



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

Annual Report 2024/25

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Foreword

Welcome to the Westmorland and Furness Council 2024/25 Annual Report, our annual update on our service delivery and achievements.

This year has been one of bold ambition, progress, and transformation as we continue to shape the future of Westmorland and Furness. Our Annual Report celebrates the strides we've made in delivering the priorities set out in the Westmorland & Furness Council Plan 2023-28, through our 10 Council Plan Delivery Framework missions.

Since local government reorganisation in 2023, we've been forging a new path, creating the conditions needed to start doing things in the Westmorland and Furness way. We know this journey is a long one, but we're making real, lasting change.

Cllr Jonathan Brook Leader of Westmorland & Furness Council "This year has been one of bold ambition, progress, and transformation as we continue to shape the future of Westmorland and Furness."

From groundbreaking projects to vital services that touch the lives of our residents every day, this report showcases just a glimpse of the dedication, determination, and passion of our staff and elected councillors. Their hard work is driving us forward, towards a future where Westmorland and Furness truly is a great place to live, work and thrive.

Cllr Jonathan Brook Leader of Westmorland & Furness Council

Introducing our Annual Report

Westmorland and Furness Council was established on 1 April 2023, bringing together four legacy councils. With a clear vision for the future, we set out our priorities in the Council Plan 2023-28, supported by 10 guiding missions in our Council Plan Delivery Framework to work and deliver meaningful benefits for our communities.

Our 3,500 strong workforce provides a broad range of essential services— from street cleaning to adult social care, highways maintenance to public safety, family support to heritage preservation. Every day, these teams work hard to ensure that residents and businesses receive the services they rely on.

This Annual Report highlights just a selection of the projects and initiatives that have helped us progress towards our Council Plan priorities, demonstrating the impact of our work across the area.

Over the past year, we have focused on building strong foundations, ensuring that our services are delivered effectively and efficiently. As a unitary authority, we have embraced opportunities to improve how we operate, strengthening services and making the most of our resources.

We remain committed to continuous improvement, working closely with our communities to provide the best possible services within our budget. Looking ahead, we will continue to refine, adapt, and build on this progress to ensure our continued success.

Our Achievements in 2024/2025

Turning our vision into reality: Delivering our Council Plan priorities through our 10 Delivery Framework missions.

In 2023, we established 10 Council Plan Delivery Missions - a clear framework to drive the actions needed to turn our Council Plan vision and priorities into reality. These missions are interconnected, encouraging collaboration and smarter ways of working to ensure we deliver the best outcomes for our communities.

We know that real, lasting change cannot be achieved alone. Delivering these missions requires a shared commitment, working together with partners, businesses, and residents.

This report outlines the progress we've made over the past year via case studies and delivery against performance metrics for each of our 10 our missions, demonstrating how these missions are shaping our work and driving forward the priorities set out in the Council Plan.

1. Communities
2. Environment
3. Growth
4. Connections
5. Homes
6. Learning
7. Care
8. Health and Wellbeing
9. Culture
10. Effective services

Communities

Our mission: Communities are welcoming, inclusive and provide a good quality of life. They are proud of and care for their local areas and the people who live in them. They are able to make the right choices for them. They are resilient, and their voices and choices are heard through local participation.

Rapid Response After Kirkby Lonsdale Fire

When a devastating fire struck Kirkby Lonsdale town centre in December, Westmorland and Furness Council played a crucial role in the community's recovery. The blaze resulted in the tragic loss of life, injuries, and widespread damage, affecting over 100 homes and 84 businesses. Many residents were displaced, and urgent action was needed to restore stability.

The council mobilised teams from across multiple services, including Highways, Housing, Economic Development, Environmental Protection, and Community Development, to provide immediate and long-term support. Officers worked to assess dangerous structures, check on residents' welfare, and coordinate essential resources.

To support the community's recovery, the council established the Kirkby Lonsdale Community Recovery Partnership, collaborating with local groups to offer practical help, advice and emotional support. Temporary housing was provided to displaced residents, emergency grants were allocated, and regular community updates ensure communities had access to the information they needed.

Bowness Welfare Hub

Launched in June as part of the Westmorland and Furness Community Safety Partnership, the Bowness Welfare Hub has provided a vital support system for those enjoying the town's vibrant nightlife. Operating on Saturday evenings throughout the summer, the hub offered a safe space where people could access help, advice, and personal safety resources.

Staffed by a dedicated team, including council officers, police, Pubwatch members, Kentdale First Aid and CADAS representatives, the hub quickly became a trusted point of support. Over the weeks, its impact grew, with nearly 50 people supported in a single night in August.

The hub provided a wide range of support, such as administering first aid to a woman who had fallen and sustained a head injury, supporting a domestic violence victim and helping a young woman to contact family after becoming separated from a group of friends on a night out. One grateful visitor called it "the best support ever,"

By ensuring a safe and supportive environment, the Bowness Welfare Hub has played a key role in enhancing public safety, reinforcing the council's commitment to community well being.

Armed Forces

We recognise the value of serving personnel, veterans, Reserve Forces and military families and promise to ensure those that serve or have served, and their families, will be treated fairly and will not be disadvantaged by their military life.

We signed up and pledged our support for the Armed Forces Community Covenant in July 2023 and continue to deliver our annual action plans, with the support of the Armed Forces Board. A large number of initiatives have been completed including the review of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme which ensures that veterans are guaranteed an interview if they meet the person specification and job description. The council is working in collaboration with many organisations to improve the way we support our Armed Forces families.

The council is committed to ensuring that we maintain our Gold Award from the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. This is the highest badge of honour an employer can receive in the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme and recognises organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

New path for Parkrun

In autumn 2024, Ford Park in Ulverston underwent a significant transformation with the creation of a new crushed stone path, solving the long standing issue of waterlogging that frequently led to the cancellation of local Parkrun events. This improvement not only ensured uninterrupted weekly runs but also made the entire park perimeter accessible to all for the first time.

The project was driven by the Ford Park charity, which successfully raised £44,000 to fund the path, with crucial support from Active Cumbria, Westmorland and Furness Council, and the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The impact of this initiative was immediate, since the path's completion, Parkrun participation has surged by 75%, with more people than ever running and walking the 5km route. This investment has not only strengthened the local running community but has also promoted greater outdoor activity and inclusivity, reinforcing Ford Park as a vibrant hub for health and well-being

Measuring Performance

Performance indicator	Q1 Actual	Q1 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Target	Q3 Actual	Q3 Target	2024/25 Status
Number of voluntary, community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector groups supported	0	n/a	96	n/a	174	n/a	n/a
Anti-Social Behaviour – 12 month rolling rate	8.8	14.8	8.3	14.8	7.7	14.8	Within 5% of target
All Crime – monthly rate	64.5	68.2	65.8	68.2	68.2	68.2	Within 5% of target
Number of Social Enterprise start-ups	0	3	7	6	14	9	Within 5% of target

Environment

Our mission: Our environment positively impacts on health, wellbeing and economy and together we build our resilience to climate change and take action to reverse biodiversity loss and to achieve carbon net zero.

First year of net zero journey

We made significant progress during year one of our five-year Carbon Management Strategy and Climate Action Plan to ensure that Westmorland and Furness is carbon net zero by 2037, working with partners, suppliers, local businesses and communities to rethink the way we approach carbon reduction.

Major projects included the construction of a 2MW solar farm in Barrow, installing almost 3,700 solar panels and the retro-fit of Voreda House, the UK's first council office building to achieve Passivhaus EnerPHit accreditation.

Our new Fleet Decarbonisation and Replacement Strategy will inform the replacement programme for our vehicles to ensure a holistic approach to the number and type of vehicles from fully electric, hybrid and green fuel alternatives. We are trialing converting the council's newer vehicles to HVO biofuel, cutting their emissions by up to 90%.

Decarbonisation is now included in the commissioning of our major projects; contractors must produce a carbon reduction plan to show how they will minimise carbon emissions and provide measurable targets.

Carbon Literate Organisation Bronze

The council was awarded bronze accreditation from the Carbon Literacy Project with 365 officers and councillors trained to date. The training will continue to be offered to all councillors to support the ambition of the council to become Silver in 2025/26, requiring 20% of our staff to be certified.

The Climate Change Action Plan's focus is supporting the Westmorland and Furness area to decarbonise through the council's scope of influence, projects delivered this year include:

- The Greening Business Scheme (an extension of the Greening Eden Business) has supported 29 businesses to reduce their carbon footprint, saving the area over 450 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent annually.
- The Green Doctor scheme supported 531 households with energy efficiency measures to help reduce fuel bills and cut carbon emissions.

Working in partnership with local businesses and community groups, the council is part of the Innovate UK Rural Net Zero project, looking into how a circular economy, green finance

and the decarbonisation of our food systems can help support the area we serve to become net zero by 2037.

Funding for fuel carbon emission reductions

Investment in council-owned buildings to reduce carbon emissions is a key strategy in the drive to becoming net zero. 47% of our corporate buildings have been upgraded to LED lighting and the remaining buildings have outline designs for future work.

Our 69 schools are benefitting from heat decarbonisation plans, thanks to securing a £367,000 grant from the Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund, delivered by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. A further £1.75 million has been awarded from the same scheme for carbon reduction initiatives at Kendal and Appleby Leisure Centres, Kendal Market and South Lakeland House.

We received £393,000 from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport swimming pool support fund to upgrade doors and windows to triple glazing and install solar PV arrays at Appleby and Penrith Leisure Centres.

Securing these substantial investments demonstrates our commitment to providing leadership in the drive to net zero.

Landmark Achievement with Solar Farm Completion

This year the council successfully completed its first-ever solar farm at Sandscale Park in Barrow. This 2MW renewable energy project, finished in just six months, marked a major milestone in the council's ongoing efforts to combat climate change and meet its net zero targets.

Featuring nearly 3,700 solar panels, the solar farm is set to generate clean, green electricity that will offset the council's carbon emissions, in line with its Carbon Management Strategy and Climate Action Plans. By saving approximately 507 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year, the project is helping to power the future with renewable energy. The electricity produced is enough to sustain the council's five leisure centres or supply around 730 homes annually, reinforcing the council's role as a leader in climate action.

Beyond its environmental benefits, this solar farm is a strategic investment in the council's future. By mitigating rising energy costs and strengthening energy sovereignty, the initiative enhances the council's financial resilience while delivering long-term savings. Moreover, it sets a powerful example of how local authorities can take meaningful action in response to climate change.

The scheme was delivered in collaboration with the council's strategic partner Electricity North West, main contractor Vital Energi, and specialist advisors Green Cat Renewables. The site is now connected to the national grid and generating electricity.

Now fully connected to the national grid and generating electricity, the solar farm stands as a testament to the council's dedication to innovation and sustainability. With this landmark achievement, the council continues to pave the way towards a greener, more sustainable future for the community.

Nature Recovery

The council is becoming a leading authority for nature recovery. Appointed as the responsible authority for the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy, the council has built successful relationships and embedded community working to ensure that we have a collaboratively developed road map for nature recovery.

Through this important strategy we are maximising the joint effort of local groups and communities to do what we can for nature. With the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain, a team of ecologists are providing expert advice to our planners to ensure that all developments provide a 10% uplift for nature. The council has assessed the potential for improving conditions for nature on our land and have started implementing some of this through schemes such as Planting for Pollinators and One Tree per Resident.

Planting for Pollinators is a scheme linking with Cumbria Wildlife Trust to ensure native wildflower mixes are planted in our parks and open spaces, connecting habitat corridors for our pollinator species. This year we've enabled 14 sites to be planted across Westmorland and Furness, with community groups and schools leading the planting days and ten-year management plans

The One Tree per Resident project was created in response to the climate and biodiversity crises, aiming to create greener spaces, enhance biodiversity, and help tackle climate change. The project aims to plant a quarter of a million trees over five years, one for every resident. This year a new Community Tree and Hedgerow Planting grant scheme was launched to boost community involvement in tree planting, ensuring Westmorland and Furness reaps the benefits of more trees and hedgerows. The initiative supports communities across the area to plant one tree, or one metre of hedgerow equivalent, for every resident, bringing long-term benefits to people, wildlife, and the environment. To date, around 42,000 trees and hedgerows have been planted across Westmorland and Furness through community-led initiatives and partner organisations and supported by grants for community orchards and micro woodlands.

Partnership working is key for nature, and the Climate and Environment Partnership Grant of £900,000 has enabled many of our partners to deliver change for nature and climate. Examples include:

- Cumbria Peat Partnership restored nearly 200 hectares of peatland, and the funding helped to develop a pipeline of sites for future restoration.

- Supporting Eden Rivers Trust with an Invasive Non-Native Species programme, providing education to local schools and groups and running events for removal of invasive species.

Measuring Performance

Performance indicator	Q1 Actual	Q1 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Target	Q3 Actual	Q3 Target	2024/25 Status
Number of trees and hedgerows planted	35K	11K	35K	22K	41K	34K	Within 5% of target
Number of hectares of peat restored through Peat Partnership	10	25	50	50	196	75	Within 5% of target
Carbon emissions of Council operations	8	n/a	8	n/a	8	n/a	n/a
Number of private homes improved through energy efficiency initiatives	0	40	0	40	20	40	More than 10% off target
% of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	44.8	20	U	20	U	20	n/a
Kg of residual waste per household (incl street bins and sweeping)	160	175	U	175	U	175	n/a

Growth

Our mission: Our economy is growing and providing people with access to a diverse range of good employment opportunities for them to be economically secure. Our businesses are more diverse and thriving, our large businesses continue to grow, and investment is further increasing the contribution made to national growth and prosperity.

Team Barrow

Team Barrow is a partnership between central Government, Westmorland and Furness Council, and BAE Systems, where more than £200 million in government funding is being invested to regenerate Barrow and Furness, reinforcing the town's critical role in UK national security while creating new opportunities for growth.

This year saw the creation of the strategic vision for Barrow and the launch of the new Barrow Rising website and campaign. With the strategic vision and historic investment set to transform the town into a thriving hub for residents, businesses, and future generations.

The vision for Barrow outlines a dynamic approach to economic diversification, higher productivity, and community development.

Key initiatives will include:

- Revitalising the town centre and local economy
- Improving housing and infrastructure
- Boosting education and skills to support future careers
- Enhancing health and community services
- Strengthening transport links for better connectivity

Improved digital connectivity

The funding and reach of Project Gigabit have been increased this year. Connecting Cumbria, which works on behalf of Westmorland and Furness and Cumberland councils to improve digital infrastructure and connectivity across the county, has worked with the Government's Building Digital UK to increase funding from just under £100 million to nearly £150 million. Resulting in the number of premises that can be added to the project gigabit roll-out increased from 32,429 to 53,536.

The investment provides funding to enhance digital connectivity and support the expansion of the Borderlands 5G Innovation Region programme, which aims to demonstrate the commercial opportunities of advanced wireless technology in a rural tourism setting.

Measuring Performance

Performance indicator	Q1 Actual	Q1 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Target	Q3 Actual	Q3 Target	2024/25 Status
Total Gross Value Added (GVA) per filled job	55K	61K	55K	61K	55K	61K	More than 10% off target
% of the workforce with qualifications	91.2	93.4	91.2	93.4	91.2	93.4	Within 5% of target
Claimant rate of Universal Credit by those looking for employment	2.6	4.8	2.8	5.3	2.6	5.2	Within 5% of target
% of Full Plan applications given decision within 5 weeks of submission/validation or before the mutually agreed extended time period	100	100	100	100	100	100	Within 5% of target
% of Major Planning Applications determined within 13 weeks	87.5	60	100	60	90.9	60	Within 5% of target
% of Minor Planning Applications determined within 8 weeks	90.9	70	91.5	70	95.5	70	Within 5% of target
Number of businesses supported through business support programmes	133	269	354	269	255	269	5-10% off target

Connections

Our mission: Transport and infrastructure enables people and businesses to reliably and easily access the places and services that meet their needs, including online, in an environmentally sustainable way.

20mph schemes

After extensive consultation this year the council confirmed plans to roll out 20 community-backed 20mph speed limits across Westmorland and Furness in 2025.

Designed based on Department for Transport guidance, the 20mph schemes will create safer roads for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. They focus on areas in built-up towns and villages with a current maximum speed limit of 40mph. The schemes introduced will make areas safer for everyone, especially children and the elderly.

Additional possible benefits identified by residents included a reduction in speeding, increase in pedestrian safety, improved air quality and reduction of car parking issues

Enhanced bus routes

This year the council committed £1.7 million of Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus (BSIP+) funding from the Department for Transport to support bus services across the area in 2024/25 for up to one year. It is hoped that this short-term funding will create a commercially viable network of self-sustaining bus routes.

From Spring 2025, communities have benefited from significant bus service improvements that provide better access to employment, education and essential services.

A total of 11 new bus routes will be in operation across the area until Spring 2026, directly addressing needs highlighted through a community consultation process and delivering vital connections for residents and visitors. The funding will also keep nine existing bus services running until November 2025 which were originally restored or enhanced earlier this year by the council.

Vast improvements to the frequency and timings of services will also be introduced right across the areas of Eden, Furness and South Lakeland.

One of the supported routes is the 105 Greystoke service, with the funding enabling the North Lakes Primary School bus route to be reinstated, providing children and young people with a reliable way to travel home.

Measuring Performance

Performance indicator	Q1 Actual	Q1 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Target	Q3 Actual	Q3 Target	2024/25 Status
% of all highway defects completed within agreed response time	59.3	60	68.9	60	66.8	60	Within 5% of target
% of A roads in need of maintenance treatment (grade 4/5)	3.8	3	3.8	3	3.8	3	More than 10% off target
Number of passengers using bus services supported by the Council	6.3K	n/a	9.7K	n/a	20K	n/a	n/a
Number of open highway defects (including those waiting for assessment/categorisation)	5K	n/a	4.5K	n/a	4.7K	n/a	n/a

Homes

Our mission: Everyone can live in a place they call home, one which is affordable, clean, safe and warm, where they can build stable, independent, fulfilling lives and have access to schools, work and cultural activities.

Housing strategy

Our ambitious Housing Strategy was agreed this year, aimed at ensuring that everyone in the area has access to high-quality, affordable, and sustainable housing. The strategy sets out the objectives, targets, and policies in relation to the council's delivery of its housing service over the next five years (2025-2030).

As outlined in the council's Council Plan and Delivery Framework, providing good quality housing is a priority. The council is committed to ensuring everyone has access to a safe, warm, clean, and affordable home. This commitment includes ensuring the right people get the right houses in the right place at the right time.

The strategy, developed through extensive engagement with residents, communities, partners, community land trusts, developers and registered providers, reflects the council's commitment to tackling housing challenges and seizing opportunities across the area.

The new strategy outlines an ambitious vision under three key themes: Our People, Our Places, and Our Homes, which aims to address critical issues such as homelessness, housing supply, availability and affordability, and stock quality while prioritising sustainability and the unique needs of diverse communities.

The plans include growing the council's housing stock, collaborating with housing associations and developers, and creating additional temporary accommodations to support homeless households

Handyperson scheme

The Handyperson Scheme was rolled out across all of Westmorland and Furness this year after previously only being available in the South Lakeland area. The scheme supports elderly or vulnerable residents with practical help around their homes.

This council service can provide help, free of charge, with anything from changing a lightbulb to putting up shelving, hanging curtains, installing handrails or doing small repairs such as unblocking sinks or replacing a washer on a tap. Fitting of minor security measures such as door and window locks is also available under the scheme, helping people feel safer in their homes and reducing the fear of crime.

The scheme aims to support people to live healthier, happier and more independent lives in their own homes.

Measuring Performance

Performance indicator	Q1 Actual	Q1 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Target	Q3 Actual	Q3 Target	24/25 Status
% of council tenant satisfaction with overall service provided by the council	78.2	70	78.2	70	78	70	Within 5% of target
% of social housing properties that meet the Decent Homes Standard	100	100	100	100	100	100	Within 5% of target
Number of people on the waiting list for social housing	8.1K	n/a	8.2K	n/a	8.3K	n/a	n/a
% of successful homelessness prevention outcomes	60.2	65	42.7	65	57.1	65	More than 10% off target
% of successful homelessness relief outcomes	45.1	45	38.3	45	46.6	45	Within 5% of target
Number of households in temporary accommodation	153	132	97	132	116	132	Within 5% of target
Number of nights in temporary accommodation	4.4K	5.5K	2.9K	5.5K	2.5K	5.5K	Within 5% of target
Number of completed dwellings	156	158	112	158	U	158	More than 10% off target
Number of affordable homes completed	26	111	22	111	U	111	More than 10% off target

Learning

Our mission: Everyone has access to high quality education, where children, young people and adults are equipped with relevant tools, skills and aspiration to pursue the life they want to live and to access a rich and varied choice of local employment opportunities that contribute to a fulfilled and happy life.

Investment in schools and education

We have made major investments in our schools over the past year, improving building structures and putting measures in place to make, often aging buildings, more energy efficient and sustainable. £4.3 million is spent on school maintenance each year and the capital programme team delivered £2 million in building upgrades during the 2024 summer holidays alone.

Major building schemes have been completed across Westmorland and Furness, delivering on our objectives to provide the right facilities where they are needed. A £6 million extension opened to students at Sandgate School for SEND children and is providing more space and facilities that are fit for purpose. A £2.9 million project to build a new 40-place alternative provision in Barrow will open at Channelside in 2025.

Smaller schemes still bring huge benefits to the staff and young people who use them. Pre-schoolers at Broughton in Furness CE Primary School are enjoying a new, accessible extension to the main school building, following an £875,000 investment to upgrade the nursery facilities. Children at St Patrick's C of E Primary School in Endmoor have benefitted from more space and enhanced facilities following the completion of a £400,000 scheme to build a 90-metre square extension.

Easy access to education, training and employment

We have remained committed to supporting young people to access education and training.

In 2024/25 through our 16 to 19 Education Travel Bursary Fund a total of £303,737 was awarded to support schools and individual young people to ensure travel costs were not a barrier to achieving potential. A total of 528 16-19 year olds benefitted from support with transport costs by bus, train, taxis, fuel costs for private transport and some students travelled by bicycle.

This supported the completion of A & T levels, NVQ's, Degrees, BTECs across a wide range of subjects including Agriculture, Physics, Electrical Installation, Health and Social Care, Bio Medical, Child Development, Cyber Security and Uniformed Protective Services.

Measuring Performance

Performance indicator	Q1 Actual	Q1 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Target	Q3 Actual	Q3 Target	24/25 Status
% of pupils achieving the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Mathematics combined at Key Stage 2	57.6	59.8	57.8	60.4	58.1	61.1	Within 5% of target
% of pupils attending GCSE levels 4-9 in English and Mathematics at Key Stage 4	65.8	65.4	65.9	65.4	65.9	65.4	Within 5% of target
Average Point Score per level 3 qualification entry (includes A'level, Academic, Applied, Technical)	33.2	35.5	33.4	35.5	32.6	35.5	5-10% off target
Adult Education enrolments on the digital curriculum from vulnerable and older adult resident in isolated areas	168	180	180	250	466	500	5-10% off target
% of Education, Health and Care Plans issued within timescales	88.4	75	89.6	75	76.2	75	Within 5% of target
% of 16-17 year olds looked after in care in Education or Training	73.8	85	86.7	85	89.3	85	Within 5% of target
% of 16-17 year olds with Education, Health and Care Plans in Education or Training	91.3	85	87.8	85	93.8	85	Within 5% of target

Performance indicator	Q1 Actual	Q1 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Target	Q3 Actual	Q3 Target	24/25 Status
% of 16-17 year olds in Education or Training	97.4	90	91.7	90	97.5	90	Within 5% of target
% of pupils receiving a permanent exclusion	0.1	0.1	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	Within 5% of target
% of sessions missed by all pupils (overall absence rates)	7.3	7.1	5.1	7.4	5.9	7.4	Within 5% of target
% of pupils achieving a good level of development at Early Years Foundation	65.5	67.2	64.8	67.7	65.5	67.2	Within 5% of target

Care (Children)

Our mission: Children, young people and adults are supported to achieve a good life, safeguarded from harm, in the place they call home, with the people and things that matter most to them.

Children's services – Our journey to good and beyond

Over the last 12 months we have been on a significant transformation and change programme – managing this alongside our business as usual. We have embedded a whole Children's Services Approach through our 'Ambition for Every Child' strategy'.

This has seen improved outcomes for vulnerable children and our Ofsted rating improve from 'requires improvement' to 'Good'. We adopted a strategic approach to driving improvement across our service and this has been achieved despite the difficult and challenging environment of major change, financial challenges and major upheaval for our staff.

We now have a well informed, engaged, motivated workforce and the right culture and values for Children Services to really make a difference to young peoples lives.

Family Hubs

Following the launch of our first Family Hub in Barrow this service has gone from strength to strength over the last 15 months. Following the approval of a new Family Help Strategy, work has been completed to bring some key support services back in house – establishing a holistic in-house Family Help Service for Westmorland and Furness.

'Family help' is a system of support which aims to support children and families as soon as problems emerge. Some family help support is described as 'targeted family help' and is provided to children and families who are identified as having multiple or complex needs.

Developing a Family Help Service in the council will allow development of the Family Hub and Family Help services while getting the most out of available resources. The new service started on 1 April 2025

Measuring Performance

Performance indicator	Q1 Actual	Q1 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Target	Q3 Actual	Q3 Target	24/25 Status
Rate of Cared for Children	63.3	63	61.5	63	65.1	63	Within 5% of target
Rate of children subject of a Child Protection Plan	62	49	62.8	49	60.5	49	More than 10% off target
% of Children in Need referrals that take place within 12 months of a previous referral for the same child	13.9	20	13.5	20	14.8	20	Within 5% of target
% of Cared for Children living in the same placement for 2+ years	78.9	75	78.3	75	75	75	Within 5% of target
% of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation (any age)	88.9	95	85.7	95	90.1	95	5-10% off target

Care (Adults)

Our mission: Children, young people and adults are supported to achieve a good life, safeguarded from harm, in the place they call home, with the people and things that matter most to them.

Home First – Intermediate Care

This innovative partnership between Westmorland and Furness Council, the NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board and University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust is making a huge difference to people's lives and helping them to return home sooner following a hospital stay.

The new intermediate care bed facility, hosted by Parkview Gardens residential home in Barrow, provides a place for people who no longer need specialist hospital care, but still require therapeutic oversight and support, to regain their independence in a residential setting before returning home. It is the direct result of a review which highlighted a lack of provision for people leaving hospital, who need a higher level of support than could be provided at home. People were staying in hospital longer than needed and unable to access services to help regain or maintain their independence.

This new service offers embedded therapy support to mobilise patients out of their bed and improve mobility to aid and improve their transition back to their independent place of residence and prevent further emergency admissions.

Since opening in August 2024, the facility has already seen over 50 people come through the new unit with over half of these now returned to their own home following a period of supported rehabilitation. The next steps are to expand this service to include people living in their own homes, who experience a sudden change in need or circumstance who would benefit from this approach to reduce the risk of premature admission to residential care or hospital.

Shared Lives

Shared Lives is nationally recognised as one of the highest quality forms of social care, offering a meaningful, community based alternative to traditional residential care. As we face the challenges of an aging population and increasing demand from our carers for more respite support, it's never been more important to invest in sustainable, high-quality care that delivers for those who need it.

The Shared Lives team received funding from the Accelerating Reform Fund, an initiative launched by the Department of Health and Social Care in England. This funding was used to help grow the number of Shared Lives carers and increase the availability of vital respite care.

To support this growth, a campaign was launched to raise awareness and encourage new carers to join. Since October, there have been over 100 additional enquiries from people interested in becoming Shared Lives carers – a fantastic response that will help us strengthen the service and continue delivering outstanding care across Westmorland and Furness.

Measuring Performance

Performance indicator	Q1 Actual	Q1 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2	Q3	Q3 Target	24/25 Status
				Target	Actual		
Number of people currently waiting for a Social Work Assessment & Occupational Therapy assessment	152	400	237	400	354	400	Within 5% of target
Rate of adults aged 18-64 whose long-term care needs are met by admission to residential and nursing care homes	15.7	17	11.8	17	18	17	Within 5% of target
Rate of adults aged 65 and over whose long-term care needs are met by admission to residential and nursing care homes	623.9	700	642.7	700	663.3	700	Within 5% of target
Number of people who have reduced or no ongoing support needs following a period of reablement (including reablement at home or within an intermediate care setting)	141	n/a	180	n/a	175	n/a	Within 5% of target
% of Section 42 Safeguarding enquires where a risk	74.3	80	66.1	80	77.5	80	5-10% off target

Performance indicator	Q1 Actual	Q1 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Target	Q3 Actual	Q3 Target	24/25 Status
was identified and the reported outcome was that this risk was reduced or removed							
% of Care Quality Commission ratings that remain Good as a minimum across all registered services	100	100	100	100	100	100	Within 5% of target

Health and Wellbeing

Our mission: No matter where you are born or where you live, there is equal opportunity for everyone to live an active, happy, healthy life, and to feel empowered and confident to choose the best ways in which this is achieved for each individual and for every community.

Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy

This year the first Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy and accompanying Action Plan for Westmorland and Furness was launched. The strategy sets out an ambitious 10-year plan to improve the health and wellbeing of our population and address health inequalities. Both have been developed through close collaboration between Westmorland and Furness Council, healthcare partners, businesses and voluntary and community organisations.

At its core, the strategy and action plan are about equality and ensuring that every resident, regardless of background or circumstance, has access to the resources and support they need to live a happy and healthy life. The strategy and action plan look to deliver against five themes:

1. Improving the building blocks of health and wellbeing
 - Our places and neighbourhoods support healthy lives and enable our residents to be safe, healthy and happy
 - Our residents have access to safe, warm and energy efficient housing
 - Employment which supports financial security and good health and wellbeing is available to all.

2. Supporting good mental health and emotional wellbeing for all
 - Our children, young people and families are supported to develop the foundations of good mental health and emotional wellbeing
 - We will strengthen action to promote and develop good mental health and emotional wellbeing for our residents and communities
 - We will work together to prevent suicides.

3. Supporting every child and young person to have the best start in life

- Families and children are supported during pregnancy and during the early years to have the healthiest possible start in life
 - Our children and families are protected from experiencing harm
 - Our children and young people are supported to have good nutrition, an active lifestyle and good oral health.
4. Supporting our residents to live healthy lives
- We will work to prevent the development of ill health and detect disease early
 - We will support adults to maintain a healthy weight and an active lifestyle
 - We will work to reduce the harms caused by substance misuse and addictions.
5. Supporting our residents to live well and independently for longer
- We will improve the care and support provided for people living with frailty and multiple long term health conditions and their families
 - We will support our older adults to live independently for longer
 - Our residents do not experience social isolation and loneliness

Smoke free Westmorland and Furness

Over the year smoking cessation officers have supported people to quit smoking and make lasting health improvements. Officers support those who want to quit using a variety of options, including 1-1 sessions and/or groupwork, access to free places on a clinically proven intervention programme, Allen Carr's Easyway, endorsed by the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), and working with pharmacies to provide support, monitoring, and advice along with Nicotine Replacement Therapy for 12 weeks.

These initiatives form part of Westmorland and Furness Council's ambition to achieve Smoke-Free status by 2030; a goal that involves reducing smoking prevalence in the region to just 5% of the population, requiring an estimated 10,000 residents to quit smoking successfully.

Measuring Performance

Performance indicator	Q1 Actual	Q1 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Target	Q3 Actual	Q3 Target	24/25 Status
% of adults who are current smokers	12.4	10	12.4	10	12.4	10	More than 10% off target
Rate of suicide (persons)	13.2	n/a	15.5	n/a	15.5	n/a	n/a
Rate of deaths from drug misuse	9.8	5.2	9.8	5.2	9.8	5.2	More than 10% off target
% of people receiving coaching support reporting an improvement in their mental health	79	70	85	70	85	70	Within 5% of target
% of mandated health visitor visits completed within timescales	64.5	85	71.7	85	70.1	85	More than 10% off target
% of opiate users that completed drug treatment successfully	5.3	5	5.3	5	5.6	5	Within 5% of target
Number of active leisure centre memberships	7.3K	n/a	8.8K	n/a	10.8K	n/a	n/a

Culture

Our mission: Culture is embedded in all we do and contributes to improved health, wellbeing and quality of life. Everyone has access to a diverse and distinctive range of opportunities to be creative and enjoy high quality cultural experiences across our area.

Cultural Framework

The council developed and launched its Cultural Framework, a five-year vision to strengthen arts and culture as key drivers of health, well-being, and economic growth.

The framework emphasises the pivotal role culture plays in supporting local communities and outlines how the council will harness arts and heritage to improve physical and mental health, tackle issues such as loneliness and isolation, and foster local economic development.

The Cultural Framework aims to achieve several key objectives that will enhance the social, economic, and cultural fabric of Westmorland and Furness:

- Building civic pride and promoting a strong sense of place.
- Promoting better health and well-being by addressing challenges such as mental ill health, loneliness, and social isolation.
- Supporting local economic growth through revitalising high streets, boosting commercial creative industries, and developing the visitor and night-time economies.
- Encouraging social mobility by ensuring inclusive access to local cultural opportunities and pathways into the rapidly growing creative industries.

The framework was shaped and informed by extensive engagement and collaboration with cultural sector stakeholders across Westmorland and Furness this year to ensure it reflects the importance of community arts as well as the ambition and vision of the sector.

Support for events and festivals

An Events and Festivals Grant Scheme was launched this year to support groups to apply for grants of between £1,000 and £10,000 from a £100,000 fund. The grant scheme is aimed at supporting organisers improve their events or festivals, as well as promoting community, place and the environment.

Voluntary and community-led businesses, social enterprises, charities, town and parish councils and other constituted groups were able to apply to the fund for established or new events or festivals.

The scheme was set up as one of 22 projects sharing £8.1 million from the government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), allocated by Westmorland and Furness Council.

Measuring Performance

Performance indicator	Q1 Actual	Q1 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Target	Q3 Actual	Q3 Target	24/25 Status
Rate of physical visits to library sites	444	n/a	462.3	n/a	464.6	n/a	n/a
Number of recorded visitors into Local Authority museums	10.2K	n/a	11.8K	n/a	6.5K	n/a	n/a
Number of attendances at shows, cultural events/activities/shows within Local Authority venues	20.6K	n/a	17.9K	n/a	20.9K	n/a	n/a
Number of grants issued by Local Authority to support cultural and heritage projects	41	n/a	5	n/a	19	n/a	n/a

Effective Services

Our mission: The council listens and takes pride in delivering services that make a difference. It is a modern, innovative and inclusive council with communities and customers at the heart of everything we do.

Customer improvements

We have a strong commitment to providing user-friendly, caring and accessible services through multiple channels. This year we've made significant strides in improving and simplifying the experience for customers accessing council services.

Work has included the development of a new Customer Charter, and Complaints and Compliments Policy, clearly setting out what the public can expect when they interact with us. This work consolidated processes from the four legacy authorities the council replaced in 2023 into one, streamlined approach.

In addition, we have enhanced how customers access our services by introducing a single customer telephone contact system, making it quicker and easier to contact us. This improved telephony system not only ensures a more consistent experience for callers but also provides us with clear and reliable data to drive continuous service improvements.

Recruitment

Our new W&F Careers Website was launched, averaging 27.5K page views per month. We have introduced a more efficient and streamlined digital process to manage DBS and Right to Work checks which has resulted in significant improvements to the process and speed of checks. Significant work has been undertaken to review DBS checks and renewals, to ensure these checks are appropriate, timely and up to date.

The first phase of recruitment programme improvements was launched to further streamline processes, enhance efficiency, and improve the overall recruitment experience for candidates, managers and the Recruitment team.

This year we also established our own Apprenticeship and Early Careers Service and adopted an apprentice-led approach to create a dynamic new brand. This has refreshed and enhanced our apprenticeship offer, enabling us to attract and recruit apprentices from a diverse range of sectors, age groups and backgrounds.

Using our new apprenticeship branding and marketing materials and increased presence within our W&F Schools and jobs fairs, our first apprentice recruitment campaign for Westmorland and Furness Council achieved fantastic results, driving a more than 100% increase in applications.

Recruiting apprentices creates opportunities for young people and adults to 'earn while they learn' while gaining valuable knowledge, skills and experience across a wide range of careers. Apprentices also bring benefits to our organisation through additional capacity and new ideas.

Staff development and support

We developed several initiatives to support our staff including refreshed staff benefits such as a new W&F Cycle to Work Scheme, a new Life Events Policy and an Employer Supported Volunteering Policy and achieved the Bronze Better Health at Work Award.

Working with services across the Council this year we have developed and delivered several new and updated programmes such as Customer Care and EDI as well as facilitation of over 50 team development sessions across the Council. Our Coaching skills courses and a 1-1 coaching offer are embedding a coaching culture and a successful pilot of the leadership and management programme this year has helped shape a roll-out of the programme for next year.

The development of key digital skills for staff across the Council has been supported by several tailored learning solutions. In addition, we have created a Digital Hub and developed 1-1, in person and virtual sessions, all of which have been well received by staff and support the growth and development of our workforce

Legal and Democratic Services

Our Legal and Democratic teams are vital to the work we do across the organisation, providing advice and training to all Council services to ensure decisions are safe, lawful and follow Council processes.

The Council is committed to embedding Good Governance and an extensive programme of work has been delivered including the introduction of policies and procedures, the review of the Constitution, delivery of training and development for Councillors and staff, the completion of the Annual Governance Statement and Action Plan and the development of an Information Governance framework.

We launched Mod.Gov, our new reporting system, this year which has helped us to support and deliver over 150 public committee meetings. Working with the Chair, Vice Chair and Lead Officers we have ensured meetings run smoothly.

Our Member Information Portal went live this year, providing access to tools, resources and information to support Councillors to carry out their roles. In addition, a quarterly Member Bulletin and Weekly News have been launched and our first successful Member's Day was held in November.

We have successfully delivered elections for the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, two UK Parliamentary constituencies, three ward by-elections, four parish council by-elections and a Neighbourhood Planning Referendum. In addition, we have processed 21,544 registration applications, 10,012 postal vote applications, and 1327 proxy vote applications over the year.

ICT

This year one of our key focus areas was to attain our Public Services Network (PSN) Code of Connection accreditation. The PSN is the government's high-performance network, which helps public sector organisations work together, reduce duplication and share resources. This required a significant amount of work with a submission made early in 2025 and recently resulted in the Council being awarded its PSN Code of Connection accreditation.

In addition, this year we have been progressing a comprehensive evaluation of our tenancies across the legacy systems of our former councils to ensure that systems are fit for now and in the future, and to ensure alignment with industry best practices. With several priority business critical systems and applications disaggregated and aggregated with the creation of single unitary systems to support our critical services.

Measuring Performance

Performance indicator	Q1 Actual	Q1 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Target	Q3 Actual	Q3 Target	24/25 Status
% of Freedom of Information and Environment Information Regulation requests processes within satisfactory timescales	73	90	78.7	90	91.6	90	5-10% off target
% of complaints responded to within timeframe	90	90	90	90	90	90	Within 5% of target
Number of days on average to process new claims for Housing Benefit / Council Tax Reduction claims	28.6	20	22	20	34	21	More than 10% off target

Performance indicator	Q1 Actual	Q1 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Target	Q3 Actual	Q3 Target	24/25 Status
% of return per annum over 10 years on Local Government Pension scheme	7.3	6.8	7.1	6.7	6.8	6.6	Within 5% of target
Number of working days forecast to be lost per Full Time Equivalent due to sickness absence	15.1	15	14.7	15	15.5	15	Within 5% of target
Number of Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences (RIDDOR) Reportable Health and Safety incidents	3	5	10	10	18	15	5-10% off target
Public Sector Network (PSN) transition	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	5-10% off target

Quarterly progress monitoring

Comprehensive details on our performance against all 2024/25 actions to achieve our Council Plan priorities and Delivery Framework missions are available in our Quarterly Corporate Performance reports.

These reports provide updates on each Council Plan Delivery Framework mission, tracking progress through performance indicators and agreed actions. They also highlight key achievements and challenges, enabling us to adapt to changing needs and delivery requirements.

Delivering within our means

We have a responsibility to be financially sustainable and that means we need to deliver services within the budget we have to ensure that we can live within our means.

Despite a difficult financial climate and economic uncertainty, alongside the challenges of being a new council, for 2024/25 we are on target to deliver a balanced budget and over £10m of savings alongside the one-off use of earmarked reserves of a net £11m to invest in capacity and growth. This has meant we have been able to invest in doing things differently, invest in services that are the drivers of change and start to realise the benefits of Local Government Reorganisation.

Looking ahead

We remain committed to delivering services and projects that benefit our communities by advancing our Council Plan priorities through our Council Plan Delivery Framework missions.

Our 2025/26 Annual Plan outlines our key delivery priorities for the year ahead and the steps we will take to delivery our missions, ensuring Westmorland and Furness continues to be a great place to live, work and thrive.

How to stay in touch

We welcome any feedback or comments on our Annual Plan.

You can visit or write to us, we have three offices:

Barrow: Town Hall, Duke Street, Barrow in Furness, Cumbria, LA14 2LD

Kendal (registered office): South Lakeland House, Lowther Street, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 4QD

Penrith: Voreda House, Friargate, Portland Place, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 7QQ

Follow and contact us on social media:

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