

Dumfries
and Galloway



2023-24 Council Plan Delivery

End of Year Position

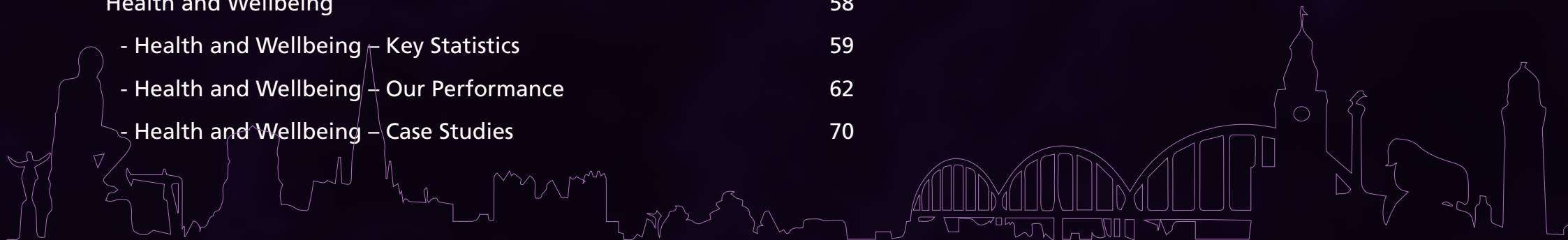


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Introduction

The Council Plan 2023–2028 sets out the vision and strategic outcomes that the Council wants to achieve over the next five years. It will guide activity across the Council and focus on how we will deliver better outcomes for the citizens and communities in Dumfries and Galloway.

Our plan looks forward after the challenges of the past few years where local communities came together to support each other through the pandemic. New challenges have emerged since that time, including the rising cost of living for people and families.

The plan centres on a core set of principles: Safeguard our future, Support our citizens, Support our Communities and Be a responsive Council. These principles will shape how we deliver our four themes: **economy**; **travel, connectivity and infrastructure**; **education and learning**; and **health and wellbeing**.

The Council produced an action plan which set out how the Council intended to achieve its strategic outcomes in 2023–2024. This report provides an end of year position on the Council Plan Delivery for 2023/24 with supporting key statistics and case studies.





Council Plan on a Page

VISION: Our ambition is to be a **successful region**, with a **growing economy**, based on **fairness, opportunity** and **quality public services**, where all citizens prosper. Working in partnership, with **connected, healthy** and **sustainable communities**.

The region will be **the natural place to live, work, visit and invest**.

Principles

Safeguard our future

- Address the climate emergency
- Protect our natural capital

Support our citizens

- Put customers at the heart of services
- Support the most vulnerable and in need
- Address inequalities
- Offer digital services

Support our communities

- Empowering communities and individuals
- Work in partnership
- Focus on local and place
- Invest to enable change

Be a responsive Council

- Communicate openly
- Maintain high standards
- Maintain sustainable finances
- Make best use of resources
- Be organised to deliver

Themes and Strategic Outcomes

Economy

- There is a diversified and growing local economy that benefits all
- Our workforce and their skills base are growing
- Rural communities and places are vibrant and thriving
- Enhancing the region's natural capital benefits local communities and businesses
- Businesses are supported to start and grow
- Investment in the region benefits communities and the local economy

Travel, Connectivity and Infrastructure

- Roads, paths, cycling and walking networks in the region are improved
- Communities are protected from the impact of floods
- Sustainable travel in the region contributes to net zero²
- The Council is a low carbon organisation
- People have access to services that are modern, efficient and responsive
- Digital connectivity supports thriving rural communities

Education and learning

- Places of learning are inclusive, sustainable and meet the needs of local communities
- We get it right for every child
- Children, young people and adults transition successfully through all life stages
- Young people and adults succeed in what they want to achieve
- Participation in creativity and play is part of early and lifelong learning experiences
- Local people can build their skills and confidence

Health and Wellbeing

- Prevention and early intervention assist people to have independent lives
- Access to personal support and care helps keep people safe
- People are active, resilient and improving their health and wellbeing
- Help is provided to tackle the causes and effects of poverty, inequality and increased cost of living
- People have access to high quality, affordable housing that supports their independence, prosperity and wellbeing

Economy



Dumfries and Galloway aims to be an attractive region for business by helping new and existing businesses flourish – all founded on inclusive growth¹.

A strong economy is key to ensuring our citizens have access to training and high-quality jobs that pay well.

The Council is a lead partner in the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership – a forum that brings together a wide range of expertise and sets the direction of the South of Scotland economy. It has set out a bold vision for the South of Scotland to be green, fair and flourishing by 2031.

Together with partners, the Council will strive to promote a region of opportunity and innovation – where natural capital drives green growth, ambition and quality of life rivals the best in the UK, communities are empowered and cultural identity and heritage are cherished.

This will enable people to thrive and attract a new generation to live, work, visit, learn and invest in the South of Scotland.

¹Inclusive growth means economic growth that creates employment opportunities and helps in reducing poverty

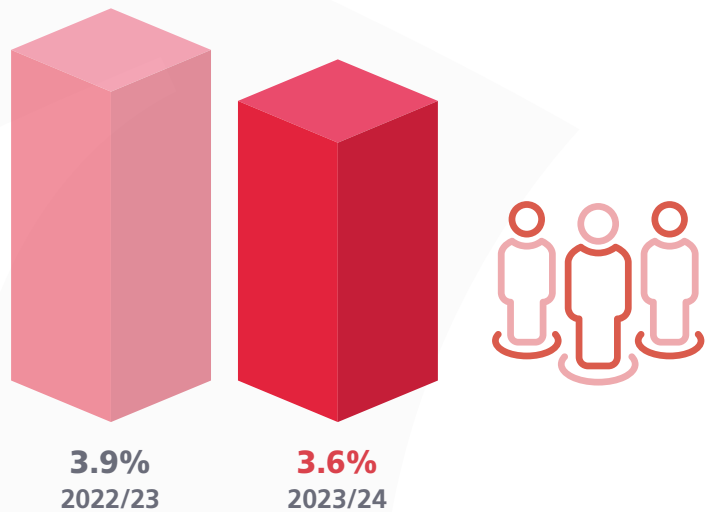
Strategic Outcomes

- There is a diversified and growing local economy that benefits all
- Our workforce and their skills base are growing
- Rural communities and places are vibrant and thriving
- Enhancing the region's natural capital benefits local communities and businesses
- Businesses are supported to start and grow
- Investment in the region benefits communities and the local economy

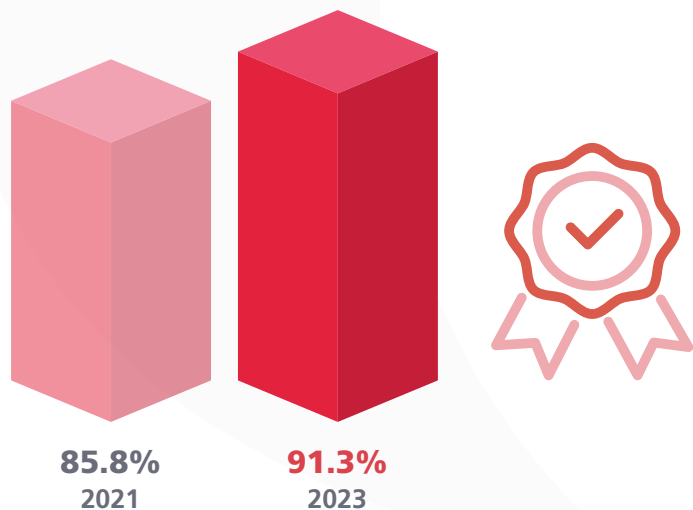


Key Statistics

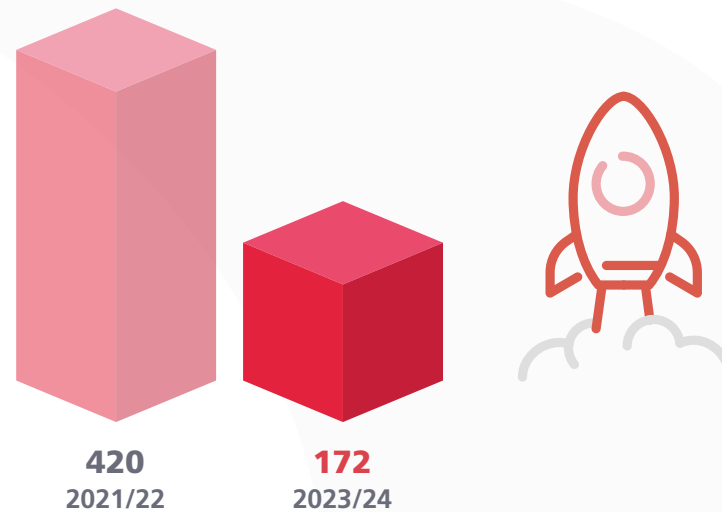
Percentage unemployment rate in the region



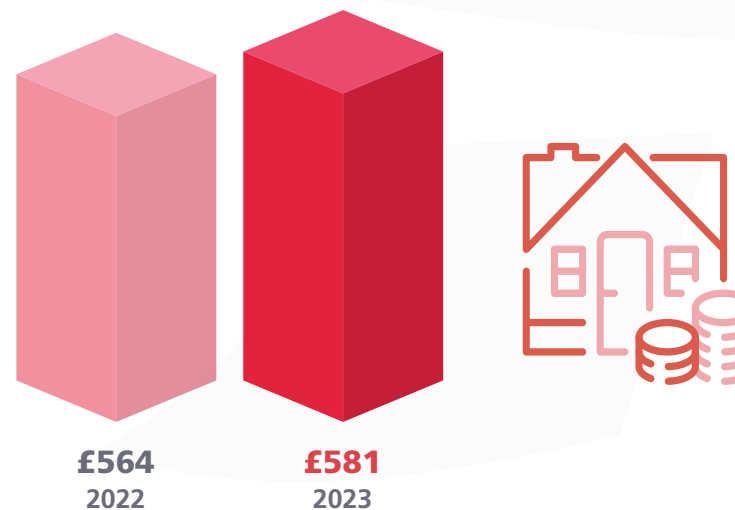
Percentage of the region's working age population have NVQ Level 1 and above



New start up businesses in the region



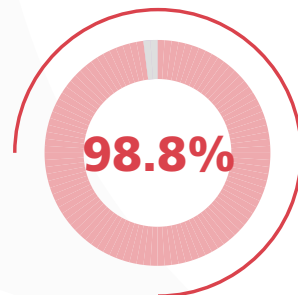
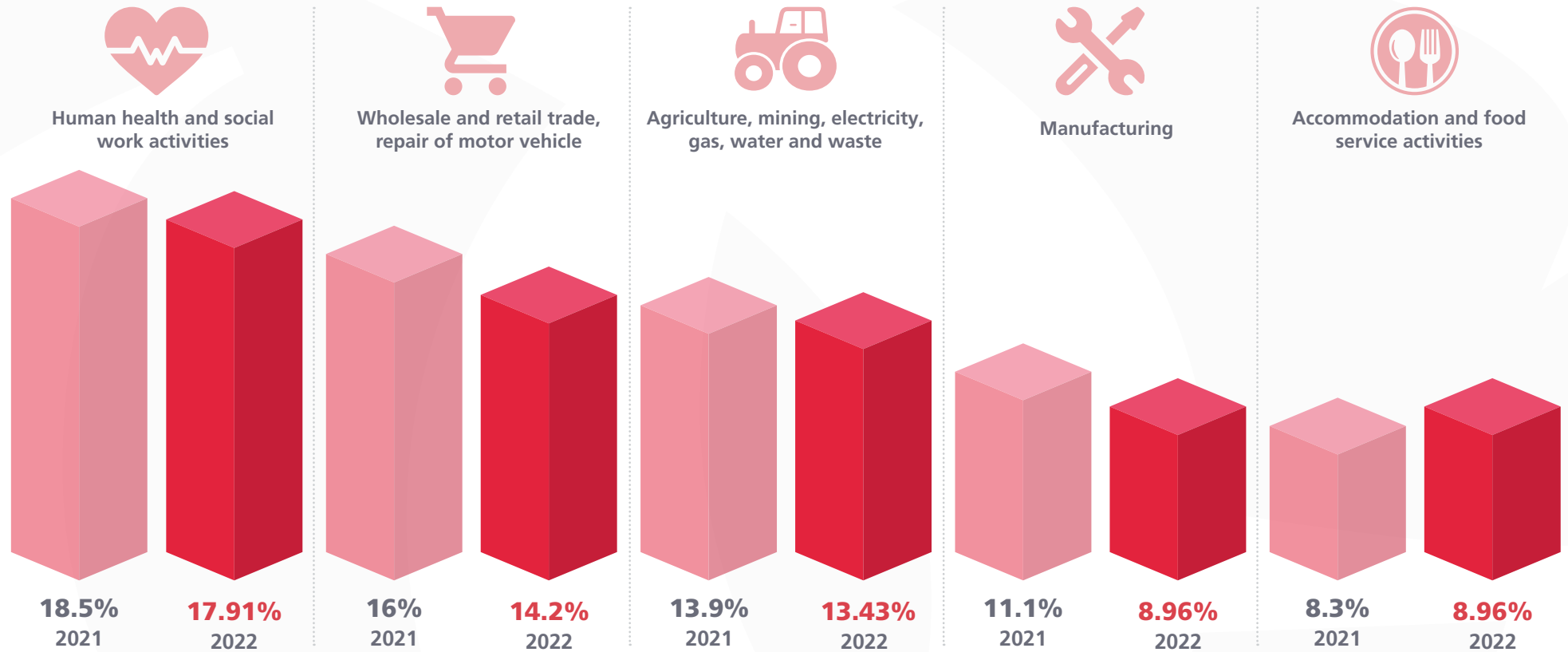
The average gross weekly wage (one of lowest in Scotland)



Key Statistics

2021 2022





Top 5 industries in employment numbers



Our region's business are micro or small and employ between 0 and 49 employees

Remains the same as 2022/23

Our Performance

Complete	Delivery has been completed.	
On track and in progress	Delivery is on track. The project or programme is multi-year and key milestones met.	
In progress	Actions have progressed with further work required to complete.	
Not started	The planned action or activity has not yet started.	

Council Plan Delivery 2023-2024
Update as at 29 February 2024






1. Economy





1. There is a diversified and growing local economy that benefits all





1.1 Develop a clear proposition to lobby for development of a South West Euro Gateway cluster or investment zone in the west of the region, to support economic growth and opportunity





Meetings have been held with Scottish Government officials and engagement has taken place with private sector investors. Work continues to progress on securing opportunities for a cluster or investment zone through lobbying both UK and Scottish Governments.







<p>1.2 Working with South of Scotland Enterprise to develop a south of Scotland approach to Community Wealth Building which includes, as appropriate, public and third sector partners operating in Dumfries and Galloway</p>	
<p>A proposal for UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) to support a Community Wealth Building Officer is ready for consideration at the March 2024 Local Business Advisory Group. Officers continue to work with all south of Scotland partners and through the Community Planning Partnership to progress approaches to Community Wealth Building which benefit local communities and the economy.</p>	
<p>1.3 Strengthen opportunity of local suppliers and contractors through our supplier development programme</p>	
<p>There have been events hosted throughout the year which provide training and support to local suppliers and contractors. Contract opportunities have been promoted via social media platforms and these opportunities have also been promoted by Business Gateway local communication channels.</p>	
<p>1.4 Implement the Major Festivals and Events Strategy which supports community development, economic growth and the cultural diversity of our region</p>	
<p>The Council introduced the Major Events Fund 2023/24 and the Community Events Fund 2023/24. Both Funds were designed with the Dumfries and Galloway Events Partnership and were marketed and promoted. Feedback on the design and value of both Funds has been positive. The Council made 10 grant awards totalling £73,500 from the Major Events Fund 2023/24. The Council also awarded 33 grants totalling £48,280 for the Community Events Fund. The Dumfries and Galloway Events Strategy funding programmes for 2024/25 are now agreed by the Council. Total funding is £121,500.</p>	
<p>1.5 Deliver the Shared Prosperity Fund programme across the three investment priorities of Community and Place, Local Business and People and Skills, investing £2.7m</p>	
<p>The multi year Shared Prosperity Fund programme has progressed with a total commitment to projects of £3.019m by the end of February 2024. These include: Place regeneration and improvement capital grants Support/improve Community Assets & Infrastructure projects Community & Neighbourhood infrastructure capital grants Borderlands Place Programme Climate Resilience Capacity Building 25+ Health and Wellbeing Condition Management Volunteering for employment coordinator Advancing Innovative Manufacturing Support for Disabled Children and Young People – Whole Family Support Student Jumpstart Accelerator Place Team Project Development (Revenue) Support for arts, cultural, heritage & creative activities Future Skills One to One Key Workers.</p>	






1.6 Continue to support the Advanced Manufacturing (AIMS) project working with Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders colleges and local businesses and entrepreneurs	
<p>Throughout 2023/24 the Council provided ongoing support to the Advanced Manufacturing project with Dumfries and Galloway and Borders colleges working with local businesses and entrepreneurs. The skills programme associated with the project has been established and is being delivered.</p>	
1.7 Develop a Regional Food Plan with partners, building on the excellent work of the Dumfries and Galloway Sustainable Food Partnership and other stakeholders	
<p>National Good Food Plan consultation was released by the Scottish Government early in 2024 with a closing date for comment by 22 April 2024. The Council is preparing a response to this consultation. The development of a Regional Food Plan will be based on the requirements of the national Good Food Plan published by the Scottish Government, and as such we are commencing recruitment of a Project Officer with allocated resources and development of our Regional Strategic Plan.</p>	
2. Our workforce and their skills base are growing	
2.1 Working with partners, deliver the Local Employability Programme, to provide positive interventions which support local people	
<p>During 2023/24 a significant amount of work has been undertaken with partners to deliver a local employability programme which supports local people. This work has supported over 400 individuals from across the region to engage with and progress on their employability journey with well over 100 progressing onto positive destinations; and others still being supported by providers to their positive destination.</p>	
2.2 Build on and extend the success of the Kickstart model for work experience and training by funding a further 30 placements for local unemployed people to gain work experience and develop their skills	
<p>All 30 placements were filled within the Council as planned. These opportunities included work experience and training in Street Scene ; Business Support; Waste and Refuse; Democratic Services; Customer Services; Hospitality and Recreation; Organisational Development; Contact Centre; Youth Services ; Roads; IT; Employability and Skills; Education and Pay and Employment Services.</p>	





2.3 Provide access to specialist driver certificate of professional competence and MiDAS mini bus training to local businesses	
<p>Training programme has been developed and marketed to local businesses. Training dates are on local business notice boards for sign up for the training. At this time the uptake is low however businesses are being made aware again of the training dates for them to take up the opportunity. Will continue to promote access to training through 2024/25 and consider uptake of training opportunities. Modest income generation targeted by this initiative continues to be monitored.</p>	
2.4 Implement a campaign with the Youth Council, alongside local trade unions, aimed at under 16s focussed on their employment rights	
<p>It was agreed with the Youth Council that a web page providing information to under 16s on their employment rights should be developed to deliver this action. The final draft is being considered with Joint Trade Unions and Youth Council. Following final agreement the web page will be launched live on our dumgal.gov.uk website with a communication plan to support the wider awareness of this resource.</p>	
2.5 Conduct a staff survey across the organisation's workforce to support action on organisational development and engagement, and identify gaps and opportunities for our workforce	
<p>Staff Survey was complete during 2023 and a full report was communicated to staff and Elected Members in December 2023. An action plan has been developed with staff and Joint Trade Unions to address gaps and provide opportunities for our workforce to engage with the organisation and this will be considered by Members in March 2024.</p>	
3. Rural communities and places are vibrant and thriving	
3.1 Support the delivery of the UCI Cycling World Championships which is the worlds biggest cycling event in Scotland with events in Dumfries and Galloway	
<p>Our region welcomed 411 competitors from 59 different countries of the world to Dumfries and Galloway for the World Para-Cycling (Road), the event was delivered successfully and it is estimated that the direct economic impact of the World Paracycling Championships in Dumfries and Galloway is £1,888,277.</p>	

3.2 Progress our work with communities in Gretna, Kirkcannel and Kelloholm, Stranraer, Whithorn and Wigtown to develop their Borderlands Place Plans, to secure investment in their ambitions	
<p>During 2023/24 we have progressed the completion of the Stranraer Place Plan and the Plans for Gretna, Wigtown and Whithorn are well progressed. It is expected that approved plans for these three towns will be completed in 2024/25. The Borderlands Town Investment Plan for Kirkcannel and Kelloholm has already advanced to Stage 1 draft for consideration by funders.</p>	
3.3 Help communities to develop place plans and deliver their ambitions, through engagement and advice to communities working with local partners	
<p>Toolkit information has been developed to support communities in specific areas of the process including mapping, and consultation and engagement. Local Place Plan presentations have been delivered to communities. Over 20 community groups have made a Local Place Plan Expression of Interest. Procedural guidance is available to assist community groups looking to develop a Local Place Plan and this is available on the Council website.</p>	
3.4 Provide funding and support for a wide range of community led economic regeneration across the region, through the development of viable projects	
<p>The Council has invested a further £150,000 in community led economic regeneration through its allocated funding for this (CLERF) in 2023/24. Investments through the year include Annan Harbour Action Group, Rocks and Wheels Dalbeattie, Space to Grow, Moffat, Stranraer Furniture Project and Lets Get Sporty – Lochvale House. Final investments for this year to be considered by Members are Carsphairn Rural Skills Training Centre and Annan & District Day Centre.</p>	
3.5 Support town centre regeneration in Dumfries working with the Dumfries Partnership Action Group and the delivery of their Dynamically Different Dumfries plan	
<p>The Council has continued to work with the Action Group and the local community to support town centre regeneration in Dumfries. This has included the re-opening of the Dumfries Fountain. Recent focus has also been on supporting the UK Government offered investment in Dumfries to develop a 10-year plan to coordinate £20M of Levelling Up Fund investment. Public engagement events were held in February and the Council is helping establish the Town Board to oversee this investment. Work on a cinema feasibility study has advanced with concept designs being prepared for options and soft market testing advancing in the industry.</p>	

3.6 Support the community led development at the former Oven building in Dumfries town centre to develop town centre housing and flexible business space	
<p>The Council continues to support the community led development at the former Oven building and work is advancing on site. It is anticipated that completion of works will be during 2024 and the Council continues to work with other funders to ensure the project completes.</p>	
3.7 Support community asset transfers which empower communities to take ownership of Council properties and land	
<p>Support continues to be provided to the Community Bodies with Community Asset Transfer requests. Meetings regularly take place with Community Ownership Support Scotland, the National experts in Community Asset Transfer, to discuss any Community Asset Transfer requests and provide advice.</p>	
3.8 Work in partnership with local communities to maintain and improve play parks and recreational spaces across the region	
<p>Plans have been developed for play parks and recreational spaces in Canonbie; Sanquhar; Dalbeattie; Gatehouse and Whithorn with works completed in 2024/25.</p> <p>Members have agreed 6 locations each receiving £104,000 for works to commence in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandhead • New Galloway • Summerhill • Heathhall • Eastriggs • Gretna 	
3.9 Support the Dumfries and Galloway Resettlement Programme, including Syrian, Afghan and Ukrainian arrivals with investment from the Scottish and UK Governments	
<p>We have provided support to the Dumfries and Galloway Resettlement Programme and detailed discussions continue with the Scottish Government to ensure appropriate support.</p>	

3.10 Develop and implement a Litter Reduction Action Plan, including working with local communities and Keep Scotland Beautiful	
<p>The Council has worked with local partners and community organisations to consult on a litter reduction action plan for the region and plans to implement this following consultation during 2024/25. Meantime, the Council has continued to support and collaboratively work with local community organisations and volunteers to improve local areas and communities. Keep Scotland Beautiful are delivering training in March on Litter and Refuse. This will be taken forward as part of the action plan for 2024/25.</p>	
3.11 Deliver Youth Beatz which is Scotlands largest free youth music festival	
<p>Youth Beatz Festival took place on 1 and 2 July 2023 with the Fringe programme delivered from 21 to 29 June. The Fringe featured 16 events across Dumfries and Galloway with a mixture of events for children, young people and families. The final event to take place was #WeCare, a regional gathering for care experienced young people which was attended by over 80 young people.</p> <p>Volunteers were a central part of the delivery of Youth Beatz including young volunteers through the Toon, Youth Work Area, Duke of Edinburgh's Award Residential, and the Events Team, as well as Adult Volunteers who took on key roles including stage support, box office and customer service, and welfare.</p>	
4. Enhancing the region's natural capital benefits local communities and businesses	
4.1 Complete the 2018-2023 Delivery Phase of the Galloway Glens project scheme as part of the National Lottery Heritage Funding	
<p>The Galloway Glens has successfully completed its programme of work with 40 projects delivered within the agreed timescale and to agreed budget of £6 million.</p>	
4.2 Delivery of committed environment and core path projects including Threave footpath and Rewilding project, Red Squirrel improvements and viewing hide Kirkcudbright and the Criffel Sea to summit footpath and the Rhins Coastal Trail	
<p>The core footpath for Criffel, red squirrel hide at Kirkcudbright and the Criffel sea to summit footpath are all complete. The works on the Rhins of Galloway Coast path will continue in 2024/25.</p>	
4.3 Support the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve to promote sustainable development, business and tourism	
<p>The Council provided funding support to assist in the delivery of the Biosphere project and continues to be an active partner.</p>	

<p>4.4 Support the next phase of the Borderlands Natural Capital programme, with business cases now submitted to UK and Scottish Governments for approval. This includes the Marine pilot for a sustainable Solway economy</p>	
<p>Updated business cases have been sent to Scottish Government and awaiting approval for business cases and confirmation of funding. It is anticipated that projects will progress once funding is approved during 2024/25.</p>	
<p>4.5 Working with partners across the South of Scotland to develop a Regional Land Use Framework</p>	
<p>Worked closely with South of Scotland Enterprise and stakeholders to develop the Regional Land Use Framework which is now out for public consultation.</p>	
<p>4.6 Support organisers of festivals and events by creating a Greener Events Toolkit for use in the region</p>	
<p>The Greener Events Toolkit has now been published by the Council and well received by events organisers across the region. More than 12 organisations attended online information and training sessions in May 2023. The Toolkit will be promoted by the Council as the primary tool for planning and organising festivals and events in the region.</p>	
<p>5. Businesses are supported to start and grow</p>	
<p>5.1 Progress the Borderlands Business Infrastructure investment programme, focused on the development of key sites in Annan, Castle Douglas and Newton Stewart, including the acquisition of the three identified sites</p>	
<p>There has been progress in advancing land purchase by negotiated purchase during 2023/24 however the sites have not yet been secured. Access arrangements for one site are being agreed to allow detailed site investigations to be undertaken with the owner however progress on other sites has not yet advanced. An exercise to identify alternative sites in these areas has been undertaken but has confirmed no more easier or available sites for development. Consideration of the Council's use of statutory powers to bring acquisitions to conclusions will be an important area of focus in 2024.</p>	
<p>5.2 Work with regional and national partners to develop a South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Destination Development and Marketing Strategy to support the tourism sector</p>	
<p>The Responsible Tourism Strategy was considered by the Convention of the South of Scotland on 19th February 2024. The draft Action plan will be published at the South of Scotland Destination Alliance Conference and the Responsible Tourism Strategy will be considered by Committee during March 2024.</p>	

5.3 Deliver an e-commerce support programme to 30 businesses to help them get online and benefit from new customer opportunities	
30 businesses have now been supported to have an online presence in the 2023/24. The programme will continue to be available in 2024/25, with support available for a further 30 businesses.	
5.4 Support local businesses with the costs of doing business through funding from the Net Zero Transition Fund	
The Net Zero element of the Climate Resilience programme funding of has been fully allocated to support local businesses in 2023/24. The programme will continue as part of the Climate Resilience Programme.	
5.5 Working with the Regional Economic Partnership progress action development of an Inward Investment Strategy during 2023/24	
The Council has been working with South of Scotland partners on inward investment plans, led by South of Scotland Enterprise. A South of Scotland Inward Investment portal is now available and co-ordination between partners is now in place.	
5.6 Support the delivery of Dumfries and Stranraer conservation area regeneration schemes which provide funding to support the owners of the buildings	
Work continues on supporting the delivery of both Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes (CARS). For Dumfries CARS, the Council continues work with property owners to support the delivery of their priority projects and providing support for small grant property owners. In Stranraer, the CARS work on the museum is now complete. Work has also started on site at Gillespie's bakery and expected to complete soon. Work has also started on the Arches replacement shopfront.	
5.7 Develop and agree an updated Non-Domestic Relief Policy which supports the local economy	
A new Non Domestic Rates empty rates relief policy was agreed by the Council in October 2023 and notifications issued to all Non Domestic Rates accounts affected by the change in Empty Rates relief policy from April 2024.	

6. Investment in the region benefits communities and the local economy

6.1 Working with our project delivery partners support the development and delivery of the Levelling Up investment of £4.6m in Stranraer Water Sports Centre and 5.2m in Dalbeattie Rocks and Wheels

Both projects advancing with Stranraer moving at pace and now concluded its tender process with site start anticipated early in 2024/25. The Dalbeattie Project has encountered some issues that have reset its timescales in discussion with funders and will go to tender in 2024/25.



6.2 Progress the redevelopment of the George Hotel site in Stranraer through Levelling Up investment of £7.8m

2023/24 saw the commencement of construction works and consideration of future operating options for the George Hotel site. The early part of 2024/25 will concentrate on identifying a preferred operator while works on site advance.



6.3 Progress the delivery of the Stranraer Marina expansion project and develop the full business case to confirm Borderlands Growth Deal funding






The revised Outline Business Case has been accepted by funders and work on the technical design phase (RIBA Stage 4) instructed and ongoing. Early 2024/25 will see further engagement on the Marina project ahead of statutory consent submissions.



6.4 Support funding for the development of the Old School, Thornhill project by providing capital match funding of £300,000 towards the projects RFGF award of 1.1m and to manage the grant award on behalf of the government

The project is now complete with the final grant claim and award made.



6.5 Support funding for the development of the Lockerbie Hub project by providing capital match funding of £775,000 toward the projects RCGF award of 2.6m and to manage that grant award on behalf of the government	
<p>The Council has supported the project whilst it had to adapt to changes in its delivery partnership. By the end of March 2024 a contract has been tendered for the project delivery with contractor appointment expected soon. Site works will commence in early 2024/25.</p>	
6.6 Support further development of the Annan harbour regeneration project, working with the community through the Annan Harbour Trust	
<p>Grant funding agreement for the Annan Harbour Action Group was signed in December 2023 allowing the group to continue of the employment of its development staff. UK Government have indicated their intention to award further Levelling Up funding to the project.</p>	
6.7 Progress the development of the new Local Development Plan 3	
<p>The Council has made progress with gathering evidence and have started work drafting the Evidence Report for Local Development Plan 3. The transport modelling work for Dumfries has been commissioned and work is ongoing with regard to landscape sensitivity studies. Progress has been slower than the team had programmed due to awaiting further guidance on Play Sufficiency Assessments from the Scottish Government.</p>	
6.8 Secure improvements in capacity and capability of the Councils Development Management service to meet needs of customers and developers, through the implementation of recommendations from the independent review	
<p>All internal recruitment has been completed with staff in post and a recruitment campaign homepage on the Council's website has been completed progressing to external recruitment in 2024/25. Further capacity has been secured working with partners to enable the service to address backlogs.</p>	
6.9 Implement the early actions in the new Vacant and Derelict Land and Property strategy	
<p>Strategic Housing Investment Plan update presented to Members in January 2024 including recommendation to support regeneration of empty property in Dumfries High Street for Mid Market Rent properties. Works have also commenced at the Former Mercury Hotel in Moffat to demolish the derelict building. The Council have been in regular dialogue with the site owner and the local community to ensure action is taken.</p>	

Case Studies

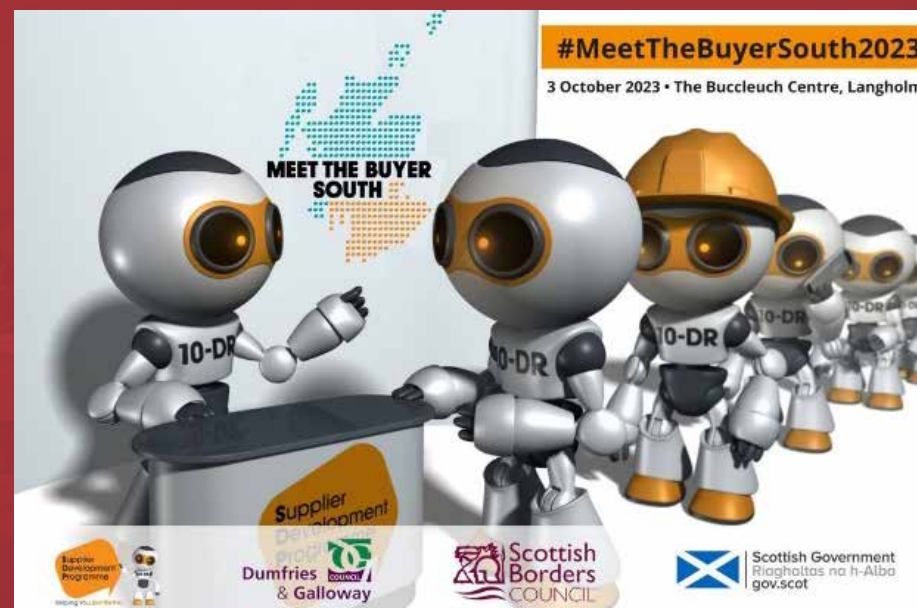
Supplier Development Programme

The Supplier Development Programme is a business support initiative. It is a partnership of local authorities, Scottish Government and other public bodies working together to bring free support in terms of tendering to Scottish based small to medium enterprises (SMEs). Dumfries and Galloway Council continues to work in partnership with the Supplier Development Programme to maximise the opportunities available to SMEs and local enterprises to encourage bidding for Council tenders or sub-contracts.

So that we can target local businesses, make them aware, and help them to participate in the procurement process, a programme of supplier engagement events alongside training, tools and support has been developed. Local suppliers who are interested in supplying goods, works and services were invited to free events throughout the year to speak with procurement experts and partners about upcoming contracts and opportunities. The Council has been looking for businesses which are interested in bidding for contracts in many sectors and areas such as legal services, fleet maintenance, social care, food supply, construction, and roads.

A Meet the Buyer Event took place in Langholm in October 2023 which was aimed at fostering business partnerships and economic growth. The event was hosted jointly by Dumfries and Galloway Council alongside Scottish Borders Council, South of Scotland Enterprise and the Supplier Development Programme. It presented an excellent opportunity for local

businesses of any size to connect with potential buyers, supply chains and business partners. It emphasised the range of support available to businesses, including the free tender training being delivered by the Supplier Development Programme. The event saw 167 attendees on the day with feedback being very positive.



An online survey was distributed to all that attended Meet the Buyer South 2023. Of the responses received, 100% of buyers at the event felt the event helped make public sector contracts more accessible to SMEs, with one comment from a supplier being that the event was 'Well organised-much better than I had anticipated. The calibre of exhibitors and guest speakers was exceptional.'

By collaborating on the Meet the Buyer South event, the Council aimed to facilitate constructive relationships between buyers and suppliers, fostering economic development and job creation in the region. Our Council’s commitment to the Supplier Development Programme will continue in 2024/25 with one event already planned for April 2024 and a further two later in 2024. Contract opportunities continue to be promoted via social media platforms and have also been promoted by Business Gateway local communication channels.

We currently have a procurement spend of approximately £200 million per annum with 34.5% of this being spent directly with local businesses.

Local Employability Programme

This work has supported over 600 individuals from across the region to engage with and progress on their employability journey, with well over 100 progressing onto positive destinations; and others continuing to be supported.

In 2023 the Council launched Placement Plus with an investment of £350,000, providing 30 paid placements within the Council for individuals across the region. Placement Plus is designed to support unemployed people living in the region with the opportunity to gain real work experience within the Council.

Placements were provided by a range of Council services including roles such as Receptionists; Digital Support; Library Services; Community Assets and Roads and Waste Operatives. Placements were available across the region from Stranraer to Annan, providing opportunities for people living across the region. Successful candidates ranged from age 16 – 55.

David’s story

David* is a 26-year-old male who lives in the West of the region. Prior to starting Placement Plus he was claiming Universal Credit and had limited work experience due to a lack of opportunity in his local area.

At the end of 2023 he applied for the position of Street Scene Operative with Dumfries and Galloway Council through the Placement Plus programme where he was successful in gaining a six-month paid placement commencing January 2024.



David was supported by an Employability Key Worker to ensure he had what he needed to take up the placement and was offered a Better Off in Work Calculation to alleviate any concerns or answer any questions about coming off benefits and into paid employment which can be overwhelming initially.

As part of the Placement Plus offer, individuals are offered training to support them in their new role and to help build their skills and knowledge when applying for future roles. David has undertaken training in Data Protection, Safe use of Industrial Equipment, Banksman and Working at Heights. He has plans to do more.

Since starting with our Council David used his first wage to obtain his provisional driving licence and pass his theory test. Using 'No One Left Behind' funding, Employability and Skills service has been able to provide financial support for 10 driving lessons to enhance his future job prospects with the ultimate goal of applying for seasonal work after completion of Placement Plus. In his words

"I am loving my job, can't wait to get on the roads and I couldn't do it without you guys."

He has improved his basic and workplace skills and is extremely motivated to prove he is a willing and valuable member of the Street Scene Team.

UCI Cycling World Championships

During July and August 2023 Scotland played host to the UCI (Union Cycliste International) 2023 Cycling World Championships, the biggest cycling event in history. It was held over 11 days, across 10 host locations in Scotland and integrated the para-World Championships into the schedule of the mainstream World Cycling Championships for the first ever time. Dumfries and Galloway Council secured the 2023 UCI World Para-cycling Championships for the region,



which took place from 9 to 12 August 2023. Project partners worked closely to deliver an event that celebrated the endurance and inspirational qualities of the para-cyclists and showcased Dumfries and Galloway as a vibrant destination for international sporting events. The Championships welcomed 59 different countries with athlete representation to Dumfries and 411 competitors.

110 individuals volunteered a total of 3,018 hours and the estimated total audience of spectators across all days was 3,100.

Based on all the sources of information gathered for this project it is estimated that the direct economic impact of the World Paracycling Championships in Dumfries and Galloway

was £1,888,277. A total of £1,003,167 was generated for the accommodation sector in Dumfries & Galloway from 4,532 bed nights. A further £546,634 was spent by athletes/teams, spectators and event staff on food, drink, and other items. £338,476 was spent by organisers, with contractors/suppliers based in Dumfries & Galloway further boosting the regional economy.

One in three spectators surveyed now have an improved impression of Dumfries and Galloway, with the remaining 65% already having a positive view. 85% of non-local spectators intend to return to Dumfries and Galloway.

The council's strategic investment in the UCI event aligns with its broader economic development goals, including enhancing the visitor experience, supporting local businesses, and promoting responsible, long-term collective benefits for the region.

2018-2023 Delivery Phase of the Galloway Glens project scheme

The aim of the Galloway Glens Scheme was to 'connect people to the heritage' of the Ken/Dee River valley, while boosting the local economy and supporting sustainable communities. Progressed from 2018 and 2023, and primarily funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, with a grant of £2.7m.

The scheme has overseen more than £6m investment including creating footpaths, archaeological surveys, transforming farmland and forest. Over 75% of the spend



has stayed in the region with more than 190 local businesses involved.

The project aimed to harness the amazing cultural heritage of the valley to tackle today's problems- from the departure of young people from the region, through to responding to the climate and biodiversity crises. More than 40 projects were supported, and highlights of the work includes:

- 10 new or refurbished community buildings (The Smiddy at Balmaclellan, Crossmichael Church Hall, The Hearse House, Crossmichael, Dalry Town Hall, New Galloway Town Hall, The Toll Booth, Kirkcudbright Dark Skies, Wildlife hub and education building at Muirdrochit, Toilets at the Otter Pool and Heart of Galloway Visitor centre)
- 15 Intern positions supported at organisations such as the Galloway fisheries trust, Better Lives Partnership,



Castle Douglas Development Trust and the Carsphairn Community Woodland.

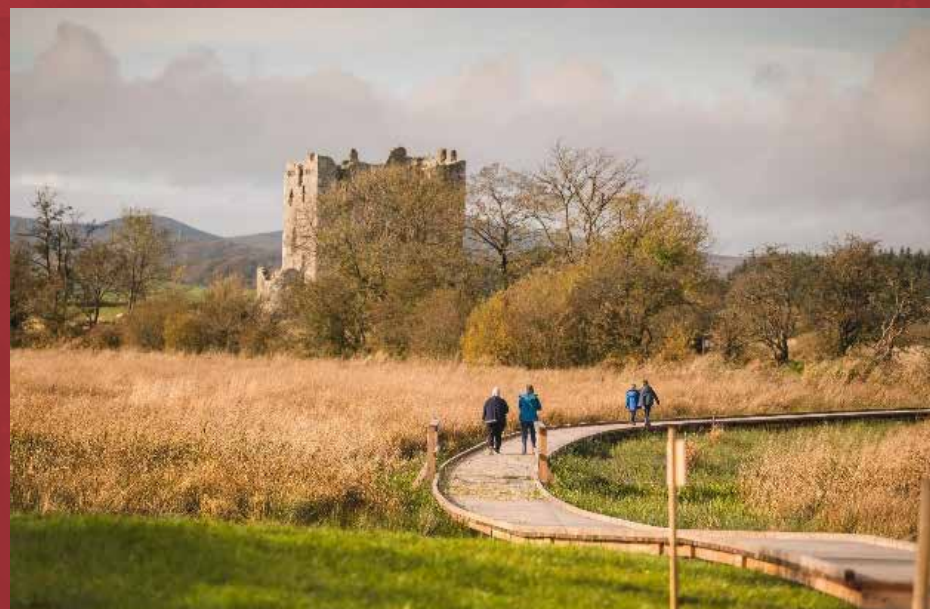
- 206 hectares of land brought into conservation management- Threave Nature Reserve and Black Water of Dee Restoration.
- 23 miles of footpath installed or improved – including 4 bridges- Pack Road from Polmaddy to Carsphairn, Path from Castle Douglas to Threave Nature reserve and on to Bridge of Dee and Restoration of Paddy line to footpath from Gatehouse of Fleet to Mossdale.
- 21,000 attendees at public events covering subjects from ancient maps to geese, arts and sciences. Reaching audiences of 15,000 plus from all around the world.
- 95% of people rated the Galloway Glens scheme as 'good or very good' (of 420 surveyed)

- Supported the Loch Ken Trust which is now running one of the first community-led ranger services in Scotland.

The Galloway Glens Scheme has won plaudits on the National Stage, being seen as an example of good practice. Working with South of Scotland Enterprise, the Scheme was used as an example of Rural Economic Development for an upcoming OECD report, supported at each stage by the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere.

Ecommerce Support Programme

Dumfries and Galloway Council and Business Gateway service works to encourage retailers to develop Ecommerce sites to make their business more resilient and sustain the high streets of our local towns.



The programme provided 30 businesses with a 12-month free subscription to Shopify, which has 4 million Ecommerce websites around the world, and 2 days of bespoke 1-2-1 set up and training support. This programme will continue to be available in 2024/25 to support a further 30 businesses to have an online presence.

Individual Case Study

One business which benefited from the programme is The Pickle Stop. The Pickle Stop (run by Kevin Ellis) offers handmade chutneys and pickles crafted in Stranraer. As a small business, it prioritises quality over quantity, selling his products jar by jar.

Although Kevin already had a website, he needed assistance with upselling products and expanding sales beyond Stranraer.

To do this he used our ecommerce Support Programme to:

- Enhance the shopping experience with a more professional online storefront, moving beyond primary sales on Facebook. This change aims to attract new customers through word-of-mouth and encourage repeat business.
- Expand the market reach beyond Stranraer, where local market constraints limit sales.
- Include additional features on his site like a stockists page and a gift section, as well as an expanded product range. We will work together on writing copy and enhancing

product imagery.

Kevin's overall objective is to grow the business to a scale where opening a physical shop is financially feasible. Kevin has greatly benefited from this support. He has significantly improved his computer and IT skills during the support. He now possesses a clear plan and brand identity, along with a new website, providing a distinct direction for The Pickle Stop. Kevin has also successfully arranged a business meeting with a potential new stockist in Ireland, enhancing his ability to connect with customers and upsell other areas of his business.

The Parents Jumpstart Programme

Business Gateway and Employability services worked together to deliver support to entrepreneurial parents. The Parents Jumpstart was a 4-week intensive course designed to empower those parents looking to launch their own businesses. The programme catered to a diverse range of aspiring entrepreneurs, from dog grooming services to hair extension specialists.

Funded by No One Left Behind, the Parents Jumpstart programme ran for four weeks and covered essential aspects of business planning, marketing, finance, and digital, tailored specifically for the challenges faced by parent-preneurs.

The programme concluded with a unique and potentially nerve-wracking challenge - pitching business ideas to a panel resembling Dragons' Den investors. This provided participants with a valuable opportunity to:

- Refine their pitches: Dragons' Den format forced participants to condense their business ideas into clear, concise, and impactful presentations.
- Gain valuable feedback: The "Dragons'" responses provided crucial insights into potential areas for growth, market viability, and overall business strategy.
- External perspective: Feedback from external experts allowed participants to gain an outsider's perspective on their business plans, potentially identifying blind spots or areas for improvement.

Feedback from participants indicates that the Dragons' Den experience, while nerve-wracking, proved to be the most valuable aspect of the programme. The Dragons' insights were considered to be:

- Actionable: Participants received practical advice and suggestions for propelling their businesses forward.
- Growth-oriented: The feedback highlighted potential areas for expansion and increased sales.
- Objective perspective: The outsider's view provided valuable insights that participants might have missed.

The overall feedback was:

- The programme was informative and taught the most important basics of starting a business.
- The sessions were very interactive and informative.
- The mentor, John, was knowledgeable, patient, and informative.
- The course was super informative, helpful, and it was lovely to be in a group of people that are in the same position as yourself.
- The programme covered a great deal of things and gave some pointers to apply to the business.
- The programme was informative and friendly and confidence boosting.

Travel, Connectivity and Infrastructure



The Council will support investment in the infrastructure needed to improve connectivity, active travel, help people access what they need in their community, revitalise places, and attract people to live, work, visit and invest in our towns and villages.

Strategic Outcomes

- Roads, paths, cycling and walking networks in the region are improved
- Communities are protected from the impact of floods
- [Sustainable travel](#) in the region contributes to net zero²
- The Council is a low carbon organisation
- People have access to services that are modern, efficient and responsive
- Digital connectivity supports thriving rural communities

² net zero - when the amount of carbon we add to the atmosphere is no more than the amount removed

The Sustainable Travel Hierarchy

Walking and wheeling



Cycling



Public transport



Taxis & shared transport



Private Car



Key Statistics



of roads – third largest road network of any local authority in Scotland

Remains the same as 2022/23



of Council vehicles are electric

Remains the same as 2022/23

24 Customer Service Centres across the region

Remains the same as 2022/23

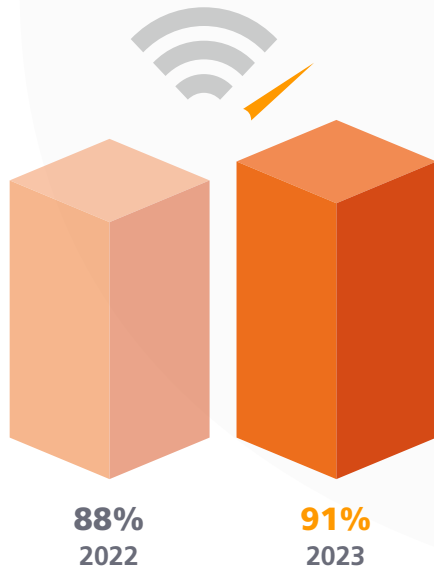


30% of citizens live at least 30 minutes' drive from a large community

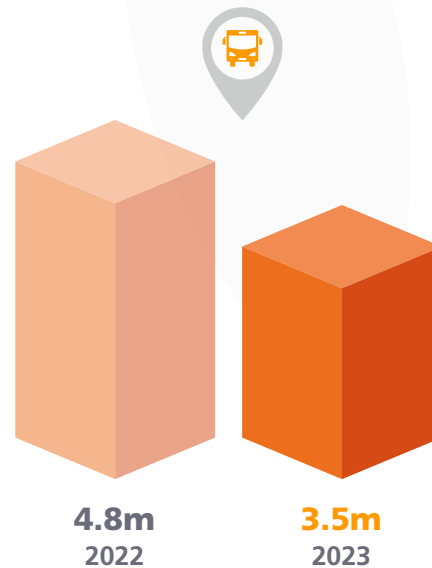
Remains the same as 2022/23



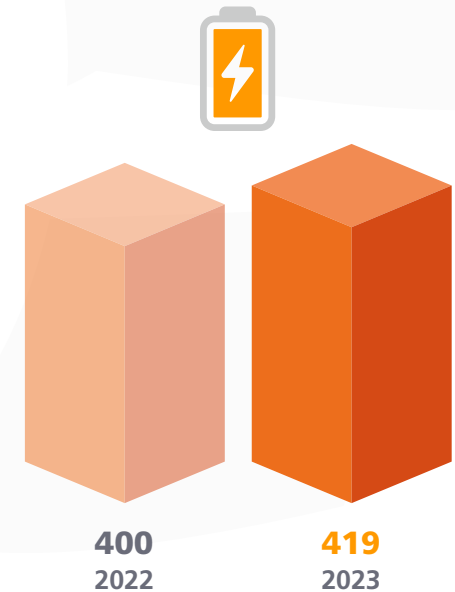
Percentage of households who can access superfast broadband



Journeys on our bus network



The number of electric car charging points across the region



In supporting local residents and businesses affected by flooding which includes a subsidy scheme for protection products, resilience support and engagement:



31

**property surveys
undertaken**



23

**properties purchased subsidised
flood resilience products**

Our Performance

Complete	Delivery has been completed	
On track and in progress	Delivery is on track. The project or programme is multi-year and key milestones met.	
In progress	Actions have progressed with further work required to complete.	
Not started	The planned action or activity has not yet started.	

Council Plan Delivery 2023-2024
Update as at 29 February 2024

2. Travel, Connectivity and Infrastructure

7. Roads, footpaths, cycling and walking networks in the region are improved

7.1 Work with the A75/A77 Action Group to lobby for investment in these strategic roads

A lobbying programme is in place and agreed with regional partners. Information on the planned upgrades to the A75 and A77 has been requested from Transport Scotland and correspondence has been issued to the Minister for Transport from the Leader of the Council requesting Scottish Government support to the improvement proposals. Members have taken the opportunity to lobby for investment in these strategic roads when meeting with UK and Scottish ministers.













7.2 Lobby for investment in transport infrastructure from both the UK and Scottish Government to improve transport and travel links across the south west of Scotland






A lobbying programme is in place and agreed with regional partners. Information on the planned upgrades to the A75 and A77 has been requested from Transport Scotland and correspondence has been issued to the Minister for Transport from the Leader of the Council requesting Scottish Government support to the improvement proposals. Meeting held with Department for Transport to discuss Union Connectivity Review A75 funding commitments.



7.3 Deliver the Roads Investment Programme, reflecting the increased Council investment, to improve our roads and associated infrastructure	
<p>Accelerated spend of £1.5m to repair carriageway defects utilising and trialling new road repair techniques has been delivered during 2023/24. Procurement processes are being developed for future years' increased capital investment. An additional 70 front-line roads operatives have been employed.</p>	
7.4 Develop a Dumfries and Galloway Parking Strategy which will maintain the social and economic vitality of our region	
<p>The Parking Strategy was agreed at Committee in February 2024 and the implementation will take place in 2024/25.</p>	
7.5 Implement the Active Travel Strategy which will promote active and sustainable travel	
<p>After the Active Travel Strategy adoption in October 2022, activity has focussed on the promotion of active travel opportunities across the region. This has included promotion of the strategy in meetings with communities and in public events. This includes the completion of the active travel mitigation works to Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary.</p>	
7.6 Implement the 20mph Speed Limit Schools Programme which will promote accessible and safer routes to school.	
<p>The Programme will be substantially complete at end of March 2024. There will be ongoing progress with permanent Traffic Regulation Orders for schools and also post-implementation traffic surveys to assess compliance which will be progressed as business as usual.</p>	
7.7 Implement the 20mph Speed Limit Communities Programme which will promote accessible and safer routes	
<p>Works in Stranraer and Annan have been completed with works ongoing in other areas based on a priority basis.</p>	
7.8 Implement Phases 2 and 3 of the Memorial / Headstone Safety Project	
<p>All very high risk and high risk cemeteries (totalling 31 out of 215 cemeteries) have been inspected and following communication with communities, the contractors are in the process of making memorials/headstones safe where no contact has been made with the lair owner.</p> <p>Phase 3 of the project is underway and inspections undertaken early in 2024 which will continue to be progressed during 2024/25.</p>	

7.9 Develop a Dumfries and Galloway Burial Grounds Strategy which will meet the needs of our citizens of all faiths	
<p>A draft Burial Strategy based on the consultation data which will be presented to Elected Members in April 2024.</p>	
8. Communities are protected from the impact of floods	
8.1 Publish the Newton Stewart Flood Protection Scheme which will include community and stakeholder consultation	
<p>The Newton Stewart Flood Protection Scheme has been published. The next phase of the project to confirm the scheme is being progressed during 2024/25.</p>	
8.2 Complete the works on the Stranraer Flood Protection Scheme which will reduce the impact of flooding on the town	
<p>Activity included the completion of the Thorney Croft works and Station Street. The scope of Works at A77 downstream were extended to futureproof mitigation measures which are now programmed for completion in early 2024/25.</p>	
8.3 Continue to support local residents and businesses affected by flooding which will include a subsidy scheme for protection products, resilience support and engagement	
<p>31 property surveys undertaken with 23 properties purchasing subsidised flood resilience products. Property surveys and subsidised flood resilience products will continue to be offered to support local residents and businesses affected by flooding.</p>	
9. Sustainable travel in the region contributes to net zero	
9.1 Develop solutions for community transport with partners and stakeholders and the regions community transport providers	
<p>A proposal, in principle, was agreed at the Community Planning partners to fund a Community Transport Development Officer (based with Third Sector D&G) from 2024/25 to drive forward the establishment of a Community Transport social enterprise by early 2026. Funding for the post to be provided by public sector partners including the Council.</p> <p>Activity continues to focus on the delivery of the Transport Hub Pilot and delivery of the Health Volunteer Car Scheme.</p>	

9.2 Work with SWestrans to help develop and implement a public transport model based on needs, at a community level, supporting local bus and community transport and also commercial local bus and rail	
<p>Following decisions at Full Council on 27 June 2023 and SWestrans Board on 30 June 2023, all current local bus services due to terminate August 2023 have been extended for 1 year. Current activity is focussing on completing the appraisal of bus service options, developing possible solutions and engagement with stakeholders/communities prior the production of tender packages that will enable a more robust demand and supply model to be in place for contract renewals in August 2024.</p>	
10. The Council is a low carbon organisation	
10.1 Approve and implement a refreshed Council Waste Strategy which will improve reuse and recycling rates	
<p>Waste, Recycling and Re-use Strategy 2023-2030 was approved by Committee in October 2023. Work commenced on the development of a detailed implementation plan with priority attached to a number of projects, designed to increase rates of recycling and optimise the processing of residual waste.</p>	
10.2 Develop a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy that will set out how we decarbonise building across the region, ahead of delivery from 2024	
<p>The Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy was agreed by Committee in November 2023 and submitted to Scottish Government in December 2023.</p>	
10.3 Working with partners identify and progress opportunities for district heating solutions focusing on Dumfries and Stranraer initially	
<p>This project has been delayed due to competing demands for Council resources diverted to the development of the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy, which was a legal requirement of the Scottish Government. Progress on district heating solutions is programmed during 2024/25.</p>	
10.4 Reduce energy usage and improve energy efficiency in Council buildings, reducing costs	
<p>At the end of December 2023, energy usage figures show a reduction in consumption in comparison to the same period in 2022. Energy audits undertaken across the Council's estate are complete and have identified spend to save proposals which in the main involve the introduction of LED (Light Emitting Diode) lighting and associated controls, which maximises saving benefits.</p>	

<p>10.5 Address Council travel arrangements which will reduce travelling and improve efficiency</p>	
<p>The transport team is working across the Council to maximise the shared use of pool cars.</p>	
<p>11. People have access to services that are modern, efficient and responsive</p>	
<p>11.1 Establish a programme of service change to support future financial sustainability and prioritisation of services, supported with additional capacity in specialist financial and analytical skills and resources</p>	
<p>A programme of change has been established with the Budget Panel and progress on this is reported to the Budget Panel each month and provides for a forward plan of activity for the Budget Panel agenda. Further work is planned to strengthen the programme arrangements and secure options for new operating models for Council services that can bridge the funding gap over the next 3 years estimated to be £30m. This work will continue into 2024/25.</p>	
<p>11.2 Implement digital service redesign of systems and processes for roads maintenance, leisure and sports booking and membership, revenues and benefits and internal recruitment, to deliver savings and efficiencies</p>	
<p>Improvements to the website were prioritised to enable digital service redesign of Council systems to support improved customer experience. Initial work has focussed on refuse and waste services for customers and this is based on the most frequency used online services. This includes a new online system for booking bulky uplifts was launched in November. Works have also progressed on the digital service redesign of Roads, Revenues and Benefits and Leisure and Sport, this is taking longer than initially programmed. The development of the website to support wider digital service redesign is progressing.</p>	
<p>11.3 Undertake user research with customers to ensure our services are simple, secure and easy to access and use online, leading to improved online services to help customers request, report and receive progress updates</p>	
<p>The Council has undertaken user research through an online survey and set up an external user-research group drawn from respondents to the survey who expressed a willingness to participate. This development is supporting website redesign and customer service development.</p>	
<p>11.4 Deliver a community participation and engagement programme which will ensure our Council services meet the needs of stakeholders</p>	
<p>Community participation and engagement officers are developing the programme in liaison with partners, with format and arrangements for a Working Group agreed and identification of possible topics. Meetings of the Working Group will take place during 2024 in place on featured topics and engaging with people with protected characteristics.</p>	

11.5 Implement the improvements and investment in Governance and Assurance Service to build capacity, improve efficiency and strengthen governance	
Through Policy Investment funding an additional three senior positions have been introduced which have built capacity and strengthened governance processes.	
11.6 Update our Licensing Board arrangements which will deliver a more effective and efficient consideration of applications	
Stakeholder engagement undertaken and work progressing in respect of the current Board set up and volume of business which will inform an options paper which will be considered at Full Council mid-2024.	
12. Digital connectivity supports thriving rural communities	
12.1 Work with Borderlands partners, commercial providers and the UK and Scottish Governments to maximise the impact of potential digital investment, ensuring digital infrastructure is delivered to benefit citizens, businesses and communities	
Borderlands Partnership application to the UK 5G Innovation programme was successful. Final project use-cases have been developed for UK Government. Borderlands Digital programme re-set is considering the implications of the 5G IP award and will report to the Digital Programme Board early in 2024/25.	
12.2 Ensure that those local premises not covered by digital broadband programmes are able to work with commercial providers to access high speed broadband, through promotion of UK and Scottish Government voucher schemes	
196 vouchers were claimed by premises in Dumfries and Galloway to fund connectivity as enabled by the Scottish Government Broadband Voucher Scheme.	
12.3 Deliver public access to wi-fi across all Council buildings	
The wi-fi upgrade and public wi-fi provision project is being delivered in two phases to 178 council buildings. The first phase has seen existing wi-fi equipment connectivity used where possible to provide public wi-fi. All primary and secondary schools are enabled for the new Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN2) capability and wi-fi, with survey work currently ongoing to understand where and how best to increase coverage within buildings to meet changes in use.	

Case Studies

Roads Investment Programme – investing in our roads

In February 2023, Dumfries and Galloway Council agreed an increased budget for the Roads Service of £30m of additional funding over the next five years. This funding will enable us to repair more potholes, improve the drainage of our roads, repair more bridges and improve the condition of our foot and cycle ways. However, its essential that this additional investment is used wisely to ensure the maximum benefit and value for money, so the Service has taken a staged approach.

A key priority is to build up our workforce and procure new contracts to ensure we had the resources – needed in place to deliver this major maintenance programme. In the last twelve months we have employed an additional 25 frontline roads operatives, bringing our total Roads Operatives workforce to 70. This recruitment has allowed us to repair damage to our roads while increasing our capacity and creating good quality local jobs. We are also developing major new supply chains to ensure we have the best quality contractors working with us and hope this is an opportunity to grow local employment opportunities.

We have invested in major new digital innovations to enable better planning of road works; these tools can make inspections and surveys quicker and better so that our teams have the best possible information available to them when planning road maintenance; and in turn we are able to make better information to be available to the public.

During 2023/24 there has been an accelerated spend of £1.5m used to repair carriageway defects which included the trialling of new road repair methods. This investment has enabled us to use recent innovations in road repair that



have been used effectively by other organisations to test their efficiency and effectiveness on our region's roads. For example, thermal patching is an eco-friendly repair system that provides permanent repairs to large areas of the region's road surfaces. The equipment reheats the existing road surface, bringing it back to a workable state where it can be recycled and used again; Spray Injection Patching enables the patching teams to spray filler directly into the pothole or road defect enabling defects repairs to be completed quicker. As a consequence of these trials, we have a much-expanded



- Clearer information about what happens when you report a pothole or other damage to roads and pathways.
- Easier process to apply for Blue Badges and disabled parking bays.

In addition, members of the public can sign up to subscribe to the Roads Works Programme weekly bulletin to receive information on roadworks taking place in their area of the region.

The increased investment in Roads Service enables us to plan the repair programme for the years ahead, ensuring we prioritise investment in those parts of the road network where maintenance is most needed.

programme of spray injection patching this year as this proved to be successful method for our road network.

Being able to provide the public with regular and improved information has been an important part of the Roads Investment Programme during 2023/24. We recently launched the new 'Roads, Transport and Parking' section of our public making it easier for customers to find information and carry out requests including:

- a searchable map of all the council-owned car parks in our region (a new transaction)
- New service alerts which will be used to highlight important issues for example, road closures (this is currently being trialled and will soon be rolled out)

Roads, transport and parking

Find out how we maintain roads and paths, public transport services and where to park.

Report a pothole or road damage >

Get bus timetables >

Find a car park >

→ Roads, footpaths and pavements

Find out how we maintain roads, paths and pavements, and how to report a problem with them.

→ Public transport

Get timetables for buses, trains, coaches and ferries, concession passes and mobility scooters.

→ Parking

Find out about Blue Badge parking permits and parking bays for disabled people, local parking restrictions and resident parking schemes.

→ Find a public toilet

Find a public toilet, and check its opening hours and available facilities.



Electric Fleet

The Council continues to look at ways to address climate change and work towards our ambition of being a net zero organisation. We are progressively converting to electric vehicles to support electrification of our transport. We have two refuse vehicles and 65 pool cars in our ever-growing electric fleet.

In 2023, a fifth electric bus was added to DGC fleet. This supports our rural communities with school transport and provides young people with the knowledge and skills to support the environment as we lead by example.

This year, the Council were successful in our bid to the Transport Levelling Up Fund and have been awarded up to £13.75m from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities at the UK Government.

The focus for the bid was on 'sustainable connectivity' across the region and the funding will help:

- Access to 'green' energy for transport and therefore future transportation for all
- Improve quality of the region's bus fleet
- Create electric vehicle transport hubs that work effectively to help regenerate centres providing better amenity for both residents and tourists

The Council's aim is to enable both local journeys and cross-region trips to be made using electric vehicles. We will purchase 16 low-floor electric buses ranging from 16 to 31 passenger seats and provide improved bus stop infrastructure at 100 stops along core routes linking into the travel hubs. Electric vehicles will lead to lower operating costs (energy and maintenance) as well as reducing NOx emissions.

Waste Strategy

The Waste, Recycling and Re-use Strategy 2023-2030 was approved in October 2023 and represents a significant moment in our regions approach to waste management. The strategy sets out a series of measures and actions that are intended to futureproof the Council's Waste Service to meet foreseeable legislation, contribute towards future and national climate change targets, improve its efficiency and customer service and improve the resilience of the Waste Service in a dynamic environment. Our vision is for our region's waste production to be reduced, and our repair, reuse and recycling to be increased, creating a region which is cleaner and greener helping safeguard our future.

The strategy has five key themes:

- Waste prevention, Reuse and Recycling
- Optimising our Kerbside Collections
- Household Waste Recycling Centre and Bring Bank
- Customer Experience and Efficiency
- Optimising our Processing of Residual Waste
- Maximising efficiency

Each of these themes is supported by a detailed set of actions that taken together will deliver our aims.

Dumfries and Galloway residents have embraced the kerbside recycling service, with the proportion of total household waste arising that is recycled increasing from 30.1% in 2020/21 to 45% in 2022/23, now higher than the Scottish average of 43.3% for the first time since the introduction of this as a Scotland wide measure of performance. We have moved up 5 places in the national rankings. The strategy looks to build on this strong performance.

The Council has been successful in a bid to the Scottish Governments Recycling Improvement Fund Small Grant Scheme and has received full funding for a kerbside collection of household batteries. Storage boxes are being fitted onto refuse collection vehicles and the Council has begun to distribute battery bags to all households.

Waste and Recycling Service Digitalisation

During 2023/24, improvements to the website were prioritised to enable digital service redesign of council systems to support improved customer experience. Initial work has



focussed on refuse and waste services for customers, and this was based on the frequency levels of current online services.

Following engagement with members of the public, we have redesigned and rewritten the most popular section of our public website, and also redesigned seven customer transactions, ranging from missed bin to assisted collection. We adopted a recognised design system to ensure our forms are accessible, easy to use and familiar. There is now a real-time-updated waste collection calendar and significant refinements have been made to the Household Waste Recycling Centre booking system. All these changes are based on user research, focussing on the needs of our customers.

For the first time customers can request a bulky uplift using our website - the ability to do this by telephone is retained. This means householders can now book in up to 24 hours

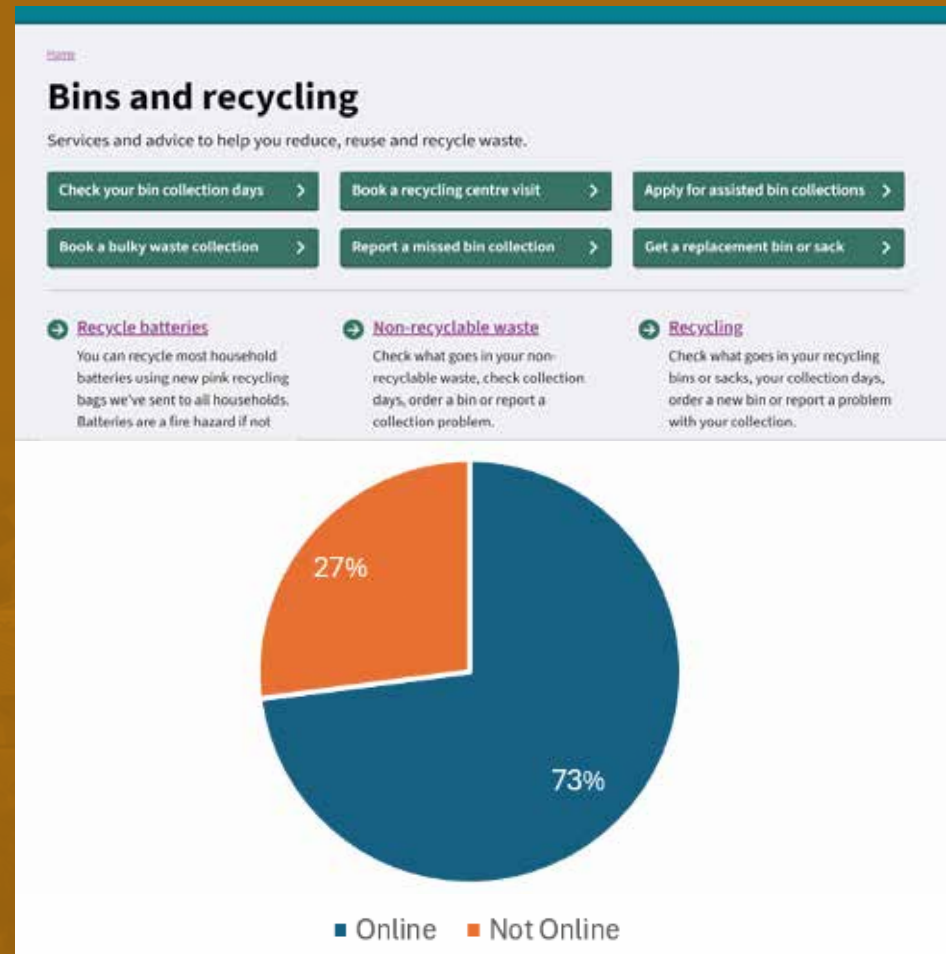
prior to the uplift if slots are available, while before they had to book the week before. Customers can also book their bulky uplift 24 hours a day, not just 9am-5pm Monday to Friday. In its first week of operation, the new online bulky-uplift system was used by 61% of customers booking bulky uplifts in Dumfries and Galloway with 39% still using the traditional telephone-booking method.

Since the online service was launched 73% of all bulky request have been done online. 27% of our customers still wish to call us or visit our customer service centres to book their uplift. This demonstrates the size of the demand for services to be available online, while still retaining the ability for customers to telephone or visit our customer service centres.

The bulky uplift service continues to be popular with residents and the online service has provided customers with a very quick and easy way of booking an uplift. Since the launch of the online service, demand for the service has increased.

From a service perspective, automation of processes has resulted in a reduction in call backs to customers as well as a reduction in the use of paper within the waste service.

The new section of the website launched on 1 November 2023 and can be viewed [here](#).



Education and Learning



The Council will improve education and learning opportunities to help all our children, young people and citizens fulfil their potential. This starts with pre-school, then school, before progressing into further or higher education or transition into work.

We will work with our partners to create and promote lifelong learning opportunities so everyone in the region can live a meaningful and fulfilling life, and contribute to their community.

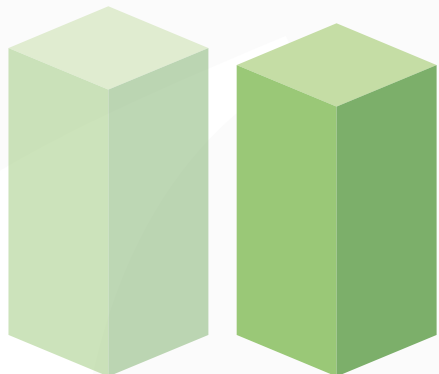


Strategic Outcomes

- Places of learning are inclusive, sustainable and meet the needs of local communities
- We get it right for every child
- Children, young people and adults transition successfully through all life stages
- Young people and adults succeed in what they want to achieve
- Participation in creativity and play is part of early and lifelong learning experiences
- Local people can build their skills and confidence

Key Statistics

Number of primary schools



97
2022

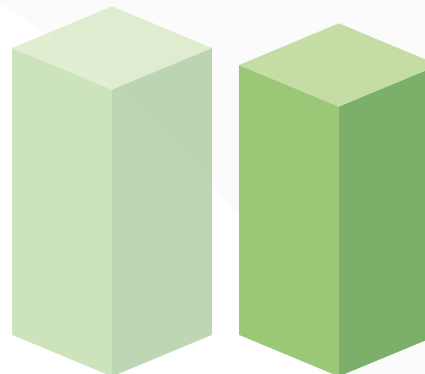
93
2023/24



secondary schools

Remained the same as 2022/23

The number of primary and secondary pupils

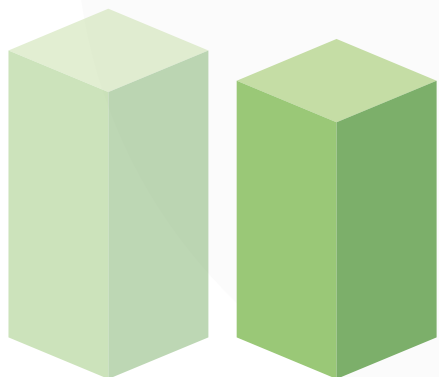


19000
2021/22

18360
2022/23



Number of school nurseries

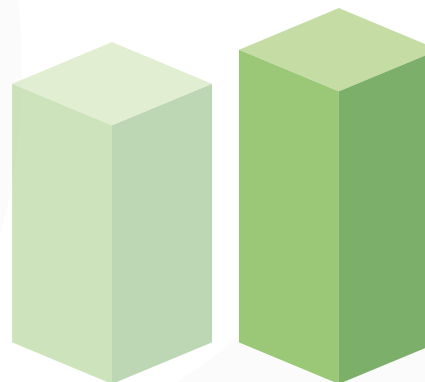


117
2022

109
2023

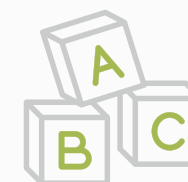


The number of children in early learning and childcare



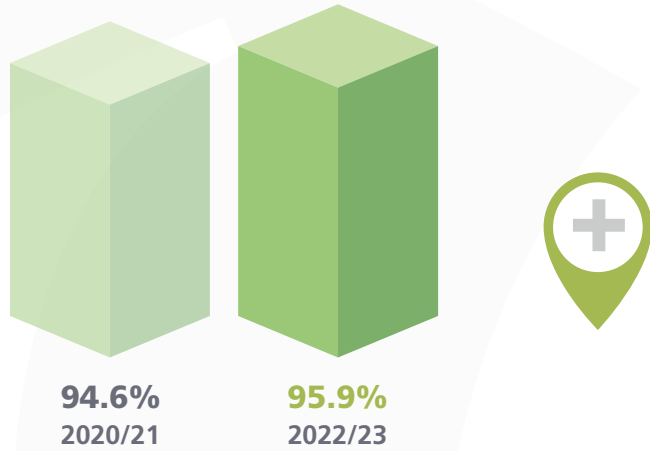
2000
2022

2350
2023

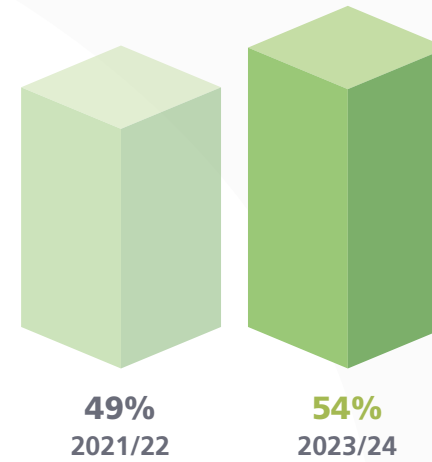


Key Statistics

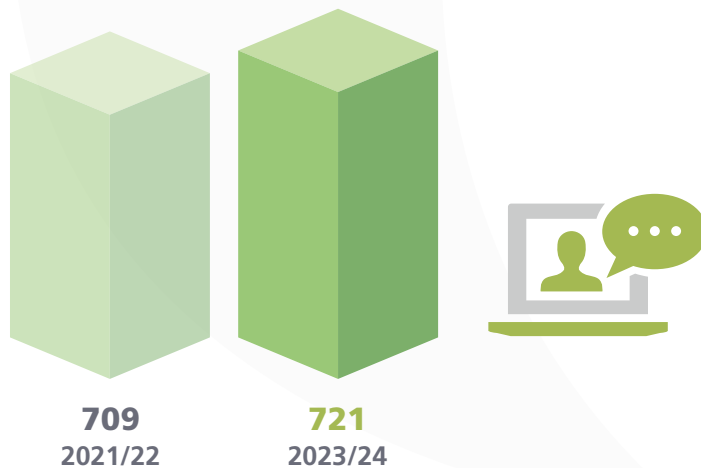
Percentage of school leavers entering positive destinations



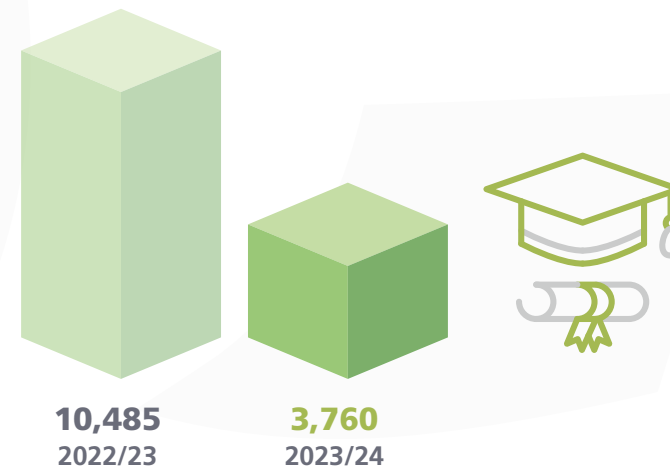
The percentage of job starters in the local area aged 16-24



The percentage of Modern Apprenticeship starts we supported



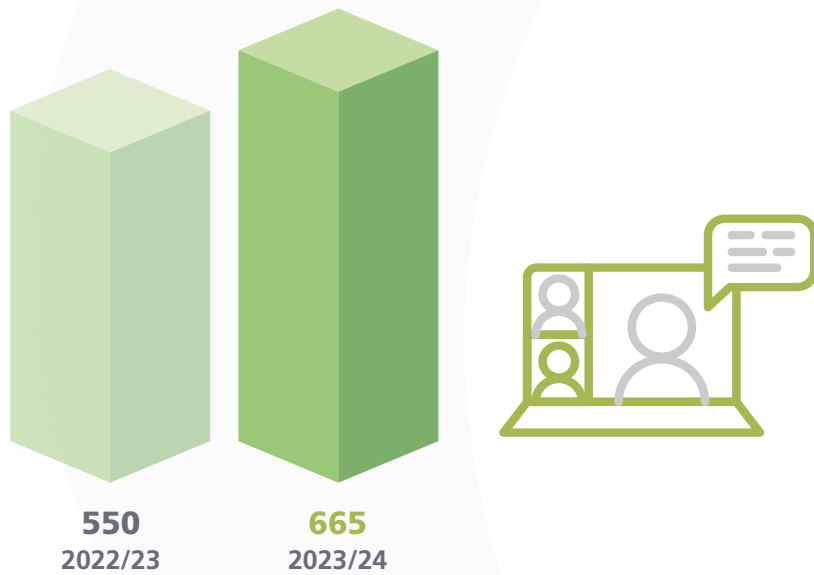
The number of adults engaged in lifelong learning activity



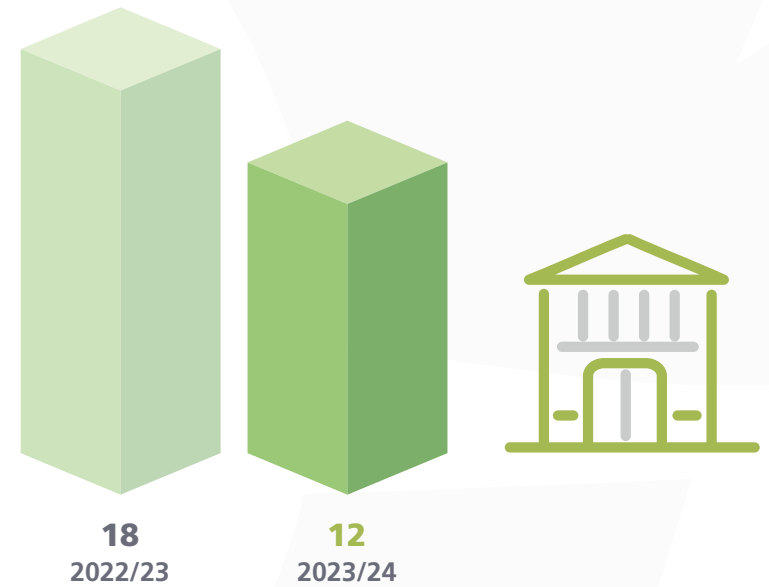
Note: the figure for 2022/23 included children and 2023/24 is adults only

Key Statistics

Number of online/digital classes per year for adult learners



Number of non school facilities providing adult learning







The Bookbug programme has been delivered throughout the year across the whole region. With in excess of 200 sessions which were attended by over 4,500 children and adults.

Storytime



The storytime sessions have been delivered throughout the year across the whole region. With over 30 sessions which were attended by over 400 children and adults.

Our Performance






Complete	Delivery has been completed.	
On track and in progress	Delivery is on track. The project or programme is multi-year and key milestones met.	
In progress	Actions have progressed with further work required to complete.	
Not started	The planned action or activity has not yet started.	


Council Plan Delivery 2023-2024
Update as at 29 February 2024





3. Education and Learning

13. Places of learning are inclusive, sustainable and meet the needs of local communities

13.1 Deliver model of education that meets the needs of the most vulnerable particularly around care experienced children and young people including alternative curriculum required	
A training programme has been introduced to provide video interaction guidance for our families and reduce staffing costs/ making our model of delivery more sustainable. Work commenced to create resources to support families including self-regulation resources, life skills and families activities. A Project Manager has been appointed together with 2 family support workers.	
13.2 Develop a sustainable model for our school estate by August 2023 and create an enabling team to progress the work	
Work has progressed on a learning estate strategy to deliver a sustainable model for the school estate. Progress on the strategy and the implementation of the strategy is being monitored through the Education and Learning Committee and work continues to progress on its implementation. Further work on allocation of resources to support further work is under consideration.	

13.3 Develop an updated agreed priority programme of investment in school assets	
<p>There is a current priority programme of investment in school assets which will be updated pending the final receipt of remaining condition surveys of the entire school estate. A small number of condition surveys remain outstanding from our consultant partners and once received it will be possible to determine the full extent of the impact on existing investment planning. The survey data that has been returned has been reviewed, to ensure that the current 3 year capital investment programme aligns with the findings of the surveys received so far.</p>	
13.4 Commence the new build of Dumfries High School	
<p>The project is due to reach financial close in March 2024. Members have allocated additional funding for the school build costs in the 2024/25 budget in February 2024.</p>	
13.5 Progress plans for the refurbishment of Dumfries Academy and relocation of Loreburn Primary School	
<p>Following confirmation that the Council had been unsuccessful in the LEIP3 bid for funding to Scottish Government for investment in both sites, plans for the refurbishment of Dumfries Academy and options for the Loreburn Primary School are to be considered by Elected Members early in 2024. This will include future options for both sites to enable Members to take a decision on preferred options for progress in 2024.</p>	
13.6 Review how the wider Council, community groups and other relevant partners can utilise available space in Schools.	
<p>This has been factored into the school modelling process as part of the learning estates strategy and will be progressed during 2024.</p>	
13.7 Agree status of schools who meet the threshold of <10 pupils on mothballing, from August 2024	
<p>The annual school census was carried out which identified school rolls. Using school roll information, there are currently a further two Primary schools where the roll is below 10. Officers will commence engagement with the affected schools. Officers have also engaged with Hutton community on two occasions. The first, at the start of the session (5 September 2023), was to explain the situation that Hutton is in and to ask the community to feedback any further considerations that officers should take into account. The second (10 October 2023) provided an opportunity for the community to feedback their views to allow officers to consider the most appropriate approach. From this meeting it was agreed that the position would move to enrolment in 2024, to determine if there is enough interest from parents to justify reopening the school for academic year 2024/25. Members agreed at the Education and Learning Committee in March 2024 to progress to consultation on the future of the school in accordance with the Statutory (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.</p>	

<p>13.8 Develop a workforce plan for Schools staff to support learning, build capacity and resilience, developing job roles and career pathways</p>	
<p>Education and Learning Workforce Plan 2024-28 agreed at Committee in January 2024.</p>	
<p>13.9 Complete the reorganisation of the management arrangements for schools of less than 100 pupils by August 2023</p>	
<p>This work was completed and Partnership Headteachers have been appointed to the two new dual school partnerships.</p>	
<p>13.10 Implement a Digital Skills development programme to increase the digital skills of teaching and non teaching staff</p>	
<p>Secondary Staff - Work is underway to deliver subject specialist sessions in use smart boards at the Inservice Days on 13/14 February. A small number of subject staff groups are being targeted to determine the effectiveness of this approach.</p> <p>Primary Staff - Discussions have been held with Strategic Groups to consider how best to provide the time in the working week for primary staff to engage in Digital learning and capacity building. Primary Head Teachers agreed this should form part of their 35hr working time agreement for the coming year to ensure staff are fully supported to deliver a digital curriculum.</p>	
<p>14. We get it right for every child</p>	
<p>14.1 Schools will adopt a rights based approaches to meet childrens basic needs and empower them to realise their full potential with all schools registered for, and achieving levels of, UNCRS RSS accreditation</p>	
<p>Quality Improvement Officers and Inclusive Practice Principal Teachers discussed RRSA progress with individual schools and signposted to good practice in other schools. 65 schools at Bronze, 25 at Silver and 6 at Gold. Ongoing support to schools and signpost to good practice in order to make progress to award.</p>	
<p>14.2 All staff, teachers and learning assistants are trained in Inclusive Practice approaches and schools undertake self evaluation and reflection of this</p>	
<p>Schools worked with Inclusive Practice Principal Teachers to identify next steps and training needs in relation to Inclusive Practice. Online and in person training offered and accessed. All schools in Group B have undertaken Nurture Training and have identified next steps and further training needs. Individual Schools have been supported to complete Inclusive Practice Self Evaluation. Next steps and training needs identified. These actions will be replicated with Schools in Group C.</p>	

14.3 Scale up intervention, early intervention and wellbeing models of service delivery for all children, young people and families	
<p>The Council's Social Work Services aims to ensure all children have an assessment and plan that involves them and their support network, identifies clear harm/ worries and safety/ wellbeing goals and a timeline identifying work to be achieved, reviewed, completed and within an appropriate timeframe.</p>	
14.4 Develop the role and responsibilities of Corporate Parents, ensuring our children, looked after and young people are provided with the opportunities and life chances they deserve	
<p>The engagement and involvement of children and young people is set out in the Corporate Parenting - Responsibilities Overview and sets out our duties in this regard. Engagement and communication tools such as the use of information leaflets for young people, their parents, carers and lead professionals across the partnership are in development aligned with the launch of the revised Corporate Parenting Plan by March 2024. Work will continue into 2024/25.</p>	
14.5 Work to ensure that our children, young people and families live in a safe, nurtured and loved home environment to keep them safe from harm including those in foster care, kinship care, residential care and/or adoptive parents/carers	
<p>The Council's Social Work Services aims to ensure all children have an assessment and plan that involves them and their support network, identifies clear harm/ worries and safety/ wellbeing goals and a timeline identifying work to be achieved, reviewed, completed and within an appropriate timeframe.</p>	
14.6 Ensure that any child in Dumfries and Galloway who needs to have a joint investigative interview will have one	
<p>Dumfries and Galloway Bairns Hoose Strategic Oversight Group introduced. <i>Vision 'All children in D&G who have been victims or witnesses to abuse or violence, or whose behaviour has caused significant harm or abuse will have access to trauma focussed support, recovery and justice'.</i></p> <p>Developed and introduced Scottish Child Interview Model for Joint Investigative Interviewing.</p> <p>9 Social Workers and 3 Police Officers completed training allowing for all children and young people to be interviewed underpinned by the new model demonstrating trauma informed and rooted in specialist knowledge and children and child development.</p> <p>Progress to introducing new model for all Joint Investigative Interviews.</p>	

15. Children, young people and adults transition successfully through all life stages

15.1 Promote access to early learning and childcare for eligible two year olds to increase the number attending

A social media campaign is in place that provides targeted information to families identified as being eligible to access to early learning and childcare. 169 children were already registered for a place, a further 234 families received targeted information resulting in 41 responses.



The Social Media campaign will be re-run and targeted information will be sent to families identified by Data Pipeline Scotland.

15.2 Support high quality play-based teaching and education and transitions to increase the number of children in early years achieving developmental milestones

The Council continues to focus support in services requiring improvement to meet the National Standard. From 1st October – 31st December there were 118 referrals to the service. The Early Years Team will continue to support settings to measure pupil progress against developmental milestones.



15.3 Review existing transition arrangements from early learning and childcare to Primary and from Primary to Secondary

This work was paused due to emerging requirement to revise School Enrolment Policy (out with P1 and S1). Timeline for this work revised- anticipated that Primary/Secondary Transition Policy will be completed by June 2024 with implementation in session 2024/25.






15.4 Standardise approaches to securing post school destinations through consistent approaches and improved use of data

Planning for sample Employability Coordination Group (ECG) has been overtaken by the need to gather more data:

- Employability Coordination Group links for every school
- to collate the process with the school
- share with Headteacher the role of the school.



Quality Improvement Manager and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to hold a meeting with ECG leads to agreed standard process for all ECGs.

<p>15.5 Develop and embed the Careers Education Standard and work with partners to develop a curriculum that supports children and young people to develop skills for learning, life and work</p>	
<p>Careers Education Standards are embedded within the curriculum across school. Skills Development Scotland presented to the Quality and Curriculum Team the offer to schools for Careers Education Standards. All secondary school have a model for embedding CES. Some work has been trialled with a few primary schools.</p> <p>Data from self evaluation will be analysed with key themes and best practice being shared with all schools.</p>	
<p>15.6 Increase parental involvement in decision making processes at key points in Education</p>	
<p>Engagement sessions continue with parents. These have been in support of the Autism Provision Consultation. This included face to face and online survey engagement. New Headteacher Parental Involvement professional development session took place introducing Participatory Budgeting national and local expectations. Parent Council updates continue to be shared with Parent Councils in relation to local and national opportunities, training and support. Joint Parent Council Survey with Dumfries and Galloway Parent Council Forum has been circulated with results due early 2024. There were 30 2023/24 allowance payments made and 5 2022/23 retrospective payments made to Parent Councils in 2023. A regional forum meeting with Parent Councils was also held during the year. Three new Parent Councils were established. 4 Constitutions updated with support of central staff. A new strategy was agreed at Committee in November 2023. A survey was also undertaken in June 2023 and will be repeated in June 2024 to assess steps to implementation.</p>	
<p>15.7 Ensure parents and families have access to quality, evidence-based Family Learning and Parenting programmes</p>	
<p>All staff and early years practitioners have completed evidenced-based training programmes benefiting 80 staff. An additional 10 new PEEP (Parental Early Education Programme) classes have started targeting P1 transitions. The delivery of Community Based PEEP continues across the region with an additional 11 classes running. Promotion has taken place through the Whole Family Support Workstream and that has involved targeted promotion at those who need it most.</p> <p>Undertaken a Parental Survey with key improvement actions identified with a focus on pre-birth – P1 to ensure consistent evidence-based programme in place through National Education System.</p> <p>An additional 16 practitioners trained. Agreement in place through Early Year’s team to monitor the role our of evidence-based programmes in nursery.</p>	

16. Young people and adults succeed in what they want to achieve

16.1 Increase the percentage of children and young people achieving expected Curriculum for Excellence levels

Analysis of Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Level (ACEL) data has taken place, and shows that although the majority of Stretch Aims were met, attainment has not increased in line with National and Virtual Comparator levels. ACEL (teacher judgement) levels do not match Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) levels that pupils go on to achieve. Challenge conversations between Quality Improvement Officers/Managers and Headteachers have taken place in relation to ACEL Data. A Headteacher ACEL data day has taken place early 2024 to further support and challenge schools in this area. Attainment Advisor continues to support individual schools.



16.2 Improve levels of attainment for young people in the senior phase

All schools have had the opportunity to have session with the Scottish Government to carry out deep dives in their attainment data.



16.3 Improve attendance of all children and young people including those who are care experienced and those residing in the lowest 20% Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

Developed consistent coding guidance for schools, to be disseminated with relevant exemplification and case studies. This will improve consistency of coding and enable the Council to better identify schools requiring targeted support while providing an accurate attendance overview for Dumfries and Galloway. Engage with Headteacher to analyse attendance data and establish patterns/causes and use outcomes of data analysis to identify interventions/supports.












16.4 Reduce exclusions (rate per 1000) of children and young people in the lowest 20% SIMD and care experienced children and young people

Inclusive Practice Principal Teachers and Care Experienced Education Team continue to support schools to explore alternative approaches to prevent escalation to exclusion. Four Nurture Teachers have been appointed to develop Nurture approaches in schools in North West Community Campus, Douglas Ewart, Sanquhar and Stranraer Clusters. This continues to be a priority in relation to supporting pupils and reducing exclusions.



<p>16.5 Develop curriculum offer that increases the number and range of opportunities for young people to experience a broader choice of subjects and learning to support transition to a positive destination</p>	
<p>Initial survey completed showing consortia arrangements between schools and the range of options available to young people across all secondary schools. Further work to be undertaken in January 2024 to extend this survey to include college based options, virtual options and foundation apprenticeships. Following the in school option process, the Quality Improvement Officer will collate all option choice sheets from the schools to analyse the range of options and how equitable this provision is.</p>	▶
<p>16.6 Develop partnerships that increase the number and range of opportunities for young people to develop a variety of skills and vocational based learning</p>	
<p>Senior Phase meetings have taken place with further meetings planned. There have been meetings with Dumfries and Galloway College and Developing the Young Workforce, with a further engagement planned with all college and virtual school partners. The @SWConnects offer has been agreed for 2024/25. College and virtual offers will remain as 'status quo' following the committee decision to change the curriculum structure in June 2025 – giving an additional year for the proposed changes to take effect.</p>	▶
<p>16.7 Implement the Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy which includes supporting the Youth Council and Scottish Youth Parliament Members</p>	
<p>Youth Council and Youth Parliament Elections held in December 2023 and Induction programme underway. Over 3600 young people had their say. Events including Young Volunteer Gathering and 'Working at the Coalface' Practitioners Conference were well attended. There have been joint meetings of the Youth Council with Dumfries and Galloway Council and an allocation of youth councillors to Dumfries and Galloway Council committees.</p>	▶
<p>17. Participation in creativity and play is part of early and lifelong learning experiences</p>	
<p>17.1 Deliver the Bookbug programme which provides every child in Scotland with four free bags of books as babies, toddlers, three and five year olds</p>	
<p>The Bookbug programme has been delivered throughout the year across the whole region. With in excess of 200 sessions which were attended by over 4,500 children and adults.</p>	▶

17.2 Deliver storytime sessions and linked activities which includes partnering with the Scottish Book Trust	
<p>The storytime sessions have been delivered throughout the year across the whole region. With over 30 sessions which were attended by over 400 children and adults.</p>	
17.3 Provide a range of practical support for school staff to develop play pedagogy in primary schools	
<p>Navigating Your Way through Play toolkit launched in 2023 and online training delivered to teaching staff. Probationer training delivered, Sharing practice blethers taken place attended by 16 schools and 120 practitioners have joined GLOW Play Pedagogy Team.</p> <p>Play Pedagogy Principal Teachers visit individual schools to observe practice and discuss impact of change to practice.</p>	
17.4 Develop curriculum offer that increases the number and range of opportunities for young people to develop transferable skills	
<p>All secondary schools have developed a skills approach framework, based on a guide to meta-skills across the curriculum, Skills Development Scotland (SDS). SDS have led sessions in a few primary schools to consider why skills development is so important.</p>	
18. Local people can build their skills and confidence	
18.1 Deliver Wider Achievement programmes for young people, including Youth Scotland, Heritage Hero, John Muir and Duke of Edinburgh Awards	
<p>Wider Achievement programmes have been delivered throughout 2023/24. Over 30 wider achievement groups have been delivered. Work undertaken to provide the Duke of Edinburgh Award Centre with a detailed summary of the impact and voluntary contribution of young people in their local community. Plans are underway to have celebration of achievement awards aligned to the academic year following feedback from young people, parents, Carers and partners organisations.</p>	
18.2 Provide the Multiply Programme adult numeracy programme commissioned through the local employability and skills partnership	
<p>Procurement of the framework is complete and delivery has commenced.</p>	

18.3 Provide digital learning, literacy and numeracy support and English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) to local people	
<p>An online adult learning training in literacy has been delivered to staff along with a national Financial Literacy Programme. Staff digital skills upskilling has also taken place with the core delivery team. Enhanced training for ESOL delivered through Dumfries and Galloway College.</p> <p>Adult Learning literacy & numeracy drop-in classes are in place across the region. 17 ESOL classes are in place (face to face and online) along with 8 Conversation Groups, 4 self-study groups, 4 drop ins and 2 IELTS groups (listening, reading, writing). 4 new digital classes on offer across the region Promotion has taken place through No One Left Behind Groups, Employability Teams, Third Sector, Social Media, Word of Mouth, etc. Funding has also been secured for Teaching to English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL) to support the upskilling of staff, tutors and volunteers.</p>	
18.4 Deliver the Summer of Play Programme which will include which will include opportunities for young people aged 12-25 throughout the school holiday period	
<p>Grant process agreed and delivered as per agreement. Funding has been distributed to organisations (Council and Third Sector) to deliver holiday provision for children and young people over the summer holiday period.</p>	
18.5 Invest in volunteering including environmental and cultural opportunities	
<p>The Council is working with Volunteer Scotland to maintain Investing in Volunteers Accreditation and implementing areas for improvement such as the production of the Volunteer Handbook and the ongoing training of champions cross Council to ensure consistency of approach. Training for officers delivered by Volunteer Scotland has raised skills and knowledge in working with volunteers.</p>	
18.6 Deliver a programme of accredited learning opportunities for adults to help build confidence, progress into further education and improve employability	
<p>Staff have been trained in SQA delivery and all core competences covering digital, literacy, numeracy, etc. Digital staff also trained to deliver the International Computer Driving Licence qualification and SQA Volunteering. SQA opportunities now available throughout the region linked to Adult learning drop-ins (30 attendees). ICDL regionwide delivery (40 learners working towards the qualification).SQA Volunteering delivered in Dumfries and Stranraer with over 30 attendees. Promoted through No One Left Behind, Employability, Third Sector, Social Media, Word of Mouth.</p>	

Case Studies

Digitally Delivery of Qualifications @ SWConnects – a virtual learning campus for secondary schools across South-West Scotland

Four Local Authorities in the South-West of Scotland have developed an innovative and transformative virtual learning campus for senior pupils. @SWConnects makes sure young people have the broadest choice of qualifications, accessing real time teaching online across all secondary schools in Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Councils. This was a project of collaboration which embedded the existing digital technology available in our schools to bring about real change, address issues of inequity in rural areas and improve outcomes in pupil attainment for 262 pupils in 35 secondary schools.

Across Scotland, all secondary schools are charged with ensuring young people can access the skills and qualifications they will require to pursue the pathway of their choice. Detailed analysis of the curriculum offers across the 40 secondary schools in Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire threw a spotlight on the inequity of opportunity available to significant numbers of 15-18 years old pupils in the senior phase of schooling. In some schools, pupils were only able to access 2 or 3 courses at Advanced Higher (AH) level and the choice of Highers was very traditional and often limited. By contrast, peers in larger schools or in schools geographically close enough to access consortia arrangements were able to choose from up to 14



AHs and a much wider range of qualifications to prepare them for the next stage of their learner journey.

Many of the schools across the South-West of Scotland are small and some are geographically remote. This stretches the teaching resource – both in specialism and in costs – and it is hard for schools to offer a wide range of subject options.

@South-West Connects aimed to address the inequity of opportunity by offering pupils in all 40 schools access to a digital hub offering a range of Advanced Highers and Highers. Digital champions, subject teachers, school management teams and Council Quality Improvement officers worked together to develop a model of offering courses digitally, aligning existing timetables and quality assurance arrangements. Careful planning and engagement alongside pupils, parents and Elected Members took place, working

to establish the gaps in provision, negotiating timetable requirements and ensuring base school support. All necessary progress and achievement reporting requirements were met for parents and school management. The excellent planning and continuous quality assurance has ensured the confidence of teachers and pupils, working together to find solutions for any local issues. We were able to provide places for quiet study for synchronous lessons and self study, access to appropriate technology for all pupils both at home and at school, we built teacher skills in digital delivery, and remote pupil study support. Through this, @SWConnects courses are broadly recognised by schools as having parity with class based teaching and the results compare well. Over the past 2 years, 262 senior phase pupils have completed courses with @South-West Connects and been presented for qualifications (111 in 2021/22 and 151 in 2022/23). Most were at Advanced Higher level (SCQF 7). Both cohorts comprised significant numbers of children from poorer areas with 34% of the cohort living within Deciles 1-4 of the Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation. 34 out of 40 schools registered pupils with the programme, in some schools the majority of their AH presentations are through @South-West Connects. Attainment is positive and broadly comparable with attainment at AH level across the four authorities– A-C AH passes in 2023 is at 76% The cohort has been a truly comprehensive group as it comprises pupils from every SIMD postcode.

We also worked partnership with Glasgow Caledonian University for the delivery of qualifications added valuable capacity in some subject areas. The University also offered face to face AH hub teaching for a large urban authority, thus

providing a direct comparison of the modes of learning for pupils and has formally evaluated the offer as part of their widening access agenda.

Stakeholder surveys and focus groups conducted in both years provide positive feedback overall with some suggestions for improvement that have been actioned. Young people like the wider options it has brought for subject choice and the relevance the online learning has in preparing them for further study and work in the future.

The digital delivery of qualifications has had real impact across the four authorities. This has been a low cost option as it used existing technology and existing staff, but through working together, having robust quality assurance, clear governance oversight and regular pupil evaluation, we have realised the ambition of a broadening the curriculum in small and remote secondary schools. Our four Chief Executives have monthly updates on the progress of the collaboration and have provided support and oversight throughout as the innovative collaboration tackles some of the resourcing and access challenges for our smaller remote schools. All our Local Authorities have ambition to raise attainment for all, with inclusion and equity central to school improvement planning. The digital delivery of qualifications through the @SWConnects model has directly impacted on this Council priority, and the model has demonstrated a proof of concept that is being explored for other areas of learning.

The project has been shortlisted as finalists for two high profile national awards.

English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) Learning

This provides community- based learning opportunities and in person classes to support learning English. It is committed to supporting all ESOL learners to integrate into British society and reach their academic and personal potential. It offers a broad range of learning opportunities to all learners; this is from Pre-Entry Level to Level 2. They have developed a pathway of learning between our service and Dumfries & Galloway College which provides learning opportunities up to Level 5.

17 ESOL classes are in place (face to face and online) along with 8 Conversation Groups, 4 self-study groups, 4 drop ins and 2 IELTS groups (listening, reading, writing). Funding has also now been secured for Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL) to support the upskilling of staff, tutors and volunteers.

Some of the positive feedback from learners include :

‘I can now have a conversation in English. I understand quite a lot of what is being said (though I struggle with accents)’.

‘I have improved my vocabulary. I can read a book in England and make orders. I have found a job’.

Learners’ Together Forum

The Learning Together Hub, which supports Learners’ Together forums across Dumfries and Galloway, specialises in bringing people together to gain new skills and socialise, boosting confidence and decreasing social isolation. It offers a range of support services aimed at bringing people together and providing them with opportunities to learn new skills. These forums contribute to local community learning programmes being delivered and encourage learner voice and co-production of programmes.

A local voluntary group from Wigtownshire has received national recognition for their local work to support learning and skills development within their local community. ‘Learners Together’ have won the ‘group award’ at the national Adult Learners’ Week Awards ceremony organised through Scotland’s Learning Partnership. Formed in 2018 the group have gone from strength to strength over the last few years supported by the Council and have attracted over £98,000 of external funding to provide a range of courses and learning opportunities such as driving theory, arts and crafts, cookery, family events, mental health and wellbeing support, funding a community garden project and many more. The award is testament to the members of the group who have overcome their own personal challenges and barriers in order provide a vital Service to their community.

Health and Wellbeing



Empowering local people to lead independent, happy and healthy lives is an important role for the Council. We also work with partners to ensure local people can access high-quality, affordable homes that support their wellbeing.

High levels of health and wellbeing increase life expectancy, reduce the impact from illness and encourage positive outcomes for children, young people and adults.

By building resilience we can prevent problems from arising in the first place. By intervening early, we support people achieve better results.

People and communities are at the heart of everything the Council does. Working with partners – the NHS and local Health and Social Care Partnership - is vital if we are to help our communities access health and care services tailored to their needs.

We will continue to promote positive physical and mental health, wellbeing and enable those who need social care to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

Strategic Outcomes

- Prevention and early intervention assist people to have independent lives
- Access to personal support and care helps keep people safe
- People are active, resilient and improving their health and wellbeing
- Help is provided to tackle the causes and effects of poverty, inequality and increased cost of living
- People have access to high quality, affordable housing that supports their independence, prosperity and wellbeing



Key Statistics

Life Expectancy

Dumfries and Galloway

81.1yrs

Female

77.4yrs

Male



Scotland

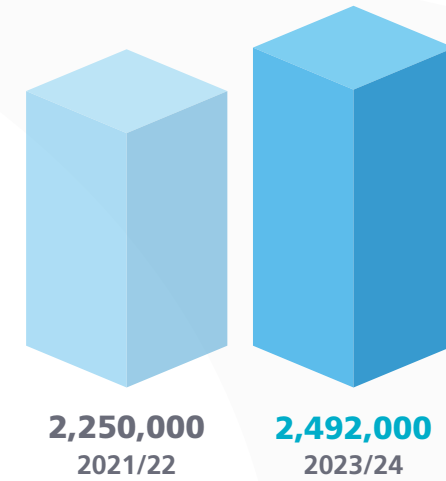
80.8yrs

Female

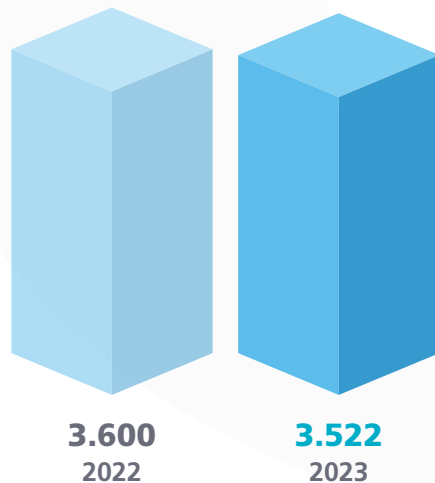
76.5yrs

Male

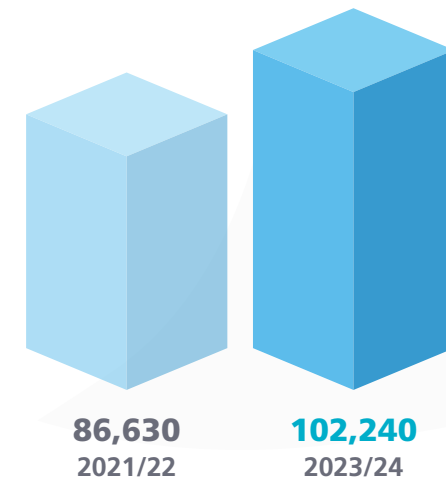
The number of care at home hours provided last year



The number of individuals that we keep safe in their homes through the use of technology

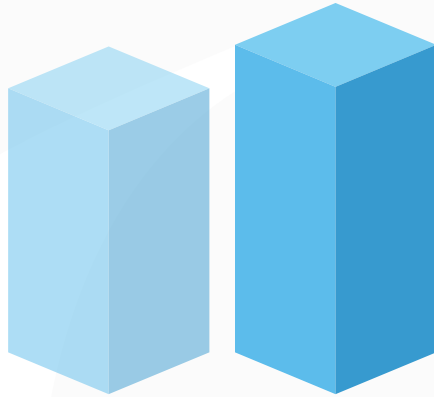


The number of calls through to our support services



Key Statistics

The number of people who claimed funding support

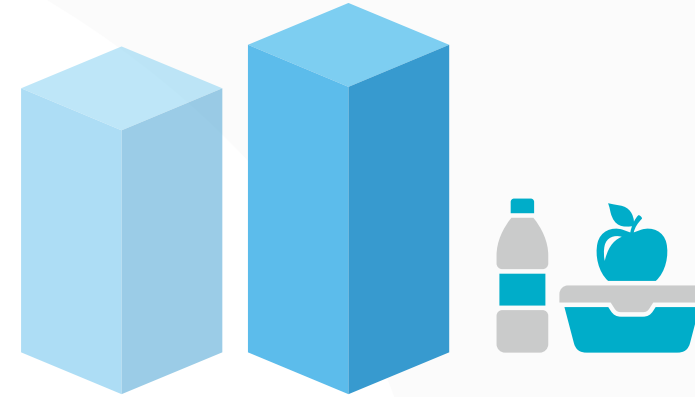


7,031
2021/22

6,337
2023/24

The Scottish
WELFARE FUND

The number of children who receive free school meals

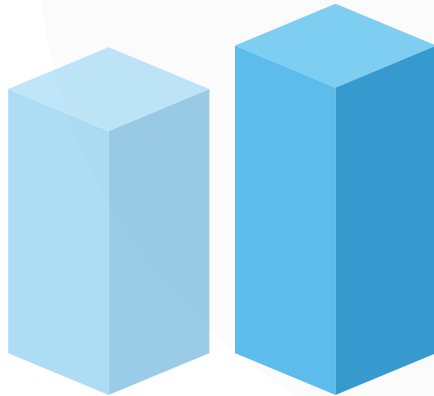


4,405
2022

3,911
2024



The amount of funding support provided

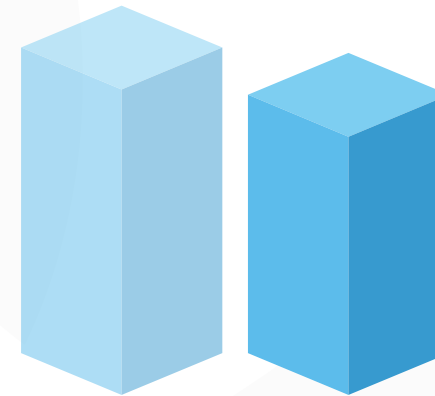


£1.479m
2021/22

£1.648m
2022/23



The number of school children who receive school clothing grant



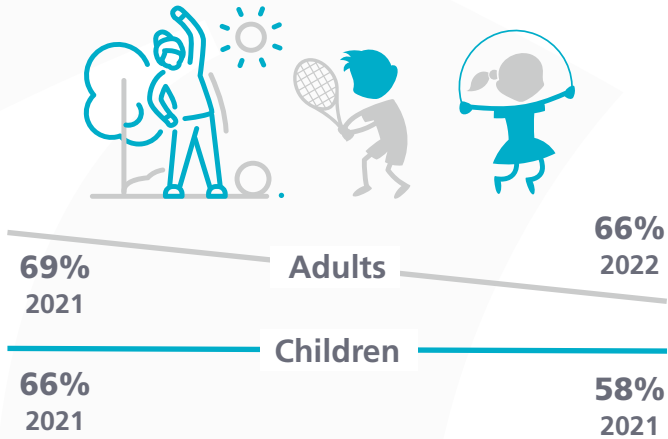
4,034
2022

3,877
2024

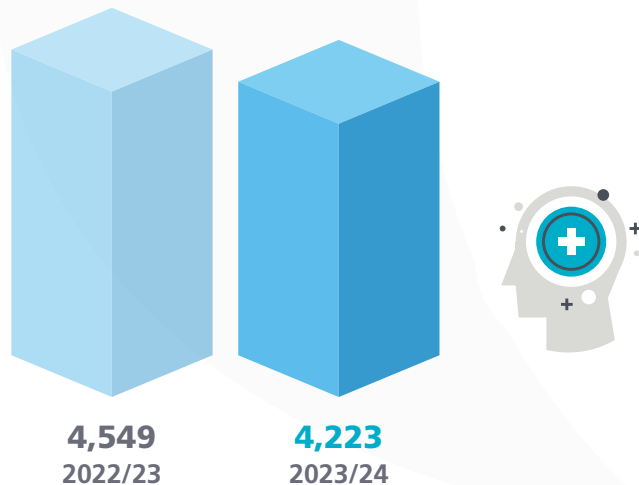


Key Statistics

The percentage of adults¹ and children² in Dumfries and Galloway achieving the physical activity guidelines



The number of adults and children reported improved wellbeing through the Council's lifelong learning



24

Council Libraries

Remains the same as 2022/23

17

Council Cultural Facilities (dgculture.co.uk)

Remains the same as 2022/23







12

Council Leisure Facilities

Note: last year an additional leisure facility was included in error instead of 13 there are 12.



Our Performance

Complete	Delivery has been completed.	
On track and in progress	Delivery is on track. The project or programme is multi-year and key milestones met.	
In progress	Actions have progressed with further work required to complete.	
Not started	The planned action or activity has not yet started.	

Council Plan Delivery 2023-2024
Update as at 29 February 2024

4. Health and Wellbeing

19. Prevention and early intervention assist people to have independent lives

19.1 Further extend the Single Access Point




The Single Access Point development work will be taken forward under the realigned council services structure. Project undertaken to review the current operating model of the Single Access Point in order to determine scope for further expansion and any subsequent resource implications. Secured funding for further 18 months for additional 7 call advisers.








19.2 Provide timely support to our most vulnerable through the introduction of an Adult Support and Protection standalone team

The implementation of an Adult Support and Protection standalone Team (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) was complete in May 2023.



19.3 Conduct a review of Out Of Hours provision to ensure a robust, safe and resilient service for the future	
<p>The Out of Hours (OOH) review process identified the challenges to deliver an OOH service which is sustainable and meets service requirements. Sudden absences – leave - training impact on the delivery of the service requiring casual cover at times.</p> <p>The review has been underpinned by an inclusive approach to looking at best value and an effective rota to meet service and workers requirements. The agreement to remove office working until 7am has benefited workers wellbeing and reduced costs. Further developments can be achieved to look at more radical options to deliver a more sustainable, robust and safe model. This would involve changes to shift patterns availability times and contracts.</p> <p>The OOH SW Standby in the West, launched on 31 March, whilst in its initial stages will allow a local and timely response to emergencies</p>	
9.4 Progress work on Adult Support and Protection in the priority activity areas of sexual exploitation, human trafficking, domestic abuse, financial harm, neglect, self-neglect and hoarding by delivering the training programme for all partners	
<p>Training delivered to Council officers. Multi agency Adult Support and Protection training delivered and Self-Neglect training launched. Financial Harm strategy developed.</p>	
19.5 Enhance our model of prevention, and early and effective intervention to keep our children, young people and families safe	
<p>Upscaled Family Support to increase the numbers of Senior Family Support Workers to allow the Family Support Service to focus on early support to families. This model allows families to get the right support at the right time. An App to support the care at home and in school Disabled Children with complex care needs. Parenting Programme Co-Ordinator recruited to map programmes currently being delivered, liaise with NES and work alongside services to organise, monitor, deliver and evaluate parenting programmes. Resources within Family Support Team now made permanent. Increased number of Family Support Workers utilising the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund allowing Family Support Team to concentrate on early intervention.</p>	

<p>19.6 Deliver holistic whole family support to provide the early and effective intervention to all children, young people, and families across the region</p>	
<p>Upscaled Family Support to increase the numbers of Senior Family Support Workers to allow the Family Support Service to focus on early support to families. This model allows families to get the right support at the right time. An App to support the care at home and in school Disabled Children with complex care needs. Parenting Programme Co-Ordinator recruited to map programmes currently being delivered, liaise with NES and work alongside services to organise, monitor, deliver and evaluate parenting programmes.</p> <p>Resources within Family Support Team now made permanent. Increased number of Family Support Workers utilising the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund allowing Family Support Team to concentrate on early intervention.</p>	
<p>19.7 Increase opportunities to collaborate with third sector organisations building on existing practices and projects in line with peer and community support on early intervention and prevention agenda for our vulnerable children and families</p>	
<p>A short life working group was set up to undertake an initial mapping of all working groups. The mapping quickly identified where working group agendas were overlapping in terms of areas of work, and attendance at management level. During the process of the mapping, findings were taken to subsequent GIRFEC Leadership Group meetings for scrutiny and oversight ensuring that all areas were covered, and all working streams included.</p> <p>A proposal was then drafted and brought to the GIRFEC Leadership Group for endorsement. In terms of where The Promise sits within the proposal, The Promise Partnership would be stood down in its current capacity, with the work of The Promise fitting better into other work streams, across the council adopting a One Council approach. To ensure that there was oversight of the work of The Promise, and to not lose sight of our requirement to ensure that we fulfil the work of The Promise by 2030, The Promise Team have created performance indicators (these are currently in draft form for endorsement within their own agency) that we plan to use to measure our progress and keep us on track. This will be overseen and supported by The Promise Officer and CSSaP.</p> <p>This proposal was endorsed by the GIRFEC Leadership Group. The next steps was to take this to the CSSaPP in December 2024, as change at this level required senior management agreement across the partnership.</p> <p>The initial proposal was agreed in principle, and is being taken CMT Meeting on the 17th January 2024 for endorsement before the changes can be embedded and communicated. During this time, the work to fulfil The Promise has continued.</p>	

19.8 Implement the Housing Options and Homelessness Strategy which will provide assistance to those at threat of homeless	
<p>The new 5 year Homeless Strategy 2023-2028 was agreed by Committee in August 2023. The Council has developed the Customer Engagement plan which is out to consultation with staff and key partners.</p> <p>Work is ongoing with Housing providers to secure temporary accommodation and increase permanent allocations. The upgrade work on the Annanbank development has now been completed in December 2023, increasing the available units of supported accommodation. Discussions are underway with key partners on improving links between services to support vulnerable service users and ongoing work to increase the temporary accommodation stock and further reductions in the use of B&B emergency accommodation</p>	
20. Access to personal support and care helps keep people safe	
20.1 Develop a service providing independent advice and support to promote informed choice for people accessing Self Directed Support, with an initial scoping exercise to explore the options available, consulting with service users, staff, and partners	
<p>The Multi Agency Steering Group together with our Health and Social Care Partners were presented with a full proposal taking account of options available, resource and financial implications aligned with the development of an independent service. The new 2024/25 service plan objective - Deliver on localised self-directed support in line with legislation and Scottish Governments Self Directed Support Improvement Plan 2023/27.</p>	
20.2 Develop a Complex Care and Support Team through implementation of a Complex Needs Plan, development of Dynamic Support Register, Positive Behaviour Support , Assertive Outreach Team and supported accommodation for those with complex needs	
<p>The alignment of the LD Clinical Team and the SW Complex Care and Support Team was concluded under the Mental Health Directorate.</p> <p>The Complex Needs Plan is currently in draft form and will be presented to IJB. The Dynamic support register is currently underway and regular meetings have been set up to review and manage this. ASARPP is being reviewed in conjunction with the High Cost Care Package panel and there is a hope this can be linked to the Dynamic Register work.</p> <p>Commissioning are arranging the first Complex Care Housing Group which will be a sub group of the Housing with Care and Support Group.</p>	

21. People are active, resilient and improving their health and wellbeing

21.1 Deliver Active Communities physical activity programme which supports older adults with long term conditions

A new Active Lives Pathway has been launched in partnership with NHS Dumfries and Galloway, built around the National Physical Activity Referral Standards this details a tiered approach to physical activity referrals from Health and Social Care settings. The new Active Lives Pathway will be embedded to enhance referrals across all Allied Health Professional areas.



21.2 Implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant which includes support for current and former Service personnel, especially with Education and Housing needs

A series of events took place throughout 2023-24 including: The Armed Forces Week events held in June 2023 included flag raising at the Midsteeple in Dumfries, promotion of Wear Your Uniform to Work Day and a day of activities in Stranraer; A Festival of Remembrance took place in the Crichton Church on Armistice Day, Saturday, 11 November 2023. The event was supported by Dumfries and Galloway Council's Armed Forces Budget with Senior Elected Members in attendance; and Services of Remembrance and Wreath Laying Ceremonies took place at War Memorials and in faith venues across Dumfries and Galloway on Sunday, 12 November 2023 in honour of all those who lost their lives in the Two World Wars and the many conflicts since then. Wreaths were laid at all War Memorials by members of Dumfries and Galloway Council, and in some locations, on their behalf, by Community Councillors and other organisations' representatives.



21.3 Deliver the Youth Information in Schools project across all 16 secondary schools which will assist with mental health support

Every secondary school is allocated a Youth Information Worker for two days a week, delivering 1:1 low level psychological support and a range of evidence-based group work and issue-based programmes. One day a week is allocated to staff for training, team meetings, planning and support & supervision and schools continue to engage with the project.



21.4 Support staff health and wellbeing through the introduction of wellbeing cafes for adult social care and programmes within Education, menopause blethers, wellbeing conversations, wellbeing checks and the delivery of mental health training programmes

Health and Wellbeing remains a priority for the Council and with the development of a new Strategy and 3 year action plan we aim to ensure that a comprehensive and supportive approach for workforce health and wellbeing remains in place. Specific work has taken place in Social Work Services and Skills, Education and Learning.



22. Help is provided to tackle the causes and effects of poverty and increased cost of living

22.1 Extension of free school meals to all primary school children

Free school meals are currently available to all pupils in Primaries 1-5 . The Scottish Government have indicated their commitment to the further expansion of free school meals. The next phase of expansion will be to pupils in Primary 6 and 7 whose families are in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment. The date of rollout for this next phase of expansion is still to be confirmed and a further update will be provided once this is known. Local Authorities and the Scottish Government continue dialogue to move forward on the commitment to universal expansion



22.2 Deliver the 2023/24 actions in the Child Poverty Strategy focusing on reducing child poverty, targeting our approach to care experienced children, young people, and the National Tackling Child Poverty Action Plan

Free IT equipment and internet access provided to low-income families as required. The most recent data from the health and wellbeing census detailed that 98% of children who responded have access to the internet at home. When schools identify families without access to IT equipment and the internet they connect them with local supports.



Low level mental health supports are available in all school settings through the award-winning Counsellors in Schools Team which are available in all School clusters in Dumfries and Galloway, and are complimented by School Nursing, CAMHS and other community-based provision

A full audit of Breakfast Clubs was undertaken in Autumn 2023 and added to the Consultation on all other Breakfast and Food Provision within our region.




To enhance the promotion of free or low-cost activities and days out for children all activities and programmes are shared through social media, e-mails and our Cost-of-Living Website.

22.3 Deliver the Cost of Living Programme which will mitigate the cost of living increases on citizens, customers, employees, householders, people experiencing poverty and inequalities and businesses

All projects that received funding from the Council's Budget have delivered their objectives.



<p>22.4 Deliver the Councils contribution to the Poverty and Inequality Strategy Action Plans which includes support for finance, energy, food and wellbeing</p>	
<p>We now have 38 agreed Poverty and inequalities Partnership Action Plan Projects which are being delivered by our 4 Sub-Groups. Sub-Group 1 and Sub-Group added an additional 8 agreed Priority Projects. 13 of these Projects have now been completed and the resulting outcomes and additional actions which have resulted from the completion of each are being gathered and added into our Reporting and Evaluation Matrix.</p>	
<p>23. People have access to high quality affordable housing that supports their independence, prosperity and wellbeing</p>	
<p>23.1 Support partners in the delivery the commitment in the 2023/24 Affordable Housing Supply Programme in Dumfries and Galloway</p>	
<p>Development meetings have been held during February with our development partners and the Scottish Government. This form of discussion ensures that all key stakeholders are able to support the delivery of the affordable housing supply programme in Dumfries and Galloway.</p>	
<p>23.2 Support the Area Based and Local Authority Flex Schemes to allow the leverage of additional funding for the delivery of energy efficiency improvements to privately owned homes, targeted at householders living in fuel poverty</p>	
<p>A meeting with the Scottish Government has been diarised to allow for discussion regarding future funding allocations. Further information will be presented to Committee at the relevant stage. Demand for the Local Authority Flex scheme continues to grow, and additional local capacity has been put in place to maximise delivery from within the region. .</p>	
<p>23.3 Allocate 1 million to the Town Centre Living Fund to support the regeneration of town centres by providing affordable homes within walking distance of existing services</p>	
<p>Delivery of the 2023/24 Town Centre Living Fund has been through a period of review, with the outcomes being highlighted to Members. This process is carried out on an annual basis to ensure that changes in scope and criteria can be considered. Also, the ongoing consideration of funding priorities is also part of this work. A report will be presented to Committee in March 2024 to consider funding allocations for 2024/25.</p>	

<p>23.4 Progress and roll out of housing protocol including accessibility and sustainability accommodation for our care experienced young people</p>	
<p>The Council is exploring the potential test of change Housing First for Youth Model and how this may look for the Region together with engaging with Registered Social Landlord Partners and other agencies to secure buy in to allow the project to commence. Further development carried to the 2024/25 service plan - Implement the Housing Options and Homelessness Strategy 2023-2028 which will provide assistance to those at threat of homeless.</p>	
<p>23.5 Invest in the Scheme of Assistance, providing health and social care partners with over 1 million to support care and repair; small repairs, home support; dementia friendly design and food at home services</p>	
<p>The Council agreed funding transfers to the Integration Joint Board for the delivery of projects that enable people to live as independently at home as possible.</p> <p>The delivery of Care and Repair, Small Repairs and Home Support, Dementia Friendly Design, and Food Train at Home help to ensure that some of the regions most vulnerable people are supported to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. Interventions range from the installation of level access wet rooms, to changing light bulbs.</p> <p>The Council maintains oversight of the delivery of these projects through the Strategic Housing and Regeneration service, who sit on the Care and Repair Steering Group. While the Adult Health and Social Care Partnership are responsible for day to day delivery, it is critical that the local authority is able to review performance in its statutory role as strategic housing body.</p>	
<p>23.6 Develop a masterplan for Lochside regeneration working with local communities and Wheatley Homes South to support new investment and opportunities in that area</p>	
<p>The Lochside Masterplan Framework has been through the Council’s pre-application process to help ensure that relevant policy areas were fully reflected. This allowed for the initial draft to be updated ahead of the Pre- Application Notice period, which includes consultation with the public.</p> <p>Once further consultation has been concluded, the draft will be updated to take on board feedback, ahead of submission to the Council for consideration.</p>	

Case Studies

Single Access Point- Lived Experience Example

Single Access Point (SAP) provides a single ‘front door’ contact for members of the public and care professionals to access a range of services for vulnerable people. In March 2023, it received Council and Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) approval to continue in its current form.

The team handles an average of 4,000 calls and 1,300 emails each month (January 2023-January 2024), this includes receiving and generating 1,688 referrals for the HSCP every month. The single ‘front door’ creates a consistent process of triage and directs service users towards short, medium and long-term support.

Building on the Single Access Point this has been grown to include the ‘Appropriate Adult’ service; Blue Badge parking scheme; Adult/Children Disability Payment scheme and the Tell Us Once Service – further streamlining the number of services under one roof for customers to access.

Service User feedback

- ‘Telephone call into the SAP manager ... Mrs H wanted to thank a call advisor for the excellent service and how professional they handled their call. The member of staff was very pleasant, polite and listened to Mrs H. Mrs H had requested a commode which was delivered less than 24 hours from ordering it.’

The Council continues to develop a service providing independent advice and support to promote informed choice

for people accessing Self-Directed Support. Self-Directed Support is the way in which personalisation is now being implemented in Dumfries and Galloway. With Self-Directed Support, you have more choice and control of the support services you receive. Under the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013, there are four choices on how you can get your social care but with a recognition and appreciation that all four options will not always be appropriate for an individual.

Individual case study

Over the past year we have been working with two siblings 17 years old and 16 years old. Both siblings have Autism, are demanding of Mums time, and will trigger each other if the other feels they aren’t getting attention due to their diagnosis. The siblings find it hard to recognise the full impact their behaviours have on the home, mum and on one another.

Due to the above it is difficult to do any activities as a family. There was a very limited support network, and this placed pressure on Mum to solely manage the constant demands of the competing siblings whilst dad worked, which placed pressure on her emotional wellbeing.

The elder of the siblings had very little education for two years previous due to her finding it difficult to manage the busy environment. This resulted in her being very much isolated in the home. The Children with Disabilities Team used a Self-Directed Support package to support the elder sibling to attend the Better Lives Partnership which has been a

great source of strength for her. It has supported her to build social, confidence and life skills, while also supporting her to achieve academically.

Mum has advised

“the support put in place has been a lifeline and support with continued funding for this on a Friday each week would be a huge help in her wellbeing. She has shown such development in her health and wellbeing. She now takes the train to Dumfries and has got a place at college which is amazing! She has lost a lot of weight and has been amazing in how she now cooks for herself. She doesn't tidy up but cooking lots is an amazing help. She has tried to recognise social cues better. She still is at risk in the community at times from some teenagers who can be cruel etc but has found a lot of reward in walking and will this year help at the local holiday club in the summer”.

Active Communities Programme

The Active Communities programme delivers a range of activities and clubs which encourage people to be more active, meet new people, do something new, and have fun. The number of sessions delivered in 2023/24 was 4,285, this was a mixture of sessions delivered in local communities and within care homes.

5 Golden Games events have been held within Care Homes across the region. The aim of the golden games is to enhance functional fitness for older people in care home settings. Providing these activities to older people helps maintain functional ability and enables them to remain independent

for longer. One of the events held at Munches Park House, Dalbeattie care home was supported and assisted by senior pupils from Dalbeattie High School. Our Physical Activity Officer for Adults and Older people worked with the senior PE pupils as part of their leadership programme. Together with fantastic support, the pupils have learnt how to deliver the 10 Golden Games functional mobility challenges. The pupils worked with the care home participants over a number of weeks to deliver the Golden Games programme.

A new Active Lives Pathway was launched in partnership with NHS Dumfries and Galloway in November 2023 to encourage and enable adults who are physically inactive to enjoy the benefits of being more physically active. The Active Lives Pathway provides a Tiered approach to physical activity interventions. There are 5 Tiers within the Active Lives Pathway. Each Tier has a range of programme choices available which the person can select in discussion with the Dumfries and Galloway Council's Active Communities Team.

Health and Social Care professionals across Dumfries and Galloway can refer people to the local programme of physical activity based on their confidence, motivation and level of support required to be more active and independent.

Classes vary from aerobics, easiobics, gentle movement, strength & balance, chair-based yoga, circuits, tai chi, walking netball and walking Scottish dancing.

The pathway is supporting people referred for a range of conditions including mental health, cancer, MSK, respiratory and cardiovascular primary and secondary prevention for example. Over 400 people have been referred into physical activity opportunities across the region since its launch in November 2023.

We have been hearing about the benefits of gentle movement on various health conditions. Such a simple, gentle activity has had significant results, this is some of the feedback we have received:

- 'It's relaxing, I feel so much better after doing it'.
- 'My balance is getting better. I had 2 walking sticks before coming, now I am down to one and I am now looking forward to getting rid of this walking stick'.
- 'It's inclusive.'
- 'We don't know what each other's health conditions are, but this class benefits us all'.
- 'I have chronic pain and I have noticed that I forget the pain when I'm doing the class'.
- 'There is 'no pressure' to do strenuous moves, we do what we can'.
- 'Movement and mindfulness help me focus on something other than pain. I have started to use it at home'.
- 'I look forward to coming along each week'.

Emma Reid, MSK Advanced Practice Physiotherapist, said

"...it's been great having your team involved, we really appreciate it. The provision of 'local' physical activity opportunities is wonderful as some of our most vulnerable people are not having to travel as far to attend classes. I have also started to see a difference with people not repeatedly returning for the same joint pains as they used to."

Poverty and Inequality Strategy Action Plans

Dumfries and Galloway Council is a key contributor to the Dumfries and Galloway Poverty and Inequalities Partnership's Strategy Sub-Group's Action Plans. In addition to the significant contribution of a range of Dumfries and Galloway Council Services, our Council Budget for 2023/24 supported a range of projects within these Action Plans that have mitigated the impact of Cost of Living. A detailed evaluation of these projects was undertaken, to ensure that the Council's investment was making the positive difference that is needed, and to inform any future investments.

All four of the priority issues are featured on the Cost of Living Website with detailed information about sources of help and were part of our promotion of Challenge Poverty Week in October 2023. Some examples of the funded projects are set out below:

Finance

- DAGCAS have increased their Drop-in Provision by 6 new additional weekly locations, mainly in rural and very rural areas to increase their face-to-face provision and support for those most in need who cannot travel, have no internet access etc.



Grassroots Projects

- 547 family members were supported at 'Free Back to School Uniform Events across the region in August 2023, with over 1000 items of free and pre-loved school uniform items collected by the families and individuals attending the events. In addition, 79 Free Haircuts were completed during our events, giving all of the children and young people involved a boost of confidence for their return to school. The number of Free School Uniform Donation and Collection Points has increased to 10 throughout our region and these provide free new and pre-loved School Uniforms for both Primary and Secondary Schools all year round.
- Our Poverty and Inequalities Team also delivered 7 Free Warm Winter Clothes Events throughout November and December 2023. These events attracted 338 attendees who collected 1,258 items of Warm Winter Clothes and

additional support was also provided from Dumfries and Galloway Poverty and Inequalities Partnership Members at these events including the Lemon Aid Fuel Poverty Project, Wheatley Group, Fire Scotland and Home Energy Scotland. Just over 3,500 items of Warm Winter Clothes were donated throughout our region for this event and all of the surplus clothes were donated to 7 community organisations within our region which then went on to be available to residents within their local communities.

Energy

Emergency Energy Payment Assistance Project

The funding for this Project was allocated to a number of partner organisations to deliver emergency interventions such as voucher support to tenants and support for the winter fuel project. The following results were achieved by this Project:

- In total, 1,918 Vouchers have been issued to individuals and families who are struggling with Fuel Poverty within our region.
- 421 of these have been issued to Private Rented Sector Tenants
- 427 of these have been issued to Loreburn Housing Association Tenants
- 1,070 of these have been issued to a combination of Wheatley Group Tenants, Cunningham Housing Association Tenants, Home Housing and Irving Housing Association Tenants throughout our region.

The Lemon Aid Fuel Poverty Project are part of Cunningham Housing Association and deliver dedicated support to any resident within our region who is struggling with Fuel Poverty. The Lemon Aid Fuel Poverty Project has delivered support throughout our region and through both initial contact with Tenants who they are directly supporting through our Project and also through referrals from other Project Partners / organisations within Dumfries and Galloway, the following have all been achieved:

- 4,275 people given advice and support
- 347 people reconnected after Self Disconnection
- 1,768 people with complex issues/restricted meters assisted
- 1,539 vouchers/energy top-ups provided



- Amount of Financial Gain / Debt Reduction Achieved = £284,572
- 149 home advice visits completed
- 91 outreach sessions / events attended
- 596 referrals from Partner Agencies
- 306 People Referred to Partners / Support Agencies from Lemon Aid Fuel Poverty Project

The Hub – Warm Winter Fuel Project

- 155 Homes within our region benefitted from the delivery of Winter Briquettes which helped their fuel bills over the winter months.

Food

Holiday Food Funding

- During financial year 2023/24, £689,350 of holiday food payments were issued to 3645 eligible Primary and Secondary children. This provided an increase in income above that was available through Scottish Government funding, to families most in need.

Early Years Holiday Food Fund Funding

- The aim of the funding was to award holiday food payments to families with children in Funded Early Learning and Childcare, to bring them in line with Primary and Secondary age children Holiday Food provision. An average of 450 children received these payments with a daily value of £2.50 per child for the holiday periods.

Wellbeing

Summer of Play

- During 2023, the Summer of Play Fund was delivered using Policy Development Funding from Dumfries and Galloway Council (£264k), as well as funding from the Scottish Government (£135k) that was utilised to further expand the offer of free summer activities for young people across Dumfries and Galloway.
- All funding was used to distribute monetary grants to Third Sector organisations (£212k) and Council Services (£175k) to run summer activity programmes in local communities across Dumfries and Galloway. Grants were distributed following an application process, and

applications were scored by an independent scoring panel. Awards were made to 30 Third Sector organisations and to 6 Council Services.

Through the Monitoring and Evaluation Reports that were submitted as part of the fund, we know that 10,069 children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway took part in at least one of the activities on offer. We were also able to look at the target groups as identified within the Children's Poverty Plan who accessed activities ran using Summer of Play funding:

- Lone Parent Families: 27%
- Families which include a disabled adult or child: 25%
- Larger Families (3 or more children): 20%

Scheme of Assistance

The delivery of the Care and Repair service, the Small Repairs and Home Support Service, Food Train at Home and the Dementia Friendly Design project helps to maintain older and vulnerable people's ability to live independently at home, while ensuring they receive the care and support, they require. They also aim to reduce the need for costly interventions, such as hospitalisation, residential care or new build accommodation. Interventions range from the installation of level access wet rooms, to changing light bulbs. The Council maintains oversight of the delivery of these projects through the Strategic Housing and Regeneration service, who sit on the Care and Repair Steering Group.

Small Repairs and Home Support Service

The Small Repairs and Home Support Service have received a number of comments from clients following a visit, such as:

"I am impressed with the service, that I have had over a number of years, from the office to the gentleman who come very quickly. My husband who died 2 years ago, would have done almost anything that needed attention so now I can rest easy that I can access help. Thank you. "

"It is an essential service that helps keep me independent and enjoying home life securely. Thank you"

"The work completed has been done to allow an elderly person to return to her home when discharged from hospital. Thank you very much for providing this service it is very much appreciated "

Food Train at Home Service

Food Train at Home service volunteers are happy to go the extra mile. For example, in Castle Douglas recently, a volunteer responded urgently to a panic telephone call from a housebound couple whose bathroom light stopped working. A faulty fitting was identified but a replacement wasn't available locally. An electrician's visit was arranged for the following day and a battery-operated sensor lamp was provided to keep them safe overnight.

Area Based and Local Authority Flex Scheme

The Area Based Scheme is a programme aimed at supporting the Scottish Government's ambition that no more than 5% of houses in Scotland will be in fuel poverty by 2040. Dumfries and Galloway Council were allocated £3.165m capital funding in 2023/24 for the ABS.

The 2023/24 programme has supported more than 200 installations of solid wall insulation. This increased energy efficiencies of homes in the region and provides wider health and climate change improvements.

We have also put in place a Local Authority ECO4 Flex (Flex) scheme, targeted at residents on low incomes, or with health issues that make them particularly vulnerable to the cold. By the end of August 2023 Flex applications in Dumfries and Galloway for ECO4:

- saw 152 homes being insulated.
- the total value of this investment was £3.48m with the average value of works being £25k.
- resulted in an average fuel bill saving of £2,196.
- Minority Ethnic Families: 9%
- Families with a child under 1 year old in the household: 15%
- Families where the mother is under 25 years of age: 8%



Photo: Clatteringshaws Loch