

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 3:

Tackle inequality by focusing on early identification and prevention activities that support people to live independent and fulfilling lives

Supporting our residents with cost of living....

Supporting residents to build resilience and to mitigate the impact of increases in the cost of living is essential to ensure that individuals and families can meet basic needs—such as food, housing, heating, and transportation—without falling into financial hardship. Rising living costs can impact on our ability to protect ourselves during a wellbeing crisis because they can lead to increased stress, poor health, and reduced opportunities for education and employment. By offering support, communities can promote financial stability, reduce inequality, and improve overall wellbeing. It also helps prevent crises such as homelessness or debt and strengthens social cohesion by ensuring everyone has the chance to live with dignity and security.

The scale and demand for our revenue and benefits service continues to grow, as a result of the increased rises in the cost of living. Key headline activities for 2024/25, are as follows:



- Received 890 customer referrals for people needing support and advice
- Paid out £23,948,594 in Housing Benefits
- Awarded £358,567.05 Discretionary Housing Payments
- Administered 9,227 claims, as part of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, totalling £10,642,765
- Awarded 4,256 Free School Meal claims
- 3,185 school uniform grants awarded
- 200 guardian/adoption payments awarded

Making our communities more resilient....

Making communities more resilient is important because it helps individuals and groups better withstand and recover from challenges such as economic hardship, climate events, public health crises, and social change. Resilient communities are equipped with strong support networks, inclusive support in their community, and the ability to adapt and innovate in the face of adversity. This leads to improved wellbeing, reduced inequality, and greater social cohesion. By investing in resilience—through education, infrastructure, local leadership, and prevention—we create safer, healthier, and more empowered places where people can thrive, even during difficult times.

In March 2024, we invited our residents to take part in a survey to help ensure that our new approach in working with communities, is delivered in the most effective and impactful way.

The feedback from this survey helped shape the final version of our 'Community and Well-being Strategy for 2023-27'.

At the end of April 2024, Council approved our '[Community Well-being Strategy 2023-27](#)'.

This strategy sets out our new vision and mission to put 'communities' and 'wellbeing & prevention' as genuine cornerstones in the way we design our services.

It aims to empower our communities to be more resilient, healthier, better connected and more equal. - The strategy is based on the concept of 'resilience', which is our ability to cope when we face a significant challenge, a crisis or during a transition in our life. It recognises that our communities are central to supporting our resilience and wellbeing and takes into account that different communities have different strengths and needs to provide this support.

The strategy identifies six strategic objectives to create the conditions for effective resilience. These are:

1. Community Leadership & Planning at Place
2. The 'Connect' Network: Building Community Infrastructure

3. Prevention through Volunteering & Community Connecting
4. The Council's Front Door & Universal Services: Personalised Wellbeing Information, Advice & Assistance
5. Targeted Prevention & Reablement from the Council & Voluntary Sector
6. Whole System Delivery: Delivering a Communities Approach with Partners

The strategy also outlines key actions, performance indicators and outcomes for each objective, as well as the governance structure and monitoring arrangements for the delivery of the strategy, that we will work against, throughout the period of strategy.

Improving flow through our Adults Services....

Research shows that our residents within Torfaen are living longer, but are in poorer health. By focusing on prevention, early intervention, and promoting independence—such as through community support, reablement, and skills development—local authorities can help adults live healthier, more autonomous lives. This not only improves individual outcomes but also allows services to focus on those with the most complex needs, ensuring better overall impact and value for money.

Many of our residents say they would prefer to live independently and not rely on statutory services. To make sure we as a Council can play our part in supporting residents, providing those that need preventative services, with the right support at the right time, we have redesigned our services accordingly.

Our work throughout 2024/25, therefore impressed on the importance of information, advice and assistance and suitable signposting, so that residents do not get drawn into a system and service when, with the assistance of alternative non-statutory support, they can maintain independence and live the life they want.

In order to address these challenges, we recognise that 'Early Intervention and Prevention' provision needs to expand, and a 'Community Offer' be developed that enables a greater level of community resolution. This will enable the council to channel its resources and statutory services to meet the needs of those with an assessed eligible need.

Our vision is to bring about a whole system change within our organisation. Namely the front door into social care, and the redesign of Early Intervention and Prevention services before the front door and within communities.

Since April 2024, our Information, Advice & Assistance (IAA) - Front Door and the Integrated Reablement (IR) Service has been in operation.

This 'Community Offer' provides information, advice and assistance, and primary prevention, within our residents own neighbourhood. If the resident is either able to self-solve their needs at this point or with non-statutory support, then it is unlikely that they will need to move on to the front door adult services offer. However, when the needs cannot be solved by community-based prevention services then the front door of Adult Services provides more targeted assistance as appropriate, offering packages of preventative support.

These services are beginning to slowly impact upon our social care systems and improve outcomes for individuals.

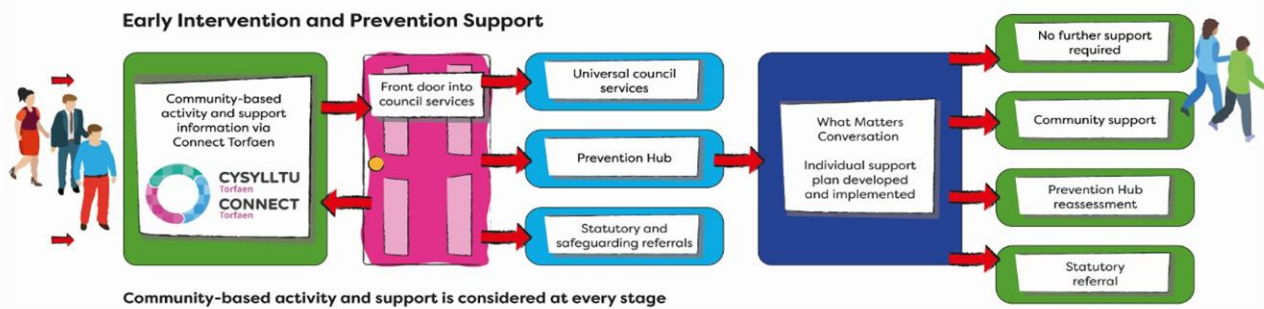
Early Intervention and Prevention....

Early intervention and prevention is crucial because it helps identify and address issues before they escalate, improving outcomes for individuals and reducing long-term demand on public services. By acting early—whether in health, education, social care, or community support—we can prevent crises, promote wellbeing, and support people to live more independently.

Alongside our 'Community Offer', throughout 2024/25, we developed an early intervention and prevention approach to help individuals and communities be more resilient, improving health and well-being in the long-term. Our newly created prevention hub now triages referrals, by assessing:

- what provision is available within our local communities,

- what additional support might be needed and;



- whether that support needs to be commissioned or council delivered.

As of March 2025, our new Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP) Hub Team relocated into a new office space that encourages knowledge, experience and skills to be shared, as well as providing an opportunity to discuss the best pathway for referrals. All referrals for preventative support are now dealt with by the hub, where the team will triage each case and assess what support might be needed, including any community-delivered activity and support.

It is part of our wider 'Communities Approach' aimed at increasing individual and community independence and resilience. Our teams are office based in the Civic Centre and will complement and be in addition to the statutory Adults Information, Advice and Assistance service and children's MASSH services.

Looking ahead, our HDRC will be leading a project in September 2025, focused on exploring how artificial intelligence can enhance the referral process within adult social care, with the aim of identifying and triaging urgent cases more effectively.

Looking after our elderly population....

Looking after our elderly population ensures that older adults can live with dignity, safety, and wellbeing. As people age, they may face health challenges, social isolation, or financial hardship, and providing appropriate support helps them stay active, connected, and independent for longer. Valuing and caring for older people also strengthens families and communities, preserves intergenerational relationships, and honours the contributions they've made throughout their lives. Investing in their care is not only a moral responsibility—it also promotes healthier, more inclusive societies for everyone.

In April 2024, we developed plans within our organisation to be recognised as an 'Age-Friendly Community', by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The aim is to ensure our local communities, services and organisations work with older people to ensure everyone is supported to age well.

To help us understand what is already being done well within our borough and what more needs to be done, a consultation was launched, aimed at anyone aged 50 and over.

The consultation was divided into four separate surveys, focusing on areas identified by the WHO as being vital to ensuring the well-being of older people:

- Outdoor spaces, buildings and transport
- Housing and health care
- Community, respect and inclusion
- Communication, information and employment



Almost 42 per cent of the population within Torfaen is aged over 50, and almost 10 per cent aged over 75. Whilst we appreciate most people in their 50s aren't considered old, these individuals may already have an insight into how we can help people age well in Torfaen, through their own parents' experiences.

The results of the survey will be used to help us understand what people want us to focus on and ensure Torfaen's Age-Friendly Plan is led by our communities and leads to positive change that benefits both current and future older generations.

Preventing homelessness....

Reducing homelessness protects people's dignity, health, and safety, while also strengthening communities and reducing pressure on public services. Homelessness can lead to poor physical and mental health, social isolation, and barriers to employment or education. By addressing its root causes—such as poverty, lack of affordable housing, and unmet support needs—we can help individuals rebuild their lives and prevent long-term hardship.

Homeless prevention continues to be a challenge for us, within the current housing climate. This is mainly due to there being very few affordable housing options available. This leaves many individuals with little choice, other than to access social rented housing options or requiring support through homelessness.

Additional steps are being taken however, to increase the supply of affordable housing options, through the introduction of Leasing Scheme Wales. This initiative aims to improve access and affordability to homes within the private rented sector, improve standards, support tenancies and reduce homelessness. Essentially it enables property owners to lease their residential properties to the local authority. Within Torfaen there has been a positive response and within 25/26 we aim to deliver 15 units for rent. In addition, a significant £3m capital project of Pearl House, Pontypool is nearing completion transforming the building to include 15 self-contained, modern flats, supporting individuals who have been homeless or are at risk of homelessness, that will become operational early in 25/26 (April).

Our partner – the Wallich will support residents, who are expected to stay at Pearl House for up to six months, while they are assisted with help to move onto alternative accommodation and sustain that accommodation. A new Housing Support Hub, run by The Wallich, will also be available on the ground floor and is due to open later in 2025. The hub will offer a variety of services and host multiple agencies, including the council's housing team, to help those facing homelessness access the necessary support and advice.

In addition, some additional capacity has been sourced to increase mediation provision and services to seek to prevent homelessness. Further support is being provided to assist in sustaining accommodation, where individuals are struggling with finances.



In comparison to previous years, our performance on **preventing people becoming homelessness** has decreased. This is mainly due to an increase in the amount of people presenting themselves homeless and there being less affordable housing to rent/buy.

The Housing Support Grant (HSG) is a Welsh Government Grant that funds housing related support and homelessness prevention activity for vulnerable people, who may be at risk of homelessness. The programme provides essential support services to enable vulnerable people to access and sustain appropriate accommodation and provides a range of services, such as, peripatetic support, refuge for women experiencing domestic abuse, hostel accommodation for young people and supported accommodation for people with mental health issues.

This programme benefited from an uplift to funding within 2024/25, to support Welsh Government commitments to fair work practices and promote service sustainability. Under the guidance and terms and conditions for the funding, each Local Authority is required to develop a 4-year Housing Support Programme Strategy, which is supported by a 3-year Delivery Plan.



In December 2024, Cabinet approved our Housing Support Programme Strategy and 3-year Delivery Plan, which provides a strategic direction for Torfaen and ensures our services are planned and delivered successfully. It sets out the priorities that we intend to deliver through the Housing Support Grant and highlights any updates and progress made against the delivery plan.

A summary of our progress so far, is as follows:

- We have increased the supply of supported accommodation in Torfaen through working with Registered Social Landlords's and local providers to develop accommodation and support services for young people and increase capacity within generic supported housing.
- We have reconfigured and recommissioned the following service provisions to respond to evolving needs and demands of communities: VAWDASV community and accommodation services, low level and preventative support services, Housing First Service
- We have worked with local and regional partners to develop and sustain the following service provisions: Gypsy and Traveller Support Service, Substance Misuse Assertive Outreach Service, Criminal Offender Service, Homes Engagement Service – Hoarding Issues, Access to Financial Inclusion Advice and Support, Housing Intervention Team, Young Person's Housing Officer

Our reviewed and revised strategy builds upon the activities we have already undertaken, whilst acknowledging the fast paced and evolving environment to respond to strategic priorities. It is however prudent to highlight that the policy and legal landscapes are set to further develop, as Welsh Governments 'white paper' for ending homelessness progresses.

Whilst the Housing Support Programme has benefited from an uplift in this financial year, the position for subsequent years remains undetermined, as the financial position remains uncertain.

Improving accessibility to affordable and healthy food....

Providing access to affordable healthy food supports physical health, mental wellbeing, and overall quality of life. When people can afford nutritious food, they are less likely to experience diet-related illnesses such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. It also helps children concentrate and perform better in school, and adults stay productive at work. Ensuring access to healthy food reduces health inequalities, supports vulnerable families, and strengthens communities by promoting fairness and dignity. Ultimately, it's a key part of building a healthier, more resilient society.

Promoting healthy & sustainable food

In August 2024, a partnership helping local businesses and community groups to promote healthy and sustainable food, was given a national award.

Our 'Torfaen Food4Growth' scheme aims to increase locally produced food, by creating a network of food producers and suppliers, providing grants to help food businesses diversify, and supporting organisations to find sustainable solutions to food poverty.

The partnership was awarded a silver award by the UK Sustainable Food Places programme, which recognises areas that are driving innovation and best practice on all aspects of healthy and sustainable food. This demonstrates just what can be achieved when creative and committed people work together.

Whilst we feel there is still much to do and many challenges to overcome, Torfaen Food Partnership has helped to set a benchmark for other members of the UK Sustainable Food Places Network to follow.

Throughout 2024, our Food Resilience Team has given out grants to over 34 community groups and 13 businesses through our 'Food4Growth' partnership.

(The Torfaen Food4Growth partnership includes Torfaen Council, Torfaen Voluntary Association, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, as well as 80 businesses and community organisations.

The Food Resilience Programme is funded by the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund and Welsh Government).

Food Strategy

In October 2024, plans were underway to develop our first Torfaen Food Strategy, which aims to increase the availability of sustainable food within the borough.

The strategy will include a focus on healthy eating, long-term solutions to food poverty and support for local businesses to diversify and reduce the environmental impact of food production.

Throughout 2024/25, we had planned to carry out a consultation to find out what local businesses, community groups and residents would like to see included within our strategy. This was however postponed, due to uncertainty around future Shared Prosperity Funding. This activity will however, commence within 2025/26.

We are committed to developing a sustainable food strategy that truly reflects the needs and aspirations of our community, therefore our residents feedback is invaluable in helping us create a plan that promotes healthy eating, supports local food businesses, and minimises the environmental impact of food production and consumption.



Together, we can ensure that everyone in Torfaen has access to affordable, nutritious food, while fostering a sustainable food economy.

(Our Food Strategy is being developed by the Torfaen Food Partnership, which includes Torfaen Council, Torfaen Voluntary Association, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Bron Afon Housing, Tasty Not Wasty, Trussell Trust, FairShare Cymru and Zero Wales Torfaen).

Planning & sustainable development within our communities....

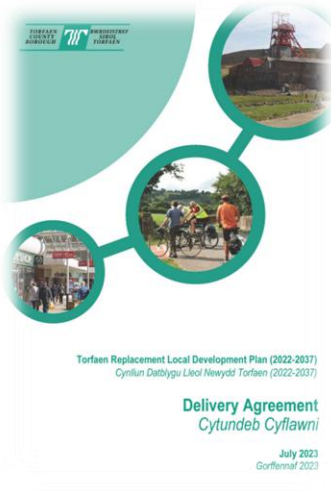
Planning for sustainable development within our communities ensures long-term wellbeing for both people and the environment. It helps balance economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection—creating places that are livable, resilient, and future-proof. Sustainable development supports better housing, transport, energy use, and public services, while reducing carbon emissions and resource waste. It also promotes fairness by meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. Ultimately, it builds stronger, healthier communities that can thrive over time.

In November 2024, Council approved a new timetable for the delivery of our Replacement Local Development Plan RLDP.

This plan sets out where new housing and employment sites are to be allocated throughout the borough, as well as identifying areas and measures to improve well-being and biodiversity.

Our current adopted plan covers the period from 2013 to 2021, but within 2024/25 work begun on a Replacement Local Development Plan for 2022-2037.

The Council has now agreed a new Delivery Agreement, which sets out the timescale for the development of the plan and how and when interested parties and the public can be involved.



The key dates are:

- Preferred Strategy- October 2025
- Deposit Plan - October 2026
- Submission to Welsh Government - January 2028
- Adoption by Torfaen Council - December 2028

The Preferred Strategy outlines the strategic direction of the Local Development Plan and the Deposit Plan provides the details of the plan itself.

The new Delivery Agreement replaces the initial agreement approved by our Councillors, in 2023.

Our Key Challenges....

Education:

Continue to increase the uptake of free school meals.

Housing:

- **Develop a revised suite of key performance indicators that more appropriately measure impact of our approach to meeting housing demand, including our Rapid Rehousing programme** - measuring the impact of housing initiatives—especially complex programmes like Rapid Rehousing—requires performance indicators that go beyond basic outputs and reflect real outcomes for individuals and communities. Developing these indicators will take time, data, and collaboration, but it's essential to understand what's working, improve service delivery, and ensure housing support meets local needs effectively
- **Ensure early intervention and prevention is a key consideration to our approach in delivering housing support and reducing housing demand** - embedding early intervention and prevention into housing support will require a shift in approach—from reacting to crises to proactively identifying and addressing needs before they escalate. It demands strong coordination, timely data, and flexible services, but is essential to reducing long-term housing demand, improving outcomes for vulnerable individuals, and making better use of resources.
- **Increase the supply of affordable housing through new developments and programmes to bring void properties back into use quickly** - increasing the supply of affordable housing requires overcoming barriers such as limited land availability, funding constraints, and lengthy planning processes. Bringing empty properties back into use quickly also demands coordination and investment. Addressing these issues will be vital to meet growing housing needs, reduce homelessness, and ensure everyone has access to safe and secure accommodation.
- **Review our preventative commissioning arrangements to ensure services are co-ordinated and responsive to a persons need, inclusive of housing support** - reviewing preventative commissioning arrangements requires aligning multiple services to work together effectively and respond to individual needs in a timely way. It's complex to coordinate, but essential to ensure housing support is proactive, person-centred, and reduces long-term demand by preventing issues before they escalate.