



2019-20

Corporate Performance Report

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Planning the Way Ahead

This is the Council's annual Corporate Performance Report. It sets out our priorities for 2019-20 and how we performed in 2018-19.

We welcome your views on this report, our plans for the future and how we did last year. We would also like to know how you, your family and your community have been affected by our work to improve services. **You can get in touch by:**



Via the web:

www.rctcbc.gov.uk/sayit *or* www.rctcbc.gov.uk/reportit



Via Twitter:

[@rctcouncil](https://twitter.com/rctcouncil) *or* [@cwmmtafconsult](https://twitter.com/cwmmtafconsult)



Via Facebook:

www.facebook.com/RCTCouncil



Via The Leader's Blog:

www.rctcbc.gov.uk/TheLeadersBlog



Help us to improve by providing your comments, compliments and complaints

www.rctcbc.gov.uk/feedback



Join the Citizens' Panel:

www.rctcbc.gov.uk/jointhepanel



Get involved in our consultations

www.rctcbc.gov.uk/GetInvolved



Via the Consultation Team:

consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk



Via the Cwm Taf Engagement Hub

www.ourcwmtaf.wales



Find the contact details of your local Councillor

www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councillors



If you are interested in taking over the running of a Council run building or service:

www.rctcbc.gov.uk/RCTTogether

This document is available in other languages and formats on request.



A message from the Leader of the Council - Councillor Andrew Morgan

Welcome to the Council's Corporate Performance Report for 2019. This report brings together information from across the Council about how well we delivered our priorities last year and our plans for 2019-20. This report helps us to meet many of the Council's legal reporting requirements, but more importantly, it has also been designed so that you, the Council's partners and other interested organisations can see for yourselves how we are doing. We want to show where we are doing well, be honest about our challenges and where we can do better, and also show the tough decisions we need to make about our spending priorities.

The Corporate Performance Report contains many examples of how the Council is working to improve the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural well-being of the residents and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf. It also shows what the Council's Independent Auditors have said about our work and progress.

For those readers that would like to see more in depth information, the report includes many links to detailed reports and data. However, you choose to read this report, I hope it helps you to understand and challenge what we are doing, and encourages you to get involved in feeding back your views so that the Council can provide the best possible services.

The data and information we collect, check and compare, shows that overall we are continuing to improve and that our residents are receiving a number of services that are amongst the best in Wales. This includes

- taking action to bring empty private sector properties back into use
- helping to prevent homelessness
- the condition of our non-principal (C) roads and
- maintaining high levels of cleanliness of our highways.

We are really pleased to see great progress in Key Stage 4 results, which showed our best ever performance compared to the rest of Wales for 'the % of pupils achieving the Level 2+ threshold (5 GCSEs A* to C, including English/Welsh and Maths)' where we were ranked 10th in Wales.

At the same time as looking at where we are making good progress and compare well with others, there are areas where we know we need to do better. This includes

- continuing to improve the condition of our roads - so we are continuing to invest in our roads and bridge repairs
- recycling more of our waste - so we are renewing our focus on targeting and supporting residents to recycle more or use enforcement as a last resort, and
- improving school attendance at both primary and secondary schools - so we are working with schools to help to jointly tackle the problems that can lead to children and young people not going to school.

We also know that our on-going work with partners to better meet the increasing demand for high levels of care is critical to help people to come home from hospital quickly.

The financial climate that all Welsh local authorities are operating within remains very challenging and we continue to work hard to deliver changes and improve services at the same time as having to make significant efficiency savings; this being around £90million over the last 10 years in Rhondda Cynon Taf. To help us to achieve our ambitions for the area, we always take every opportunity to get extra income from Welsh Government by applying for additional grant funding that we can use to help pay for one off projects. By careful budgeting, making tough choices about where we spend, planning ahead and changing how we work, we have been able to keep the increase in Council Tax to the lowest in Wales for the second year running.

The Council's work does not stand still and this report doesn't tell you about the many services we deliver to residents every day at the same time as continuing to focus our work and budget on those priorities that you told us were most important to you and your communities. For instance...

- *to strengthen the 'economy' of RCT*, we are continuing to develop our Town Centres and bring in more jobs across the County Borough so that everyone can live in good quality housing in thriving communities, as well as give our children and young people the education and support that will help them reach their potential and improve their life chances.
- *to support the 'people' of RCT*, we are continuing to support our most vulnerable residents through our Stay Well@home service and our programme of Extra Care developments across the County Borough as well as other independent living accommodation. Our Resilient Families Programme is delivering family support so that problems at home are addressed early and children can safely stay at home with their families.
- *to make our 'place' an attractive place to live, work and visit*, we are maintaining high standards of cleanliness across RCT, improving and repairing our roads and bridges, putting in place improved public transport options and continuing to improve our parks, leisure centres and sports pitches. We are also continuing to expand the shows, performances and films in our theatres and the other outside events we organise for residents and communities to enjoy.

When you read this report, it is likely that more progress will have been made in the work it describes. We are fully committed to keeping residents up to date with our progress and improvements through social media and on our website, and I would encourage you to see for yourself the changes we are making in these areas. The benefits of some of our work can be seen now, other benefits will take longer to see, but we continue to put in place firm foundations that will support improvement and from which future generations can benefit and also build on.

Finally, none of this work would happen without the continued commitment of staff, councillors and partners. I would like to put on record my personal thanks to everyone who is working hard to make Rhondda Cynon Taf one of the most successful Councils in Wales so that our residents get the best possible services, despite the challenging financial climate the Council is operating within.

I hope this Performance Report helps you to understand how the Council is approaching the challenges and opportunities it faces now and how we are preparing for the future. Please let us know what you think of our progress and plans, tell us what matters to you and give us your ideas about what we can do to further improve the positive impact of the Council's work. Look out for ways you can get involved, including helping to shape and develop the Council's new Corporate Plan that will be in place from 2020.

Thank you for your continuing interest in the Council.

A. Morgan

Councillor Andrew Morgan
Leader, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council

Continuing to deliver our priorities in 2018-19

The Council's Corporate Plan for 2016-2020, *'The Way Ahead'* continues to put residents at the centre of what we do.

The plan was originally developed and shaped by residents, staff and partners who told us what mattered most to them. It has set the direction for everything we have done since 2016 and its final year, it sets the firm foundations for our new plan which will be in place from April 2020.

The Corporate Plan sets out a Vision for the future...

A County Borough that has high aspirations, is confident and promotes opportunity for all

and focuses on three priorities:

 <h2 style="margin: 10px 0;">Economy</h2> <p style="margin: 0;"><i>Building a strong economy</i></p>	 <h2 style="margin: 10px 0;">People</h2> <p style="margin: 0;"><i>Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone</i></p>	 <h2 style="margin: 10px 0;">Place</h2> <p style="margin: 0;"><i>Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work</i></p>
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The Plan also sets out the key principles we follow to deliver these priorities

- ▶ providing essential services well
- ▶ helping people and communities to help themselves
- ▶ building a sustainable County Borough and
- ▶ living within our means.

Following these principles to achieve our longer term Vision has meant that we have needed to involve people and communities in shaping our services, think about the effect of what we do now on people and communities in the future, carefully plan what we do so that we can work with others where it is best to do so, and put in place services that will help prevent problems from happening or getting worse.

The detailed plans for 2018-19 to deliver our three priorities were set out in our **Corporate Performance Report for 2018-19**. Since then we have been continually monitoring our progress. The Corporate Plan doesn't tell you about all the services that we deliver directly to or organise for our residents, communities and businesses. You can find out more about all the services we deliver and the progress we are making on the **Council's website**, and on the **Council's Twitter, Instagram or Facebook pages**.

As you will see throughout this report we have made positive progress in tackling our three priorities since 2016. Our work has been reviewed and checked by Councillors every three months and at the same time, reports have been put on the Council's website so that residents and other interested organisations can see our progress for themselves. We are now at the end of the 2018-19 reporting year, so this report contains the year end assessment of our progress and provides examples of where our work has made a difference to the lives of people that live, work and visit Rhondda Cynon Taf, and also where we need to do better.

The Council's three priorities will remain in place until March 2020. What we intend to do, the targets we have set ourselves and next steps have been refreshed and strengthened as part of the plans we are putting in place for 2019-20. Our progress so far will help us to prepare to respond to the challenges we face beyond 2020.



To help us to achieve our ambitions and respond to the impact of increasing financial pressures, we are continually looking at ways we can make more of the resources we have available by tackling...

Digitalisation...

so that customers can access more of our services online and also helping to increase access to technology for people and communities.

e.g. online transactions have increased from 36% in 2016-17 to 63% in 2018-19. This means that our residents can access more services more quickly and easily, e.g. booking a visit to the Lido, applying for a job or checking recycling arrangements and many more online services. Our plans to provide free Wi-Fi access across seven Town Centres across the County Borough over the coming months will support residents and businesses alike.

Commercialisation...

so that the Council takes more opportunities to act as a business to earn income rather than cut budgets.

e.g. renting out our properties and building industrial units for rent and bringing new jobs into the area.

Early Intervention and Prevention...

so that we spend more on stopping problems and less on trying to fix them once they have happened.

e.g. our **Resilient Families Service** working with families experiencing difficulties so that their problems don't get any worse. The information available to date shows that 74% of the families that were referred to the service accepted support. Of these families, 95.4% said they were better able to cope as a result of this support.

Independence...

so that our vulnerable residents stay as well as they can for as long as they can.

e.g. our **Stay Well@home Service** getting people safely out of hospital when they are well enough to leave and giving them the support to cope better when they get home. This joint service received an award from NHS awards 2018 for '**Working Seamlessly across organisations**'.

Efficient and Effective Organisation...

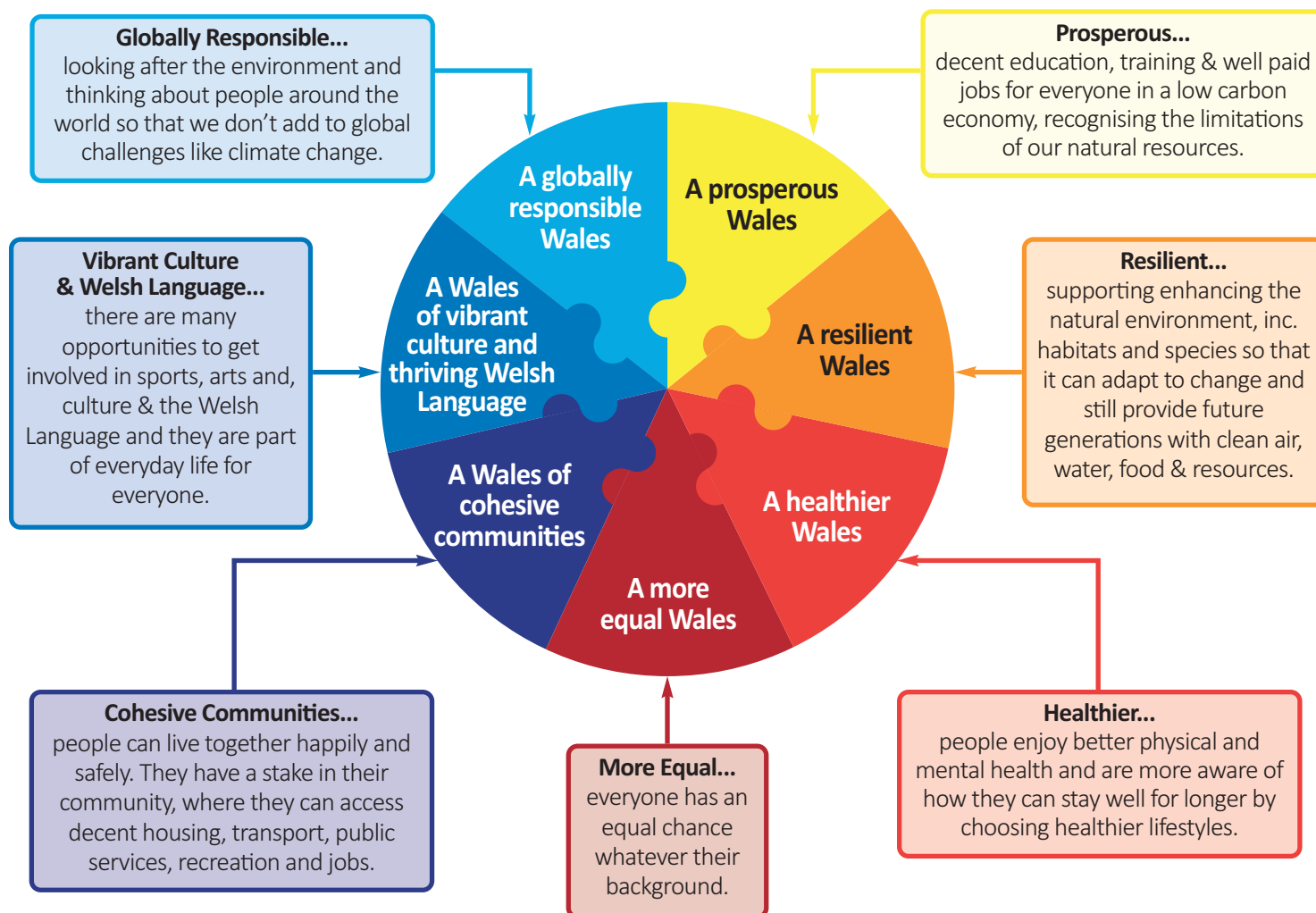
so that we challenge everything we do to see if we can do it better.

e.g. centralising office based administration to make the most of the skills and expertise available behind the scenes. Also helping staff working in the community by providing 'hot desks' that they can use in different locations so that they spend more time working with residents, communities and businesses and less time travelling across the County Borough back to an office.

In 2018 we also continued to embed the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** into the Council's work and priorities. This Act applies to 44 public bodies in Wales including all Councils, Health Boards, Fire and Rescue Services and Natural Resources Wales. Having adopted our three priorities as our Well-being Objectives in **March 2017**, we have also continued to strengthen those aspects of our Corporate Plan that have changed or moved on since it was introduced in 2016.

The Act means that as well as the Council showing continual improvement, it also needs to carry out 'Sustainable Development' which means the process of improving the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural well-being of the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Act also asks us to "maximise our contributions" to seven national Well-being Goals, which you will see throughout this report.

The seven national Well-being Goals



Our three priorities have provided a clear starting point to help us to show how our work is contributing to these seven national Well-being goals, but we know we need to do more.

The Act directs us to make sure that we meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. To do this we need to work differently, where we are not already doing so, and

1. **involve those with an interest in our plans and seek their views**
2. **balance short term need with long term and planning for the future**
3. **work together with other partners to deliver objectives**
4. **consider the impact on all well-being goals together and on other bodies**
5. **put resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse**

These five ways of working make public bodies in Wales, including the Council, think more about the long-term, work better with people, communities and each other, look to prevent problems and also take a more joined-up approach to the work we do.

You will see many examples of how we are doing this throughout this report. Also we show that we are contributing to the seven national Well-being goals, through an easy to read section containing examples, set out on page 44. However, we need to continue to build and improve on this positive platform.

Delivering for the future

For many years, Councillors have been faced with financial challenges that have meant they have had to make tough choices and difficult decisions.

These choices and decisions have allowed the Council to prioritise services, particularly for those who are most vulnerable, whilst at the same time make the savings needed to balance the books.

We are continually reducing our management structures and administration, finding new ways to work in partnership with other councils and public bodies and making better use of the buildings and office space we have.

We have achieved these changes because we are continually looking to see where we can do things differently or better and where we can get better value for our money. We ask our residents and our staff for their ideas, we use all the feedback we receive from inspections and audits and we learn from organisations that are the best at what they do. We also regularly review and challenge every Council service. This means that we know our strengths and areas for improvement and are better able to respond quickly to change and continue to provide quality services with reducing resources, including fewer managers and staff. We are making best use of limited resources by working with others where it makes sense to do so. By continuing to challenge what we know about our services and the needs of our residents and communities, both now and in the future, we can better understand how and what we need to change. This helps us to make sure that we focus on improving what matters most now and also make sure that the needs of future generations can be met.

The Council also works in partnerships with other public bodies e.g other councils, Cwm Taf Health Board, South Wales Police, South Wales Fire and Rescue, the Third Sector and Natural Resources Wales. You can see some examples of how we work with others on [our website](#). Some of the partnerships are because we think we can deliver better services together, and also because some problems cannot be dealt with by one organisation alone.

The Welsh Government recognised the value of partnership working and has put in place laws that direct public bodies to work together e.g. the **Well-being of Future Generations Act** which is described in more detail in section 10.

Another law that directs how we work is the **Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014**. This Act gives people more of a say in the care they receive. To do this, the Act asks Councils to work in partnership with Health Boards and the Third Sector to work together better to improve the well-being of adults and children who need care and support, as well as their carers. In RCT we work as part of the Cwm Taf Regional Partnership Board, which has put in place a Cwm Taf Social Services and **Well-being Area Plan** that sets out what it intends to do to work better together to benefit

- children and young people
- older people
- health/physical disabilities
- learning disability/autism
- mental health
- sensory impairment
- carers who need support
- violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence

with priority given to

- older people with complex needs and long term conditions, including dementia
- people with learning disabilities
- carers, including young carers
- integrated Family Support Services and
- children with complex needs due to disability and illness.

As a Council, working alone and also working in partnership with others, we continually strive to improve everything we do so that we can provide better, more efficient, effective and joined up services to our residents and communities.

In its most recent report published in **September 2018** our independent regulator, the Wales Audit Office, indicated that “the Council continues to meet its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement”. You can see this and other reports from our inspectors [here](#).

Progress on our Corporate Plan 2016-20

The Council launched its first Corporate Plan *'The Way Ahead'* in 2016.

The Plan was put in place to set the direction of the Council's work for five years, up to 2020, set ambitious targets for improvement and focus on three areas of work that would improve the lives of the people and communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf.



Economy

Building a strong economy



People

Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone



Place

Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work

The Plan describes ambitions for the future and how the Council will achieve those ambitions, including where we have planned to work with other partners to get the best possible results for residents. Since the Plan was launched, the decisions that the Council has made, the resources that have been put in place, the risks that have been managed and the training and development opportunities that have been provided to staff have all been directed to making a difference to the lives of the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

We have seen investment of over £365M across 21st Century Schools, highways, transportation and other infrastructure, parks, play areas, leisure centres and outdoor sports facilities and our community assets.

Our progress in what we set out to achieve in 2016, has been set out in regular reports for Councillors to challenge and check, and for residents to see for themselves. Our progress in the last year is also set out in this report. Looking back at our progress since 2016 we can show that we have achieved most of what we set out to achieve.

ECONOMY

We wanted to regenerate RCT, build new homes and create new jobs and we have seen

- the ratification of the £1.2billion City Deal which includes the implementation of the South Wales Metro and associated local transport schemes.
- a new building at the heart of the regeneration of Pontypridd, **Llys Cadwyn**, nearing its planned 2020 completion following the demolition of the former Taff Vale precinct.
- over 2,000 new jobs coming to the County Borough. These include over 1,000 jobs to the new Headquarters of Department for Work and Pensions in Treforest, 500 to Llys Cadwyn for Transport for Wales and 300 already in the Health Education and Improvement Wales Offices in Nantgarw.
- more business start-ups and registered businesses/enterprises as well as fewer business closures.
- 1,654 additional housing units provided and 550 affordable homes delivered to date, together with £4M extra social housing investment.
- confirmation of the Eisteddfod being held in RCT in 2022, and the development of two designated destination gateways at Dare Valley Park and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park.

We wanted our schools to be among the best in the country and we are seeing pupils enjoying new or refurbished schools in Y Pant, Treorchy, Porth, Tonyrefail, Cymmer, Ferndale with more improvements on the way, and more of our pupils achieving better results in level 2 + threshold (English, Welsh and Maths) at Key Stage 4 leading to the highest ever RCT performance at this level.

We wanted to put in place a broad range of skills and employment programmes for all ages and we are seeing young people and adults of all ages supported to gain qualifications and find employment through our employment pathway, which provides support for people at every stage, from improving essential skills to gaining sector specific qualifications and work experience for jobs that are available locally.



PEOPLE



We wanted to provide our residents with the care they need to live in their own homes for longer and we are seeing more people helped to live independently, however despite the new Stay Well@home service there are fewer older people getting back to their homes from hospital more quickly. This is because the demand for home care has increased as we support more people to live at home rather than in residential care. We have seen happy residents living in a new extra care facility in Ty Heulog, Pontyclun, a second new facility in Aberaman nearing completion and proposals in place for further Extra Care facilities. There are more adults choosing their own care providers and more people better able to remain independent following a package of care.

We wanted to make services more joined up and efficient and by working closely with others we improved our support for families so that they are less affected by poverty. We also improved our substance misuse services across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr to make it easier for people to access the help they need.

We wanted to give RCT's children and young people a great start in life so we put in place a **Resilient Families Service** and are seeing that families get the help they need at the right time. We have also seen fewer children subject to statutory intervention and fewer children re registered on the Child Protection Register (CPR) but there have been more children taken into the care of the Council.

PLACE



We wanted RCT to be among the safest places in Wales, with communities helping each other and residents feeling safe so we changed the way we deal with victims of Domestic Violence and also put in place technology to help protect older and vulnerable adults from unwanted phone calls and cold callers. We visited schools to talk to pupils about hate crime and how to report it, helped more people to enjoy socialising in town centres by putting in place Public Spaces Protection Orders in Aberdare and Pontypridd to help control anti-social behaviour because of the misuse of alcohol. We have also seen more residents who have been victims of anti-social behaviour feel safer after our involvement.

We wanted RCT's parks and green spaces to continue to be valued by residents and we have seen high levels of residents satisfied with RCT as a place to live, continuing high levels of cleanliness across RCT, fewer roads in poor condition and more waste recycled.

We also know that there is still more work to do where we haven't made as much progress as we had planned e.g.

ECONOMY

the achievement of our more vulnerable pupils is still too far below their classmates. We also need to work with schools to improve school attendance and reduce the number of pupils excluded.

PEOPLE

we are not able to get all people home from hospital quickly when they are well enough.

PLACE

we need to continue to encourage residents to recycle their waste. We also need to meet the Welsh Government's national recycling target of 70% by 2025.

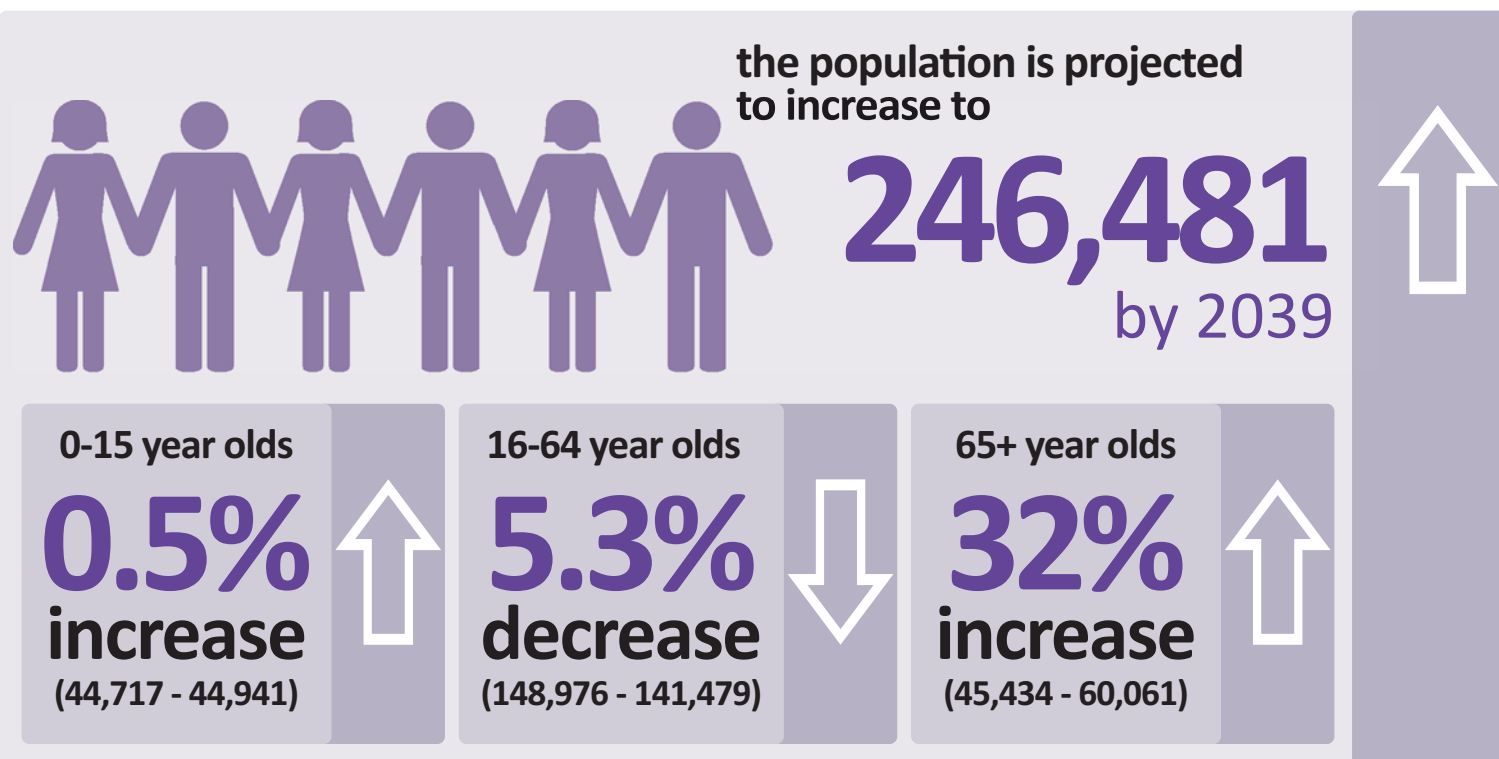
It is impossible for our Corporate Plan to show information about all the many different services we deliver to or organise for our residents, communities and businesses, but there is lots of information available about all our services on the **Council's website**.

We are starting to prepare a new Corporate Plan that will take the Council beyond 2020. To do this we will build on what we have achieved so far and make sure every town and community in the County Borough is a great place to live, work and visit. We will be looking at how we can meet the challenges facing RCT both now and in the future and will be talking to people and communities about what matters most to them.

A measure which shows how well areas in Wales are doing to create the conditions for communities to improve both now and in the future, the **Thriving Places Index**, was launched in 2018 and looks at Local conditions, Sustainability and Equality. The index shows that across 55 measures, we already have a solid platform in place that will help us to make further improvements to our place and environment, mental and physical health and education and learning in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The **2019 index** shows that the lowest score across all of the categories for Rhondda Cynon Taf is for Mental and Physical Health.



Long Term Data for RCT









You can see more information about the 'Future Trends' that will affect the residents and communities of RCT, [here](#).

How are we performing compared to the rest of Wales?

In 2018-19, there were fewer nationally set measures in place. This means that there are fewer measures with which we can compare with other councils in Wales.





Of the 35 national indicators we report, we can compare our performance for 19 with other Councils¹.

Our comparisons show....





-  **4 of our indicators were in the top quartile in Wales**
-  **10 indicators showed improved performance**
-  **8 indicators performed better than the Wales Average**
-  **5 indicators were in the bottom quartile in Wales, 1 of which had improved**
-  **8 indicators showed performance declined from last year**
-  **performance in 1 indicator remained unchanged and continued to be in the top quartile in Wales.**

To see a full summary of how we performed compared to the rest of Wales in 2018-19 please view our **PI comparisons**. To summarise, comparing our performance against other Welsh Councils we were...

among the top quartile in Wales for...



-  % of highways inspected of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness
-  % of households threatened with homelessness successfully prevented from becoming homeless
-  % of empty private sector properties brought back into use during the year through direct action by the local authority
-  % of non-principal 'C' roads that are in overall poor condition

among the bottom quartile in Wales for...

-  % of pupil attendance in primary schools and secondary schools
-  % of Year 11 school leavers known not to be in education, training or employment (NEET)
-  % of principal 'A' roads that are in overall poor condition
-  % of B roads that are in overall poor condition.

Comparing our performance with other councils can raise more questions than answers. This is positive as it can help us to better understand what we do, learn from better practice as well as provide us with an indication on how well we are performing. If we can see that our performance is not improving over time and remains below the Welsh Average without good reason, we can then focus on what we need to do to improve.

We have also compared our performance against the targets we set ourselves for 2018-19 and found...

-  **9 indicators met or exceeded target and 7 indicators were within 5% of hitting the target**
-  **3 indicators missed the target, all of which were also below the Wales average.**

Performance indicators are not the only measure of how well services are performing, nor do they tell the whole story, but they can help. We also look at residents' views and survey responses, and the comments, compliments and complaints we receive through social media. We compare our performance with published best practice, we also consider what our auditors and inspectors are telling us. There is always something we can learn to continually improve what we do. All of these steps help us to make sure that the services we provide help to make RCT a great place to live, work and visit.

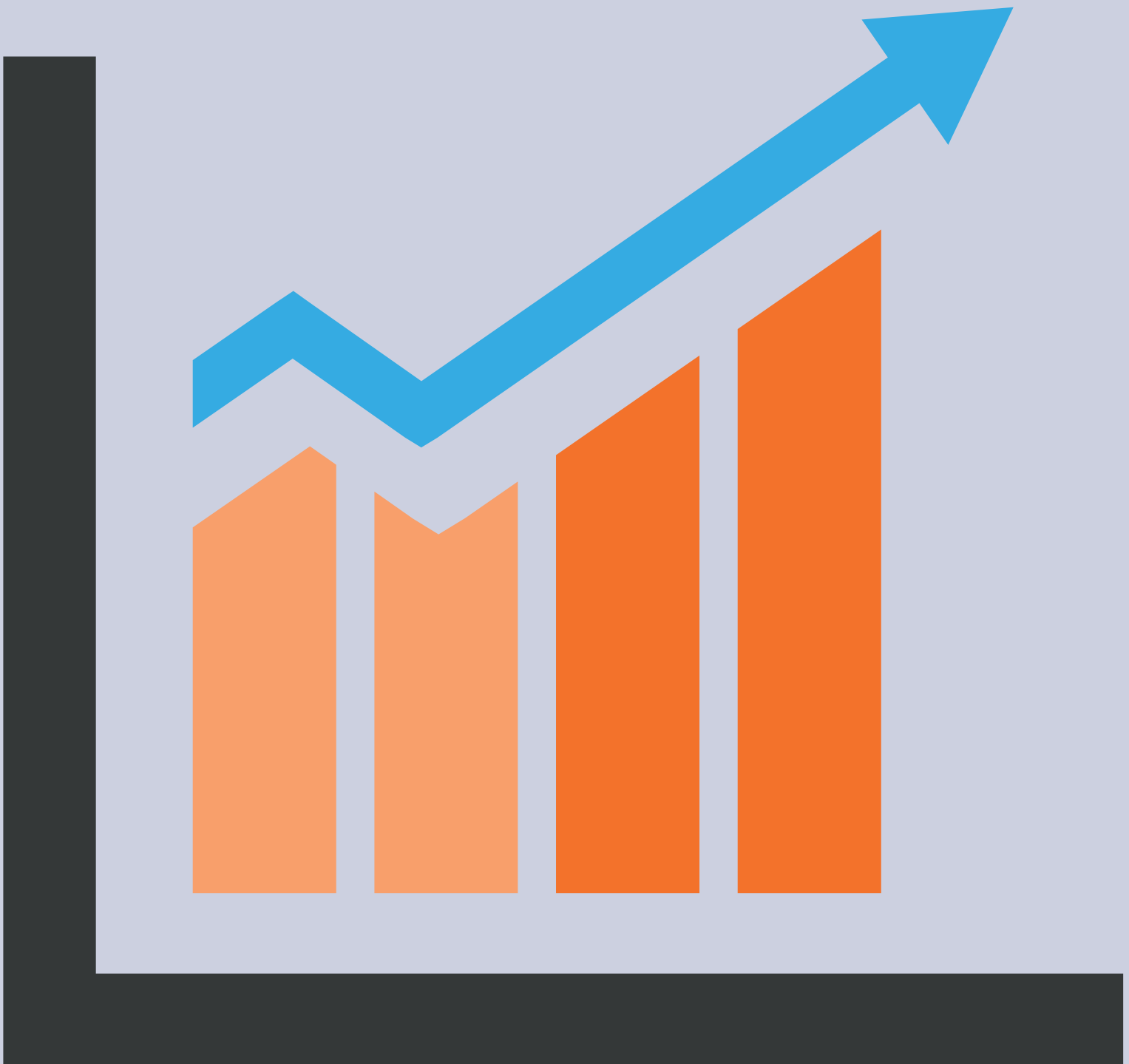
We also need to contribute to the seven national Well-being goals for Wales set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which is described in more detail in page 32. In 2018, the Welsh Government published its second report, '**Well-being of Wales 2018**' which sets out the progress being made across 44 public bodies in Wales, to meet these seven national goals. Whilst the report is not about Rhondda Cynon Taf, we can use this information to look at the Council's contribution to the 7 national Well-being goals. In parallel, the Welsh Government also published for the first time, a separate report on the '**Well-being of Children across Wales**' which we are using to consider what we do in RCT.

¹We have used the most recent all Wales data from 2017-18 to compare our 2018-19 performance.

6

ECONOMY:

Building a Strong Economy



ECONOMY

Building a Strong Economy



Key information about Rhondda Cynon Taf

- 6,700 people (5.8%) were unemployed in the year to December 2018 compared to 6,100 (5.5%) in 2017 and unemployment remains higher than the Wales average of 4.5%.
- 47% of areas in RCT are within the more deprived areas in Wales.
- 10.1% of adults have no qualifications and 18.2% of adults have fewer than 5 grade C GCSEs.
- 53.1% of pupils achieved at least 5 GCSEs grade A*-C including English/Welsh and mathematics, compared to 49.8% last year.
- 28% of pupils entitled to Free School Meals achieved at least 5 GCSEs grade A*-C including English/Welsh and mathematics, compared to 24.2% last year.
- 17.8% of children in RCT are living in poverty. However, when the cost of housing is deducted from household income, this figure increases to 28%.
- 2,885 private sector dwellings have been vacant for over 6 months, 67 more than last year.



Looking ahead

- Over the next 10 to 20 years, up to 35% of existing UK jobs will be at high risk from automation. Advances in technology, computerisation and artificial intelligence could result in the loss of 700 occupations in the UK.
- However, there will be an increase in the number of higher level professional and technical jobs and in caring and service occupations.
- By 2022, 1 in 5 new jobs in the UK will be in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.
- The number of households in Wales looks set to increase significantly.
- The number of single person households is predicted to rise by over 30% in the next 20 years.
- Recent trends in house building indicate that the number of properties available may not keep up with this rise in households. Growth in population and housing will not be uniform across Wales.

We put in place the **ECONOMY** priority as we believe that economic growth will drive prosperity and bring opportunities to our residents and business as well as the Council. A growing economy will support jobs for our residents and will also allow the Council to generate more income to fund services, enable a responsible approach to setting Council Tax levels, support businesses and invest in the infrastructure needs of the County Borough. Helping to create these conditions will also help to improve the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural well-being of residents and communities. Residents told us this is important to them and studies have shown that work is good for people and can benefit individual mental health and contribution to communities.

We want to support residents, particularly our young people, to realise their potential by getting the best education, fulfilling jobs and good quality housing, irrespective of their backgrounds.

We also want to make sure that RCT is best placed to take full advantage of the many different opportunities that will arise from the **Cardiff Capital Region City Deal**.

Making RCT Town Centres more attractive will not only benefit our residents, it will also add to the appeal of the area as a visitor destination, which will help to increase tourism and will in turn support local businesses as well as provide more opportunities for jobs for our residents.

We also know that we have to plan to meet higher expectations from our residents with less funding so we have to do things differently.

The steps we put in place to achieve this Priority are

- **A responsible approach to regeneration, with new homes being built and job opportunities created – including investments in town centres and the commercial infrastructure such as Treforest Industrial Estate.**
- **Making Rhondda Cynon Taf's schools amongst the best in the country, with all children achieving the best they can.**
- **Making sure there is a broad offer of skills and employment programmes in place for all ages - by using European Social Fund monies where we can.**

As part of our preparations to put in place a new Corporate Plan from 2020, we are considering whether we have made enough progress in the past three years as well as looking ahead to see what Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural challenges we are facing and how we can work better with others to prevent problems from happening so that our work has the biggest positive impact both now and in the future.

In 2018 we said we would continue our work to Build a Strong Economy, focusing on improving our economy by supporting business growth and helping individuals improve their skills. Overall, we continue to make good progress as a Council and as part of wider partnerships and we have exceeded many of our expectations. Much of the work in this priority will be seen in the longer term but we are also seeing good progress in our shorter term plans. However, we still have more to do to keep up with changes in technology and the economy, including preparing for the continuing uncertainty of Brexit.

Alongside our work in delivering our ECONOMY priority we are continually building on our experience of doing things differently, what has worked and what we need to do better. We are also increasing our understanding of the effect of the changes we are making for the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf and the wider Cwm Taf Region.

Our work within the ECONOMY priority is overseen by Cabinet, relevant Scrutiny Committees and, where appropriate, the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, Cwm Taf Public Services Board and others Boards.

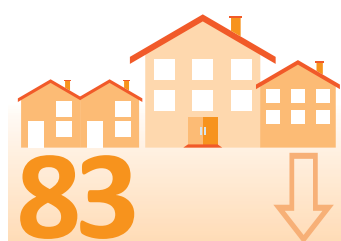


You can see more detail of our progress against what we set out to achieve in 2018-19 in our **ECONOMY Performance Evaluation**.

Putting in place a responsible approach to regeneration, with new homes being built and job opportunities created

Among other things, we have...

- identified the five areas in RCT with the potential to create more jobs and prosperity, i.e. the Cynon Gateway, Wider Pontypridd, Pontypridd Town, the A4119 corridor and Llanilid/M4 corridor.
- continued to lead and work with partners to support the City Deal projects that will bring investment, improved transport, housing and jobs into the region.
- delivered 83 affordable homes and brought 213 empty properties back to life.
- undertaken 452 interventions to tackle long term empty properties.
- continued to promote RCT as a visitor destination. The wider partnership destination management plan is not yet in place, but will be completed in 2019.
- continued to see
 - » positive signs of business start-ups with 34.2% start-ups, almost double the 17.8% for South East Wales, and significantly more than the rate for the whole of Wales and the rest of the UK.
 - » fewer business deaths at 8.9% in RCT, compared to 11.1% in South East Wales, 10.4% in Wales and 12.3% in the UK.
- identified wider Pontypridd/Treforest as a Strategic Hub for economic development by the Valleys Taskforce, with detailed work to consider opportunities for future development underway.
- achieved the halfway point of the new **Llys Cadwyn**. Pivotal to the regeneration of Pontypridd, the building is on target for completion in 2020.



Affordable homes delivered less than in 2017-18 (226)
proposed schemes considered for funding not progressed as planned



Empty properties brought back into use, more than in 2017-18 (204)

CASE STUDY

BUSINESS IS BLOOMING IN TONYPANDY

With funding from a business support programme, the owners of the Flower Room were able to improve a derelict building to create premises where they could start their new business as part of the regeneration of Tonypandy town centre.

In 2019-20 our plans include...

- supporting our Town Centres to be social centres and gateways to local services in Porth, Mountain Ash, Treorchy and Tonypandy.
- reviewing the support we provide to local businesses to make sure it meets their needs.
- working with local businesses to make our town centres safer.
- promoting Rhondda Cynon Taf to visitors by making the most of our landscape and delivering the Valleys Regional Park.
- expanding the range of housing available to all residents, including new developments, social housing and self build opportunities.

You will know we have made a difference because...

- more property improvements in our Town Centres.
- no. of registered businesses and new start ups.
- we will know how many homes have been built by local businesses.
- we will continue to deliver affordable homes and bring empty properties back to life.

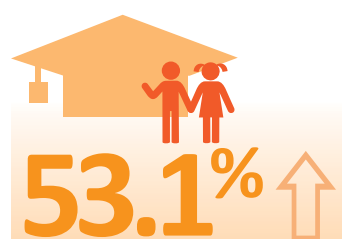
Making Rhondda Cynon Taf's schools amongst the best in the country, with all children achieving the best they can

Among other things, we have...

- opened 3 new through Schools as part of the 21st Century Schools programme, i.e. Porth Community School, Tonyrefail Community School and Ysgol Nant Gwyn in Tonyrefail. A new community primary school also opened at Cwmaman.
- continued to work with our regional partners in the Central South Consortium to challenge and support schools to improve achievement and well-being outcomes for pupils.
- continuing to put in place support for pupils well-being so that they can better cope with the challenges they face inside and outside school that may affect their ability to learn and to reach their full potential. This includes help in school e.g. Mental Health First Aid, as well as help for the whole family through the Resilient Families Service.
- put in place a 'Food and Fun' summer school holiday programme following a successful pilot in 2017. Almost 1,500 meals were served in five schools over the school summer holiday. 178 children enjoyed sport, fun and educational activities with old and new friends. Both pupils and parents gave it a thumbs up!

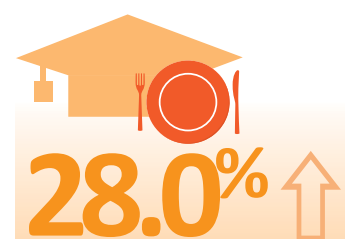
FOOD AND FUN...

"Routine is vital to my child and they have loved spending time with their friends. I have no one to help with childcare so this has had a huge positive impact for my family"

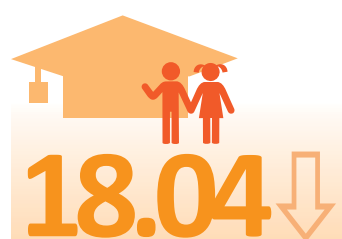


RCT pupils achieved L2+ threshold
49.8% in 2017-18
closing the gap with the Wales average (55.1%)

L2+ Threshold: 5 GCSEs at Grade A* to C including English/Welsh and Maths



Pupils eligible for free school meals achieved L2+ threshold
24.2% in 2017-18
still too far below peers



fixed term exclusions per 1,000 pupils in primary schools
compared to 14.2 in 2017-18



fixed term exclusions per 1,000 pupils in secondary schools
compared to 95.7 in 2017-18

*The number of permanent exclusions has decreased.
We are working with teachers to get children and young people safely back in lessons.*

CASE STUDY

HELPING FAMILIES - GLENBOI PRIMARY SCHOOL

Glenboi Primary school has a high number of disadvantaged pupils. The school put in place many ways to support, nurture and challenge the pupils and also to develop strong, supportive relationships with parents so they can in turn also better support their children's learning. From weekly mindfulness sessions, providing advice for learning at home and having a Family Engagement Officer to help parents to cope by providing practical as well emotional support. As a result of the work of everyone involved, pupils have a great starting point from which they can progress. In March 2019, the school's work was recognised as excellent by Education Inspectors.

You can see a detailed Case Study on the [Estyn website](#).

In 2019-20 our plans include...

- continuing with long term improvements to our school buildings through the 21st Century Schools programme and involving parents and communities in developing plans for future projects.
- expanding the opportunities for school buildings to be available for delivering community services outside of school hours, e.g. community learning hubs.
- reviewing the support we provide to children with Additional Learning Needs before they start school.
- working with Health to make sure that all parents have support that most benefits their children's development.

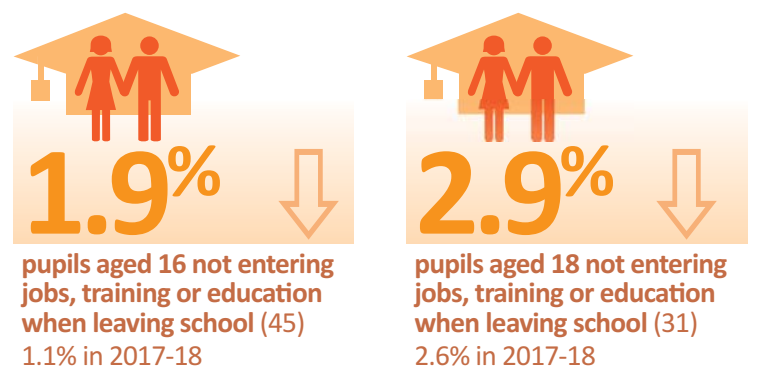
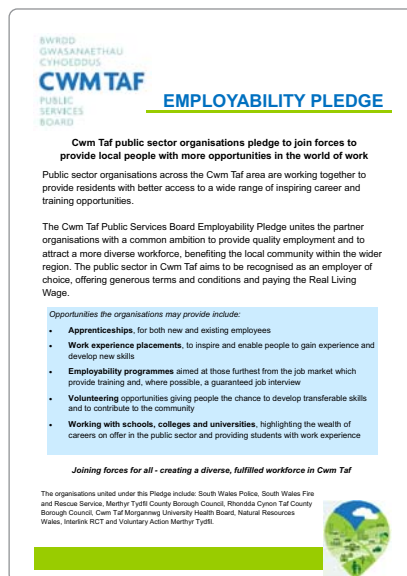
You will know we have made a difference because...

- more pupils including pupils eligible for free school meals, will achieve good results in their GCSEs.
- fewer pupils will be excluded from school.
- more pupils will attend school more regularly.

Making sure there is a broad offer of skills and employment programmes in place for all ages

Among other things, we have...

- continued to support people, including those with additional learning needs or disabilities, to gain work.
- worked with partners to develop adult community learning opportunities that will support people to gain essential skills, enhance their wellbeing and confidence.
- continued to work with employers to provide opportunities for RCT residents to develop skills that will help them to compete for jobs.
- expanded Digital Fridays in the Council's libraries, helping 273 people to improve their digital skills.
- offered free childcare to more eligible 3 and 4 year olds, with over 1,200 places available.
- worked with PSB partners to develop an 'Employability Pledge' that commits all public sector partners across Cwm Taf to work together to provide better access to job and training opportunities, making sure that the public sector, in the Cwm Taf areas, is seen as an employer of choice.



New Data Protection laws introduced in 2018 have made it difficult to collect this personal data about all young people and enable accurate comparisons with previous year's data

CASE STUDY

COMMUNITIES FOR WORK

A, is a 19-year-old woman caring for her mother, she was isolated and lacking confidence. She initially struggled to engage with the 'Communities for Work' because of a number of setbacks, including family bereavements. A's Support Worker kept in touch with her until she was ready to enrol on a 'Steps to Excellence' course. The course helped A to make friendships, increase her confidence and get work at a local factory.

In 2019-20 our plans include...

- providing support to people with long term health conditions and disabilities to stay in work.
- improving advice and practical opportunities for young people so that they can make more informed choices about their future careers.
- supporting more digital and creative work opportunities.
- working with employers to develop a skilled workforce that will help more RCT residents to compete for jobs.

You will know we have made a difference because...

- more people, including young people, will be supported to get jobs.
- more young people will leave school and go on to further education, employment or training.
- more people with health conditions will be supported to stay in work.
- local businesses will be supported to help people stay in work.

The work in our ECONOMY priority is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is



You can see more detail about how we will continue our work to 'Build a Strong Economy' in our 2019-20 ECONOMY Plan

PEOPLE:

Promoting
independence and
positive lives for
everyone in Rhondda
Cynon Taf



7 PEOPLE

Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone in Rhondda Cynon Taf



Key information about Rhondda Cynon Taf

Population of RCT as at 2017 was 239,127

- 18.7% under 16
- 62.3% between 16-64
- 19% over 65

According to the latest National Survey for Wales.

- 17% of households in RCT are in material deprivation, i.e. unable to afford things like keeping the house warm enough, making regular savings, or having a holiday once a year.
- 10% of adults in Wales exhibited fewer than two of the five healthy lifestyle behaviours. Men, middle-aged adults, and those in the most deprived areas were most likely to exhibit fewer than two of the behaviours i.e. smoking, not drinking above weekly guidelines, eating 5 fruit or vegetables (previous day), being physically active for at least 150 minutes (previous week) and obesity levels.
- 17% of people in RCT are lonely.

As at the 31st March 2019, there were

- 674 children in the care of the council.
- 498 registrations on the Child Protection Register.

In the latest Welsh Thriving Places Index RCT has been rated

- 4.47 for social isolation, increasing from 4 in 2018. A score of 10 indicates exceptionally good conditions for well-being and a score of 0 represents exceptionally poor conditions.
- 3.36 for Mental and Physical Health, a marginal increase from 3.23 in the previous year.

Latest Available Data applying to Cwm Taf – i.e. RCT and Merthyr

- Cwm Taf has the second highest rate of alcohol specific death in Wales 2015-17.
- Alcohol accounted for 43% of referrals to specialist substance misuse services across Cwm Taf in 2017-18.
- In 2018, **65.2 %** of adults in Cwm Taf were obese or overweight.

We put in place the PEOPLE priority as we believe that the best way to support people live long and healthy lives is to support people to make informed choices and keep control of how they live their lives and support and contribute to their communities. Residents told us this is important to them.

From the latest available data, the population of RCT is 239,127 (2017), which has increased from 231,937 in 2001. As people are living longer, the proportion of older people in RCT is also growing. We want our residents of all ages to stay as well as they can for as long as they can but, inevitably, age related conditions in older people will mean an increase in the need for health and social care.

We know that in RCT we have high numbers of vulnerable residents of all ages as well as deprived communities. We want to make sure people of all ages have the best chance of benefitting from the opportunities available to them including taking control of the services and facilities they value. We also want to focus on those in most need and to make sure that they have the right support at the right time.

We also know that we have to plan to meet higher expectations from our residents with less funding so we have to do things differently.

The steps we put in place to achieve this Priority are

- **Personalising and integrating health and social care services, with more people supported to live longer in their own homes.**
- **Giving our children and young people a great start in life.**
- **Redesigning local services so that they are joined up and efficient.**

As part of our preparations to put in place a new Corporate Plan from 2020, we are considering whether we have made enough progress in the past three years as well as looking ahead to see what Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural challenges we are facing and how we can work better with others to prevent problems from happening so that our work has the biggest positive impact both now and in the future.



Looking ahead

- Population of RCT will rise to 246,481 by 2039, with the greatest increase in the number of people aged 65 (32%).
- Life expectancy will increase by 5 years for both men and women by 2066.
- **68.7 %** of adults will be obese or overweight by 2025.
- There will be an increase in the number of adults with chronic conditions, including diabetes, heart conditions and stroke as well as common mental health conditions.
- The number of people aged over 65 years living with dementia in Wales is estimated to increase from 44,275 in 2017 to 72,769 in 2035.

In 2018, we said we would continue our work to promote independence and positive lives for everyone – Overall, we continue to make good progress as a Council and as part of wider partnerships, and we have exceeded many of our expectations in supporting our most vulnerable residents. Progress in our short term measures show improvement, but not all, and we know we still have more to do to help keep our residents of all ages and backgrounds safe and well.

Alongside our work in delivering our PEOPLE priority, we are continually building on our experience of doing things differently, what has worked and what we need to do better. We are also increasing our understanding of the effect of the changes we are making for the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf and the wider Cwm Taf Region.

Our work within the People priority is overseen by Cabinet, relevant Scrutiny Committees and, where appropriate the Regional Partnership Board and Public Services Board. In the last year, two areas of work in this priority have been subject to external review or inspection. We have not yet seen the final findings but they will be reported to Councillors and made public once they are available.

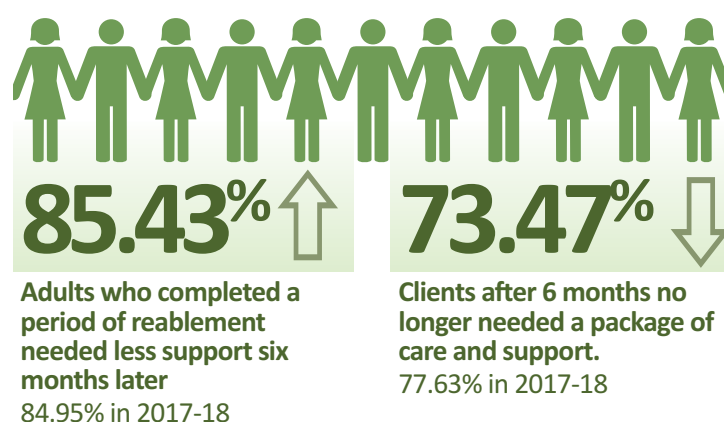


You can see more detail of our progress against what we set out to achieve in 2018-19 in our **PEOPLE Performance Evaluation**.

Personalising and Integrating Health and Social Care services, with more people supported to live longer in their own homes

Among other things, we have...

- made good progress on our second Extra Care Housing facility in Maesffynnon in Aberaman.
- continued our Stay Well@home service, providing dedicated support to vulnerable residents.
- continued our investment in playgrounds and leisure centres to make them more attractive and accessible for residents and communities to encourage them to become more physically active and stay healthier for longer. Investments include improvements to Bronwydd and Hawthorn fitness suites, Llantwit Fadre, Rhondda and Abercynon Sports Centres together with 3G pitches across RCT.



there was a 7% increase in the number of adults who received reablement, however, only a 1% increase in the number of adults with no package of care and support.

We asked people with a Care and Support Plan in place about what matters to them from the care they receive

93% ↑ feel they live in the right home for them
89% in 2017-18

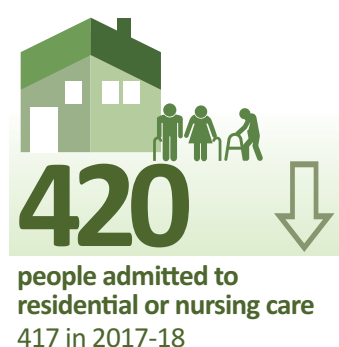
77% ↑ can do what matters to them
50% in 2017-18

94% ↑ they feel safe
79% in 2017-18

96% ↑ feel part of their community
52% in 2017-18

90% ↑ felt involved in any decisions made about their care and support
78% in 2017-18

95% ↑ received care and support through their language of choice
94% in 2017-18



The demand for intensive care and support for people leaving hospital is increasing the pressure on the health and social care provided in the community, especially in those areas where we are finding it hard to recruit care staff.

In 2019-20 our plans include...

- continuing to work with partners to put in place improved and enhanced community based solutions so that people will be able to get out of hospital more quickly and safely.
- putting in place a way forward for residential care that best meets the increasing demand and changing needs of our residents.
- progressing our programme of Extra Care housing.
- continuing to make sure that there is appropriate housing, accommodation and support for our residents with learning disabilities.
- making better use of technology that will allow people to continue to stay safe in their own homes.
- working more closely with other public bodies in ways that will strengthen communities.
- continuing to invest in improvements to our leisure centres, parks, playgrounds and other facilities where our residents can get active and keep well.

You will know we have made a difference because...

- there will be fewer people admitted to residential or nursing care.
- more adults who complete a period of reablement will need less support 6 months later.
- more people will return home from hospital more quickly.
- more people will be using a direct payment to manage their own care arrangements, so they can choose who provides care and when.
- there will be more visits to our sports and leisure facilities.



We are also working as part of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board (PSB) to deliver the changes it has set out in the **Cwm Taf Well-being Plan**. For the Council in particular, the Cwm Taf Well-being Objectives of Thriving Communities, for which RCT is the lead and also Loneliness and Isolation is relevant to our own priorities. This is the first full year of delivering the Public Services Board's work so there is still lots to do to deliver the long term plan.

Thriving Communities...

as part of a wider partnership and working closely with the Ferndale community and local groups, we have been working to put in place the Ferndale Community Zone with a Community Hub building, known as the 'Hwb,' in the former Ferndale Infants School. The main focus will be to help children and young people that have to cope with difficulties in their homes. The Community Zone is housed in a Community Hub building, where there will be a community space and services such as child care provision and employment courses.



Loneliness and Isolation...

working with partners we have been looking at ways we can work together better to support communities to do more to tackle loneliness and isolation. Work so far includes finding the good work that is already going on and seeing how we can support more like it, working with schools to develop more volunteering opportunities as part of the Welsh Bacalaureate and Duke of Edinburgh Award and starting to hold volunteering fairs in schools.



CASE STUDY

EVERY LITTLE HELPS

We are helping to improve physical and dental health by reducing the sugar intake of our residents and staff. RCT is one of the partners in the Cwm Taf partnership that has committed to remove all added sugar drinks from offices, cafes and canteens, leisure centres and vending machines by July 2019.

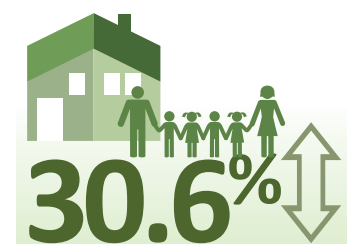


You can see more about our work as part of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board [HERE](#).

Rhondda Cynon Taf's children and young people will receive a great start in life

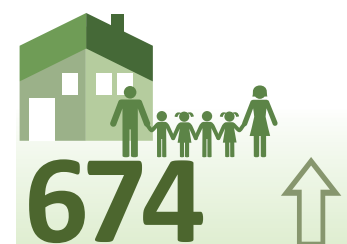
Among other things, we have...

- surveyed and talked to children and young people in the care of the Council to find out what matters to them as part of the 'Bright Spots' programme. The feedback was mostly positive but we know we still have more to do to give these children and young people the best possible start in life.
- taken steps to increase and improve the accommodation available for children who cannot stay with their own families by putting in place a Regional Fostering Service with our partners in Merthyr Tydfil CBC. The new service started on 1 April 2019, to provide a 'Front door' to potential foster carers across the areas of Cwm Taf.
- talked to young people leaving our care to see how we can make improvements so that they are better prepared and able to contribute to the communities they live in. The detailed findings are not yet complete but from our work and information available so far, the things that are most likely to help them get the best start in life are
 - » ensuring that children who cannot live with their parents live in suitable accommodation in RCT.
 - » developing a clear accommodation pathway for young people leaving our care so they can see their options or 'journey'.
 - » developing a scale of accommodation as well as support to meet the needs of young people leaving our care.
 - » reducing the numbers of young people leaving our care who are placed in B&B accommodation so that they can be supported in more suitable accommodation.
 - » developing a comprehensive support package for care leavers including independent living skills, a handbook of useful information and making sure that young people are informed and ready to take up tenancies.

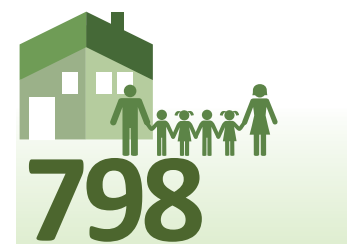


of cases we received about concerns for the care of children and young people, needed the involvement of Statutory Social Services
6,209 contacts

we are unable to compare this data with previous years as Welsh Government has changed the way this national measure is calculated



Fewer children were in the care of the Council, which means more children stayed with their families
676 in 2017-18



families received support earlier through the Resilient Families Service, helping them to resolve or cope better with the challenges they were facing
new measure for 2018-19

CASE STUDY

CONTINUING TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO LEARNING

by putting in place sanitary products in schools across RCT so that female learners can manage their periods with dignity and confidence and they don't miss out on school. Since we introduced the scheme in RCT, Welsh Government has committed funding so that females in all schools across Wales have access to appropriate products and facilities.



In 2019-20 our plans include...

- strengthening the support we give to Foster Carers, particularly those who care for children with challenging behaviour.
- improving the availability of information, advice and assistance to children, young people and families.
- improving housing options and support for vulnerable people to prevent homelessness.

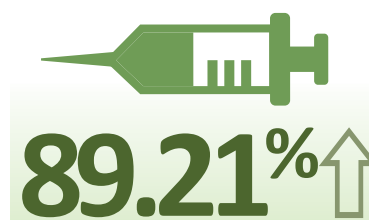
You will know we have made a difference because...

- more families will receive support at an earlier time, which will mean fewer children will require intervention from Statutory Social Services.
- fewer children will need to be taken into the care of the Council.

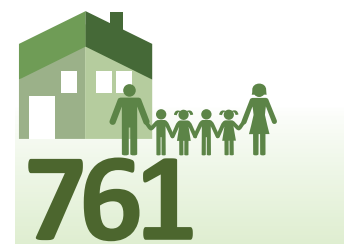
Redesigning Local Services for our residents so that they are integrated and efficient

Among other things, we have...

- continued to strengthen our support to families through the Resilient Families Service and wider Resilient Families Programme as well as working closely with partners to make sure that we are better able to find the children and young people in greatest need of our help. We are also making sure that this support is closer to families across RCT in the new Community Hubs.
- talked to parents, families and service users about how we can improve our Early Years Services. The findings will be used to shape and inform the new arrangements.



more people we worked with reduced, abstained or sustained their substance misuse from programme start to most recent review
88.26% in 2017-18



families (95.4%) reported that they were better able to cope with their difficulties following the involvement of the Resilient Families Service
New PI for 2018-19
No comparable data

HELPING FAMILIES COPE...

A family supported by the RFS to cope with difficulties including the impact of alcohol misuse told us

"We couldn't have done any of what we have if it was not for Resilient Families Services (RFS) help and support. We really appreciate everything they have done for our family and we'll be sorry to see them leave".

A FRESH START...

A resident helped by the Substance Misuse Service told us

"I have now been abstinent for months... I am not so isolated and really enjoying being around positive people. For the first time ever I am looking forward to the future!"

In 2019-20 our plans include...

- strengthening the way we deliver a range of services to families with children in their 'Early Years'.
- embedding the new Substance Misuse service within Cwm Taf.
- improving Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence services within Cwm Taf.
- working more closely with South Wales Police so that we can identify and provide earlier support to those children facing harmful experiences in their households.

You will know we have made a difference because...

- more people will reduce their substance misuse.
- there will new arrangements in place for people experiencing Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence so that they will feel safer.
- more families will be better able to cope with the help of the Resilient Families Service.

The work in our PEOPLE priority is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is



You can see more detail about how we will continue our work to 'Promote independence and positive lives for everyone' in our 2019-20 PEOPLE Plan

PLACE:

Creating neighbourhoods
where people are proud
to live & work



PLACE

Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live & work



Key information about Rhondda Cynon Taf

- In 2017, there were 104,032 households in RCT.
- 96.54% of adults aged 60+ held a concessionary bus pass in last year.
- In 2016, RCT emitted 1,095.2 kilo tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂), the main greenhouse gas emission. This equates to 4.6 tonnes of CO₂ per resident.
- There are 8 Green Flag Awards for parks and open spaces in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Issued 129 Fixed Penalty Notices for Dog controls.
- We recycled 74,791 tonnes of waste in 2018-19 this year, and sent 2,420 tonnes of waste to landfill.
- The health benefits for people living with a view of a green space are worth up to £300 per person per year.
- RCT is one of four defined flood risk areas in Wales. 11.3% of the population of RCT is at risk from surface water flooding due to excess rainwater issues.
- We have classified properties in 'at risk' areas of flooding as:
 - 7,623 in high risk,
 - 14,182 in medium risk and
 - 26,682 in low risk.
- 85% of journeys in Wales are made by car, 8% by rail and 8% by bus.



Looking ahead

- Current trends suggest that, despite growth in rail use, private vehicles are set to remain the main mode of transport in Wales in the short to medium term at least. The expected advent of autonomous or driverless vehicles in the next 10 to 15 years could in turn have implications for our transport systems.
- By the 2050s it is estimated that average summer temperatures in Wales will increase by 1.0 - 4.6°C, average winter rain, snow, sleet or hail will increase by 14% and average summer rain will decrease by 17%. Droughts and flood events may become more common.
- Climate change poses risks within the next two generations including from flooding; drought, with consequences for agriculture, farming and food production and damage to ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Flooding affected by future climate change poses the greatest long-term risk to the performance of our transport networks, energy and digital infrastructure and public water supplies. The growing risks from heat, water scarcity and landslides caused by severe weather could also be significant.
- Wales' biodiversity and habitats will be under ever greater pressure, mirroring the global situation.

We put in place the PLACE priority as we believe that despite public sector austerity, the Council must look positively to the future through the growth and regeneration of the County Borough's infrastructure. Millions of pounds have and will continue to be invested in schools, new housing, our principal towns and the transport networks that will benefit the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural well-being of residents and communities, helping more residents and families to become more independent. Residents told us this is important to them and there is much to enjoy and celebrate about the County Borough.

We want to help residents and visitors to RCT to get on with their lives by maintaining the environment for a thriving County Borough where they can get around efficiently and safely whether they are commuting to work or enjoying RCT's rich and varied landscape to stay active and healthy.

We know that our residents have pride in their communities and we believe that by giving choice and power to local people you get better results and achieve better value. We want to help communities to do more themselves and give them more control over local services such as libraries and other cultural and community facilities.

However, it would be wrong to spend more than we can afford, and/or to pass on financial problems to future generations. This means we have to make difficult decisions, manage our budgets and focus on our priorities

The steps we put in place to achieve this Priority are

- **Rhondda Cynon Taf will be amongst the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion, and residents feeling safe.**
- **Rhondda Cynon Taf's parks and green spaces continue to be valued by residents.**
- **Involved and resilient communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf.**
- **Rhondda Cynon Taf's local environment will be clean and attractive, with well-maintained roads and pavements, flowing traffic, increased recycling and less waste sent to landfill.**

As part of our preparations to put in place a new Corporate Plan from 2020, we are considering whether we have made enough progress in the past three years as well as looking ahead to see what Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural challenges we are facing and how we can work better with others to prevent problems from happening so that our work has the biggest positive impact both now and in the future.

In 2018, we said we would continue our work to ‘Create neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work’. Overall, we continue to make good progress as a Council and as part of wider partnerships, exceeding many of our expectations. Many of our short term measures show improvement although we know we still have more to do to achieve some of our longer-term plans in each of the four steps within this priority.

Alongside our work in delivering our PLACE priority we are continually building on our experience of doing things differently, what has worked and what we need to do better. We are also increasing our understanding of the effect of the changes we are making for the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf and the wider Cwm Taf Region.

Our work within the PLACE priority is overseen by Cabinet, relevant Scrutiny Committees and, where appropriate the **Cardiff Capital Region Cabinet** and the **Cwm Taf Public Services Board**.

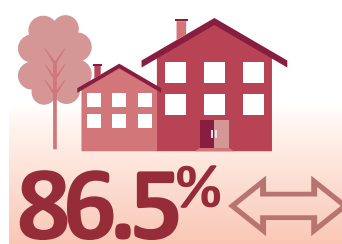


You can see more detail of our progress against what we set out to achieve in 2018-19 in our **PLACE Performance Evaluation**.

Involved and resilient communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Among other things, we have...

- progressed our Community Hubs programme. The new Mountain Ash Hub, **Canolfan Pennar** is now open, Ferndale ‘HWB’ is almost complete, and work in the former St Mair’s Day Centre is starting soon. There will be 6 more Hubs in place over the next 2 years.
- put in place new plans to improve library provision in library buildings, library vehicles and digital libraries so that we can better meet current and future community need.
- put in place a varied Arts programme for residents of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy. We also marked 80 years of the Coliseum Theatre with a varied programme of events to celebrate the past and present and look forward to the future by setting up a new Cynon Valley Cultural Network.
- talked to more residents about what they would like to see in our programme, their feedback helped us to shape our first **Rhondda Arts Festival**.
- put in place a new housing allocation scheme that supports long term housing need and includes making social housing more accessible.
- put in place the funding and outline plans for the Bryn Pica Eco Park that will turn rubbish into resources.



of residents are satisfied with Rhondda Cynon Taf as a place to live
Same as last year

We are also working as part of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board to deliver the changes set out in the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan, in particular the **Cwm Taf Well-being Objectives** of Thriving Communities. This is set out in more detail in our PEOPLE priority plan.



In 2019-20 our plans include...

- continuing to progress the Community Hubs development in Rhondda Fach (Ferndale) and Porth Plaza.
- improving our arrangements to support all our residents including homeless people, to find suitable long term accommodation.
- continuing our work to put in place an Arts programme with and for our communities.
- progressing the first phase of Bryn Pica Eco Park.

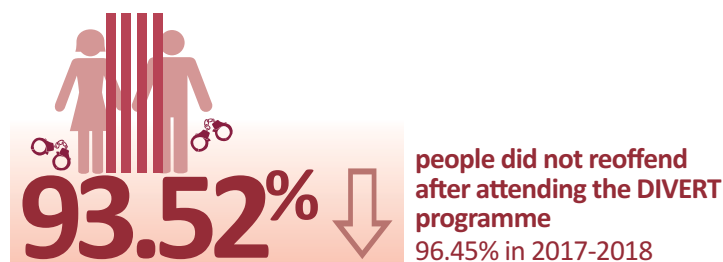
You will know we have made a difference because...

- fewer people/households will become homeless.
- residents will be satisfied with Rhondda Cynon Taf as a place to live.

Rhondda Cynon Taf will be amongst the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion, and residents feeling safe

Among other things, we have...

- delivered community safety services and programmes that involve residents including...
 - » promoting responsible drinking in our communities with 'no alcohol zones' in Aberdare and Pontypridd Town Centres and surrounding areas.
 - » working with residents, businesses and police to help develop a culture of sensible drinking by putting in place a Community Action Plan Partnership (CAP) for Pontypridd.
- helped to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in our community by
 - » providing training and awareness opportunities for pedestrians and drivers of all ages to join in programmes and fun events to learn and understand more about road safety.
 - » introducing improved technology to strengthen our enforcement of parking restrictions outside schools.



CASE STUDY

PONTYPRIDD YOUTH CLUB

In our talks with young people about the Pontypridd CAP, young people told us that there weren't enough activities for them that didn't involve alcohol. So we set up a weekly club where young people can take part in different activities and socialise with their friends without alcohol. From May 2018 around 33 young people attended the club each week. The club also provides support to vulnerable adults and advice on substances, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and ways of coping with difficulties at home.

RHOI TERFYN AR YFED AR Y STRYD

CALLING TIME ON STREET DRINKING

www.rctcbc.gov.uk/strydoedddimalcohol
www.rctcbc.gov.uk/alcoholfreestreets

#StrydoeddDimAlcohol
#AlcoholFreeStreets

RHONDDA CYNON TAF

Mae croeso i chi gyfathrebu â ni yn y Gymraeg / You are welcome to communicate with us in Welsh.

In 2019-20 our plans include...

- using the lessons learned from putting in place the Pontypridd CAP to see how we can apply it to other areas.
- raising awareness of the harms associated with knife use and knife crime to make sure that we keep knife crime as low as possible.
- working with partners to deliver effective interventions to reduce ASB including targeted patrols of ASB hotspots, improving information about youth provision available within RCT and taking steps to improve support to vulnerable young people.
- continuing to protect vulnerable people in our communities from rogue traders and doorstep crime.

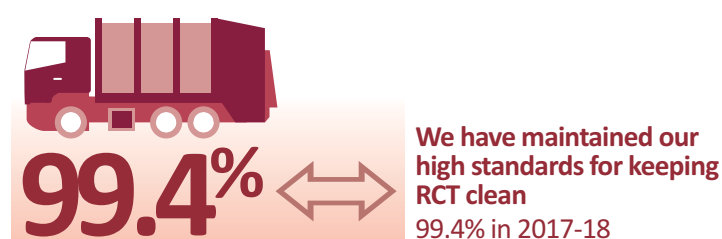
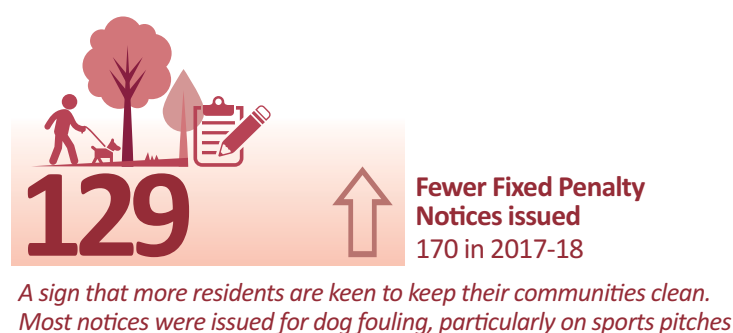
You will know we have made a difference because...

- more people will feel safe in our town centres.
- vulnerable or repeat victims of anti-social behaviour will feel safe following our intervention.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's local environment will be clean and attractive, with well-maintained roads and pavements, flowing traffic, increased recycling and less waste sent to landfill

Among other things, we have...

- continued to improve the condition of our existing roads and highways e.g. resurfacing part of A4059 in Aberdare and sections of the Sardis gyratory in Pontypridd. We also repaired bridges and river walls, replaced footways, put in place new road safety measures and completed our LED street lighting replacement, which means all street lighting in RCT is more energy efficient.
- progressed major new schemes e.g. Mountain Ash Cross Valley link, Llanharan Bypass, dualling of Ely Valley Road, Gelli/Treorchy Relief Road and Cynon Gateway North (A4059 Aberdare Bypass Extension).
- progressed transport schemes that will join with other transport provision e.g. 10 new Park and Ride Schemes, more buses including new low floor buses and schemes that will promote walking, cycling and use of public transport.
- continued with our flood alleviation schemes in **Cwmaman; Bwllfa Road, Cwmdare; Rhydyfelin, Cae Nant Flats-Rhydyfelin; Nant Cae-Dudwg, Cilfynydd; Nant Gwaw - Aberaman and Nant y Fedw, Ynysboeth**. We have also improved the information that is available to residents so that they can make more informed choices.
- involved schools and residents in projects to encourage more recycling including community projects in Ynysybwl, Brynna, Tonteg and Cwmbach.
- continued our campaigns to prevent littering, dog fouling and flytipping and worked with residents and communities to help them tackle local issues. We have also issued Fixed Penalty Notices and have also taken court action as a last resort.



In 2019-20 our plans include...

- continuing to improve the condition of our roads and highways.
- continuing to progress major schemes that will be beneficial to communities both now and in the future.
- progressing transport schemes that will join with other transport provision, including active travel.
- completing our initial review of the infrastructure needed for low carbon vehicles.
- continuing to work with partners including Natural Resources Wales, to prevent the risk of flooding.
- continuing to involve residents in schemes to increase recycling.
- taking steps to prevent environmental crime through education, engagement and as a last resort, enforcement.

You will know we have made a difference because...

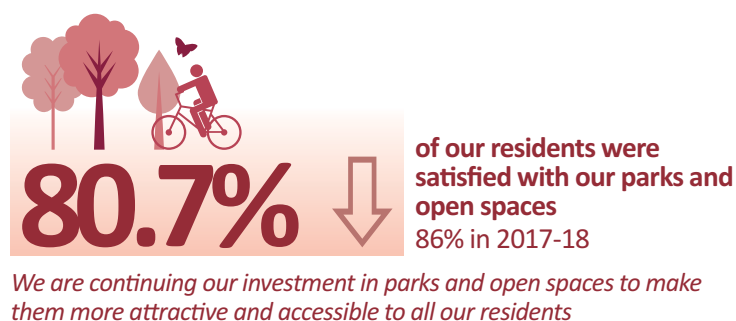
- more of our waste will be recycled.
- fewer penalty notices will be issued.
- the condition of our roads will continue to improve.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's parks and green spaces continue to be valued by residents

Following successful bids for funding, we are continuing to develop and improve our parks and open spaces and also helping to support volunteering activities, with plans in place for 2019.

Among other things, we have...

- the new 'Friends of the Ynysangharad Memorial Park' group has been involved in many community activities and events.
- Rhondda Heritage Park was recognised as 'Family Venue of the Year' at the Welsh Hospitality Awards, gained the Autism friendly award by the National Autistic Society and achieved official Museum status.
- Aberdare Park saw improvements to its play area, George V fountain and surfacing used for the Road Race. Weekly Parkruns have been introduced and the Park achieved its first 'Green Flag' Award.
- In total, eight of our parks have been awarded 'Green Flag Award' including Ynysangharad, Taffs Well, Aberdare and Dare Valley Country Parks. This international award recognises the high standards of our parks and green and outdoors spaces.
- we improved our use of social media to let our residents know about events and activities.



CASE STUDY

YNYSANGHARAD WAR MEMORIAL PARK

has seen 50 volunteers on its Volunteer programme, giving 1,650 hours of their time to support community developments, including, Poppies in the Park, School community flower bed, vegetable patch, Bat Walk and Mindfulness programmes.

In 2019-20 our plans include...

- taking steps to make RCT more 'Green' including further investment in our parks and green spaces, tree planting and reducing air pollution.
- identifying ways to further improve air quality across Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- considering the impact of the speed reduction on the A470 on the air quality in the surrounding areas.
- continuing to invest in outdoor play facilities.
- progressing plans to link Parks across the Valleys region as part of the Welsh Government's 'Valleys Regional Park Discovery Gateways'. This will connect the Valleys as a region, tell the stories of its rich cultural and industrial heritage, and encourage people to be more active and explore the Valleys landscapes.

You will know we have made a difference because...

- our parks will maintain 'Green Flag' status.
- residents will be satisfied with our parks and open spaces.
- air quality will have improved.

The PLACE priority is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is



You can see more detail about how we will continue our work to 'Create neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work' in our 2019-20 PLACE Plan

BUDGET:

Making the best
use of our budget –
Living within our means



BUDGET

Making the best use of our budget - Living within our means

Rhondda Cynon Taf, like all Councils in Wales, has faced a prolonged period of operating with reduced resources alongside rising demand and costs associated with many services. Despite this challenging climate, we have delivered over £90Million in efficiency savings over the last 10 years or so and have achieved this through carefully managing our finances and prioritising investment, planning ahead and changing how we work.

As part of setting the 2019-20 budget, we took account of expenditure requirements such as changing service demands and inflation at around +2.2%, together with the money we would receive from our main funding source, Welsh Government, of +0.8%. This meant that we needed to make savings of £6.9Million in addition to £7Million of savings already agreed. We were able to make these savings through, for example, becoming more efficient in how we purchase goods and services, reducing the number of senior managers and office accommodation costs and also through the use of specific one-off grants. As part of setting the budget, a Council Tax increase of 3.6% was agreed, the lowest increase in Wales for the second consecutive year. More detail on our 2019-20 revenue budget of £483.469Million can be viewed [here](#).

As part of our forward planning, we have estimated that we will need to find further savings of around £43Million (see Medium Term Financial Planning document – July 2018) by 2021 to off-set continuing reductions in government funding and increasing demand for services, particularly in social care. We know it will be harder to deliver year-on-year savings in the future and that is why we are continuing with our approach of examining every part of the Council's budget alongside a programme of significant investment in key areas.

Our work and investment is continuing to focus on:

- Early intervention and prevention work in a wide range of areas to improve the lives of residents. This includes our Early Years and Family Support Service, Resilient Families Programme and Youth Engagement and Participation Service.
- Keeping adults independent by, for example, working with partners to deliver the regional Stay Well@home service, providing home adaptations, support for carers and also involving residents in helping to shape social care over the longer term in areas such as Extra Care provision.
- Bringing more empty properties back into use to support the provision of good quality housing and to generate income from Council Tax.
- Offering more services on-line such as applying for Taxi licenses, involving customers in the design of services and continuing to use digital technology to modernise how the Council works.
- Thinking longer term and investing in the future through improvements to the highways infrastructure to reduce on-going maintenance costs and invest-to-save energy efficiency schemes that reduce energy consumption in Council buildings.



In parallel with the above, our 3-year capital programme for 2019-20 to 2021-22, we are investing £173Million in priority areas to further improve infrastructure and facilities available for residents. These include regeneration projects, improving school buildings and facilities, improving the condition of both roads and community assets such as parks and playgrounds as well as further investment in Leisure Centre facilities. We will continue to work closely with partners over this period to ensure we make the best use of resources and take all opportunities to attract additional funding should it become available.

Rhondda Cynon Taf is also a member local authority of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and is playing a central role in delivering an exciting and ambitious plan to improve the economy of South East Wales over the next 10 years.

OUR WORK:

Important Themes
that underpin our work



Important Themes that underpin our work

WORKING NOW FOR THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 puts a duty on the Council to improve the social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being of its residents. This new law asks all Councils and many other public bodies in Wales to change what they do and how they do business so that they can make improvements.

We want to make sure that we embed the Act into everything we do. What this means is that in delivering our priorities of Economy, People and Place, and across all our services we are working hard to

- **balance the short term needs with planning for the future.**
- **work with other partners to deliver objectives.**
- **involve those with an interest and seek their views.**
- **put resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse.**
- **consider the effect of our work with that of other public bodies and organisations.**

You can see many examples of how we are doing this throughout this report but we know we have more to do to make sure we do everything asked by the Act. We believe that we can best do this by making sure it is part of and not separate from our everyday work.

The Act also means we need to think about those services which are behind the scenes, and make any changes necessary so that they also work in a way that helps the Council to succeed in its plans. Since our Corporate Plan was introduced in 2016, we have made good progress in making sure that these services are working well. Given the Council's ambition and the pace of change required to deliver our priorities, the level of progress in implementing the Act is generally positive. This is reflected in each section of this report but we have used the Act to check where we can do better, and used resources being developed by the **Future Generations Commissioner** to provide relevant support and challenge as we continue to embed the Act into the Council's arrangements and processes.

WFG Act Corporate Theme

RCT PROGRESS

CORPORATE PLANNING

The priorities in our Corporate Plan for 2016-20, 'The Way Ahead' were tested against the Act in 2017 and were adopted as the Council's Well-being objectives. Since then, we have increased our understanding and application of the Act and it is being used to shape our performance and monitoring and planning processes, among other things. Our annual corporate and service assessments include a review of how we are putting the Act in place across the whole Council. We are now starting work to renew our Corporate Plan. The new Plan, which will be in place from 2020, will set out what matters most to our residents and communities, the direction for all Council services both now and in the future and also what we will do to get there.

FINANCIAL PLANNING

We spend our budgets on what matters most to residents and communities and find ways to work more efficiently, work better with partners and share our resources.

WORK FORCE PLANNING

We train our staff so that they continue their personal development and keep up to date with the skills they need to help the Council to improve. We think that the physical and mental well-being of our staff is key to a well-motivated workforce and make sure that they are supported to stay as well as possible. We also look to the future e.g. with our graduate scheme and our apprenticeship programme which won an award in the **National Apprenticeship Awards Cymru in 2018**. We want to make sure our residents are also able to develop their skills so that they can take advantage of work and digital opportunities so we also put in place activities to help them e.g. Digital Fridays, opportunities to get involved in intergenerational projects and supporting them to maintain services and facilities as part of 'RCT Together'.

PROCUREMENT

We make sure that anything we buy for the Council is value for money, benefits society and makes as little impact as possible on the environment. We also make sure that our policies take into account other social responsibilities e.g. promoting anti-slavery, the use of Fair Trade products and buying electricity that is generated from 100% renewable energy sources. The arrangements we have put in place with our major contractors have provided over 100 people with jobs.

MANAGING OUR ASSETS

We make sure that we make best use of our buildings to benefit our residents and communities, e.g. community use of our schools and also providing staff with the equipment they need so that they can spend more time with residents, communities and businesses. We share office space with other organisations where it makes sense to do so e.g. Porth Plaza contains a library, childcare facilities, private training businesses and our One4All centre. We are also working with Public Sector partners to see how we can improve services, make better use of all partners' buildings and so reduce costs. All of this work also takes account of our drive to deliver a carbon neutral service.

MANAGING RISKS

We identify short, medium and long term risks that will need to be mitigated in order to help us to deliver our Corporate Priorities.

MANAGING OUR PERFORMANCE

We make information about what we do and how well we do it, widely available on our website. This report is one of the ways we make this information more accessible to people, communities and our partners. We make sure that everything we do is focussed on the things that people have told us are important to them and are engaging more of our residents in the decisions that affect them. We want to put in place improved arrangements to share relevant data with our partners to help us improve all public services in RCT and also strengthen the information we have available. We are also working with Data Cymru to improve access to a wider range of consistent, timely and relevant information about future trends that will help us to better prepare for longer term.

We know there is always more to do to as we plan for and keep up with the speed and scale of changes facing the Council and all public bodies in Wales. We continually challenge why, what and how we do what we do so that we can make changes that will benefit the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf, both now and in the future.

In 2018, we looked at how we were applying the Act as part of the way we review our services to see what we can improve or do differently. We saw that we have a positive platform from which to build but some areas of our work were progressing more quickly than others. We used the Commissioner's 'Journey checker' to help us reflect on our progress so far. It is difficult to apply the Checker across the many and varied actions involved in delivering our objectives but overall whilst we can point to examples where we are "Leading the Way" e.g. the Stay Well@home service, we also know that we have more to do.

Over the next year we will

1. use advice, guidance and feedback from the Future Generations Commissioner, the Wales Audit Office and best practice to continue to embed the Act into our work.
2. use what we learn from our own pilot projects to further improve our arrangements.
3. continue to work with national bodies, e.g. Welsh Government and Future Generations Commissioner so that we can improve how we join together the different national policies we need to put in place.
4. work with national partners to find stronger and more consistent information about the future that will help us to improve our long term thinking.
5. continue to positively contribute to and support the Cwm Taf Public Services Board particularly in its joint working with Bridgend County Borough Council.

You can see more detail about how we are applying the Act in our Corporate Assessment [here](#).

We know we can't do everything ourselves and we have a good track record of working with others. From well-known partnerships like the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal to smaller partnerships, you can see some examples of how and where we do this [here](#). There are also many other everyday examples of where we talk to and work with other public bodies so that we can overcome shared local difficulties more easily. We also work with and alongside local community groups to provide residents and communities with direct support to get things done in their communities, e.g. through our 'RCT Together' programme, supporting them to prepare community bids for Welsh Government funding.

The Act puts a duty on the Council to work in a more formal partnership with other public bodies in a Public Services Board (PSB). What this means is they must work as part of a Public Services Board, finding out how they can make the biggest difference to people and communities by working better together.

As RCT works with many of the same public bodies as Merthyr Tydfil CBC, e.g. South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, South Wales Police, Cwm Taf University Health Board, in 2016 we agreed to join together to form a joint PSB, the **Cwm Taf Public Services Board (PSB)**.

The Cwm Taf PSB set out how it will work together to improve the Well-being of the Cwm Taf area in four Well-being Objectives which are set out in more detail in a **Well-being Plan** published in 2018. The four Well-being Objectives for Cwm Taf are

THRIVING COMMUNITIES:

promoting safe, confident, strong, and thriving communities improving the wellbeing of residents and visitors and building on our community assets.

HEALTHY PEOPLE:

helping people live long and healthy lives and overcome any challenge.

STRONG ECONOMY:

growing a strong local economy with sustainable transport that attracts people to live, work and play in Cwm Taf.

TACKLING LONELINESS AND ISOLATION:

finding new ways to channel the undoubted strengths of our communities, including volunteering, to tackle effectively more the loneliness and isolation which often exists within many of them.

The Council is the lead partner for the Thriving Communities objective and is also actively involved in the other three Well-being objectives. You can see more information about the PSB's work and progress on its [website](#). How we are working with our PSB partners has been described throughout this report.

As well as working together to tackle the big issues in Cwm Taf, the PSB also wanted to set a quick and positive example of how partners could support residents to improve their health. Recognising the high number of staff working for all the PSB partners who also live in the Cwm Taf area, the PSB has agreed to replace all added sugar drinks across all the partner organisations (PSB), you can see more about this in the People priority.

The PSB is also looking at how the transfer of Health Care services in Bridgend from Abertawe Bro Morgannwg UHB to Cwm Taf UHB to form the new **Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board**, will affect the partnership arrangements in place and provide opportunities for further joint working with Bridgend CBC.

The PSB published its first **annual report** in July 2019.

The Future Generations Commissioner has also set out six areas of work that people have told her are the biggest challenges facing Wales and where she could have the most impact.

This is how we are progressing our work in these areas

- 1 SKILLS**
Our work includes putting in place an employment pathway supporting people to develop their skills in line with the needs of local employers.
- 2 Housing**
Our work includes putting in place new housing, bringing empty properties back to life and providing all our residents with the opportunity to live safe independent lives in purpose built accommodation.
- 3 Transport**
Our work includes putting in place active travel routes and also creating a sustainable, accessible transport system for all by investing in public transport as part of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal as well as considering the infrastructure requirements for electric vehicles.
- 4 Planning**
Our work includes how planning can be used to create the right places, communities and infrastructure for future generations. Making **Wi-Fi available in Town Centres** will help support high street business.
- 5 Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)**
Our work includes helping children and young people and their families to cope with the difficulties they face including through our Resilient Families Service, and providing work opportunities for young people leaving care.
- 6 Better Ways to keep people well**
Our work includes helping to increase the resilience of young people through the Arts and encouraging volunteering as ways to keep well.

These are just some of the ways we are already tackling these areas of work identified by the Commissioner. You will find more detail included in our progress to date and our plans for the future throughout this report.

You can give your thoughts and experiences on the Commissioner's priorities on the **People's Platform**.

EQUALITIES

A FAIR AND EQUAL RCT AND A MORE EQUAL WALES



RCT Population (2017 Mid Year Estimate)

TOTAL	239,127
Males	49% 117,201
Females	51% 121,926

AGE RANGE

0-15	16-64	65+
18.7%	62.3%	19%

RCT STAFF DATA (March 2018)

As reported in the Equalities Report 2019
Over 80% of employees live in the Council area

TOTAL	10,491
Males	25.4%
Females	74.6%

Age Group	Total	% of Workforce
16-24	746	7.0%
25-34	1,986	18.7%
35-44	2,557	24.0%
45-54	3,213	30.2%
55-64	1,894	17.8%
65+	245	2.3%

More detailed information about the workforce can be found in the **annual equalities monitoring report to Cabinet 19 March 2019**.

The Thriving Places Index Wales for Equalities measures inequalities in Health, Income and Well-being. The 2019 data gives RCT a rating of 4.60. The measure covers many different services and different providers at a local, regional, national and international level and has fallen from 5.26 since its introduction in 2018.

In the last year we have maintained our good progress towards a fair and equal RCT and we can point to many positive examples of this throughout this report as well as in our annual Equality Report which was presented to Cabinet in March 2019.

Examples include helping children and young people aged 0-25 who as a result of their personal or family circumstances, need assistance to access and/or engage in play opportunities and youth activities; and extending the **Home Library service** so that people with long-term illness, mobility problems or who are full-time carers are also able to access books as part of the new @homelibraryservice.

In the last year we have also put in place our new **Strategic Equality Plan for 2019-22** which sets out our detailed work programme with a focus on five key areas that our residents told us were most important to them

- better understanding the needs of our communities and the barriers they face to thrive.
- reducing inequalities that exist within our communities.
- promoting safe communities.
- reducing the gender pay gap within the Council.
- creating an inclusive workforce within the Council that represents the differences in our communities.

This plan reflects the Well-being of Future Generations Act and in particular helps us to show how we are contributing to a **more equal Wales** - a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances.

In the meantime, we have continued to

- tackle hate crime and improve the monitoring of the impact of our work so that it can be robustly scrutinised by the Cwm Taf Community Cohesion Group.
- encourage service managers to gain a greater understanding of customers by collecting equality monitoring data and ensure diversity is represented in decision making.
- provide awareness about our employee networks and increase their membership.
- implement the WAVE action plan with a specific project on whether barriers exist for career development for senior women in the organisation.
- tackle the stigma of Mental Health through our commitment to the 'Time to Change' Wales Pledge.
- encourage new membership to the Disability Forum to ensure it reflects our diverse communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- increase our knowledge and understanding of our workforce.



Tackling hate crime and improve the monitoring of the impact of our work so that it can be robustly scrutinised by the Cwm Taf Community Cohesion Group

Among other things, we have focussed on Early Intervention, Education and Training

• With pupils in RCT schools

Working with 45 schools to deliver training to pupils to raise their awareness of Hate Crime and how to report it with the aim of increasing inclusion and reducing discrimination and inequality within schools. 2,200 pupils received the training which looked at five characteristics defined in Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Criminal Justice Act 2003, which helped to encourage discussion about young people's understanding of

1. **Disability** - pupils discussed all aspects of disability including physical disability, mental health awareness, learning difficulties, dementia and Autistic spectrum disorder.
2. **Race** - pupils often demonstrated a good understanding of race and the issue of racism.
3. **Religion** - pupils often demonstrated a good understanding of different forms of religion and good knowledge of other cultures.
4. **Sexuality** - pupils were encouraged to talk about sexuality and look at celebrities who are openly lesbian, gay or bisexual with the aim of challenging stereotypes.
5. **Gender identity** - pupils were encouraged to think about different gender identities including people who identify as non-binary and gender fluid. Pupils are also provided with guidance on the use of appropriate pronouns.

At the end of the session pupils are asked if they understand more about Hate Crime and how to report it. You can see more about our work in schools in the **PLACE evaluation**.

• With students in Further Education Colleges

'Drop in' clinics have been held in Aberdare, Nantgarw and Rhondda campuses of Coleg Y Cymoedd, with the aim of increasing awareness of Hate Crime and how to report it. During this time, 138 students dropped into the clinics. As a result of these drop in clinics, further formal training has been arranged with students.

• With Police Youth Volunteers

Hate crime awareness training has been delivered to 8 Police Youth volunteers to raise their awareness of hate crime and reporting mechanisms.

• With Adults with Learning disabilities

Working with Adults with learning disabilities in Talbot Green and Llwynypia 'Learning Curves' helping them to recognise hate crime that may be directed at them, and how they can report it.

• With residents

Open Events for residents were held in local Libraries and Leisure Centres to help to increase general awareness of hate crime and how to report it. These events have been run with South Wales Police as part of Hate Crime Awareness Week 2018, but have also been held on other occasions throughout the year.

We also participated in National Hate Crime Awareness Week

During National Hate Crime Awareness week in October 2018, we worked with South Wales Police to host a variety of community events. During these events we talked to residents about their experiences of Hate Crime and were able to raise greater awareness. The events also provided a valuable opportunity to record and collect more accurate information to gauge public understanding of Hate Crime and barriers to reporting it.

During this week;

- 20 community events were held across RCT.
- 429 residents took part in our formal survey, with more people sharing their personal experience of hate crime and its effects in individual discussions.
- we launched a local social and mainstream media campaign on hate crime and how to report it.
- South Wales Police used its 'Pride car' in four events across RCT and Merthyr, creating great interest and opportunities to engage with residents. The car was also taken to Ysgol Hen Felin, where Council staff and Police officers discussed diversity topics with pupils aged between 3 and 19.
- working with South Wales Police and Pontypridd RFC, the week culminated in an event at Pontypridd RFC. To support National Hate Crime Awareness Week, the club used social media to advertise the event, produced a 'Be heard' banner, shared numerous photographs of players, residents, police and councillors on social media platforms and also printed an article in a match day programme explaining hate crime and how to report it. These actions prompted a positive response from social media followers, although we are not able to state the total number of residents that have seen the message in its various forms.

Monitoring Hate Crime

Working with our partners, including South Wales Police, we have strengthened our collection, scrutiny and use of Hate Crime data and are taking steps to ensure that residents receive a positive and consistent response when they report Hate Crime.

The Council works with South Wales Police and other partners including Trevallis, 'Show Racism the Red Card' and Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST) as part of the Cwm Taf Community Cohesion Group. In its quarterly meetings, the Group considers and scrutinises Hate Crime data from the past quarter and the progress it is making. This data comprises Stop and Search Data and all Hate Crimes and incidents which have been reported in the RCT and Merthyr areas broken down by protected characteristics. The latest data in respect of Hate Crime provided by South Wales Police is set out in the **PLACE evaluation**.

The Group is able to identify emerging trends or hot spots and also compare its data with that of other South Wales Police force areas to see if it can improve and learn lessons. In the past the low number of reported hate crime has made this difficult to achieve. However, the recent uncertainties surrounding Brexit, has led to a greater emphasis on identifying residents, community groups and networks that may be vulnerable to harassment or experience increased fear.

Continuing to tackle the stigma of Mental Health through our commitment to the 'Time to Change' Wales Pledge.

We have continued to hold regular 'Time to Talk' sessions to tackle the stigma of mental health, although we are now working towards a wider wellbeing strategy.

However, monitoring our sickness absence data continues to show Mental Health as being a key issue for employees, with 32% of all absences related to Mental Health. Consequently, the focus this year has been on overall wellbeing and the introduction of a Well-being Working Group to analyse data and identify workforce trends and good practice that we can use to improve our arrangements. In January 2019, a Well-being day for staff was held in Abercynon Leisure Centre, where stress busting and mindfulness sessions took place alongside **other wellbeing initiatives** and information. The work to raise awareness of mental health issues is still in progress and will continue into 2019 as we focus on management induction and training.

Providing awareness about our employee networks and increasing their membership

500 of our Managers have been briefed on the existence and benefits of the Council's three employee networks, Perthyn our LGBT+ Network, our Allies Network and our Disability and Carer Network, so that they can make staff aware of the support available to them.

As a result of these briefings, Membership of some networks has increased slightly but there is still much to do. Our work will continue during 2019-20. Staff networks have been actively involved in supporting events including LGBT coffee morning, Time to Talk sessions and Pride. In December 2018, we also launched our new staff Disability and Carers Network as part of International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

SUPPORTING TRANS PUPILS IN SCHOOLS

by providing information that will help teachers to better support them

Encouraging new membership to the Disability Forum to ensure it reflects our diverse communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

We have successfully attracted new members to the forum, including people with disabilities and also parents of disabled children to ensure that members are representing the range of disability diversity. Among other things, members of the Disability Forum have been supporting the Accessible Wales' Considerate Parking Campaign in Aberdare in conjunction with South Wales Police and have been involved in a number of consultations including the annual budget review, the Council's new Local Toilets Strategy and the new Strategic Equality Plan.

CASE STUDY

PARKS FOR ALL TO ENJOY

Following a visit to test the accessibility of Aberdare Park, the Disability Forum helped to inform a programme of work to make it easier for people with sensory and mobility loss to get around the park and enjoy the facilities on offer. We have already completed footpath improvements and other improvements have been planned.

Encouraging service managers to gain a greater understanding of customers by collecting equality monitoring data and ensure diversity is represented in decision making.

We recognise that we need to know more about the diversity of our residents and customers. Without detailed knowledge we are unable to be fully confident that the decisions we make fully represent and meet the needs of our communities. We have not made as much progress as we planned while we focussed on our **Strategic Equality Plan**. Some data relating to people with protected characteristics is captured as part of the equality monitoring section of the Customer Satisfaction and Consultation surveys, but this is not enough. We have already talked to residents about the potential to seek more information from them as part of our monitoring arrangements and they told us that they were mostly happy to answer equality monitoring questions, but also indicated that we need to give more thought and provide clarity about how responses will be used. We are developing relevant privacy notices to ensure data compliance.

Continue to implement the Women Adding Value to the Economy (WAVE) action plan with a specific project on whether barriers exist for career development for senior women in the organisation.

As part of our monitoring of the WAVE project and to meet our legal obligations, we published information about the Council's Gender Pay gap in our **Annual Equality Report 2017-18**. The information showed a slight reduction in the gender pay gap from 2017. To further reduce this pay gap, we are continuing to implement the WAVE action plan, including the specific project on whether any barriers exist for career development for senior women in the organisation.

Owing to the potentially complex and sensitive information disclosed by female staff, an experienced gender pay expert is involved in the Project and undertook the research into women's progression routes into senior management posts. Phase 1 of the project has been completed and the findings are imminent. We will continue to prioritise this area of work and are committed to positive action to encourage more female staff to undertake management development programmes.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS AT WORK

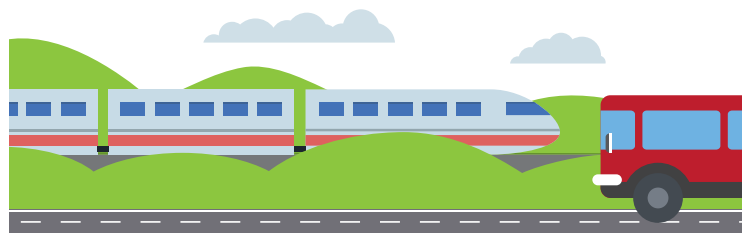
75% of our work force is female and 80% will experience noticeable changes as a result of the Menopause. We launched our Menopause Guide on International Women's Day. We aim to create an environment where our employees feel confident about raising issues about the effect of their symptoms.

Increase our knowledge and understanding of our workforce.

There is a significant amount of data about our workforce set out in our annual Equality Report presented to **Cabinet on 19 March 2019**. This workforce data allows us to monitor the diversity and make up of our employees and also monitor any gaps in protected characteristics. An example of this is we know that employment and retention for young people working for the Council is lower than for other age ranges. Our apprenticeship programme helps to recruit young people, and we have successfully recruited 27 apprentices in 2018-19, 19 of whom are under the age of 25.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO TRAVEL ...

by providing 'Travel Training' that helps people of all ages, abilities and needs to improve their road safety awareness and knowledge of how to travel by public transport so that they have more opportunities to get out and about independently and with confidence. They also have more chance of getting jobs and enjoying other activities available in their communities and further afield.



In 2019-20 our plans include...

- Implementing our new **Strategic Equality Plan for 2019-22** with its focus on the five key areas that our residents told us were most important to them.
- meeting our responsibilities under the 'Disability Confident' Scheme.
- continuing our commitment to the 'Time to Change Wales' pledge, 'Stonewall Diversity Champions' programme and 'Stonewall Equality Education Index'.
- continuing to deliver Dignity and Respect training to colleagues across the Council and inform them of their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and to encourage them to challenge negative attitudes.
- strengthening equality training for staff dealing with complaints about the Council's services and ensure information is used to inform service improvement.
- continuing to focus on Mental Health, making sure it is included in all relevant training.
- strengthening our understanding of the needs of our armed forces veterans.

Contributing to an RCT and Wales that is



WELSH LANGUAGE DELIVERING SERVICES IN THE LANGUAGE OF YOUR CHOICE

We are making good progress with our work to deliver services to you in the language of your choice, although we know that there is more to do, especially if we are to play our part to help Wales to achieve 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050.

- The number of Welsh speakers in RCT has remained fairly consistent since 2001.
- The greatest proportion of Welsh speakers are under 25 years old.
- The 2011 Census tells us there are 27,779 Welsh speakers in RCT (12.3% of the population). Data from an ONS population survey **December 2018** suggests that there are now more Welsh speakers, 51,400 (22.4%). However, the ONS survey involved fewer people so it might not be a true reflection.
- Since 2003, there has been almost 1,000 additional places in our Welsh schools (990).
- RCT has highest % of pupils taught Welsh as a first language from within the 5 Councils covered by the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service, 19.04% in Primary schools and 19.35% in secondary schools.

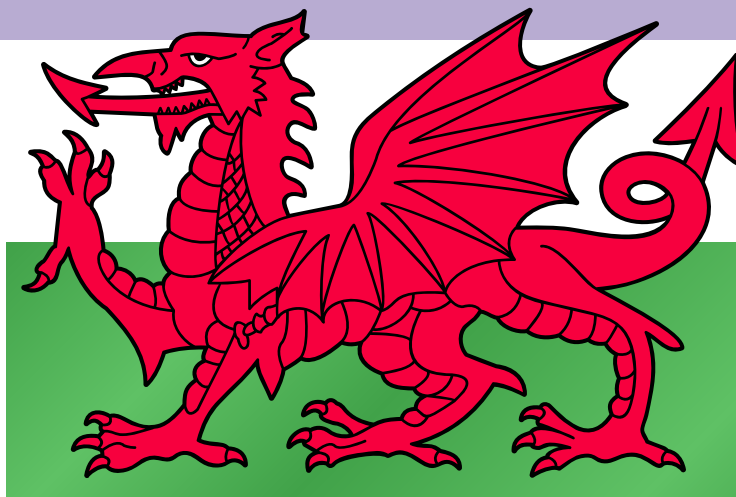
Between 2015-16 and 2017-18

- the number of 7 year olds being taught through the medium of Welsh has remained around the same (543 in 2017-18, 2 less than in 2015-16). However, there are now slightly more 7 year olds being taught in English so the overall percentage of pupils learning through Welsh has decreased by 0.72%.
- 0.42% more learners achieving A*-C grades in Welsh first language Key Stage 4 outcomes.

Since 2016 we have provided Level 1 Welsh Language training to 1,562 staff.

As a result of the improvements in recruitment and training for Welsh Language since 2016, more of our staff have indicated they are fluent in Welsh.

There has been a 30% increase in the workload for Welsh Services, including translation, ensuring that services are provided to residents in their language of choice.



We are committed to encouraging residents to deal with services in Welsh, and making it easier for them to contact and do business with the Council in the language of their choice. The number of Welsh speakers in our communities is currently low at 12.3% of our population* (27,779) compared to the whole of Wales at 19%. As a result, the number of local people applying for jobs in the Council who are able to speak Welsh is also low as the majority of Welsh speakers in RCT are not of working age.

What this means is that we need to support and encourage our existing staff to use and improve their Welsh skills at work and encourage our residents to engage with us in Welsh. It also means that we need to plan ahead so that we are able to take advantage of the Welsh Language skills our young people have to offer as they leave full time education and reach working age. To help with raising the skills and confidence of our staff, we recruited a Welsh Language Tutor. Between April 2018 and March 2019 over 400 staff have had Welsh language lessons from our tutor which helps staff and services to respond better to the needs of residents.

Along with the proposed significant investment in our Welsh medium schools, **the announcement** in March 2019, that Rhondda Cynon Taf will host the Royal National Eisteddfod in 2022 is an exciting opportunity to further boost the use of the Welsh language in our communities. This will also contribute to helping the Council to meet the national Well-being goal of a 'Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh language' as well as other national goals.

The Council also needs to adhere to the Welsh language laws and apply national Welsh Language Standards, making sure that we:

- **treat the Welsh language the same as the English language, and**
- **offer people the opportunity to receive their services from us, as well as from those funded by us, in Welsh.**

The Welsh Language Standards apply to all parts of the Council's work, including to Council meetings, where translation facilities and translators have been put in place.

A national Welsh Language Commissioner is responsible for making sure that the Welsh Language Measure and the Standards are being implemented across Wales. **We report our work** and progress to the Commissioner every year.

The Council also has its own arrangements in place to make sure we are making progress and the Welsh Language Commissioner has recognised these arrangements as good practice on his **website** indicating that the Council "has shown its commitment to ensuring compliance with the Welsh language standards and the principles of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011".

If we do not properly implement the Welsh Language Standards we could receive a penalty of up to £5,000 for each case. During 2018-19, the Council has been investigated a number of times following complaints from a number of our residents about how it is treating the Welsh Language. But we continue to work closely with the Welsh Language Commissioner's office to make sure that we do everything we can to resolve any problems and so far we have received no financial penalties.

*As at 2011 Census

What we plan to do to meet the standards is set out in two documents that we must publish as part of our duties under the law. These are the:

1. **Welsh Language Standards Action Plan**
2. **Welsh Language Promotion Strategy**

To make sure that we keep on track and meet the Welsh Language Standards, a Steering Group of Councillors and representatives from other interested public bodies and voluntary groups including Fforwm Iaith:

1. checks the progress we are making against our Action Plan and Promotion Strategy,

2. reviews Audit reports to make sure that all services are delivering services in Welsh, and
3. approves major Welsh language policies that affect all services to our residents

Each of our services also looks at where they are providing services in Welsh and what they need to do to improve or do more. One way of helping us to improve is to work with others. We work with others as part of the Welsh Language Forum, made up of voluntary groups, the third sector and other public bodies, which helps us to develop and implement our plans for the Welsh language.

To increase services we provide in Welsh

Last year we said we would...

work more closely with our partners in the community

And amongst other things we...

- worked towards organising Welsh language 'Splash, Sing and Learn' sessions for parents and babies in our leisure centres in partnership with Mudiad Meithrin.
- put in place after school activities e.g. climbing, football, netball and rugby in partnership with the Urdd.
- provided Welsh language activities in School Holidays with Menter Iaith.
- continued to support Menter Iaith with resources and facilities to hold Parti Ponty.
- hold Welsh Medium Book clubs and Mother and Toddler groups in our libraries with Mudiad Meithrin.
- encouraged our staff and residents to work with Welsh for Adults to help with their Welsh language skills.

help Wales to meet its target of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050

- made sure that
- new staff are trained to Welsh Language Level 1.
 - all staff who are promoted or transferred between services also receive Level 1 training.
 - all Council staff that can already speak Welsh are being helped to continue learning Welsh to Level 2 +.
 - staff and residents were more aware of the Welsh language.
 - our Welsh speaking staff continue to wear badges and lanyards.
 - we use the Cymraeg logo on our communications.
 - there are posters encouraging staff to speak Welsh.

We have also

- provided Welsh language training to the staff in our 'Flying Start' Child Care settings so that they are able to encourage greater use of Welsh with children.

contribute to improving Welsh medium education across Wales

by working with partners to show how we will increase and support Welsh medium education in the area, in our **'Welsh in Education Strategic Plan'**.

We have received positive feedback from the Welsh Language Commissioner about our progress, so we know we are on the right track, but there is always more to do.

Among other things, in 2019-20 we will:

- work towards our target of increasing the number of Welsh speakers in RCT by 6.8% by the next census date of 2021.
- work with the Royal National Eisteddfod Committee on the arrangements to bring the Eisteddfod to Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2022.
- promote key national and local Welsh medium events to raise awareness of the Welsh language including:
 - St David's Day
 - Owain Glyndŵr Day
 - Shwmae Su'mae Day
 - National Urdd Eisteddfod
 - the annual youth message of **Peace and Goodwill** with the Urdd.
- continue to work with the Welsh Government's Welsh in Business Support Officers to encourage our businesses to see the advantages of Welsh both locally and globally.
- further strengthen the translation facilities in Council meetings.
- continue to meet the Welsh Language standards.
- increase the opportunities for staff to learn Welsh by working with Cymraeg Gwaigh (Work Welsh)

Our work to promote the Welsh Language is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is



BIODIVERSITY

PROTECT AND ENHANCE OUR ENVIRONMENT

We are making good progress with our work to protect and enhance our environment in Rhondda Cynon Taf, although we know that there is much more to do to tackle the big environmental challenges both locally and nationally.

- RCT is of national importance for its Rhos pasture marshy grasslands, and other species-rich grasslands.
- We have the most southerly glacial cwm landscape in the British Isles.
- About two thirds of the County Borough is of particular importance for wildlife, including Local Nature Reserves, Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.
- There are at least 85 different kinds of bee on our old coal tips, not to mention many other insects, lichen, fungi and flowers.
- The valley sides are outstanding wildlife highways allowing species to move and habitats to function.
- The mountain above Treherbert is probably the wettest place in the South Wales valleys. Which is why there are extensive peatbogs, being restored amid the new wind turbines. It is also why our mountain streams are so energetic and full of wildlife.
- Wildlife and biodiversity on our door step is amazing, free and there for residents of all ages and abilities to enjoy. We can see bluebells on the hillsides and in the woods, watch birds of prey like buzzards, peregrines and red kites, or make our gardens more attractive to wildlife.
- There are clear physical and mental health benefits of being outside and engaging with nature.
- Our landscape and history are closely bound to our identity and culture, as well as producing our unique biodiversity. The dramatic geography and story of RCT informs our sense of our place in the world as well as local place names.
- Children and Young People from schools in Wales and England visit the Dare Valley Country Park to learn about, and enjoy, nature and the environment.

There is more information available on our Biodiversity tour.

Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth and includes all species of plants and animals and the natural systems that support them. The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 asks us to protect our biodiversity, as well as meet the challenge of creating jobs and homes, health and education. By working in this way, it will also help to make Wales a low carbon, green economy, ready to adapt to climate change. A more joined up approach to how natural resources, such as the land, water, air and wildlife, are managed will help to make sure that they will still be available for the future. This law works alongside what we need to do to improve Environmental Well-being for the residents and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf, helping to contribute to the seven national Well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, in particular, a more Resilient Wales and a Globally Responsible Wales.



You will have seen many examples of how the Council is protecting and enhancing our environment within our priorities. As well as these examples, in 2018-19 we have also:

- continued to make sure that biodiversity is integrated into the plans for new housing estates e.g. sustainable long term management of public open spaces, protecting trees and hedges, meadows and wildlife corridors as well as providing for sustainable drainage, children's play, active travel routes and an attractive environment for new residents and their neighbours. We have also checked the ecological impact of over 1,400 planning applications. We have used GIS mapping to create a more complete picture of how the biodiversity mitigation sites fit with other opportunities across Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- continued to check that developers deliver the long-term biodiversity mitigation to which they committed as part of the planning agreements.
- worked to develop a 'living landscape' project with partners, including the Wildlife Trust, developers and other local organisations, with the aim of launching a pilot in the south of the County Borough during 2019-20.
- continued to manage grassland and grass verges so that we develop and increase the number of sites providing wildflower and pollinating insect habitat.
- obtained grant funding for three years to March 2022 to continue our 'Healthy Hillsides' work following a successful joint partnership bid to develop grass fire mitigation on 6 sites in RCT which will be put in place next year.

CASE STUDY

Working together to create Healthy Hillsides...

'Healthy Hillsides' is a partnership of RCT, South Wales Fire and Rescue, **South and West Wales Wildlife Trust**, Natural Resources Wales, South Wales Police, **Butterfly Conservation**, **PONT**, Swansea University, other South Wales Councils and Llantrisant Town Trust. Its objective is to develop sustainable land management and community engagement projects, to help to successfully prevent grass fires and promote and develop the multi-benefit outcomes of this work. An example of its work in 2018 is at Y Graig, Llantrisant where bracken and bramble were cut back from an extensive area of the Common to provide more grazing for animals. Butterfly Conservation used the site for 'the Great Rake-Off' volunteer day to clear the cut material and celebrate their 30th Anniversary. Despite the dry summer in 2018, the Common avoided the major fires seen in previous years, and the area of flower-rich grassland has increased. In Autumn 2018, fire breaks and conservation grazing areas were cut using a specialist Fire Service robotic cutter. With the increases in both bracken cutting and pony grazing that the 'Healthy Hillsides' Project will provide, we should see further significant improvements in biodiversity over the next 3 years.



- continued to identify and progress other priorities for the Council so that it meets its 'Biodiversity Duty', this includes working with services so that they are able to integrate work to support healthy ecosystems into everyday tasks e.g. grass cutting and vegetation management.
- continued to manage conservation grazing sites which help to sustain those species rich Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. The sites are Dare Valley Country Park near Aberdare; Cwm Fields, Cwm Field Extension, Nant Celyn and Llantwit Fardre Marsh all in the south of the County Borough between Llantrisant and Tonteg.
- continued to take steps to improve air quality, particularly in those few areas that are linked to high levels of pollution. Steps include awareness raising, traffic management and schemes to relieve congestion and park and ride and bus lane improvements. You can see more detailed information in our latest **Air Quality Progress Report**.

Residents from Parc Nant Celyn checked that water was available for grazing cows in the dry summer of 2018.

Attracting Visitors to RCT

Walking is the top attraction for visitors to RCT. Our **Walking trails** cross landscapes that have been shaped by both nature and industry. 8 of our Parks have achieved Green Flag status.

GET INVOLVED

If you would like to be involved in the review of our Action for Nature, please get in touch with parkscountryside@rctcbc.gov.uk

In 2019-20 our work includes...

- creating a new sustainable drainage feature to prevent flooding at Park Lane School, Aberdare. Tackling this flooding problem has created the potential for a positive community impact, providing public open space, opportunities for outdoor learning and a new marshy grassland (Rhos pasture) habitat for wildlife. The site is next to Aberdare Park and the public footpath between Trecynon and Gadlys. We will work with both Park Lane school and the Friends of Aberdare Park so that the work benefits the school and the wider community. Once complete, the site will complement the network of marshy grassland sites in the Cynon Valley that support **Devil's-bit Scabious**, a purple flower that is essential for the survival of the rare marsh fritillary butterfly.
- developing a pilot 'Living Landscape' Project that shows how Council, partner and planning agreement land can be successfully managed to provide a connected framework of biodiversity rich habitat. Linking local sites and community groups with each other can show how working together benefits everyone, as well as the wildlife.
- using social media to promote and raise awareness about the Council's current pollinator and wildflower management work, providing wildflower and pollinating insect habitat through grassland, cemetery and grass verge management, as well as looking to increase the number of sites where opportunities arise.
- working with the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership to review and update 'Action for Nature', i.e. the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, and to expand the Partnership.
- considering how litter, flytipping and dumping garden rubbish affects wildlife both locally and globally and what we can do to tackle it.
- putting in place a plan to reduce greenhouse gases across RCT and to respond to the recommendations of the **Committee on Climate Change** and the Welsh Government's '**Low Carbon Wales**'.
- Identifying and progressing the other priorities for the Council as part of our 'Biodiversity Duty'.

Our work in Biodiversity is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is



INVOLVEMENT INVOLVING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES IN RCT

We have a good track record of engaging with our residents from all backgrounds in many different ways. We also take account of what they tell us in our plans and arrangements. We also know that there is always room to do better. We will continue to look at what we do and where we can improve so that more people can get involved in the decisions that affect them and their communities.

Throughout this report you will have seen many examples of how we have involved people and communities in the decisions that affect them and the services they receive. The methods we have used to involve and engage people range from face to face conversations in town centres and car parks to conducting online surveys or encouraging feedback through **Twitter** or **Instagram**. We also make the most of chatting to visitors at Council events e.g. talking to families and parents at the Teddy Bears picnic and RCT residents at Pride Cymru. We have found that talking to people in this way can provide a wealth of information that we can use to help shape our services and also inform some of the more formal surveys and we also get to know what is happening in communities when it isn't always obvious.

We want all our residents to have the opportunity to be involved and give their views in the decisions that affect them. One of the ways we have done this recently is to provide **easy read versions** of information so that more people can understand it. An example of this is how people with learning difficulties were able to get more involved in discussions in the changes to Community Day Centres because they were provided with information that was more accessible to them. We also use the **WICID** website, which is aimed specifically at children and young people to promote surveys that directly affect them.

By making it easier for people to give us their views, more people are responding to us, using different ways. But we know we need to do more if we are to be fully inclusive and if people are to continue to have a real and lasting involvement in the future of their communities. We also need to improve how we use the information from residents' complaints so that we get a more complete picture of residents views.

Examples of how residents and communities have been involved in the Council's work include:

- providing over 4,000 responses to our budget surveys which were considered in setting the 2019-20 budget.
- telling us what they think of the play opportunities across RCT. This survey is part of the information that helped the Council to put in place its plans for outdoor play areas agreed by Cabinet in **March 2019**.
- shaping our new '**Strategic Equality Plan**' by telling us what is important.
- identifying how the use of Welsh Language is affected by any new service proposal.

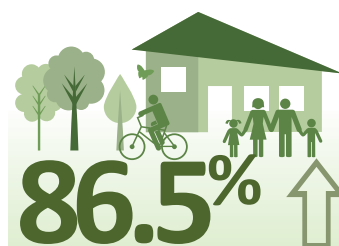
For our younger residents, our Youth Forum was involved in a UK survey '**Make your Mark**' to identify the top five issues that most matter to young people and should be discussed at parliament. We have also engaged with children and young people in the care of the Council about what they think about the care they receive in 'Your Life, Your Care' survey. This is described in more detail in the PEOPLE section.



Last year we said we would

continue to talk to people across the communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf, among other things we:

- talked to residents and shoppers in Porth as part of the **Porth Town Centre strategy**, as well as carrying out online surveys.
- talked to residents and users of Mountain Ash Day Centre and Library as part of the discussions about the **development of a Community Hub in the Mountain Ash Day Centre**. Listening to their ideas led to a redesign in the centre increasing the available community space and to increase the accommodation available to prepare hot meals.
- started to talk to residents and their relatives of all our residential care homes about how we can modernise residential care as well as Day Care services.
- worked with Fern Partnership to talk together with residents about the new Community Hub in Ferndale, to see how we can collectively better meet the needs of residents and the community. Once the Hub is open, it will provide a range of services to residents including community engagement, childcare provision and employment support.
- talked to residents, shoppers and businesses in Aberdare and Pontypridd Town Centres as part of the drive to reduce the misuse of alcohol in Pontypridd and Aberdare by putting in place Public Space Protection Orders.
- talked to young people in the Youth Forum about the way the Council prioritises how it spends its money and the introduction of Public Space Protection Orders in Aberdare Town Centre and Pontypridd. We also discussed the Welsh Government plans to introduce voting for 16 year olds as part of the Council's response to consultation.
- talked to older people in the Older Persons Forum about issues that could support their ability to get out and about e.g. the provision of public toilets, changes to community transport services, pavement cafes in Pontypridd.
- held regular discussions with disability groups and also involved the Disability Forum in discussions about how we can improve access to Council services and facilities. This included a visit to Aberdare Park to review its disabled access, described in more detail in the Equalities section.



In a local 2018 survey, 86.5% of residents told us they were satisfied with RCT as a place to live, compared to 84.8% in 2016



use the information that residents give us to better focus how we engage and involve them

An example of how we did this is through the 'Your Voice' survey of 11-25 year olds from across Rhondda Cynon Taf who told us about the issues that affected them and how we could improve how we communicate and involve them. The findings from this survey are currently being analysed and the results will be considered as part of our on-going planning.



refresh and update our Citizens' Panel

and we are continuing to review the membership so that it more fully represents the communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

As well as talking to people about Council services, we are also involved with partners in asking people about how partnerships can work better together, for example, working with Fern Partnership to expand and increase community engagement as part of the Cwm Taf partnership in the Ferndale Community Hub.

We are also working to support other partnerships, including the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the Valleys' Task Force, where we use our local knowledge to get consistent and timely messages to our residents and communities using our Social Media channels.

In 2019-20 our plans include...

- continuing to improve how we engage and involve our residents and communities so that they are able to provide their ideas and views about the issues and services that affect them now and will do in the future, including increasing the use and availability of easy to read materials.
- involving residents in developing a new Corporate Plan to improve the well-being of the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The new Corporate Plan will be in place for 2020 – 2024. Once complete, it will set out our longer term priorities and will show shorter term actions and measures that we can use to show our progress and whether or not we are heading in the right direction.
- continuing to engage and involve residents and communities in matters that affect them so that their voices are heard in Council decisions, e.g. Developing Community Hubs and schemes that will provide Extra Care for our older residents.
- increasing the involvement of children and young people in the care of the Council to make sure that they can help to shape the services that affect them.
- strengthening how we analyse the ways that residents get involved with us so that we can clearly see what works best for different social groups within communities.
- continuing to work as part of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board to support the objectives of the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan, the Safeguarding Board and other partnerships.

How our work is contributing to the seven national Well-being Goals

National Well-being Goal	Building a Strong ECONOMY	Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone PEOPLE	Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work PLACE
Prosperous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing opportunities for businesses to emerge and flourish • Building new homes • Creating opportunities for jobs • Providing schools where children can achieve the best they can 	Supporting Children and Young People by giving them a great start in life through our Resilient families programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping people and traffic moving on well-maintained roads and pavements • Progressing schemes that will benefit communities now and in the future
Resilient	Promoting biodiversity by protecting existing habitats where possible and creating new areas for wildlife in our schools	Reducing site disturbance and material waste with shorter construction schedules by using modular construction methods in the construction of our Extra Care facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in and valuing our Green Spaces • Integrating biodiversity into new housing estates • Expanding 'Healthy Hillsides' project
Healthier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in our Leisure Centres • Putting in place Walking Routes for residents and visitors and also safe routes to school for children and young people 	Helping people to stay as well as they can for as long as they can by encouraging increased activity through investing in our playgrounds, leisure centres and community facilities in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Green Flag' progress in our parks • Continuing to tackle environmental crime • Encouraging healthy activities in our parks e.g. Park Runs
More Equal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing sanitary products to help tackle period poverty for girls in our schools • Providing opportunities to all our residents to improve their digital skills • Freezing prices in Leisure Centres and minimal pricing in the Lido 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sure that residents can access services, no matter what their background or circumstances • Creating opportunities for people of all ages to get together to learn from each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Community Hubs for all to enjoy and benefit from • Making sure that our residents of all ages and abilities can enjoy our parks and green spaces
Cohesive Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving housing for all our residents and creating pleasant neighbourhoods in which communities can thrive • Organising Community events that bring people together, e.g. Big Bite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping people to stay in their own homes for longer and enabling them to contribute to communities and strengthen social relationships • Continuing 'Food & Fun' during School holidays 	Keeping people safe and helping them to feel safe by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting sensible drinking • tackling anti-social behaviour
Vibrant Culture & Welsh Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrating the culture and history of the area in our theatres and parks • Promoting RCT as a visitor destination, including the Eisteddfod 	Providing more opportunities for our residents to communicate with the Council and each other in Welsh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising Arts events for all sections of the community • encouraging local talent
Globally Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting in place transport hubs that will minimise car use and so improve air quality • Supporting Fair Trade Initiatives 	Supporting the resettlement of refugees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerating our recycling and reuse • Progressing the Eco Park in Bryn Pica • Continuing to celebrate residents who go above and beyond to keep RCT clean and green through our 'Love Where You Live' awards

