



South Tyneside Council



South Tyneside Council ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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Introduction

Two years ago we launched our new 20-year Vision - to make South Tyneside a place where people live healthy, happy, and fulfilled lives.

Underpinning this Vision, we identified five Ambitions:

We want all our residents to be:

- Financially Secure
- Healthy and Well
- Connected to Jobs
- Part of Strong Communities

And we made a commitment to:

- Target Support to Make Things Fairer

To help us achieve these ambitions, we follow a range of short and medium-term plans that guide Council resource allocation, service design and delivery.

Our **South Tyneside Strategy 2023-2026** is our main corporate plan, setting out how we will progress each of the five Ambitions over those 3 years. Within this Strategy we also set out our new **PROUD values** to guide how we will work (Professional, Respectful, Open and Honest, Understanding and Engaging, and Deliver what we say we will).

When we launched the Strategy, we committed to publishing **Quarterly Performance Reports** providing regular updates on our key performance indicators, projects and other activities. We also promised to produce an **Annual Report**, to reflect on our progress over the year and set out our future intentions. This Annual Report, covering the 2024 calendar year, is our second such report. An overview of our latest available annual and quarterly performance data (aligned to our five Ambitions) is provided at the end of this report. More detail on our performance is available via the **Quarterly Performance Updates** which are published on the Council's website every quarter.

2024 has been another year of positive progress against our Ambitions.

Major investments like our adult social care **extra-care developments** and new **children's residential homes** will have a transformative impact in creating more high-quality, appropriate placements for our residents who need support.

Our **innovative renewable energy schemes** are now helping us significantly reduce our carbon emissions, attracting significant national praise. This year our Viking Energy Network Jarrow scheme won the **Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors UK Awards 'Best Public Sector Project'** and the **Association of Public Service Excellence Awards 2024 'Best Climate Action or Decarbonisation Initiative'**.

We also made the major decision this year, which was endorsed by 94.2% of tenants who completed the ballot, to bring the **management of Council housing stock back 'in house' from the former Arms-Length Management Organisation, South Tyneside Homes**. This move has created opportunities to reduce duplication and design more joined-up, streamlined, responsive housing and neighbourhood services.

We've also been recognised nationally this year in the Association of Public Service, Local Government Chronicle and Municipal Journal Awards for several innovative and impactful schemes, such as the **South Tyneside Pledge**, our **Children's Services Virtual Memory Box digital innovation**, our **outstanding leisure services**, our **impactful anti-poverty work**, our **high-quality parks and green spaces**, our **transformative transport schemes**, our forward-thinking **career, skills and employment support efforts**, our dedicated **schools' catering services**,

and our bold **approach to culture change and organisational development.**

Given all of this, it's no surprise we were shortlisted for the **overall 2024 'Council of the Year' at the Association of Public Service Excellence Awards** earlier this year, in recognition of how many individual categories we were shortlisted in. Although we didn't clinch that title this year, it endorses some of the excellent work we are doing, despite the very challenging context we are working within.

Like most local authorities across the country, we are facing a very **challenging financial picture**, not helped by considerable demand pressures in major spending areas like children's and adult social care, or by persistently high levels of pay and contractual inflation across all service areas.

Other challenges we have faced this last year have included: negotiating a **resolution to the waste services industrial dispute** that caused significant disruption for residents; consultation on the development of a statutory Local Plan to retain local control of **future planning and development**; and continuing our **Children's Services improvement journey**, working closely with partners and evidencing

our progress to Ofsted through regular monitoring visits.

2024 has in many ways been a year of navigating and responding to considerable change – locally, regionally, and nationally.

Most notably, the UK General Election in the early summer brought a change in Government and some **significant policy and fiscal changes**. The policy commitments of the new Labour Government's signal some **major opportunities for areas like South Tyneside**, and we are ready to work closely with Government to ensure our residents benefit from national decisions.

After years of hard-fought negotiations, we've also taken a major step forward in relation to regional devolution for the North East. In May the public elected Labour's Kim McGuinness as the Mayor for the newly established North East Mayoral Combined Authority (NECA), which includes South Tyneside, Sunderland, Gateshead, Durham, Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland. **Through the Combined Authority, the region now has significant devolved powers and funding that will dramatically transform transport infrastructure, housing, skills, business growth and development, and much more.**

“



Tracey Dixon,
Leader



Jonathan Tew,
Chief Executive

Ultimately, we've achieved a huge amount this last year despite very challenging circumstances. We will undoubtedly continue to face challenges in 2025 and beyond, but as we've proven in the past, we are a passionate, resourceful, and ambitious local authority, capable of making the most of emerging opportunities and delivering valued services for our residents.

”

Our five 'Ambitions'

When we launched the Council's Strategy 2023-2026, we set out clear priorities for each of the five 'Ambitions' for the three-year period:



Financially secure

Residents will be financially secure. They will have what they need for a good standard of living.

We will:

- Work with partners to share intelligence and identify residents close to, or experiencing, financial hardship and poverty
- Promote, signpost and deliver interventions to support our residents through short-term hardship and enable good long-term financial wellbeing
- Provide targeted support to those who are disproportionately likely to experience poverty and financial insecurity
- Find new ways of listening and learning, working with our communities to co-produce interventions to tackle poverty



Healthy and well

Residents will enjoy good mental wellbeing and physical health throughout their lives. They will have the best start in life and be able to live and age well.

We will:

- Support our children and young people to get the best start in life
- Enable and inspire our residents to live healthier lives
- Create the conditions for good mental health and social connectivity at all ages
- Ensure our communities can live safe from harm and access specialist support if they need it
- Empower our residents with choice and independence to live longer, healthier lives in their homes and communities



Connected to jobs

Residents will have access to good quality jobs, skills and learning. They will have the skills and confidence to apply for a wide range of quality local jobs. These jobs will be in key and growing areas of employment and will benefit all of our borough.

We will:

- Build on our strengths in the green economy, advanced manufacturing, social care, and tourism and capitalise on emerging opportunities
- Equip our local young people with the skills, confidence, and aspiration to move into a career right for them
- Work with partners to break down barriers to employment and in-work progression
- Open up opportunities for business growth and job creation
- Deliver infrastructure and transport improvements that link people to services and opportunities



Part of strong communities

Residents will live in clean, green and connected communities where they feel safe.

We will:

- Support green and sustainable choices and behaviours and connection to the natural environment
- Enhance satisfaction in the local area by supporting clean and safe neighbourhoods and public spaces
- Create opportunities for our residents to connect and participate in their local communities



Targeting support to make things fairer

We will target support at the residents and parts of our borough that need it the most, reducing inequalities and making things fairer.

We will:

- Establish what inequalities exist, where in the Borough they have the biggest impact on outcomes and how we are going to address them
- Address Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion issues within our Council workforce and model best practice.



Financially Secure

The impact of persistently high inflation, combined with existing high levels of poverty in South Tyneside, has had significant consequences for many of our residents.

This has been particularly challenging for residents who were already struggling. Food and energy prices continue to place pressure on household budgets, resulting in unprecedented demand on foodbanks and other vital support services.

One third of South Tyneside's neighbourhoods fall within the 10% most deprived nationally. Further challenges in South Tyneside include **one third of the 18,180 residents living in the borough who are accessing Universal Credit are in work**, while 1 in 5 jobs in the borough pay below the living wage. Local foodbanks also report a significant increase in the number of working residents accessing crisis support. This highlights the need to **prioritise addressing in-work poverty**. This is an area prioritised through the North East Combined Authority and this regional approach provides further opportunity for determined action.

Recent data published by the North East Child Poverty Commission on levels of child poverty revealed disturbingly high levels of child poverty within the region. **More than one third (36%) of all babies, children and young people in South Tyneside are living in poverty.** This equates to approximately 8,000 people and has risen at a much steeper rate than the UK average over recent years.

South Tyneside Council, along with local partners, has taken significant action toward its goal of achieving financial security for all residents. This includes **hosting three Poverty Summits, forming a multi-agency Poverty Group, appointing an Anti-Poverty Coordinator, planning a Poverty Truth Commission, and developing an Anti-Poverty Strategy.**

2024 headlines:

£8.5 million in additional benefit entitlements has been secured for residents through support from the Council's Welfare Support Team

10,000 households have received additional support through the new income-based local council tax support scheme

117 people attended the Child Poverty Summit held in October 2024, making promises to take action to address poverty across South Tyneside

£330,000 has been paid to over **900** residents to help meet shortfalls in their rent through discretionary housing payments

£125,000 given to local foodbanks by the Council to support residents facing hardship and food poverty

1,596 South Tyneside housing tenants engaged in consultations to help improve services

1000+ customers at risk of fuel poverty were contacted and offered free energy advice and other assistance

200+ customers were provided with assistance from housing services, Groundwork's Green Doctor, Age Concern, Citizens Advice and Northumbrian Water as part of a series of Energy Roadshows

8,150+ young people entitled to Free School Meals, have received food vouchers to help support families over the school holidays

70+ Welcoming Places continue to support residents and help signpost to advice and support

100+ residents have been supported to improve their mental health, confidence, independence and financial wellbeing through the Social Navigator's Scheme

24,000 additional income was accessed through SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, to assist Veterans and support into suitable accommodation

200 baby boxes have been distributed to local families through the North East Combined Authority's Child Poverty Prevention Programme



Food banks have seen a significant rise in residents asking for help

This strategy sets out the work that the partnership is doing to support residents at the sharp end of the cost-of-living crisis, incorporating longer term goals in recognition that poverty prevention is better than the cure.

The implementation of this strategy evidences the determination of our Council to support with the extreme pressure that the cost-of-living brings and a commitment to help residents in the borough to be financially secure.

These efforts have contributed to the **establishment of low-cost community shops, a network of 70+ welcoming places, and benefit maximisation campaigns, resulting in £8.5 million in additional benefits and financial gains secured for residents.**

We are proud of what is being accomplished in a challenging economic context, but we know more is required. The cost-of-living crisis has had a significant impact on our most deprived communities and through a proactive and forward-thinking approach, we have looked for new ways to do more with less. Collaborative partnership work has been at the heart of all decision making and interventions. Our residents, local community groups and key partners, have demonstrated remarkable community spirit and resilience which has resulted in positive and determined actions, focused on cost-of-living.

Delivery Against Our Priorities:

Priority 1: Work with partners to share intelligence and identify residents close to or experiencing financial hardship and poverty

The **multi-agency Poverty Group** meets monthly to drive forward collaborative action to reduce poverty in South Tyneside. This group includes Voluntary Organisations, schools, Public Health and various other services who all share their insight into the challenges facing residents in South Tyneside. Following last year's Anti-Poverty Summit, the focus was on developing a **targeted action plan**. The Anti-Poverty Strategy was developed and agreed by Full Council in March 2024 and is being implemented and monitored through this group and wider work.

The **Child Poverty Summit**, held in October 2024, highlighted the **staggering levels of child poverty within the borough** and provided an initial platform for the development of a South Tyneside Child Poverty Strategy. 117 attendees from a wide range of organisations including schools, nurseries, Family Hubs, VCS organisations, Health, Council Officers and Lead Members attended. This provided an opportunity to **strengthen collaborative working**, discuss the challenges facing our young people and families and prioritise immediate actions.

Priority 2: Promote, signpost, and deliver interventions to support residents through short-term hardships and enable good long term financial wellbeing

Within South Tyneside there are a vast number of services available to provide support to residents in hardship. These organisations work tirelessly to ensure effective **advice and guidance** is accessible. Across the North East, there are an estimated **£1.3 billion unclaimed entitlements on an annual basis**. In South Tyneside, we are working collaboratively to ensure residents are aware of the available support and access their entitlements.

Targeted campaigns have focused on increasing uptake of Pension Credit, Carers Allowance and Free School Meals. These campaigns have included social media posts, letters, leaflets, posters and drop-in sessions with organisations available for face-to-face advice. The service providers including Citizen's Advice, Age Concern Tyneside South (ACTS) and South Tyneside Welfare Support have all reported an **increase in enquiries** following the launch of these campaigns.

The **Welfare Support Team** assists customers by offering benefit checks, debt advice, support with energy and fuel costs and providing household items such as white goods and furniture. This essential support for customers with the cost of living has ensured **£8.5 million in financial gains** secured for residents from 4,454 applications for support received during 2023/24.

Social Navigators provide intensive support working with vulnerable clients who are financially excluded. Help includes signposting to welfare and debt advice, employability services, help with digital skills and referrals to wider support from other agencies.

The **Healthy Homes Team** tackles cases of damp, mould and condensation. Since January 2024, the team has received 2,503 survey requests and from those surveys has delivered all repairs and upgrades needed to help manage and remove damp and mould.

An in-depth **cost-of-living web page** is available providing financial advice and signposting to other services. 3,932 visits were made to this page in 2024. An overview of this information is available in a short one-page leaflet that is available for residents and service providers to access.

Priority 3: Provide targeted support to those who are disproportionately likely to experience poverty and financial insecurity

Throughout 2024, **energy roadshows** were held across the Borough providing in person advice on energy efficiency and how to reduce fuel bills, to help customers to afford to live comfortably in their home. Over 200 customers were provided with assistance from housing services, Groundwork's Green Doctor, Age Concern, Citizens Advice and Northumbrian Water. In addition. The Council Website includes a section titled **"Get help with energy support"**. This section alone has had 1,180 visits during 2024.

South Tyneside residents are also benefiting from the **Home Energy Advice North East project**, which began in March 2024 and aims to provide people across the region with advice and support on how to improve the energy efficiency of their homes by installing retrofit measures. The scheme is particularly focussed on hard to reach groups and hard to treat properties.

During the year, 1,708 customers were provided with advice and guidance in relation to their **housing situation** through the Council's Housing Service and an additional 1,387 homeless presentations were received. Of these, 356 households have been **prevented from becoming homeless**.

The **Veterans Outreach Support Worker** received 122 referrals during the year and supported customers into suitable accommodation. In addition, a further £24,000

additional income was accessed through SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, to assist these residents.

The **Stay Close programme**, in partnership with Children Services, supports **care experienced young people** and has seven dedicated properties for vulnerable young adults, which are all occupied. Four young people have moved on to independent tenancies and the team has managed to accommodate 24 other care experienced young people, through the "choice-based lettings process."

This year we have continued to support community partners to deliver a range of services to help alleviate food poverty. This has included working closely with **Hospitality & Hope** to continue building on the 'community shops' model. Funding has helped to sustain the already established two shops and enabled the opening of a third community shop. This ensures even more residents can purchase low-cost products enabling those who may have previously relied on food bank support, to shop independently and with pride. Together, the shops have now reached 3,900 people, saving residents a total of £265,000.

Further funding supports the **Key2Life community food bus project** which brings low-cost food and support to a wide range of areas within the Borough. The food bus has extended its reach and now visits 12 'stops' enabling a greater number of residents to access this much needed service.

In addition, we have supported the **five established food banks** in the borough with a further £125,000 to provide food packages and advice to residents facing financial hardship.

The extension of the Household Support Fund (HSF) has enabled further support for residents across the borough to be financially secure and healthy and well, with support targeted to make things fairer. The four themes for our Household Support Fund plans are child poverty, housing, food and **support organisations to help residents access help**. Primary schools have been allocated a discretionary amount of **Household Support Funding** to allocate to families that are struggling financially but do not meet the Free School Meal criteria.

Holiday, Activities Food

The **Holiday, Activities and Food Programme (HAF)** provides free sessions for children entitled to free school meals during school holidays. Over the summer holidays, the total number of HAF places made available by 50 providers was 12,850, enabling high numbers of young people to access free activities and food.

Priority 4: Find new ways of listening and learning, working with communities to co-produce interventions to tackle poverty

Localised cost-of-living **drop-in sessions** have taken place across the borough. This has aimed to further develop community links focusing on what is working well, potential barriers, future actions and to **signpost residents to cost-of-living advice and support**.

This coordinated approach and direct feedback from residents, will continue to inform council actions

There are 70+ established **Welcoming Places** within the small borough of South Tyneside, all offering essential spaces for residents to access. An independent evaluation of the venues and support proved that they helped to reduce loneliness and isolation, with one attendee describing them as **'worth their weight in gold'** and help to reduce loneliness and isolation. Our commitment is a collaborative approach to supporting the network of Welcoming Places through sourcing funding, resources, support, and training. The Welcoming Places web page received 1,326 visits during 2024.

We have worked in partnership with other organisations to understand potential barriers to financial wellbeing, including **digital exclusion**. Working together, we are helping to resource digital equipment, training, and support to help address this barrier and enable an inclusive South Tyneside.

What's Next?

The Child Poverty Summit held in October 2024 identified a number of key themes, including food insecurity and a need to widen free school meal provision, the cost of the school day and the challenges and barriers facing families and young people. Practical next steps include providing support to schools to reduce the cost of the school day and support parents just above the Free School Meal threshold; encouraging take-up of Free School Meals; rolling out more baby boxes to new parents; providing further welfare support within Family Hubs; and expanding advice on money matters and help on sustainable cooking to parents within school settings.

The development of a focused **'Child Poverty Strategy'** planned for Spring 2025 is the next clear priority alongside focused interventions with schools to reduce the cost of the school day for families. The work in South Tyneside links closely with the regional strategy being led by our North East Mayor Kim McGuinness, and the work of the Child Poverty Reduction Unit.

We will:

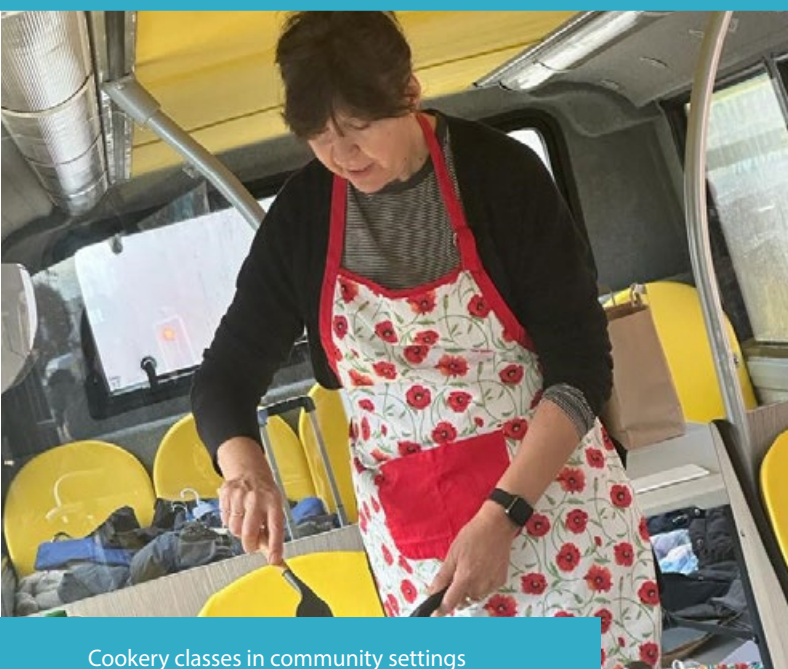
- Ensure the voice of those experiencing financial challenges informs decision making and strategies
- Improve access to financial support, products and services through partnership working, training and further targeted campaigns
- Work with schools to reduce the cost of the school day through awareness raising, financial support and increasing the number of children taking up their free school meal entitlement
- Improve digital inclusion through support with devices, training and online safety
- Link training and skills provision into community settings including accredited qualifications, careers guidance and volunteering opportunities
- Prioritise in-work poverty through work with businesses, schools and voluntary organisations
- Continue to campaign for long-term change around specific policies that have a direct, negative impact on the residents of South Tyneside



Hospitality & Hope provide community shops and a food bank



Advice and signposting to services for residents



Cookery classes in community settings



Fernyhough Hall residents attend an Energy Roadshow



Children enjoying the Holiday, Activities and Food programme



Housing Plus residents at an Energy Roadshow



Healthy and Well

We know that there is much more to health than healthcare. The social determinants of health are those non-medical factors that influence health and include the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, learn, work and age.

This includes our childhood experiences, where we live, our education, employment and income, how socially included we are and how accessible healthy and affordable food is to us. According to the World Health Organisation, the social determinants of health account for between 30-55% of health outcomes.

The Council and its partners have a key role to play in facilitating the conditions for good health and wellbeing throughout the borough and we have some fantastic assets that support this ambition. This includes our passionate voluntary and community sector, award winning parks and beaches, state of the art leisure facilities, strong public and private sector partnerships, affordable housing and highly rated education providers.

However, we know we have some real challenges. Nearly half of South Tyneside's population live in the 20% most deprived areas in England and on a whole range of indicators local outcomes are worse than national outcomes. This includes adult and child obesity, the rate of children in care, alcohol specific mortality, deaths from drug misuse and life expectancy.

Domestic abuse remains a key issue in South Tyneside and the rate of incidents has risen steadily for the past 5 years. While we have seen rises across the whole of the Northumbria Police force area, we are consistently above our neighbours.

2024 headlines:

Our Shared Lives scheme was rated **'Good'** by the Care Quality Commission

We now have over **11,300** leisure centre members

We provided **13,000** free swimming lessons for families who have children with disabilities or lifelong additional needs and **2,500** free gym, swim and fitness class sessions to our looked after children and care leavers

We now have over **350** 'A Better U' community champions sharing important health and wellbeing advice

Welcomed more than **200** breastfeeding mothers and children to celebrate World Breastfeeding Week and **26** venues have now taken our Breastfeeding Friendly Pledge

Delivered and facilitated training to **186** people via our UK Shared Prosperity funded South Tyneside Care Academy

We supported 19 schools to reaccredit their Healthy Schools Award and presented them with their Healthy Schools plaque at a 'Healthy Settings Awards' celebration event in July

The Asylum, Refugee and Migrant Community Integration Team supported 27 families into long term accommodation, preventing homelessness in 2023 and supported 5 large ARAP (Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy) families to resettle in 2023/24

£2.31m of Department for Education funding has been secured to support ongoing Children's Services improvement work

96 new Extra Care apartments are being created at the £31m development in Hebburn Town Centre to support more people to live independently for longer

50,000+ contacts from 8,500 children, parents and families were received across the 12 Family Hubs across their first full year of operation

Domestic abuse has a devastating impact, and we know that women are disproportionately affected. Repeat victims make up close to half of all incidents and our latest data shows that, in around 50% of cases, children are present at time of incident logging.

Over recent years, there has been an increase in the number of families and individuals presenting to the Council as homeless. In the first 10 months of 2024, there were 2,234 presentations. The main reasons for loss of accommodation continue to be families and friends no longer being able or willing to accommodate, private landlords terminating tenancies, relationship breakdown and domestic abuse. We have maintained a small number of people sleeping rough over the course of 2024 and we are continuing to improve how we identify and support rough sleepers, including through working with our neighbouring authorities to find solutions for those who move between areas.

Demands on Adult Social Care have risen in recent years with more people overall requiring support from the service and more people requiring long term residential care. This is a national trend linked to an ageing population but demand for support is generally higher in South Tyneside. We know that most of our residents who draw on care receive high quality support, with the majority of our care providers rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission.

Meanwhile, demand for Children's Social Care support continues to exceed national benchmarks but has reduced over the last year and as of September 2024, is below that of our regional and statistical neighbours. Numbers of children in need have reduced in all categories of need aged 0-17 (Child In Need, Child Protection and Cared For Children), whilst young people accessing our Leaving Care Services have increased.

Delivery Against Our Priorities:

Priority 1: Support our children and young people to get the best start in life

2024 has been **another important year for our improvement journey** in children's services following a challenging inspection in late 2022. **Improvements across the service have been recognised by Ofsted inspectors** during all four monitoring visits undertaken this year and we have been **successful in securing 3 bids from the Department of Education** for just over £2.31 million. This is enabling us to invest in our workforce, enhance our practice development offer, increase placement sufficiency for children and provide enhanced assurance and leadership oversight.

We are in the **process of implementing a new senior leadership team** and are **taking steps to strengthen our committee structure** to provide increased oversight and scrutiny. Meanwhile, our dedicated Children's Safeguarding Board is placing increased emphasis on the Partnership's response to meeting the needs of our children and families and is providing a **refreshed focus to our safeguarding strategy**.

To ensure we have the right people with the right skills, we've **strengthened our recruitment and retention strategy**, resulting in fewer children experiencing changes in social worker. We are **working hard to maintain caseloads too**, averaging 16 children per social worker and 16.5 for personal advisors.

Following a Council wide review of the commissioning service, we now have a **dedicated children's commissioning team which will provide additional support and scrutiny** to ensure we are providing our cared for children and young people with the right homes. We have **significantly increased placement sufficiency** through **earlier identification of kinship carers, our refreshed foster carer recruitment strategy, and the development of three new children's homes**.

To retain our fantastic foster carers, we have developed **innovative projects**, including developing the role of **Community Foster Carers** and **Out of Hours Foster Carers**. We are also **building on our successful Mockingbird project with a fifth constellation** to support foster carers and provide positive experiences for children and young people.

We have **refreshed our approach to Corporate Parenting** based upon what our cared for children and young people tell us is important to them. This has informed our refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy – A year of Action. In Spring, we held a well-attended, **partnership-wide Corporate Parenting summit** and jointly developed 8 'Promises' to our cared for children. This session was **replicated with all senior leaders across the Council** later in the year and an additional 38 commitments were made to children and young people.

We've **successfully rolled out our network of 12 Family Hubs**, which have now been accessed by **thousands of families from right across the borough**. A range of professionals and service providers, including midwives, health visitors, early help workers and adolescent workers are located at **the hubs to provide a 'one-stop-shop' so that families need only tell their story once**. Around 80 organisations now work from the hubs, although staff work within other locations too as well as in families' homes as part of an effective outreach service.

In August, **we welcomed more than 200 breastfeeding mothers and children to celebrate World Breastfeeding Week** at our network of exciting Breastival events. Events included a teddy bears picnic at Riverside Hub and other fun activities at Hebburn Family Hub. We also launched the **Breastfeeding Friendly Pledge** working with partners across South Tyneside to support breastfeeding families. **26 venues across the borough**, including cafes, restaurants, leisure centres and community venues have committed to ensure they **welcome and support visiting mothers to breastfeed**.

In November, **South Tyneside Matrix young people's service** moved into the Council's Public Health directorate. The Service also relocated into an exciting new space in the MarketPlace, which was **designed and decorated in collaboration with young people**. The new space has been well received and Matrix hosted a well-attended launch event in October.

Priority 2: Enable and inspire our residents to live healthier lives

As a partnership, we have been pressing forward with a range of projects focused on supporting residents of all ages to live healthier lives.

We have **worked closely with children and young people to increase awareness and understanding of the health system**. South Tyneside's Young Health Ambassadors (STYHA), a group of young people aged 13-19 with a passion for health and wellbeing, have launched a **new Mental Health awareness campaign**. This was kicked off at an event in June which brought together secondary and special schools to hear about the mental health services available to young people. As part of the campaign, the Young Health Ambassadors have **developed a website with tips and advice on mental health topics and created a podcast**, 'What the Health are you Talking About!?', interviewing professionals from services across the borough to showcase what they do and what young people can expect from them.

To help create a safer, healthier environment outside the school gate, we are **rolling out our School Streets programme to more schools**. The positively received programme promotes active travel and lowers congestion by restricting vehicle access around schools. In 2024, we also supported **19 schools to reaccredit their Healthy Schools Award** which celebrates good practice around healthy eating, physical activity, relationships and emotional health and wellbeing. Schools were presented with their Healthy Schools

plaque at a **'Healthy Settings Awards'** celebration event in July.

We've continued to support organisations across South Tyneside to do what they can to improve their employees' health and wellbeing. This includes through supporting 21 organisations covering over 8,000 employees to maintain their Better Health at Work Award. We also developed and delivered a **South Tyneside Pledge campaign** to increase knowledge and support to employers around the **recruitment and retention of neurodiverse employees and those with health needs**.

With partners, we've moved forward with a **range of food related activities under the umbrella of South Tyneside Open Collective for Good Food**. STOC is a **cross-sector food partnership** committed to inspiring a good food movement, tackling food poverty and diet related ill-health, promoting a sustainable food economy, and environmental sustainability. STOC **recently achieved membership of the Sustainable Food Places Network** through their efforts in making local, healthy and sustainable food available to South Tyneside residents. Some of the projects supported so far include the opening of **Hospitality & Hope's community shops**, the **Food Fair Project** and the **re-useable cup pilot at the This is South Tyneside Festival events**. Good Food Local Benchmarking, which was recently carried out by Sustain and regional Public Health teams to capture good food practice and policy across North East local authorities, saw South Tyneside perform **highest in the region under the 'Food for the Planet' theme**, recognising work on reducing food waste, promoting community growing, and improving the carbon footprint of school menus.



Hebburn Central pool

We know that opportunities to be physically active are key to staying healthy and well throughout our lives. There are an impressive **183 publicly accessible sports facilities in South Tyneside**, which includes those free for public access, pay and play, sports club or community associations, and those for registered membership use. This is equal to **12 facilities per 10,000 people**, the third highest in the North East Combined Authority Area. Yet in South Tyneside, over a quarter of adults (19+) do less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week and rates of obesity among children and adults are significantly worse than the England-wide average. Evidence tells us that people who have a **physically active lifestyle have a lower risk of cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease and stroke** compared to those who have a sedentary lifestyle. **Regular physical activity** is also associated with a **reduced risk of diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis, colon and breast cancer** and with **improved mental health**. This makes creating the conditions for all South Tyneside residents to be physically active especially important.

It has been an exciting year for our Leisure Team, who were **shortlisted for 'Best Sports, Culture and Leisure Team' in the 2024 APSE Service Awards**. Through our close partnership arrangements with world **leading fitness brand Les Mills** we hosted a **visit of their Global Ambassador Anthony Oxford** in November.



Swimmer at Haven Point

Anthony delivered a bespoke fitness class to 90 of our leisure members at Jarrow Focus to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Bodycombat, a leading Les Mills class discipline.

Our fantastic **leisure centres now have over 11,300 members**, with over 1.5 million visits this year. Via our Max Card scheme, we've provided **13,000 free swimming lessons for families who have children with disabilities or lifelong additional needs**, while our **looked after children and care leavers attended a total of 2,500 free gym, swim and fitness class sessions**. To support more young people to be active, we've expanded our **'Teach Active' programme**, aimed at making core subjects such as Maths and English less sedentary, with **16 schools now taking part**. We're also continuing to invest in our facilities, with the **existing building at Gypsies Green Stadium set to be demolished and replaced** with a new facility which will be operational in early 2025. The £375,000 investment project, funded using UK Shared Prosperity Fund monies, will provide **venue users with new kitchen, social space, changing and shower facilities**.

Positively, **the percentage of residents who smoke, including mothers smoking at the time of delivery, is now at an all-time low for South Tyneside** (12.3% of all adults, and 8.3% of pregnant mothers) thanks to

local interventions and partnership working. While the prevalence of the latter is still significantly higher than the England and North East average, South Tyneside's smoking prevalence among adults is now similar to the national average. **We continue to work closely with partners to achieve our smoke-free ambitions through universal and targeted interventions.** This includes piloting a swap to stop programme which provides free vapes to encourage individuals to quit and other stop smoking interventions, including working with South Tyneside Council's routine and manual workforce with a view to expand to **other workplaces and voluntary sector organisations.**

As a borough, we have high rates of alcohol-related illness and mortality so tackling alcohol related harm is a key priority for us. To inform a dedicated strategy, the South Tyneside Alcohol Partnership was re-established in September and a **strategy workshop attended by 60 stakeholders took place in October.** To ensure our plans are shaped by lived experience, we are undertaking surveys with children and young people, those engaging with South Tyneside's Adult Recovery Service (STARS) and carers of South Tyneside residents who experience alcohol dependency. The Alcohol Strategy Group will be central to the development and delivery of **the Alcohol Strategy and Action Plan, expected to launch in March 2025.**

Priority 3: Create the conditions for good mental health and social connectivity at all ages

We know that **loneliness and social isolation can have serious impacts on our physical and mental health.** Our latest data shows that an estimated 10,400 people in South Tyneside feel lonely 'often' or 'always', and in 2022/23, 8.8% of South Tyneside residents (16+) reported low scores when asked 'to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?' – significantly worse than the England-wide figure.



Over the last year, we have worked closely with partners on a range of activities to address loneliness and social isolation. **Our Loneliness and Social Isolation network** has continued to evolve and we have **plans to launch our co-produced strategy with a festival style celebration in early 2025.** Work to **improve awareness and access to Chatty Benches is ongoing,** with a training package aimed at **equipping all staff to be able to ask residents about their social health** and support them where needed.

Work has also been ongoing to **support the social health of employees across the borough,** including through a support package rolled out with our Better Health at Work Award organisations which is aimed at **supporting managers where employees may be isolated by changing work patterns.** A 'Chatty Table' scheme has also been launched to support employees working in South Shields Town Hall, with **plans to extend this to other Council venues in the new year.**

Three **Local Area Coordinators** are now in role and making a real difference in Primrose, Whitburn and Marsden, and Biddick and All Saints. Local Area Coordinators build upon community strengths and connect **people who may require help and support to others within their community,** creating a network around them, and preventing the need for services to intervene.

Priority 4: Ensure our communities can live safe from harm and access specialist support if they need it

The Council's Educational Psychology service, jointly with colleagues at Newcastle University, **submitted a bid to the Nuffield Foundation** to undertake a project aimed at **exploring the emotional and behavioural profiles of persistently absent children and young people**, perceptions of their carers and school staff, and support available for children and young people to engage with challenges leading to non-school attendance. If successful, the research **will inform policy and interventions to support children** who find it difficult to attend mainstream schools.

November 2024 saw the **grand opening of the new Restart Integrated Domestic Abuse Hub at Chichester House in South Shields** and was attended by over 100 people. The **Restart Integrated Domestic Abuse service**, which was moved in-house last year and is delivered by the Council's Public Health directorate, offers a range of support to people in South Tyneside impacted by domestic abuse. The service received nearly 3000 referrals over 2023/24, predominately for victims and their children, but also to work with perpetrators on behaviour change to reduce incidents and break the cycle of abuse.'

As part of an emerging piece of work with the aim of better supporting people with the most complex lives, the Council commissioned a **scoping review from Insights North East to identify evidence-based solutions to addressing multiple and complex needs** and ways of working differently to better support people who experience them. In October, we co-hosted an NIHR Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) North East and North Cumbria event which brought together researchers, practitioners, policy makers, service commissioners and providers to hear about the experiences of and **successful approaches to supporting people with multiple and complex needs**. In October, we hosted an **interactive workshop**

on collective support for people experiencing multiple disadvantage which was attended by 120 people from over 40 different teams, services and organisations. The findings and reflections from the conversations will **support the needs assessment currently being undertaken** with a view to use this to shape approaches to better support residents.

In the last year, **joint work between housing and children's social care** around responding to 16- and 17-year-olds presenting as homeless was **highlighted and recognised as effective and well-coordinated by Ofsted inspectors undertaking a recent monitoring visit of Children's Services**. Work is now ongoing to develop a **joint protocol for Care Leavers** in the borough and development of an accessible guide which has been co-produced with care experienced young people.

A **review of exempt accommodation** (supported accommodation that is exempt from certain housing benefit provisions, either resettlement accommodation or accommodation provided alongside care or support) has also been worked through and **a dedicated officer has been recruited** to work on addressing challenges with this type of housing. Over the next 12 months, our recent engagement with supported housing providers and the Government's Supported Housing Review will inform the development of a **dedicated Supported Housing Strategy**.

A review of homelessness in the borough has been undertaken and will inform the **emerging Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy** which will be launched in 2025. To prevent homelessness, we are working with Registered Providers on ensuring a pre-action protocol is developed and that when making allocations, homeless households will be accepted wherever appropriate. We are also working with the North East Combined Authority to establish a **Homelessness Prevention Blueprint** for the region.

Additional funding has been secured to **expand the Council's rough sleeping outreach offer** and has

supported the **purchase of an additional temporary single-person move-on accommodation unit**. This is in addition to the existing 7 accommodation units that were purchased in the last year and currently being used to support vulnerable rough sleepers. The accommodation has provided **some much need housing for complex non-priority rough sleepers and those at risk of sleeping rough**, with positive outcomes including individuals being able to move into their own independent accommodation, reconnect with family and find employment.

Priority 5: Empower our residents with choice and independence to live longer, healthier lives in their homes and communities

In January, the Health & Wellbeing Board approved **our first Age Friendly action plan** and working closely with partners, good progress has been made across several areas. This includes the **production of a checklist and walkability audit of the town centre**, the hosting of a transport equality workshop with a view to complete a transport needs assessment, implementation of a **sexual health charter for older people**, signing up to the national age friendly employer pledge and improving information and advice by supporting digital inclusion and health literacy.

Our Living Better Lives Strategy, produced together with local partners, people working in social care, and local people who draw on care and support, has the aim of ensuring people can live as independently as is possible and in their own home for as long as possible. In line with our ambitions, the Council's Technology and Independence team have **supported 4,000 people to remain safe and independent** through the provision of essential equipment. Meanwhile, our **innovative 'See and Solve' service continues to deliver benefits to those who use it**, reducing Occupational Therapy waiting times by training Trusted Assessors to carry out low level assessments and allowing Occupational Therapists to focus on more complex cases.

The service received a **Commendation of Excellence in the Outstanding Achievement of the Year** category at last year's **National Healthy Housing Awards 2023**.

The Council, NHS South Tyneside and the South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Hospital Trust commissioned a **review of the hospital discharge process** with partner Newton Europe. This will inform work across the partnership that focuses on supporting as many people as possible to return to their usual place of residence after their admission to hospital.

Work is nearing completion on two specialist supported living housing schemes which will support people to live independently in their own homes in their local community, with the support provided focused upon individual outcomes. An important part of the focus will be on independence supported by the use of the latest assistive technology which is enabling a reduction in overall supports costs of approximately £450,000. The schemes at the former Father James Walsh Centre and Nolan Hall sites are expected to be ready for residents to move in in early 2025 and will offer a total of **21 units designed for people with complex autism and learning disabilities**. Staff accommodation will be located at both sites to ensure residents have the support they need while still being able to live independently in a community setting nearby to family and friends.

In Autumn 2024, **construction work began on a £31m Extra Care housing scheme in Hebburn Town Centre**. The 95-apartment scheme, on the site of the former Lincoln Court, will comprise 20 two-bed and 75 one-bed apartments, 17 of which will be specialist dementia apartments. The homes will be owned and managed by Karbon Homes with South Tyneside Council's Adult Social Care team supporting with the allocation of the apartments. The scheme will help **address the lack of specialist affordable accommodation options in the borough and prevent people from entering residential care prematurely**.

January saw the **official launch of the South Tyneside Care Academy**, which aims to improve the recruitment, ongoing development career progression and retention of the adult social care workforce. Funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the Care Academy has delivered and **facilitated training to a total of 186 people**, with a range of new training and development opportunities planned, including on digital skills, dementia awareness and reablement training and mental health first aid. The Care Academy now has a **fully functional website and a career development coordinator has been recruited** to raise the profile of a career in adult social care, working closely with key partners. Going forward, the Care Academy team have plans to roll out an induction to adult social care for all new starters, engage closely with local schools and Further Education and Higher Education settings, and develop a training plan for adult social care staff and staff employed by commissioned providers.



What's Next?

- Continue with our Children's Services Improvement Journey, including through delivery of new Children's Homes, the Staying Close project supporting children leaving care, and the continued expansion of the Family Hubs offer
- Launch the three-yearly Health-Related Behaviour Questionnaire with all schools in South Tyneside, surveying all children and young people in Years 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10, and collecting valuable insight into their attitudes, behaviours and views in relation to health and wellbeing and SEND provision, with a view to informing future campaigns and support
- Support local people with healthier behaviours, including by developing an Alcohol Strategy and continuing to work closely with partners to achieve our Smoke-Free ambitions through universal and targeted interventions
- Support more schools to achieve their Healthy Schools Award and more businesses to achieve Better Health at Work Awards
- Work to provide outreach support from housing services to the Hospital Discharge Team to reduce length of stay of people in hospital who are homeless or require rehousing
- Launch a range of new strategies, including our Loneliness and Social Isolation Strategy, Supported Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy
- Develop and deliver a work programme of system support for people experiencing multiple disadvantage
- Prepare for and support a Care Quality Commission Assessment in 2025 looking at the delivery of Adult Social Care services
- Continue with the delivery of the £31m scheme to offer more Extra Care accommodation across the borough, supporting more people to live independently in their own homes for longer
- Work with a strategic transformation partner and system partners to review hospital discharge pathways, reablement and intermediate care, focusing on maximising independence, prevention of admission to residential care and supporting people to remain at home
- Work with the Social Care Institute of Excellence to develop our strategic approach to commissioning supporting a strengths-based approach, aligned to our Adult Social Care and Commissioning Living Better Lives Strategy



Cllr HcHugh with foster carers celebrating the latest 'constellation' of the expanding Mockingbird model



A Carer and Service User involved with Shared Lives



Mother and daughter at Bede Family Hub



Parents and Elected Members at The Customs House, one of many local venues signed up to the Breastfeeding Friendly Pledge



Young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities surfing at Sandhaven Beach



Local resident with a new stair lift installed by the See and Solve service



Connected to Jobs

Connecting local people to high-quality jobs, skills and opportunities remains a critical challenge and priority for the Council.

Although employment rates have improved slightly over the last year, the borough still lags behind national and regional rates, and high economic inactivity is a persistent challenge for the area, with notable numbers of local people currently not working or seeking a job due to ill-health.

The borough also has lower than regional or national average skill levels and although this has been improving over time, there is an ongoing mismatch between the skills local people have and the skills and experiences businesses need.

The Council has a key role in providing guidance and opportunities so that local people of all ages can make the most of local opportunities and that local businesses are able to make the most of the local talent available.



2024 headlines:

4,200+ young people, parents and school staffs engaged with the Schools' Careers Programme in 2023/24

984 people shared their opinions and ideas on their town as part of the eight-week 'Our Hebburn Conversation'

827 young people attended the 2024 Your Next Steps Live 'Preparation for Adulthood' event aimed at young people aged 15 to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities reflect on their next steps into education, training and employment

300+ organisations are now engaged in the South Tyneside Pledge

95.6% of local primary school students are learning in schools rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted

£3.7million has been secured to fund skills bootcamps across South Tyneside which give local people the opportunity to build up in-demand skills

186 people have engaged in training by the new South Tyneside Care Academy since it was first established

£113,391 has been distributed to local businesses as part of the new South Tyneside Business Growth Grant Scheme

1,258 pupils from 29 local schools took part in this year's 'Reducing Accidents at Play' road safety education event

1234 people received employment support this year from South Tyneside Works Jobs Coach service, skills support tutors and Department for Work and Pensions Work Coaches

47 local people were registered with employment support organisations after attending the 'New Year, New You' jobs event in February 2024

42 people attended the 'March into Care' jobs fair in March 2024

Delivery Against Our Priorities:

Priority 1: Build on our strengths in the green economy, advanced manufacturing, social care, and tourism, and capitalise on emerging opportunities

This year we have continued with a range of major projects which are helping us drive growth by capitalising upon local economic strengths and opportunities.

Work has continued on **the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP)**, the flagship joint South Tyneside and Sunderland Council venture which is creating world-class facilities and infrastructure near to the Nissan Sunderland plant, to support the continued growth of the automotive and advanced manufacturing industry in the region. **Among other efforts that have moved forward this year at the IAMP site is work on a new National Grid substation which will enable new gigafactories and other businesses on the site to plug directly into the electricity transmission network.** This has the potential to create **7,000 new jobs** over the next 10-15 years.

In relation to capitalising on strengths in the green economy specifically, 2024 has been another successful year for the borough, with the Council receiving **national attention for the innovative renewable energy schemes** in Hebburn and Jarrow. (see 'Part of Strong Communities' for more information).

We have also continued to focus on sustainable practices within local businesses through the introduction of the **Climate Change Business Toolkit**. This toolkit aims to help businesses reduce energy costs and carbon footprints by providing essential information on energy efficiency, monitoring bills, and renewable energy options. It was recently showcased to organisations involved in the **South Tyneside Pledge**, highlighting our commitment to environmental sustainability and economic resilience. By supporting our local businesses in adopting greener practices, we aim to strengthen our position in the green economy while ensuring sustainable job growth.

The Council also this year secured **£3.7 million to run a series of free, flexible skills bootcamps**, co-designed with local employers, to give people the opportunity to gain skills in sectors and professions with identified skills shortages, including HGV driving, electric vehicle manufacturing, gas engineering and renewables.

Meanwhile, work has continued to develop the local care workforce, including with the official launch of the **new South Tyneside Care Academy at its new base in the Phab Club in Jarrow**. The Care Academy offers a range of social care training courses, from entry level through to senior leadership and management qualifications and has been established to encourage and upskill residents into fulfilling careers in social care and helping to address the workforce challenges in this sector. The Care Academy has delivered and facilitated training to a total of 186 people so far, engaging with over 50+ local care sector employers. The team has delivered a wide range of training, on topics ranging from medication to digital skills and, as part of work with South Tyneside College on their Health and Social Care T-Level course, has matched 13 students with industry placement in local care homes.



Priority 2: Equip young people with the skills, confidence, and aspiration to move into a career right for them

96% of local primary school pupils, 88% of local secondary school pupils and 100% of local special school pupils currently attend schools rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

Our high-quality schools equip young people with the skills, knowledge and qualifications to thrive. **71% of young people sitting A-Levels in 2024 achieved grades A*-C.** Meanwhile, **58.3% of young people sitting GCSE exams achieved a grade 9-4 pass in English and Maths.**

The Council works hard with schools and employers to ensure that young people have a good awareness of the different career opportunities available to them locally. The Council's **schools careers programme engaged over 4,200 young people, parents and school staff in 2023/24.**

Building on the success of last year, a number of further **Your Next Steps Live events** have taken place over 2024, supporting young people and their families to explore post-16 education, employment and training options. Meanwhile, the Council celebrated 'National Apprenticeship Week' in February with a series of drop-in events helping people learn about local apprenticeship opportunities.

The Council has also this year relocated its STEM Careers programme to support more young people to explore careers in science, technology, engineering and maths while also developing essential skills for employment. Notably, the **innovative 'South Tyneside and Beyond' scheme**, which last year challenged 3,000 young people across South Tyneside to develop their science, technology, engineering and mathematics interests through finding creative ways to harness renewable energy, was recently **awarded first place in the 'STEM Initiative' category of the national Collaborate to Innovate Awards 2024.**

The Council is also making the most of opportunities associated with the newly established North East Combined Mayoral Authority (NECA) to drive ongoing improvements in the local and regional education and skills offer, with Councillor Tracey Dixon, South Tyneside's Leader, now **leading on the NECA Education, Skills and Inclusion portfolio**, including overseeing the delivery of the £60 million a year devolved adult education and skills regional budget. Amongst other projects, work has now begun on a national pilot, in partnership with NECA and The Careers and Enterprise Company, which aims to improve tracking and monitoring of young people's post-education education, employment and training destinations and outcomes. Work is also underway on a regional Employment Plan and on delivery of a Supported Employment programme to help people back into work.

Priority 3: Work with partners to break down barriers to employment and progression

The **South Tyneside Pledge** is one of several key projects which is continuing to help local employers join forces to break down barriers to employment and progression. Over 300 local employers are now involved in the Pledge, including public, private and third sector organisations of different sizes and working across different sectors. This year saw the scheme, which encourages involved organisations to spend in, recruit in and give back to the local community, named as a **finalist in the Public/Private Partnership category of the 2024 Local Government Awards**.

A range of pledge events have been held this year to share advice and information, including a 'Recruit Well, Retain and Empower' event sharing guidance on how to benefit from a diverse workforce and Spring and Autumn Networking events focused on sustainability and volunteering. A toolkit has been developed to support employers support employees with caring responsibilities and Pledges have also this year participated in a charity walk and litter pick and in a fundraising initiative support local mental health charity 'The Red Bench Project'.



South Tyneside Works, the Council's Further Education and Skills Service, which supports over 3,000 adult learners a year, also plays a key role, working closely with employers, schools and partners such as the Department for Work and Pensions, in supporting local people of all ages and circumstances move into employment. South Tyneside Works retained its **'Good' Ofsted rating** this year, with inspectors noting that learners 'value and enjoy learning new life skills' throughout their training. The South Tyneside Works Quality Assurance Team was also this year named as a **finalist in the 'Quality Collaboration of the Year' category at the 2024 Quality Professional Awards**, in recognition of collaborative efforts with Durham County Council, Gateshead Council, and Sunderland City Council to improve quality assurance arrangements for employment support services.

Among other projects ongoing this year, South Tyneside Works has supported **'The Mentoring Project'**, a groundbreaking initiative aimed at shaping brighter futures for young people in South Tyneside. The North East Local Enterprise Partnership-led programme, which matches young people involved with the Youth Justice Service with local employers, to help them gain skills and practical insights into work, is helping raise young people's employment aspirations and has been well-received by both mentees and mentors.

Another employment support scheme which has received national interest this year when it was **showcased at the 2024 LGA Annual Conference 'Innovation Zone' is the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) programme**, a trailblazing joint South Tyneside and Gateshead programme which helps people over the age of 16 who have experienced issues with drug and alcohol with tailored support and advice, including in-work support, to help them secure and sustain rewarding employment.

Meanwhile, various organisations who have been allocated a share of South Tyneside's **£8.87m UK Shared Prosperity Funding** are also helping to **remove barriers to employment for different cohorts of people across the local community**. These range from the **'Upskill to Success' programme** delivered by the Compact for Race Equality in South Tyneside, which is providing education, training and employability activities to black and ethnic minority communities in South Tyneside, to the North East Autism Society's **neurodivergent employment service**, to the Foundation of Light's **'Career Warm Up' programme** which supports unemployed residents, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, by providing community-based pre-employment support.



Holborn Riverside

Priority 4: Open up opportunities for business growth and job creation

The Council has continued to support local businesses to thrive, including through a range of Council-led schemes which are helping to unlock opportunities across the borough.

One significant development in our efforts to support ongoing growth this year is the establishment of the new independently-chaired **'Jarrow Forward' Town Board**, which will **manage Jarrow's allocation of £2 million annually over the next ten years** through a central government programme. This funding will be directed toward local projects that enhance amenities and connectivity, ultimately improving access to employment and services for residents. Extensive community engagement will begin in Spring 2025.

Another flagship multi-year project that has continued to move forward in 2024 has been work on the **South Shields Town Centre masterplan**, including planning for the relocation of the South Tyneside College and South Shields Marine School campus into the heart of the town centre. As of late 2024, contractors have been invited to register their interest in the construction of the planned main building, the conversion of the Grade-II listed Barrington Street building which is intended to house staff accommodation and Marine School, and in the construction of the planned 140-bed student accommodation block on the site of the former Central Library on Prince Georg Square. £20 million in government funding was secured last year for the College relocation and wider revitalisation of the Town Centre, with other elements including the redevelopment of The Custom's House.

Nearby, the **Holborn riverside development** is another key project that has progressed this year. The project, which secured £1.85 million in Government Brownfield Land Release Funding and a further £9.4 million from the North East Combined Authority is delivering civil engineering works and supporting the construction of

300 new homes and 200,000 sq. ft of new Grade A office accommodation on the site of former industrial docks.

The sales office and show home for the riverside housing element of the project was formally opened to the public in September 2024.

Meanwhile, local people shared their opinions and suggestions about their town as part of the **'Our Hebburn Conversation'** eight-week consultation which took place between November 2023 and January 2024. The consultation outlined the strengths and challenges facing the town centre, the riverside and wider surrounding areas, and offered potential options for regeneration and improvement, including pop up stalls, covered walkways, art or sculpture trails, better lighting and CCTV, play areas, coffee kiosks, family activities and wildlife features. A masterplan will be brought forward later this year to look at the key themes that emerged from the exercise, including the importance of a variety of shops and restaurants, availability of activities and amenities for young people and families, and safety and security. Hebburn has also this year seen the official **opening of the Paul Younger Energy Centre**, which houses heat pumps associated with the renewable energy scheme delivering heat and hot water to supporting residential and Council facilities and was named as a tribute to the late nationally-recognised local hydrogeologist and environmental engineer Professor Paul Younger.

Other borough-wide schemes are also helping businesses of all sizes to thrive. Among other projects, a **new business growth grant scheme**, funded through the Council's share of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, has been launched to support inward investment and the growth of companies in South Tyneside. Grants of between £20,000 and £50,000 have been made available to support capital funding for activity such as the development of land for employment use, the introduction of new technologies or processes, or launching products and services to new markets, with £113,391 distributed so far.

Priority 5: Deliver infrastructure and transport improvements that link people to services and opportunities

The Council has progressed a number of connectivity-boosting projects over 2024. One major transport infrastructure project completed this year is the **A183 Coast Road realignment scheme**, which shifted part of the key coastal route inland, protecting it from cliff erosion and extending its lifespan by a further 50 years. Other notable projects have included the **renewal of the Monkton Terrace Footbridges**, as well as **delivery of the 'Flags to Flexible' road resurfacing** projects.

Another transport improvement project brought forward in 2024 has been the agreement of the **new Safer Roads Partnership**, a regionwide partnership initiative which will see South Tyneside work with the police and neighbouring authorities to improve cameras, share traffic intelligence, increase road safety awareness and reduce road casualties.

The Highways and Infrastructure service has gained regional and national recognition this year, including with the **South Tyneside EV Charging Network receiving a commendation in the 'Project of the Year' category at the Chartered Institute Highways and Transport (CIHT) North East regional awards**, and two other South Tyneside projects – the Coast Road Realignment scheme and Heathier Metros - being shortlisted in the Sustainability Project of the Year category.

Working with public transport providers such as Nexus and local bus operators, the Council has also this year worked up proposals that have seen the introduction of new bus services within the borough to improve connectivity to key employment, education and health care sites. This has included the development of a new bus service (559) which begins in Hebburn and Jarrow and travels to the International Advanced Manufacturing Park and Nissan, then onto Sunderland Royal Hospital and Sunderland City Centre. The Council,

collaborating with partners, has also supported revisions to bus timetables of services operating close to the Nissan plant so that they better align with Nissan shift change times, enabling more workers to use public transport options.

The Council has also continued to work closely with the North East Combined Authority to help make the most of newly available transport powers linked to bus reform which will see the introduction of an **Integrated Transport Network for the North East region**. Work is also underway to investigate options for designating a Key Route Network for regional roads.

South Tyneside is also the lead for the local authority shareholder of Newcastle International Airport, with the Leader of South Tyneside appointed Chair of the LA7 Holding Company Board. Over the last year, the Airport, which is of pivotal importance for regional connectivity, has been named **2024 'UK and Ireland Airport of the UK'** and both **'Best Airport' and 'Overall Winner' at 2024 World Routes Awards**, in recognition of its route development and operational excellence.

In addition to transport projects, another forward-thinking infrastructure project that has moved forward at pace this year has been the start of work on an **innovative 5G-enabled 'smart port' operations scheme at Port of Tyne**. The £1.159 million investment has supported new 5G infrastructure including cameras and sensors, which are being used to streamline efficiency, reduce fuel usage, and improve safety and sustainability, ultimately using digital connectivity to drive economic growth.

What's Next?

- Continue to deliver flagship multi-year regeneration projects, including the Northern Employment Area of the International Advanced Manufacturing Park
- Continue to develop South Shields, Hebburn and Jarrow, in line with the views and needs of residents and local businesses, listening to the findings of the South Shields Conversation, the Hebburn Conversation and Engagement with Jarrow residents supported by Jarrow Forward
- Continue to work in close partnership with schools and other partners to equip young people with skills and careers confidence, including through the new Careers Leaders Network, World of Work Programme and South Tyneside Works School Engagement Programme
- Continue to make the most of the significant opportunities resulting from the new North East Mayoral Combined Authority, including providing leadership of the Education and Skills portfolio
- Develop a Local Transport Plan aligned with regional ambitions, including with the creation of an Integrated Green Transport Network



The South Tyneside and Beyond programme was awarded first place in the STEM initiative category of the Collaborate to Innovate Awards



CLlr Carter visiting an HGV Driving Skills Bootcamp



Nissan at the Your Next Steps Conference 2024



CLlr Meling visits Toner Avenue Primary School where pupils explore engineering with diggers donated by Hitachi Construction Machinery



Growing Monkton Business Park-based local business Beach Accountants



South Tyneside Care Academy representatives encouraging local people to join the care workforce



Part of Strong Communities

South Tyneside boasts a wealth of treasured community assets, from award-winning beaches and parks, to libraries, community centres, and cultural venues.

According to our latest Resident Survey (2022), a significant majority of residents (72%) are satisfied with their local area as a place to live.

While we know we have challenges ahead in reaching our net zero goals, including a complex and competitive funding landscape and the high cost of low carbon technologies which have advanced less rapidly than projected when our Climate Emergency was first declared, we've taken great strides as a Council in recent years in achieving ambition interim carbon emissions targets. We've also supported improvements in key environmental metrics, including a 9% reduction in overall household waste and a 5% decrease in non-recyclable waste.

We also work hard to make sure residents can enjoy high quality green and coastal spaces and have opportunities to enjoy and learn about nature. When it comes to helping communities connect and engage in arts, culture and heritage, we are guided by our 'Making Waves' Cultural Strategy, produced through public consultation, and strive to create a range of opportunities for local people.

A recent Northumbria Police user survey shows that perceptions of crime in South Tyneside are more positive compared to the wider region, with 97% of residents feeling safe locally, surpassing the Northumbria Police average, and the latest available figures show that crime and anti-social behaviour rates have fallen year on year. However, we also know that crime and anti-social behaviour, including litter and fly tipping, are still a key concern for some residents, and the borough has some challenges around high rates of domestic violence.

We have excellent relationships with our partners in Northumbria Police and together we work hard to ensure we understand, address and prevent the issues that matter most to our communities. The refreshed Community Safety Partnership Plan for 2024-2027 identifies plans for delivering against five key priorities for partnership work in this area - crime reduction, domestic and sexual abuse, putting victims first, addressing anti-social behaviour, and delivering community confidence.

Our residents take immense pride in the area's clean and safe neighbourhoods, town centres, green spaces, beaches and cultural and events offer. We are committed to delivering services and creating opportunities that maintain a high quality of life and a strong sense of community for everyone.



2024 headlines:

1,035 tonnes of carbon emissions is being saved each year due to the award-winning Viking Energy Network Jarrow

87% of the borough's street lighting has been upgraded to energy efficient LEDs

73,000 households each week are served by the Council's waste collection crews

£25m was invested in Council homes over 2023-24 to ensure they are well maintained, meet the Decent Homes standard and keep customers safe

100+ bikes have been seized this year by the dedicated taskforce set up to tackle motorcycle disorder

6 South Tyneside parks - West Park and Monkton Dene in Jarrow, and North and South Marine Park, Readhead Park and West Park in South Shields - secured 'Green Flag status' this year, placing them among the best green spaces in the country

£25.4m has been invested into Council housing stock this year to ensure homes meet Decent Homes standards

15,300 gas servicing repairs have taken place over the last year

3,610 electrical safety inspections and **1,7000** water risk assessments have taken place across 2024/25

13,000 building safety inspections of high-rise, low-rise or communal facilities have taken place over the last year

12,682 emergency repairs have been undertaken this year to ensure that Council homes remain safe and comfortable

1,488 people took part in the 2024 Summer Parade

37,290 residents cast their vote in South Tyneside in the 2024 Local Elections and a further **36,912** residents of the South Shields constituency and **36,813** of the Jarrow and Gateshead East constituency cast their ballots in the 2024 General Election

6.446 million visitors came to South Tyneside last year, including over 6-million-day visitors and over **40,000** overnight visitors

£417.58 million is the estimated economic impact of the visitor economy to South Tyneside

29,618 residents attended events at South Tyneside's libraries between January and October 2024

180,546 books were issued in South Tyneside libraries between January and October 2024

Delivery Against Our Priorities:

Priority 1: Support green and sustainable choices and behaviours and connection to the natural environment

South Tyneside has pressed ahead over the last year with its ambitious Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy and goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030.

The Council was this year **shortlisted both in the 'Net Zero' category of the LGC Awards and in the 'Leadership in Responding to the Climate Emergency' category of the MJ Awards 2024** in recognition of sector-leading work in this important area.

Most notably, the Council's renewable energy schemes have gone from strength to strength over the last year, with a number of projects reaching key milestones and drawing significant national attention and celebration.

The Viking Energy Network Jarrow, the first scheme of its kind in the UK, which harnesses low-grade heat from the River Tyne and uses it to heat Council-owned buildings in the Jarrow area, is now fully operational, cutting annual carbon emissions by 1,035 tonnes a year. The Viking Energy scheme **won the 'Best Climate Action and Decarbonisation' category of the 2024 Association of Public Service Excellence Awards**, in recognition of its innovation. The project also **won this year's North East regional Registered Institute of Chartered Surveyors North East (RICS) 'Best Public Sector Project' award**, before progressing to **win the overall national RICS 'Best Public Sector Project' Award 2024**.

As of November, **work is now also complete on the build of the Paul Younger Energy Centre**, which houses the **£7.7m Hebburn Renewable Energy scheme**, and is already providing renewable energy to Hebburn Central and the high-rise residential flats at Durham Court, with further options for extension now being explored.

The **Hebburn Renewable Energy scheme** uses a two stage air to water source heat pump solution which takes ambient heat from the air and converts it into low-temperature-hot-water to provide reliable, low carbon heating to deliver a reduction of 320 tonnes of carbon emissions a year.

Alongside pressing forward with renewable energy schemes, as part of the wider Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy, over the last year the Council has also continued to create opportunities for residents to learn about, connect with and play a role in protecting nature.

This includes the **new 'COAST South Tyneside' project**, which raises awareness of our internationally-important coastal habitats and wildlife through direct engagement, events, and its dedicated website and social media feeds. The COAST code promotes nature-positive behaviour to reduce disturbance and help our coastal wildlife to thrive. The project also delivered the second year of a nest protection scheme for ringed plover, a UK red-listed bird of conservation concern. With the assistance of 15 trained volunteers, this resulted in the successful fledging of 3 ringed plover chicks from Jackie's Beach in Whitburn – a 300% increase on the previous year.

Another example of the Council's leadership in responding to the climate crisis, is the **Stronger Shores project**, a South Tyneside-hosted region-wide £6.9 million multi-year environmental scheme which is improving understanding of how marine habitats can support with the management of coastal erosion, flood risks, climate change and biodiversity. As well as supporting a range of projects from Berwick to Redcar, in South Tyneside the programme is exploring how oyster reefs, seagrass meadows and kelp forests support an improved marine environment and generate local economic benefits. This year, Stronger Shores hosted its first annual conference, attracting experts from around the country to discuss the theme of 'Beyond Concrete: nature based solutions for coastal management'.



This year, through its concession contract with Connected Kerb, the Council undertook a **refresh of the Electric Vehicle Charging Point Network** with the majority of the network to be renewed and phasing expected to be completed in early 2025. Over the lifespan of the 20-year contract, Connected Kerb are committed to extending the Electric Vehicle Charging Point Network by over 2000 charging point units.

Also this year, alongside volunteers and partners such as 'Friends of' groups, the Council has continued its work to preserve and improve local green and blue spaces for local people to enjoy. **Six Green Flag Awards**, national accolades which recognise high-quality, well-maintained green spaces, were secured this year for parks across the borough, including West Park and Monkton Dene in Jarrow, and for North and South Marine Park, Readhead Park and West Park in South Shields.

Other notable work that the Council has led on this year involving green spaces has included working with charity Fields in Trust to draw up **'Deeds of Dedication' to provide legal protection for a number of playing fields and other green spaces used for recreation and leisure across the borough**, ensuring that they are preserved for future generations.

Engagement on the climate emergency continues internally and externally as sustainability continues to be embedded into Council processes and procedures. New members of staff are given a presentation on the Climate Emergency in their Corporate Induction which gives a brief overview of the Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy, progress towards our objectives and highlights notable projects such as the Viking Energy Network Jarrow. **Carbon Literacy training** is now being delivered to Council Officers and Elected Members, with the course, which is accredited by the Carbon Literacy Project, covering a wide range of topics related to climate change and aims to inform, educate and inspire action in participants. There are now **35 officers and councillors accredited as Carbon Literate**. Council officers have also engaged with schools across the borough, delivering climate change presentations and working with Eco Clubs. A poster competition for school children was organised in collaboration with Boldon Library to celebrate Earth Day 2024.

Progress has also been made to support the delivery of **'Biodiversity Net Gain' (BNG)** within the borough. Since April 2024, all developments are required to achieve a 10% gain for biodiversity either on or off-site and the Council is working to legally secure areas of council land for the purpose of improving biodiversity net gain, which will see these sites being improved and managed for nature over the long term.

Meanwhile, the Council has also continued to work to ensure that the borough's beaches and coastal areas are maintained to a high standard. The bathing waters at both Sandhaven Beach and Marsden Beach this year met the 'Good' standard and the Council is working with partners at the Environment Agency and Northumbria Water to develop an action plan to improve water quality at Littlehaven Beach which was rated as 'poor' when it was tested in Autumn 2024, following the area this **year being formally designated as a bathing site**, after a consultation with residents and work with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Priority 2: Enhance satisfaction in the local area by supporting clean and safe neighbourhoods and public spaces

The Council has continued to work hard over 2024 to maintain and improve local neighbourhoods, housing and public spaces.

One of the most significant steps that has been taken over the last year in pursuit of this objective has been the **decision to bring Council housing stock management back in-house** to support more joined-up services and an integrated approach that better serves tenants housing and social needs. Proposals for this change were drawn up after an independent housing review undertaken in 2023 in anticipation of new regulatory and legislative requirements and following a 'minded-to' decision from Cabinet. Consultation took place in Spring 2024, with 94.2% of Council housing tenants who took part endorsing the change. The transition formally took place in November 2024, with all staff and services, such as



Sandhaven Beach



From left to right: South Tyneside Council's Gary Kirsop, Council Leader Tracey Dixon, one of our involved tenants, Chief Executive Jonathan Tew and Councillor Foreman marking the transition of Housing Services back into the Council in November 2024

repairs and tenant support, transferring to the Council to sit under the new Community Operations Council Directorate alongside other services such as Highways, Infrastructure and Project Delivery.

Alongside overseeing this transition, over the last year, housing services have continued to press on with a number of long-term projects supporting high-standards and improvements for tenants. Over the 2023-24 financial year, **£25.4 million has been invested into council homes** across the borough to ensure they meet Decent Homes standards, are well-maintained and keep customers safe. This includes a range of external and internal upgrades to individual homes and Housing Plus community facilities, from kitchens and bathroom installations, to roof renewals, structural works, electrical rewrites, boiler renewals, and more. Alongside improvement works, housing services have delivered a range of planned and responsive works to keep tenants safe, including carrying out **15,300 gas servicing repairs, 3,610 electrical safety inspections, 1,700 water risk assessments, and 13,000 building safety inspections of high-rise, low-rise or communal facilities. 12,682 emergency repairs** were also undertaken over the 2023/24 year, 99.6% of which were completed within timescales.

In addition, housing services have brought forward new high-quality homes for affordable rent. This has included

housing the first tenants at the new **£2 million carbon-cutting council housing development in Hindmarch Drive in Boldon**, a mix of two-bedroomed council houses, apartments and bungalows, all A-rated for energy consumption. The scheme has been named as a finalist in the 2024 Housing Innovation Awards.

Planning permission has also been approved for a new housing development of 12 two- and three-bedroom apartments and houses at **Lizard Lane in Marsden**, building on at the site of former flats demolished in 2022, and expanding the number of high-quality homes available for affordable rent in the local area. Work is also underway to bring forward 17 energy-efficient homes at Reynolds Avenue in the coming years.

Working with partners, housing services have also worked hard over the last year to ensure appropriate support for people experiencing homelessness, with 1,387 people presenting as homeless over 2023-24, an increase from previous years mirroring growing pressures across the country. **Over 1,708 people have been provided with advice and guidance in relation to their housing situation** over this period and the number of **emergency homeless units has been expanded locally to 34 units**, including more dedicated units for young people and veterans.

Beyond housing, a number of community safety initiatives have also taken place over the last year to help ensure local people feel safe and secure in their homes and neighbourhoods.

Most notably, a **new dedicated policing team has been put in place for the borough**, headed up by Area Commander for South Tyneside, Chief Superintendent Aelfwynn Sampson. This change is part of Northumbria Police's move to a local-authority based policing structure which is intended to help the force focus activity and resources on the issues that matter most of local South Tyneside residents.

Another project that is supporting more joined up working between multi-agency professionals in the area and will help to improve residents safety is the opening of the new Hebburn Tri Station. This **new multi-agency emergency services hub**, the first in the country, brings together Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, Northumbria Police, and the North East Ambulance Service under one roof and won 'Collaboration of the Year' award at the Government Property Awards.

Over the last year, a number of multi-agency initiatives have taken place to tackle crime and disorder locally. This has included Operation Niagara, an approach which has seen Community Responders from the Council equipped with body-worn cameras targeting hotspot areas in Hebburn, Jarrow and on the Metro network, working with plain clothes and uniformed police patrols.

The initiative has been highly impactful in reducing youth-related crime and anti-social behaviour, resulting in a number of arrests in Hebburn Town Centre and supporting a **70% decrease in anti-social behaviour incidents** in target areas in its first six months in operation. Other initiatives have included setting up a dedicated taskforce on motorbike disorder which has resulted in nearly 100 bikes being seized since the start of the year, and work by the Community Safety team on an 'early intervention' approach which has seen more home visits with police to young people involved in disorder to prevent their behaviour escalating, and more mediation to resolve neighbour disputes.



CLlr Gibson at the Coast Road Alignment project which was shortlisted for 'Project of the Year' in the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transports North East and Cumbria Awards



Spectators enjoy music at South Marine Park as part of the This is South Tyneside Festival

The Council has also continued to tackle environmental crime, including fly tipping and graffiti. As part of this, new designated 'Urban Street Art' sites for graffiti artwork are being explored after recommendations from the **Council's Our Place Scrutiny Committee commission into graffiti** across the borough, which found that while illegal graffiti can have negative environmental impacts, high quality community-supported street art can brighten up dark spaces.

Regrettably, waste services industrial action this year caused disruption to resident waste collections over much of the year, contributing to more litter and a challenging backlog of domestic waste. The Council and unions representing the waste services workforce negotiated a resolution to this situation in the summer, following the agreement of a new **Waste Services Action Plan** informed by an independent Local Government Association Peer Review in Spring 2024. The Action Plan is well underway and is supporting considerable improvements to service delivery on key areas such as balancing collection routes, improving personal protection equipment, and improving engagement and communication across the service. It is hoped that these improvements, alongside the return to normal collection services for residents, will support cleaner, greener neighbourhoods through more efficient service delivery, and will help the Council to return to and build on the positive trend of higher recycling rates and reduced household waste

volumes going forward. Looking ahead, the Council will also need to adapt to several upcoming changes in legislation in the coming years and so will be undertaking an overall **review of waste strategy over 2025**.

Work has also begun this year on a five-year rolling programme of **safety inspections and repairs on memorials across the Council's six cemeteries** which will seek to ensure the sites continue to be safe and comfortable places for people paying their respects. Improvement works have additionally taken place this year at South Tyneside Crematorium, with 22 extra car parking spaces added to the existing 57 space parking site to make it easier for bereaved families and friends to pay tribute to their loved ones without unnecessary stress, while also helping to alleviate pressures in nearby residential areas.

Wider improvements in the public realm have been made through Community Area Forum funding of a range of locally-led projects initiated from within local communities. Investment in the public realm has also taken place with uplifting imagery in key town centres promoting the heritage offer across the whole borough.

Priority 3: Create opportunities for residents to connect and participate in their local communities

The Council, working closely with partners such as local cultural venues and third sector organisations, has an important role to play in creating opportunities for residents to come together, connect, celebrate their heritage and identities, and contribute their talents and interests to help bring together communities.

As well as benefiting local residents of all ages, high-quality events and cultural attractions, together with draws like the coast and green spaces, play an important role in drawing visitors to South Tyneside. These visitors have a significant positive impact on the local economy and the latest available data shows that **6.446 million people visited South Tyneside last year**, bringing a total economic impact of £417.58 million.

Community events are a particularly valued element of the Council's community and culture offer and the Council this year continued with its much-loved 'This is South Tyneside Festival' over the summer.

Over 15,000 people turned out for the 2024 South Tyneside Parade, with 1,488 participants from a wide range of schools and community groups.

This year's two-day festivities were themed around 'celebration' which was reflected in colourful costumes, dance and music, as well as in the active incorporation of the celebration of lesbian, gay, trans and queer pride into the parade.

The annual **free open-air Summer Concerts** this year featuring major acts like Sigala and Jason Donovan, and was again well-received by both local people and visitors. Other popular events over the three month-festival included a programme of live music at the foreshow, showcasing a range of talented emerging North East artists and musicians, children's entertainment as part of the regular Kids Fun Fest, and brass bands, as well as the popular Proms in the Park classical concert.

LGBTQ+ Pride was not just a feature of the summer parade, but also an ongoing major theme for the wider festival, particularly the late July concert headlined by Sister Sledge, which attracted **18,000 attendees**.



This is South Tyneside Festival 2024



2024 Summer Parade

Other cultural opportunities tied into the **Pride in South Tyneside programme**, supported by the work of inclusive events charity 'Out North East', included LGBTQ+ exhibits and activities at The Word and inclusive family picnics and dog walks.

As well as the summer events programme, the Council has staged and supported a wide range of other well-received events across the last year. Among other events, this has included hosting a range of Christmas events including light switch-ons and festive markets and musical performances, support for community-led events such as the Ocean Road Mela, Hebburn Carr-Ellison Carnival, and Armed Forces Day, cultural programmes such as WRITE Festival and the International Magic Festival, and various civic events including the Mayor's Charity Ball and Remembrance Day parades and services across the borough. 2024 also saw a community commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day landings, mirroring the national commemorations with a unique South Tyneside flotilla of boats and actors re-enacting the landings of 1944.

Outside of the events programme, the Council has also continued to work closely with cultural partners to boost cultural and creative participation and

ensure South Tyneside is a place where people have meaningful opportunities to explore arts, heritage and culture. Local cultural and community organisations have been supported to deliver a wide range of activities this year, including working with people making use of Welcoming Places with support from People's Postcode Lottery. The South Tyneside Cultural Partnership was also this year successful in **securing grants of over £500,000 from Arts Council England to develop a programme of activity that supports local creatives to deliver ambitious projects, festivals, residencies, skills and development workshops** over the next three years, creating opportunities for local creative enterprises and boosting access to arts and culture for South Tyneside residents. A further **£1million has also been secured from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England for capital improvements at South Shields Museum and Art Gallery and Jarrow Hall museum.**

Alongside South Tyneside's cultural offer, the Council also works to bring people together through leisure and recreation activities. Events like the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Sport and Leisure Festival, which took place in August, have helped to widen access to a range of sports and activities. Active activities like rock-climbing have been central to events like the Youth Festival and Lighter and Darker Nights campaigns and **£20,000 was secured this year from the Government's Youth Justice Sports Fund to help provide 120 vulnerable young people between the aged of 11 and 17 with free leisure and fitness activities** across the borough.

The Great North Run, the world's biggest half marathon, also continues to be a key event and a major source of pride for the borough, bringing over 45,000 runners and their supporters to the finish line in South Tyneside this September. The Mayor of South Tyneside this year accepted a **World Athletics Heritage Plaque** which recognises the significance of the Great North Run finishing line in athletic heritage. This year also saw hundreds of school children once more take part in 1.4km the Fit for the Finish fun run as part of the 2024 Great North Run celebrations.

The Council's Library Services have also gone from strength to strength this year, **enabling local people to check out 180,546 physical books and 52,812 e-books** or e-audiobooks and supporting 50,467 log-ins on public computers, as well as **hosting 29,618 customer attendances at a range of events and activities**. Among other activities, **over 9,000 people participated in the Football Takeover of the Word in August, over 40 literary events were held as part of the Write Festival in September**, Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation funding has provided development support for over 40 local artists, and **over 575 of the most isolated people in South Tyneside have engaged in the externally-funded 'Know Your Neighbourhood' programme**.

The voluntary and community sector also plays a hugely valuable role in South Tyneside life. The roll out of community platform, Plinth! has seen voluntary organisations become better connected to communities and volunteers. The #LoveSouthTyneside Awards in July 2024 attracted local business sponsorship used to fund a celebration event, passing on financial donations to those winners who were nominated from our own community.

What's Next?

- Deliver a Climate Summit in Spring 2025, in light of recognised barriers to reaching upcoming carbon emissions targets, bringing together internal and external partners to help build relationships, take stock of the current landscape around low carbon technology and regional and national funding opportunities, share ideas and shape a refreshed Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy for 2025 onwards
- Continue to provide regional and national leadership around sustainability, including through ongoing leadership of the Stronger Shores regional project and steering of the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group
- Develop the South of Tyne and Wear Local Nature Recovery Strategy with regional partners, building towards a public consultation in Spring 2024
- Continue to refine our approach to tree risk management, with publication of a refreshed Tree and Woodland Policy
- Continue to promote the waste hierarchy of reduce, reuse and recycle, supporting a move to a more sustainable circular economy model, and undertake a strategic review of waste services to ensure the Council is able to respond to the direction of the newly established national Circular Economy Taskforce and to wider upcoming national legislation changes, including Extended Producer Responsibility, Simpler Recycling, and Deposit Return Scheme
- Continue to work with communities, through COAST South Tyneside, to raise awareness and promote behaviour change to protect wildlife
- Explore opportunities for further renewable energy schemes, such as the extension of the Viking Energy Network Jarrow and Hebburn Renewable Energy schemes, as well as consider additional technologies such as Deep Geothermal and energy from wave power
- Continue to work with residents and partners to ensure responsiveness to community preferences while enabling sustainable development that can meet local planning needs, including around housing, infrastructure and green spaces
- Realise the opportunities for more integrated services that come with the transfer of Council housing stock management in-house
- Continue to work with partners to keep communities safe in line with the Making Communities Safer 2024-27 Community Safety Plan
- Continue to deliver cultural and events programmes that nurture local strengths and serve to connect and inspire communities, in line with the Making Waves Cultural Strategy
- Continue to invest in housing that meets local needs and work to maintain high-quality public spaces, including green spaces and other community sites, that are attractive and accessible



Spectators enjoy a This is South Tyneside Festival Summer Concert



Good Friday Parade 2024



New Northumbria Police Chief Superintendent for South Tyneside, Aelfwynn Sampson, with Cllr Dixon and Chief Executive Jonathan Tew



Cllr Dixon and Cllr Taylor at the launch of the new Tidal Trails coastal run



Fit for the Finish Fun Run 2024



Targeting Support to Make Things Fairer

South Tyneside is home to over 147,000 residents with a wide range of different identities, backgrounds and characteristics.

According to the 2021 Census, 5.6% of local residents are from a minority ethnic background, 22.1% of local residents have a disability, 2.74% of residents identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or another sexual orientation other than heterosexual, and we also know that 10.5% of residents are carers, approximately 1% of local people are care-experienced, and 5.3% of residents are Armed Forces veterans.

While this diversity has a lot of benefits for the local community, we also know that people with particular characteristics can face prejudice or must navigate additional barriers to accessing services or achieving positive health, employment or other outcomes.

As a Council, we want all our residents be financially secure, healthy and well, connected to jobs, and part of strong communities, and to ultimately be able to live happy, healthy and fulfilled lives in South Tyneside. And we recognise that to support that, we need to target support to those who need additional help.

2024 headlines:

150+ people attended the sell-out 'From Diversity to Adversity' event at South Shields Town Hall in October which brought communities together to celebrate diversity

100+ people attended our first ever multi-faith community Iftar event and a further 100+ to our second multi-faith Christmas event, both in partnership with The Dialogue Society

571 adaptations – such as installation of stairlifts, ramps or wet rooms – were made to Council homes over 2023-24 to help tenants with a disability or care need continue to live independently at home

122 people were referred to the Veterans Outreach Support Worker over 2024-25, with £24,000 in additional income accessed for these individuals because of this support



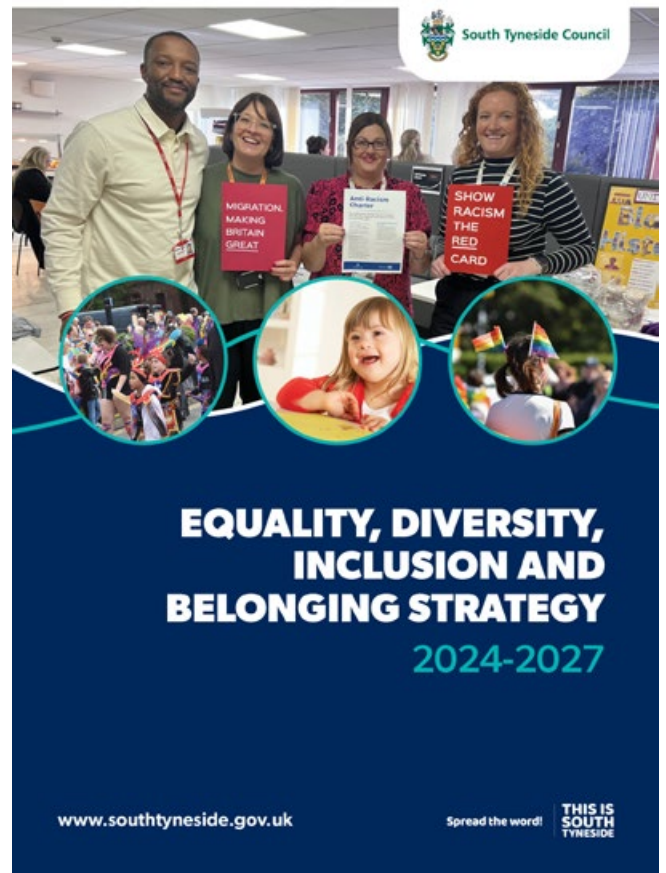
Group discussing protected characteristics at the 'From Adversity to Diversity' Conference

6 employee identity-based networks are now operational across the Council - the multi-cultural network, the LGBTQIA+ network, the disability and neurodiversity network, the carer's network and the armed forces network

10% of applicants to Council vacancies have a disclosed disability and 22% of applicants identify as coming from a non-white British ethnic background

18,000 people attending the 'Pride' Summer Concert headlined by Sister Sledge, sisters of inclusive disco anthem 'We Are Family'

1488 people took part in the 'Celebration' - themed annual Summer Parade



In October 2024, the Council formally agreed a **new Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) Strategy** and suite of Action Plans, **which set out plans for delivery against a set of refreshed Equality Objectives:**

- Improve Our Data and Understanding
- Strengthen Our Approach to Engagement and Co-Production
- Embed Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging into our Culture, Workforce and Everything we do

Although these objectives, and the associated actions, are only one part of the Council's wider cross-service efforts to target support and make things fairer, it is hoped that they will better enable all services and partners to go further in their efforts to address inequalities.

Delivery Against Our Priorities:

The **new Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) Strategy**, launched in October following consultation with external partners, community groups, and representatives from the Council's EDIB employee networks, brings together a set of projects which are aimed at improving data and understanding around inequality, supporting better engagement with local diverse communities, and bolstering training and tools to ensure that the Council is able to meet the needs of its diverse community and workforce.

Already, considerable progress has been made on a number of the key projects in the strategy.

In terms of the 'Improving Our Data and Understanding' objective, as well as compiling intelligence about local communities in the form of the **2024 'Our South Tyneside' report** and publishing a **new annual Equality Information Report**, over the last year a new 'Spotlight on...' feature has been built into regular Quarterly Performance Reports, supporting deeper understanding of the latest available data on inequalities across different service areas. The Council has also this year launched a **new Annual Research Report** and worked to raise awareness of opportunities for the workforce to improve research skills and build confidence with evidence-led decision making. Importantly, the organisation has also launched new **one-stop-shop publicly accessible 'data observatory'**, which pulls together up to date data and evidence from a range of sources.

The Council has also pressed ahead this year with its goal of continually improving engagement and co-production with diverse local communities. Most notably, the Council has this year stepped up its efforts around celebrating 'Pride' and communicating support for LGBTQ+ residents and employees through partnering with inclusive events organisation 'Out North East' to host and advertise a series of inclusive local 'Pride in South Tyneside' events. As well as consciously making Pride a feature of the Summer Parade and hosting a Pride-badged free Summer Concert, headlined by Sister

Sledge. The first **annual 'Pride in South Tyneside' festival programme** included inclusive family picnics, concerts and events hosted by local nightlife venues, a 'Pride Pooches' dog walk event, an exhibition on the inclusive LGBTQ+ flag at The Word, a film festival exploring films with LGBTQ+ significance, and a series of arts and crafts workshops.

Other work that has taken place this year to promote diversity and community cohesion has included organising and hosting the **highly successful 2024 'From Adversity to Diversity' event**, which marked Hate Crime Awareness week by bringing together over 150+ speakers, multi-agency professionals and residents from a diverse range backgrounds to celebrate the achievements and contributions of people from the local community with different abilities and from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and to share food and music. The sell-out October event built on the similarly well-received 2023 Hate Crime Conference and further developed relationships with the Dialogue Society and members of the local Muslim community following a well-received Community Iftar Dinner hosted at the Town Hall during Ramadan in Spring 2024.

Working with partners, the Council has also this **year continued to support work to set up a South Tyneside Poverty Truth Commission**, which is currently identifying and developing local commissioners with lived experience of poverty, with a view to gaining greater insight into the barriers faced by people with poverty when accessing services or navigating schools or workplaces.

Internally, the Council has also continued to **nurture and expand identity-based employee networks**, with six networks now operational – a neurodiversity and disability network, a women's network, an LGBTQIA+ network, a carer's network, and, new as of 2024, a multi-cultural network and a network for armed forces veterans, reservists, uniformed services volunteers and family members.



Attendees at the 'From Adversity to Diversity' marking Hate Crime Awareness Week 2024

Meanwhile, work has also progressed in relation to the objective around embedding Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging into the culture, workforce and everything the Council does. In particular this year the Council has **made a wide range of equality and diversity training courses available to the workforce**, on topics such as understanding neurodiversity in the workplace, and has **strengthened its Equality Impact Assessment processes** to support improved consideration of equalities factors into decision-making. The Council has also launched a new **'Reverse Mentoring' programme**, matching employees with diverse characteristics and lived experiences to share their insights and ideas with senior managers.

Following the civil unrest which took place around the country over Summer 2024, the Council was quick to develop and implement an **action plan aimed at reaching out to and offering reassurance and support to local people from minority ethnic and faith-based communities**, including working with schools, local employers and internal equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging networks to communicate support, unity and listen to concerns.

Elsewhere, Council services have continued to build on successful models for co-production with service users, including the **Working Together group**, made up of care users and carers with an interest in shaping Adult Social Care and Commissioning service improvements, and Children's Services Participation Forums including the **Making A Great Important Change (MAGIC) Children in Care Council**.

The **South Tyneside Youth Council** and the **Young People's Health Ambassadors** have helped to deliver several well-received **Intergenerational Debates** this year, bringing together younger and older people for spirited discussions about topics ranging from graffiti to period poverty which help to bridge generational divides. The Youth Council, Young Ambassadors, and **newly elected Member of Youth Parliament for South Tyneside, sixth former Yacub Ahmed**, also all play important roles in championing the interest of young people across the borough.

Building on the success of the 'summit' model to bring partners together around important shared challenges, the Council and the South Tyneside Partnership this year brought together diverse voices to collaborate on a **Corporate Parenting Summit** and **Child Poverty Summit**.

The Council has also leveraged its influence and resources to lend support to and raise awareness of inclusive campaigns across the year. This has ranged from marking **International Women’s Day with an event inviting girls and young women from local primary schools to meet with local women using STEM skills in different career paths**, to celebrating **‘International Day of Older People’**, to lighting up the Town Hall purple for **‘Purple Tuesday’** in November to contribute to global efforts around accessibility and inclusion, to hosting civic services with schools and community representatives to facilitate reflection on important dates such as **Holocaust Memorial Day** in January and **Remembering Srebrenica** in July. In addition, the Council has participated in campaigns like **‘White Ribbon’** to communicate support for eliminating abuse against women and girls and organising a week-long programme of events ranging from sports to arts and craft workshops to celebrating **‘Learning Disability Week’** in June.

The Council has built on last year’s improvements to accessible playground equipment by expanding access to accessible toilets and changing areas, including installing a **new state-of-the-art Changing Places unit in Bents Park** in South Shields, featuring equipment such as hoists, adult-sized changing benches and space for carers and family, and installing a similar **new Changing Places facility in South Shields Town Hall**.

The Council has also this year expanded its support for the local Armed Forces community, recognising the additional barriers often faced by veterans, reservists, volunteers and family members. 2024 saw the Council retain its **Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Gold Status Award**, an accolade reserved only for organisations which are recognised as the most committed supporters and advocates for the Armed Forces community. The Council is also leading the way in expanding its Armed Forces Covenant commitment to the Merchant Navy, including those who have served alongside the forces during wartime or defence moves.

What’s Next?

- Continue to deliver the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy and Action Plans, including launching the publicly accessible Data Observatory, strengthening the Council’s Equality Impact Assessment processes, and expanding the training, events and engagement offers
- Host an Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Engagement Summit, working with local partners to share learning and best practice around engaging with diverse and hard-to-reach local communities
- Deliver the South Tyneside Poverty Truth Commission
- Progress with the Anti-Racism Charter, Age-Friendly Communities programme, and Care Confident scheme



Community Iftar Dinner in South Shields Town Hall for Ramadan 2024



LGBTQ+ Pride in South Tyneside was celebrated as part of the Summer Parade and through a range of community events this year



The Women's Network is one of six employee identity-based networks operational across the organisation



Newly elected Member of Youth Parliament for South Tyneside Yacub Ahmed with Deputy Member of Youth Parliament Lewis Hillis



Community groups participating in the 2024 Summer Parade



Parade participants highlight the Ocean Road Mela celebration

Recognising Our Fantastic Workforce



The many achievements outlined in this report are only possible because of the hard work of our dedicated employees, elected members and partners.

The Council delivers a wide range of important services which make a difference every day, in both big and small ways, for our residents.

Each year the Council provides high-quality social housing for around 18,000 tenants; empties 6.5 million bins; manages 550km of road; receives 300,000 customer service contacts, triages 25,000 new adult social care contacts; supports 23,000 children in their nursery, primary and secondary school education - and so much more.

Residents are likely to regularly encounter our passionate and committed frontline staff - from social

workers to waste operatives and customer services representatives - who are very visible as they are out there delivering and communicating with the community.

However, our fantastic frontline services would not be possible without the support of our employees who work behind the scenes – including those working in finance, people services, procurement, legal and democratic services, communications, policy, performance, Digital & ICT, assurance & risk, business support, and more.

As well as supporting the delivery of the achievements detailed in this report and doing vital work such as keeping the Council legally compliant, communicating with residents, helping co-ordinate significant saving proposals, and supporting a workforce of 3062 people (not including school-based employees), our back-office teams have also delivered many projects which are helping us be more efficient, effective and fit for the future.

Some notable examples of achievements delivered by our back-office functions in 2024 include:

- The **People and Organisational Development Team** being shortlisted in 'Small Team of the Year' at the 2024 Local Government Chronicle Awards and in the 'Best Workforce Initiative' category at the 2024 Association of Public Service Excellence Awards, in recognition of their work in helping to accelerate organisational culture change through leadership development, learning, support and wellbeing offers for employees and elected members
- The **Elections Team** planning and facilitating local elections, general elections and an additional by-election, with 37,290 residents supported to cast their votes in South Tyneside in the May 2024 Local Elections and a further 36,912 residents of the South Shields constituency and 36,813 of the Jarrow and Gateshead East constituency supported to cast their ballots in the 2024 General Election
- The **Digital & ICT Team** supporting over 3 million visits to the Council's website over the last 12 months, maintaining over 100 key systems and enhancing collaboration and productivity through the Modern Workplace Programme
- The **Performance and Change Management Team** delivering a first full year's cycle of Quarterly Performance Reports, while also supporting the Children's Services improvement journey and supporting Adult Services in preparing for Care Quality Commission assessment
- The **Information and Feedback** service leading on the digitisation of historic paper records and freeing up a Council building previously used for physical storage for sale or reuse, and implementing new 'corporate complaints, compliments, and comment's policies and statutory processes for Children's Services, Adult's Services and Public Health
- The **Procurement Team** securing, as part of contracts agreed over 2023/24, over £2.4m in economic, social, and environmental 'social value' benefits for the local community, and through the early payment programme helping make sure over 21,000 suppliers were paid early while also generating £620,000 in additional income to be reinvestment back into Council services
- The **Revenues Team** collecting over £70m of council tax and supporting residents with on-line account facilities and text prompts to assist in managing their account
- A **cross-Council Team** delivering the first ever PROUD Employee Awards recognition programme and Awards ceremony, celebrating over 400 employees nominated by their peers



'Our Council' Change Programme

At the Council we have thrown ourselves into a process of renewal over the last few years. We have redefined a Vision for the borough and designed and implemented phase one of the 'Our Council' change programme with a root and branch approach to governance, culture, engagement, and modern ways of working.

We have a new Council-wide planning framework in place with a 20 Year Vision, Three Year Council Strategy and Annual Service Plans, and in line with our new PROUD values, we have increased understanding and transparency of our performance through new public-facing Quarterly Performance Reports, the Our South Tyneside report and Annual Reports.

Our efforts around culture, engagement, workforce development and support are having a positive impact across the organisation. Our latest Employee Wellbeing Survey results report that 95% of employees surveyed feel trusted to do their job; 96% know what is expected of them at work; 92% feel proud to work for the council; and 91% feel the Council is a great place to work. We have a comprehensive action plan in place to address the areas of improvement identified by the survey, as well as bespoke plans to support specific services, such as Waste Operations and frontline teams not linked to the Council's ICT network.

The second phase of the 'Our Council' Change Programme focuses on the major and prioritised programmes of change which will have significant financial, policy or strategic implications for the Council and Borough. There are four major programme workstreams (Prevention, Commercial, Modern-fit-for-purpose Council, and Evidence & Engagement) which are led by a programme sponsor and a separate programme board, reporting into an overarching Transformation Board. The Transformation Board is the focal point for facilitating collaborative activity around public service reforms whilst managing risk which will underpin the Council's financial sustainability in the medium term to fundamentally close the projected financial gap within the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

The four major programme workstreams are:

Workstream 1 - Prevention

This workstream is about us supporting people to live healthier and happier lives and as a result, preventing, reducing, and delaying needs for support and statutory services. Being able to access the right support at the right time is critical, with a focus on targeted early intervention so we can work collaboratively with people and partners to improve outcomes.

As a local authority we have an important role in helping convene the right conditions to play a key role in driving system transformation, linked to public sector reform, liberating our workforce to utilise their skills to work differently with people to enable real change. We can harness the assets and strengths we have across South Tyneside so they are coordinated, maximised and targeted to those who really need it. We understand the

benefits of not making long term decisions with people when they are in crisis, the need to move away from admissions to care from hospital as an example and how we need to do more in terms of working with people much earlier to understand what matters to them.

We want to help enable people to live as independently as possible. This **includes more self-care options; making the most of strengths that already exist among individuals, families, and communities; more co-ordinated information and advice; greater alignment of activity across partners; more decisions led by the person; and greater use of data, evidence, and technology.**

By focusing and investing our activity in 'Prevention' we can help people live happier and healthier lives, which is our top priority. We know that this improves outcomes for people, which in turn has a benefit for employees as they see the rewards in the work they are doing and there is a significant financial impact as well.

Social care accounts for 65% of our discretionary budget and therefore in the context of significant budget pressures, there are also significant financial benefits to strengthening our focus and approach to prevention.

There are several projects underway as part of this workstream, including:

- **Preventing, Reducing, Delaying Need for Adult Social Care** including reducing the trend and number of people accessing support, ensuring support is focused upon maximising independence and reducing numbers of people entering long-term care through preventing, delaying, and reducing needs. This includes through identification and use of alternative support, including connecting people to their community, use of technology, equipment and adaptations, the right type of accommodation and a focus upon the home first principles. Working with partners is critical including the Integrated Care Board, foundation trust and mental health trust providers, independent providers, and our voluntary sector. This work is being informed by the Adult Social Care and Commissioning Strategy, our Let's Talk Together approach and we will seek to build upon on the work already started as part of our Living Better Lives programme (including reviewing our Let's Talk Service and the development of Specialist Accommodation as an example), as well as identifying further opportunities

- **Children's Social Care transformation strategy to improve outcomes and reduce demand, cost, and volume of care provision.** This includes significant cost avoidance for future years as a result of investment in early intervention, such as Family Hubs, more in-house fostering, new in-borough Children's Homes, and refinements to how social care is practiced

- A programme of work to **better understand the challenges and opportunities for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities**, including developing appropriate specialist local provision alongside mainstream and using less independent and out of area provision, with also a clear focus upon preparation for adulthood and effective transition planning

- **Supporting people with multiple and complex needs** - a system-wide work programme to better understand the challenges faced by people with multiple and complex needs, identify and share lessons learned from best practice from elsewhere in the region and beyond, and co-design, implement and commission evidence-informed practices to better support people before they reach crisis point and address gaps in current provision

Delivering these significant and complex change projects alongside the 'day job' is a huge challenge, given budget and capacity constraints and demand pressures. We continuously challenge ourselves to think about how we might take an even broader view of prevention and join up our approaches, both within the Council and across the system with partners. This may include **more integrating of services, service design around residents / families, using joint assets in a different way, use of technology and data, enabling the third sector to take a great role, setting a future target to pivot resource allocation towards prevention and other desirable outcomes and mitigations.**

Workstream 2 - Commercial

Over the last two decades we have invested millions into borough-wide regeneration and infrastructure schemes. This investment has been used to improve the local area and kick start regeneration where there has been limited private sector interest to initiate investment. However, our ability to invest directly in large schemes has reduced over recent years, and this necessitates a need to explore more public-private partnerships and joint venture options to drive growth and regeneration. This may include **use of our land and property assets; targeted investment in housing development; and renewable energy schemes**. We will also support those services that can lean into a more **commercial trading environment**, and we will look to **maximise the social value and community benefits of trading and commercial transactions** where possible.

So far, we've established a set of commercial principles to guide the scope of this work and have set out a work programme, including a focus on:

- **Reviewing our Traded Services to ensure we are maximising value** – both financial and in terms of wider outcomes
- **Procurement** – routes, social value, contract management, impact of changed legislation
- **How we use assets such as land and buildings** to further our strategic ambitions and bring additional investment to the area
- **Being open and curious around new and different delivery models**, such as joint ventures, outsourcing, shared services, etc, through application of a rigorous option appraisal

Workstream 3 - Modern, fit-for-purpose Council

This workstream is about ensuring the Council has the right **culture, skills, technology, processes, and environment** to allow employees and elected members to undertake their important roles and responsibilities in the most effective way and this is a future-proofed and modern Council. It is about **ensuring our systems and processes are efficient, effective, accessible, and sustainable, and digitally enhanced** where possible, to improve resident and user experience and increase value for money.

There are a wide range of projects ongoing within this workstream, impacting every area of the Council. This includes:

- **Modern Workplace Programme** – to implement and embed MS365 suite of products to improve information management, collaboration, processes, system design and culture. We are currently halfway through the agreed four- and half-year timescale
- **Recruitment and Retention Review** – the Council's workforce is central to its success. This project covers the themes of attraction, workforce planning, recruitment, retention, and employee performance management
- **Oracle Replacement Project** – to replace Oracle ERP system due to obsolescence risk by 2026, and address existing functionality issues across HR, Payroll, Finance and Procurement, resulting in improvements to self-service, increased automation, and improved data management
- **Service Design** – our Service Design Team are working on key projects such as developing a new Members' Enquiries and Customer Complaints experience with a view to improve the user experience, streamline processes, and create better insight. In 2025, the team will be focusing on the Customer Contact Redesign project, which will redesign the customer contact experience from beginning to end based on a new Target Operating Model. This will include an improved

systems environment, such as a cloud telephony solution, a CRM replacement, and a payment solution, as well as developing new and improved online forms and processes that are automated, end-to-end, and integrated with the relevant service area systems

- **Council-wide Data Strategy** - to set out a three-year strategy with the aim of providing high quality and joined up data across the Council. This will improve analytics, strengthen reporting, and empower employees to make more informed decisions and target support where it is most needed. We are also working on improving the quality of data we collect, use, and make available to residents, by implementing the Modern Workplace Information Governance project, which will help us understand the data each area in the council holds, increase the use of MS365 tools to manage data, and enhance governance and security
- **Council-wide Digital Strategy** – we are working to set out a refreshed three-year Digital Strategy, which will include several streams of work including resident facing services (customer contact/ digital services, digital skills), technology products and services (hosting, platforms, operations, and end user technology), cyber resilience and data. We are exploring the benefits of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning as part of our Digital Strategy

Workstream 4 - Evidence and Engagement

In recent years we have made improvements in how we use, analyse, and embed data, evidence and insight into our decision making. This includes both hard data and softer intelligence, including insight gained from more conversations with our communities. However, led by our new PROUD values, we want to go much further on this and do a lot more around making fair, transparent and evidence-based decisions, and more listening, collaborating and empowering our communities, so that we can effectively deliver on our Vision and target support to make things fairer for the people and places that need it.

The three aims of this workstream are:

- Boost **the basic understanding of baseline data and evidence** in the borough of officers, members, partners, and residents to support better informed decision making
- **Enhance sharing of data, intelligence and insights** across the Council and partnership to reduce duplication of efforts and boost engagement with evidence
- **Embed a culture of research** among employees to develop knowledge and skills for research evidence use, business case generation, programme / project evaluation and benchmarking

Key projects already implemented include the **'Our South Tyneside' Report of data and evidence** about the borough; an **annual research report**; a **Research Champions network** of officers embedded within the Council; a **new Data Observatory** for employees, elected members, partners and residents; and a **'PowerBI' network of officers** established to share best practice. In recent years the Council has also conducted its first Economic Assessment, business survey and residents survey for several years, and we are considering how to further improve, broaden and deepen engagement with a range of stakeholders.

Performance Overview

The table below provides an overview of our performance on all of the key measures set out in the Council's Strategy across our five Ambitions.

The summary includes the latest available positions on measures that are published annually (many of which are provided by Government departments), as well as the latest available positions on the quarterly measures that the Council reports on more frequently via the Quarterly Performance Updates (which are uploaded to the Council's website every quarter). The key measures are compared to the position at this time in 2023 to show where they have changed over the last year since our 2023 Annual Report.

Measure	REPORTED WHEN	Latest Position	Previous Position (previous year)	Direction of Travel	Regional	National	Latest Update
AMBITION 1 - FINANCIALLY SECURE							
Proportion of people claiming benefits	QUARTERLY	5.5%	5.3%	↑	4.4%	4.4%	Quarter 2 2024/25
Young people 18-21 claiming benefits	QUARTERLY	10.3%	10.5%	↓	6.6%	5.6%	Quarter 2 2024/25
Residents claiming universal credit	QUARTERLY	21654	18895	↑	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
% of primary/secondary children eligible for free school meals (academic year)	ANNUALLY	32.8%	31.8%	↑	31.5%	25.5%	2023/24 academic year
Rate of debt relief orders per 10k (calendar year)	ANNUALLY	12.3	13.6	↓	9.4	6.5	2023
% Households in fuel poverty	ANNUALLY	10.7%	13.9%	↓	10.9%	13.1%	2023
Indices of Multiple Deprivation - INCOME measure	EVERY 3-4 YEARS	Not updated since 2019	Not updated since 2019	n/a	n/a	n/a	2019
AMBITION 2 - HEALTHY AND WELL							
BEST START IN LIFE							
Children Referred to Social Care per 10,000 (Referrals accepted)	QUARTERLY	593	713.9	↓	608.2	518	Quarter 2 2024/25
Children In Need	QUARTERLY	438.4	479.8	↓	451.4	333	Quarter 2 2024/25
Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan per 10,000	QUARTERLY	57.8	63.3	↓	68.1	42	Quarter 2 2024/25
Child Protection Plans that were repeat plans	QUARTERLY	29.1%	27.9%	↑	25.1%	23.3%	Quarter 2 2024/25
Children Cared For/ Looked After per 10,000	QUARTERLY	100.2	105.1	↓	117.1	67	Quarter 2 2024/25

Measure	REPORTED WHEN	Latest Position	Previous Position (previous year)	Direction of Travel	Regional	National	Latest Update
Children with an Education Health Care Plan	QUARTERLY	1766	1731	↑	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
Rate of Permanent Exclusions from School - Primary	ANNUALLY	0.04	0.06	↓	n/a	n/a	2023/24 academic year
Rate of Permanent Exclusions from School - Secondary	ANNUALLY	0.53	0.4	↑	n/a	n/a	2023/24 academic year
Long Term Placement Stability of Children Cared For	ANNUALLY	67.3%	70%	↓	66.1%	69%	Quarter 2 2024/25
Children in Year 6 of healthy weight	ANNUALLY	58.4%	57.5%	↑	59.9%	63.6%	2023/24 academic year
Children in Reception who are of healthy weight	ANNUALLY	76.7%	69.1%	↑	74.6%	77.0%	2023/24 academic year
Breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks after birth	ANNUALLY	34.3%	31.00%	↑	38.6%	53.7%	Quarter 1 2024/25
AGE WELL							
Number of people open to Adult Social Care (LA Funded)	QUARTERLY	2863	2799	↑	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
Of which: Number people in Long Term Residential / Nursing Care	QUARTERLY	776	810	↓	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
Of which: Number people receiving Short Term support	QUARTERLY	122	113	↓	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
Of which: Number people in Community /own home /family	QUARTERLY	2035	1989	↑	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
People aged 18-64 with long-term care needs met by admission into residential or nursing care per 100,000	QUARTERLY	9.2	25.2	↓	15.6	14.6	Quarter 2 2024/25
People aged 65+ with long-term care needs met by admission into residential or nursing care per 100,000	QUARTERLY	699.2	841.6	↓	762.8	560.8	Quarter 2 2024/25
% of care providers rated Good or Outstanding by CQC	QUARTERLY	96.50%	96.6%	↓	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
Overall satisfaction of people who use services with their care and support	ANNUALLY	62.2%	67.3% (21/22)	↓	66.4%	64.4%	2022/23 year end
Overall satisfaction of carers with social services	ANNUALLY	50.9%	N/A	→	42.0%	36.3%	2021/22 year end
LIVE WELL							
Domestic Abuse Offences	QUARTERLY	335.8	336.1	↑	277.2 (Northumbria Police)	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
Leisure Centre Memberships	QUARTERLY	11226	9139	↑	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
Number of homeless presentations (projected 12 months)	QUARTERLY	1639 (3278)	1546 (3092)	↑	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25

Measure	REPORTED WHEN	Latest Position	Previous Position (previous year)	Direction of Travel	Regional	National	Latest Update
Number of rough sleepers	QUARTERLY	30	20	↑	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
Mothers smoking at time of delivery	QUARTERLY	6.8%	12.6%	↓	8.4%	6.5%	Quarter 1 2024/25
Percentage of physically inactive adults	ANNUALLY	28.1%	28.1%	→	26.7%	22.6%	2022/23 year end
Adults classed as overweight or obese	ANNUALLY	71.7%	76.3%	↓	70.2%	64.0%	2022/23 year end
Emergency Admissions for Intentional Self-Harm	ANNUALLY	221.3	265.9	↓	209.4	126.3	2022/23 year end
Smoking Prevalence	ANNUALLY	12.7%	15.20%	↓	11.00%	11.60%	2023
Admission episodes for alcohol related conditions per 100,000	ANNUALLY	735	812 (19/20)	↓	650	456	2021
Healthy life expectancy (MALE)	ANNUALLY	57.3	60.4	↓	58.9	62.5	2018-20
Healthy life expectancy (FEMALE)	ANNUALLY	58.9	58.5	↑	59.5	63	2018-20
AMBITION 3 - CONNECTED TO JOBS							
Employment Rate	QUARTERLY	65.6% (June 2024)	62.4%	↑	71.1%	75.7%	Quarter 2 2024/25
Unemployment Rate	QUARTERLY	5.5%	6.7%	↓	4.4%	3.8%	Quarter 2 2024/25
Percentage of pupils in good or outstanding primary schools (academic year)	QUARTERLY	95%	86%	↑	95.50%	93%	Quarter 2 2024/25
Percentage of Secondary schools rated good or outstanding (academic year)	QUARTERLY	90.1%	72.7%	↑	81.3%	85.9%	Quarter 2 2024/25
% 19-21 years old Care Leavers in Education Employment or Training	QUARTERLY	66.7%	67.9%	↓	54.8%	56.0%	Quarter 2 2024/25
% 16-17 years old who were NEET - Not in Education Employment or Training	QUARTERLY	9.1%	6.9%	↑	6.2%	7%	Quarter 2 2024/25
Attendance at School - Primary	ANNUALLY	93.9%	94.0%	↓	n/a	n/a	2023/24 academic year
Attendance at School - Secondary	ANNUALLY	89.7%	90.0%	↓	n/a	n/a	2023/24 academic year
Children Achieving a Good level of Development at the end of Reception	ANNUALLY	68%	69.2%	↓	66.8%	67.7%	2023/24 academic year
Children Achieving Expected Levels in Reading, Writing & Maths at KS2	ANNUALLY	63%	63%	→	62%	61%	2023/24 academic year
Children Achieving Level 4 Grades or Above in English and Maths at KS4 (Key Stage 4)	ANNUALLY	58.3%	60.6%	↓	62.30%	65.40%	2023/24 academic year

Measure	REPORTED WHEN	Latest Position	Previous Position (previous year)	Direction of Travel	Regional	National	Latest Update
GCSE KS4 Average Attainment 8	ANNUALLY	42	44.1	↓	43.7	46.1	2023/24 academic year
GCSE KS4 Average, Progress 8	ANNUALLY	-0.39	-0.27	↓	-0.25	-0.03	2023/24 academic year
A-Level Results - Average Point Score	ANNUALLY	31.61	33.16	↓	33.75	36.56	2023/24 academic year
Average Earnings - excluding overtime	ANNUALLY	£16.37	£15.25	↑	£16.68	£18.73	2024
Qualification RQF4 And Above	ANNUALLY	33.7%	n/a	n/a	39.6%	47.3%	Jan 23 - Dec 23
Qualification RQF3 And Above	ANNUALLY	59.2%	n/a	n/a	62.8%	67.8%	Jan 23 - Dec 23
Qualification RQF2 And Above	ANNUALLY	84.2%	n/a	n/a	85.0%	86.5%	Jan 23 - Dec 23
Qualification RQF1 And Above	ANNUALLY	89.6%	n/a	n/a	88.1%	89.0%	Jan 23 - Dec 23
Qualification : Other Qualifications	ANNUALLY	2.4%	n/a	n/a	3.4%	4.6%	Jan 23 - Dec 23
No Qualifications	ANNUALLY	8.0%	n/a	n/a	8.5%	6.5%	Jan 23 - Dec 23
AMBITION 4 - STRONG COMMUNITIES							
Total household waste produced (projected 12 months vs 2023/24)	QUARTERLY	16175.12t (43133.65t)	17094.17t (41624.92t)	↑	n/a	n/a	Quarter 1 2024/25
Residual household waste ((kg/ household) projected 12 months vs 2023/24)	QUARTERLY	149.59kg (598.38kg)	148.68kg (561.69kg)	↑	596.3kg	508.8kg	Quarter 1 2024/25
% waste sent for recycling, reuse and composting	QUARTERLY	32.60%	37.2%	↑	32.1%	35.9%	Quarter 1 2024/25
Proportions of contaminated recycling bin waste	QUARTERLY	22.7%	20.8%	↑	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
Anti-Social Behaviour incidents (projected 12 months vs 2023/24)	QUARTERLY	2186 (4372)	(2554) 4544	↓	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
Crimes (rate per 1000)	QUARTERLY	102	108	↓	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
Trees Planted	ANNUALLY	4024	4181	↓	n/a	n/a	2023/24 year end
New homes delivered (net growth in homes)	ANNUALLY	200	175	↑	n/a	n/a	2023/24 year end
Vacant Properties Owned by South Tyneside	ANNUALLY	1.8%	1.60%	↓	2.4% (Tyne and Wear)	2.20%	2023
Emergency Home Repairs Completed on Time	QUARTERLY	99.9%	99.6%	↑	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
Non-emergency Home Repairs Completed on Time	QUARTERLY	91.9%	93.9%	↓	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25

Measure	REPORTED WHEN	Latest Position	Previous Position (previous year)	Direction of Travel	Regional	National	Latest Update
Number of Homes which do not met the Decent Homes Standard	QUARTERLY	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
Homes where all required landlord gas service and safety inspections have been carried out	QUARTERLY	100%	100%	→	n/a	n/a	Quarter 2 2024/25
Council CO ₂ Emission reduction	ANNUALLY	14324	14322	↓	n/a	n/a	2021/22 year end
CO ₂ Emission estimates (tonnes) per capita	ANNUALLY	3	3.1	↓	4.7	4.8	2022

We hope you enjoyed reading this Annual Report.
Please let us know what you think and any improvements we should consider for next time: www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/11631/Leave-feedback

You can find out more about our key strategies and plans here:

- www.southtyneside.gov.uk/vision
- www.southtyneside.gov.uk/adultsocialcarestrategy
- www.southtyneside.gov.uk/localplan
- www.southtyneside.gov.uk/healthstrategy
- www.southtyneside.gov.uk/culturalstrategy
- www.southtyneside.gov.uk/communitysafetypartnership
- www.southtyneside.gov.uk/housingstrategies

We are committed to being open and transparent about our performance and progress. You can find our Quarterly Performance Reports here:
www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/15988/How-the-Council-is-performing

For further information:

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If you know someone who needs this information in a different format, for example large print, Braille or a different language, please call Marketing and Communications on 0191 424 7385.