal advisers.
- Five properties in Carmarthenshire were set up from scratch, with 10 young people living in them.
- No commissioned placements being used for any new referrals from the national transfer scheme. This has been an enormous challenge, but our teams are delivering.
- Practice guidance and processes are in place to support the work of the teams.

### Disability Service

We continue to work with partners to ensure young people, including disabled young people, are supported to remain connected with their families and reducing the need for supported accommodation where it is safe to do so.

Since January 2025, a multi-agency pilot is in its second phase of implementation by locating the team within our Early Help Hub. Finding ways to reach young people and their families at an earlier stage, helping to avoid breakdown in relationships, and preventing homelessness for young people.

## **Neurodevelopmental (ND) Pathway**

Carmarthenshire has been actively developing and implementing a Neurodevelopmental (ND) Pathway to support neurodiverse young people in accessing suitable and inclusive education. This initiative involves assessment, training, and direct intervention with young people, their families, and colleagues across Education, Children, and Family Services. The Portsmouth Model has been a significant part of this development and emphasises the importance of providing the right support at the right time, without the need for a diagnosis to get needs met.

An ND conference was held which focused on the complexities of neurodiversity and the importance of inclusive classrooms. The conference highlighted the challenges faced by neurodivergent children, particularly in relation to school attendance. The conference also included discussions on the importance of a psychological lens in understanding and supporting neurodiverse children.

We have established a departmental ND delivery group which will oversee the implementation of the ND pathway. We are in the process of recruiting to the three new Disability Intervention Workers and an Exploitation Worker who will provide the additional capacity to deliver this.

## **Sport and Leisure Initiatives**

### **Actif Anywhere for Schools**

The Actif Anywhere for Schools project has significantly boosted physical activity engagement across Carmarthenshire, with 4,677 pupils participating in 288 activity opportunities through both live-streamed and on-demand sessions. A festive roadshow, livestreamed from leisure centres and led by Young Ambassadors, created 45 volunteering opportunities and enhanced youth leadership skills. Overall, the project has made meaningful strides in promoting physical activity and youth development across the County.

### **Actif Sport and Leisure**

Offer and facilitate access to a wide range of opportunities for children and families to improve their health and well-being. Our household membership adds huge value with two adults and up to four children being able to access all leisure centres. We have received an additional £169,000 funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund to continue the excellent work being undertaken in the community, particularly in rural/hard to reach parts of Carmarthenshire, to give everyone the opportunity to be active. 2024/25 saw attendance in leisure facility-based programmes for young people increase to 357,420 visits, up from 331,357 – a growth of 8% year-on-year.



### **Splash Phase Swimming Programme**

Targeting children unable to progress in school swimming lessons, this free 6-week Splash programme supported 24 learners, most from disadvantaged backgrounds. Over half advanced to the next level, with some continuing into the 'Learn 2 Swim' programme. By addressing gaps in access to essential life skills like swimming, the initiative helped reduce health and safety inequalities, building confidence and resilience that can positively influence long-term outcomes for these children.

## **Support for Llanelli Athletics Club**

Through Actif Places, Llanelli Athletics Club expanded its provision to include jumping events, previously inaccessible due to limited resources. This support has increased junior participation, particularly among children from disadvantaged backgrounds. By removing financial and structural barriers to sport, the project promotes equal access to physical development opportunities, helping to level the playing field and support healthier, more active lifestyles that benefit children's prospects.

## **Youth Empowerment Initiative**

With funding secured from Hywel Dda University Health Board, Actif Sport and Leisure launched the Youth Empowerment initiative – an early intervention programme aimed at supporting young people aged 11–14 who are at risk of substance misuse. This preventative project was delivered in collaboration with key partners including Swansea Foundation, Scarlets Community Foundation, NHS nurses, Choices, and People Speak Up. The 16-week programme engaged 39 pupils from across Carmarthenshire, offering them meaningful opportunities for self-discovery through engaging and challenging experiences. The sessions focused on personal development using a child-centred approach. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their choices, build self-motivation, set personal goals, and develop self-esteem. The programme also aimed to enhance overall well-being by creating a supportive environment where young people could grow in confidence and resilience.

## **Outcome: Families from disadvantaged backgrounds are able to access health and well-being provision within their local areas.**

### **Early Help Support**

We have been developing an effective offer of Early Help Support across Carmarthenshire for our Families over the last year. This has seen the development of an Early Help Hub bringing existing teams together to work together effectively to offer support to families at the right time and in the right place. We have also undertaken a systems review to identify areas where we can improve our offer. We have developed our Early Help Strategy that clearly sets out the vision that underpins our work. We are continuing to embed the Early Help approach across all our partner agencies and statutory teams; and continue to find ways to reach families at the earliest opportunity to help them find their solutions and make the changes that they want to make.

**The Family Information Service (FIS)** has been actively updating families and professionals on services, resources, and developments. The FIS website has been enhanced with new functionalities like a Family Notice Board, an Accessibility button, Feedback forms, and a Calendar of Events. This has led to increased user engagement. During the year, FIS responded to 2,193 enquiries.

FIS has promoted community events through its Facebook page and participated in countywide outreach events with various Local Authority and third sector partners. During the summer holidays, FIS supported National Play Day and Summer Play Day events, as well as the Food and Fun programme in eight Carmarthenshire primary schools. FIS also engaged in a Tackling Poverty pilot project in the Aman-Gwendraeth area, offering support and information to families in need. FIS also supported two successful 'Hey Come Play' events during February half term and collaborated on a West Wales Neurodivergence Support drop-in day, which had 170 attendees.

## Play Sufficiency Action Plan

- Food and Fun 2024: 8 Primary Schools successfully ran 'Food and Fun' across 12 days of the summer holidays. These schools were Y Bedol, Pontyberem, Pen Rhos, Burry Port, Betws, Old Road, Myrddin and Llanmiloe. Approximately 331 pupils ages 5 to 11 benefitted from attending. A further 11 primary schools (covering 12 cohorts) have committed to run the programme during the summer of 2025.
- People Speak Up has been funded via the Playworks Holiday Grant to run open access play sessions across the County. They have delivered sessions during school holidays and some weekends. 17 sessions ran across six locations for 58 individual children during October half term. During the Christmas holidays, there were nine locations each held a session, with 37 individual children benefiting. 63 individual children participated in sessions on weekends during term time across four locations.
- A 'Stay and Play' project has been piloted in Ysgol Ffalfach, running every Tuesday 3.30pm to 4.15pm during March 2025.
- Andi Pandy Day Nursery was supported in undertaking a Play Audit of the resources within two of their rooms.
- During August 2024, the Family Information Service Childcare and Play Team proudly hosted a series of free family events across the County to celebrate National Playday. 38 services were attended by approximately 400 children.
- Ludicology were commissioned to support the Play Team in completing the Play Sufficiency Assessment. A combination of desktop research, focus groups, and consultations took place during the year. All information is collated and used to inform the assessment and Play Sufficiency Action Plan, due for submission to Welsh Government in June.

## Actif Llanelli Summer Family Sessions

In collaboration with five local family centres, Actif Llanelli delivered inclusive weekly activity sessions during the summer holidays, engaging 810 participants. These sessions provided free, accessible opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to develop physical, social, and emotional skills in a safe, supportive environment. By enabling siblings and families to play together, the initiative fosters stronger family bonds and helps reduce barriers to participation in structured physical activity. This contributes to improved wellbeing and future life chances.



# Is anyone better off?

## A Foster Child's Journey in Carmarthenshire

To celebrate Care Day 2025 on the 21st of February, a 10-year-old boy who has been in foster care in Carmarthenshire for just over two years has shared his poem about his moving journey.

Titled 'My Foster Life', the poem gives a powerful insight into G's experiences, from the uncertainty of entering care to finding stability, joy, and belonging in a caring home.

Care Day is a celebration of children and young people with care experience.



### My Foster Life

I'm nervous, I'm anxious, everything's strange,  
My sisters are with me, but it's still a change  
These people are strangers, I feel so scared,  
I wouldn't be here if only they cared.

The rules are different, this life is new,  
Things used to be bad, but it's all I knew,  
It seems to get easier every day,  
Here, for a football team I get to play.

In foster care I don't have to move school,  
And I think the food is really cool,  
I don't have to move, and I love the days out,  
At Christmas time, they went all out.

One year later, its decision time,  
And we will stay in care full time,  
They found a family for us all,  
Altogether we had a ball.

Foster care is scary, but you need to stay strong,  
Eventually you will find where you belong,  
I love my new family, and they love me,  
Each day is awesome and filled with glee

## How can we do better?

We will strengthen our approach to supporting children and families by developing a new Corporate Parenting Strategy, ensuring everyone in the Council understands their role in helping looked after children and care leavers thrive. Our early help services will be enhanced so families can access support sooner, helping more children stay safely at home. We will implement the Fair Allocation to Resources Policy for disabled children and their families, giving them greater choice and control over the support they receive. Alongside this, we will increase the capacity of our fostering service, improving recruitment and retention to ensure a sufficient supply of in-house foster placements to meet the diverse needs of children in Carmarthenshire.

## In Summary

During the year, progress was made across Early Years services:

- A key policy shift was the formal removal of the Rising 4s policy following a review by the Education and Children Scrutiny Committee. This change prompted engagement with non-maintained providers and discussions with seven schools to expand their age range to accommodate the resulting demand. This will be effective from September 2025.
- Childcare provision also saw growth, with an increase to 218 registered providers offering 4,502 places by May 2025. The Flying Start programme completed its second expansion phase and began rolling out phase three, with a focus on promoting Welsh language and culture.
- Family Support Services were strengthened through a redesigned structure and new roles to enhance fostering practices.
- Efforts to support Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) included aligning allowances with foster carers and integrating SGO carers into the Foster Wales Carmarthenshire structure.
- Collaborative work with Hywel Dda University Health Board and the voluntary sector advanced the Maternity and Early Years Strategy. This included the development of an e-learning package.
- Community engagement was fostered through events funded by the Tackling Poverty Grant, benefitting a number of children.
- The Families First programme supported 9,701 individuals through 2,704 referrals, with high success rates in parenting interventions and positive outcomes on the Distance Travelled Tool.
- Despite rising demand and complexity, early intervention services continued to provide quality support, though some projects reported waiting lists for specialised services such as domestic violence and therapeutic support. These are being actively managed to ensure timely assistance.

## How are we doing?

- 9.7% of children in care in Carmarthenshire during 2024/25 had to move three or more times during the year. This equates to 26 out of the 269 children, compared to 8.5% (22 out of the 259) in 2023/24. There was a further increase in the number of Children Looked After on 31 March 2025 to 269 compared to 259 the previous year.
- There are 218 registered childcare providers, offering 4,502 childcare places delivered by childminders, day nurseries, cylchoedd meithrin, Flying Start, after school clubs, and holiday clubs.
- 84.3% attendance rate within allocated Flying Start free childcare placements for eligible 2 to 3-year-olds to prepare for school readiness, an improvement of the 2023/24 result of 78.1%. With the lowest levels of unauthorised absence recorded to date at 0.88%. It is encouraging to see families reporting absence and engaging with childcare settings in reporting absence.
- 179 families with additional social welfare needs living in a Flying Start area received time specified interventions from the wider Flying Start Team e.g. Social Worker, Family Support Officer, Domestic Abuse Project Worker, or Midwife. This is 98% of those families referred and an increase on 2023/24, where 149 received time specified interventions.



## Outcome: Improved availability of early years education and childcare settings across the county, particularly in rural areas; with a particular focus on providing and strengthening Welsh-medium childcare.

### Rising 4s Policy

In 2018/19, the Education and Children Scrutiny Committee completed a Task and Finish Review of the current provision for early years education, childcare, and play opportunities.

One of the conclusions identified was that the Authority's 'Rising 4s' policy is markedly different to other neighbouring local authorities', and that the 'Council undertake a formal review of its current admissions policy for full time education for 4-year-olds (the rising 4s policy).'

After due consultation, it was decided to remove said policy and the removal of the Rising 4s policy will come into effect in September 2025. We have engaged with the non-maintained sector and several providers have expressed an interest in providing non-statutory nursery education either within or close to some of our 4-11 schools. This will meet a projected demand created by the one term delay in entry to full-time reception classes under the Rising 4s policy. In other areas, we have begun discussions with seven schools to change their age range from 4 to 11 to 3 to 11 where gaps in provision remain. Both processes should be complete by September 2026.

### Childcare

There is an increase in the number of childcare providers and places as of May 2025, with 218 registered childcare providers offering 4,502 childcare places delivered by childminders, day nurseries, cylchoedd meithrin, Flying Start, after school clubs, and holiday clubs. In June 2024, there were 213 providers and 4,214 places. Our Statutory Childcare Sufficiency Assessment summary report continues to be shared with prospective childcare providers and is also available on the Family Information Service website.



### Flying Start Childcare

The Flying Start childcare's second phase of expansion is now complete. New areas were targeted, ensuring the childcare providers are commissioned to register eligible children for childcare. Eligible families are informed through targeted postcard mailing shots and then they are invited to complete a self-registration form. All expansion areas are now fully enrolled into Flying Start. Our Welsh Language officer has started to work with all childcare providers across Flying Start to promote Welsh language, culture, and environments. Work has been ongoing with visits to support the childcare providers in new areas to promote Flying Start Carmarthenshire.

Phase 3 of the Flying Start childcare only expansion is now being rolled out during 2025/26. We anticipate eligibility being taken up from June 2025.

## **Outcome: Keeping children at home with their families whenever possible.**

Our aim is to prevent the need for statutory involvement and for children and young people to remain with their families and communities whenever it is safe to do so. Should statutory support be needed, protecting children who are at risk of or are experiencing abuse, neglect, or other harm is a priority.

### **Family Support and Resources**

This area is on track to deliver a set of co-ordinated, responsive services that provide an effective resource for Social Workers to draw on. Key achievements include:

- The new structure for the Family Support Service has been designed through the completion of the Systems Thinking Review.
- New posts created and people appointed to improve our fostering practice and performance.
- We continue to perform well against national targets for foster carer recruitment, although there is still a significant shortage of foster placements.
- The fostering marketing strategy has been developed and is being implemented. A recruitment campaign is currently underway.

### **Special Guardians**

We have sought to improve early permanence arrangements by establishing parity of fees and allowances for Special Guardian (SGO) carers with foster carers to promote connected carers becoming SGO carers. This keeps children with their families, out of care, and are now accepted into and assessed within Foster Wales Carmarthenshire Fostering structure.

### **Maternity and Early Years**

We have implemented key priorities in the Maternity and Early Years Operational Plan, and Regional Maternity and Early Years Strategy. We are moving towards an integrated delivery model in partnership with Hywel Dda University Health Board and the voluntary sector.

### **Early Years Integration Team**

There are currently 42 families receiving one-to-one support from Family Support Workers. This is for a range of needs, including complex social needs, development delays, infant feeding, parental mental health, housing support; or common parenting issues such as toileting, behaviour management, sleep management, or fussy eating. A further £15,000 from the Regional Investment Fund (RIF) was received to aid in completing the childhood obesity project. This funding facilitated the creation of an animated character named Gwen, designed to convey key messages in the voice of a child. The e-learning package will be available in both Welsh and English.

### **Maternity and Early Years Transformation**

Two events were held during February half term for families of early years children. These events were funded by the Tackling Poverty Innovation and Supporting Communities Grant. 66 children attended with their families, and 20 stallholders attended each event. Evaluations from families show that they value these community-based events as ways to access information, meet other families, and have access to free activities for their children. Stallholders found the events useful for engaging with families. In total, 468 children have benefited from activities developed as part of the Tackling Poverty Grant.

## Outcome: Families facing difficulties are supported to provide stable, safe and secure home environments for their children.

Early intervention and preventative services continue to provide high quality support that achieves good outcomes for families despite the challenges around rising demand and complexity of need.

In 2024/25, within the Families First programme:

- 2,704 referrals were received.
- 9,701 individuals were supported, of which 5,140 (53%) were new individuals.
- 693 new single agency Joint Assessment Family Framework Forms (JAFFs) were opened.
- 574 single agency JAFFs were closed with a forward movement of 518 (90%) on the distance travelled tool.
- 19 single agency cases were stepped up and accepted by Social Services, and 127 cases supported were stepped down from Social Services.
- 97% of parents benefitted from a parenting intervention.

The projects have reported challenges, including an increased demand for support and more complex referrals with multiple issues that require support over a longer time frame. As a result, some projects are reporting waiting lists for specific types of support, including support for children affected by domestic violence, parenting, and therapeutic support (Art and Play therapy). Waiting lists are monitored and actively managed by projects. Families are contacted to acknowledge that a referral has been made and support whilst they are waiting is discussed, where appropriate.

Reassurance is given that support will be provided as soon as possible.

## How can we do better?

To give every child the best start in life, we will continue to review school admission dates and age ranges across the county, following the removal of the Rising 4s policy from September 2025. We will address gaps identified in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022–27, including promoting and developing Welsh-medium childcare. In line with Welsh Government guidance, we will roll out Phase 3 of the Flying Start childcare expansion during 2025/26, ensuring more families can access high-quality early years education and childcare wherever they live.



## In Summary

Over the past year, Carmarthenshire's Education department made notable progress in promoting inclusive, high-quality education despite facing financial pressures and the ongoing effects of the pandemic.

This has been achieved in the context of significant challenges such as falling pupil numbers and substantial financial pressures across our education system. It has also been at a time where there is an increasing demand for services, especially post pandemic and with wider societal changes. The increasing levels of complexity and needs of children and young people, whether that is Additional Learning Needs, Elective Home Education, attendance, behaviour etc. requires a very different response and is creating significant pressures not only in our schools but within the Education department.

The Inclusion Service led the rollout of the Welsh Government's Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reforms, broadening specialist support, particularly for Welsh medium and secondary age pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Schools were guided in assessing pupil needs, tailoring learning plans, and involving families, with Estyn commending the Authority's work.

Bilingual education remained a priority, with equal access to Welsh and English provisions, the development of internal Welsh language resources, and bilingual delivery of professional learning. Initiatives like the Young Sports Ambassador programme enabled ALN pupils and staff to lead inclusive physical activities.

Attendance, however, was a persistent issue, with Carmarthenshire recording the lowest rates in Wales. In response, the Council have launched targeted strategies to highlight the importance of regular attendance and are working closely with schools. The numbers of Electively Home Educated (EHE) pupils also continued to steadily rise in line with the pattern across Wales over the recent decade. At the end of 2024/25 there were 694 EHE learners registered with Carmarthenshire Council.

Support for vulnerable learners was enhanced through improved multi-agency collaboration.

Curriculum development has aligned with the Curriculum for Wales, promoting inclusive, community-based learning with a strong emphasis on literacy, numeracy, and digital skills.

Whilst GCSE and A-level results dipped slightly below pre-pandemic levels, they remained nationally competitive.

Key appointments were made at the end of 2024/25 to progress the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and a strategic partnership with National Centre for Learning Welsh was re-established. School infrastructure also saw improvements with investments made through the Modernising Education Programme (MEP), including new facilities for Welsh-medium and ALN education.

## How are we doing?

- The Council maintains 1 nursery school, 94 primary schools, 12 secondary schools and 1 special school. These provide education for over 27,000 pupils.
- At the end of March 2025 school budgets had an overall £1.8m net deficit despite relative protection for school budgets over the past decade. These budget pressures are forecast to increase further.
- Our 2024 residents survey received just over 3,500 respondents. Overall, there is an agreement from respondents that local schools provide children and young people with a good education with a score[2] of 0.27. Although the score has decreased significantly on the previous year (0.41), with 20% of respondents disagreeing.
- The number of Year 11 leavers Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) during 2024/25 has increased again with 2.4% (51 out of 2,083) compared to 2.3% (46 out of 1,987) the previous year.



## Progress Against Outcomes

### Outcome: Pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) are fully supported.

#### Education

The Inclusion Service is an integral part of the Local Authority's front-line service to children and young people. It is a service which has statutory responsibilities and provides support and intervention where necessary.

The Council has implemented the Welsh Government's ALN transformation to support a new ALN system that is person centred and supports learners with personalised learning to achieve effective outcomes. However, this is against a backdrop of austerity and covid recovery. The Council's central support team ensure that schools build capacity to identify needs early, make the correct provision, and then monitor and review this provision. Schools have required significant support by the ALN Department to fulfil this expectation due to budgetary cuts and new expectations on ALN Coordinators and class teachers. Increased and unforeseen demand for autistic placements necessitated the use of departmental resources identified for growth to provide a timely response to develop new specialist provision. The new provision filled identified gaps in both Welsh medium and secondary autism spectrum disorder (ASD) specialist provision. This situation has meant that resources to support the building of capacity in our mainstream schools for meeting the needs of learners have been directed to specialist provision, thus impacting the department's ability to meet targets for strengthening inclusive practices.

[2] Average Index Score: A score below 0 indicates overall disagreement; a score between 0 and 1 indicates overall agreement, and a score between 1 and 2 indicates overall strong agreement.

The Council's strategy on ALN states that inclusive education means providing all children and young people with an appropriate personalised curriculum and networks of support. We are committed to the belief that 'inclusive learning' is the best practice in teaching and learning. We place a strong emphasis on supporting schools within the following key areas:

- Accurate assessment of strengths and needs;
- Planning effectively to build on strengths and address areas of need;
- Adopting pedagogical approaches to optimise individual learning;
- Involving children in setting their learning goals and evaluating their progress towards agreed targets;
- Engaging with parents to inform them of their child's progress, and to involve them in supporting their child's learning;
- Evaluating individual child's progress and the progress of groups and classes;
- Refining the approach to teaching and learning considering evaluation;
- Maintaining systematic records to report progress and to enable reflective practice.

Success is evidenced as schools are making correct statutory judgements in relation to ALN and working well with families and learners. This results in very few requirements for the Council to reconsider decisions.

Estyn produced a Thematic Report on the ALN system in Wales in November 2024, highlighting good practice in ALN in Carmarthenshire schools.[3]

Carmarthenshire is a bilingual local authority, with both Welsh and English having equal legal status and parity. When considering provision for pupils whether in bilingual or Welsh-medium schools there is an agreement that both languages will be considered in line with the needs of the child.

The local authority provides specialist provision through the medium of English, Welsh or bilingually. They have recently opened three primary specialist classes for pupils with autism within Welsh-medium primary schools, who deliver provision through the medium of Welsh and/or bilingually.

A significant proportion of pupils with ALN attend Welsh-medium education in Carmarthenshire. This includes pupils from first language Welsh, bilingual, non-Welsh speaking, and multi-lingual homes. To ensure that the local authority clearly identifies the language profile and the needs of children and young people, all pupils undertake a baseline assessment to ensure that the starting point of their learning journey is correctly aligned to language and learning needs of the child.

This assessment is undertaken in Welsh and English. The local authority provides ALP through the medium of Welsh or English, meeting the language needs of individual pupils.

As is nationally the case, the local authority notes that access to Welsh language resources and assessments is an ongoing barrier. However, Carmarthenshire has overcome this successfully, by creating resources internally or translating resources to support schools and other educational settings. Over many years it has developed a library of resources and advice/guidance documentation to support schools to deliver provision through the medium of Welsh.

All professional learning is delivered bilingually by the ALN and inclusion department. Where external services deliver training that cannot be presented bilingually, they provide translation services, and all associated documentation and slides are translated into Welsh.

Carmarthenshire has increased its specialist classes from 38 places to 62. Most specialist settings have staff who can offer support if required through the medium of Welsh or enhancement to the support offered can be considered through additional funding. Pupils within their specialist classes are not disapplied from the Welsh language, they receive a differentiated pupil centred approach in line with the teaching of all subjects.

## Sport and Leisure Initiatives

### Physical Literacy Programme

Over the past year, Actif's Active Young People Team has continued its impactful work supporting Primary ALN Units, whilst also expanding into Secondary ALN Units. This initiative adopts a whole-school approach to enhance staff confidence and competence in delivering inclusive physical activity sessions through the Physical Literacy Programme. Through a combination of training and mentoring, school staff have developed the skills and assurance needed to tailor physical activity sessions to the diverse needs of their pupils. As a result, an additional eight ALN units have benefited from this support during the year.

One of the supported units shared their appreciation:

*"Thank you for your input and resources which have greatly improved our PE sessions."* — Canolfan Amanwy



This feedback highlights the programme's success in empowering educators and enriching the physical education experience for learners with additional needs.

### Young Sports Ambassador Programme

Actif's Active Young People Team has launched a new, inclusive leadership initiative designed specifically for pupils with ALN across Carmarthenshire. The Young Sports Ambassador (YSA) training programme provides ALN students with equal opportunities to take on leadership roles in sport, promoting confidence, responsibility, and inclusion. This bespoke programme is tailored to meet the diverse needs of ALN pupils, offering varying levels of responsibility and practical, hands-on training in leading physical activities. The approach is designed to empower students by building their confidence and enabling them to contribute meaningfully within their school communities. The initial rollout has already shown promising results. At Queen Elizabeth High School's Elfed Unit, two students completed their YSA training in January 2025. Since then, they have taken the lead in organising and delivering sports sessions, including table cricket events, and have initiated inclusive football games during break times. Their involvement has not only enhanced their leadership skills but also fostered empathy, teamwork, and a sense of belonging among their peers. These early successes highlight the programme's potential to create lasting impact. With ongoing mentorship from Actif staff and growing enthusiasm among participants, ALN Young Sports Ambassadors are emerging as positive role models within their schools.

Looking ahead, the goal is to expand the programme to include ALN units from all primary and secondary schools across the county, ensuring that every pupil can lead, inspire, and thrive through sport.

### Physical Literacy Training

Actif's Active Young People Team has continued to strengthen the confidence of primary school staff in delivering high-quality PE and school sport through Physical Literacy Training. Since the programme's launch, it has expanded its reach by an additional 20%, with 70% of schools now benefiting from tailored training and mentoring. This support has played a key role in enhancing both staff capability and the overall provision of physical education and sport within schools.

Looking ahead, the focus will be on sustaining this progress by offering ongoing support through updated resources and refresher training opportunities.

## Outcome: Increased school attendance rates and access to education for vulnerable pupils.

### Attendance

Attendance levels in Carmarthenshire schools remains a key concern. We are currently placed 22 out of 22 local authorities for rates of attendance. A range of strategic approaches are in place, aiming to support schools to improve their rates of pupil attendance.

	2022/23 Academic Year	2023/24 Academic Year	Mar 2025 Provisional	Wales Mar 2025 Provisional
Primary Schools	91.1%	91.6%	92.7%	92.9%
Secondary Schools	86.4%	86.8%	88.0%	89.0%
All Schools	89.3%	89.6%	89.4%	91.0%

### School Safeguarding and Attendance Team

Significant support is provided for schools, pupils, and families, targeted towards those who are most vulnerable. Family Engagement Officers work directly with families ensuring that all 'early help' required is in place.

### School Based Youth Work

Schools report that the impact of the youth workers is significant in supporting learners to engage in school life. This grant funded service impacts significantly on preventing children and young people from entering the justice system also. However, the service is at risk due to cuts in grant allocations.

### Pastoral Focus

Progress in reviewing pastoral systems is ongoing, aiming to generate an improved sense of belonging amongst learners. Professional Development training is being developed, focussing on the accuracy of registration systems, as well as on the ethos of pastoral routines to engender the sense of 'belonging.' The behavioural support team continues to provide a range of support based on trauma informed and restorative approaches. All secondary headteachers have had the opportunity to engage directly with the team lead to outline concerns and support required. In addition, the Team around the Parent Pupil and Setting (TAPPAS), a multiagency response to strategic or individual pupil need, continues to strengthen in line with the priorities of individual schools. A working party reflecting on the use of mobile phones within schools continues to build momentum, creating a toolkit for schools to utilise when addressing concerns regarding social media and the use of mobile phones.

### Learner Engagement

Curriculum opportunities aiming to engage learners continues to evolve, strengthening community-focussed work. The impact on participating pupils is positive. Broader curriculum development work led by the Council, which includes working in the outdoors, is highly valued by teachers and continues to strengthen learning experiences and pedagogical approaches. Sharing events, encouraging school to school peer learning, remains a key aspect of this strategy.

### Learner Voice

A strategic working party led by the Youth service has been established, aiming to engage directly with children and young people to understand their views on school attendance and non-attendance. Their views will be considered when developing supportive actions and strategy.

## Marketing Activity

The Education Department ran a campaign **Miss School: Miss Out** at the start of the Academic Year in September. Designed to underline to parents the importance of school attendance, the campaign's messages included:



- To remind and encourage children, young people, and their families that not attending school on a particular day, or for a set period, is not acceptable.
- There are many reasons why a child should attend school, including meeting with their friends, building relationships, and maximising opportunities to learn and develop.
- Excellent school attendance allows a child to develop as an ambitious, capable learner, ready to learn throughout their life.
- Going to school will help a child become an enterprising and creative contributor, ready to play a full part in life and work; and will allow them to mature as an ethical, well-informed citizen of Wales and the world.
- Children and young people are also more likely to become healthy and confident individuals from attending school, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.
- The Council understands that some children have complex needs and particular reasons why, on occasion, attending school is difficult. Every one of our schools can support a child and parent(s) or guardians to address those difficulties.

Carmarthenshire's school attendance is not yet as high as it was before COVID. Through the 'Miss School: Miss Out' campaign, the Council will continue to work with parents and guardians, schools, teachers, and support staff to improve school attendance for the future prosperity of Carmarthenshire, and our children and young people.

## Vulnerable Learners

Whilst all schools are supported to review the progress made by all pupils, the Council has robust systems to identify and measure the progress made by specific groups of children. These are reviewed regularly.

During the year, work has been ongoing to develop a more effective way of being able to consider use of the Vulnerability Assessment Profile to assist in the identification of relevant 'vulnerable' learners. Discussions have included senior managers across the Education and Children's Services Department.

The Vulnerability Assessment Profile is central to Carmarthenshire implementing the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework. There is a designated Engagement and Progression Coordinator who works closely with partners and stakeholders e.g. Careers Wales, schools, and work-based learning, to collate and verify monthly data to identify relevant 16 to 18-year-olds who require support into employment, education, and training. This early identification method is designed to support and assist learners who may present with a range of needs. The aim being to work as partners to seek to address support needs (health, family, relationship, attendance, etc.) towards more favourable outcomes.

## Behaviour Support Community Team (BSCT)

The BSCT have established links with their designated schools, each having a link specialist teacher and link specialist teaching assistant. Through TAPPAS and joint consultation meetings with our Educational and Child Psychology colleagues, schools plan and identify the training and support that they need. Schools also have direct access to discuss new or emerging needs throughout the year. Data collection and quality assurance processes are now in place. This allows analysis of training needs and demand across the County to ensure that the team can plan and deliver training and support, having considered emerging trends in advance. Exclusion advice and guidance is well received by schools via our Phase 2 Behaviour Support Services Manager. In turn, this role has the support and guidance from a newly established panel of senior officers and managers – the Exclusion Advice Panel. They provide guidance in terms of the exclusion itself and support options available to safeguard those involved to mitigate any future risk. The BSCT continue to work closely with schools on the implementation of Individual Risk Assessments and Pastoral Support Plans.

## Education and Well-being

The Education and Well-being Team ensure children and young people can access appropriate education in a setting where they are safe, and their needs are being met. The Team have delivered training to 205 individuals, including: school staff, school governors, foster carers, Emotional Literacy Support Assistant's (ELSA's), and social workers, to develop understanding of the impact of trauma on learning and giving practical strategies to support CLA (Children Looked After) learners in school. The team provide weekly support to schools, upskilling and supporting staff who directly work with our CLA learners to help them with strategies to manage better in the classroom setting, organise their work, and understand their emotions. Through the summer term, we identified learners who would transition from primary to secondary school, and ensure that these children had extra visits, met with new staff, and felt safe and confident in their new setting. We link closely with the leaving care team and meet regularly to share information about our learners who are approaching the end of their compulsory schooling. We ensure they all have an individual plan and a well-matched personal assistant to support them with the next steps in their learning and work journey. The School Safeguarding and Attendance Team support the pupils to overcome barriers when their attendance at schools falls below 80%. They also work directly with the young person, arranging meetings between parents, the pupil, and school, supporting families with routines and structure, all whilst addressing the attendance concerns.



## **Electively Home Educated (EHE) Learners**

The number of electively home educated children in Wales has grown significantly from 1.6 per 1,000 pupils in 2009/10 to 13.0 per 1,000 in 2023/24. Carmarthenshire currently has 694 registered EHE learners.

- The 'Elective Home Education' strategy is currently being updated by the Schools, Students, and Teachers (SSAT) team.
- Local authorities are mandated to ensure that children not registered in schools receive a suitable education, assess the suitability of education provided by parents, and collaborate with other departments for support.
- EHE advisors maintain contact with families to ensure quality education and address concerns. No School Attendance Orders have been issued in the last three years, indicating cooperation from families.
- Various classes and resources are provided to support EHE learners, funded by the Local Authority Education Grant. This includes qualifications and learning materials to enhance educational experiences.
- Flexi-schooling allows children to attend school part-time whilst being home educated. However, this arrangement is at the discretion of the headteacher and is not guaranteed.
- The Welsh Government provides annual grants to support EHE advisors and assist families with educational costs, ensuring flexibility to meet the diverse needs of EHE learners.

## **Outcome: Deliver a rounded curriculum raising educational standards.**

### **Curriculum**

- Co-designed by teachers and pupils, a learning curriculum that is based on the Curriculum for Wales is now established across Carmarthenshire. Learning experiences in our schools are inclusive and purposeful, successfully aiming to reduce the impact of poverty.
- Increasingly, learning experiences are purposefully linked to the local community, 'our cynefin', ensuring that pupils develop a rich understanding of their locality and their heritage.
- We have established strong links with the Carmarthenshire Museums Service and Oriel Myrddin. This collaborative, cross-departmental support includes sharing information with schools on upcoming education programmes and directly connecting with education officers at Carmarthenshire Museum and Carmarthenshire Archives.
- Our schools effectively support children and young people to become ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives, whilst effectively developing their Welsh and English bilingual skills. A broad range of learning experiences ensure that our children and young people develop their enterprising skills and creative thinking, making sure that they are well informed about Wales and the world.
- Engaging learning experiences and activities ensure that our children and young people develop as healthy confident individuals, maximising the opportunities to learn in school, outdoors, and within our local environment.
- The areas of learning and experience include a focus on languages, literacy, and communication; science and technology; mathematics and numeracy; expressive arts; humanities; and health and well-being.
- The curriculum also develops pupils' knowledge of human rights, developmentally appropriate relationships and sexuality, diversity, and respecting differences, as well as providing opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and knowledge of careers and the workplace.

Schools are supported to strengthen their teaching practices and ensure that the needs of all learners are met effectively. As a result, the quality of teaching is sound or better in many schools, ensuring that pupils' progress is in line with teachers' high expectations. Pupil progress and standards are monitored collaboratively, with schools receiving support to ensure that they are well equipped to address their developmental priorities. Key areas of focus continue to be pupils' skill development in literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, including their application of these skills across a broad range of subject areas. The progress of individual pupils remains the key focus, with person-centred planning underpinning learning experiences across many schools. Most pupils, including those with ALN and in specific groups, achieve good progress in their early years' skills development, numeracy, literacy, and digital skills over time.

Our revised priorities for 2024/25 were:

- Strengthen pupil progress and engagement through effective pastoral systems, teaching, and an engaging curriculum, particularly in the secondary sector;
- Develop leadership skills at all levels in evaluating pupils' skills progression, and in planning for and delivering pupil progress;
- Professional development of Newly Qualified Teachers, Teaching Assistants, and future leaders;
- A significant focus by the School Improvement Team on self-evaluation and monitoring professional learning.

## Outcomes

The School Improvement Team, including Education Support Advisors and the Associate Education Support Advisors, work alongside head teachers, senior leaders, teachers, and school governors during their self-evaluation processes. This develops a strong understanding of the school's strengths, areas of development, and the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and learning.





### Summary of Estyn Outcomes 2017-2025

Estyn introduced a new inspection framework in March 2022 and no longer provides summative judgements for individual inspection areas. Inspectors can still place a school into Estyn Review if they judge that the school would benefit from a short period to improve some aspects of their work. The two statutory categories of follow-up remain unchanged. This is when schools need significant improvement or require special measures.

We want to reduce the proportion of schools requiring follow-up activity following Estyn inspection.

Academic Year	Number of Inspections	No Follow Up	Estyn Review <sup>1</sup>	Significant Improvement	Special Measures
2021/22 (Inspections re-start New Framework)	13	11		1	1
2022/23	21	17	3		1
2023/24	19	15		1	3
2024/25	10	8		1	1

- In March 2022, Estyn restarted school inspections following the pandemic. Many of our schools have had no follow-up, with few in a category. In nearly all cases, there is close alignment between Estyn's outcomes and the department's understanding of the school's strengths and areas of improvement.
- An additional school was inspected in March 2025, but the report was not published until May 2025. Their outcomes are not included in the above table.
- Four good practice case studies were identified in our inspections between September 2024 and March 2025.
- The school placed in Significant Improvement in September 2023 is judged to be making good progress but remains in category due to instable leadership. The three placed in Special Measures in 2023/24 remain in category but are judged to be making good progress in relation to their recommendations.

### Attainment

Many pupils make good progress over time. The level of challenge in Carmarthenshire has increased significantly as seen in the context below. Here are the 2024 exam data outcomes.

Context:

Percentage of pupil eligible for Free School Meal (FSM):

	Carmarthenshire	Wales
2019 (pre-pandemic)	16.4%	16.4%
2024	22.5%	20.3%

In 2024, the FSM level for Carmarthenshire is 6.1 percentage points higher than it was in 2019, where across Wales there has been an increase of 3.9 percentage points only.

## GCSE

- In 2024, outcomes in Carmarthenshire are higher than Welsh national outcomes at A\* to C grades, and only slightly lower than national outcomes at A\* to A grades.
- 66.9% of grades were awarded A\* to C grades in 2024, reflecting a slight decrease of 0.9 percentage points in comparison to 2023. This is less than the Wales decrease of 2.8 percentage points. However, outcomes at A\* to C are lower than in 2019 (pre-pandemic).
- 20.2% of grades are awarded at A\* to A which is only slightly lower than 2019 and that of the current national data, 20.6%. This reflects well when considering the additional FSM challenge in Carmarthenshire.



## A Level

- Grades across all indicators have decreased. This reflects the national trend. National grades are lower than in 2023, broadly returning to pre-pandemic outcomes. Results are slightly lower than when compared with 2019 (pre-pandemic), which should be our benchmark.
- The biggest decrease is seen in the A\* to A grades, with the decrease slightly higher than the national decrease. Results compared with Wales are slightly lower, like the pattern observed in 2019. However, there is a 7-percentage points gap between A\* to A, where pupils across Wales seem to be performing better.
- The decrease at A\* to C is lower than the national decrease.
- Nationally, there was no decrease in outcomes at A\* to E. In Carmarthenshire, the decrease was 1.1 percentage points.



## Outcome: Nutritious free school meals for all primary school pupils.

The Catering Service is responsible for providing school meals in all Carmarthenshire schools, serving around 25,000 meals every day. We comply with national standards including healthy eating, food hygiene, and allergens. We also provide a free breakfast service in most primary schools.

We offer a menu which is compliant to Welsh Government regulations and achieves the highest grade available for compliance and nutritional balance. Menus are nutritionally analysed using Saffron recipe development software.

We continue to work with parents, schools, and external stakeholders to manage special diets and allergies. This includes individual care plans for pupils, one-to-one meetings with parents and a robust system of work to ensure a healthy, safe dining environment. We go above current guidance and work to include pupils not currently covered by the groups identified by Welsh Government as being entitled to a special diet menu. For example, Additional Learning Needs students, pupils with sensory issues, etc.

### Free School Meals

The Welsh Government announcement regarding extending Free School Meals entitlement for all primary school children required a significant amount of planning, financing, and investment to build capacity and prepare for the implementation of the commitment.

School meal provision for our 97 settings is provided via three central production kitchens – 85 production kitchens attached to settings, as well as deliveries between production kitchens, and 15 dining centres.

Universal Primary Free School Meals have been offered to all full-time pupils in Carmarthenshire since April 2024. We are also pioneering the development of local sustainable supply chains within Wales.



### Bremenda Isaf Farm

We have also invested heavily into generating our own food production model on our County Farm Estate. Bremenda Isaf Farm became the first in the UK where the Council directly employ staff responsible for food production on the public plate. By developing and launching the Future Generations Menu in Primary Schools, we are also supporting other Local Authorities across Wales. With a menu based around seasonality and availability of Welsh produce, scaling up this model will directly improve the resilience of Carmarthenshire's local supply chain. At the same time, we are improving and utilising our county farm asset to reduce the environmental impact of our food procurement and increase economic value retained by the council.

We are exploring how Bremenda Isaf can be a centre of innovation to support the local food system in Carmarthenshire – everything from diverse food production to education, health, and wellbeing. Investment is being sought for the infrastructure requirements necessary, alongside engagement with a broad range of local stakeholders focussing how the best delivery model could be achieved.

## Outcome: Increased bilingual and Welsh medium education.

Our vision is to ensure progression from Welsh-medium pre-school provision to primary and secondary Welsh-medium and bilingual education to the world of work or further and higher education. We are increasing the proportion of each year group that receives Welsh medium education in line with Welsh Government's new designations. We have strengthened and expanded the provision for learners through Language Centres with specific provision for latecomers and improving standards. We ensure that learners with additional learning needs (ALN) have linguistic opportunities equal to their mainstream peers. Our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and action plan are arranged under seven main goals or outcomes:

1. More three-year-olds educated through the medium of Welsh.
2. More five-year-olds being educated through the medium of Welsh.
3. More children continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one phase of their statutory education to another.
4. More learners studying for Welsh qualifications – as a subject, and subjects through the medium of Welsh.
5. More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts at school.
6. An increase in the provision of Welsh-medium education for pupils with ALN in accordance with the duties specified by legislation.
7. An increase in the number of teaching staff who can teach Welsh – as a subject, and through the medium of Welsh.

### Linguistic Categorisation of Schools



We collaborated with schools to transition them to the new linguistic categorisation system. In line with guidance, we have taken the lead by identifying a category that best reflects the current category of each school. We have also set each school an aspirational category to reach within 10 years. Schools continue to develop in line with their Welsh Language categorisation in preparation for the introduction of the Education and Welsh Language Bill.

## Outcome: Schools for sustainable community learning that are fit for 21st Century.

### School Building Condition

90% of Carmarthenshire school buildings are graded as "Good" or "Satisfactory", compared to 72% in the previous year. However, this is due to a change in the assessment criteria provided by Welsh Government. We now follow an objective methodology, using a weighting and scoring process. This gives a more accurate overall condition grade, with properties able to be compared across all portfolios. This new methodology gives us confidence that building condition is appropriate. Further investment is challenging as the cost of upgrading or building new schools has escalated significantly, placing increased pressure on a limited capital budget. It will be impossible to deliver all the Council's aspirations.

## **Modernising Education Programme (MEP)**

Following approval of the revised MEP Strategy in November 2024, we are continuing to invest in our school buildings. There is currently an ongoing 'live' project worth £15m to develop new classroom and science teaching spaces, along with a community focussed enhancement of sports facilities at Bryngwyn Comprehensive School, Llanelli. Under the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, formal approval of our Strategic Outline Programme was provided in August 2024. A total of £60.9m is available for capital projects which include ALN provision in Llanelli, Ysgol Dewi Sant and Welsh Medium primary education provision in the Kidwelly and St Ishmael area. We are also utilising Welsh Government grant funding to develop a Welsh Language Immersion Centre at Ysgol Gyfun Y Strade and various projects to enhance community facilities across the schools' network. All schemes are being developed in line with Welsh Government sustainability guidelines designed to make schools as energy efficient as possible.

We are currently progressing several schemes to develop community sports facilities in secondary schools. This work is scheduled for completion during the summer of 2025. All facilities at these schools will be available for wider community use, in addition to enhancing the provision available to pupils. Further schemes to be developed in line with new grant funding available in 2025/26.

We have completed a comprehensive review of school capacity calculations in partnership with all primary and secondary schools to feed into the new Admissions Policy for 2026/27.

**Is anyone better off?**

## **Pembrey School's New Building Officially Opened**

Pembrey School's new building was officially opened by Carmarthenshire County Council's Leader, Cllr Darren Price, at a ceremony attended by children, teachers, and staff on Wednesday, 17th of July 2024.

The brand-new, £8.25m primary school building has been constructed on land adjacent to the old school site and has a capacity for 270 primary pupils, aged 3 to 11, and 30 nursery places. This scheme has been delivered as part of the Welsh Government and Carmarthenshire's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, B and B investment. The building was constructed by local contractors, TRJ (Betws) Ltd.

Replacing the former school building, the new site incorporates a Flying Start facility (previously located in a separate mobile classroom) under one roof. It has transformed the education provision in the Pembrey area by providing state-of-the-art facilities, accommodation for pupils and staff, as well as a learning environment suitable for education in the 21st century.

Delivering this modern and new facility for both the school and community of Pembrey is being achieved over two phases. The first phase seeing children, teachers, and staff occupying the new school in February 2024.

Work on the second phase is progressing well, with the demolition of the former school building to build a sports pitch for community use, a multi-use games area (MUGA), a forest school for outdoor learning, and associated landscaping and infrastructure works.

On completion, the new sports pitch will be transferred to Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council to replace the community facilities lost on the land where the new school is located. The pitch will be used by the school during school hours and available to the community outside these hours.



**How can we do better?**

Our focus remains on supporting pupils with additional learning needs by fully implementing ALN reforms and reviewing transport arrangements to ensure fair access. We will work with schools to address financial deficits, strengthen governance, and progress our Modernising Education Programme, including capital projects, school reviews, and proposals to change the age range of several primary schools. Improving attendance and supporting vulnerable pupils is a priority, as is updating our approach to Elective Home Education. We will also encourage schools to self-evaluate their Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Health, identifying strengths and setting actions for improvement.

## Well-being Objective 2

### Enabling our residents to live and age well (Live and Age Well)

#### Overview of Progress

Carmarthenshire's demographic pattern is changing positively. People are living longer due to advancements in healthcare and general improvements in living standards. With that in mind, the Council is committed to supporting residents to live and age well.

Whilst gross weekly income continues to improve, approximately 30% of households are thought to be living in poverty, and the rising cost of living continues to be a concern for many of our residents. In response, the work of the Tackling Poverty Advisory Group continues at pace with our Tackling Poverty Plan guiding activity. Significant efforts have been made to ensure that residents are able to access the support they are entitled to through our Hwbs and the Hwb Fach y Wlad service.

Increasing the availability of good quality, affordable homes, as well as sustaining continued investment in existing homes, is a priority for the Council. Access to fit for purpose housing promotes health and well-being and forms the foundation of improved living standards. A focus on acquiring private sector properties, repurposing empty homes, and developing new housing has seen 361 additional homes added to stock over the last year. Efforts to decarbonise existing housing stock has advanced well, which reduces carbon emissions and fuel poverty.

Healthy life expectancy in the County has seen a decrease for both males (59.2 years) and females (57.9 years). This will result in increased demand for services in the future. In recognition of this, we continue with our efforts in terms of early intervention and prevention, which has seen a significant reduction in hospital admissions, improved health outcomes, and shorter hospital stays. This enables individuals to return home sooner with the right support in place. A key priority is reducing reliance on residential care, with a strong focus on expanding supported living options that promote independence.

A wealth of health and well-being initiatives are available to our residents, focussing on increasing accessibility and ensuring that our offer meets the varied needs of service users. Health and well-being initiatives continue to be delivered in innovative ways to ensure that everyone can access preventative initiatives. The number of Carmarthenshire residents with two or more healthy lifestyle behaviours continues on an upward trajectory. These behaviours significantly reduce the risk of chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers, and increase life expectancy for individuals; in turn, this should reduce demand on our health and social care systems.

In recognition that mental health is an increasing concern and priority for all of us, the mental health well-being service provides vital early intervention and prevention support. Mental health support is also considered through sport and well-being initiatives, given the vital role that being active plays in maintaining and improving mental health.



## In Summary

Over the past year, we have taken significant steps to tackling poverty through a wide range of targeted initiatives:

- The Actif Places project reached over 117,000 people with inclusive health and well-being programmes, including support for mental health, older adults, and the homeless.
- The Tackling Poverty Advisory Panel focused on winter support and benefit awareness campaigns.
- The Carmarthenshire Public Services Board advanced the 'Making Every Contact Count' (MECC) initiative, promoting health and well-being through everyday interactions and coordinated training.
- Hwb advisors helped nearly 6,000 residents claim over £7.5m in benefits. Additionally, the Council's proactive revenue work ensured families accessed vital financial support, including Discretionary Housing Payments and homelessness prevention grants.
- The Pre-Accommodation Team supported over 750 new tenants, securing over £730,000 in savings, and extended support to the private rented sector through targeted training and benefit access.
- The energy efficiency of homes was improved through retrofits, insulation, and renewable energy installations, whilst the ECO Flex scheme delivered heating and insulation upgrades to hundreds of homes.
- Procurement and economic development teams engaged local businesses through surgeries and events, enhancing access to public sector contracts.
- Apprenticeships and employability programmes like Fit2Employ empowered young people with skills and career pathways.
- Adult Community Learning expanded access to essential skills and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) education, with strong progress noted by Estyn.
- The Shared Prosperity Fund supported thousands in training and qualifications, whilst the Ageing Well Network advanced Carmarthenshire's application to the WHO's Age Friendly Communities initiative.
- Hwb Fach y Wlad delivered vital rural services, and Theatrâu Sir Gâr improved cultural access through discounted ticket schemes.
- Despite a slight decline in homelessness prevention success, new early intervention strategies and landlord engagement efforts were introduced. We also brought 239 empty homes back into use and secured major funding for Gypsy and Traveller site improvements.
- The My Safe Place pilot supported domestic abuse survivors with home security upgrades, and the Wallich programme combined fitness and education to support individuals experiencing homelessness. These collective efforts reflect a comprehensive, community-driven approach to reducing poverty and supporting vulnerable residents across the County.

## How are we doing?

- 30.7% of all households in Carmarthenshire are living in poverty. This translates to around 25,800 households. This is a reduction on last year (34.6%) which mirrors trends seen nationally.
- There has been a further significant increase in the average Gross Weekly Earnings in Carmarthenshire, from £617.80 (2022) to £664.20 (2023) to £700.00 (2024). With the 6th highest figure in Wales, Carmarthenshire figures continue to be higher than Wales (£684.40) but continue to be below the UK (£728.3).
- Our 2024 residents survey indicated that there was overall agreement to the statement; 'Poverty is a problem in my area'.



Progress Against  
Outcomes

**Outcome: Help and support to alleviate the effects of the 'cost of living' crises and poverty in the County.**

### Actif Places Project

Funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the Actif Places project boosted health and well-being in some of our most deprived communities by expanding access to physical activity and inclusive programmes. Key initiatives included Mindful Movement for mental health, gym access for the homeless, Motiview for older adults, and intergenerational fitness. Digital upgrades enabled virtual classes, and partnerships tackled loneliness and dementia. Reaching over 117,000 people, the project created 13 initiatives and laid a foundation for sustainable, inclusive health programmes across many of the County's deprived areas.

## **Tackling Poverty Advisory Panel**

Over the past year, the Tackling Poverty Advisory Panel has had a busy and productive period, dedicating its efforts to supporting residents across Carmarthenshire through a range of initiatives.

A key focus has been on addressing the challenges around winter fuel payments, warm places, and community hubs, ensuring that residents had access to safe, supportive environments during the colder months. The Panel have worked closely with the Council's Hwb and Hwb Fach y Wlad services, as well as supporting awareness campaigns like 'Claim What's Yours', informing people about the benefits and entitlements available to them. Our partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has brought valuable insight, with presentations to the Panel enhancing members' understanding of Universal Credit and enabling them to better support constituents. In parallel, the Council's Tackling Poverty Action Plan has been reviewed and fully updated to reflect current priorities and actions.

## **Carmarthenshire Public Services Board (PSB)**

The PSB established a Task and Finish Group to look at Making Every Contact Count (MECC) and Hwb services as part of its Well-being Objective to address poverty and its impacts. The group focused on:

- evaluating the opportunities and challenges of MECC across PSB organisations,
- exploring the opportunities and barriers around advice and support provision,
- understanding key issues facing residents and communities, especially those dealing with socio-economic disadvantages and protected groups,
- reviewing how different organisations are tackling poverty and their action plans.

MECC uses everyday interactions to support positive changes in physical and mental health by sharing healthy lifestyle tips during daily conversations at work or in the community. It empowers staff, particularly in health services and partner organisations, to promote healthy lifestyles and support behaviour change. Not just for clients or patients, but also for their friends, families, and colleagues.

PSB Members agreed to develop a joint web presence to ensure that advice and support services provided across the PSB organisations are promoted and coordinated; and that key front-line members of staff within PSB organisations are encouraged to complete the MECC Level 1 training (e-learning).

## **Support and Advice**

During the last 18 months, our dedicated team of Hwb advisors have helped 5,745 residents referred to its service to claim over £7.5m in support and benefit payments. Hwb advisors have supported applications for a range of Council and third-party support schemes, including blue badges for disabled parking, council tax discounts, personal independence payments (PIP), and grants to help parents purchase school essentials, such as school uniforms.

In addition to supporting residents who are referred to our advisors, the Council has also accommodated almost 90,000 visits from people seeking advice at our three main Hwbs in Carmarthen, Ammanford, and Llanelli; Hwb Fach y Wlad surgeries; and focused events.

## **Revenues Proactive Work for those in Poverty**

We support families in claiming all the financial assistance they are entitled to and actively seek the information needed to process Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Scheme claims as efficiently as possible. We also promote Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), working closely with the Housing Department and Housing Associations to encourage take-up. An additional £31,000 was allocated to the DHP fund for 2024/25.

We ensure appropriate signposting and referrals are made so that families receive the advice and support they need. In collaboration with the Housing team, we make timely referrals for applications to the Homeless Prevention Grant—a discretionary scheme administered by Housing.

Our Personal Budgeting Officer provides direct support to individuals facing financial hardship. This includes targeted campaigns aimed at residents who may be struggling, based on their engagement and payment history. We maintain strong partnerships with colleagues in the Hwbs and the third sector to signpost customers to appropriate services such as food banks, debt charities, and the Discretionary Assistance Fund.

We adhere to the UK 'Breathing Space' Scheme and work with customers to establish affordable and sustainable payment arrangements for Council Tax arrears, in line with the Welsh Government's Council Tax Protocol.

## **Procurement**

Procurement have supported colleagues in economic development to appoint a supplier for period dignity products. Work is on-going to explore a longer-term arrangement for a subscription service and free products in schools and, potentially, wider locations across the County.

## **Pre-Accommodation Support**

The Pre-Accommodation Team played a vital role in sustaining tenancies and maximising tenants' access to their entitlements. During 2024/25, the team supported 751 new tenants across various tenures, helping them secure a total of £731,063 in supported savings through income maximisation, grants, and benefit entitlements.

Staff provided direct assistance with income maximisation and completed numerous benefit applications that had a significant financial impact on tenants. As trusted partners of the Welsh Government's Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF), the team facilitated grants for white goods, off-grid fuel, and Emergency Assistance Payments totalling £145,668. Additionally, as verified assessors for Welsh Water, we've enabled qualifying households to access reduced water rates amounting to £70,106.

Support was also extended into the Private Rented Sector, where 97 tenancies were sustained through Housing Support Grant funding.

Private Rented Support Officers have designated slots in Job Centres, accepting referrals from individuals claiming for Universal Credit and have housing costs, providing them support to prevent them falling into financial difficulty. We provided specific training to:

- 31 vulnerable at-risk young people.
- 28 people in temporary accommodation.
- 8 vulnerable young people in temporary or shared accommodation
- 28 households from referrals from the Gateway, Housing Options Advisors, or other agencies.

In addition, home readiness training was delivered in schools, reaching over 1,000 pupils from Ysgol Maes y Gwendaeth, Strade, Bro Myrddin, and youth access schemes.

Support was also provided to 1,603 applicants with a homeless duty, enabling them to navigate the system and access settled accommodation.

The **Housing Planned Programmes Team** successfully packaged and delivered a range of major construction projects aimed at enhancing the structural integrity and energy performance levels across hundreds of properties. These initiatives have not only contributed to energy efficiency improvements but also supported sustainable development across the region. Key achievements include:

- Completion of deep retrofits under the Optimised Retrofit Programme (ORP) with complete refurbishments, significantly improving energy efficiency in 15 properties and setting a benchmark for future projects.
- Installation of External Wall Insulation (EWI) and associated upgrades on 50 properties, reducing heat loss and enhancing comfort for residents.
- Re-roofing and the installation of photovoltaic (PV) systems on over 120 properties across the county, combining structural upgrades with renewable energy solutions to reduce carbon footprints.

## **ECO Flex Scheme**

The ECO Flex scheme in Wales (ECO4 Flex) is a government initiative for improving energy efficiency in private sector housing. The aim is to help reduce fuel poverty, particularly for low-income and vulnerable households. In partnership with Warm Wales, we have delivered 641 ECO Flex schemes, generating an additional £110,000 in income for the service. These schemes have supported insulation and heating improvements in privately owned and rented homes, enhancing living conditions and reducing energy costs for residents. Approximately 900 properties are expected to benefit from the ECO4 Scheme, with around £16m invested in private sector housing.

## **Outcome: People are supported to take advantage of local opportunities whether it be through starting a business, gaining qualifications, or gaining meaningful employment.**

### **Procurement and Business Surgeries**

The Council's Procurement and Economic Development Teams engaged with local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and third sector organisations through a supplier engagement initiative - Procurement and Business Surgeries throughout Carmarthenshire. This Supplier Engagement Surgery was linked to the Council's "Ten Towns" Economic Development Initiative which aims to support the economic recovery of rural towns across the County.

The purpose of the surgeries is to offer professional procurement advice, guidance, and support to interested businesses/organisations on funding, training, business support projects and initiatives, and referral options to partners. These sessions aim to ensure suppliers can compete for any potential business to enhance their trading. By developing a procurement link between contractors, suppliers, and providers with relevant officers within the Council, we can make relevant introductions, bringing potential buyers and sellers together.

In 2024/25, the Surgeries were held in May, June, and July and followed the success of the surgeries held towards the end of 2023/24 in the main towns of Carmarthen and Llanelli. The surgeries in 2024/25 were held in the smaller, more rural towns of Kidwelly, Llandeilo, and Llandovery and across the three rural surgeries, where 22 businesses attended.

### **Economic Development**

The Economic Development team continued to support the corporate procurement Unit and various services to raise awareness of our upcoming tenders / contracts among the business community. Engagement is done through email, our business newsletter and occasional telephone calls. Recent contracts include the substantial Property Works contract where the business team engaged with the dozens of businesses who were awarded contracts. Case studies are to be drawn up of the positive outcomes.

We continue to work on future tender exercises to promote them to local businesses who may be interested. We also share our work programme on a quarterly basis to identify further opportunities to promote these opportunities to Carmarthenshire businesses.

## **Fit2Employ Programme – Llanelli and Carmarthen**

The Fit2Employ programme, delivered in partnership with Communities for Work+, supported young people in Llanelli and Carmarthen to gain practical skills and explore career pathways. Participants received training in TAG Rugby and First Aid, volunteered at local events, and engaged in a ‘World of Work’ tour at Llanelli Leisure Centre. These experiences helped build confidence, develop employability skills, and increase awareness of local job opportunities. Two participants are now pursuing qualifications in the leisure industry, with ongoing support provided to help others access volunteering, training, and employment empowering them to take advantage of future career opportunities.

## **Outcome: Improved opportunities for all residents in literacy, numeracy, and digital skills to upskill for employment.**

### **Post-16 Review**

We have completed a comprehensive review of post-16 education provision across the County that has moved to a very positive operational planning stage. We are in the process of realising the recommendation to develop cluster based collaborative working across our sixth forms. We will continue a holistic approach to experiences development including careers, and local and global political engagement.

### **Adult Community Learning**

Following the successful inspection of the Adult Community Learning (ACL) provision in November 2023, Estyn returned in December 2024 to review the progress achieved in relation to the two recommendations. Estyn concluded that:

*‘The adult learning in the community partnership in Carmarthenshire has made good progress in developing its strategic procedures and practices following the core inspection in November 2023. It has established a strategic group, which is made up of core partnership members from the local authority, Coleg Sir Gâr, the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership and Careers Wales. Within the local authority, adult learning in the community is part of the education directorate, enabling it to be seen as a valued and essential part of the lifelong learning continuum.’*

In addition, Estyn found that the improved website communication provides potential learners with ‘an easily navigable’ portal, enabling clear access to the range of learning opportunities available. The joint observations of learning provision across the partnership were noted as beneficial, securing high expectations. Whilst the sound progress achieved in relation to developing the Welsh language provision and family learning programmes was said to be valuable.

The service continues to deliver across the County supporting English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners from a range of backgrounds including refugees and asylum seekers, as well as learners improving their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. A cohort of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children study on one of our five full time courses. Learners on literacy and numeracy programmes study up to GCSE level and can take other qualifications appropriate to their level.

A range of opportunities for digital skills continue to be offered including use of social media to promote sustainability (e.g. using Vinted) and for well-being (e.g. working with MIND). Engagement classes using crafts continue to be popular this year and are now available bilingually. The service collaborated with the Multiply team on legacy and transition, including open days and visits to Multiply classes to encourage learners to progress on to adult learning classes.

One significant project is the Family learning/Rhif Crif project, using Multiply legacy activities and resources to work with parents and teaching assistants in schools. The essential skills and ESOL team actively promote the service through the Hwbs, Hwb Bach y Wlad, community open days and meetings, college open days, and networking opportunities such as the Neurodivergence Support Event.

New Learner Ambassadors are undertaking training and becoming involved in the strategic partnership. Collecting and acting upon the learner voice is a high priority for the service in terms of delivering provision to engage new learners and for appropriate progression opportunities. The partnership is working together to refer learners between partners for progression and to highlight all partners' provision available to learners across the County.

Learners on Council courses have access to careers advice, Communities for Work Plus and Workways for employment preparation and support.

### **Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)**

In 2024/25, the SPF has contributed by supporting Carmarthenshire's residents in the following ways:



## Outcome: Recognise and seek to limit the disproportionate barriers faced by marginalised groups in accessing services and support which allow them to live and age well.

### Ageing Well Network

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Age Friendly Communities initiative aims to create environments that support healthy and active ageing. This involves making cities and communities more inclusive and accessible for older adults, ensuring that they can live safely, enjoy good health, and participate fully in society.

With financial support from the Welsh Government, our Age-Friendly Communities Policy Officer has been working to finalise the strategy and action plan that will form part of the application to gain membership to the World Health Organisation's Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities during 2025/26. Our key stakeholders include around 1,200 members of our Carmarthenshire Ageing Well Network, Carmarthenshire Public Services Board, and others we have engaged with through various events and consultations.

### Hwb Fach y Wlad

Since its launch in September 2023, Hwb Bach y Wlad has surpassed expectations by supporting over 11,646 customers and making more than 484 community visits across Carmarthenshire. The project has provided vital assistance to rural communities, offering a wide range of services that have profoundly impacted the lives of its customers.

The project offers key services such as housing benefits, council tax assistance, waste and recycling information, housing-related enquiries, trading standards support, and employability resources.

Additionally, Hwb Bach y Wlad has made a tangible difference through its "Claim What's Yours" programme, helping individuals understand and access their financial and well-being entitlements. Beyond this, the team has arranged emergency food parcels, organised transport for medical appointments, and provided critical support in times of mental health crises and housing insecurity. This tailored approach has been instrumental in ensuring that each customer receives the specific help they need.

A key driver of the project's success has been its close collaboration with a wide range of both local and national partners. Working alongside numerous partner organisations, Hwb Bach y Wlad has been able to offer a comprehensive care package to those in need. Routine visits to community hubs such as food banks, leisure centres, and local farmer's marts have made these services highly accessible.



## Theatral Sir Gâr

Theatral Sir Gâr is working with over 50 local organisations across Carmarthenshire to make theatre more accessible to individuals who may face barriers to attendance. Whether financial, physical, mental health-related, or due to a perception that theatre is not for them.

A key initiative in this effort is the **Community Rate Ticket Scheme**, which offers highly discounted tickets priced at just £5.50 regardless of the original price for 20 shows every two months. Since its launch in November, the scheme has seen a purchase of over 500 tickets, with overwhelmingly positive feedback from the community.



## Outcome: A reduction and working towards an end to homelessness.

### Homelessness Prevention

There was a decline in the percentage of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless during 2024/25 with 69.1%. This is down on 72.1% in 2023/24 but continues to be above the 2023/24 Welsh rate of 57.9%.

During 2024/25, there were significant challenges, notably in resolving relationship breakdowns and preventing homelessness within the private rented sector. These issues have highlighted some critical areas that need attention and improvement. By reallocating resources, an Early Intervention Team was established and dedicated to conducting in-depth affordability assessments, developing bespoke support packages tailored to the needs of private landlords, and offering comprehensive support to prevent relationship breakdowns.

Engaging with landlords has been key through offering assistance and incentives for maintaining tenancies and implementing proactive measures to identify and address potential issues before they escalate. We believe these actions will improve our ability to prevent homelessness and support those in the private rented sector. By focussing on early intervention and tailored support, we aim to create a more robust and responsive system that addresses the root causes of homelessness.

### Landlord Offer

Our Private Sector Housing Team continues to make strong progress, particularly through the implementation of the new 'Landlord Offer.' This initiative is designed to sustain the involvement of existing private landlords whilst also attracting new ones to help meet ongoing housing demand. The offer includes tailored support and engagement to encourage long-term participation in the local housing market by strengthening relationships with landlords and improving tenancy support.

### Empty Homes

Through direct intervention and assistance, we successfully brought 239 private empty properties back into use, representing a 130% improvement on the previous year's performance. As a result, the overall number of empty homes across Carmarthenshire has been reduced to below target levels.

## **My Safe Place – Pilot Project**

In partnership with Dyfed-Powys Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, we delivered the My Safe Place pilot project. This initiative enables survivors of domestic abuse to remain safely in their homes through the installation of tailored security measures such as locks, alarms, and fencing. Between April and October 2024, the scheme supported 76 individuals across various housing tenures. Funded through the Safer Streets initiative and match-funded by the Council, the project addresses a critical gap in support for those in privately owned or rented homes. It has received strong feedback from service users and is being considered as a model for future domestic abuse prevention strategies. The initiative aligns closely with Carmarthenshire's priorities around homelessness prevention, early intervention, and community safety.

## **Wallich Housing, Health, and Well-being Programme**

In partnership with The Wallich, Actif Llanelli provided weekly gym access to individuals experiencing homelessness, linked to participation in educational sessions. The eight-week programme promoted routine, physical health, and social inclusion whilst supporting learning around budgeting, housing, and well-being. Participants reported improved mental health and lifestyle habits, with some continuing their fitness journeys through corporate memberships. This initiative highlights how inclusive leisure access can support vulnerable individuals in rebuilding their lives.

## **Implementation of the Social Housing Allocation Policy**

Building on the success of the Emergency Allocations Policy, we successfully implemented the Social Housing Allocation Policy, enabling us to directly match available homes to individuals and families in the highest housing need. This targeted approach has played a key role in alleviating homelessness across the county.

**Is anyone better off?**

The Council's Street Football project has been shortlisted for an award at the 2025 Welsh Sports Association Sport Awards.

Shortlisted for the Best Social Impact Initiative award, the project was kickstarted in 2024 and is coordinated by Actif Sport and Leisure. The project was established to support individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless by using the power of sport to improve their physical, mental, and social well-being.

But sessions go beyond football by offering a safe and inclusive space where participants can not only be active but engage directly with partner organisations that attend sessions to offer help and support with housing, mental health support, and other services these individuals may need. The sessions enable weekly contact between housing advisors and participants to maintain consistent support. Each session also includes a cooked meal.



## Support and Advice - Hwbs

### Case Study: Mrs H

Mrs H is now £800 a month better off after seeking advice from our Hwb advisors. A single mother of three children, Mrs H is a homeowner who is in receipt of ESA, PIP, and child benefit payments. Mrs H visited a Hwb centre to speak with an advisor as she was struggling to pay her household bills. During her meeting with a Hwb advisor, Mrs H was made aware that she was eligible for council tax reduction and was backdated three months of payments. She was also made eligible for a single person discount and received a refund of £1,200, awarded universal credit, an enhanced rate of PIP, a blue badge, free school meals for her children, and a uniform grant of £200.

### Case Study: Mr S

Mr S visited one of our Hwbs having recently suffered a stroke and was reliant on a friend to help him apply for universal credit. Due to their lack of knowledge in completing the relevant forms, Mr S was deemed fit for work. A Hwb advisor was able to help Mr S to successfully apply for a discretionary housing payment, which cleared £600 in arrears. A temporary council tax reduction was recalculated, and a council tax reduction for severe mental impairment cleared his council tax debt of £1,440. Mr S was awarded a blue badge, a disabled bus pass, and received an extra £400 every 4 weeks after his capacity to work was reassessed. He was also awarded an enhanced PIP rate of £184 per week.

### How can we do better?

We will continue to deliver and update our Tackling Poverty Plan through the Tackling Poverty Advisory Panel, ensuring our actions respond to the current challenges faced by residents and communities. This includes supporting people to access the benefits and services they are entitled to, working with partners to provide targeted help, and using feedback from the panel to shape future initiatives.

## In Summary

Over the past year, the Housing service has achieved notable progress, with a strong focus on increasing the supply of affordable homes and improving the overall quality and sustainability of housing throughout the County. The 2024/25 programme contributed 361 additional homes, focussing on acquiring private sector properties, repurposing empty homes, and developing new units, including the transformation of the former YMCA Building in Llanelli into eight apartments. This year substantial grant funding has been acquired from the Welsh Government, including over £17,000,000 in Social Housing Grant. These funds have been instrumental in contributing to the delivery of additional affordable homes.

The Housing Regeneration Development Programme continues to drive forward the vision of delivering over 2,000 homes by 2027. Aligning with broader regeneration priorities such as Town Centres, Rural Ten Towns, and strategic projects like Pentre Awel and Tyisha.

Additionally, the recommissioning of the County-wide floating support service has yielded £500,000 in savings over four years, enabling reinvestment into temporary supported accommodation. A new Estate and Tenancy Management offer has also been introduced, enhancing tenant engagement and satisfaction through increased visibility and regular estate visits by housing officers.

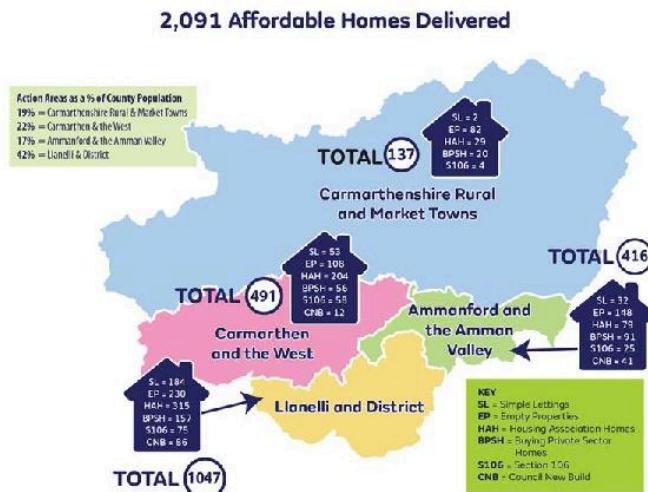
## How are we doing?

- It took an average of 20 calendar days to complete all Council housing repairs during 2024/25. This is higher than expected as demands for responsive repairs continue to increase and impacts our ability to meet the target. A new service improvement plan has been developed that will adopt a phased approach to ensure the delivery of the service is sustainable into the future. This will initially involve detailed work around understanding the current demand and backlog of responsive repairs, a greater focus on packaged minor works, and a re-alignment of existing resources to meet current priorities and risks.
- 239 of private sector properties in Carmarthenshire that had been empty for more than six months were brought back into use through direct action during 2024/25. There were 1,868 properties in Carmarthenshire that had been empty for six months or more at the end of March 2025, compared to 2,144 at the end of March 2024 this is a 13% reduction.
- The percentage of rent lost due to Council properties being empty reduced further in 2024/25 to 1.9%, compared to 2.2% the previous year. This is primarily due to the expanded contractor base established through the new Property Works Framework. This has significantly enhanced overall contractor capacity.



## Outcome: Availability of good quality and energy efficient affordable homes in the County.

We have delivered around 2,500 additional affordable homes since the beginning of our ambitious plan to increase the supply of affordable homes in the county. Good quality affordable homes are the bedrock of healthy and sustainable communities. We have continued to exceed targets every year by increasing our supply of homes using a range of solutions to maximise external funding opportunities and meet housing need. We will continue with this approach, but our focus is to ensure that the Council new build programme plays a more significant role developing large sites of more than a hundred homes at pace.



## Housing Regeneration Development Programme

Our housing regeneration development programme sets the vision to support the delivery of over 2,000 homes for rent and sale over the next five years (February 2022 to December 2027). The plan is based on meeting housing need and stimulating economic growth across the County, creating jobs, building strong sustainable communities, and growing the green economy. The programme for 2024/25 delivered 361 additional homes, focussing on buying private sector homes for general and specialist housing need, bringing empty homes back in to use, and developing new homes, including the conversion of the former YMCA Building in Llanelli into eight apartments.

It is important that this plan links with wider corporate and departmental priorities such as Town Centres, Rural Ten Towns, and key regeneration projects e.g. Pentre Awel, Tyisha, Carmarthen West and Wauniago House (Carmarthen). A significant amount of additional grant monies has also been drawn down from Welsh Government to support the delivery of additional affordable homes this includes over £17m Social Housing Grant and £12.1m of other grant funding including Transitional Accommodation and Capital Programme Funding (TACP) and Housing for Care.

## New Build Developments

Over the next five years, our current pipeline of Council new build developments will deliver over 900 homes. Our new build homes will meet the individual needs of our communities and include houses, bungalows, and apartments for both individuals and families. All our new build developments follow a clear set of design principles that create new communities that are sustainable with a real sense of place.

## Support Service

We have successfully recommissioned the County-wide floating support service, achieving savings of £500,000 over four years. These savings will support the delivery of new temporary supported accommodation options within the Housing Support Grant programme, thereby reducing the Council and Housing Revenue Account burden on the provision of temporary accommodation.

## Estate and Tenancy Management Offer

A new Estate and Tenancy Management offer is being delivered, aimed at improving tenant engagement and satisfaction. This approach increases the visibility and accessibility of housing officers on estates, something tenants have identified as a key priority. Through regular home checker and estate visits, the service ensures a more consistent presence within communities.

Is anyone better off?

## Resident Experience Following Improvements to Their Home

"Since the improvements to my home were completed, my home feels noticeably warmer for longer, which means I've been using the heating less. The house is comfortable, and I'm looking forward to seeing how it performs through the colder months.

Switching from oil to gas has been a smooth transition. I'd wanted gas for a while, so I was pleased to finally have it installed. I also use the Solis Cloud app to monitor how much energy my home is generating and using—it's straightforward once you get the hang of it.

The work itself didn't take long, and the team were great—they cleaned up after themselves and kept me informed throughout. Yes, there was some noise and dust, but a few weeks of disruption was well worth the result.

During the last 6 months, I've saved £714 on my energy bills. On a sunny day recently, I only spent 46p despite using the air fryer, washing machine, dryer, and all the usual appliances. I'm excited to see the total savings after a full year.

Would I recommend it? Absolutely. It's been a no-brainer for me."



We are committed to delivering the Council Housing Investment Programme to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) 2023, based on stock condition surveys and our Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2025–28. We will continue to implement actions to improve turnaround times for repairs, voids, and adaptations, and will appoint an in-house team to deliver small adaptations more efficiently. We will also support Care and Repair in assisting private homeowners. In addition, we will expand access to affordable homes by developing a greater range of low-cost home ownership options, contributing to the delivery of over 2,000 additional homes across the county as part of our Affordable Homes Strategy.

## In Summary

- There has been a significant reduction in hospital admissions, improved health outcomes, and shorter hospital stays, enabling individuals to return home sooner with the right support in place.
- Early intervention and prevention are central to our approach. Our initiatives clearly reflect this, ensuring individuals receive timely support before needs escalate and statutory intervention becomes necessary.
- Reducing reliance on residential care remains a key priority, with a strong focus on expanding supported living options that promote independence, personal choice, and better long-term outcomes.
- A wide range of inclusive and community-focused initiatives have promoted physical activity, mental well-being, cultural engagement, and lifelong learning across Carmarthenshire. This supports healthier, more connected communities.



## How are we doing?

- We remain in a stable position with a decrease in the numbers waiting in hospital for domiciliary care (five people to the end of March 2025). This is despite increased complexity in our caseloads. This demonstrates that our preventative community pathways are working to manage the demand coming through the system. 50-day challenge funding awarded via Welsh Government in the latter part of 2024/25 contributed to creating additional capacity in the system that has, in turn, reduced the numbers waiting for domiciliary care.
- There were 1,460 referrals to the National Exercise Referral Scheme during 2024/25. Slightly lower than the previous year (1,537), but numbers continue to be high. Sadly only 43% (233/542) of those that started the scheme completed the 16-week programme during 2024/25 compared to 70.2% (316/450) in 2023/24.
- The average number of calendar days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant continues to be high at 272 days during 2024/25. A very slight improvement on 273 days the previous year. Removing the means test in February 2022 significantly increased demand for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). To control spending, we introduced Delayed Payment Approvals. However, this measure has also slowed down the pace at which contractors' complete projects, potentially impacting delivery times in 2025/26. The recent reintroduction of the means test has reduced the number of new DFG requests, and the budget for 2025/26 has increased. Demand will continue to be managed within the available budget.

## Outcome: Seamless integrated services between Health and Social Care.

The Integrated Home First Pathway is an example of integration between Health and Social Care at its best. The Home First pathway seeks to do three things:

1. Provide safe alternatives to hospital admission.
2. Support discharge from hospital (particularly where an individual requires an assessment for ongoing care and support; and that assessment does not need to be undertaken in an acute hospital bed).
3. Stream individuals out of statutory services and into preventative services that will maximise independence.

The pathway is a single point of access for community-based Health and Social Care, a co-located multi-disciplinary team working alongside the Information, Advice, and Assistance function at the front door. They provide robust screening and triage for each referral that comes into the Home First hub. This is a partnership approach across health, social care, third sector, Delta Wellbeing, and the Welsh Ambulance Service.

Home First manages to support around 225 people each month, which is a combination of admission avoidance, supported hospital discharge, and virtual ward assessment (people who do not need hospital-based treatment, but require medical oversight can be supported to remain at home with the virtual ward).

The Home First pathway has had huge interest from Welsh Government and across other Health Board and local authority areas in Wales. It has won two NHS Wales Awards (Integrated Person-Centred Care and Overall Winner in Transformation of Health and Care) and a National Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise (iESE) award.

## Social Care

- The Mental Health Well-being Service continue to provide vital early intervention and prevention support. In autumn 2024, a new Hoarding Service launched in collaboration with third sector partners. This model is proving successful in preventing escalation.
- We have strengthened our partnerships with health, housing, and third sector colleagues to support a more joined-up approach to commissioning. The Regional Commissioning Group brings together commissioners from Hywel Dda University Health Board and the three local authorities. Through the Board, we continue to collaborate on long-term care and adult services. This group feeds into the Regional Commissioning Board, which is part of the Regional Partnership Board's governance structure.
- On 19th March 2025, an event was held to celebrate Social Prescribing Day, held at the Living Well Centre, Parc Dewi Sant. Highlighting the impact of social prescribing in Carmarthenshire, the event brought together patients, referral partners, community organisations, and staff to share experiences and highlight collaborative successes.

## **Outcome: Accessible, inclusive, sustainable services, which promote and facilitate learning, culture, heritage, information, well-being, and leisure.**

### **Day Opportunities**

Over the past year, we have worked closely with local community projects, leisure services, and third sector organisations like Arts Gofal Celf to broaden access to day opportunities for individuals with learning disabilities and mental health issues. Day opportunities are structured activities designed to build skills, confidence, and independence. Our key objective is to increase the number and variety of opportunities to enable individuals to engage in meaningful activities, develop social connections, and work towards personal goals. This has resulted in seven individuals with a learning disability gaining valuable experience by volunteering at Llyn Llech Owain Café.

### **The Passport to Leisure Initiative**

This initiative provided unpaid carers with free access to leisure facilities across Carmarthenshire. The initiative forms part of a broader strategy to enhance well-being, reduce isolation, and offer respite from caring responsibilities. During 2024, this enabled 78 carers to access the Council's leisure services, resulting in over 700 visits. Some participants explored new activities, whilst others made significant long-term lifestyle changes. 100% of carers reported improved well-being, reduced isolation, and complete satisfaction with the offer.

### **Reducing Reliance on Residential Care**

A key objective in Adult Social Care has been to reduce the reliance on residential care by developing a broader range of supported accommodation options which would improve outcomes and promote independence and choice for individuals. Over the past three years, nine new supported living settings have been developed, with seven more currently underway. In the last two years alone, 45 individuals have successfully transitioned into supported living.

The Shared Lives Adult Placement service has expanded across the region and is working to transition individuals from residential placements into Shared Lives arrangements. This approach offers a more personalised and community-based alternative to traditional care and directly supports our goal of reducing reliance on residential care.

Innovative approaches have been adopted by the Substance Use and Recovery Team, who have supported individuals with alcohol-related brain damage to step down from residential care through the creative use of accommodation. Continued partnership working with housing and third sector organisations is enabling the development of a recovery house to further enhance step-down options for people with alcohol and substance use issues.

In addition, Adult Social Care is enhancing the planning and support available for young people moving from Children to Adult Services. This work is being delivered in close collaboration with Children's Services, Housing, and Commissioning teams to ensure that young people can remain in their home communities and access the right support at the right time. Several new supported living schemes have been established, offering more independent and tailored settings for young people in transition.

As part of our wider respite offer, Y Caban has been used for short breaks. It provides flexible, person-centred support for individuals and their carers. This initiative supports our commitment to offering alternatives to residential care and ensuring timely, community-based support during periods of increased need.

## Online Services

We have seen an increase in residents and businesses accessing information, support, and Council services online. Throughout 2024/25, the number of sessions on our website has increased yet again to over 4.5 million.

Accessibility of information is very important to us. This year, we worked with DAC (Digital Accessibility Centre) to audit our website to make sure our digital products and services are usable and comply wherever possible with level AA of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.2). This is in line with the requirements of The Equality Act 2010. It is important to remember that residents, visitors, and businesses are now accessing the website in various ways, with 62.9% using a mobile device. This is key when considering how to present information to ensure we engage as wide an audience as possible. We also monitor our websites through Silktide, a platform that automatically scans websites for accessibility and content.

## Sport and Leisure Initiatives

### Actif Gold Card Scheme

The Carmarthenshire 'Gold Card' Scheme allows residents who represent our country, as unpaid athletes within their chosen sport, to supplement their current training programme with free access facilities within Actif's Leisure Centres. During 2024/25, Actif received 94 Gold Card applications, with 79 awarded. Applications reflect the diverse range of sports available within the County, with 26 different sports featured.

### Scarlets Sporting Memories – 'Scarlets Stories'

Actif Llanelli supported weekly Sporting Memories sessions at Parc y Scarlets, engaging over 520 attendees and offering walking rugby every three weeks. The initiative combats loneliness, dementia, and isolation through sport, storytelling, and social interaction. Participants have formed strong community bonds, organising trips and activities beyond the sessions. This project exemplifies how inclusive, culturally rooted programmes can enhance well-being, preserve heritage, and foster lifelong engagement in leisure and community life.

### Foothold Cymru – Bike Maintenance and Cycling Access

Actif Llanelli collaborated with Foothold Cymru to enhance cycling access and education in local schools. The initiative began at Ysgol Heol Goffa, where adapted bikes were repaired and pupils received hands-on bike maintenance training, equipping them with practical skills. This supported sustainable transport and active lifestyles. Actif Llanelli also funded the purchase of new bikes, which were distributed to schools across Llanelli in Spring 2025. The project promoted inclusive learning, well-being, and long-term engagement with cycling, a designated focus sport through 2027.

### Llanybydder Community Hub – Digital Fitness Access

Llanybydder's community hall introduced digital fitness classes through new infrastructure, offering free access as part of membership. This led to increased participation and financial sustainability, with seven new members joining in the first week. The initiative promotes inclusive, local access to health and well-being services, especially in rural areas, and supports the long-term viability of community-run facilities. Face-to-face sessions are planned in future to further expand engagement.

## **Women and Girls Weightlifting / Menopause Education**

The Learn to Lift programme empowers women and girls aged 14 and over to build strength and confidence in a supportive environment. The sessions challenge stereotypes, promote bone health, and encourage intergenerational participation. Many have progressed to advanced classes. A new partnership with Hywel Dda University Health Board is piloting menopause-focused education and fitness, highlighting the programme's potential to support women's health across life stages and expand sustainable, inclusive fitness opportunities.

## **Cycling for Seniors – Motiview Pilot**

Actif Places introduced Motiview, a virtual cycling technology for seniors, promoting physical activity and reminiscence therapy. Participants cycle through familiar landscapes, sparking conversation, nostalgia, and improved mobility. The pilot has shown strong potential for enhancing well-being in care settings. Plans to develop Carmarthenshire-specific routes will deepen local engagement and cultural relevance, supporting sustainable and inclusive leisure for older adults.

## **Health Referral and Prevention Programmes**

As part of our commitment to improving population health and reducing health inequalities, we have expanded our health referral and prevention programmes across the County. Programmes include NERS, Falls Prevention, and Pre-Diabetes.

## **Aquatic Therapy and Fitness Programmes**

Good Boost has received valuable support from the Health Board, recognising its innovative approach to improving musculoskeletal (MSK) health through personalised, technology-assisted aquatic and land-based exercise. The programme uses clinically designed sessions to support individuals with conditions such as arthritis, chronic pain, and those awaiting or recovering from joint replacement or injury. Notably, a combination of Aqua Therapy and Good Boost has already led to tangible NHS savings, with some participants seeing such improvement that they have been removed from joint replacement waiting lists. These individuals have since maintained their active lifestyles by continuing with Actif's wider leisure centre and community-based activities, demonstrating the long-term benefits of the programme for both personal well-being and healthcare demand. Support offered by the NHS has now enabled Actif to commence a community-based programme to aid in the management of MSK conditions in rural and hard to reach areas.

Your Health Matters (YHM) is a 16-week health intervention programme supporting adults to improve their physical and mental well-being. Delivered by trained instructors and guest experts, YHM combines education, exercise, mindfulness, and dietary guidance, with access to Actif Anywhere and local activities. Targeting preventable conditions like type 2 diabetes and smoking-related illness, it achieved notable outcomes:

- 94% of participants improved mental well-being,
- 76% reduced waist size, and
- 70% lowered or maintained BMI.

Overall, 81.6kg of weight was lost, and average blood pressure improved. Participants reported increased confidence, reduced cravings, and sustained healthier habits. A key strength was the supportive group environment. Participant feedback highlighted the programme's holistic impact, shifting focus from weight loss to lifestyle change. Journals and monthly one-to-one sessions were used to encourage goal achievement and track individual progress. Many continued physical activities after the programme, with inspiring personal transformations and improved mental health, showing the value of targeted, supportive health interventions.

### **Actif Anywhere Service**

The Actif Anywhere service was launched as a bilingual online platform to support schools and rural communities across Carmarthenshire. Offering a wide range of extra-curricular classes and activities, the platform has been further developed with support from the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). This helps ensure access to healing and wellbeing opportunities regardless of location.

### **Actif Sport and Leisure Facility Programmes**

A comprehensive offer of programmed and pay and play sessions are available across all sites to enable people to get active and improve the quality of life, health, and overall well-being. Popularity of membership schemes has seen growth in the uptake of those benefits, with a growth of 8.5% to the year ending March 2025 and a whole membership level of 8,720. Recorded attendances of the 18 to 59 age group rose by 28% to 673,069.



### **Theatrau Sir Gâr**

Theatrau Sir Gâr has continued to champion inclusivity in the arts through innovative partnerships and programming. In collaboration with InclusAbility Swansea and Breaking the Box, we developed tools to make theatre more accessible for individuals with disabilities and anxiety. Recognising that traditional theatre environments can be overwhelming for some we introduced free sensory bags. Available at the box office, these include a visual story of the theatre, ear defenders, sunglasses, and fidget items. We are also developing relaxed spaces during standard performances, providing a quiet, safe area where individuals can decompress and return to the performance when ready. These efforts aim to build trust and ensure that everyone feels welcome and supported in our venues.

In addition, Theatrau Sir Gâr hosted The Ancient Oak of Baldor by Frozen Light – a multisensory theatre experience designed specifically for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. Over 80 guests and their carers attended, many experiencing theatre for the first time in a space created just for them.

### **CofGâr**

CofGâr launched its new reminiscence service, Cofio. This service uses carefully curated Memory Boxes filled with familiar items from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s to spark meaningful reflection and conversation. Designed for use in support groups, care homes, and community gatherings, each box includes historic objects, printed materials, discussion prompts, and quizzes to encourage engaging and enjoyable interactions. CofGâr has already delivered sessions across the County, including a successful partnership with the Libraries Service, where reminiscence boxes were used during 1940s-themed tea dances held in spring 2025.

## Outcome: Improved preventative services to meet the demands of an ageing population.

- Over the past year, Integrated Services has successfully implemented personalised care plans for over 5,000 residents. This has contributed to a significant reduction in hospital admissions, improved health outcomes, and shorter hospital stays - enabling individuals to return home sooner with the right support in place.
- The Home First Team, a co-located multidisciplinary team of health and social care professionals working together to support people leaving hospital, has established a successful triage arrangement that is having an impact on hospital flow and reducing waiting lists.
- We continue to support older people to live independently for as long as possible, focussing on early intervention and personalised care. Our “releasing time to care” approach ensures the least intrusive support is provided, freeing up capacity for others. Over the past year, 851 hours of care have been released, helping reduce domiciliary care waiting lists to their lowest in years and resulting in 30 fewer people in residential care despite rising demand.
- Over £1 million in additional grant funding has been secured to further support the preventative agenda. The investment will be used to target issues such as improving the accessibility of services for diverse communities, tackling transport gaps and improving community safety through the provision of tailored technology packages.

### Social Prescribing Service

Our social prescribing service is an essential component of our preventative strategy, linking patients with community resources to support their health and well-being. The Social Prescribers work as integral members of the locality community teams, working closely with individuals that either self-refer, or are identified by their GPs or members of the Community Resource Team and wider primary care contractors as needing support to connect with their communities in order to promote self-worth and integration; providing a patient focused service, which promotes health and well-being.

This service connects individuals with non-clinical support to improve their health and well-being, such as community groups, physical activities, and advice services. Between April 2024 and March 2025, the service received over 1,100 referrals, primarily for low-level mental health support (68%) and social isolation (50%). The service supported individuals aged 18 to 100, with the largest group aged 55 to 64. Of those who completed a patient experience form, 95% felt that their well-being had improved.

### Connecting Carmarthenshire

Connect Carmarthenshire Community Hubs are a partnership of third sector organisations delivering a preventative support service designed to help residents across Carmarthenshire more easily access advice, support, and local resources. Confidence in the service continues to grow, with over 4,500 referrals made during 2024/25.

The Connecting Carmarthenshire digital platform has continued to evolve throughout 2024/25. Ongoing software enhancements have focused on: expanding functionality, improving the user experience; and tailoring the platform based on resident feedback. The platform has 213 community activities listed and 1,341 registered members. In 2024/25, the partnership received accolades at four award ceremonies.

## **Direct Payment Support Service**

Direct Payments (DPs) empower individuals eligible for care and support to take control of their services by receiving cash payments to arrange care that meets their assessed needs. This approach promotes flexibility, independence, and personal choice. Since bringing the Direct Payment Support Service in-house in 2021, uptake has increased by 51%. The service continues to evolve to ensure best practice, legal compliance, and value for money, whilst supporting individuals to manage their arrangements confidently and effectively. Key milestones in 2024/25 include:

- The launch of a refreshed Direct Payment Policy, providing a clear and consistent framework for delivery.
- The introduction of Micro Enterprise services, expanding the care market and enhancing choice and control for service users.

## **The Catalysts for Care project**

The project supports individuals in establishing their own small, independent care services – known as micro-enterprises. These services offer personalised, community-based care, often tailored to local needs. As of 2024, 63 micro-enterprises are operating in Carmarthenshire, with 73% providing personal care. The project has led to a significant reduction in Home Care waiting lists, improving access and flexibility in care provision.

## **Care Home Development**

Plans have been announced to redevelop the former Plas Y Bryn care home in Cwmgwili into a new 60-bed, state-of-the-art, dual-registered nursing and residential care facility – the first of its kind in Wales. Subject to part-funding through the Welsh Government's Integration and Rebalancing Capital Fund (IRCF) Programme, the proposed development will double the capacity of the original home and address a significant gap in local authority care provision. The new facility will be designed to Net Zero Carbon standards, supporting the Council's ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030. In addition to expanding care capacity, the project is expected to deliver wider community benefits, including local employment and skills development. A Pre-Application Consultation is scheduled for December 2025, with construction anticipated to begin in October 2026.

## **Living Well in Carmarthenshire**

As part of the development of the Living Well in Carmarthenshire Strategy, six community events were held in rural Carmarthenshire communities which offered opportunities to engage with the public to understand what living well meant to them. These events brought together a wide range of services focused on prevention, well-being, and self-care, helping individuals understand the support available to help them to stay well and live independently at home. A total of 260 people attended the events. Participating organisations highlighted that this had been an excellent opportunity to network and raise the profile of their services to other professionals, as well as the public. Feedback from the public praised the variety of information available with one stating:

‘I have accessed valuable information about the disposal of medical items, had a health check done, will be having my fire alarm checked and support with blocking nuisance calls.’

## Case Study

The Well-being Team is an early help and preventative service supporting adults and their carers with mental health and well-being needs. The team works across the county and collaborates with GPs, housing services, the Department of Work and Pensions, Dyfed-Powys Police, Hywel Dda Health Board, and various third sector organisations, like Mind and West Wales Action for Mental Health.

This year, the team has helped an individual facing the repossession of his home. With the support provided, the repossession was successfully prevented, as it was having a significant negative impact on his mental health. The individual was supported in communicating with his mortgage company and decided to place his home up for sale.

The individual also had hoarding tendencies, with his home overwhelmed with belongings. At times of support, the Well-being Team arranged more short term mental health support. The team helped him organise and sort through his possessions through both practical and emotional support.

Ongoing support has been provided by the Well-being Team. The individual has also attended a hoarding support group at Mind, where he received peer support from others in similar situations, as well as guidance from professionals leading the group. This empowered him to leave his home regularly to attend sessions, where he connects with others and continues to make progress in his journey.

## **Seraphim trueCall© Nuisance Call Blocking and Monitoring**

238 vulnerable residents are subject to enhanced telemarketing fraud prevention services under the Trading Standards trueCall© telemarketing fraud prevention programme. Residents' trueCall© nuisance call blocking devices are monitored monthly using Seraphimbeta©, an innovative software solution designed by Trading Standards to alert officers where vulnerable residents are suspected of engaging with telemarketing criminals.

Last year, the programme blocked 31,374 nuisance calls, of which 6,756 were identified as being from numbers associated with telemarketing criminals. From that, 2,421 monitoring actions were undertaken leading to 74 welfare intervention alerts initiating direct contact interventions from the team.

It is estimated that the programme has prevented around 40 telemarketing frauds and generated savings to vulnerable households of £184,554. This led to a reduction of £109,297 in public service costs (NHS, Social Care, and Police).

Two Carmarthenshire residents, Mark and Lesley, who have benefited from direct payments through Carmarthenshire County Council's Social Care services, were honoured guests at the Royal Assent Ceremony of the Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill on Monday, 24th March, at Cathays Park, Cardiff.

Mark and Lesley's powerful testimonies about their positive experiences with direct payments in Carmarthenshire influenced the development of this

landmark legislation. Their contributions were recognised by the Welsh Government, who invited them to witness this historic event, where the First Minister, Eluned Morgan MS, formally applied the seal to the Letters Patent, enacting the new law.

Mark and Lesley were accompanied by their personal assistant, funded through direct payments, and their senior social worker, Catherine James, who had supported them throughout their journey. They felt it was important that those who had played a key role in their care were present to share in the moment. Lesley said: "We were honoured to be invited to the Royal Assent Ceremony and to know that sharing our story has helped shape a law that will give others the same independence and choice that we've had. It's encouraging to see our experience valued in this way and we're pleased to share the ceremony with the two individuals who are so instrumental in allowing us to live our best possible lives."

The Health and Social Care (Wales) Act introduces significant reforms, including ending private profit in children's residential and foster care, making Wales the first UK nation to legislate this change. This has enabled the introduction of direct payments within continuing NHS healthcare, giving disabled people and those with long-term health conditions greater control over their care.



## How can we do better?

We will continue to listen to carers and service users, hosting a "You Said, We Did" event to share progress and shape future improvements. Our new Adaptations Policy will help us deliver timely home adaptations, supporting independent living and quicker hospital discharges. We will also strengthen our suicide prevention work in response to rising concerns and reviewing services in line with the Market Stability Report to ensure priorities remain aligned with current needs. This includes enhancing foster care, expanding home provision, investing in preventative services, continuing with our Growing Shared Lives programme, increasing specialist care home capacity, and strengthening domiciliary and community care.

## Well-being Objective 3

### Enabling our communities and environment to be healthy, safe, and prosperous (Prosperous Communities)

#### Overview of Progress

A stable, well-functioning economy forms the basis for growth, prosperous communities, and improved living standards, where all can take advantage of opportunity. Varied and secure employment opportunities, thriving town centres and businesses, and a skilled labour market are key to securing a healthy economy; and we are committed to driving this forward through a range of interventions. Carmarthenshire's economy has recovered well over recent years, but it is not immune to outward pressures and challenges. Disposable household income remains below national averages and economic inactivity rates remain above average.

A significant amount of inward investment and external funding has been secured to support community projects, businesses, job creation, and town centre regeneration. Several strategic projects and public realm projects are either underway or have been completed which will enhance town centres and surrounding areas for the benefit of local communities. Work at Pentre Awel continues at pace with benefits for surrounding areas already being realised through communities.

Our two employability programmes have continued to support those furthest away from the labour market to access employment, volunteering opportunities, or undertake training. These opportunities are designed to increase confidence and arm people with the skills to access employment which will improve their prospects.

In recognition that the County's businesses are the very foundation of our economy, work continues to offer support through a range of interventions, with a focus on improving access to commercial space, providing networking opportunities, signposting to available funding opportunities, and supporting businesses to take advantage of local supply chains through procurement opportunities.

Carmarthenshire's natural environment is one of its greatest assets. The Council declared its commitment to addressing the climate and nature emergencies and will continue working towards becoming a Net Zero Carbon Local Authority by 2030, addressing the issues that are driving a decline in our biodiversity and support nature recovery. We have seen a 37% decrease in the carbon emissions targeted within the Net Zero Plan. Three significant strategies have been developed to support biodiversity. We have also implemented several interventions to mitigate the effects of flooding.

We have seen good progress within Waste Services, with a continued increase in reuse and recycling tonnage performance, a reduction in waste sent to landfill, and a reduction in waste per person not recycled. This is substantiated by the Waste Service receiving the highest satisfaction levels within the residents' survey for 2024.

Our County is a strategic stronghold for the Welsh language, with almost 40% of residents being Welsh speakers. Our Welsh speaking communities are resilient, but there has been a decline in the number of Welsh speakers over recent years. The Council has led on the development of action plans to support making Welsh the norm in areas like encouraging use with pre-school age children, increasing the proportion of families who successfully transmit the language at home and increasing the number of residents who learn Welsh.

Crime levels in Carmarthenshire are comparably low. Most residents agree that they feel safe in their community, but there is some disparity across the County. Effective partnership working has continued over the year, with a focus on community cohesion and targeted community work.

The Council maintains a vast highway network of over 3,500km across semi-urban and rural areas. Reductions in funding, supply chain pressures, rising public expectation, and deteriorating highways creates a pressured operating environment for the service. This is substantiated by the Highways and Transport service area receiving the lowest satisfaction levels within the Residents Survey for 2024. Consequently, we prioritise maintaining the network, especially during Winter months, to ensure uninterrupted access to essential services that safeguards strategic connectivity. Further work has been completed around major strategic challenges such as the national 20mph campaign, development of regional transport planning, and net zero aspirations.

The number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads continues an upward trajectory and the Council is committed to doing everything it can to make our roads safer through partnership working, raising awareness, and education and training opportunities to improve road users' skills and behaviours.

The sport, leisure, and tourism offer within the County continues to perform well with overnight and day visitors contributing £683m to the local economy, supporting 6,649 full time jobs. These sectors are strategically important for the County and take advantage of our natural landscape and strong cultural and heritage offer. More importantly, they support and promote our residents and visitors to lead active, healthy, and enriched lives.



## In Summary

There has been significant activity in economic recovery and growth in 2024/25. This has been achievable because of the service securing external funding – most notably through the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Programme (UK SPF) and Levelling UP Programme. Together with support from Welsh Government, these funds have enabled Economic Development to directly deliver programmes in Skills, Town Centre Regeneration, Communities and Business Support. Strategic projects like the Carmarthen Hwb and Pentre Awel are well underway with construction progressing at pace.

The £38.68m budget for UK SPF has been fully spent with all projects now complete. Over 520 Carmarthenshire projects received funding from our SPF allocation, ranging from small town improvements to large strategic projects. Businesses and communities have received significant investment, and the programme has made a significant impact on the local economy. Economic Development's dedicated SPF Project Management Team and Anchor Teams have successfully delivered the following outputs:

- 529 FTE jobs created,
- 154 FTE jobs safeguarded,
- 508 people supported to gain employment,
- 3,652 new volunteer opportunities created,
- 6,988 existing volunteer opportunities supported,
- 3,378 local events or activities supported,
- 842 enterprises received non-financial support,
- 7,611 people attended training sessions,
- 1,264 people supported to gain a qualification,
- 209 adult numeracy courses delivered,
- 2,185 people engaged with a keyworker,
- 417 organisations received a grant.



## How are we doing?

- Employment rates have improved slightly in Carmarthenshire to 72.8% as of the end of March 2025, compared to 72.0% for the previous year. However, they continue to be below the Welsh and UK rates of 73.4% and 75.4%, respectively. Unemployment figures increased slightly to 3.6% in March 2025 compared to 3.0% March 2024. This is above the rates in Wales (3.5%) but below the UK (3.8%). Economic Inactivity<sup>[5]</sup> in Carmarthenshire remains high despite a slight improvement from 21.7% in March 2024 to 21.1% in March 2025. This is above the Welsh rate of 19.9% and well above the UK rate of 17.7%.
- The proportion of those aged 18 to 64 qualified to National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 4 or above in Carmarthenshire reduced for the first time since 2020. The most recent data (December 2024) indicates a result of 40.7% which is a significant reduction from 46.3% the previous year. This is well below the Welsh result of 46.4%, which increased from 45% the previous year. Developing skills and qualifications improves employability prospects, boosts career prospects, and creates a well-skilled and able labour market. It also ensures that we have a workforce that is fit for the future. Following a downward trend for the last few years, the proportion of those aged 18 to 64 with no qualifications increased according to the most recent data (December 2024) – 6.4% compared to 5.3% the previous year. We continue to be below Wales (7.9%).
- 1,789 Direct and Indirect Jobs were created with regeneration assistance during 2024/25. This is almost double the previous year's figure of 955.
- 151 individuals were supported through Council employability schemes to earn the real living wage during 2024/25, a slight decline on 158 in the previous year. Many of the clients supported were still receiving advice and guidance at the end of the financial year as they experience multiple barriers and have complex needs. Therefore, additional support is needed before they access employment opportunities.
- Economic Development secured over £58m of funding during 2024/25 via private sector investment and various successful applications for external funding.
- Overnight and day visitors contributed £683m to the local economy supporting 6,649 full time jobs.

[5] Economically inactive are defined as people who are not in employment or unemployed, the above data excludes students and persons 65+, therefore could be inactive due to looking after family or long-term sick etc.

## Outcome: Businesses supported, and employment provided.

Significant support and growth have been delivered across Carmarthenshire through Economic Development in 2024/25, with 1,353 direct jobs created/accommodated, 436 indirect jobs created through construction, and 346 jobs safeguarded.

A total of 3,953 volunteers have been supported through programmes such as the Sustainable Communities Fund and the Shared Prosperity Programme (SPF). 2,328 businesses have been supported via Business Support, the Regional Learning Skills Partnership, and town centre regeneration initiatives. The table below illustrates the achievements of the team against targets.



	Direct Jobs Created / Accommodated / Into Jobs	Indirect Jobs created / Construction Jobs (construction spend / £150,000)	Jobs Safeguarded	PSI / External funding Secured	Number of Volunteers	Number of businesses supported
<b>Total for 24/25</b>	1,353	436	346	58,378,868	3,953	2,328
<b>Annual Target</b>	1,257	565	320	42,602,169.47	2,318	1,123
<b>Difference</b>	96	-129	26	15,776,698.95	1,635	1,205

### Markets

The provision markets in our primary towns continue to provide a key service to our residents and visitors. Building upon their success, we have held a junior trading event in each of our town centres which was well attended. The event gave the opportunity for local school children to experience market trading by developing a business idea and turning it into an enterprise, gaining valuable experience of the world of work and business.

### Business Support

Economic Development continued to offer an array of business support measures aimed at creating and safeguarding jobs, providing funds to purchase capital and revenue equipment, and building and refurbishing properties for economic use across the county.

1,061 business were supported with grants and loans through Economic Development in 2024/25. For example, under the SPF Business Growth and Start Up Programme, a total of 194 businesses were supported, delivering £3.4 million of investment, creating 317 jobs, and safeguarding 97 jobs.

## Employment Sites

Over the past 12 months, Economic Development has worked in partnership with Welsh Government to develop and deliver several employment sites to create space for businesses to either start up or grow, creating jobs and growth.

Parc Gelli Werdd is a new and sustainable development of employment space totalling 32,500sqft located on the Cross Hands East Strategic Employment Site. The development comprises industrial units and offices in three buildings, targeting the following sectors:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Agri-Food Technology
- Creative
- Energy and Environment
- Financial and Professional.



One of the highlights of the space is that it has used Active Building principles involving an on-site solar photovoltaic (PV) and a fabric first approach, involving high levels of insulation that will reduce space heating costs. Designed with the aim of achieving 'Net Zero carbon in-use target' and having achieved BREEAM<sup>[6]</sup> "Excellent" and EPC<sup>[7]</sup> "A" ratings. This development includes an innovative building management system (BMS) that incorporates a bespoke metering and monitoring platform to enable both billing and detailed performance monitoring. Data collected via the BMS will be used to provide future learning in relation to sustainability and de-carbonisation, to both enhance the performance of the development and to inform the construction and operation of new premises. By adopting good practice, tenants should be able to enjoy lower energy costs because of the sustainable features of the development.

In addition, planning consent has been secured for the development of 7,500sq ft of industrial units at Beechwood employment site in Llandeilo. It is envisaged that this development will be delivered in 2025/26 in partnership with Welsh Government through the Rural Joint Venture.



## Outcome: People are supported to take advantage of local opportunities whether it be through starting a business, gaining qualifications, or gaining meaningful employment.

### Ten Towns Programme

We have been delivering this programme to support the regeneration of ten rural market towns across the County. The Authority has invested £1m capital funding together with a further £1.2m investment from the Shared Prosperity Fund to deliver a range of initiatives to support the needs of businesses and the wider community:

- £260,000 has been invested to support the conversion of empty premises bringing them back into business use.
- 95 properties have received funding to improve their shop frontages.
- Public realm improvements, street cleansing, and art murals have been undertaken to enhance the vibrancy of the towns.
- 8 rural events have been supported to draw additional visitors into the towns.
- Each of the towns has received funding to support initiatives that have been identified as a priority by the respective communities e.g. development of a community hub; pump track; events space; bunk house; new market development; car parking facilities.



Several initiatives have been supported to raise awareness of the circular economy including swap shop activities, library of things, and repair cafes. Additionally, local schools have designed artistic installations made from waste products which are displayed in their respective towns.

### Sustainable Communities Fund

Funded via the Shared Prosperity Fund, the Sustainable Communities Fund has enabled an investment of over £6m into local community led projects. The scheme has delivered the following outputs:

- 70 projects supported,
- 37 jobs created,
- 32 jobs safeguarded,
- Over £900,000 local spend,
- 42 new or improved amenities / facilities,
- 12,900m of pathways created or improved,
- 586 events or community activities,
- 2,933 new volunteering opportunities.

Case studies can be found via the link: [UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Sustainable Communities Projects - Carmarthenshire County Council](#)

## **Employability and Skills Fund**

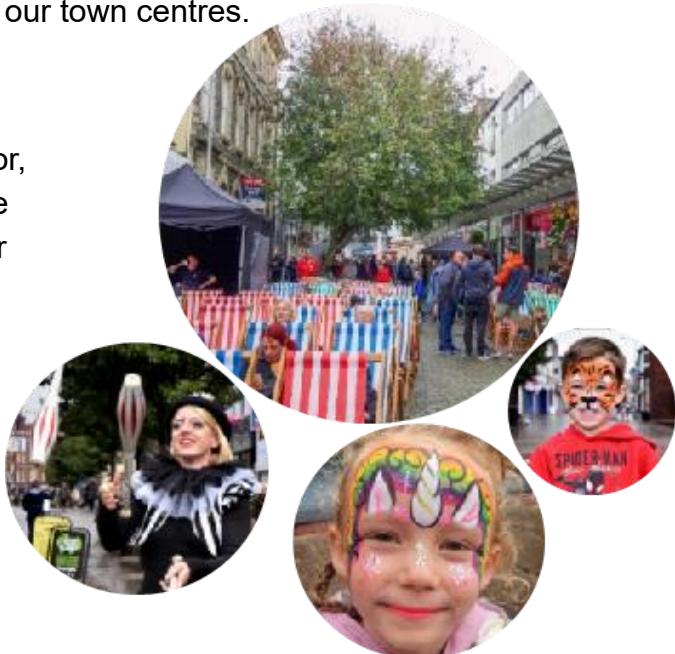
Funded through the SPF, the Employability and Skills Fund has been supporting people into jobs with:

- 11 projects supported,
- 45 supported into jobs or self-employment,
- 1,201 gaining a qualification,
- 111 volunteering opportunities.

## **Town Centre Regeneration**

Over the last 12 months, Economic Development have continued to deliver town centre regeneration initiatives in the three primary town centres of Ammanford, Carmarthen, and Llanelli. A total of £4.2million has been invested in our towns through a plethora of initiatives aimed at improving the offer. We have delivered grants to businesses to improve their properties, public realm improvements, and funding to support events in our town centres.

Activity has been coordinated via each town's respective Task Forces and Forum, where key stakeholders from private sector, voluntary sector, other public bodies, and the local authority come together to discuss and coordinate activity in our town centres.



## **Town Centre Events**

Several Town Centre events and festivals have been supported by Economic Development during 2024/25 bringing many organisations and communities together in our primary town centres of Ammanford, Carmarthen and Llanelli and boosting footfall in our towns.

## **Carmarthen Hwb**

Enabling works for the project were completed in April 2024, with the main construction contract signed in July 2024. Works are progressing well on site. The main site accommodation has been delivered and fitted out; and groundworks sub-contractors have completed the breaking out of the internal slab and drainage installation. Roofing works commenced in early November and plant room roof commenced in December 2024. Secondary steel, intumescent, and section 104 drainage connection completed. Works are expected to be completed by Spring 2026.

## YMCA – Llanelli

In November 2019, the Council was successful in obtaining the full award of £2,000,000 Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme strategic funding for the YMCA development. The proposal was to redevelop an iconic building within Llanelli town centre to bring it back into use. The development consists of 1,700m<sup>2</sup> over four floors and a basement area. This former YMCA building will house commercial and community use on the ground and first floors, with eight two-bedroom apartments on the second and third. The housing units have all been occupied whilst the retail units and office spaces are currently being advertised online for businesses to submit their interest.

### Before



### After



## Market Street North

In November 2019, the Council was also successful in obtaining the full award of £2,000,000 Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme strategic funding for the Market Street North Scheme. Planning approval for the development was granted in August 2020 for the demolition and subsequent reconstruction of a three-storey building to provide five commercial use units at ground floor level and 10 2-bedroom apartments on the first and second floors. The demolition works were completed in December 2020. The project officially started on site in September 2023 and is expected to be completed in September 2025.

### Artist Impression



### Works Progressing



## Public Realm Improvements

Several public realm improvements have been delivered in Ammanford, Carmarthen, and Llanelli. These projects have improved the physical appearance of our town centres. Some examples of completed projects are as follows:

## Ammanford Market Square Quay Street

Extensive works have been carried out at Market Square Ammanford, with the removal of a vacant bus stop, relocation of a cycle shelter, improvements to lighting and railings, and a better pedestrian access between Carregamman Car Park and town centre. Coupled with a complete resurfacing of the market square, this area now provides a larger central location for the market to be held and other community events in the town centre.

**Before**



**After**



## Carmarthen

Several projects are in progress across the town centre to improve visual appearance, accessibility, connectivity between key town centre locations, and modernise street furniture. The Tackling Towns projects include Carmarthen Castle, St Peters Car Park Entrance, Guildhall and Notts Square, King Street and Queen Street, Red Street and Market Precinct, Chapel Street, Cambrian Way, John Street, and Town Signage.

**Before**



**Before**



**After**



**After**



## Cowell Street

In response to COVID-19, Cowell Street underwent a temporary traffic restriction, and social distancing measures were put in place. This allowed for the assessment of potential effects on the street environment. Preliminary studies indicate that the space was positively used by companies, and there are no appreciable negative effects on vehicle circulation. In response, enhancements to Cowell Street's public realm were identified as a crucial undertaking in the Llanelli Town Centre Recovery Plan. After the recovery plan was released, Atkins was hired to conduct a feasibility study to look at ways to improve the public realm and placemaking in several important parts of Llanelli town centre, including Cowell Street.

The presented plan demonstrates a pedestrian 'friendly' design. For example, a proposed 1.6m wide crossing is to be added, existing laybys to be raised to footway level and further existing crossing point to be added in line with the active travel guidance. Furthermore, the project also entails to re-tarmac parts of the street. Project works started on the 27th of August and were completed in 9 weeks.



## Regional Learning and Skills Partnership

The Regional Learning and Skills Partnership (RLSP) for South West Wales is one of four skills partnerships working with the private sector, public sector, skills/training providers, education providers, and key stakeholders to ensure that we are delivering the right skills for our future workforce.

The RLSP produces and analyses labour market intelligence; gathers evidence from regional employers through the sector cluster groups and via surveys; and publishes a 3-year Regional Skills and Employment Plan. This informs Welsh Government on the skills needs across the region now and in the future. The table below highlights the work of the Skills Partnership over the year.

Develop an understanding of the Skills requirements of the future	Promote career pathways and apprenticeship opportunities	Develop a skilled workforce of the future for the region
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Skills Barometer</li><li>Labour market intelligence reporting</li><li>National occupation standards</li><li>Industry focus groups</li><li>Youth groups, pre 16 surveying</li><li>Industry surveying</li><li>Emerging priorities - Net Zero, AI etc</li><li>Skills Plans - Regional and local Authority (with focus on key skill gap areas and core economic industry)</li><li>Custer groups focus on core issues for each sector</li><li>Local and national initiatives</li><li>Understanding new infrastructure and supply chain requirements</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Promotion of degree apprenticeship opportunities</li><li>Analysis of apprenticeship offer</li><li>Promoting engineering &amp; digital career through apprenticeship</li><li>Targeting pupils and parents in schools</li><li>Careers events</li><li>Career perceptions</li><li>Lets talk Gen z webinar</li><li>Career pathway information tools for 7 sectors</li><li>Apprentice workshops for employers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Engaged with key future developers</li><li>Membership of all the key working groups for the Freeport and Celtic Sea</li><li>LMI data gathering, utilising local and national intelligence, to formulate strategic actions</li><li>Supported the development of user centred experience qualification</li><li>Promotion of the PLA to upskill workforce in retrofit and green technologies</li><li>Future skills for the future workforce event</li><li>Showcasing new digital technologies to cluster groups</li></ul>

The RLSP also leads on the delivery of the Skills and Talent programme for the Swansea Bay City Deal. The work of the programme is to specifically identify skills needs of the eight City Deal projects and develop new modules or courses to meet future skills needs where they do not already exist. A total of 25 pilot projects have been funded across the whole region.

### **Carmarthenshire Employability Schemes**

There are two employability programmes in Carmarthenshire designed to assist individuals who are either unemployed or seeking additional employment. The Communities for Work+ and the Carmarthenshire Working programmes (funded by Welsh Government and through the Shared Prosperity Fund respectively) both provide support to individuals aiming to enter the workforce immediately, or after participating in training or volunteering opportunities to build their confidence. Both programmes offer a variety of training options, assistance with CV preparation and interviews, as well as job searching support. Throughout the year, the programmes organise job fairs in Llanelli, Ammanford, and Carmarthen, collaborating with local businesses to facilitate recruitment for job vacancies. Over the past year, the programmes have supported 185 businesses, helped 312 individuals secure employment, and enabled 184 individuals to engage in volunteering opportunities.

### **Outcome: Businesses are supported to take advantage of local supply chains and procurement opportunities.**

The Corporate Procurement Unit is working closely with colleagues in Economic Development to deliver Procurement and Business Surgeries. These offer procurement advice and guidance to potential suppliers, advice on business grants to those eligible, and wider business support. The Procurement and Business Support Surgeries have proven very successful, with nine held to date. All have been fully booked with the maximum of 12 businesses per day. More surgeries are booked for May, July, and September 2025. A procurement event has also been organised in conjunction with Business in Focus, Cwmpas, Antur Cymru, and Business Wales.

The Procurement team and Business Support team deliver a monthly Procurement and Business Support Surgery throughout the county which gives businesses an opportunity to discuss accessing work with the Council, and the support and funding available to them. Engagements are also undertaken through email, inclusion in the business newsletter, and occasional telephone calls. Recent contracts include the substantial Property Works contract, where the business team engaged with the dozens of businesses who were awarded contracts. Case studies are to be written of the positive outcomes. In addition, they continue to work with Economic Development on future tender exercises to promote them to local businesses who might be interested in tendering; and sharing its work programme on a quarterly basis to identify further opportunities to promote these opportunities to Carmarthenshire businesses.

## Procurement Opportunities

In June 2024, the South West Wales Regional Contractors Framework (SWWRWF) was tendered with an approximate total value of £800 million. Procurement and Property Design adopted a variety of supplier engagement initiatives to attract local contractors to tender, promote the tender requirements, and to enhance tender submissions by offering tender support where required.

Following a Getting Tender Ready webinar held in the last financial year, we held a briefing session for this tender at Parc y Scarlets, Llanelli in April 2024 where 186 contractors attended. To further enhance and support suppliers interested in tendering for this opportunity, we organised a live Tender Webinar via Business Wales in June 2024. The webinar was organised to assist contractors with the tender process.

## Community Benefits

Through the delivery of Community Benefits and Targeted Recruitment, Training Procurement ensures that contractors/suppliers provide employment and training opportunities for those that have barriers to entering employment. These barriers include long term unemployment, economic inactivity, disabilities, health conditions, aged over 54, amongst others. We also work closely with contractors to provide apprenticeship opportunities over and above what they would normally provide.

We work with several contractors across several frameworks, including the South West Wales Regional Contractors Framework (SWWRWF), South West Wales Regional Engineering Contractors Framework (SWWRECF), and the Property Works Framework (PWF).

Opportunities are measured in person weeks<sup>[8]</sup>, with 5,011 person weeks created in 2024/25 – more than doubling our target of 2,462. 64 jobs were also created, beating our target of 60.

## Pentre Awel

As part of delivering the Pentre Awel Zone 1 contract as the main appointed contractor, Bouygues UK (BYUK) were required to provide opportunities to local contractors to bid for sub-contracting work on the project. Regular meetings were held to identify mechanisms to advertise supply chain opportunities and capture the spend. This included tracking the supply chain materials by location and the location of individuals employed on site. Using a reporting model developed and adapted in conjunction with the Centre for Local Economies Strategies (CLES), Bouygues are finalising the figures to be broken down by post code and region. This data will cover the larger packages, including groundworks, and mechanical, engineering, and plumbing. Currently, Bouygues reports that 74% of contractor spend is within Wales.

Pentre Awel provided numerous opportunities for targeted recruitment (TR&T) opportunities. We set a target of 4,680 person weeks of TR&T and have already delivered 5,495 weeks. Some of this has been achieved through innovative practices adopted by the Council and Bouygues, including the introduction of Employability Hubs – working with local employability support projects to set up monthly employability hubs on site. The hubs allowed the contractor the opportunity to meet with potential employees and take them through a detailed introduction of how working on the site would look. This process led to an effective sifting process which, in turn, led to a higher level of retention on site.

Cyfle are a registered charity that deliver a shared apprenticeship scheme in Carmarthenshire and beyond. The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) had recently shut the financial subsidy attached to Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) apprentices, which meant a number of first year apprentices could not find employers and would not have had the opportunity to complete their apprenticeship. Bouygues also agreed to finance the subsidy for 10 M&E apprentices through Cyfle. The apprentices were inducted at Pentre Awel and then placed with local SMEs. This allowed them to complete their second year and gave local employers the opportunity to work with an apprentice.

## **Outcome: Look to improve the availability and affordability of early years education and childcare settings across the County, to address one of the common barriers faced by individuals looking to return to or find employment.**

### **Affordability**

Carmarthenshire fully promotes and supports the Welsh Government 30 hours Childcare Offer (CO), recognising that affordable, available, and accessible childcare enables parents to work. This supports the drive to increase economic growth, tackle poverty, and reduce inequalities. We support registered providers and eligible parents through the roll out of the new National Digital Service.

With the Childcare Offer for Wales, children of eligible parents could receive a maximum 30 hours of funded early education and childcare a week, for up to 48 weeks of the year. The Childcare Offer for Wales is a combined offer, made up of Early Years part time education and childcare provision. Therefore, children must be of an age to be eligible to access both elements at the same time. If parental eligibility has been established, children will usually receive the childcare element of the offer from the term after their third birthday, until they are offered a full-time education place.

The Additional Support Grant (ASG) provides funding to help ensure that eligible children with additional support needs can access the childcare element of the Childcare Offer in the same way as other eligible children. 16 children received support through the CO Additional Support Grant (ASG).

### **Is anyone better off?**

#### **Case Study for Startup and growth Grants – Lignum Joinery Ltd**

In June 2024, Owen Smart approached Carmarthenshire County Council for a start-up grant. These grants are funded by the UK Government through the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Once Owen's application had been received, he was guided by the grant team through the process for which he successfully secured the substantial grant award. The money made available contributed towards the equipment costs of setting up and opening the workshop in Ammanford during the summer of 2024.

*Owen said 'the support I received from business development team was exemplary. They guided me through the whole grant process which initially appears quite daunting, however they provided me with all the advice that I needed to be successful with the startup grant. The startup costs for my business were high due to the high prices for some of the equipment we needed. Being able to apply for grant support towards essential equipment made a huge difference to my investment costs. This initial financial boost ensured that the equipment purchased will be fit for purpose for the long term.'*

Once the business was established and specific markets identified, the business needed to invest in specialist equipment. Lignum Joinery made a further application for a growth grant. Owen says 'once again, the support I received from the business development team was perfect. They guided me through the growth grant process and provided me with the additional advice needed to make successful applications. We have now completed one startup and two growth grant applications which have helped us with start and develop our business.'

Owen added "*I can wholeheartedly say that the support provided to myself, and my business made, a huge difference and has afforded the business a great start for the future.*"

### **The Story Project**

Theatrau Sir Gâr partnered with The Wallich on The Story Project – a vibrant collaboration between people with lived experience of homelessness and addiction, and the Welsh performing arts community. The project aimed to uncover hidden talents, nurture creativity, and introduce new voices and audiences to theatres across Wales.

Over 10 weekly sessions in Ammanford and Llanelli, 15 participants worked with local artists to create and perform a powerful piece of theatre. The final performance was moving and educational, with many participants describing the experience as life changing. They reported increased confidence, new skills, and aspirations for the future. One participant, initially fearful of entering a theatre, is now a regular attendee and volunteers as a technical assistant and ambassador.

This project also helped us explore creative, supportive ways of working with individuals with lived experience of homelessness. Building on this success, we've continued our partnership with The Wallich through a weekly art hub. The pilot supports creative development, community building, and public storytelling in a safe and inclusive space.

### **Skills and Talent Programme Awards Funding to Innovative Educational Initiative**

In 2020, two Welsh Medium schools, Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Myrddin and Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Maes y Gwendraeth, collaborated with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David to lead the first pilot project to be funded by the Swansea Bay City Deal Skills and Talent Programme. The project aimed to address a critical skills gap in the region by offering students the opportunity to achieve Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications in Engineering and Digital Studies through the medium of Welsh. This was the first programme of its kind and, since being approved, has successfully enrolled hundreds of students to take the Level 2 and Level 3 courses. Many of these leaving school with the qualification and moving on to college, university, or apprenticeships.

The programme was designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities within the engineering and IT sectors. By working closely with the University, students gained practical skills using state-of-the-art equipment and have benefited from the research conducted by the University. This hands-on experience within the schools ensures a seamless transition to higher education.

There has been a significant increase in the number of students enrolling in these qualifications across both schools. Approximately 40% of students who complete Level 2 courses continue to Level 3, demonstrating a clear educational pathway and sustained interest in these fields. Since starting the pilot project, 843 students have enrolled in Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications in Engineering and Digital Studies, showcasing the success and demand for these courses.

Dr Llinos Jones, Headteacher Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Myrddin said *"The Skills and Talent Programme Awards have been a catalyst for transformative change, enabling our innovative educational initiative to reach new heights within our schools. This funding has not only expanded access to vital learning resources but also empowered learners with future-ready skills, fostering long-term regional growth and opportunity."*



How can we do better?

We will strengthen support for local businesses by expanding early engagement and procurement opportunities, helping more local firms access Council contracts and supply chains. Our business support network will be enhanced to provide tailored advice, encourage entrepreneurship, and promote the "Think Carmarthenshire First" approach. We will continue to deliver and monitor regeneration projects in our town centres and rural areas, with a renewed focus on tackling vacant properties, supporting events, and improving public spaces to boost footfall and community pride. Recognising the importance of skills and employability, we will further develop training and upskilling programmes, working closely with the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership and local employers to address gaps and support people into quality jobs. We will also review and expand our employment land and premises offer, ensuring that new and existing sites meet the needs of growing sectors and support sustainable development. Finally, we will seek additional funding and partnerships to maximise investment in our communities, while monitoring the long-term impact of our projects to ensure they deliver lasting benefits for residents and businesses.

## In Summary

The Council declared its commitment to addressing the climate and nature emergencies in 2019 and 2022, respectively. We will continue working towards becoming a Net Zero Carbon Local Authority by 2030 and addressing the issues that are driving a decline in our biodiversity and support nature recovery. 2023/24 was the halfway point in our net zero plan programme and has resulted in 37% reduction in the carbon emissions targeted. Our third Environment Act Forward Plan 2023 – 2025 sets out the actions we are taking to tackle biodiversity decline and this year saw the publication of three major strategies to support biodiversity: the Green and Blue Infrastructure, Tree and Woodland, and Grassland Management for Pollinators.

Areas of the County are susceptible to the negative effects of the climate emergency, especially flooding. The Council has implemented interventions through the Flood and Water Management Act and Shoreline Management Plan to mitigate these effects.

Efforts to decarbonise housing stock have also advanced, with over 51% of homes now achieving a minimum Band C energy performance rating. We have adopted a fabric-first approach to energy efficiency, incorporating solar panels, thermal insulation, and hybrid heat pump systems. These measures not only reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty but also stimulate the local economy and support workforce development.

## How are we doing?

- Carmarthenshire is one of the most proactive counties in Wales in terms of investment in low carbon energy projects. This is positive and substantiates the forward-thinking approach that the county adopts with regards to addressing the threats posed by the climate and nature emergencies. The most recent data for 2023 indicates that there was a total of 10,103 projects in Carmarthenshire generating 346MW of energy. This is the fourth highest level in Wales and an increase on 2022 figures.
- Flooding is always a concern in Carmarthenshire and, according to 2024 data from Natural Resources Wales, over 18,000 business and homes are at risk from either river, tidal, or surface water flooding. This is an increase from the 2019 figure of 15,000.
- There was a 27% increase in the number of properties at high or medium risk of flooding between 2019 and 2024, rising from 5,400 to just under 7,000. Natural Resources Wales predict that due to climate change, this will more than double again to over 15,500 by 2120.
- The increasing threat of the climate and nature emergencies places greater emphasis on the need for suitable and proportionate flood defences to protect those at greatest risk. Through our Flood and Water Management Act and Shoreline Management Plan, several interventions have been completed. This includes the installation of new defences and upgrades made to existing defences.
- In our 2024 residents' survey, the largest proportion of respondents indicated 'Neither' when asked whether the climate emergency is being addressed locally. This might suggest that people are unaware of the measures put in place. For those that did answer, slightly more people disagreed than agreed.

## Outcome: Continue to work towards becoming a Net Zero Carbon Local Authority by 2030.

### Breakdown of the Council's Carbon Footprint

	2016/17	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Change
<b>Consumption (kWh)</b>	72,527,266	63,869,172	61,420,560	58,798,981	<b>-4%</b>
<b>Mileage (miles)</b>	9,313,790	7,272,186	8,420,699	8,216,503	<b>-2%</b>
<b>Carbon Footprint (tCO<sub>2</sub>e)</b>	26,542	16,984	16,756	16,556	<b>-1%</b>

The latest data for 2024/25 reflects continued strong performance. Our carbon footprint (measured in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) have reduced by 37% compared to our 2016/17 baseline year. This sustained progress highlights the effectiveness of the measures we have implemented. Given the extensive actions outlined in our Net Zero Plan executed in 2024/25, we expect the forthcoming data to further demonstrate the impact of our commitment to reducing emissions and advancing our climate goals.

Data is vital to our carbon monitoring, and we are improving its accuracy through the rollout of our meter upgrade programme. This provides real-time data that plays a crucial role in assessing the impact of our initiatives, as well as identifying priority areas for further investment.

### Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transformation Fund

In our pursuit to decarbonise the County's transport, the Council secured funding from the Welsh Government's Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transformation Fund to trial electric vehicle (EV) gully charging in both urban and rural settings. Utilising the Kerbo Charge Gully system, 13 residents with on-road parking were fitted with charging facilities. Phase one of the trial has been a great success, with users recording positive experiences based on installation and maintenance, and an improvement in understanding EV charging solutions. The users have praised the EV gully as a convenient, safe, and cost-effective home charging solution – especially for those without off-road parking. The gully system eliminates tripping hazards from cables, ensuring a flat and secure walkway – day and night, whilst enabling users to charge at cheaper overnight rates. This trial has provided an insight into the scalability and adoption of EV solutions within the County, and whilst the impact of the trial is still being assessed the intention is full adoption. Phase two of the trial has recently commenced with a further 10 systems installed.

## Electric Vehicle Transition

The transition to electric vehicles has accelerated, with a notable increase in the adoption of electric vehicles (EV) across various sectors. We have been proactive in expanding our EV fleet. For instance, in 2024, the Council secured £431,632 in funding from the Welsh Government. This facilitated the acquisition of 40 new EVs – 30 vans and 10 cars. Combining this funding with additional collaborative procurement efforts has significantly boosted the proportion of EVs in the Council's fleet, increasing from 1.8% to 8% to March 2024.

## Business Renewable Energy Fund

Economic Development has championed sustainability in delivering several programmes across Carmarthenshire, including the Business Renewable Energy Fund (BREF). BREF provides grant aid to businesses who invest in renewable energy systems to make their business more efficient and sustainable. To date, we have supported 28 businesses which have delivered an anticipated saving of 640 tonnes of CO2 emissions over three years.

## Housing Decarbonisation Plan

In February 2023, the Council made a clear commitment to ensure that all our homes are energy efficient and achieve a minimum Band C energy performance rating as quickly as possible. Over 51% of our homes have already achieved this standard, an improvement of just over 19% since making our commitment.

Future investment in our existing homes will continue to be based on improving the energy performance of our homes through our ongoing planned maintenance programmes. This integrated approach ensures that we are improving the energy performance of our homes and reducing carbon emissions, whilst simultaneously improving and maintaining the general condition of our homes.

The works to improve the energy efficiency of our homes approach is based on using a fabric first approach, which improves the thermal efficiency of our homes and includes installing renewable technology, where appropriate.

This includes installing solar panels and increased thermal insulation as part of our re-roofing programmes, and hybrid heat pump systems as part of our on-going boiler replacement programme.

In addition to the current works, we are also developing target energy pathways for all our homes to help determine a suitable and cost-effective approach for further improving energy performance. This will help to:



- Improve the thermal performance of our homes and indoor air quality to promote health and well-being.
- Grow the local economy by providing long term investment programmes.
- Upskill the local supply chain and provide more training and work opportunities for local people.

Our new build Council homes embrace decarbonisation. They are energy efficient, well insulated, and have the latest innovative technologies that support the Council's Net Zero Carbon principles. These have helped reduce our carbon emissions by on average 70%, and create affordable warmth for tenants, growing the green economy, and creating sustainable communities.

### **Carmarthenshire Museum**

Carmarthenshire Museum completed a £330,000 project to redevelop our car parking facility in 2024/25. This was funded by a £264,000 grant by Visit Wales as part of their Brilliant Basics Fund. The project has provided new accessible spaces, pedestrian pathways, and an improved layout to enhance visitor experience. The improved car park enhances access to the museum and links directly to the Tywi Valley Cycle Path. With the installation of a new EV bike charging unit encouraging cultural participation and tourism. The project includes energy efficient lighting and sustainable design considerations – including the use of fully recyclable aluminium signage, and the development of a new Story Garden that improves the biodiversity of the green space outside the museum entrance.

## **Outcome: Improve current and explore new developments to limit the effects of flooding and other environmental threats which affect our residents and service users.**

### **Revised Local Development Plan (LDP)**

A Strategic Flood Consequences Assessment was undertaken to guide and inform future distribution and location of development, including housing, employment, and future decision making. This defined the extent of projected flood risk, incorporating climate change assumptions, and forms key evidence in support of the preparation of the revised LDP.

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) documents have been prepared to accompany the revised LDP. These include SPGs on Open Space; Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI); Trees, Woodland, and Hedgerows; and Placemaking and Sustainable Design. Together, they provide developers with clear expectations and equip planning officers with the tools to embed GBI into both strategic planning and site-specific development.

### **Nutrient Management Plans**

The Council are a key Member of the Cleddau, Tywi, and Teifi Nutrient Management Boards (NMB), and play a central role in delivering actions identified through the Nutrient Management Plans prepared by the boards. These actions are underpinned by legislation and supported by the Welsh Government.

The Nutrient Management Plans (NMP) for the riverine Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) affected by nutrient guidance in Carmarthenshire were adopted in March 2025. The NMPs and the associated action plan serve to:

- Facilitate the removal of phosphorus to support the delivery of new development.
- Act as a framework to monitor the situation regarding other nutrient pressures.
- Offer holistic opportunities to consider the effects of flooding and other environmental factors.

Actions identified in the NMPs to limit the effects of flooding and other environmental threats include:

- Promoting natural flood management: tackle the impacts arising from peak flow events to not only reduce nutrient transmission into the rivers but reduce the risk of flooding downstream through better regulated flows.
- Opportunities for riparian buffers and other nature-based solutions, including natural flood management, to slow the flow and improve water quality more generally.
- Design interventions to consider factors such as public safety, wildlife habitat, and floodplain management where they facilitate development and/or contribute to restoration of the riverine SAC to favourable condition status.

## **Green and Blue Infrastructure**

We continue to use Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) as a strategic tool to help mitigate environmental threats. This includes flooding which directly impact our residents, local businesses, and service users. In this respect, Carmarthenshire has developed a draft GBI Strategy and Supplementary Planning Guidance, and toolkits to support implementation of the principles and content of the revised LDP.

Carmarthenshire's Draft GBI Strategy sets out a county-wide approach to enhancing and conserving the local GBI network, improving water management, supporting climate resilience, and addressing a range of other environmental and placemaking priorities. The strategy prioritises the use of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) such as sustainable drainage systems (SUDS), habitat restoration, and tree planting – all of which contribute to reducing flood risk, improving air and water quality, and buffering the impacts of extreme weather.

## **Flood Risk Management**

Effective flood risk management is a cornerstone of our efforts to safeguard our residents, businesses, and service users from environmental threats. By continuously improving existing practices and exploring innovative solutions, we can better mitigate the impacts of flooding and ensure resilient communities and our placemaking goals.

We employ a comprehensive approach to flood risk management and are seeking to develop our team accordingly. We have developed a new local strategy that sets out how we will seek to manage flood risk and deliver local and national objectives. We are also developing flood risk plans – operational documents that detail the actions we will take in our highest risk communities to manage flood risk. In the recent year, we have developed our skills and resources with regards to capital works and now have a significant capital works programme. Through Welsh Government grant awards, we have been able to advance our knowledge of flood risk and implement structural measures.

Non-structural measures complement these physical defences by focussing on policies and practices that reduce vulnerability. These include community awareness programs to educate residents on flood preparedness, and early warning systems that provide timely alerts about impending flood events.

In new developments, we are continually seeking ways to enhance their flood risk management strategies. The new planning policy document Technical Advice Note 15 (released in March 2025) is key in supporting this. Advances in technology offer promising avenues for innovation. For instance, the use of drones and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) allows for more precise mapping and analysis of flood-prone areas, enabling targeted interventions. Additionally, developing integration of real-time data from weather stations and river gauges into predictive models can improve the accuracy of flood forecasts, allowing for more effective response planning.

### **Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)**

Another development is the adoption of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS). These systems mimic natural processes to manage surface water runoff, reducing the burden on traditional drainage infrastructure. Features such as green roofs, permeable pavements, and rain gardens not only mitigate flood risks but also enhance urban biodiversity and improve water quality.

Collaboration and knowledge sharing are also vital for advancing flood risk management. By partnering with academic institutions, private sector experts, and other risk management authorities, we can leverage diverse expertise and resources. Such partnerships can lead to the development of innovative solutions that are both effective and sustainable.

### **Flood Schemes**

We have continued developing our flood risk management capital works programme through 2024/25, building on the successes of previous years. This year, our programme comprised of 21 schemes, aimed at managing the flood risk at 740 homes and businesses in Carmarthenshire. We have completed schemes in Ammanford, Newcastle Emlyn, Kidwelly, Llandovery, and have property level protection schemes ready to go early in 2025 in Llanybydder, Llandysul, and Llangennech. We have also secured £2.1 million in flood risk management grant funding for 2025/26.



## Air Quality

Significant progress has been made in raising awareness and improving air quality across Carmarthenshire:

- **Educational Outreach:** Officers delivered informative talks to primary schools, highlighting the health impacts of air pollution and encouraging behaviour change.
- **Real-Time Monitoring:** Air quality monitors were installed outside eight schools, enabling over 2,000 pupils to access live data and undertake local environmental projects.
- **Active Travel Promotion:** In partnership with the Road Safety Team, approximately 2,500 pupils used the WoW Travel Tracker, recording over 130,000 active journeys in the 2024/25 academic year.
- **Interactive Learning:** The “Abbie Ayre and the Shed of Science” show reached 790 Year 5 pupils across over 20 schools, using performance to explore air quality issues and promote sustainable travel.



## Is anyone better off?

The Council's progress on decarbonisation and nature recovery is delivering measurable benefits for wellbeing. Over half of council homes now achieve Band C energy ratings, providing warmer, healthier homes and reducing fuel bills for thousands of tenants. Flood schemes completed this year have strengthened resilience for homes and businesses, protecting communities from disruption and loss. Biodiversity strategies and nature-based solutions are improving habitats, supporting pollinators, and enhancing access to green and blue spaces. These actions contribute to improved physical wellbeing, reduced anxiety about climate risks, and stronger, more resilient communities, alongside potential financial savings from energy efficiency and flood risk reduction.

We remain committed to becoming a net zero authority under our Net Zero Carbon Plan, actively mitigating climate impacts and promoting a sustainable future. Securing grant funding has enhanced our ability to deliver these measures, ensuring better value for money and maximising investment in climate resilience.

The Flood Defence and Coastal Protection Unit has worked extensively with communities to build resilience and awareness of climate adaptation. Initiatives include workshops and training on flood preparedness and property-level protection, supported by industry specialists such as Flood Mary (Mary Donohue). Internal collaboration has strengthened emergency response processes through weekly adverse weather meetings and regular drills to test and refine plans, ensuring readiness for real-life scenarios.

While progress is strong, there is still more we must do to meet the scale of the climate and nature emergencies. Flood risk continues to rise, and with over 18,000 homes and businesses now at risk, accelerating both structural and natural flood management interventions remains essential. Despite significant work, many residents remain unaware of the actions underway, highlighting the need for clearer, more visible communication and engagement. Continued investment in decarbonising transport, expanding EV infrastructure, and improving energy efficiency in remaining homes will be critical to reaching net zero by 2030. We also need to further strengthen ecosystem restoration, expand nature-based solutions, and ensure that new developments fully embed resilience and biodiversity gains. By enhancing collaboration, improving public awareness, and scaling up proven interventions, we can go further and faster to secure a healthier, greener, and more climate-resilient Carmarthenshire.

## In Summary

- The Welsh language is a defining feature of Carmarthenshire's identity as a place. Our Welsh speaking communities are resilient. However, there has been a significant decline in the number of speakers across the County. These results have further increased the importance of promoting and normalising the use of the Welsh language.
- As Carmarthenshire experienced the highest percentage loss of Welsh speakers in all of Wales for the second decade running, firm and confident action, as outlined in the 'Carmarthenshire Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023-2028', must be taken to stop this declining trend.

## How are we doing?

- The Census data for 2021 indicates that Carmarthenshire is home to 72,838 Welsh speakers, 39.9% of the population.

<b>Total Welsh Speakers</b>  <b>72,838 (39.9%)</b> <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Highest number in Wales</b> <b>4<sup>th</sup> highest % position in Wales</b> (2011 Census – 78,048 - 43.9%)	<b>Population aged 3 -15 that can speak Welsh</b>  <b>15,004 (55.1%)</b> (2011 Census - 15,514 - 57.7%)
	<b>Population aged 16-64 that can speak Welsh</b>  <b>39,595 (36.0%)</b> (2011 Census - 43,904 - 39%)
	<b>Population aged 65+ that can speak Welsh</b>  <b>18,243 (40.1%)</b> (2011 Census - 18,630 - 48.8%)

- Our 2024 residents survey received just over 3,500 respondents, with most agreeing that it is important to promote and protect the Welsh language.
- 179 members of staff attended various levels of Welsh Learning courses between September 2023 and June 2024 (Academic Year), a reduction on the previous year (242).



## Outcome: Increase in the number of Welsh speakers.

The Welsh Language Strategic Forum is led by the Council and includes representation from the County's language promotion organisations and public bodies with statutory responsibilities. The Forum has continued developing a programme of promoting the Welsh language in Carmarthenshire and has contributed extensively to co-planning for the implementation of the Promotion Strategy Action Plan in accordance with the Promotion Standard.

Over the course of the year, the Forum has been leading on the preparation of action plans which support the overall vision of the Strategy ***“to make Welsh the main language of the County. Our aim is to restore Welsh to a language spoken and used by the majority of our inhabitants consistently, and in all aspects of life.”***

We have developed action plans to support making Welsh the norm in areas like encouraging use with pre-school age children, increasing the proportion of families who successfully transmit the language at home and increasing the number of residents who learn Welsh.

As a Council, we are fully committed to supporting our staff to learn Welsh, and the work of the Learning and Development Advisor has been key to accessing provision from the National Centre for Learning Welsh. During the year, there has been an opportunity to collaborate with the Centre on a range of opportunities for staff. The feedback from those opportunities has been very positive, with staff noting a change in the use of Cymraeg in the workplace in elements such as holding meetings with colleagues, taking minutes, and carrying out assessments.

## Outcome: Increased confidence and use of Welsh as a thriving language.

### Theatrau Sir Gâr

Theatrau Sir Gâr have supported local Welsh artists and creators in developing new theatre ideas and activities through dedicated research and development opportunities. Highlights include:

- A children's theatre piece inspired by the Mabinogion: exploring script, music, and multilingual storytelling using Welsh, British Sign Language, and English.
- A powerful new work by a Carmarthenshire-based artist drawing on lived experience of OCD.
- Support for a Welsh theatre company to adapt and scale down a production about former rugby coach Carwyn for rural touring.
- Upcoming support for a Welsh-language youth opera inspired by the poetry of Taliesin.

## Libraries – Stars on the Shelves Project

In January 2025, Carmarthenshire Libraries proudly took part in the Stars on the Shelves initiative – an all-Wales programme designed to inspire young readers and writers through direct engagement with celebrated Welsh authors. This project offered a unique opportunity to bring literature to life for local schoolchildren through interactive workshops and storytelling sessions.

Over the course of the project, eight events were held across Ammanford, Llanelli, and Carmarthen libraries, welcoming approximately 210 pupils from eight school classes. Authors including Dr. Ffion Jones, Robin Bennett, Sion Owen Thomas, and Eloise Williams led sessions that explored storytelling, character development, and the writing process. Children had the chance to ask questions, participate in creative writing activities, and have their books signed – creating lasting memories.



## Is anyone better off?

### Council wins 'Employer of the Year' and 'Workplace Learner of the Year' for Welsh Language excellence

Carmarthenshire County Council has been awarded 'Employer of the Year' by Learn Welsh Ceredigion-Powys-Carmarthenshire, from Aberystwyth University. Recognising its commitment to supporting staff to learn and use Welsh in the workplace.

Adding to the celebration, David Lewis, Operational Delivery Assistant within the Place, Infrastructure, and Economic Development department, has been named 'Workplace Learner of the Year.'

David has made huge strides on his Welsh learning journey, and he describes the opportunity to learn the language through work as "something special." He credits the support from the Council, as well as the inspiration and enthusiasm of his tutors, for motivating him to continue developing his skills and confidence.

"I've definitely taken big steps forward in my Welsh learning journey," said David. "I'm really enjoying reading Welsh magazines and books for the first time, and I'm looking forward to taking the next level course."

In addition to classroom learning, the Council and Learn Welsh CPC has developed a wider Welsh language programme that promotes a positive linguistic culture across the organisation. These awards reflect the Council's commitment to nurturing a bilingual workforce and creating a supportive environment where the Welsh language can flourish, where staff can attend Welsh courses during working hours, and courses are funded corporately.



We continue to take active steps to promote and normalise the use of Welsh in Carmarthenshire. This includes working with the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office on a pilot project to strengthen internal use of Welsh, embedding a new Welsh language apprenticeship post (Level 4), and re-establishing the Carmarthenshire Welsh in Education Forum and the County Welsh Language Forum to monitor progress on the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. We will also review our Welsh Language Skills Strategy and continue to support staff and departments to meet Welsh Language Standards, ensuring residents can access services in their preferred language.

## In Summary

- Total crime in Carmarthenshire increased during 2024/25 – a trend consistent with other Local Authorities within the Dyfed-Powys Force Area. However, the rate of reported crimes per 1,000 population remains comparably low. Effective partnership working will support in sustaining these low rates.
- The residents survey for 2024 indicated that most respondents like living in Carmarthenshire.
- Most people agreed that they feel safe in their community. However, there was some disparity within local community areas, for example Llanelli exhibited an overall negative score.

## How are we doing?

Residents Survey Statement	Average Index Score (AIS)			Comment
	2022	2023	2024	
<i>I like living in Carmarthenshire</i>	1.32	1.16	1.16	Scores were highest for the Tywi and Teifi community areas and lowest in Llanelli. Interestingly, scores were lowest amongst the younger age group.
<i>I feel that I can live the life I want to live without the fear of judgment or prejudice</i>	0.71	0.49	0.54	The score has increased slightly from the previous year. Agreement to this statement was lower amongst members of the LGBTQ+ community and respondents who have disabilities. It is positive for Carmarthenshire as a place and its people that overall residents feel that they can be themselves. This is an integral part of feeling a sense of belonging and is one of the main contributors to overall happiness.
<i>I feel safe in my community</i>	0.78	0.55	0.61	Carmarthenshire has one of the lowest crime rates in all of Wales. A positive score to this statement supports this, with 67% of respondents agreeing that they feel safe in their communities. However, there is disparity within local community areas, with Llanelli exhibiting a comparably lower score than other areas. Whilst that is the case, the score has improved on the previous year suggesting that sentiments have improved since the conclusion of the emotive events at the Stradey Park Hotel.

- 99.22% of food establishments in Carmarthenshire met food hygiene standards during 2024/25.
- All 173 (100%) Trading Standards businesses that were due a programmed inspection during 2024/25 were completed. This is much improved on the 2023/24 performance of 49%.
- During 2024/25, 18 defendants were convicted of Animal Health and Trading Standards related offences, with 141 months of imprisonment and 500 hours of community service handed down. Furthermore, £61,310 in costs were awarded to the authority and £127,600 in compensation and redress for victims of crime.

## Outcome: Sustain low crime rates whilst continuing effective partnership working to address increasing rates evident in some areas of the county.

### Community Cohesion Team

The Mid and South West Wales Community Cohesion Team is one of eight regional teams funded by Welsh Government. It continues to deliver a consistent and collaborative approach to community cohesion across Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, and Powys. The team actively supported national and regional campaigns to raise awareness and promote inclusion:

- **Refugee Week (June 2024):** Shared key messages across social media platforms to highlight refugee experiences and promote understanding.
- **Hate Crime Awareness Week (October 2024):** Coordinated training sessions delivered by the Wales Hate Support Centre and hosted a high-profile engagement event at Parc Y Scarlets to raise awareness and encourage reporting.
- **Holocaust Memorial Day (January 2025):** Commemorated through social media campaigns and symbolic lighting of public buildings in purple.
- **LGBT History Month (February 2025):** Promoted inclusion and visibility through shared digital content and community engagement.

The team delivered and facilitated a range of training opportunities to strengthen local capacity:

- “Cohesion in our Communities” session showcased best practices from three small grant-funded projects.
- Delivered targeted training for local authority staff on:
  - Online hate and third sector safety,
  - Hate crime awareness for managers,
  - Inclusive communication through “The Power of Language,”
  - Collaborated with Victim Support to develop campaigns and training on hate crime awareness and reporting.

Three impactful projects were funded through the Mid and South West Wales Community Cohesion Team Regional Small Grants Scheme:

CETMA's '**INCLUDE: Say No to Hate**' campaign delivered impactful events across Llanelli, Carmarthen, and Fishguard, including coffee mornings and a strong social media presence. The initiative engaged 240 attendees, 10 partner organisations, and secured 11 “Safe from Hate” commitments. With over 67,500 social media views, the campaign significantly raised awareness of hate crime, strengthened local partnerships, and laid the groundwork for future expansion.

The Llanelli Unites initiative hosted three inclusive events featuring spoken word, music, and cultural performances. It exceeded targets by attracting 88 attendees, and engaged with diverse partners such as People Speak Up and Llanelli Queer Collective. Through multilingual promotion and accessible venues, the events successfully reached underrepresented groups. Survey feedback highlighted a positive impact on perceptions of community cohesion and identified opportunities for deeper engagement in future events on perceptions of cohesion.

St Clears Town Council delivered a week-long **Anti-graffiti Arts Project** that engaged schools, youth groups, and older residents to address hate-related graffiti through creative expression. The project exceeded its participation target with 75 attendees. The project integrated equality themes into school curricula, and led to a visible reduction in graffiti, and increased interest in public art.

### **Transforming Tyisha Project**

The Tyisha ward has been identified as one of the more significantly deprived wards within Carmarthenshire and has an important geographical position between the town centre of Llanelli and the new Pentre Awel development. A project team has been created to transform the area with key objectives on:

- Reducing crime and antisocial behaviour,
- Improving health and well-being,
- Increasing employment and educational opportunities,
- Improving the environment,
- Delivering improvements across housing stock and developing key strategic sites for new housing and community facilities.

The Transforming Tyisha project is an important part of a suite of strategic interventions currently being undertaken by the Council involving investment, development, engagement, and enforcement measures delivered through a holistic and sustainable approach. The main ethos of the project is to transform the area into a vibrant, cohesive, and resilient community that will adapt to the changes needed. This will be completed through significant behavioural change, forming one of the toughest challenges for the project. This change is a long process delivered through educational programmes, service changes, and raising awareness. Following this change, the community should be able to independently target the key issues in a sustainable manner, alongside Council interventions.

Community engagement is a key element to making any placemaking project successful. We need to ensure that we engage with the community every step of the journey. This will ensure that we develop community cohesion, resilience, and longevity for the community once the project comes to an end.

## Clos Sant Paul – Transforming Tyisha

As part of the Transforming Tyisha programme, a “Planning for Real” exercise revealed that residents of Clos Sant Paul felt unsafe due to high levels of crime and antisocial behaviour. Community members frequently reported individuals loitering under the influence of alcohol and substances. Six residents expressed that they were unable to use their front gardens and were considering relocating via the social housing register.

In response, a partnership with Dyfed Powys Police led to an Environmental Visual Audit to identify practical solutions, such as:

- Installation of low-level fencing to deter loitering,
- Introduction of Neighbourhood Watch schemes,
- Deployment of ring doorbells and additional CCTV,
- A joint crime action plan with regular patrols,
- Support from local agencies to address substance misuse.

A robust community engagement plan was also implemented to build cohesion, confidence, and resilience. These efforts aimed to empower residents to take ownership of local issues and sustain improvements beyond the life of the project.

Post-intervention surveys showed 90% resident satisfaction, with comments such as “Made the area safe and looks better” and “A safe area for my children to live and play”.

Overall, crime in the Tyisha ward has reduced by 34%, demonstrating the effectiveness of a holistic, community-led approach to regeneration.

## How can we do better?

We will work closely with Dyfed Powys Police and other partners to deliver an updated joint action plan to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour across Carmarthenshire, including surveillance operations, enforcement measures, and awareness campaigns. We will complete the final year of the three-year Community Cohesion Plan, support the Safer Communities Partnership, and review safer routes and traffic calming measures in towns and villages. In collaboration with the Public Services Board (PSB), we will also enhance engagement and recruitment practices to improve representation from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities, providing clear guidance and support through our website and community networks.

## In Summary

During the year, Leisure and Tourism in Carmarthenshire achieved several notable milestones. Pembrey Country Park distinguished itself as the only site in Wales to hold both Blue Flag and Green Flag accreditations, underscoring its excellence in coastal and parkland management. Cefn Sidan Beach, within the park, retained its Blue Flag status, reflecting high standards in water quality, environmental stewardship, safety, and visitor facilities. The park also earned the title of Best Campsite at the South West Wales Tourism Awards and represented the region at the National Wales Tourism Awards in March 2025. It also hosted the high-profile 'Battle of the Beach' event, drawing over 700 competitors from across Europe.

The 14-bed Caban accommodation and restaurant continued to perform strongly, maintaining near-perfect customer reviews and a 4-star Visit Wales rating.

Meanwhile, CofGâr, the County Council's Museums and Arts Service, received the Best Attraction award for the Museum of Land Speed in Pendine. This museum is known for its sustainable design and engaging exhibits, and has attracted global visitors, and hosted a diverse range of events, including corporate functions, children's activities, and weddings, all set against the scenic backdrop of Pendine's seven-mile sands.

## How are we doing?

- Overnight and day visitors contribute £683m to the local economy supporting 6,649 full time jobs.
- There were almost 750,000 visits (in person and online) to our libraries during 2024/25. This is a 13% improvement on the previous year of 660,000. This increase was achieved through various events in our libraries such as Makerspace events, Saturday Clubs, Digital Training Sessions, Crochet and Sewing Clubs, as well as World Book Day visits and Christmas Craft Fayres. Our digital visits continue to remain high with customers benefitting from our range of digital eBooks, audiobooks, newspapers, magazines, and training apps.
- The number of visits to our leisure centres during 2024/25 are at an all-time high and just below two million (1,941,547), which equates to just over 10,000 visits per 1,000 population. Growth in fitness sales, especially in rural settings, and improvements in group sessions and data capture have all helped improve attendances.



## Outcome: People feel empowered to lead active and healthy lives through access to fit for purpose services and provision.

### Lifting Through Change

The project was launched in Whitland to support women who are peri-menopausal or menopausal. The initiative combined strength training sessions delivered by Actif with expert-led information from health board teams. The programme aimed to reduce osteoporosis risk in older women whilst increasing awareness of the signs, symptoms, and challenges associated with menopause. Participants received guidance on nutrition, pelvic health, and psychological well-being. The 10-week pilot demonstrated significant benefits, including increased confidence to engage in physical activity, improved knowledge, and enhanced well-being scores. Based on its success, plans are underway to secure additional funding to expand the project and develop a digital resource to reach a wider audience.

### Actif Sport and Leisure

Investments into the facility portfolio have included the new Athletics Facilities and 3G pitch at Amman Valley Leisure Centre, changing facilities at Penrhos 3G, Health Suite Replacement at Carmarthen Leisure Centre, and smaller scale investment into refurbishments and equipment provisions at various leisure centres. Programmes have continued to evolve and develop in conjunction with listening to customer demands and utilising targeted grant funding to ensure a robust response. This has been fruitful, demonstrated by growth in attendance and associated improvements in income.

### Pembrey Country Park

Pembrey Country Park is now the only site in Wales to hold both Blue Flag and Green Flag accreditations, highlighting its excellence in both coastal and parkland management. Cefn Sidan Beach, located within the park, has once again earned the prestigious Blue Flag award. This internationally recognised accolade, administered by Keep Wales Tidy on behalf of the Foundation for Environmental Education, reflects the beach's outstanding water quality, environmental management, safety standards and visitor amenities.

Pembrey Country Park was named Best Campsite at the South West Wales Tourism Awards, recognising its outstanding facilities, customer service, and commitment to sustainability. The park went on to represent the region at the National Wales Tourism Awards in March 2025. The park hosted the flagship 'Battle of the Beach', which attracted over 700 competitors from across Europe to Carmarthenshire.



## Caban Accommodation

Our 14-bed Caban accommodation and restaurant continues to thrive, with customer reviews averaging close to 5 stars and the site proudly holding a 4-star Visit Wales rating.

## CofGâr

CofGâr, the County Council's Museums and Arts Service, secured the award for Best Attraction for its renowned Museum of Land Speed in Pendine. The site celebrates the history of land speed records on the famous sands and attracts visitors from all over the world. This fun, hands on museum is a model of sustainable design that hosts special exhibits alongside interactive displays. Its purpose-built function space has welcomed a variety of events this year, from corporate meetings and children's activities to a beautiful wedding ceremony, all whilst offering spectacular views of Pendine's seven-mile sands.

## Is anyone better off?

### Mindful Movement (with CYCA)

Two eight-week Mindful Movement courses were delivered in partnership with CYCA (Connecting Youth, Children, and Adults) underpinned by their Resilience Model. The programme supported participants through journaling, stress awareness, and gentle exercise, empowering individuals to reflect, set goals, and improve their mental and physical well-being. The initiative had a transformative effect on participants, with many reporting reduced anxiety, improved sleep, and a renewed sense of purpose.

One participant shared, “The sessions have really helped my anxiety through yoga, discussion, and journalling. I will definitely carry on these techniques.”

Another described a life-changing experience: “I now smile more; I socialise and am happier in life – it’s been a big turning point for me.”

Participants also gained motivation to make positive lifestyle changes. One individual was inspired to start a business and write a book, saying, “I feel so happy, and I am loving life.”

Others reported improved family relationships and emotional resilience: “I now shout less at the children... my anxiety has reduced, and I feel I can cope with more in life.”

The programme supported individual growth but also fostered a sense of community and empowerment, equipping participants with lifelong tools to manage stress and maintain well-being.

We will invest in new and improved leisure and tourism facilities, including the opening of Pentre Awel Zone 1 in Llanelli as part of a flagship health and well-being hub. We will continue to participate in the Celtic Routes Project to promote Carmarthenshire as a tourist destination and complete a business feasibility study to support the ambition to reopen Kidwelly Industrial Museum as a modern community resource. We will also roll out Actif Anywhere for schools, provide Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time and after-school support, and establish a network for early years partners to reinforce the importance of being active from a young age.

## In Summary

- The current Waste Collection Strategy continues to provide an increase in reuse and recycling tonnage performance, surpassing the National Target Statutory target of 70%.
- The average municipal waste per person not recycled has reduced.
- The percentage of waste sent to landfill has reduced.
- The Council has increased the kerbside glass collection service to 99% of residents.
- Ongoing and enhanced awareness raising and educational support through a comprehensive community outreach plan to promote recycling and sustainability.
- Further development and delivery of our Eto reuse and Circular Economy projects. The education programme and shop provision promote resource efficiency, recovery, repair, and a circular economy to various social groups, communities, and residents.
- The Council has improved the average number of days taken to clear fly-tipping incidents, which continues to fall.

## How are we doing?

- Our recycling rate continued to improve to 71.3% in 2024/25, exceeding the National Recycling Target of 70% by the end of March 2025. The most recent all-Wales data from 2023/24 shows a national recycling rate of 66.6% and places Carmarthenshire with the sixth highest in Wales. Comparative data for 2024/25 will not be available until January 2026.
- The percentage of waste sent to landfill reduced further to 1.31% but has not met the National target of Zero Waste to landfill by 2025 (the Welsh Government's requirement is that 'Landfill will be eliminated as far as possible, with the view that the Local Authority is striving towards +70% reuse and recycling targets.')
- Our 2024 residents survey received just over 3,500 respondents. Although the majority tend to agree that their local environment is pleasant and well looked after, there is a high proportion which disagree. The overall score of 0.03 has worsened very slightly on the previous year's result of 0.04. Some comments highlighted issues in relation to street cleansing, waste, and litter, which are likely to be contributory factors.
- The average municipal waste per person not recycled has remained static at 122Kg at the end of 2024/25, compared to 121Kg in 2023/24. National comparative data shows Carmarthenshire's rate is better than the all-Wales figure, and second of all counties.
- Our bi-monthly Local Environmental Audit and Management System (LEAMS) surveys conducted during 2024/25 shows that there is more litter found in the streets of Carmarthenshire, with smoking related and fast-food litter being the most predominant. In addition, black and blue bags discarded in our streets have also influenced the levels of litter found, particularly in the Llanelli area. We have commenced an anti-litter communication plan to support the Council's strategy in tackling this issue. Once complete, a local action plan will be developed and include engagement with key businesses, communicate a clear anti-litter message, set out how we will work with the local community and volunteer groups to reduce litter, and identify enforcement actions for those that continue to litter.
- The average number of days taken to clear fly tipping incidents has improved to 2.2 days during 2024/25 with just under 1,700 reported incidents cleared.

## Outcome: On track to meet the national recycling targets.

### Recycling

- Our initial recycling figure for 2024/25 is awaiting verification by Natural Resources Wales but indicated to be 71.3%. This exceeds the statutory national target of 70% for 2025. This success is due to a new kerbside collection system with features like weekly collections for dry mixed recycling and food waste, and separate collections for glass and 3 weekly black bags. This system aligns with the Council's vision for implementing a modern waste service that is compliant with Welsh Government's Blueprint collection methodology.
- Kerbside glass collection was initially implemented to 95% of households during the waste service change in January 2023. Further households have been included during 2024/25, with 99% of households now receiving a glass bottle and jars kerbside collection service.
- To support households without kerbside collection and to supplement collections exceeding the container provision, we have 25 community bring sites positioned at strategic locations around the county.
- A comprehensive community engagement programme was put in place during 2024/25 to promote recycling and achieve our aspirations of increased recycling capture:
  - Delivering 22 presentations to community groups and stakeholders.
  - Supported 10 community led events to promote recycling, reuse, and sustainability.
  - Engaged directly with 10,037 households through face-to-face engagement via a community recycling advisor to support kerbside recycling compliance.
  - We completed 950 reactive monitoring of kerbside set out rates to establish further recycling support requirements to certain households.
- We have continued to collaborate with relevant organisations such as Wrap Cymru, Natural Resources Wales, and CWM Environmental to ensure all businesses and Council buildings were prepared for the new Workplace Recycling Regulations which came into effect in April 2024. This involved offering direct support and advice to schools, businesses, and third sector organisations to develop and share best practices to achieve effective recycling systems across the commercial sector and align with broader national waste management goals. Officers attended trade and tourism events within the County to support and answer any questions on the new legislation. Commercial waste recycling exceeded 80% by the end of the financial year.

## Circular Economy

The Council is promoting a Circular Economy through several initiatives:

- Canolfan Eto, Nantycaws:
  - A reuse workshop and shop that receives donated items from our recycling centres to repair and upcycle them for resale.
  - Education centre.
  - Paint reuse facility where unused paint is recycled/re-blended for resale.
- The Education and Events Coordinator for Eto Education Centre and School/Community Outreach has attended 74 schools to undertake talks and presentations, issued 190 educational learning packs on sustainability and circular economy, and welcomed 24 schools to the facility in Nantycaws.
- A Circular Economy Capacity Building event was held at Sero in February 2025. There were four talks with Q&A sessions on local circular economy project development, sharing best practice, and lessons learned. The goal was to equip community members with further information and knowledge to progress in their circular economy projects and endeavours.
- Cabinet Member circular economy awareness raising training was held in March 2025. This explained the circular economy concept, its legislative relevance, its relationship with the WBFGA, and how we as a Council are satisfying goals with our circular economy work.
- Supported Ynni Sir Gar with their Library of Things project 'Pethau Pawb'. Funded by the Welsh Government Circular Economy fund, we established and promoted a new "Library of Things" in Llandovery to contribute to the delivery of the Programme for Government commitment to support 80 repair and reuse hubs in town centres.

Is anyone better off?

### Circular Economy Benefitting Communities

We have supported community projects with seedcorn funding to set up new circular economy projects within local communities.

### Cadernid, Castell Newydd Emlyn Resilience

Creation of a CE hub within the town centre of Newcastle Emlyn to house a Library of Things, a community fridge and freezer, and a repair café.



## **CETMA, Kidwelly**

Expand their kitchen equipment library to include other non-kitchen equipment e.g. tools including PAT testing and support a 2nd generation online shop.

## **Llanybydder Old School**

Set up a Repair Café in Llanybydder Old School building, created a social space for residents' well-being, and ran educational workshops to teach people how to do basic plumbing, DIY, knitting, crocheting, cooking, weaving, wool spinning, upcycling, gardening, and growing food.



## **Permaculture Tywi Fabric Upcycling Group**

Repurpose waste yarns and fabrics into new products for community and charity benefit.

## **How can we do better?**

We aim to maintain or exceed the Welsh Government statutory recycling target of 70% in 2025/26. We will begin the next phase of our waste service changes by adopting the Welsh Government blueprint for kerbside sorting and expanding the range of recyclable materials collected from 2026 onwards. We will also work closely with communities to raise awareness, tackle contamination in the blue bag recycling stream, and provide clear information and support to ensure waste is disposed of correctly.



## In Summary

The Council prioritises maintenance of the highway network, especially during Winter, to ensure uninterrupted access to essential services. However, the road surface condition deteriorated in 2024/25, with a significant increase in reported defects. We have continued to work through major strategic challenges such as the national 20mph campaign, development of regional transport planning, and the trajectory towards net zero carbon aspirations.

We have been proactive in delivering change and have successfully obtained grant funding to support service delivery. However, we face challenges with reducing capital and revenue budgets, rising public expectation, supply chain pressures, and deteriorating asset condition. This has led to a difficult operating environment for Highway and Transportation services.

We have worked with Welsh Government (WG) to secure funding via the Local Government Borrowing Initiative (LGBI) to assist in delivering our contribution towards ensuring the resilience of our network. This will be delivered in line with our Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP), which prioritises investment that safeguards strategic connectivity.

## How are we doing?

### Road Condition Survey – Percentage in Poor Condition



- Compared to the 2022/23 survey, there has been no change in the percentage of our Class A roads considered in 'Poor Condition', while there are slightly more of our Class B roads, and slightly less of our Class C roads.
- Our 2024 residents survey received just over 3,500 respondents. In the question, 'I am able to access the services that you need', whilst many responded 'neither' (29%), slightly more respondents disagreed (35%) than agreed (33%). The score has worsened slightly on the previous year, suggesting that sentiments have not returned to those in 2022, which were positive.
- In the statement 'there are good transportation links around me', the residents survey score declined from -0.45 to -0.59.

## Outcome: Look to improve access to services through enhanced transportation networks and infrastructure.

We are actively investing in enhancing public transportation and infrastructure across the county.

### Connecting Communities

#### Tywi Valley Path

£16.7m UK Government Levelling UP funds are being utilised to deliver this ambitious project that connects rural communities within the Tywi Valley. The first four-mile section between Abergwili and Nantgaredig opened in April 2025, providing a valuable safe, sustainable, and affordable means of connecting communities.



#### Addressing Rural Transport Needs

##### Bws Bach y Wlad Bus Service

We have developed an initiative to bridge the gap in public transport accessibility for residents in North Carmarthenshire's rural areas. It directly responds to the discontinued Bwcabus service, ensuring residents can connect to economic opportunities and fostering regional growth and development.

### Enhancing Road Infrastructure

#### A484 Sandy Road Improvements (Phase 1)

This completed project has yielded several benefits for Llanelli. The redesigned Sandy Road roundabout and its approaches promote a shift towards active travel options like cycling and walking. This improves air quality, reduces traffic congestion, and improves public transport journey reliability. In doing so, this improves accessibility and the economic vitality of Llanelli town centre. The second phase of the project has secured funding from the WG Transport Fund and will be delivered in the Summer of 2025. This will see improvements made to the Sandy Road/Maesycoed junction to improve traffic flows, reduce congestion, and provide a safer environment for all road users.

## **A, B, and C Road Maintenance**

We continue to prioritise funding across the road network in a risk-based manner, with priority given to the busier sections of road. In 2024/25, we invested £2million in highway surfacing. Improvements in the road condition indicator are shown on C class roads, with A roads remaining steady, and a slight decline in class B road conditions. The Council acknowledges the need for further funding to address the condition of unclassified and rural roads. Through the Welsh Government Resilient Roads fund, we secured £500,000 of funding to carry out major repair works across the County. This funding supported us on several significant emergencies, including three collapsed road embankments, two failed retaining walls, and two collapsed culverts.

## **Maintenance**

We prioritise maintaining the highway network throughout the year to ensure residents have uninterrupted access to essential services and vulnerable residents receive care and support. Strategic routes are treated with salt as part of the Winter Service Plan to maintain the flow of vital services and supplies.

Road surface condition continued to deteriorate in 2024/25 particularly on lower class roads. The number of customers reporting surface defects and potholes (2,567) decreased by 21% compared to 2023/24, but this is still an 88% increase compared to 2022/23 figures. Reductions in preventative maintenance programmes leave our roads vulnerable to rapid deterioration, increasingly as weather extremes become more frequent.

## **Safety**

Each year, the Road Safety Team carry out a programme to identify locations where personal injury collisions are a cause for concern, then devise engineering measures to reduce the risk of collisions occurring. This is carried out using collision data from Dyfed-Powys Police, who are responsible for collecting all personal injury road traffic collision data. This provides the means of making sure that the direction and focus is current and remains relevant. Between 2015 and 2023, Carmarthenshire saw a 25% reduction in personal injury collisions. Deaths and injuries from road traffic collisions impose a significant economic, environmental, health, and social burden on society. The reduction of collisions and casualties supports a key corporate objective for healthier, safer, and more prosperous communities.

## Empowering Rural Communities

We reaffirmed our commitment to the wellbeing and prosperity of rural residents by launching two initiatives: Bws Bach y Wlad and Hwb Bach y Wlad. These represented significant steps in ensuring that residents of North Carmarthenshire have access to vital resources and support, regardless of rural barriers.

Thanks to essential funding from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, the Bws Bach y Wlad offered a service five days a week as part of a nine-month pilot project. The initiative is designed to empower and enrich the lives of residents living in rural areas by addressing the challenges of isolation and limited access to essential services. Bws Bach y Wlad does this by providing easy access to vital support services, pursuit of educational and employment opportunities, and recreational activities. These opportunities also extend to the young people of rural Carmarthenshire, who benefit from discounted rates for travelling so that they may explore opportunities beyond their immediate vicinity.

Building on the success of this project, we have also introduced Hwb Bach y Wlad – a comprehensive support hub tailored to meet the diverse needs of rural residents. Individuals can now receive advice on council services, cost of living, waste and recycling, consumer and business affairs, housing issues, and referrals to partner organisations. It is an extension of our Hwb Customer Service, which has reached over 6,000 customers by visiting community halls, food banks, leisure centres, and farmer's marts.



**Cllr Edward Thomas, Carmarthenshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste, and Infrastructure Services, said:**

*"Carmarthenshire County Council remains dedicated to enhancing the lives of all residents, and these initiatives underscore our unwavering commitment to fostering thriving and inclusive communities in rural Carmarthenshire."*

*By providing essential support services and bridging the gap between remote areas and vital resources, we are empowering individuals to thrive and fostering inclusive communities in rural Carmarthenshire."*

We continue to invest in transport infrastructure to improve access to services and support economic growth, with a focus on sustainability and rural connectivity. Our plans include developing a Regional Transport Plan, progressing the South West Wales METRO, and investing in electric vehicle infrastructure supported by a forthcoming Fleet Transition Strategy. We will review the Highway Capital Investment Programme, pilot Transport Surgeries to improve public engagement, and develop a new Car Parking Strategy to align with our economic and sustainability goals.

# Well-being Objective 4

## Our Council:

### To further modernise and develop as a resilient and efficient Council

#### Overview of Progress

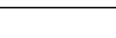
Over the past year, the Council has made substantial progress in modernising its operations and enhancing resilience and efficiency:

- The Transformation Programme has delivered significant cost savings, including over £200,000 from fleet reviews and £2.5 million through improved debt recovery.
- Hybrid working has been successfully embedded, with the sale of Parc Dewi Sant and the use of workspace management tools supporting property rationalisation.
- Technological investments have streamlined operations, with automation and robotics reducing manual workloads and saving over £61,000 through hybrid mail alone.
- In relation to People Management, a new Recruitment and Retention Strategy is in development, and the Council was recognised as 'Employer of the Year' for its support of Welsh language learning.
- Staff engagement remains strong, with improved survey scores indicating pride and advocacy for the Council as an employer.
- The first year of our Digital Strategy has delivered transformative change across the organisation. We've enhanced infrastructure, empowered our workforce, improved service delivery, and embedded cybersecurity at the core of our operations. With strong foundations in place, we are well-positioned to continue delivering smarter, safer, and more connected public services in the years ahead.
- We have also advanced its data-driven decision-making capabilities and invested in digital skills development.



## How are we doing?

We place significant emphasis on the importance of the views of our residents. The primary way of measuring progress against this objective is through our annual residents' survey. The results for 2024 are provided below with a comparator for the previous two years. These statements relate directly to the Council and our performance.

Statement	Overall AIS			Trend
	2022	2023	2024	
I can access Council services through my preferred language	1.40	1.37	1.37	
When I access Council services, I find the staff to be approachable and friendly	0.82	0.77	0.77	
I can easily access up to date information about Council services	0.50	0.46	0.41	
I find contacting the Council simple and easy	0.31	0.28	0.30	
The Council provides good quality services overall	0.27	0.17	0.07	
The Council lets people know how it's performing	-0.10	-0.12	-0.02	
The Council provides opportunities for me to participate in decision-making	-0.19	-0.19	-0.11	
The Council makes good use of the financial resources available to them	-0.33	-0.46	-0.54	
Investment is focused in the correct areas	-0.41	-0.57	-0.64	

Of the nine statements posed in relation to the Council and its performance, respondents agreed or strongly agreed with five (56%) of them. This is consistent with trends seen for the previous year.

Whilst this is the case, there has been improvement this year, with four statements seeing declines in scores, compared to eight statements last year. Two statements have remained the same and three show improved results.

- **Most people like living in Carmarthenshire.** This has been the highest scoring statement for the last three years.
- Responses were mixed regarding the degree that residents feel that the Council lets them know how it's performing. The largest proportion selected 'neither', which is consistent with trends seen last year.

- Views were mixed regarding ‘the Council provides opportunities for residents to participate in decision-making.’ **There is a desire among respondents for decision-making that is more responsive, transparent, and tailored to the needs of individual communities.**
- The Council’s communication process is mostly effective in allowing residents to access up-to-date information about our services, and **most agree that they find contacting the Council simple and easy.** However, there are some issues with direct contact processes such as occasions when residents utilise the main switchboard, email to connect with officers, or wish to speak directly with officers within individual departments. These findings are consistent with the previous year.
- **Overall, respondents believe that the Council does not make good use of the financial resources available to us and that investment is not focussed on the right areas.**
- **The cost-of-living crisis remains a significant challenge for residents and their families. Rising costs continue to place significant pressure on Carmarthenshire’s residents.**
- Whilst many respondents agree that their general health and well-being is good, access to fit for purpose Health and Social Care services remains a real concern and challenge for residents.
- **A lack of fit for purpose public transport options and good transportation links are a barrier for many.** Potholes and general road safety were highlighted as issues.
- **Waste services received the highest satisfaction levels with 59% of respondents expressing satisfaction.** However, comments were still received in relation to litter, fly tipping, and the general unkempt feel of some areas of the County. These comments are especially relevant to the town centres.
- Although the majority (46%) agree that their local environment is pleasant and well looked after, there is a high proportion which disagree.
- **Carmarthenshire has a relatively low crime rate in comparison to other counties in Wales, with 67% of respondents agreeing that they feel safe in their communities.**
- Whilst there has been a shift from overall strong agreement to agreement, it remains important to residents that local people are supported to buy homes locally. This translates to overall agreement from 75% of respondents.
- A significant proportion of respondents indicated ‘neither’ when asked whether they feel local people are well supported to take advantage of local opportunities.
- **Most respondents (63%) agree that it is important to promote and protect the Welsh language.** However, some residents expressed opposing views with sentiments relating to the amount of resource utilised on this priority when resources are depleting.
- Although the score has declined slightly year on year, it is still important to residents that consideration is given to supporting people’s mental health and well-being.
- The largest proportion of respondents (42%) indicated ‘neither’ when asked whether the climate emergency is being addressed locally. This is a consistent trend with the previous year.
- Except for those that answered ‘neither’ or ‘don’t know’, disagreement levels were higher (33%) than agreement levels (14%) for the degree to which businesses are supported within the local area.
- 21% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with employment support services.
- **Overall, there is agreement from respondents (44%) that local schools provide children and young people with a good education.**

## Outcome: To further modernise and develop the Council's ways of working.

### Transformation

Over the past year, our Transformation Programme has focused on accelerating its modernisation efforts to ensure the provision of high-quality, cost-effective services.

A key achievement has been the identification and implementation of cost savings through smarter financial management. For example, a review of our vehicle fleet has already realised over £200,000 in cost savings and is now being extended to other areas. Additionally, efforts in debt recovery have yielded £2,523,468 in additional revenue, highlighting the success of the Council's commercial approach to service delivery.

We have also made progress with regards to the rationalisation of Council assets, successfully releasing the Parc Dewi Sant site for sale and reallocating staff to other buildings. This step, along with the use of workspace management software, supports informed decision-making on property consolidation and allows for smarter working approaches.

Investments in technology have further modernised Council operations. Automation of paper-based processes has led to significant savings, with hybrid mail services alone delivering over £61,884 in cost reductions for the year. Moreover, the deployment of robotics technology (RPA) has optimised back-office functions, freeing staff to focus on more value-added tasks. Examples of RPA implementations include Create New Post, which has freed up HR staff time to support managers with more complex issues, and the Apply for School Essentials Grant (SEG) process. Implementing RPA for SEG has involved automating parental/guardian eligibility checks, which has not only freed up significant staff time in Education but has also given the added benefit that parents/guardians are informed that they are eligible within 48 hours of application, rather than in some cases, waiting for a week or more.

We have completed a successful pilot scheme within our Residential Care Services to reduce the use of the agency workforce in favour of using in-house resources. The aim of the pilot was to provide a more cost-effective service whilst also increasing residents' satisfaction through the consistency of having familiar CCC staff providing their care. This has realised a 79% reduction in hours that would have otherwise been fulfilled by agency provision.

## Outcome: Support the development of the Council as a modern, diverse, inclusive, and responsive organisation and be an 'Employer of Choice'.

### Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are seen as fundamental to the development of our future workforce. As a Council, we offer a range of opportunities for new starters, as well as current staff looking to upskill. Since 2022, 21 people on apprenticeship contracts completed their studies with 13 of those still employed. We also support placements in partnership with the Cyfle scheme to provide learners with the range of experiences they need to achieve their qualification. This has been an effective route for many of our staff. In addition, there are currently 83 members of staff who are undertaking apprenticeship qualifications to upskill – ranging from Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE) up to a degree.

A new Recruitment and Retention Strategy is currently under development, which will set out our objectives and describe how we will address our resourcing challenges. This aligns with our 'Workforce Strategy' and 'Transformation strategy', reflecting our corporate commitment to equalities and diversity, whilst ensuring safe recruitment practices are in place. It also aligns with our Cabinet vision statement, specifically:

- Work to position our recruitment competitively and work towards continuously improving recruitment levels across the organisation. Seeking to understand the steps needed to become the employer of choice in West Wales.
- Work to market Carmarthenshire County Council as an attractive employer for apprentices, school leavers and graduates. Focussing on reducing the migration of young people out of Carmarthenshire and from rural areas.
- To work with relevant groups to promote the council as an employer across all communities including within the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community.

To March 2025, 91 (1.08%) of Council employees are from minority ethnic communities compared to 78 (0.94%) at the end of March 2024.

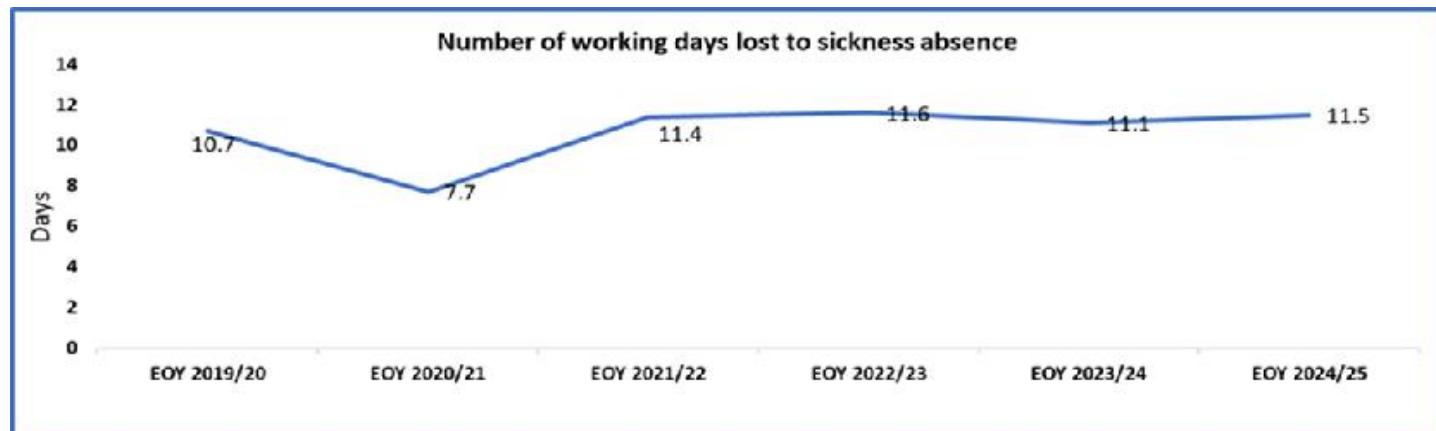
### Developing Welsh Language Skills

The Council was awarded 'Employer of the Year' by Learn Welsh Ceredigion-Powys-Carmarthenshire, from Aberystwyth University. This was in recognition of its commitment to supporting staff to learn and use Welsh in the workplace. This reflects the Council's commitment to nurturing a bilingual workforce and creating a supportive environment where the Welsh language can flourish. Staff can attend Welsh courses during working hours and courses are funded corporately.



## Attendance

There has been a slight increase in the average sickness absence of Council employees during 2024/25, increasing from 11.1 days to 11.5 days. This is well above the pre-pandemic levels of around 10 days.



## Outcome: Listen to our staff through regular staff engagement and empower them to improve their own service areas.

We received over 1,600 responses to our staff survey during 2024/25, with the scores and year-on-year comparisons below. The results and comments were analysed, with findings discussed at corporate and departmental levels with agreed local actions to address some of the areas requiring improvement.

Employee Engagement Survey	Average Index Score (AIS)			Comment
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	
<i>I am proud to work for the Council</i>	1.04	1.06	1.15	The result of 1.15 indicates that, overall, staff are in strong agreement about being proud to work for the Council.
<i>I would recommend the Council as an employer</i>	1.04	1.10	1.17	The result of 1.17 indicates that, overall, staff are in strong agreement about recommending the Council as an employer

## Outcome: Ensure local and regional partnership working is efficient and effective and adds value to the work of the Council.

### Carmarthenshire Public Services Board

Over the last year, Carmarthenshire Public Services Board (PSB) has progressed key actions from the Well-being Plan.

One example is the development of the Carmarthenshire Food Strategy, which has involved consultation with over 450 local, regional, and national stakeholders. Focus groups, workshops, surveys, and one-to-one interviews with people, businesses, and organisations have supported the academic research into the local food system required to develop the strategy. The PSB's input and involvement has been crucial in identifying the most suitable and impactful areas for intervention, leading to the definition and prioritisation of strategic objectives and targets.

We continue to work closely with the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) to build stronger links between both areas.

## **PARTNERIAETH**

PARTNERIAETH was established to support schools in partnership with Swansea and Pembrokeshire councils, following the abolition of Education through Regional Working (ERW) service. A new Joint Committee was established, and a Legal Agreement was developed to manage the work of the new entity. Core staff have been restructured to create a team of officers to support and complement school improvement activities in the three counties.

In the past year, the Legal Agreement has been replaced with a new Collaboration Agreement. Effective from the 1st of April 2025, it is there to maintain a proportionate level of governance to maintain collective responsibility and effective partnership working.

Work continues to strengthen governance, monitoring, and holding PARTNERIAETH to account for its contribution to school improvement in the region. The priorities going forward are:

- **Priority 1:** Support all schools and educational settings to design and deliver their own high quality equitable curriculum.
- **Priority 2:** Embed principles and processes which underpin educational equity in all schools and educational settings.
- **Priority 3:** Support schools and educational settings to develop a range of research and enquiry skills as a key part of their professional learning.
- **Priority 4:** Provide career pathways for leaders, practitioners, and support staff at all levels of the system.

## **Swansea Bay City Deal**

The Swansea Bay City Deal is an unprecedented investment of up to £1.3 billion by 2033, creating 9,000 jobs across a portfolio of nine headline projects and programmes throughout the counties of Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, and Pembrokeshire. The portfolio is in full delivery, aligned to three themes of economic acceleration, energy and smart manufacturing, and life science and well-being. The Deal will provide opportunities for many existing and new regional businesses, as well as residents across the region.

## **South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC)**

The South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) has been established as a regional corporate body by Welsh Ministers. Membership consists of the executive leaders of Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, and Swansea councils, along with a member of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority. The CJC published its Corporate Plan for 2023-2028, which recognises its functions and responsibilities within South West Wales. This is in terms of economic well-being, energy, transport, and strategic planning, conveying the progress made to date, and to set out future ambitions. To this end, the Corporate Plan includes a Vision for South West Wales 2035, as well as three well-being objectives, and an equality objective.

## **Economic Development**

Local partnership working continues in our primary town centres of Ammanford, Carmarthen, and Llanelli. This is done through the various town centre task forces, and town forums, where all stakeholders come together to discuss town centre issues, developments, and activities to deliver each town's Economic Development Recovery Plans.

Regional partnerships are ongoing through the Corporate Joint Committee, and its support structures. Most notably the Private Sector Advisory Board. The four Local Authorities are currently carrying out a review of the Regional Economic Development Plan, which sets out the regional strategic direction for economic development and will be the basis for economic activity for the next five years.

## **Outcome: Increased public engagement through engagement, participation and consultation.**

### **Involvement Strategy**

During 2024/25, we have developed and approved an Involvement Strategy for 2025-27, which emphasises the importance of engaging our community in the design and delivery of services. The strategy aims to ensure that all residents are aware of their opportunities to contribute to discussions that shape their local environment and services. This commitment is supported by various legislative frameworks aimed at promoting well-being and inclusivity across Wales.

We are committed to engage effectively and this is underpinned by a range of legislation including:

- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015,
- Equality Act 2010,
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2015,
- Welsh Language Measure 2011,
- Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021,
- Social Partnership and Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.

As part of the Strategy, we will follow best practice and national standards. For example, the Children and Young People's National Participation Standards and the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales. We are committed to adopting new and emerging best practice, like with digital engagement platforms and working with our partners on the Public Services Board. As part of the Strategy, we will evaluate the effectiveness of our strategy through the National Principles for Public Engagement Evaluation toolkit.

## Leisure – NPS Leisure Survey

2024/25 presented various challenges regarding customer experiences at leisure centres, negatively affected by the continued deterioration of Carmarthen Leisure Centre's pool tiles, Amman Valley Leisure Centre's roof leaks, and parking issues and general state of Llanelli Leisure Centre.

Naturally, Llanelli only saw essential facility-based investment due to the imminent site closure, but Carmarthen's pool resurfacing is scheduled to take place in the new financial year, as is the repair to Ammanford's roof – both totalling around £400,000 investment. Given these sites account for over 76% of the feedback responses received, the overall score was lower than our target at 44%.

However, this is a percentage point higher than the score from 2023/24, matches the global benchmark score, and is 4% higher than the UK benchmark score at 40%.

The high scores of rural sites are also a positive, with Llandovery at 87%, Newcastle Emlyn at 80%, and St Clears at 57%. Overwhelmingly, staff and facilities top the table for positive feedback at these sites.

With the repairs planned and opening of Canolfan Pentre Awel in 2025/26, we would expect a rise in outcomes next year.

## Annual Consultation Activity

In line with our statutory obligation through the Local Government and Elections Act, the Council consulted with residents, businesses, staff, and trade unions on the degree to which we are meeting our performance requirements:

Survey	Update
Residents Survey: 2024	We received just under 3,600 responses to our Residents Survey during 2024, this is a 9% decrease on the response rate for the previous year (3,943), although this is still a good return. The findings were analysed and summarised into a report. The main findings are detailed on our website and have been embedded into the 2025/26 business planning process. Service areas were asked to consider these in the creation of actions.
Staff Survey (People Management): 2024	We received over 1,600 responses to our staff survey during 2024/25, this is an increase on the previous year and equates to approximately 18% of our entire workforce. Following analysis, findings were discussed at corporate and departmental levels, agreeing local actions to address some of the areas requiring improvement.
Business Survey: 2024	We received 110 responses to our Business Survey during 2024, which is consistent with the previous year. We have summarised the analysis and findings into a report that includes comparisons with previous years.
Trade Union Survey: 2024	Only 1 response received, which is disappointing and a decrease on the previous two years. The limited information received will be summarised and reported.

## **Budget Consultation**

In preparing yet another very challenging budget, we invited the public and other interested parties to express their views on a range of matters, including a council tax increase, educational transport, public conveniences, and some cultural and leisure services. These were considered alongside 90 detailed operational proposals, such as building costs, efficient use of vehicles, digital efficiencies, staffing structures, and internal back-office functions.

Over 2,900 people responded to the online consultation, and 61 young people from nine secondary schools attended a face-to-face 'Insight' event at County Hall to discuss with Cabinet Members and express their priorities. The event gave pupils the chance to put themselves in the roles of the Council's Cabinet and discuss their opinions on the budget proposals. It was also an opportunity for Cabinet Members to hear pupils' views and discuss with them directly about issues that matter to them.

In response to the public consultation, amendments were made to the Council's budget proposals. For example, not to increase car parking charges increases above inflation, recognising public comments regarding the important contribution its facilities provide in supporting town centre businesses and tourism, as well as the daily impact on residents' lives.

## **Social Partnership**

The Council has well-established information, consultation and negotiation frameworks in place with its recognised Trade Unions. However, the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act provides opportunity to develop this work further, with the potential for achieving mutual gains through co-operation and collaboration. Throughout the year we have maintained our commitment to working in partnership with the Trade Unions by maintaining established frameworks for regular communication and consultation, but we have also strived to engage on a range of strategic matters affecting the workforce. Full details of these activities can be found within the Social Partnership Annual Report at Appendix 6.

## **Outcome: A more commercial approach to the delivery of Council services with a view to increasing the level of income generated.**

### **Estates and Asset Management**

We are actively exploring opportunities to optimise the use of our estate, including rationalisation of underutilised or poor performing assets, and reinvestment in core sites. In support of the Welsh Government's Town Centre First principle, the Council is committed to prioritising the location and relocation of public service facilities and office buildings within town centres. This strategic approach recognises the critical role town centres play in the environmental, economic, social, and cultural wellbeing of our communities. By embedding civic and commercial functions centrally, we aim to reverse the trend of decentralisation that has historically contributed to reduced footfall and diminished local spend. Our regeneration proposals actively consider town centre spaces for new developments, including leisure, housing, and co-working hubs, to create vibrant, multifunctional destinations. This not only supports the viability of retail and hospitality sectors but also encourages sustainable travel, reduces carbon emissions, and fosters inclusive, walkable neighbourhoods.

Through targeted investment and collaborative partnerships, we are working to reinvigorate our town centres as thriving places to live, work, and engage.

We have recently completed rent reviews of our industrial portfolio which generated additional revenue of £193,728 per annum, increasing our income on the portfolio from £1,974,001 to £2,167,729.

## **Outcome: Make better use of digital technology to further transform our services into smarter, efficient service processes and to deliver a better experience for customers.**

In July 2024, the Council approved its new Digital Strategy 2024–2027, setting a bold vision for a digitally enabled Carmarthenshire. This Strategy has served as the cornerstone of our efforts to enhance digital capabilities, improve customer service and engagement, and transform the way services are delivered. It aligns with corporate, regional, and national priorities, and digital agendas and places people at the heart of public service design—“designed for people, enabled by technology.”

### **Strategic Foundations and Vision**

The Strategy builds on the progress made during the previous four years, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It outlines five key priority areas:

- Digital Services
- People and Skills
- Data and Decision Making
- Technology and Innovation
- Digital Communities and Economy

Each area is supported by targeted investments, strategic partnerships, and a commitment to bilingual service delivery, reflecting the cultural importance of the Welsh language in our digital future.

### **Key Deliverables and Progress in 2024/25**

#### **Cloud Technologies and Legacy System Migration**

We focused on migrating legacy business critical systems to modern, cloud-managed platforms to improve service delivery, efficiency, resilience, and business continuity. Key projects included:

- Agresso Financial Management System
- iWorld Revenues and Benefits System
- OLM CareFirst Social Care System
- Civica CX Housing Services System

These migrations are critical to improving resident facing service delivery, operational efficiency, and decommissioning our on-premises environment and streamlining our data centre footprint.

#### **System Replacements and Service Improvements**

We replaced outdated systems with modern cloud solutions, enabling 24/7 service delivery for residents:

- Arcus Land Charges System and Portal
- ALLOY Waste Management System
- Total Connect Housing Repairs System
- ThinQi Learning Management System
- Oleeo Recruitment System and Portal

These systems have improved customer experience, operational efficiency, and integration across departments.

## Innovation, AI, and Automation

We embraced emerging technologies to modernise services:

- Microsoft 365 Copilot (AI personal assistant) – Piloted with 240 staff; wider rollout being planned.
- Magic Notes AI – Piloted for Social Workers, saving up to seven hours per week in notetaking per person.
- Robotic Process Automation Implementations – Automated HR tasks, Free School Meals, and Pupil Development Grant Access Grants – over 3,000 applications processed with same-day decisions.

We also began shaping a comprehensive and forward-looking AI and Data Strategy that aligns with our digital and corporate ambitions. This will provide a structured, ethical, and forward-looking framework to harness emerging technologies in ways that directly benefit residents, staff, and the wider community.

## Cybersecurity: A Strategic Priority

Cyber resilience was a central focus this year. We strengthened our defences and further embedded a culture of vigilance:

- We onboarded our organisation to the all-Wales Cymru Security Operations Centre, providing 24/7 cyber threat intelligence and incident response. Collaborating with the Welsh Government, it supports 21 public sector bodies in Wales and aligns with the UK Government's "Defend as One" strategy and the Welsh Government's Cyber Action Plan.
- Phishing Simulations – Conducted across our workforce; results informed training and awareness raising.
- Cyber Action Plan – Included permission reviews, policy updates, and cyber playbooks.
- Incident Response Exercises – Participated in national simulations (Ty Coch, Celyn Coch).
- Audit Wales Cyber Review – Completed; recommendations pending.
- ThinQi Cyber Training – Launched and made mandatory for all office-based staff.

These efforts have significantly improved our preparedness and resilience against evolving threats. However, we must continue to invest in this area to counter the growing cyber threat.

## People and Digital Skills

We invested in workforce development to build a digitally confident organisation:

- Digital Skills Audit – 1,092 responses; informed targeted training.
- ThinQi LMS – Launched with modules in Cyber Security, Data Protection, and AI.
- Digital Mentors – Network established to support staff.
- Workforce Planning – Succession plans developed.

We also hosted seminars, engaged with colleges, and recruited apprentices and graduates to future-proof our workforce.

## **Data and Decision Making**

We embedded a data-centric culture to support evidence-based decision-making:

- Power BI Adoption – over 80 trained users delivering actionable insights.
- Safeguarding LINC Project – Pioneering data-sharing initiative with police and health services.
- Digital Maturity Assessments – Conducted across departments to guide transformation.
- SharePoint Management – 38TB of data managed, retention policies and digital preservation initiatives underway.

## **Technology and Infrastructure**

We continued to modernise our infrastructure through cloud migrations, a Device Replacement Programme, a Voice Technology Review, and supporting digital needs of office moves and closures.

## **Digital Communities and Economy**

We supported connectivity and inclusion across the County:

- Pembrey Country Park Fibre Upgrade – £201,000 investment via City Deal.
- Smart Towns IoT Network – over 60 gateways deployed, pilots in waste and safety monitoring.
- Dark Fibre Project – £3.5M investment to connect 33 public sector sites by 2026.
- Regional Infrastructure Investment – £26.7M over the past three years in connectivity projects.

We also supported strategic developments like Pentre Awel, Carmarthen HWB, and Llanelli Town Centre, ensuring digital readiness.

## **Complaints**

The number of complaints received during 2024/25 reduced slightly to just under 1,700 compared to almost 2,000 the previous year. Just over 61% of these complaints were dealt with on time. Due to the nature of complaints becoming more complex and the communication from complainants becoming more detailed, meeting the statutory response timescales is increasingly challenging.

**Outcome: Embrace and promote agile working, hybrid meetings and new ways of working across the organisation, by being more sustainable and creative to improve Council services.**

## **Transformation**

We have successfully transitioned to new ways of working supported by the rationalisation of our assets, which allow staff to work smarter, ensuring continuity and productivity. The release of the Parc Dewi Sant site for sale and the relocation of staff to other Council buildings effectively demonstrated this approach. The use of workspace management software has further enabled evidence-based decisions regarding property portfolio rationalisation, ensuring optimal use of resources.

Our move towards process automation, such as hybrid mail and robotics technology, has significantly improved operational efficiency. For example, the implementation of hybrid mail has led to over £61,884 in cost savings during the year, whilst robotic process automation (RPA) in debt recovery has freed staff to focus on high-value tasks, resulting in the collection of £2,523,468 in additional debt.

We have also focused on training and equipping managers with the necessary skills for a commercial and modern approach to service delivery. Training sessions held for over 50 managers in March 2025 are part of this initiative, fostering a business-like mindset across the organisation.

## **Digital**

Over the past year, we have taken decisive and measurable steps to embrace and promote agile working, hybrid meetings, and new ways of working across the organisation. These efforts have been underpinned by a clear commitment to sustainability, creativity, and service improvement, as articulated in our Digital, Workforce, and Transformation Strategies.

We've implemented a range of digital tools and infrastructure to support this. For example, the Council introduced workspace management software to enable flexible desk booking and evidence-based decisions on property rationalisation. This supported the release of the Parc Dewi Sant site and the relocation of staff to other Council buildings, demonstrating a practical application of hybrid working principles. Hybrid meetings have become the norm, supported by Microsoft Teams and enhanced SharePoint structures.

One of the most transformative initiatives was the pilot of Microsoft CoPilot, an AI-powered assistant rolled out to 240 users. The Copilot Business Case demonstrated how CoPilot helped staff automate routine tasks, freeing up time for more complex responsibilities. We've identified numerous real-world use cases where productivity gains were achieved without compromising job roles. The pilot's success led to a proposal for scaling the tool across the organisation.

A key enabler of this transformation has been our commitment to maintaining a robust and modern end user device estate. Excluding schools, we fully support and manage approximately 3,500 laptops, 450 tablets, 2,500 smartphones, and 300 desktops for our corporate departments and services – all of which are configured to enable mobile, agile, and flexible working. This estate ensures that staff can securely access systems and collaborate effectively from any location, whether in the office, at home, or in the community. The predominance of laptops and smartphones reflects our strategic shift toward mobility and digital-first service delivery, whilst desktops remain in use where fixed workstations are still appropriate.

## Outcome: Deliver organisational change that supports key Net Zero Carbon targets.

### Property Design

- New Housing developments have been designed to reduce the carbon used in both operation and in construction. All properties are designed to meet an SAP[9] rating of 92+. Designed and constructed to Passivhaus principles, Wauniago was handed over in November 2024.
- Ysgol Pen-bre/ Pembrey School was completed in October 2024. The school is a Passivhaus school, making it extremely energy efficient due to high levels of insulation and air tightness.
- Assisted in the delivery of a decarbonisation project to replace fossil fuel boilers with air source heat pumps and solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity at six existing primary schools.
- Continuing to monitor and analyse the energy performance in operation of primary schools to evaluate the effectiveness of adopting 'fabric first' principles and decarbonisation measures to inform designs and specifications of future projects.

## Outcome: Ensuring the Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Council approved a Council Tax increase of 8.9% and spending reductions of more than £8m at a meeting to set its Budget Strategy.

An original Cabinet proposal of 9.75% was lowered to 8.9% following minor adjustments in the Council's funding due to the Welsh Government's final budget, a slightly lower Fire Brigade levy, and the allocation of £500,000 from the contingency budget.

**Cabinet Member for Resources, Cllr Allun Lenny said:**

*'This budget has been the most challenging for many years. This Council is more than £150m worse off in real terms than we were a decade ago, which means there is £150m less to spend on essential services like social care, education, and highways, etc.'*



Only 16% of the Council's income comes from Council Tax. Most of our funding comes from the Welsh Government that, in turn, depends on a block grant from the UK Government. Like all other Councils, we face a most challenging time as the huge pressure on public spending and services continues.

As a result of the Welsh Government's final budget published in February 2025, coupled with taking half a million pounds from the contingency budget, Cabinet proposed a Council Tax rise of 8.9% This is much more than we would have liked in these difficult days, but as a Local Authority we must set a legal budget which strikes a balance between the raising of Council Tax and protecting the essential services upon which our residents depend.

Placed against inadequate funding and the extra National Insurance cost, is the growing demand for services. Despite the present pressures, Carmarthenshire County Council is pumping an extra £11m into adult and children social care, where the demand is immense. We are determined to provide for the welfare of the rising and future generations in Carmarthenshire by also protecting funding for schools.

On a positive note, a drop in fuel costs, following a huge hike 2 years ago due to the war in Ukraine, has saved the Council an extra £2.1m on top of the anticipated £1m. This has enabled us to respond to the public consultation by dropping the two most unpopular proposals, which were the closure of public toilets if not asset transferred, and a 10% increase in car parking charges.

## **Financial Services**

- 96.41% of Council Tax was collected during 2024/25, slightly lower than the previous year (97.01%). However, we have the fifth highest collection rate in Wales and above the all-Welsh rate of 95.97%. We take a proactive approach to recovery and have provided relevant support and advice to those falling into arrears to ensure the best possible way forward regarding repayment arrangements.
- 97.95% of non-domestic rates due for 2024/25 were collected by the Council, sixth highest collection rate in Wales. This is a reduction on the excellent collection rate of 99.24% the previous year which was the highest collection rate in Wales.
- 95.6% of invoices were paid within 30 days in 2024/25, an improvement on the previous year (94.9%). This is despite a 7% increase in the number of invoices received from 311,466 to 333,272.
- An increased access to online services has created a shift towards online payments with many customers contacting us, submitting forms and documents, and paying for our services electronically. This has risen from 63,427 transactions in 2023/24 to 144,570 transactions during 2024/25 with a value of £17,098,947. Council Tax payments, housing rent payments, paying invoices and miscellaneous income are amongst the most utilised services.

## **Outcome: Embedding the sustainable development principle in all that the Council does.**

The principles and requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act underpins everything that we do as an organisation; and ensures that the sustainable development principle is at the heart of strategy development and implementation. This principle forms the basis of our approach to annual self-assessment, and the requirements of the Act underpin the approach to both the development and subsequent implementation of the Transformation Programme.

## **Transformation**

We have made efforts to modernise the Council's fleet of vehicles, which has resulted in substantial cost savings, and demonstrated a commitment to resource optimisation. Similarly, the use of workspace management tools has provided critical data that supports informed decision-making regarding property portfolio rationalisation, ensuring effective utilisation of resources.

A key example of sustainable development in action is our decarbonisation programme, which has achieved a 37% reduction in carbon emissions compared to the baseline year. This milestone reflects a robust performance in line with broader climate targets and underscores the Council's dedication to climate action. Additionally, initiatives such as the development of e-learning training modules on climate action for staff and partnerships with local organisations highlight our proactive approach to environmental education and awareness.

We are also committed to fostering a culture of continuous improvement. The introduction of a financial documentation support system has enabled schools to identify and implement cost-saving measures, thereby contributing to more sustainable school budgets. Through this initiative, schools have collectively realised significant savings, demonstrating a shift towards more prudent financial management.

## Is anyone better off?

### Successes of the Pilot Workforce Resourcing Team

The Workforce Resourcing Team (WRT) pilot project undertaken within Residential care, has been highly successfully and is now looking to expand.

#### Project Aims

- Reduce reliance on agency workforce.
- Reduce additional costs associated with an agency workforce.
- Increase opportunities for existing staff to undertake additional hours outside of their existing work base.

#### Project Outcomes

- Care home residents report greater satisfaction with their care due to increased consistency and confidence of having CCC staff supporting them.
- Care home managers' report improvements in the quality of work provided.
- Staff report improved team cohesion and sense of being valued.
- Over 2,000 hours cover was provided internally in December 2024, an increase of 312% from the hours covered in May 2024.
- December 2024 over £6,000 costs avoided across the four care homes in through use of WRT staff instead of Agency staff.

Care Home Managers feedback: The Work Resource Team has been an invaluable asset to our service. We have successfully transitioned away from using agency staff and now benefit from a consistent team of well-trained personnel who are familiar with the individuals we support.

Team Member Alison's feedback: Since joining WRT last May I feel that I have gained confidence in my ability to deliver the best quality care. The WRT management help and support me with any questions or concerns that I may have. Whilst being with WRT I have shown my experience from working in care previously and I have also gained new knowledge and skills to provide the best care possible to all residents that I assist.



## IT Degree apprenticeships success

Congratulations to three members of staff from ICT who were the first cohort to undertake their degree apprenticeships at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD).

Over the past four years, John Williams, Julian Milligan, and Emma Williams have undertaken a degree apprenticeship, this enabled them to gain a fully funded undergraduate degree whilst working.

John Williams (ICT Operations and Governance Manager) received a BSc with Honours in Computing (Computer Networks and Cybersecurity). John has undertaken the apprenticeship alongside fulfilling his responsibilities in his senior role within the IT Department. Over the years, his role has evolved with the increase demands on the services. The degree programme has enabled him to update his existing qualification, refine his skills in project management, information governance and report writing, and provide the latest knowledge on the technical aspects of his role. He added: *"I take great pride in the accomplishments of Emma, Julian, and myself. Balancing full-time work with academic studies is undoubtedly a formidable task, especially with the added challenges brought about by the 2020 lockdown. The skills and knowledge acquired through our degree programme will prove invaluable in our roles in delivery future digital services for the Council."*

Technical officer, Emma Williams also gained BSc with Honours - Computing (Computer Networks and Cybersecurity). Emma started her career working as an admin assistant and worked her way up in the IT department from IT Monitoring Officer to a role in the Service Delivery team as a Digital Support Engineer. In 2020, she was successful in moving to the role of ICT Technical Officer within the Technical Delivery Team, which she attributes to her studies providing her the boost in confidence, skills, and knowledge she needed to apply. Since September 2022, she has worked within the Cybersecurity Team, in a role that enables and inspires her to continue to grow and develop. Due to Emma's success, she is often asked by UWTSD to attend Breakfast meetings with employers and talks with students to give her insight of her working within a STEM[10] subject area, and working in the IT sector which, prior to the course, she felt she wouldn't have had the confidence to do. Emma added: *"The Council is a very encouraging and supportive employer. We are able to take the time to study and develop both personally and professionally, contributing what we learn and experience back to the workplace and service."*

Julian Milligan, Senior Applications Developer, gained a BSc with honours in Computing (Software Engineering). Julian said he found that from the very first day of lectures that how to draft reports and research papers has helped him with current projects he works on. He can adapt his skills, and this has allowed him to evolve in his new role, which he credits getting due to the new knowledge and skills he has from undertaking this course. He added: *"Early on in my career, everything I learned was self-taught. So, doing the degree has shown me best practice, and the best way to program and build SQL databases. I now use these methods on any new projects and feel the quality of my work has evolved and improved."*

Following on from the remarkable success of John, Emma, and Julian, we now have the next cohort within the IT department undertaking the BSc with Honours - Computing Degree Apprenticeship.

# Core Business Enablers

In addition to the identified thematic and service priorities, there are a range of core business enablers which underpin the Council's daily functions and our delivery of services. Several are detailed within this section; however, ICT, Marketing & Media, Finance, People Management, Policy & Performance, Estates and Asset Management and Business Support have been interwoven within the content in well-being objectives 1-4 above.

## Legal

- We have ensured legality and probity in the Council's decision-making.
- We work within a statutory framework governing such things as the way meetings are run, the way decisions are taken and the legislation behind each decision which needs to be taken.
- 1,936 files were opened in 2024/25.
- We handle as much of the legal work needed by the Council in-house as we can, although there will be some occasions when we need to send work to external lawyers.
- The range of legal work undertaken includes not just court and tribunal cases, but also advising Council committees, drafting legal documentation, and giving legal advice.
- The Transformation Team has been working closely with the service. A Project Management group has been established to provide effective oversight and governance of the Legal Services improvement delivery plan. This group is responsible for prioritising initiatives, monitoring their implementation, identifying barriers, and measuring success post-implementation.
- Several efficiency measures have already been identified, including:
  - Creating a dedicated communication area on the intranet to provide essential information about legal services
  - Introducing a new e-form for service users to complete when seeking external legal advice
  - Implementing Magic Notes to assist in the completion of statements
- The work of the group will continue to ensure that these initiatives are designed to streamline processes, improve accessibility, and support ongoing service enhancement for the Legal Services team.

## Planning

- 91.6% (1,224 / 1,336) of planning applications were determined on time during 2024/25. This is a very good improvement on 87.5% last year and is just above the Welsh average of 90.5%.
- Of the 32 planning appeals received during 2024/25, 25 were dismissed (78.1%). This is an improvement on the previous year (70.4%) and exceeds the Welsh Government Performance Framework for 'Good' of 66%.
- 19 out of the 22 major planning applications determined in the year were completed within the time required to give a result of 86.4%. This is a good improvement on last year (69.7%).
- The average number of days taken to take positive planning enforcement action during 2024/25 continues to be high at 360 days (306 days the previous year). A significant number of cases are taken through to prosecution. Figures represent the length of time to prosecute a case, which has significant delay, and we have no control. A review of the delivery of the enforcement function is ongoing.
- 81.6% of planning enforcement cases were investigated within 84 days. This is a slight reduction from the previous year at 84.3 but continue to be high compared to historically.
- An Assurance Rating of 'Reasonable' was received during Internal Audit inspections to ensure that robust systems and procedures were in place for planning applications – Extension of Time and for the administration of 'Section 106 – Affordable Homes'.

## Procurement

- We spent more than £443 million per annum on goods, works, and services in 2024/25. This has a significant impact on the quality of life for the community. It is vital we have a strategic approach to procurement to ensure that goods, works, and services are procured as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- 42% of our spend with suppliers was within Carmarthenshire, higher than the all-Wales rate of 30%.
- The Corporate Procurement Unit (CPU) led on the delivery of 47 tenders with an approximate value of £1.2bn.
- The new Procurement Act 2023 and the Procurement (Wales) Regulations 2024 came into effect in February 2025 (postponed from the original date of October 2024). This marks a major reform of public procurement law in Wales and the wider UK, replacing previous EU-derived rules post-Brexit.
- To meet our legal obligations under the Act, we are required to publish a pipeline of planned tenders over £2m which will be published in the following 18 months by the end of May 2025. The CPU has engaged with departments to accurately capture all tenders over this value and are on target to publish the notices by the deadline.
- A new Health Services (Provider Selection Regime) (Wales) Regulations 2025 (PSR) is also now in effect. This is a new, separate regime designed specifically for the procurement of health care services by the NHS and related public bodies in Wales.
- We are awaiting the Welsh Government to implement the procurement provisions of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 via secondary legislation (commencement orders), but a specific date has not yet been announced. The Contract Procedure Rules were updated in March 2025 to align with the new Act.
- A variety of supplier engagement initiatives and events were held in 2024/25 to accommodate our programme of tender exercises. One example of this was an event held in June 2024 for the South West Wales Regional Contractors Framework (SWWRCF), with approximate total value of £800 million. Procurement, alongside colleagues in Property Design, adopted a variety of supplier engagement initiatives to attract local contractors to tender, to promote the tender requirements, and to enhance tender submissions by offering support. Following a Getting Tender Ready webinar held last financial year, we held a Briefing Session for this tender at Parc y Scarlets, Llanelli in April 2024 with 186 contractors attending the event.

## Internal Audit

- Internal Audit is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve the organisation's operations.
- Internal Audit is committed to working to the highest professional standards, and to delivering quality services that add value to the Authority. A Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP) is in place, designed to achieve high professional performance operating in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and the Code of Ethics.
- 85% of reviews in the 2024/25 Audit Plan were completed by the end of March 2025, which was slightly lower than 89% the previous year. All audit assignments on the plan had been initiated and were underway at the end of the financial year.
- Internal Audit reports to the Council's Governance and Audit Committee, providing regular progress updates. Every Internal Audit Report is provided to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee.

## Democratic Services

- Democratic Services manages the Council's decision-making process. The Council Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made, and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent, and accountable to local people. Some of these processes are required by law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose.
- The number of Councillor Enquiries has increased slightly to 2,780 for 2024/25, with 72.05% responded to within 7 working days. 1,208 service requests were processed by the unit through the Member portal rather than Councillors directly. The portal provides a platform for members to log and monitor Councillor Service requests and enquiries.
- The service continues to administer joint working arrangements for Wales Pension Partnership Joint Governance Committee, the Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Panel, and Y Partneriaeth (Partneriaeth was disbanded on the 31st of March 2025 with its functions transferred to a collaboration agreement on the 1st of April 2025). The service also has responsibility for administering the Llesiant Delta Wellbeing Governance Group, the CWM Shareholders Board, and administers the appeals process in respect of Education Admissions and Exclusions.

## Risk Management

- In 2024/25, 94% of response to letters of claim were completed within six working days of receipt at the Risk Management Section. This covered issuing acknowledgement letter to the claimant or claimant's legal representative, and referral of the claim to the appropriate insurer.
- During the year, the Risk Management Steering Group invested over £260,000 in areas to reduce the risk of claims or expensive litigation. Successful bids included driver training, CCTV for home to school and college transport, delivery of training for managing sexual harassment in the workplace, and safeguarding/security fencing in some of our schools.
- The Corporate Risk Register is reported to the Governance and Audit Committee on a six-monthly basis following quarterly review and critical assessment of the risks by the Corporate Management Team.

## Electoral Services and Civil Registration

- Electoral services are underpinned by a legal framework which establishes how elections are delivered. It sets out who is allowed to vote and the various ways they can cast their vote to have their say. The service has a strong Election Project Team that helps support the main team in delivering safe, transparent, and open elections.
- The service administers all types of elections (scheduled or unscheduled), and, with the introduction of the Modern Democracy app, it ensures accuracy of the ballot paper accounts. During 2024/2025, one County By-election, 15 Town and Community By-elections (five of which were called but uncontested), and a Business Improvement District (BID) ballot were held.
- We continue to work with data matching of our records against Council Tax, Housing Benefits, Payroll, and Education records to ensure the Electoral Register is up to date. We will be one of few Welsh authorities that will take part in an Automatic Registration Pilot with data matching taking place in summer 2025.
- The Council's Civil Registration Service has the statutory function of providing a statutory service to the public for the registration of births, stillbirths, deaths, and subsequent certificates; notices of marriage and civil partnership and consequent ceremonies and certificates; production of legal documentation and the approval of premises for marriages and civil partnerships; and is also responsible for conducting citizenship ceremonies on behalf of HM Government.
- The service offers a range of celebrant non-statutory ceremonies, including bereavement-related ceremonies such as funerals and celebration of life memorials. The 'Tell Us Once' service is delivered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). There is an increasing demand for celebration events such as affirmations of marriage vows.
- We are also excited in our new joint venture with Carmarthenshire Libraries to offer parents registering their baby to also register the child for a Carmarthenshire Library card. This will hopefully encourage lifelong readers.
- 21 citizenship ceremonies were conducted during 2024/25, all completed within 60 days of the Home Office invitation. These covered 90 adults and eight children, compared to 76 adults and nine children during 2023/24.
- There were 2,334 birth registrations recorded during 2024/25, a slight reduction on 2,461 during 2023/24. However, there was an increase in death registrations with 2,627 during 2024/25 compared to 2,447 in 2023/24.
- The number of marriages and civil partnerships reduced further during 2024/25 to 638 from 706 in 2023/24 and 800 in 2022/23.

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